

THE USA IN WWII



Following WWI, many Americans embraced isolationism, believing that involvement in European conflicts had been a mistake.

This sentiment was reflected in legislation and public opinion throughout the 1930s.

Key Legislation:

Neutrality Acts (1935-1939): Prohibited arms sales to warring nations, loans to belligerents, and travel on ships of warring countries

Cash and Carry Policy (1939): Allowed belligerents to purchase non-military goods if they paid cash and transported them in their own ships

However, events culminating in Pearl Harbor, led to a full involvement, to final victory

WHAT WAS US ACTION IN WWII?

I/ From Isolation to Involvement (1939-1941)

A/ Gradual shift toward support for allies

1-Lend-Lease Act (March 1941):

Allowed the US to “lend” or “lease” military equipment to Allied nations. It replaced the “cash and carry”

Roosevelt famously compared it to “lending a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire’

Marked a significant shift from strict neutrality

2-The Atlantic Charter (August 1941):

Joint statement by FDR and Churchill outlining common post-war goals

Signaled growing US-British cooperation despite official neutrality

This growing support is well illustrated by **Roosevelt’s « four freedoms »** speech

FDR's "Four freedoms", Roosevelt's address to Congress January 6th 1941

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression -- everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want -- which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear -- which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour-- anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception -- the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.(...)

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B/ Undeclared naval war

Some key Incidents:

USS Greer incident (September 1941): German U-boat attacked US destroyer

USS Kearny and USS Reuben James (October-November 1941):
Further attacks on US vessels

These incidents increased public support for more aggressive action against Germany

**EVEN IF THE USA GRADUALLY INCREASED ITS
SUPPORT TO ALLIED NATIONS, THE KEY EVENT WHICH
TOTALLY CHANGED US POSITION WAS PEARL HARBOR**

II/ Pearl Harbor: The Catalyst for War (December 7, 1941)

A. The Attack

US-Japan Relations had been deteriorating:

Japan's invasion of China (1937) and expansion in Southeast Asia led to US economic sanctions and oil embargo against Japan

Results of the attack: Dec 7th 1941

2,400+ Americans killed, 18 ships sunk or damaged, 300+ aircraft destroyed

B/ Roosevelt's Response

"Date Which Will Live in Infamy" Speech (December 8, 1941): FRD requested a declaration of war and total commitment to the war effort.

Congressional Response: House voted **388-1 for war** (only Jeannette Rankin dissented) Senate voted 82-0 for war

It is not every day that one receives a report in the mail from the supersecret National Security Agency. NSA is the U.S. intelligence agency responsible for the collection and analysis of foreign communications and foreign signals intelligence. And when the report investigates the history of one of the long-disputed contentions about the worst war of the twentieth century, it deserves special attention. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, continues to inspire suspicion in some quarters that the U.S. knew it was coming. Some revisionist and conspiracy writers, historians, and critics of the Roosevelt administration contend that the U.S. intercepted a Japanese message that was a clear warning of the impending attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor. Some further contend that this so-called “Winds Message” had been revealed to senior American military and civilian leaders. The implication is that the attack might therefore have been prevented. The story long ago acquired near-mythic status in some circles and has never quite gone away. This group of believers may even have grown in recent years due to the proliferation of Web sites on the Internet with entries about the Winds message.

Skeptical Inquirer Volume 33.2, March / April 2009

**FROM PEARL HARBOR, THE USA WAS FULLY
COMMITTED TO WAR. LET'S SEE US STRATEGY AND
MAJOR CAMPAIGNS**

III/ Military Strategy and Major Campaigns

A. Two-Front War Strategy

The US maintained its strategy of prioritizing the defeat of Germany while holding defensive positions in the Pacific.

B. Pacific theater major campaigns

1. Doolittle Raid (April 1942)

First US air raid on Japanese mainland with fire bombs
Boosted American moral after Pearl Harbor

2. Battle of the Coral Sea (May 1942)

First naval battle fought entirely by aircraft carriers
Prevented Japanese capture of Papua New Guinea and Australia

3. Battle of Midway (June 1942)

Decisive US naval victory

Marked the turning point in the Pacific War

4. Island-Hopping (sauter d'île en île) Campaign (1943-1945)

Strategy of bypassing heavily fortified Japanese positions

Key battles: Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima, Okinawa

Each battle demonstrated increasing Japanese desperation and American strength



C/ European and African Theater Major Campaigns

1. North African Campaign (1942-1943)

Operation Torch: First major US ground offensive

Defeated German Afrika Korps (Rommel)

2. Italian Campaign (1943-1945)

Sicily invasion (July 1943) led to Italian surrender Sept 8th 1943

3. D-Day: Operation Overlord (June 6, 1944)

150,000 Allied troops landed in Normandy under Eisenhower's command

4. Liberation of Western Europe (1944-1945)

Liberation of Paris (August 1944)

Crossing of the Rhine and drive into Germany (Spring 1945)

D/ 1945: Final Victory

European Theater:

Hitler's suicide (April 30, 1945)

Germany's unconditional CAPITULATION (May 8, 1945)

Pacific Theater and the Atomic Decision:

Battle of Okinawa showed the cost of invading Japan as it was the longest and deadliest battle of the Pacific

It led to Truman's decision to use atomic weapons

Enola Gay a B29 bomber dropped the A bomb on Hiroshima August 6th (little bomb) 1945 and BobScar (fat man) August 9th.

Final capitulation Sept 2nd 1945

AFTERMATH OF HIROSHIMA: SOME QUESTIONS

it was presented as the only means to avoid a costly invasion of Japan

But after the war, critical memories of the bombing and the suffering it caused, broke in the open

Were Hiroshima and Nagasaki necessary to end WWII?

Moreover: extreme casualties and shock of consciences

EX: 1955: NORMAN COUSINS anti nuclear and peace activist arranged for a group of 25 young radiated Japanese women to come in the USA for medical treatment:

HIROSHIMA MAIDENS



HIROSHIMA'S SHIGEKO NIIMOTO, 1954 & 1956
From horror to triumph.



Still many Americans and until recently war veterans didn't even want to remember this and commemorate.

For the first time in 2010 (65 years after) , US ambassador in Japan John Roos was present in Hiroshima's commemoration in Japan.

However, no American president has ever been back in Hiroshima and Nagasaki since 1945.

HIROSHIMA, Japan –

A crowd of 55,000 on Friday solemnly marked the moment 65 years ago when the world's first atomic attack incinerated this city under a towering mushroom cloud. For the first time, a **representative of the United States, Ambassador John V. Roos, participated in the annual ceremony**, raising hopes here of a visit soon by a more prominent guest, President Obama, who is scheduled to be in Japan in November. Until Friday, American officials had always skipped the annual ceremony, fearing their presence would **renew the debate over whether the United States should apologize for the World War II bombings, which together killed more than 200,000 people** in explosions so intense that many victims were vaporized, leaving only ghostly shadows on walls, while others died in agony from burns and radiation sickness. **Such a debate would probably be politically divisive in the United States and could even drive** a wedge between America and Japan, one of Washington's closest allies. American officials have long defended the bombings as having shortened the war **and avoided an invasion**, which they say would have cost untold thousands of American and Japanese lives. But many Japanese see the attacks as the epitome of the indiscriminate slaughter of modern warfare, and a principal reason for Japan's postwar pacifism. "Japan and the United States are not so far apart," said Kazumi Mizumoto, a professor at Hiroshima City University. "Maybe they should offer a joint apology of all the terrible things that happened in that war."

By Martin Fackler, published: August 6, 2010 in The New York Times

"The director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum resigned today, citing the "continuing controversy and divisiveness" over the 5 exhibit of the Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima 50 years ago.(...) The Enola Gay exhibit, which involved the largest restoration project in the museum's history, was drastically scaled back by the Smithsonian in January after repeated efforts to revise it had failed to quell a furor pitting veterans groups and members of Congress against some historians. As originally designed more than a year ago, the exhibit was to encourage visitors to re-examine their thinking about the use of atomic weapons to end World War II, in the context of the bombings' horror and of the arms race that followed. But veterans groups, which had long pushed the Smithsonian to exhibit the bomber's fuselage, and later some members of Congress, criticized the exhibit's scripts, saying they were too sympathetic to the Japanese and ultimately an insult to the American troops who had fought and died in the Pacific. Curators' repeated efforts to rewrite the scripts failed to satisfy the veterans groups or the lawmakers and provoked criticism from historians who said the exhibit was becoming inaccurate and politicized."

From : New York Times, May 3, 1995

IV. The homefront

A/ Immediate aftermath

Human Cost:

Over 400,000 American military deaths

600,000+ wounded

Economic Impact:

US emerged as the world's dominant economic power

Economic Mobilization

US industrial production doubled during the war

Full employment ended the Great Depression

Unemployment dropped from 14% to under 2%

Government spending increased from \$9 billion to \$98 billion annually

Japanese American Internment:

Executive Order 9066 (February 1942) authorized removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast

120,000 people, mostly US citizens, were relocated to internment camps

Rationing and Conservation

Rationing of gasoline, rubber, metal, sugar, and meat

Victory gardens provided 40% of vegetables consumed

**WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION**

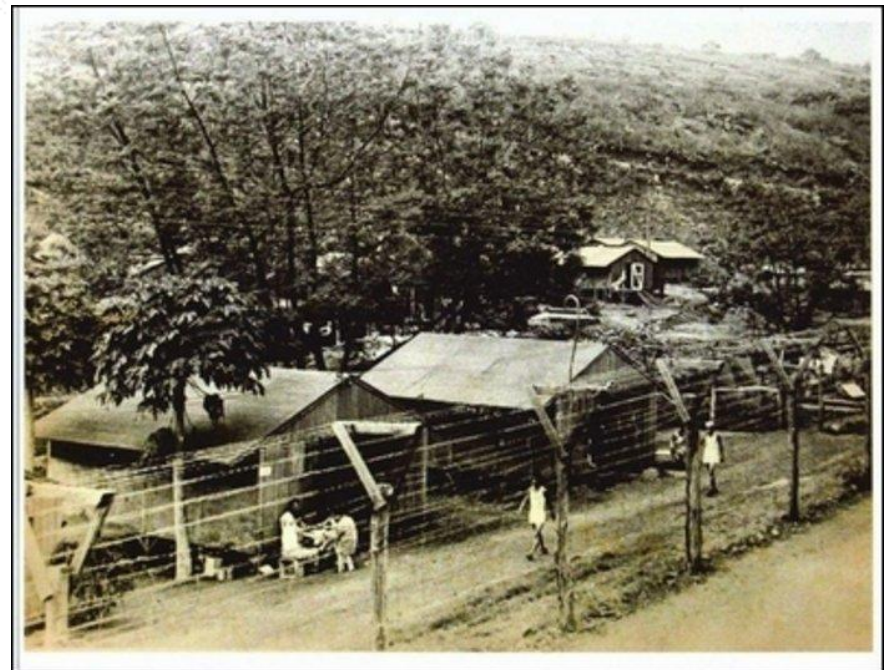
Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 3, 1942

**INSTRUCTIONS
TO ALL PERSONS OF
JAPANESE
ANCESTRY**

Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the County of Alameda, State of California, within the boundary beginning at the point where the southerly limits of the City of Oakland meet San Francisco Bay; thence easterly and following the southerly limits of said city to U. S. Highway No. 58; thence southerly and easterly on said Highway No. 58 to its intersection with California State Highway No. 21; thence southerly on said Highway No. 21 to its intersection, at or near Warm Springs, with California State Highway No. 17; thence southerly on said Highway No. 17 to the Alameda-Santa Clara County line; thence westerly and following said county line to San Francisco Bay; thence northerly, and following the shoreline of San Francisco Bay to the point of beginning.

In February 1942, president Franklin Roosevelt signed [executive order 9066](#) that required all people of Japanese descent—US citizen or not—to be relocated from their homes and moved into concentration camps.



B/ Long-term Consequences

Geopolitical Changes:

US end of isolationism

Creation of the United Nations under US proposition

Beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union

US commitment to collective security and international involvement

Social Changes and Challenges

Women in the Workforce:

“Rosie the Riveter” by Howard Miller became the symbol of women’s war work

Women’s workforce participation increased by 50%

African American Experience (but some were denied the medal of honor until the 1990’s) segregation remained in the military forces

Naomi Parker Frailey in 1942



Norman Rockwell made it the cover of The Saturday Evening Post in 1943



Technological and Scientific Advances:

Nuclear technology- Monopoly until 1949

Aerospace technology

Medical advances (antibiotics, surgical techniques)

Computer technology development

Social and Cultural Impact:

Advancement of civil rights movement (but gradual)

Changed role of women in society

“Greatest Generation” identity and national confidence

The Greatest Generation: what made it so great?

“Scholars define the members of the greatest generation as Americans born between 1900 and 1924. They experienced the highs of the “roaring 20s,” the lows of the Great Depression that began in 1929, and the ravages of World War II. They also experienced the economic prosperity of the 1950s. (...)

Japan’s vicious attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, signaled our entry into World War II. (...) Members of the Greatest Generation responded. Of those who served in the military, approximately 419,000 did not return.

This generation had a strong sense of purpose — the war effort at every level. There was no alternative but total and complete victory. (...) The country as a whole banded together as never before to defeat those who would alter the American way of life. This generation made sacrifices of the highest order. (...)

After 50 years or so of reflection, history has recognized the enormous contributions and sacrifices of the Greatest Generation. Tom Hanks’ and Steven Spielberg’s 1998 movie, “Saving Private Ryan,” attempts to recreate the enormous struggles and sacrifices of this generation in war. Another such movie is Pearl Harbor, produced in 2001.”

Robert Holt (professor of business management and real estate in the USA), 2011.

From tidewaternews.com.