

Dropping of the Atomic Bombs On August 6, 1945, an American plane dropped an atomic bomb over the city of **Hiroshima**. The bomb flattened four square miles and instantly killed more than 70,000 people. In the months that followed, many more would die from radiation sickness, a deadly aftereffect of exposure to radioactive materials.

Truman warned the Japanese that if they did not surrender, they could expect "a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this Earth." And on August 8, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. Again, Japanese leaders did not respond. The next day, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb, this time on the city of **Nagasaki**. More than 40,000 people were killed in this second explosion.

Some members of the Japanese cabinet wanted to fight on. Other leaders disagreed. Finally, on August 10, Emperor Hirohito intervened, an action unheard of for a Japanese emperor. He forced his government to surrender. On September 2, 1945, the formal peace treaty was signed on board the American battleship *Missouri*, anchored in Tokyo Bay. After more than five years of fighting, World War II was over.

An Ongoing Controversy Using the atomic bomb against Japan brought a quick end to World War II. It also unleashed terrifying destruction. Ever since, people have debated whether or not the United States should have used the bomb.

For President Truman, using the bomb was a difficult decision. He later explained that he made his decision based only on military considerations. He was concerned that Japan would not surrender without an invasion, and that would cost an enormous loss of lives. After all, the Japanese still had a home army of 2 million.


Critics of Truman's decision argued that Japan was almost defeated at that point and the bomb was not needed. They also claim that by using the atomic bomb, the United States unleashed a dangerous arms race that grew over the next decades.

Growing differences between the United States and the Soviet Union may also have influenced Truman's decision. Truman may have hoped the bomb would impress the Soviets with American power. The debate over Truman's decision has continued to the present.

? INTERPRET What was the purpose of the declaration issued by the Allies at Potsdam?



>> After Japan failed to accept Allied surrender terms, Truman ordered the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The destruction was unlike anything the world had seen.

 **Interactive Timeline**

Aftermath of the War

Even as the Allies celebrated victory, the appalling costs of the war began to emerge. The war had killed as many as 50 million people around the world. In Europe alone, over 30 million people had lost their lives, more than half of them civilians. The Soviet Union suffered the worst casualties, with over 20 million dead.

Europe in Ruins "Give me ten years and you will not be able to recognize Germany," Hitler had predicted in 1933. Indeed, Germany in 1945 was an unrecognizable ruin. Parts of Poland, the Soviet Union, Japan, China, and other countries also lay in ruins. Total war had gutted cities, factories, harbors, bridges, railroads, farms, and homes.

Over 20 million refugees wandered Europe. Amid the devastation, hunger, disease, and mental illness took their toll for years after the fighting ended. As they had after World War I, the Allies faced difficult decisions about the future.

The Holocaust Is Revealed Numbers alone did not tell the story of the Nazi nightmare in Europe or the Japanese brutality in Asia. During the war, the Allies were aware of the existence of Nazi concentration



>> Representatives of the four major Allies sat in judgment of Nazi war criminals. It was the first time that war criminals were punished for "crimes against humanity" during war.



>> Prime Minister Tojo did not have the same totalitarian powers as Hitler and Mussolini. Still, he was tried and executed for war crimes committed by Japan during the war.

camps and death camps. But only at war's end did we learn the full extent of the inhumanity of the Holocaust. American General Dwight Eisenhower, who visited the camps, was stunned to come "face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every sense of decency."

War Crimes Trials At wartime meetings, the Allies had agreed that Axis leaders should be tried for "crimes against humanity." In Germany, the Allies held the **Nuremberg Trials** in the city where Hitler had staged mass rallies in the 1930s. Nearly 200 Germans and Austrians were tried for war crimes. Most were found guilty. A handful of top Nazis received death sentences. Others were imprisoned.

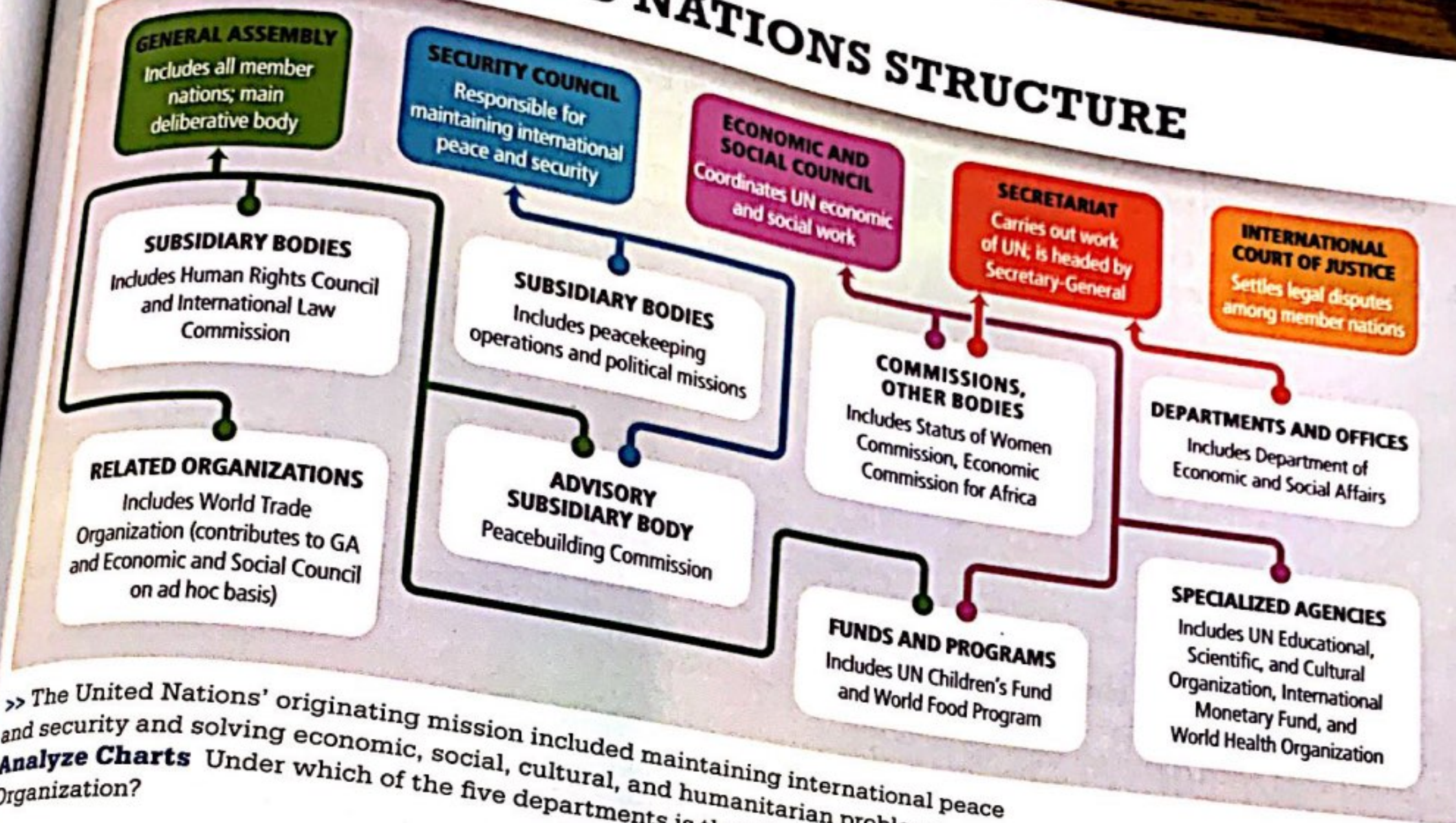
Similar war crimes trials were held in Italy and Japan. Among those found guilty and executed was Japanese prime minister Tojo. Many of those accused of war crimes were never captured or brought to trial. However, the trials showed that political and military leaders could be held accountable for actions during wartime.

The war crimes trials served another purpose. By exposing the savagery of the Axis regimes, they further discredited the totalitarian and militarist ideologies that had led to the war. Yet disturbing questions remained. Why had ordinary people in Germany, Poland, France, and elsewhere accepted—and even collaborated in—Hitler's "Final Solution"? How could the world prevent dictators from again terrorizing Europe or Asia?

The Allies tried to address those issues when they occupied Germany and Japan. The United States felt that strengthening democracy would ensure tolerance and peace. The Western Allies built new governments in occupied Germany and Japan with democratic constitutions to protect the rights of all citizens. In German schools, for example, Nazi textbooks and courses were replaced with a new curriculum that taught democratic principles. In Japan, the occupying forces under General MacArthur helped Japanese politicians to create a new constitution that gave power to the Japanese people, rather than the emperor and military elite.

? ANALYZE INFORMATION What were the main goals of the Allies' post-war policies toward the defeated Axis countries?

UNITED NATIONS STRUCTURE



>> The United Nations' originating mission included maintaining international peace and security and solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems.
Analyze Charts Under which of the five departments is the World Health Organization?

The United Nations Is Formed

In April 1945, delegates from 50 nations convened in San Francisco to draft a charter for the **United Nations (UN)**. They hoped that, unlike the ineffective League of Nations, the UN would be able to keep peace among nations by providing a forum where differences could be resolved peacefully. In the years to follow, the UN would play a greater role in world affairs than its predecessor did.

Structure of the United Nations Under the UN Charter, each of the member nations has one vote in the General Assembly. A much smaller body called the Security Council has greater power. Each of its five permanent members—the United States, the Soviet Union (today Russia), Britain, France, and China—has the right to veto any council decision. The goal was to give these great powers the authority to ensure the peace.

The Security Council has the power to apply economic sanctions or send a peace-keeping military force to try to resolve disputes. Still, differences between the United States and Russia have continued to hamper Security Council decisions. Since the

fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, more peacekeeping delegations have been approved.

UN Activities Over time, the work of the UN would go far beyond peacekeeping. It has taken on many issues from human rights and economic development to health and education. UN agencies have worked to end diseases such as smallpox and set up vaccination programs around the world. It has set up refugee camps and organized resettlement programs for refugees from war zones. It has worked with national governments to reduce poverty and protect the environment.

From the first, the UN has faced critics. Some have argued that the UN is ineffective in preventing or resolving conflicts. Others claim that UN resolutions interfere with national governments or are biased. Differences have also risen between rich industrial nations and the poorer nations of the world. And some smaller nations have criticized the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

? CONTRAST What is the difference between the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council?