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During World War II, [Allied](#) leaders had many ways to stay in contact. They could cable or telephone, send written communications, and dispatch ambassadors and other representatives to conferences. But there was nothing like meeting in person to ensure that a point was adequately stressed, to forge a friendship, or to understand how to best manipulate the other man.

Great Britain's prime minister, [Winston Churchill](#), knew this well; an intrepid traveler, he took long and often dangerous journeys to all 13 of the major conferences. President [Franklin D. Roosevelt's](#) struggle with polio made long-distance travel difficult, while the Soviet Union's supreme leader, [Joseph Stalin](#), involved in a brutal fight against Nazi Germany and obsessed with politics in Moscow, was even less willing to travel. When he did, he refused to stray far from home.

Over time, a tenuous bond formed between the Allied leaders, since each needed help from the others. The Soviet Union was desperate for the Western Allies to open a second front in Europe. The fate of Great Britain depended on the USSR's ability to occupy the Nazis on the eastern front. And the United States wanted allies in its war against Japan. A declaration released on December 1, 1943, after the three men met for the first time in Teheran, proclaimed: "We leave here, friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose." But even as they offered mutual assistance and relied on one another, their goals for the postwar world were vastly different, compromises were inevitable, and the Allied leaders remained suspicious about the others' intentions.

Atlantic (codename Arcadia), Aug. 9-12, 1941, Roosevelt, Churchill. Aboard two ships off the Newfoundland coast. At this, their first meeting, Churchill and Roosevelt began to forge a partnership. Roosevelt agreed to provide more Lend-Lease aid and to protect British shipping between Canada and Iceland. They warned Japan about its aggression and sent a note to Stalin suggesting the three meet. They also issued the [Atlantic Charter](#), which expressed a commitment to the principles of self-governance and freedom for every country, called for the "destruction of the Nazi tyranny," and looked forward to free trade, cooperation, and peace among all nations.

Washington (codename Arcadia), Dec. 22, 1941 – January 14, 1942; Roosevelt, Churchill. [The Declaration of the United Nations](#) was created, establishing an Allied alliance to oppose the [Axis](#) nations; it was signed by 26 countries on January 1, 1942. Churchill and Roosevelt also began organizing a coordinated Allied war effort, created the [combined chiefs of staff](#), and agreed that a [supreme commander](#) would oversee each theater of war. They resolved that the Allies would focus first on defeating Germany and formulated plans to invade North Africa.

Moscow, Aug. 12 – 17, 1942, Stalin, Churchill. In this, their first meeting, Churchill could not promise Stalin a second front soon, but he explained how the Western Allies' military strategy would aid the Soviet Union by bombing Germany and invading North Africa.

Casablanca (codename Symbol), Jan. 14 – 23, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill (Stalin could not attend). The Allies planned a combined bombing offensive against Germany, agreed to invade Sicily, and began preliminary discussions that would result in [Operation Overlord](#), or the invasion of Normandy (D-Day) in 1944. [French resistance](#) leaders Charles de Gaulle and Henri Giraud attended and were encouraged to cooperate. Roosevelt announced that the Allies would pursue a policy of [unconditional surrender](#) against the [Axis](#) nations, calling for "the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other people."

Washington (codename Trident), May 11 – 25, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill. They discussed operations against Japan and the Battle of the Atlantic and debated strategy for Europe. They agreed on an Italian offensive and decided to delay the cross-Channel invasion of France until May 1, 1944. Cross-Channel training would start in November 1943. They also agreed to pursue a policy of [unconditional surrender](#) against Italy.

Quebec (codename Quadrant), Aug. 17 – 24, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill. Plans for Operation Overlord progressed and were given priority over Mediterranean operations. They formed a new [theater of war](#) command in Southeast Asia and authorized offensives to further aid the Chinese war effort. The Allies also decided to pressure Spain to stop providing the [Nazis](#) with raw materials and manpower. They signed the secret [Quebec Agreement](#) about development of the atomic bomb. In it they pledged not to use nuclear weapons against one another or against another country -- or share information about the weapons with another country -- without mutual consent.

Cairo (codename Sextant), Nov. 23 – 26, Dec. 3 – 7, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek (China), Ismet İnönü (Turkey). The leaders planned operations in Southeast Asia. Chiang, Churchill, and Roosevelt issued the [Cairo Declaration](#) resolving that postwar Japan would be stripped of possessions acquired after 1914, agreed that China would regain lost territory, committed themselves to a free Korea, and vowed that “Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed.” (Churchill and Roosevelt interrupted the meeting and traveled to Teheran to meet with Stalin.) After returning tried unsuccessfully to convince İnönü to join the [Allies](#) in the war. They selected U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the [supreme commander](#) for Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy.

Teheran (codename Eureka), Nov. 28 – Dec. 1, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin. At last the “[Big Three](#)” met face-to-face. They settled on the timing of Operation Overlord and Stalin committed to launch an eastern front offensive against Germany that coincided with the attack. Stalin pledged to assist in the war against Japan after Germany was defeated and expressed his wish that, after the war, the 1941 USSR borders with Finland and Poland be restored. The leaders discussed the fate of Poland and the possibility of ceding a portion of eastern Germany to Poland to compensate for the Polish territory that the USSR would claim. They touched on how to handle a postwar Germany.

Quebec (codename Octagon), Sept. 12 – 16, 1944, Roosevelt, Churchill. They determined Allied military strategy in Europe and the Pacific. Churchill committed a British fleet to help the U.S. in the Pacific war and received the assurance of continued Lend-Lease aid while Japan remained undefeated. The men agreed that Germany would be divided into occupation zones after the war. Despite Churchill’s reservations, they also approved the created by Treasury Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau to obliterate German industry and give German machinery to Allied nations; the plan was later abandoned.

Moscow (codename Tolstoy), Oct. 9 – 19, 1944, Churchill, Stalin (with Ambassador Averell Harriman present as an observer). Stalin was briefed on overall [Allied](#) strategy and agreed that the Soviet Union could enter the war against Japan about three months after Germany’s defeat. The men discussed post-war spheres of influence in eastern Europe, informally deciding that the Soviet Union would have more prominence in Romania and Bulgaria, Great Britain would have more in Greece, and Yugoslavia and Hungary would be split in half (later talks altered this agreement further in the USSR’s favor). Stalin also agreed to invite the head of the Polish government-in-exile, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, to Moscow to discuss the future of Poland. Churchill supported Stalin’s proposal to annex a portion of eastern Poland while awarding Poland a part of eastern Germany—a suggestion Mikolajczyk did not agree to. The Polish situation was left unresolved.

Malta (codename Argonaut, phase 1 Cricket), Jan. 30 – Feb. 3, 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill. Just before the meeting of the “[Big Three](#)” in Yalta, U.S. secretary of state Edward Stettinius and British foreign secretary [Anthony Eden](#) met to discuss their combined military strategy. Churchill and Roosevelt met with one another only twice at Malta. As the strategic plan for Europe was being developed, the

British made concessions, agreeing to transfersome [Allied](#) divisions in the Mediterranean to the western front to fight Germany.

Yalta (codename Argonaut, phase 2 Magneto), Feb. 4 – 11, 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin. The leaders coordinated the [Western Allies'](#) European strategy with the Soviet Union's activities on the eastern front, but most of this conference was devoted to postwar issues. They created the [Allied Control Commission](#) to oversee the postwar division of Germany and confirmed that Germany and Berlin would be divided into four [zones of occupation](#) overseen by France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. They agreed to give part of Poland to the USSR after Stalin promised that free elections would be held soon in Poland. The three men signed the [Declaration on Liberated Europe](#), affirming the right of all people to "to create democratic institutions of their own choice" and pledged to assist in "the earliest possible establishment through free elections of Governments responsive to the will of the people." Roosevelt's concern over the war with Japan prompted him to sign a secret agreement with Stalin that would give the USSR Japanese territory and economic rights in Manchuria in exchange for a Soviet declaration of war against Japan. Churchill was not informed of this agreement.

Potsdam (codename Terminal), July 17 – Aug. 2, 1945, Truman, Churchill/Clement Attlee, Stalin. Roosevelt had died on April 12 and British elections made Clement Attlee the new prime minister. The leaders discussed postwar Europe and created the Council of Foreign Ministers to further resolve European border issues and negotiate peace treaties. They discussed the fate of defeated Germany and scheduled the first war crimes trial. Poland's western boundary was determined, and the Western Allies reluctantly gave the Soviet-controlled Polish government more power, while Stalin again promised that free elections would be held there soon. The Allies considered the surrender terms for Japan and on July 26, Great Britain, the United States, and China issued the Potsdam Declaration . The document limited Japan's sovereignty to four islands, called for Japanese disarmament, insisted on the prosecution of Japanese war criminals, mandated that the country promote democratic principles, and required the nation to be occupied until these terms were met. Calling for Japan's "unconditional surrender," the Allies warned that the alternative was Japan's "prompt and utter destruction." With British consent, Truman advised Stalin about the United States' success in testing "a new weapon of unusual destructive force." Stalin promised to enter the Pacific War in August.