

At stake in War

America enters the fray: 1941-45

A second World War

- **Fascism** on the rise in Europe and beyond in the 1920s and 30s: Italy, Germany, Spain
- In Japan, imperialism and ethnocentrism drives the Empire of Japan to invade China and set its sights on much of Asia and the Pacific
- **Elements of fascism:** Nationalism/ethnocentrism, totalitarian rule of a single party under a strong dictator, militarism, anti-democratic, strict control of the economy via “corporatism”
- The WWII Axis Powers had a major interest in geographical expansion, e.g., Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931 & China in general in 1937, Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, & Germany’s invasions in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland et al.
- This is in some ways a continuation of the “sphere of influence” fights various European powers engaged in before and during WWI - the goal was control of resources & territory

A second World War

- Global economic depression and political fragility after the devastation of WWI contributed to the rise of Hitler and the National Socialist Party in Germany
- NAZI partisans take advantage of the fragility of the Weimar Republican government, using white supremacy and promises of German economic and military superiority as a way to take over German governmental institutions and destroy traditional liberalism/democracy and the left (Socialists and Communists)
- “Payback” for the terms of WWI’s Versailles Treaty - retaking territory lost in the treaty (plus more) and rearming against the terms of the treaty
- Starts with “ethnically German” areas like Austria and portions of Czechoslovakia...but doesn’t end there
- Alliances with Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain

A second World War

- Britain, France, the US, Russia, and others not excited about the prospect of more war, but invasions of China and European nations is not okay
- Appease, or fight?
 - Britain and France don't contest the German annexation of Czech-held, ethnically-German Sudetenland in 1938 in exchange for a promise by Hitler to stop there
 - Germany and USSR enter into secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in which they agree to split Poland and then cease aggressions against each other
- Hitler isn't trustworthy, though. Poland falls to Germans in fall of 1939, and they don't stop there.

Casablanca & the costs of Isolationism

- Germans attack France in 1940 and occupy the north, coordinating with a corrupt “puppet” government ruled out of Vichy in the south
- The film *Casablanca*, released in 1942, depicts the French-Moroccan city of Casablanca in North Africa during the early part of the war. It is administered by corrupt Vichy officials.
- “Rick’s Cafe Americain” is a club run by Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart). It’s a microcosm of Casablanca itself - a place where vulnerable refugees fleeing Europe go to wait in hopes of securing passage to safe places like the US, where Vichy and German officials mingle, and where spies, freedom-fighters, and underworld criminals coalesce

Casablanca & the costs of Isolationism

- Many actors in the film are actual war refugees from Axis-controlled Europe, including ant-Nazi Germans; with the war going on as the film was produced and released, this takes on extra emotional significance!
- The film illustrates the miscarriages of freedom and justice propagated not just by German fascists and corrupt Vichy puppets, but also the injustice that occurs when well-meaning “neutral” (LOOKING AT U, US pre-1941!) nations fail to act vigorously

The end of US Isolationism

- Britain fights off German air invasions in 1940 & 41 under PM Winston Churchill, after which Germany goes after Russia in earnest
- The US tries to maintain a distance from hostilities, wanting to avoid another “costly” war (in terms of both \$\$\$ and lives), but doesn’t maintain perfect neutrality



Fireside Chat

- FDR's **December 29, 1940 *Fireside Chat on the Great Arsenal of Democracy*** discusses the reality of American national security and how to deal with international aggression that affects American friends
- How did Roosevelt feel that Axis aggression was threatening American interests?
- What did he think was Britain's role in the international conflict?
- What action did he advocate in this address? Did he seem to "draw any lines" for action?

Fireside Chat

- Remember when I took office in 1933? We mobilized and met our immediate threats head-on. We need to do that now with national security!
- We should not be entering the fray as combatants right now, but we should be aware of the danger the Axis represents not just to our friends, but to us, too - we have tensions with Japan over China, and Japan and Italy and Germany are now in alliance as of 9/1940!
- Appeasement doesn't work - those creeps take indiscriminately and want to destroy liberal values. So long as Britain can hold off the Germans, there's no reason for us to jump in; but if Britain falls, the Americas could be next
- We must mobilize for war NOW, even though we do not plan to enter it in the immediate future
- The US has assisted and will continue to supply the British in their heroic efforts

The end of US Isolationism

- FDR wants to enter the war, but US opinion is decidedly antiwar until Pearl Harbor. Lend-Lease program of 3/1941 and the Atlantic Charter agreement of 8/1941 were attempts to help Britain while also pimping out the idea of intervention and the promotion of democratic values in occupied nations
- Eventually, the US has no choice but to retaliate when the Japanese bomb the Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor in December, 1941
- The US had already dissolved treaties with Japan over the invasion of China, also withholding key supplies from Japan via an embargo of fuel and other military goods
- Japan felt this meant US intervention on behalf of China was inevitable, thinking that a surprise attack would destroy the Pacific Fleet, buying them time to consolidate their power in China and elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific

The end of US Isolationism

- Turns out the Japanese jumped the gun, essentially drawing the US into war not just with Japan, but with the entire Axis
- As our textbook authors say, Pearl Harbor essentially melded two previously-separate conflicts into one, creating a multi-continental, truly “world” war
- It also creates a massive American “war machine” in which vast sectors of industry retool for the war effort on two fronts



Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941
U.S. Naval Historical Foundation
Chapter 24, *America's History*, Seventh Edition
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Rosie the Riveter
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Casablanca Discussion/VR5

- Is this film a “war movie”? In what ways does it comment on global politics during WWII?
- Are FDR’s warnings about national security and liberal/democratic values reflected in the film?
- Do you think this film could have been made before Pearl Harbor? If so, do you think it would have been as resonant? Why or why not?