THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE
WASHINGTON, DC 20319-5078

Strategies of World War Two
6029

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Course 6029

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020

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Strategies of World War Two
Course Schedule

Course Overview

Introduction

World War Two was the defining event of the Twentieth Century. A cataclysm that occurred within generations of the "war to end all wars," the war was a global ideological conflict that saw the rise and fall of great nations and gave birth to a new era of competing superpowers that has only recently been resolved. In terms of scale, commitment, conflict, and atrocities the Second World War was a genuine apocalypse, accounting for more wide-scale destruction than a combination of all previous conflicts. It was a war of particular viciousness, waged freely against civilian populations as well as opposing armies. It was a genuine racial conflict, driven by ideologies not only based in extreme nationalism but also pseudo-scientific racial theories that fed off traditional cultural mistrust, creating a global conflict that was in many cases pure genocide. Strategically, it was a war of coalitions; although it is popular in the aftermath to view the conflict in terms of the major powers, no nation stood alone. Alliances and coalitions waxed and waned throughout the war in terms of effectiveness and importance; in the aftermath of the Allied victory it became commonplace to view these coalitions as either harmonious (in the case of the Allies) or inconsequential (in the case of the Axis). Both pictures are simplistic and inaccurate; strategies of the combatants were often driven as much by the needs and conflicts among allies as they were in attacking the enemy. The role of military power was altered forever by the war; in four short years, armies and navies went from being small, relatively unsophisticated forces to sources of global strategic outreach capable not only of operating in all dimensions but also possessing (in the atomic bomb) the capability to annihilate entire populations in moments. While the First World War represented a changing of the European order, the Second changed the world in almost every sense. There would be no going back.

Such a broad topic presents a number of academic challenges. While it's tempting to move throughout the war purely through campaign analysis, we need to take a step back and examine the conflict through the eyes of grand strategy. Given the complexity of the conflict and the changes brought about by the war, we will take a three pronged approach. In Part 1 we will look at the world prior to the formal outbreak of war in 1939. I say "formal" in this case because the reality is that the "peace" in the interwar years was in fact an era of turmoil that not only saw the rise of new military technologies that would be tested and ultimately used in the great conflict but also gave birth to the new ideologies that made the coming of a future war inevitable. The interwar years were times of dictatorships, the derivation and testing of new military theory and technologies, and a simmering of hatreds let loose by the inconclusiveness of World War One. The power of ideology and theory would be tested first in Spain, China and ultimately in new forms of "lightening war" that gave the Axis powers mastery of much of Europe and the Pacific in a very short amount of time. Keeping what they had won, however, would prove to be problematic. We will then examine the initial campaigns of the war in light of how the assumptions and plans of the warring powers worked—or didn't.

While it's tempting to move throughout the war purely through campaign analysis, strategically there are a number of factors we must consider. World War One was a "world war" in the sense that most established nations were involved in it in some way; the actual area of conflict was relatively small in that sense. World War Two was different in that the war was genuinely fought as a "world" war in terms of areas of operation and scale of destruction. The ability to conduct operations on this scale was

due to the development of various strategic systems that gave the warring powers true global reach. Part 2 will focus on these strategic systems. These are not limited to the obvious use of new technologies—although these are certainly significant. Many of the technologies that saw their first employment in World War One now became dominant. Air power, long an impassioned subject for theorists, became a driving factor both on the battlefield as new practical methods of combined arms developed and also as a strategic system used against economic and civilian targets on a heretofore unheard of scale. How effective these operations were was debated hotly both during and after the conflict, setting the stage for post-war military theory. At sea the war radically changed the composition of navies as fleets became not only able to operate effectively in three dimensions but also became capable of genuine power projection against land targets.

But our examination will not be limited to weapons and their impact. Genuine economic warfare was conducted on a huge scale during the war, both in terms of the mobilization of populations and industry for total war and means to target those efforts. Intelligence, especially technical and signal intelligence, reached a new level of sophistication and importance in driving operational forces. Finally, we will examine the critical role of coalitions and how they evolved throughout the war. The Allies have often been portrayed as a group unified by a single noble purpose and bound together by Western ideals; this idealistic image does not match with the reality of an alliance that was frequently beset by strategic bickering and clash of operational wills. Conversely, Germany is often portrayed as the sole dominant force in the West (Japan in the East), but both not only relied on allies but also made strategic decisions based on the needs of those allies—decisions on which turned the entire course of the conflict.

Part 3 will focus on the great campaigns of 1942-44 that slowly turned the tide against the Axis, and the final offensives in both Europe and Pacific. We will be examining these in the grand strategy sense, exploring how new theories of warfare were being applied practically, as well as how previously examined strategic systems impacted the course of these campaigns. We will examine the effectiveness of coalition warfare and how it evolved (or devolved) in campaign planning and execution. Finally, we will examine the war in its final stages as a genuine global apocalypse not only in terms of the planned genocides, but also in the annihilation of nations that heralded in the modern age.

Approach:

The course consists of twelve sessions that will analyze issues covered in the readings through group discussion. Student presentations, guest lectures, and visual graphics and handouts and video clips as appropriate will augment the discussion on occasion; the goal is an unconstrained environment that will foster insightful analysis from all perspectives.

The course has five main objectives:

1. Understand the theory and ideology that drove the central strategies at the onset of war and the early war years and how these evolved to meet operational challenges.

2. Understand the impact of strategic systems and debate their ultimate effectiveness on global conflict.

3. Appreciate the challenges of coalition warfare, and how the (influences of each nation changed over time).

4. Appreciate the challenges of global conflict and the unique changes that occurred during the war.

5. Analyze the various strategies of the warring combatants to determine reasons for success or failure.

Absence Policy:

Regardless of absences, students must still meet all stated course objectives to pass the course. Thus students who have missed one or more class sessions may be required to complete compensatory assignments at the course director's discretion. Additionally, any student who has missed one or more classes and questions his/her ability to meet the course objectives regardless of compensatory work completed should ask the course director for further remedial assistance.

With the exception of absences due to required International Student Management Office (ISMO) events, any student who misses four or more sessions of a course will meet with a faculty board that will consider whether to recommend disenrollment to the NWC Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs and the Commandant. The Board will consider both extenuating circumstances and the student's potential to meet the course objectives. The Commandant will make the final decision on the student's status.

Students must alert the instructor in advance if an absence is anticipated. The above policies apply equally to U.S. students, International Fellows, and students from other NDU components.

Assessment:

Students must demonstrate mastery of the stated course objectives to pass this course. Students will be graded in the following areas:

1. A 6-8 page paper on a strategic aspect/element of World War Two. Paper topics are subject to instructor approval and due the third week of class. Completed papers are due at the beginning of the next to last class. Course weight: 50%.

2. Campaign/Battle presentation: each student will prepare a 10-15 minute presentation on a campaign or battle, describing the initial setting, course of the campaign, why it was significant to the conflict, and applicable strategic lessons. Presentations will be throughout the course; there will be a sign up for potential topics available week one. Course weight: 10%

3. Student participation in class discussion: 40%.

The following grading scale will be followed:

Letter Grade	Descriptor	Grade Points
A	Exceptional Quality	4.00
A-	Superior Quality	3.70
B+	High Quality	3.30
B	Expected/Acceptable Quality	3.00
B-	Below Expected Quality	2.70
C	Unsatisfactory Quality	2.00
P	Pass	0.00
F	Fail/Unacceptable Quality	0.00

I   Incomplete   0.00

Students who fail to complete all course requirements in the time allotted will receive an overall grade of Incomplete (I). All incompletes must be completed according to the time frame agreed upon with the course director. Incompletes that remain unresolved at graduation revert to a grade of Fail (F).

A student who does not sufficiently meet course objectives as indicated by overall performance on course assessments will receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (C). In this case, the student will enter remediation to conduct additional study and raise his/her performance to an acceptable level. If a student refuses remediation or fails in the process, the grade will convert to Fail (F).

All students have the right to appeal their course grades. First, within a week of the release of the grade, the student must request a review by the course director. Should this review not lead to a satisfactory resolution, the student should follow the grade appeal process established by their college's grading policy.

Original Work

As described in the Student Catalog, and to avoid any ambiguity, the College has carefully defined 'original work'. The term 'original' within the NWC research and writing program means both 'produced by the author' and 'produced for the first time'. Thus, papers written to satisfy NWC writing requirements must be produced during the student's tenure at NWC, be sub-mitted to satisfy only one writing requirement (excludes approved expanded and long papers), and contain the student's own ideas and analysis except as documented by appropriate citations. Complying with the original work definition will avoid potential issues of plagiarism. When in doubt about options or requirements, consult a faculty advisor or the Associate Dean of Research and Outreach.

Readings:

The academic works on WW2 are voluminous—perfectly understandable given the size, scale, and historical impact of the war. This can be both a blessing and a curse for the historian. While there is a potpourri of material to choose from, the interpretation these works offer of the war is incredibly wide ranging—and often contradictory. In addition, like all history, the history of the war is constantly evolving as new material becomes available from archives, declassified material, and sources previously unavailable for political, ideological, and nationalistic reasons.

Given the wide variety of material available, approaching the war requires adopting a certain academic method. In our study of the strategies of the war, we will use a comparative approach, using sources that offer slightly different perspectives on similar events. Because of the volume of reading in the class, we will often "triage" readings so part of the class will read one work/viewpoint while others will examine another; this should foster a lively debate. Students can anticipate reading 70-100 pages per week for each class session. We'll be using the following works:

Gerhard Weinberg's <u>A World at Arms</u> is widely regarded as the seminal work on the Second World War. A child during the Blitz living in London, Weinberg has made a lifetime study of the conflict, revising this work as new material becomes available. The current edition is one of the best and most comprehensive sources on the strategic elements of the conflict.

Max Hastings' <u>Inferno</u> (also known in Britain as "<u>All Hell Broke Loose</u>") is an excellent companion piece to Weinberg (whom he acknowledges in his introduction) in that while it addresses many of the same campaigns, it does so from a more 'human' perspective, focusing on the actions of individuals and the effects the war had on participants and those on the periphery. A British historian of considerable repute, Hastings is known for his attention to detail and his WW2 scholarship, as evidenced in such works as "Armageddon" and (Retribution) that address the end of the war.

Norman Davies offers a very different perspective on the war, writing from a more revisionist perspective. <u>No Simple Victory</u> focuses on the "good versus evil" argument, noting that in the apocalypse of war all sides committed crimes on a grievous scale. Davies focuses much of his work on the Soviet Union, arguing that the West's alliance with a totalitarian state had largely untold effects and consequences.

Mark Clodfelter's <u>Beneficial Bombing</u> deals with a critical issue that matured during the war; the role of airpower and specifically the decision to use bombing as a means to limit bloodshed vice conduct total war. Clodfelter's thesis is that during the interwar period the bomber was seen as the answer to the widespread destruction of the First World War; by use against economic targets, the destruction would be far less than that inflicted by armies. The reality, of course, was far different when this tactic was put into practice.

Finally, Bergen's <u>War and Genocide</u> provides a comprehensive assessment of the literature and historiography of the Holocaust, addressing many of the questions of this seminal event. We'll be supplementing this with reading from Weinberg's <u>Ordinary Men</u> which may seem (at first glance) to be an unusual choice-not because of the subject matter (we will be addressing the Holocaust during the course) but rather due to its tactical vice strategic nature. Written as a result of new archival evidence on the Holocaust released in 1996 (as noted in Weinberg's introduction), this a classic work on ethics--how conditions, peer pressure, ideology, and organizational ethos can make an individual perform inexcusable acts. While tactical, I believe it is a vital work to understanding the broader picture of the Holocaust.

Additional readings will be provided on Blackboard.

<center>**Topic 1**</center>

<center>**Origins: Dictators, Ideologies, and the Legacy of WW1**</center>

To say that the period between the wars was one of "uneasy peace" would be a vast understatement. The end of the First World War did not return the world to the "old order" (as much as dethroned monarchs would have liked) nor did it herald in an era of peace and democracy as idealists had dreamed. Rather, the world remodeled itself based on the worst lessons of the war, seemingly embarking on an inevitable path to a future conflict as governments redefined themselves in new ideologies that promised recovery, prosperity, and a return to greatness—by any possible means, especially renewed competition and conflict. Idealism was replaced by new theories of power that stressed not only an increase in the political process by citizens but also unity based on elements of strength and the use of power to solidify the nation state. The results of the Great War were the focal point of these new ideologies that stressed revenge, the desire for more global influence not properly rewarded in the war's aftermath, or (in the pacifist cases) an intense anti-militarization that led to national complacency. There are three important trends that we must consider.

The legacy—or rather, lack of legacy—of World War I is a key element when examining the ultimate causes of the Second World War. Given the benefit of hindsight, this would appear to be obvious; it can be argued that the war "solved nothing" in terms of ending not only militarism but also the passions that led to war in 1914. But if one were to take a view from the negotiating tables at Versailles in 1918, this view would have been, at best, wildly pessimistic. It seemed as the guns fell silent in 1918 that the world was tired of war; this would prove tragically wrong.

The origins of the Second World War are far more complex than the normally accepted narrative. Conventional wisdom holds that Germany, infused with nationalism and a universal desire for revenge after the humiliation of Versailles, embarked on a slow course of rearmament and ultimately offensive war unified by the exhortations of Hitler. Similarly in the east Japan's "snubbing" in the aftermath of WW1 led to the rise of ultra nationalist movements demanding the same "right" to expand as had been exercised by the West during their respective periods of imperialism. According to this narrative war was inevitable.

While this narrative is "true" in some sense, it is also very basic. There was more than simple revenge brewing in the international scene in the aftermath of World War I. The conflict had fundamentally altered the core of societal order. Gone were the days of kings; what would replace the weakened empirical orders was very much open to question. A "positive" result of the war was almost universal enfranchisement of previously oppressed classes; while this had been slowly occurring in most European nations prior to 1914, the demands of the war ensured increase of political power. What would be done with this "freedom," however, was problematic. The 14 Points had stressed and promoted principles of Democracy, but these were not received well among the disillusioned. Revolutionary movements sprung up throughout Europe, inspired to some degree by the Communist experiment in Russia that had been in place since 1917; these movements were seen as a threat by more right wing and traditionalist groups. In such an environment the neutrality that the Democratic political parties offered was seen as both an anathema and weakness.

Failed promises, disappointment, disillusionment and reaction to the threat of the rise of Communism in Russia led to the development of the first Fascist movement. Benito Mussolini began

the formal trend in Italy, soon seizing power in a wave of popular reaction against perceived humiliations by the other major powers. Mussolini's success inspired both Franco and Hitler who formed their own form of Fascist movements. Fascism was attractive to conservative elements who desired a maintenance of social order, to rich industrialists who saw opportunity for protectionism and profit, and above all to the lower middle classes who viewed it as a means to maintain political power under the veneer of recovered nationalism-and as a means to punish the "enemy" that had downtrodden the nation as a whole. To the East, the Communist Revolution in Russia seemed to offer a new type of hope for the working classes worldwide. Communist offshoots sprung up in all the major powers, especially those that lost their Imperial mantle in the aftermath of WW1. Communists, various forms of Socialist movements, Anarchists; the list was long and covered all ends of the leftist political spectrum. While this offered "hope" to many, to the Right it represented threat and was responded too accordingly-there were few European capitals that did not see internecine street violence among the groups vying for power, the ultimate expression of which would occur in Spain. The irony of course is that the Communism practiced in Russia was anything but idealistic; Stalin's purges on his path to dictatorship, carefully hidden from the West, would claim millions.

Added to the political vacuum left by the fall of Empires was a global depression, conflict among minorities freed from the administration of the Empires, the redesign of borders along arbitrary lines, a numbing sense of loss from the casualties of WW1 and a dissatisfaction with the results of the war that often expressed itself as a rabid desire for vengeance. In such an environment, was war inevitable?

Issues for consideration:

1.   What were the basic elements of each of the dominating ideologies of Fascism, Communism, and Nazism?

2.   What was the impact of WW1? Could conflict have been avoided had the diplomats at Versailles taken a different course?

3.   What was unique about those who would rise to dictatorship--Hitler, Stalin, Franco, Mussolini? Did they share common characteristics? Were they products of their environment, or did they drive/shape the course of their nations?

4. Why was there no international backlash against the extremist movements?

Readings:

Norman Davies, <u>No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939-1945</u>, Chapter Three, "Politics," pp. 131-165.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u>, Chapter One, "From One War to Another," pp. 7-47.

Topic 2
The Theorists: Future War

The conclusion of the First World War not only created new conflicts among the emerging political ideologies, it also created conflict in the world of military theory among military traditionalists and an emerging group of new theorists. The impact of World War One simply couldn't be ignored; despite all the plans and study prior to the war, established "theory" was almost completely wrong in predicting the course of events or as a means to obtain victory. Rather than being a swift war of maneuver the conflict turned into a slugfest that literally ate armies as they employed new technologies in the worst possible way. In retrospect, it would seem obvious that the new technologies developed during the war, as well as the use of large, nationalistic standing military forces, heralded a new type of warfare that required a new approach. But in the West, especially among the victors, tradition returned with a vengeance. After all, the war had ultimately been "won," so while some small changes might be in order for the future, for most militaries—the most traditional of all organizations-a return to the status quo was in order. This view was challenged by a new class of theorists concerned not only with new technology but also in breaking the deadlock of trench warfare and ultimately in fighting a modern global war.

Today with the benefit of hindsight we view many of these theorists as visionaries, but it must be remembered at the time they were largely considered radicals by professional military establishments that were intensely traditional. While we are familiar with much of their work in terms of its impact on modern doctrine, at the time their writings were often considered borderline heretical, with dire professional consequences. The "court-martial of Billy Mitchell" is an old story in the Air Force (even being made into a movie in the post-war era), but it illustrated a very real danger for professional military officers that strode beyond the norm. Less well known are professional articles written by Patton and Eisenhower, both early tank enthusiasts who advocated the use of tanks for mass and exploitation, that were voluntarily withdrawn at the "suggestion" of the Chief of Staff of the Army. In that case one could argue that history is the better for it, as both went on to be great commanders--vice obscure theorists with ruined careers.

The theorists were universally focused on the phenomenon of the First World War and the potential changes it represented. In general, theorists focused on three areas: the advent of new technology and the change it represented, how the problems encountered during the War could be addressed (especially the deadlock of the Western Front), and how tactical and technical systems could alter the strategic calculus of warfare. Each dimension (air, land and sea) produced its own set of theoretical luminaries, and each generated harsh reaction from established institutions and traditionalists. Two interesting points should be noted. First, the theorists were in the broader sense internationalists in that while they might have been rejected by their own nations (or militaries), they were read and often accepted in other parts of the world. Second, the degree to which new theories were accepted was directly linked to political influences or ideologies; Hitler, for example, was most famously enamored with tanks and armored warfare, thus significantly enhancing the career of Heinz Guderain who became one of the great operational commanders of the war.

In terms of the future war, we will consider why the future combatants accepted some theorists while rejecting others--and ultimately what impact this had on the course of the war.

Issues for consideration:

1. What were the respective theories of land/air/and sea power? How were they received in the major powers? (Germany, France, Russia, Britain, United States).

2. What was the populist view of future war vice the traditionalist?

3. What theorists had the most influence on the development of military doctrine? Who proved "right" during the war?

4. How significant was the link between ideology and the willingness/ability of military establishments to innovate?

Readings:
Air:
Mark Clodfelter, Beneficial Bombing: The Progressive Foundations of American Air Power, Chaps. 1-3.

Armor:
Williamson Murray, Innovation in the Inter-War Period, Chap. 1, "Armored Warfare: The British, French, and German experiences."

Sea:
Geoffrey Till, in Innovation in the Inter-War Period, Chap. 5, "Adopting the Aircraft Carrier: The British, American, and Japanese Case Studies."

Holger Herwig, in Innovation in the Inter-War Period, Chap. 6, "The Submarine Problem—Germany, Britain, and the United States, 1919-1939."

Additional Readings:

Claudio Segre, "Giulio Douhet: Strategist, Theorist, Prophet?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 14, no 1 (March 1999), pp. 72-89 (RMC 283), student readings.

Alex Danchev, "To Hell, or, Basil Hart Goes to War." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 20, no 4, (December 1997), pp. 66-93 (RMC 389), student issue.

R.L. DiNardo, "German Armour Doctrine: Correcting the Myths," *War in History*, vol. 3, no 4, (November 1996), pp. 384-397 (RMC 389), student issue.

Azar Gat, "The Hidden Sources of Liddell Hart's Strategic Ideas," *War in History*, vol. 3, no 3, (July 1996), pp. 293-308 (RMC 389), student issue.

Eugenia Kiesling, "If it Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it': French Military Doctrine between the World Wars," *War in History*, vol. 3, no 2, (April 1996) pp. 208-223 (RMC 389), student issue.

Timothy Nenninger, "Leavenworth and its Critics: The US Army Command and General Staff School, 1920-1940," *Journal of Military History*, vol. 58, no 2, (April 1994), pp. 199-231 (RMC 389), student issue.

Topic 3
The Reality: Interwar Conflicts and the First Campaigns

In many respects the size and scope of the Second World War overshadows the fact that the period between wars--especially the ten years prior to outbreak of war--was a tremendously tumultuous and violent period. Warfare broke out almost immediately in a host of global conflicts; some, like the revolution in Russia, was arguably a continuation of the war that had raged since 1914. These conflicts are important for the coming war in that theorists writing about future war during this period were not doing so in a vacuum; revolutionary outbreaks, the Communist expansion in Russia, Japan's adventurism in China and continued development of new technologies all offered ample opportunity for observation, testing and analysis. This is not to say, however, that the lessons from these conflicts were apparent to all—nor were accepted by the major powers.

Conflicts in the inter-war period were very wide ranging. In the immediate aftermath of World War One revolutionary movements broke out worldwide, some—such as those in Russia and China—with more staying power than others. The anarchy these movements represented presented a number of opportunities for exploitation. In the east Japan took advantage of a weakened regime and civil war in China to launch an aggressive war of conquest. War in Russia between "whites" and "reds" was continuous. Ultimately civil war in Spain presented the opportunity for the major powers to test their militaries—and ideologies—in a conflict that quickly became an international struggle as much as a national one.

Operationally war in the West and East would begin with two radically new types of warfare that would serve to define a great deal of the conflict in both theaters: the German use of combined arms mobility (expressed as "Blitzkrieg") and the Japanese development of carrier strike power demonstrated at Pearl Harbor. All powers experimented with new methods of combined arms warfare with various degrees of success. These methods were steeped in theory, and tested in the interwar period in active combat. But the interwar period offered broader strategic lessons concerning the potential future of war. Spain illustrated not only the impact of new technologies and tactics, but also the power of ideology in conflict—it was the first war of the new ideology of Fascism versus its ideological enemies, a loose coalition of Socialists, Communists, and those promoting democracy. War in Russia was the first mass war against civilians, where millions died either directly in combat or as part of organized terror campaigns. And organized terror and genocide became more of an established norm.

How well some learned the lessons of the interwar period became apparent in the early campaigns of the Second World War. The German use of Blitzkrieg and the speed of the conquest of Poland shocked the world with a seeming picture of invulnerability, while the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor heralded in an entirely new form of war at sea. What is interesting to note, however, is how others reacted to these new forms of warfare—and how success potentially blinded the users.

Issues for consideration:

1. How well did interwar theory fulfill the expectations of the major combatants during the opening campaigns of the war?

2. The conflicts in the interwar period have often been characterized as the "testing ground" for new methods of war – do you agree or disagree?

3. Given that there was very little that was "secret" about the theories or tactics discussed and used during the interwar period, why were the first initial campaigns such a shock to the defeated powers?

Readings:

Norman Davies, <u>No Simple Victory: World War Two In Europe 1939-1945</u>, Chap. 2 - pp. 75-94, Chap. 4.-- pp. 208-249.

Max Hastings, <u>All Hell Let Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945</u>, Chaps. 1-3.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u>, Chap. 2 - pp. 48-69, Chap. 3, Chap. 4 - pp. 245-263.

Additional Readings:

Pascal Vennesson. "Institution and Airpower: The Making of the French Air Force." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 18, no 1, (1995), pp. 36-67 (RMC 283).

Part 2: Strategic Systems

Given our focus on strategy at the National War College, it is appropriate that we now examine the strategic systems that contributed to the conflict. While the various campaigns are obviously important (we'll be examining these in part 3), we must remember that World War Two was genuine TOTAL war-- all elements of national and military power were unified in various ways to target the enemy in totality. It should be noted that these strategic systems relied almost wholly at the onset of war on theory; no one was really sure, for example, if strategic bombing would really work, although it was widely accepted that strategic bombing would dramatically affect (if not break) enemy morale and thus be potentially war winning.

Strategic bombing is the most well remembered of the strategic systems that developed during the Second World War, but there were certainly others with equal or more dramatic effect on the course of the conflict. The war at sea evolved far differently than many theorists had predicted, both in terms of power projection with the development of the fast aircraft carrier, to its ability to wage strategic economic warfare (successfully in the Pacific and unsuccessfully in the Atlantic) with the use of the submarine. Wartime economies needed planning on a heretofore unimaginable scale both to create the weapons of war and feed armies (and populations) in relatively security; a difficult proposition while under direct attack. Intelligence, something of a "gentleman's game" prior to the war, evolved into a highly technical and integrated art form that directed the movement of armies and fleets. And finally, while the First World War was a war of alliances, the Second was a war of coalitions; all powers acted in direct concert with the military forces of others in vast strategic campaigns whose success relied on the ability for senior commanders to cooperate in the derivation and execution of grand strategy.

Topic 4
The Air War: Bombing, Terror, and Combined Arms

The development of air power as a credible weapon of war was one of the most significant strategic events of the Second World War. Since its earliest days the military had looked to the use of air power for application on the battlefield; Wilbur and Orville Wright, for example, had direct links to the U.S. Army. But practical application remained problematic. Air power had certainly developed rapidly during the First World War as a means of conducting rudimentary combined arms, but the early attempts at strategic bombing (long the dream of theorists) had mixed results. As we saw during our study of the interwar period air power was embraced by some powers, while other more traditionalist forces regulated it to a rudimentary means of support.

The first campaigns of the war shattered any illusions about the ineffectiveness of air power. The German use of the Stuka as a form of mobile artillery—against military targets and as a terror weapon—was shockingly effective. Strategic bombing began early in the war, evolving into a major effort by all powers that literally destroyed cities. The ultimate expression of the power of this new type of war was the atomic bomb, the weapon that heralded in the new age.

It is important to note, however, that air power was used very differently by the major combatants during the war. Nazi Germany mastered the art of combined arms early in the war, developing medium range bombing against civilian targets as part of their land offensives and as a terror weapon. The Soviet Union developed rapidly developed considerable air capability, but largely limited its use to tactical support of its large land offensives. The British were true pioneers of strategic bombing in terms not only of development of interwar theory but also in execution throughout the war. The Americans followed suit, expanding on British efforts to conduct a massive daylight bombing campaign while simultaneously developing tactical air power for combined arms support. Each power experienced both successes and failures in their respective approach.

But in the aftermath of the war the role of airpower slowly became controversial. Was it as effective as advocates claimed? There is no doubt that air power—especially strategic airpower used in bombing campaigns—had impact, but at the end of the day was it worth it? Those who employed it on a massive scale (especially the Americans and British) did so at enormous cost in men and material. There is no doubt that cities could be destroyed, but did the mass killing of civilians actually contribute to the war effort? What were the reasons these methods were employed—and if the material dedicated to the air campaigns had been directed elsewhere, would the course of the war have been changed?

Issues for consideration:

1.   Consider the development of air power from pre-war to the mass bombing campaigns of the Allies. Why did it change in emphasis?

2.   Which powers used air power most effectively at the onset of war? During campaigns?

3.   How effective were combined arms operations in the respective powers? Who employed the most effective doctrine? How were these modified throughout the war?

Readings:

Mark Clodfelter, <u>Beneficial Bombing: The Progressive Foundations of American Air Power, 1917-1945</u>, Chaps. 4-6.

Max Hastings, <u>All Hell Broke Loose</u>, Chap. 19 - pp. 470-495.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u> , pp. 417-420, pp. 616-618.

Additional Readings:

Condoleezza Rice, "Soviet Strategy," in <u>Makers of Modern Strategy</u>, pp. 660-673.

Michael Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945," in <u>Makers of Modern Strategy</u>, pp. 563-590.

Topic 5
The War at Sea: Strategy in Three Dimensions

In terms of theory and practice of war, perhaps no area was more affected by the course of World War Two then the means by which war was fought at sea. Sea power had long been the pride of empire; one's Navy represented not only the ability to change the course of events in the international arena during times of peace but was also a symbol of nationalistic pride and patriotism. The development of sea power represented a considerable investment in time and material, often driven as much by building of navies by potential opponents as domestic desire to demonstrate national power. Naval arms races were commonplace in the early part of the twentieth century, even during times of economic depression.

The naval services have often been characterized as the most traditionalist and resistant to change. Whether or not this is true today, this was certainly a significant factor in the strategic planning leading up to the Second World War. There is a certain logic to this traditionalism; materially, the design of ships and associated weapons systems was (and is) a process that can take decades. Prior to the First World War the theories of Mahan had dominated, encouraging the major powers to build capital ship fleets composed primarily of battleships. Despite the general ineffectiveness of capital ships during the First World War, the "battleship admirals" still held sway at the onset of war even though significant technological advances in deployed aircraft power on carriers and underwater through new long range submarines offered the opportunity to change the calculus at sea considerably. How respective navies viewed these changes was largely cultural. To the victors of the First World War, capital ships (in this case, battleships) had "proven" their worth in the final result—threats (especially the submarine) had ultimately been defeated. The strongest advocates for the continued use of battleships argued that new propulsion, armor, and arms technology effectively nullified any advances in air or undersea warfare. Even on the age of war, the idea of an "unsinkable battleship" was popular among the traditionalists.

This is not to say, however, that new theories were not being examined—and, in the case of the future Axis powers, tested. While the German Navy still argued for its larger vessels (and built them, in the case of the Bismarck and Tirpitz), serious study was devoted to improving the design of the submarine and (more importantly) determining how it could be used in a successful strategic campaign. Chief of the undersea arm, Admiral Doenitz, had the ear of Hitler, who encouraged this study and technological development. While all powers continued the development of submarines, the idea of using them in a "guerre de course" role was distasteful; the Americans, for example, built their new "fleet boats" specifically to act in support of fleet operations as scouts and training almost exclusively in an anti-warship role that was almost completely ineffective. The use of submarines against enemy economic power was forbidden in both doctrine and policy—until December 7th.

The development of naval airpower also proceeded along cultural lines. In the East, the Japanese seized on the idea of using the aircraft carrier as a primary strike platform; first developed by the Allies during the First World War as a scouting platform, the aircraft carrier was still something of an anomaly in the West where it was viewed more as a scouting and support platform for the gun line by the traditionalists. Although the value of the carrier as a strike platform would become apparent in the early days of the war (the most noted example was the British use of torpedo planes to sink several Italian battleships at Toronto), the idea of naval airpower as a centerpiece of battle was slow to catch on; both the British and Americans moved begrudgingly in their development until the need became glaringly apparent in the wake of Japan's early successes. The reality of war would alter this calculus

considerably, forever changing naval theory.

Issues for consideration:

1. What were the lessons of World War One for the use of sea power? How were they used?

2. What were the respective naval strategies of the major powers at the onset of war?

3. What technological developments most affected the development of naval theory in the interwar years?

4. How did the major powers adjust their strategies to meet wartime realities?

Readings:

Max Hastings, All Hell Broke Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945, pp. 236-252.

Andrew Lambert, "Seapower 1939-1940: Churchill and the Strategic Origins of the Battle of the Atlantic," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 17, no 1 (1994), pp. 86-108 (RMC 555), student readings.

Marc Milner, "The Battle of the Atlantic," *Journal of Strategic Stud*ies, vol. 13, no 1 (1990), pp. 45-65 (RMC 555), student readings.

Clark Reynolds, "The U.S. Fleet-in-Being Strategy of 1942," *Journal of Military History*, vol. 58, no 1, (January 1994), pp. 103-118, (RMC 555)

Gerhard L. Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II, pp. 542-544.

Topic 6
Economics and Intelligence

The scope and scale of the combat of the Second World War often overshadowed strategic elements that were as important to the winning of the war as direct force on force engagements—if not more so. This section will examine two of these critical elements, the roles of economics and intelligence. The importance of these two strategic areas cannot be underestimated. The global conflict consumed resources on a heretofore unknown scale; total war usually meant total mobilization of economies to fight that war, something that opposing forces were well aware of. The movement of armies and navies on a global scale created an almost unquenchable thirst for information critical in directing operations—in fighting across such vast distances, there was much that was unknown not only about the enemy but also such critical elements as geography, economic conditions, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Without solid intelligence there was simply too much to risk.

The term "economics" covers a very broad range. For purposes of this discussion we will focus on two areas: how the warring powers managed their means of production to maximize its potential for war fighting (or not) and how this ability was targeted strategically by the opposition. The singular point that must be remembered is that economic issues were massive during the war; the powers literally lived or died based on their ability to produce, maintain, and repair their war fighting apparatus on a global scale, an unprecedented task with no historical equal.

The amount of material required to actually fight the war was staggering. In the European theater alone, the United States provided over 70 divisions and shipped 18 million tons of war goods to Europe—at a cost in today's dollars of over 4 trillion. U.S. munitions plants produced over 800,000 vehicles and 40 billion rounds of munitions. From D-Day to V-E day GIs fired 500 million rounds; as one GI put it, "I'm going to let the taxpayer take that hill." (Atkinson 633).

The role of strategic intelligence during the Second World War and its ultimate impact on operations was, until very recently, shrouded in mystery. Until the 1970s the picture we had of the role of strategic intelligence was fragmentary at best due to classification timelines and political sensitivities of the still ongoing Cold War. The official revelation that code breaking was occurring during the war, for example, led to a major reassessment of the historiography of the war; years later, the extent of the successes (and failures) of signal intelligence led to still more "rewriting" of history that even today is ongoing. While we can say with some confidence that we are "fairly clear" of the impact of strategic intelligence during the Second World War, it is almost certain that the story will continue to evolve as more sources become available, especially from archives in the former Communist bloc.

For our purposes there are a number of elements concerning the role of intelligence that we must consider on the strategic level. The first is the fact that all sides actively engaged in it to various degrees; despite the interwar public distaste for the craft (best summarized by the Secretary of State's comment that "gentleman do not read other gentleman's mail"), intelligence activities were conducted both by national level agencies in all the major powers and by their respective military branches. Given the clear value that intelligence gave to combatants in the First World War and the increasing sophistication of the technical means available to exploit intelligence it would have been surprising to find any power that did not engage in some degree in the tradecraft. But as we will find in our study, the degree of effectiveness of the use of intelligence varied considerably. This was due to two primary factors. The first, and arguably more important, was the degree to which the various organizations

cooperated with other intelligence organizations within their own national boundaries. This varied considerably; traditional army/navy rivalries, for example, were notorious in the Japanese empire to the extent that their lack of cooperation created vulnerabilities for the enemy to exploit; in the United States, these traditional rivalries were eventually muted to the extent that "joint" intelligence became the norm. The second factor was the degree to which each power believed its own systems were immune from compromise and the degree to which other powers went to ensure they maintained this belief. Both German and Japanese high commands were confident that their communications were completely secure--but only because comprehensive deception operations were conducted to make them secure in this belief.

Issues for consideration:

1. How did the political systems of the major powers affect their ability to mobilize their economies?

2. How did the political systems of the major powers affect the development and use of strategic intelligence?

3. What methods of mobilizing economic power were most effective? Least effective?

4. What means of targeting economic development were most effective? Least effective?

Readings:

Norman Davies, No Simple Victory, pp. 283-296.

 Intelligence and International Relations 1900-1945, Christopher Andrew and Jeremy Noakes (ed), Exeter studies in history, University of Exeter, 1987.

J.W.M. Chapman, "Japanese Intelligence 1919-1945: A Suitable Case for Treatment," pp. 145-190

Max Hastings, All Hell Let Loose, pp. 337-351.

F. H. Hinsley, "British Intelligence in the Second World War," pp. 209-218.

Edward Thomas, "The Evolution of the JIC System up to and During World War 2," 219-234.

Jurgen Rohwer, "The Operational use of ULTRA in the Battle of the Atlantic," pp 275-292.

Bernd Wegner, "The Tottering Giant: German Perceptions of Soviet Military and Economic Strength in Preparation for Operation Blau," pp. 293-312.

From: Intelligence and Statecraft: The Use and Limits of Intelligence in International Society, ed Peter Jackson and Jennifer Siegel, David. R. Stone, "Soviet Intelligence on Barbarossa: The Limits of Intelligence History," pp 158-171.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II, Chap. 10, pp. 544-558.

Topic 7
Coalition War: Axis and Allies

The coalitions of the war are often examined purely in terms of military effectiveness. This is a mistake; each was, first and foremost, composed of representatives of different political entities. As Davidson notes, politics did not stop during the war--if anything it intensified as the respective powers competed for influence. On the strategic level, we must examine how these political forces (and actors) waxed and waned in influence throughout the conflict and the ultimate effect this had on practical application in coalition warfare.

The initial Axis national coalitions were intensely ideological. The core tenets of Fascism bound Hitler and Mussolini (and to some extent Franco, prior to the war). The alliance of Japan and Germany was both ideological and practical; although there was little doubt that the government of Japan possessed the militaristic and nationalistic elements of Fascism, it can be argued that Japan also saw a distinct opportunity in Germany's stated goals of taking apart the European empires.

In the West, it can be argued (idealistically) that the Allied powers came naturally together based on their belief in western style democracy or (more realistically) alliances of the old western imperial orders. There are good arguments for both. And of course the rise of aggressive Fascist neighbors led for a natural anti-fascist alliance. This did not mean, however, that cooperation was automatic or smooth. Traditional elements of national pride, arrogance, and suspicions always present in international relations were enhanced by the political maneuvering and tensions of the interwar period.

And of course the Soviet Union was the great enigma. Stalin was an ideologue, but he was also the consummate realist. An early surprise alliance with arch nemesis Hitler allowed Germany a free reign in his early campaigns, and guaranteed Stalin's success in offensive operations in Poland. Stalin apparently believed his alliance secure right up until the German surprise attack in 1941.

It is important to note that political factors directly affected how the military coalitions fought the war, even among the staunchest of Allies. The American-British coalition, for example, has a post-war reputation of being almost flawless in terms of cooperation; the truth is far more complex. Eisenhower as commander in chief was constantly questioned—and undermined—by the British high command, most notably by Montgomery who argued until almost the final months of the war that he be given overall direction of the war. A similar argument was made by the liberated French, who demanded a leading (and vengeful) role against the collapsing Reich. In an almost impossible situation, Eisenhower successfully managed this disparate coalition—but often military campaigns were seen as instruments of compromise rather than effective operationally.

The Axis coalitions fought far differently. Both Japanese and German high commands dominated the military planning of allies and satellite powers—who were never regarded as equals. While less politically contentious, this had impact on operations—foreign soldiers in front line units often fought for the Axis reluctantly with dubious effectiveness. In many cases, Hitler was required to come to the aid of his Allies' adventurism, most notably in Greece and Africa. Second tier units showed more enthusiasm in settling ethnic scores, especially against other nationalities and the Jews, which we will examine in our study of the Holocaust.

What was different about the Axis coalition was that at its core it was intensely autocratic. On the

grand strategy level, the dictators of the Axis controlled operations—increasingly towards the end of the war at the operational and even tactical levels. This almost always meant Hitler, whose will was unquestionable; even when placed with a clear strategic choice (such as breaking out of the Soviet pocket at Stalingrad), Hitler was always to be obeyed, despite disastrous consequences.

According to Atkinson (Guns at Last Light, p. 632), the Allied coalition, despite its intense political rivalries, succeeded because of checks and balances that tempered willfulness and personal misjudgment. It processed a strategic symbiosis—British prudence in 1942 transitioning to American audacity in 1944 and 1945 (this is a direct quote). The Axis, on the other hand, became more restrictive as Hitler became more obsessive in the wake of Axis defeats, desperately trying to apply methods that had previously worked but now proved to be unsuccessful.

Issues for consideration:

1.   How did overriding political factors affect the military coalitions that actually fought the war?

2.   How did the underlying political philosophies of the coalitions affect their strategic war fighting capabilities? What were the advantages each offered? Disadvantages?

3.   How did the major coalitions evolve during the war? Devolve? How did power shift vis-a-vis the fortunes of war?

Readings:

Norman Davies, No Simple Victory: World War Two in Europe, 1939-1945, Chap. 3 - pp. 152-203.

D. Clayton James, "American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War," in Makers of Modern Strategy, pp. 703-734.

Maurice Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe," in Makers of Modern Strategy, pp. 677-702.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II, Chap. 13 - pp. 722-749.

Part 3: The Campaigns

Following our examination of the various politics, conditions, and ideologies that led to the onset of war (and served to drive much of the conflict) and the strategic systems that enabled the war to be fought on a global scale, we now turn to the campaigns of the conflict itself.

As can be imagined given such a broad topic, it is impossible to examine in great detail all of the campaigns and battles of the Second World War. For this reason we will take a strategic approach, focusing on the campaigns in the East and West that ultimately turned the tide of the war. Interestingly enough the participants unwittingly cooperated in this future academic approach in their actions; the scale of WW2 demanded, for the first time, strategic campaign planning on a global scale. Gone were the days of one decisive battle ending a conflict--now war was fought in terms of breakthrough and follow up campaigns as a matter of course.   While many battles fought during the war were certainly decisive--Stalingrad, Midway, and D-Day were all turning points in their own right—each were part of a broader campaign that demanded continuous attention in political, economic, and military spheres. We will now examine the military aspect; the hard combat that ultimately decided the course of the war.

Topic 8
War in the East, 1942-44

Although the Soviet Union emerged victorious from the Second World War as one of two global superpowers, no nation suffered as much during the course of conflict. In four years of war the Soviets officially acknowledged 20 million war dead (the number was probably higher), over half of which were civilian casualties. The nation itself became a vast battleground that left villages, towns and cities completely leveled. The Germans invaded not to subjugate but to annihilate for Hitler's "living space," in which non-Germans were at best to be used as slave labor, ideally eliminated. Titanic by any standards, the war in the east was not only the largest singular land campaign in history, but it was also the closest to Clausewitz's definition of "absolute war"—a war fought in its totality.

At the onset of war it seemed that the Soviets would be more a menace to the new Allied coalition. Initially allied with the Axis in the infamous Non-Aggression Pact that sealed the fate of Poland, the Soviet offensive took Stalin (and much of his military) completely by surprise. The next four years would be cataclysmic for the Soviets; although halted before Moscow (it is largely a myth that this was due solely to the infamous Russian winter), in 1942 the Germans renewed the offensive along a front of several thousand miles, were fought to a standstill at Stalingrad and only began their retreat in 1944. The Soviet war was characterized not only by vast distances but also scale; armies of literally millions fought across inhospitable terrain of all kinds and conditions. Moreover, the war was intensely ideological and therefore especially vicious; Hitler had made clear in "Mein Kampf" his opinion of the Communist menace and the "sub-human" nature of the Russians, whose fate in the quest for Lebensraum was all too clear. The infamous "Commissar order" was only the first step in a war of annihilation to which the Soviets responded in kind to a despised and hated invader. As the tide turned the retribution the Soviets would enact on the Germans was horrific; only now is much of the archival evidence being released detailing the atrocities on both sides in the East. It was in every respects the most graphic example of total war in recorded history.

While there was little doubt during the war that the conflict in the East was fought on an enormous scale, how that war was conducted was (until recently) shrouded in secrecy. During the war the image of "Uncle Joe" Stalin was one of a benign ally--the historiography of this has changed considerably over time, most notably as the opening of many Soviet archives had indicated the scale of Stalin's crimes during his rise to power and throughout the course of the conflict. Today there is considerable disagreement as to who was "worse" in terms of exercise of totalitarian power, Stalin or his archenemy Hitler. While I personally find this argument to be irrelevant (and a bit silly comparing two independent evils), it must be considered in examining the totality of conflict on the Eastern Front. Terror and totality of combat was as much a strategic factor of the campaigns on the Eastern Front as were the logistical support of armies, a factor that until the Second World War was largely unknown in the West.

Issues for consideration:

1. What weaknesses faced the Soviet Union at the onset of Barbarossa?

2. What were the strengths of the German's initial offensive? What were its weaknesses?

3. How did the Soviets address the attack strategically? What factors contributed to the turn in fortune?

4. How did both sides deal with the strategic stalemate of 1943?

5. How did ideological differences drive campaign planning on both sides?

6. What made the war in the east unique?

Readings:

Norman Davies, <u>No Simple Victory: World War Two in Europe, 1939-1945</u>, selected reading.*

Max Hastings, <u>All Hell Let Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945</u>, Chap. 6, Chap. 7, Chap. 12.

Gerhard Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u>, Chap. 5, Chap. 11 - pp. 601-611, Chap. 12 - pp. 703-721.

*case studies to be assigned.

Topic 9
The Pacific, 1942-44

The Pacific war was unique in a number of respects. The largest ocean campaign in history, it was a war fought with new assets and methods that were developed to fight in heretofore unknown theaters. Strategically the war in the Pacific had two demands; first, the obtaining of almost total command of the sea, and then the deployment of land power against a series of island targets that would allow for direct strike against a distant enemy. The war was driven by the tyranny of geography; since the enemy could not be struck directly, economic warfare was used first as a means of isolation and then ultimately as a tool of terror while naval and land forces fought for geographic dominance to enable direct attack. Even in its final stages success remained elusive; the United States was fully prepared to completely destroy the enemy and most certainly would have done so if the war had continued without the use of atomic weapons.

The war in the Pacific would ultimately define the United States as a naval (and atomic) super power. It was also a particularly vicious war. The Japanese, infused with a cultural militarism, began their war in China with a series of genocides that became signatory of many of their operations against both civilians and prisoners. The surprise attack at Pearl Harbor literally "woke a sleeping giant" (a fictionalized version of Yamato's comments after the attack), creating a unifying hatred in America that created a war of no compromise. The Japanese were famous for their refusal to surrender in battle, an attitude that continued until the final days of the war with the appearance of the Kamikaze. After four years of conflict the Americans were more than willing to immolate the enemy. In many regards the conflict in the Pacific was like that fought in Russia—bloody, merciless, and for total victory.

While in hindsight it would appear that Japan had little chance against an industrial giant such as the United States, it must be recalled that this issue was certainly not a factor in the early days of the conflict—nor was it particularly evident. By 1941 Japan had conquered a large Empire in Asia with a highly developed and experienced Navy and Army that was well entrenched throughout the Pacific. Unlike the United States, Japan was fighting a "one front" war; America's "Europe First" strategy seemed to indicate that Japan would have plenty of time to consolidate their gains. In this they underestimated the fury of the Americans. But even with an industrial base turned toward total war, the campaigns in the Pacific were long and controversial; while the United States could produce the material and employ manpower, how this was to be done remained very much an issue right until the final end of the war.

Issues for consideration:

1. Often considered "America's war"—is this really the case?

2. What was different about the Pacific? Was there any historical precedent? How well did theory play out?

3. What were the respective campaign plans of the Japanese and Americans? How well did they adapt during the war?

4. How did the Allied personalities—specifically Nimitz and MacArthur—differ in their approach to the

Allied offensive? Which was more effective?

5.   What was the role of ideology and culture in the conflict? How was this expressed in respective strategies?

6.   What was the role of economic warfare, including strategic bombing? How did each side employ terror as a tactic?

Readings:

Mark Clodfelter, <u>Beneficial Bombing: The Progressive Foundation of American Air Power 1917-1945</u>, Chap. 6.

Max Hastings, <u>All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-1945</u>, Chap. 8, Chap. 9, Chap. 10, Chap. 17, Chap. 22.

Clark Reynolds, "The U.S. Fleet-in-Being Strategy of 1942," *Journal of Military History*, vol. 58, no 1, (January 1994), pp. 103-118 (RMC 555), Student Readings.

Gerhard Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u>, Chap. 6 - pp. 311-348, Chap. 16.

Topic 10
Coalition Offensives
Africa/Italy, D-Day, Market Garden, the Red Tide

In 1942 at Casablanca Franklin Delano Roosevelt surprised his allies with his sudden (and apparently unsolicited) statement that the West would fight until unconditional surrender had been achieved. The niceties of diplomacy aside, Roosevelt's statement was prophetic; there was little doubt after Barbarossa (and probably none whatsoever after the Japanese surprise attack) that the war would only be won through occupation or destruction of both Germany and Japan. But how to achieve these ends? As noted in the Pacific, the geography of Japan aided in its isolation. But Germany was a different matter; there were many roads to Berlin, all of them difficult, and all with their advocates and detractors among the Allies.

From the onset there was disagreement at the highest levels of command. Upon its entry into war, America was keen on a direct attack on Europe (wholly supported by Stalin, desperate to relieve German pressure in the East). The British argument against such an attack prevailed--as Hastings and Atkinson note, British opinion of U.S. military capability was at best skeptical. Although the U.S. military would soon improve as a fighting force, the initial British analysis was probably correct, given the infancy of continental amphibious operations. But the British view of Churchill's "soft underbelly" proved to be idealistic, committing the Allies to a brutal slugfest that left Germany a distant vision.

The coalition offensives are important in a number of respects. First and most importantly, each was driven not purely by military considerations but also political ones. The vested interest of destroying Germany also had to be considered not only in terms of capability of the allied force but also on the strategic impact on other fronts; had the western allies not invaded Africa in 1942, for example, what would have been the effect on the Eastern Front? Had Eisenhower, perhaps in a nod to the fading of Empire, not acquiesced to Montgomery's questionable plan to cross the Rhine through an airborne carpet in the north, could Bradley and Patton have sliced into the Reich from the South? Had Stalin directed his vast tank armies south, could the allies have driven to Berlin and dramatically affected the post-war world? Was this a consideration at the time?

Examining the Allied offensives are important because they illustrate the practical difficulty of executing strategic plans in a politically contentious environment. It wasn't just cooperation between allies on the battlefield (which proved difficult enough); how to support allies in other theaters (specifically the Soviet Union) was an early war concern—later this become contentious in terms of arming and bringing to the fight new allies that were liberated. As the fate of Germany became more evident, considerations of power influences in the post-world war became more significant; decisions that were made in the final days of the war remain controversial in hindsight as former allies became suspicious and ultimately enemies.

Issues for consideration:

1.   What strategic considerations did the Allies deal with in their decisions to strike at the Axis in the early phases of the war?

2.   How successful were the campaigns in Africa and Italy in weakening the Axis?

3.   Why did the Allies wait until 1944 to invade Europe? What were the arguments for and against the attack?

4.   How did the Allies support the Soviets? Could they have done more? What were the political considerations at the onset of war, and how did these change?

5.   What alternatives did the Allies have at the various conferences at Casablanca, Yalta, and Tehran?

Readings:

Max Hastings, All Hell Let Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945, Chap. 14, Chap. 18, Chap. 21, Chap. 23.

Gerhard Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II, Chap. 8, Chap. 12, Chap. 13.

Topic 11
Armageddon: The Holocaust and the Politics of Unconditional Surrender

Having examined the campaigns that brought the Axis powers to the brink of defeat (and potential annihilation) at the onset of 1945, we now turn to the final days of the war and that unique act of genocide that has come to be known as the Holocaust.

Much has been written about the end of the Second World War and the legacy of unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies. It is interesting to note that even in the final days, the soon to be defeated Axis powers seemed to believe that there would be some way to avoid total defeat; in the East, Japan adopted a policy of inflicting maximum casualties at any cost in the mistaken belief that the Americans would grow tired of war, while in the West the Nazis attempted to reinvent themselves as a bulwark against Bolshevism in a vain attempt to gain favor with the non-communist Allies. Although both would fail during the war, each effort would become subject to considerable revisionist examination in the post-war years.

The Holocaust is obviously a difficult history. In terms of sheer scale and deliberate viciousness it was a war crime like no other; while various ethnicities had always been a target in war, the idea that a modern industrialized state could make targeting and killing of innocents policy was beyond comprehension. That Hitler was waging some kind of campaign against the Jews was well known even before the outbreak of war; the extent of this campaign only became apparent in the later days with evidence smuggled piecemeal out of Europe, finally confirmed with the liberation of the first concentration camps. At the conclusion of the war the Holocaust seemed to be just another confirmation of the evil nature of the Axis powers, now reduced to ashes by the victorious Allies. But in later years, the Holocaust has gained new focus. The term itself, referring now to the systematic genocide against the Jews, only came into being in the 1960s.This (and a new era of scholarship) was driven by the trial of Eichmann, the most senior Nazi tried after the Nuremburg. While there is no doubt that the Holocaust occurred on an organized and massive scale, scholarship regarding the event had (perhaps understandably) been very limited. Even today, there are many uneasy questions that remain unanswered. Why did this occur? What was the role of Hitler? How did genocide become the POLICY of the Reich, despite its clear diversion away from the war effort of men and material? Was it a war aim, as Weinberg claims? How much did the Allies know and what efforts did they make to stop it? These strategic questions often lead to ones that are far more problematic, specifically when dealing with people and personalities. The accepted view that "it was just a few Nazis" is unrealistic; as scholarship by Goldhagen (Hitler's Willing Executioners) and others demonstrated in the 1980s using archival evidence, there were far more "ordinary" Germans involved than had previously been admitted. There are other uncomfortable answers as well; why did so many Jews go willingly to their deaths, despite the rising evidence of what was going on? Why were the revolts at Sorebor and Warsaw the exceptions rather than the rule? And finally, what was the Allied strategy for dealing with the Holocaust once the extent of it became known?

Issues for consideration:

1.   Was the policy of unconditional surrender in both theaters of war a strength or weakness for the Allies? In what way?

2.   What rifts developed among the Allies in the final days of the war?

3. Consider the Holocaust as a Nazi war aim. How could it possibly be rationalized? Do you agree with Weinberg's assessment?

4. How did Nazi anti-Semitism evolve into mass murder?

5. Did the Allies respond correctly to the Holocaust? What were their strategic options?

Readings:

Doris Bergen, War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust, selected readings.

Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, Chap. 3.

Max Hastings, All Hell Let Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945, Chap. 20.

Gerhard Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II, selected readings (index triage).

Topic 12
Legacies

   The legacies of the Second World War are often difficult to categorize because of the changes the war made in virtually every element of global society in its aftermath. We live in a world created by the Second World War. The most obvious change in the immediate aftermath was the division of the world into bipolar spheres of influence controlled in various degrees by the new superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Both powers were fundamentally altered by the experience; it can be argued by many that the very nature of society changed, particularly in the United States which for the first time developed a large, standing conventional military force that maintained readiness for immediate war. America's follow on conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and various other "brushfire" wars were fought in this context. Sixty years of Cold War ended, ironically, where it began--in the streets of Berlin.

   But there were other legacies as well that are beyond this context. Nations rose from the ashes of the war. The reconstruction of both Germany and Japan initially created new allies in the growing coalition against Soviet Communism (to a lesser degree the Soviets redeveloped their occupation areas in a similar vein); ultimately these nations would emerge as economic powers in their own right following years of developmental assistance. And of course the state of Israel would emerge from the war as an established nation with a direct link to the Holocaust; Israeli policy of "never again" served to make them a force in the Middle East. Globally the end of the remains of formal "empires" led directly to the end of colonialism—and subsequently, the outbreak of hundreds of "brushfire" wars as new groups vied for power worldwide.

   Socially, the war radically changed human perspective. Ideological positivism, challenged in the aftermath of the First World War, was difficult to maintain after the global suffering of the Second. The Axis powers were completely shattered by the war; as Hastings notes, this led to a culture of victimhood where many Germans (and Japanese) believed themselves as much the victims of their respective wartime governments as those who met them on the battlefield. This has led not only to some interesting revisionism but also a more recent backlash against this reaction, especially in the revitalization of many of the more reactionary political parties. As noted, the events of the Holocaust set a new standard for human depravity, so much so that events of lesser scale in the modern world can be marginalized when compared to it. Life in the aftermath of the war was cheap; international outrages seemed more the rule than the exception. Only now, in the era of instantaneous global communication, is that potentially changing.

   Militarily the Second World War radically changed the character of war. Total destruction in conflict was no longer a theoretical possibility, but rather a practical ability and very real danger with the advent of nuclear weapons. In the era of superpower rivalry, large standing militaries became the norm rather than the exception; arms development for the purpose of combat in 1939 became the arms race of the Cold War as all powers sought new and highly technological means to gain advantage in war. Defense budgets, traditionally low in times of peace, rapidly became the largest allocation in economies that were in a permanent state of potential crisis. Whereas the First World War had been regarded during it's time as the "war to end all wars," the Second was only the beginning in a new age of conflict.

Issues for consideration:

1. What are the legacies of the Second World War?

Readings:

Norman Davies, <u>No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe 1939-1945</u>, Chap. 7.

Max Hastings, <u>All Hell Let Loose: The World at War, 1939-1945</u>, Chap. 26.

Gerhard Weinberg, <u>A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II</u>, Conclusions.