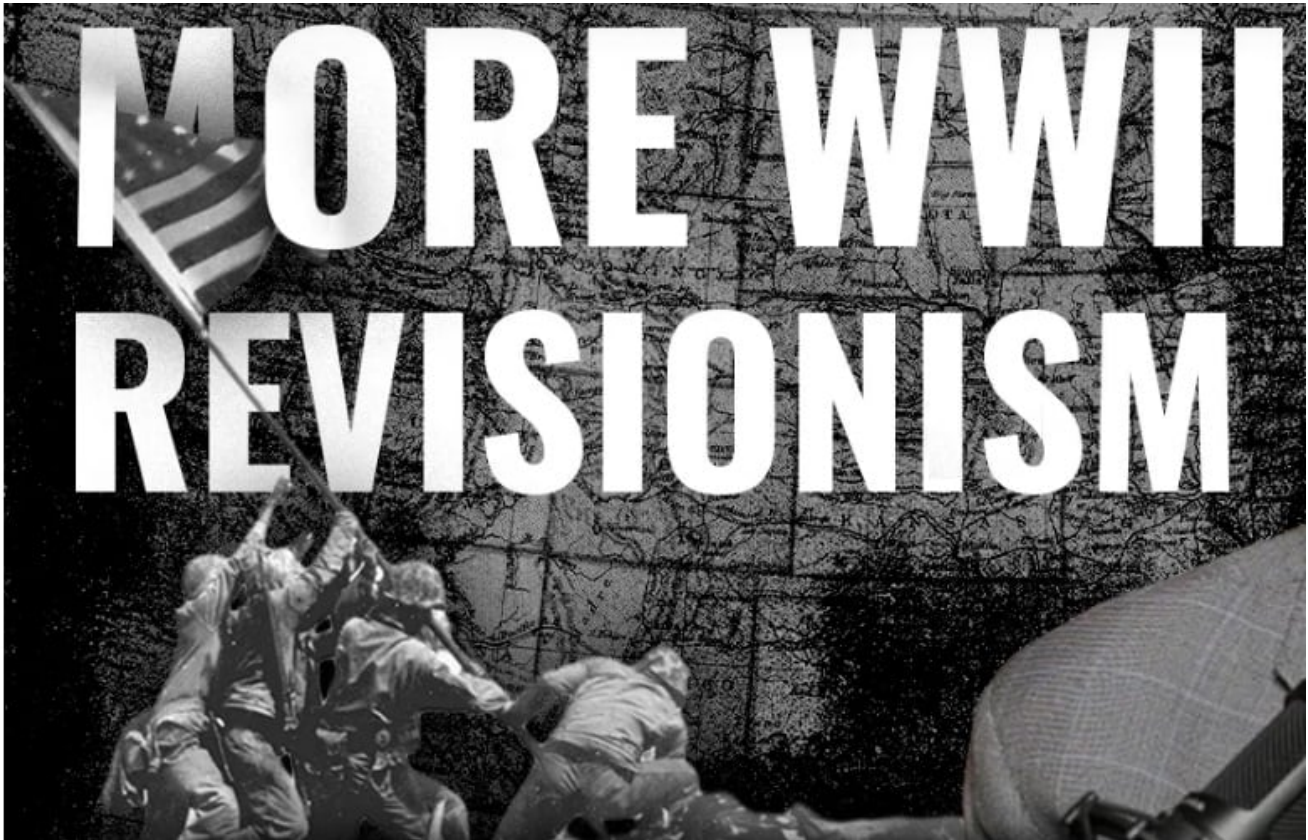


World War II Was a Noble Cause—Anything Else Is Ahistorical

By Victor Davis Hanson

I know I've talked to you before about the decision to drop the atomic bomb in August of 1945 to end World War II in the Pacific. And we've talked about the revisionists that have appeared, such as Darryl Cooper and David Collum on [Tucker Carlson's](#) show. We've talked about, I think, a misreading of what I said in a text and she heard, Diana West, who wanted an apology—which I can't give because she was mistaken.

But I want to revisit something that I think is happening. And it's on our side of the conservative—this conservative sphere and atmosphere. And that is, people are starting, at this critical time, to look back at [World War II](#) and to reinterpret it.



And usually, we saw that on the left, that said, you know, we were racist, we were colonialists, we were furthering our selfish ends, we didn't have to do this, we didn't have to do that. For the Left, World War II is, essentially, the Japanese internment and the dropping of atomic bombs.

So, I want to look at just three or four key elements of World War II that have come up in the news and people have questioned, I think, quite ahistorically, without sufficient background.

The first is we kind of forced Japan to attack us at Pearl Harbor because we imposed a boycott in 1940 of oil. And they would only have two years of oil. And they pleaded with us and we said no.

It was sort of like the Roosevelt administration was sort of doing what [President Donald Trump](#) is doing by putting boycotts—although it wasn't a secondary boycott—on Russian oil, in reverse, that people would not buy Russian oil. Because that was a desperate move to stop an aggression on the

part of Russia.

China had been invaded by [Japan](#) in 1931—the first sign of war—and 1937. And the United States did not get active. And finally, when it went into Vietnam, Southeast Asia in 1940, it said: Enough is enough, we're going to not sell Japan oil.

And Japan, remember, had started that because they went in, not only to get the rice belt of the Mekong Delta, but also to stop all importation of goods from the West into China. So, they started the blockade.

More importantly, you gotta remember that the war in Europe had already begun on Sept. 1, 1939. And by the time we imposed this 1940 boycott, there was no free Europe. And all of their colonies in the Pacific—and I'm talking about the rich areas of Southeast Asia that had been under the control of France. I'm talking about the oil, the Shell oil company's holdings in the Dutch East Indies. And I'm talking about, soon, the Malaysian rubber in Singapore.

They felt that they could absorb these orphan colonies from a nonexistent country that was now controlled by Hitler. And therefore, they wanted to press the attack because they thought the only way that they could be stopped was the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor.

They thought they could take Singapore. They did. They wanted the rubber in Malaysia. They got the oil in the Dutch East Indies. They went into the Mekong Delta. They had been fighting in China. So, it was kind of a last pathetic effort on our part to stop them and try to avoid war in the process.

Very quickly. Another thing about the Pacific War. Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto was not a peacenik. Everybody said, he said: I can raise hell for six months. And then I can't guarantee anything. We're up against the American colossus.

He had been to the United States and studied at Harvard in a

military context. But more importantly, Yamamoto threatened to resign, to the Japanese military government, unless he got his way. He wanted to attack Pearl Harbor. He thought he could get away with it. And he practiced for months and simulated the attack. And he said: If I don't get my way, I will resign. He was a bellicose militarist, as was the emperor, Hirohito, and as was the entire Japanese government.

Finally: Another issue that's come up among conservatives is that in July of 1940, after all of [Europe](#) was under the control of Hitler, Hitler said: I am the victor. I don't need to have this war anymore. Great Britain, do you want a peace? You can have your British Empire.

First of all, nobody could trust him because why would you after the Anschluss, after the destruction of the Sudetenland, and the annexation of, basically, the destruction of all of Czechoslovakia, the invasion of Poland? He had never told the truth about his territorial ambitions. But more importantly, I think this is really important, he had all of Europe under his control.

Britain would not have been able to survive a mere 30 miles away from a German empire extending from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Russian border. And he had no intention of giving that up. And there already had been disturbing reports coming out that he was killing the disabled, rounding up Jews in Poland, mass murdering.

There was no way in the world Britain could make a deal with Hitler and expect him to keep it or survive, in the next few years, with the entire European continent under the control of National Socialism.

I could go on. But these are very important points because in this fractious times, when we have the internet and we have all of this fake news and all of these conspiracy theories, it doesn't behoove us to go back and say that this noble cause to

win World War II was somehow flawed, or that we were too harsh on the Japanese, or we started the war, or we didn't give Hitler a chance. These were fascists, Nazis. They wanted a war. They thought they could win the war.

If the United States was culpable for anything, it was in the Great Depression, in 1939 and '40, we were not sufficiently rearmed. Hitler looked at us, the Japanese looked at us, and they said: Their army is the size of Portugal. They don't really have an Air Force that we have to worry about. They're weak. We can get away with it.

That was our only mistake, not arming earlier.

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