American Leading up to WWII and Mobilization

Neutrality Acts: USA is isolationist

-1939: FDR revision to include “cash and carry” (hope is to help Allies)

Destroyer for Bases Deal: in order to avoid the Neutrality Acts, FDR organizes a deal with GB to trade 50 American warships for access to British military bases

Shift in American opinions: isolationism to support for offering limited aid to the Allies

-due to German invasion of France and miracle at Dunkirk

Fight for Freedom Committee: repeal neutrality laws and stronger action against Germany

Committee to Defend America by Aiding Allies: led by William Allen White, increased American aid to the Allies but opposed armed intervention

America First Committee: isolationist group that firmly opposed any intervention or aid to the Allies (Charles Lindbergh, Gerald Nye)

Election of 1940

-unpredecented

-change of leader might not be in the nation’s best interests

Edging Toward War

FDR expanded nation’s role in the war (help Britain due to commonality in democracy)

Lend Lease Act 1940: Britain is out of money; law allows the US to lend or lease weapons to a country that is “vital to the defense of the US”

-if Britain is stocked, it will keep the US out of war

-allows US to contribute to the Allied war effort and USSR (Hitler eventually violates the non-aggression pact and invaded USSR)

Hemispheric Defense Zone: problem with lend-lease in that Germany is sinking boats, and the British cannot afford this

-FDR declares the western portion of the Atlantic to be a neutral hemispheric defense zone

-US Navy to patrol this area and reveal the location of German submarines to the British

Atlantic Charter: August 1941 between FDR and Churchill, committed the leaders to a postwar world of democracy, non-aggression, free trade, economic advancement, and freedom of the seas

German U-boats begin firing upon American ships—hostility

Pearl Harbor

Japan’s decision to attack was a direct result of Roosevelt’s efforts to help Britain in its war against Germany

FDR had to help Britain protect its navy in Asia protected from Japan (pressure Japan)

Japan depended on the US for materials such as scrap metal and oil

FDR passes the Export Control Act which restricts the sale of strategic materials to Japan

Japan furious and joins alliance with Germany and Italy (Axis powers)

1941: lend-lease aid to China—failed strategy as Japan moves to Indochina which threatens British territory (Japan could bomb Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malacca)

FDR responds by freezing Japanese assets in US and sends Douglas MacArthur to Philippines to strength defenses

FDR says he will undo this if Japan withdraws from China, but Japan needs resources, so they target British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia

Japan plans to attack the Philippines and Pearl Harbor to leave the US without a navy (prepare to attack Pearl Harbor)

US doubts Japan will attack Pearl Harbor due to far location, but they do on December 7, 1941

Germany and Italy declare war on the US because Hitler grew tired of American navy interfering with his ships—he underestimated Americans and overestimated the Japanese

Mobilizing for War

Churchill knows that victory in modern war depends on industrial power

American workers are twice as productive as German workers and five times more productive that Japanese workers

Part of industrial success was that FDR already begun ordering warplanes when German begam blitzkrieging

Govt issued cost plus contracts to rapidly mobilize (govt pays the cost of a product plus a percentage of the cost as profit)

-expensive, but gets production done quickly

Reconstruction Finance Corporation: make loans to companies to help them cover the cost to convert to war production

American Industry Gets the Job Done

After Pearl Harbor, almost all companies converted to war production

Automobile factories began to produce trucks, jeeps, tanks (move faster on land—advantage over Germans)

-artilery, rifles, mines, helmets, pontoon bridges, cooking pots, etc.

-produces nearly 1/3 of milit equipment manufacturing

Liberty ships-basic cargo ships that were welded (cheap, easy to build, hard to sink)

War Production Board: authority to set priorities and production goals to control the distribution of raw materials and supplies (but starts to clash with military)

Office of War Mobilization: settles arguments between different agencies

Building an Army

After invasion of Poland, FDR expands army

After France surrenders, Selective Service and Training Act (plan for first peacetime draft in American history)

Basic training for military soldiers (promoted unity)

Military was segregated, some African Americans did not understand the point of fighting if they did not have their rights

Some engaged in “Double V Campaign” to fight war on two sides—Hitler and discrimination

FDR began to recruit African Americans and promote Benjamin O. Davis the highest ranking African American officer to the rank of brigadier general

Tuskegee Airmen: African American fighter pilots in Alabama under Davis who were sent to the Mediterranean (battle of Anzio)

Truman integrates the military in 1948

Women in the Military

Administrative and clerical roles in the military for women

Oveta Culp Hobby is the first director of the Women’s Army Auxilary Corps

Legacy

Military men not trained, prejudice

But American suffers fewest casualties and they perform well