





*A Companion to World War II*

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# A COMPANION TO WORLD WAR II

Volume I

*Edited by*

Thomas W. Zeiler, with Daniel M. DuBois

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# Introduction

The most transformative event in world history since the Industrial Revolution, World War II, continues to be a benchmark to this day for national development, security and economic policies, and issues of morality. It might seem like hyperbole, but more than any event since the Industrial Revolution, this war was the most pivotal event of the past two or three centuries in terms of the carnage it caused, the developments in every aspect of human life, and the consequences it wrought. World War II represented the culmination of decades of diplomacy, modernization, and societal shifts across the world, between and among regions, and within nations. It also initiated whole new systems of government and international organization, sparked revolutions and counterrevolutions, and served as a warning to the world to avoid a repeat of the horror of atomic warfare or suffer the ultimate consequence: the destruction of the planet. Alterations, even revolutions, for that matter, in the international system (disintegration of empires, the rise of the United States, the end of fascism, the emergence of communism, and the creation of a global network of institutions that addressed topics from security to finance to health) and the very memories of the evils it eradicated remain with us. Generations born after the war have felt its effects.

Because of its timeliness, its influence on a host of areas affecting humanity, and its continual, and continued, contestation and benefits through relations among nations and peoples, World War II remains a significant topic for students. Also, the fact that the history of World War II reveals the contours of the human experience at the midpoint of the twentieth century means that we all have a stake in understanding the world it created. The two volumes that comprise this *Companion to World War II* explore the conflict's contexts around the world, within nations, and across transnational groupings of people. We did not attempt to be exhaustive; readers will find topics, theaters, areas of the world, campaigns, and people excluded or addressed in

glancing fashion. The goal is to shape research on World War II; that is, the volumes are suggestive in indicating areas for current and future study.

This work is also more than a military history, although one of its intentions is to cover the many sides of battle, operations, and strategy that engaged the belligerents. The *Companion* does so, however, largely without fixating in detail on individual battles and campaigns. Thus, the volumes include examinations of the “old” and “new” military histories. The 58 chapters in this *Companion* provide insights into how the war linked nations, systems, and cultures, and they also lay out agendas for future researchers to further that effort, as well as cover the import behind the military engagements.

The war, which some believe stretched from the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937 to Japan’s surrender in September 1945, encompassed six continents on which nations, governments, militaries, and civilians developed responses to deal with the conflict. The actual beginning of the war is in dispute: did it start in China, or later with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939? The European phase ended in May 1945, but did the onset of decolonization and wars of liberation actually push World War II to 1975, with the end of the Vietnam War and the signing of the Helsinki Accords that settled the postwar boundaries of Europe? Regardless, the impact and consequences of the war are clear. Nobody was spared its effects; it was truly history’s most comprehensive global *event* as well as war. Because of its worldwide scope, the vast mobilization of people and resources, and the use of cutting-edge technology, World War II was also the most destructive conflict in recorded human history in terms of lives and property lost. For this result alone, the war deserves further intensive study.

*A Companion to World War II* probes this most significant and traumatic of wars in its many global dimensions: military and technological, diplomatic and political, economic, gender and racial, and social and cultural between and within the major participants. In short, the volume addresses the historiography of the war, offering readers and scholars a survey of various subjects in a way that provides them with a state-of-the-art assessment of trends, issues, and topics.

Reflecting research in several subfields over the past seven decades, the writing of the history of World War II has undergone major change, most notably (but not exclusively) by the turn toward “bottom-up” social and cultural studies that explore the experiences of a variety of people (soldier, citizen, generals, strategists, policymakers, manufacturers, etc.) and their bearing on societies. *A Companion to World War II* embraces this new scholarship from an international as well as a transnational perspective. To be sure, the volume does not shun the classic tradition of strategic, operational, and even tactical narratives; the older-style “blood and guts” history is present on both a national and global scale. But the so-called “New Military History” is very much in evidence in terms of analyses of the way of war and the influence of war on society, and vice versa. Ideology, economics, culture, social change, interdisciplinary crossings, and transnational connections and movements figure prominently into the writing – indeed, into the very selection – of these chapters. No other historiographical collection strives for comparable extensive global coverage combined with thematic depth and breadth.

Of course, the effort to bring a greater understanding of the global nature of the war has been underway for some time, as has the push to expand the topics and

methodologies of studying the conflict. The sheer volume of publications is daunting; shelves groan under the weight of this output (both scholarly and amateur) of every sort – biographies, memoirs, battle accounts, operational surveys, and analyses of the causes, nature, and consequences. The avalanche of books and articles make World War II one of the most researched topics in scholarship of any kind. A quick survey of finding aids on Internet sources such as Amazon, Google, and the Library of Congress, for instance, indicates a yield of anywhere from 60,000 to 300,000 books (and those numbers do not even reflect the enormous number of articles) that in some way touch on the war. The volume of scholarship is so considerable, and there is so much produced every month, that even a survey such as this one risks being outdated very quickly. Even this *Companion* has surely overlooked key sources, themes, and actors that will likely become critical to the study of the war in coming years.

Nevertheless, what is already in press is stunning in its breadth, depth, and numbers. The vast production of World War II literature of every kind staggers the mind, and surely does the same to students who seek to get a handle on the historiography. There is, of course, the cottage industry of deserved (though often weakly historicized) recognition of generations, nations, units, people, and the like that has a tendency to border on hagiography and hero worship. The now classic of this genre of hagiography is Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (1998), but Stephen Ambrose both preceded and followed that laudatory study with many other popular works, such as *Citizen Soldiers* (1997), *Band of Brothers* (2001a), and *The Good Fight* (2001b). The classic war memoir of the realist model is still E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (1981).

And, there is the flipside: literature that tells of the horrifying, brutal side of men under duress or making decisions that led to mistakes, injury, and death, and attests to the bottomless level of degradation (as well as the heights) that humans can reach. See, for instance, Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization* (2008), as well as classic recollections of participants, such as Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five, or the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969), regarding the bombing campaign in Europe, and John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946). These works are not included in the *Companion* but need mention because they are such a stock in trade that has made, and makes, the war a popular topic. Much of this outpouring is American-centered, and some of it very good for the illumination of experiences and attitudes, although other nations certainly have their triumphal “good war” motifs.

In a more scholarly sense, students can learn about the war in film and radio, cartoons and newspapers, art forms from music to painting, literature, advertising and propaganda, and through personal accounts. For still the best bilateral examination of the cultural aspects of the war, see Dower (1987); for a sampling from the American side, see Chambers and Culbert (1996), Doherty (1993), Fox (1975), Horten (2002), Roeder (1993), Bird and Rubenstein (1998), Minear (1999), and National Archives (n.d.); and for personal accounts, see Linderman (1997). Archives, maps, exhibits, and discussions are readily available (see, for example, the US Military Academy website, West Point Maps of the Asian Pacific War, available online at <http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SitePages/WWII%20Asian%20Pacific%20Theater.aspx> (one also exists of the European theater); useful is the “World War II

Links on the Internet” website, available at [http://homepage.mac.com/oldtownman/ww2\\_links.html](http://homepage.mac.com/oldtownman/ww2_links.html)). Home fronts have been studied in detail, and have become a significant focal point for investigators of race, gender, immigration, law, and other fields that deal with social change. For instance, on the US side, John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (1976), though dated, still stands up to scrutiny. Other sources for other nations’ domestic lives can be found in the “Homelands” section of this *Companion*. Historians (military, diplomatic, economic, social, cultural), philosophers, theologians, social scientists, journalists, and other researchers have joined participants and military buffs to produce a myriad of reference books that consider seemingly every step and aspect of the war. More recently, work has blossomed on resistance movements, intelligence, and Nazi oppression, topics addressed in this *Companion*. One of the most keenly examined subjects has been the morality of the combatants at the national, group, and individual level (Fussell 1989; Burke 2001; Dear 2005; Bess 2006). Yet, even with such an outpouring, authors are careful to note that these works are not definitive; World War II still holds treasures beyond what scholars have already dug up.

By the 1970s and 1980s, as archives opened, secondary sources on campaigns and battles proliferated. At the same time, the war itself lost its immediacy and began to dim for younger generations. As a result, historians launched trends that lifted World War II from the domain of war buffs interested in generals, armies, tactics, and operations – in war as a game, or in a family member’s role in battle, or in militaries driven by great personalities. That stated, some of the best work on operational history continued to grace the shelves of military history libraries, including the masterpiece *A War To Be Won* by Murray and Millett (2000). Following in this tradition are several texts by major publishers that draw on updated research and approach the war through an organizational structure different from the standard Europe-first model. See, for instance, Zeiler, *Annihilation: A Global Military History of World War II* (2011). A combined military and strategic lens is found in Evan Mawdsley, *World War II: A New History* (2009). Grand strategy and individual experiences comprise the readable Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (2011). With a more focused theme but equally encompassing is Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (1995) and, in a specific theater, the superb H. P. Willmott, *The Second World War in the East* (1999). Before and after Williamson and Murray produced their study, however, others had also undertaken broad looks at military engagements, with an eye on the uses of technology, the political causes and consequences of the war, and a nod to the human context (Keegan 1989; Black 2003). The resulting body of work has provided a military history of the war noted for its thoroughness and attention to minute details of men and materiel, and battles and backdrops to conflict. The *Companion* touches on much of this methodology.

*The Companion to World War II* is designed for the researcher but it is also a useful pedagogical tool, and therefore reflects the teaching of the conflict at the advanced high school, but primarily the college and postgraduate levels. World War II and military history in general, for that matter, share an accessibility for the layperson, including students. In reality, war is understandable as well as exciting, dramatic, and tragic, and this conflict being the biggest of them all reaches into nearly everyone’s sensibilities. Teaching about World War II is an effective way to transmit complex ideas about ideology, ethics, nationalism, and the nature of war itself, to name but a

handful of concepts. For a good overview of the pedagogy regarding the war and ideas for teaching it, see Murray (2011). Many of the publications on the war were designed with teaching in mind. Furthermore, because of the need to assign readable texts in classes that are of limited duration, it is also important to point out that the war has attracted a host of short overviews that survey the military and, on occasion, the social landscapes in each country or theater. The classic in this regard is James Stokesbury's *A Short History of World War II* (1980), a text that still endures after more than thirty years in print. Other abbreviated explorations of the war followed Stokesbury – and, indeed, he subsequently published a short history of World War I, and then of other American wars as well (e.g. Kitchen 1990; Lyons 2010; see also Zeiler 2011). Although they do not offer the breadth of the thousand-page volumes, or the depth of the monograph, they are surprisingly complete in their coverage of topics. Thus, while the focus is on the military campaigns, they capitalize – in brief – on many of the themes found in this *Companion*. Presumably, future short histories of World War II will steer readers to some of the newer subjects that range beyond battles, strategies, and personalities.

Setting aside the brief treatments and the pedagogical aspects of the war, scholarship has reached into explorations of the very meaning of “total war” in terms of combat, the role and plight of civilian noncombatants, mobilization of home fronts (and the power that civilians, governments, and modes of production rendered to the belligerents) as well as the conduct of the war and the change World War II made on societies and in the international structure of power. The United States has been a major beneficiary of these studies, but Europe and Asia – and most recently, the China-Burma-India theater and the Soviet-German Eastern Front – have garnered increasing attention as scholars move into more subaltern looks at the war, refocus on less traditional topics like genocide, and discover new memoirs and correspondence of participants (Stoler and Gustafson 2003; Martel 2004; Chickering, Forster, and Greiner 2005). For an example of the (media-driven) American dominance on the war that taps into recent interests in societal aspects, see Ward and Burns (2007); for the Eastern Front, see Snyder (2010); and an example of correspondence is Masuda (2008). We now have a burgeoning body of literature on every nation involved in the conflict (Peszke 2006; Kimble 2006; Anonymous 2006; Merridale 2007), and subgroups within those nations (for subgroups, on the American side, for example, see Honey 1984, 1999; Daniels 1993; O’Sullivan 1996; Terkel 1997; Bentley 1998; Townsend 2000; Sklaroff 2002; Moore 2004; Alvarez 2008). This old and new military history covers so much ground that it is beyond a single author to present it; edited collections or coauthored works are the norm. Likewise, this *Companion* also draws on the efforts of dozens of scholars. But just as important as the number of scholars working in the field is the multinationality of their backgrounds. The *Companion* has sought out experts from a variety of nations, many of whom do not speak English as their primary language. They were able to bring a unique perspective, and include non-English sources, in their chapters in a way that proves invaluable to expanding our knowledge of the war.

We should not confuse the inclusion of all theaters – ranging from Europe and Asia to Africa and the Atlantic – with a truly global historical analysis. The *Companion* represents an initial attempt at mounting a comparative global historiography of World War II, but it admittedly relies on the reader to make those ties across borders.

Earlier and current work take a global approach in terms of delving into common themes in the history on each continent, which is an accomplishment in itself, but the effort does not necessarily result in a truly comparative world history. Over four decades have passed since Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint divided their monumental work (it was one of the first of the studies in the thousand-page range), *Total War*, into two geographic sections: the western hemisphere and Asia. This was an attempt to write a history comprehensive in scope. They abandoned a chronological approach that lumped the theaters together, and took a sequential look (at Europe first, then Asia) because they found that “the two hemispheres were much less closely interdependent than we had at first supposed.” Their rationale rested on the premise that the stories behind the war begun by Hitler were “distinctly intelligible” from the Sino-American-Japanese conflict (Calvocoressi and Wint 1972, p. xii).

That argument can be debated because many of the chapters in this *Companion* indicate that there were certainly shared experiences, outlooks, and consequences around the world that render a globalized version of the war more possible than before. The bombing campaigns, for one, prove this point, as do issues of civilian involvement (both in mobilization and casualties), technology, strategy and coalition-building, imperialism, and expansionist ideological, national, and cultural visions. Again, the *Companion* makes a stab at globalizing the history of World War II by the very nature of the topics and authors chosen to write the chapters. But, it is suggestive of ways readers can draw parallels, contrasts to various aspects of the conflict, and narratives and analyses of the experiences of nations, groups, and people.

Nearly two decades ago, the now classic account of the war, Gerhard Weinberg’s *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, aimed to link the various theaters together without bogging down in excessive detail on the actual fighting. As Weinberg noted, he sought to overcome the parochialism of treatments that tended to focus on one nation or area at a time by showing the simultaneity of events, decisions, and movements. Thus, revealing the “inter-relationships between the various theaters and the choices faced by those in positions of leadership” were the objectives of his magnificent, masterly work. This *Companion* is fortunate to benefit from his insights in chapters that explore both the run-up to and conclusion of the war (Weinberg 1995, p. xiv). Yet while the coverage is comprehensive, *A World at Arms* is largely a political book and does not drill down into the various transnational themes of society, culture, economics, and even ideology to compare them across time and place.

The objective of the *Companion* is not to correct *A World at Arms* (or, for that matter, any other account of the conflict); rather, its goal is to complement and supplement Weinberg’s and others’ histories by situating them in the historiography. These volumes, therefore, introduce the reader to the myriad elements of the war’s developments, experiences, and influences, home fronts, battles and theaters, diplomacy, economics, intelligence, and roles of a host of nations, including major neutrals.

Our hope is that a subject addressed in a chapter might be suggestive of work to be done in another. For instance, chapters cover mobilization in Europe, and also collaboration and resistance in the region, but neither are treated in Asia or the United States; that might disappoint readers but they should be able to look elsewhere for that topic. Some obvious military history – such as battles on the Western Front before 1944 or the North African campaign – lack attention, though other theaters and campaigns are included. Australia, Canada, and Latin America do not come in for

specific notice, nor does Hirohito or even Hitler and his rise to power in a sustained way. Some US topics that are commonly addressed, such as Japanese American internment or mobilization of the military, remain in the background, though all of these topics are significant and beg for attention. The collection tries to deal with issues from a variety of perspectives, so that as many themes as possible could be included. Still, readers will find many other subjects that are either novel (such as comparisons across nations) or commonplace (but approached in greater depth than seen before). We hope to acquaint students of World War II with ways of approaching the war, as well as with the potential for digging deeper.

To that end, the *Companion* is organized into broad sections under which various themes, methods, and topics fall. This categorization is evident in the Contents list but merits a word here in order to show the breadth and depth of the volume and also to explain why certain issues appear where they do. Six basic sections delineate the volume. First, the “Roots of War,” which addresses the buildup to the war and provides explanations of the factors of why war occurred, offers fairly traditional, political and economic approaches but includes the most recent research. A second section, “Fighting the War,” of mostly military history is broken down by theaters. Note should be made that not every battle, campaign, nor even area of combat is considered in this part; for example, Latin America and North Africa do not receive much mention. Section three and four are called “Multinational and Transnational Zones of Combat: Strategy” and “Multinational and Transnational Zones of Combat: Society” respectively, and the intention here is to analyze shared experiences, movements, and histories across borders in both a multinational (contacts across borders by official governments) and transnational (unofficial contacts by people, movements, experiences, and organizations beyond national boundaries) context. The fifth section deals with “Homelands,” and addresses the historical issues, and historiography, from the point of view of individual nations. Finally, the concluding sixth section provides insights into the “Aftermath and Consequences” of the war. The last chapter in this section, and in the volume as a whole, is fittingly written by Gerhard Weinberg, who also opens the *Companion* with the first entry in the first section.

When reflecting on the Contents listings, and then reading the chapters, one is struck by the broad scope of the topics. If the chapters are lumped into broad, methodological fields of inquiry – strategic, political, military, or social as well as cultural, economic, science, and the like – the coverage is both wide and deep. A rough count, for example, reveals that well over three quarters of the chapters embrace a strategic, political, or military approach. In addition, about half of all the chapters are social in content, and a quarter follow the cultural turn. Slightly less than a quarter have economic substance, and a handful deal with the themes of science, technology, or environment as well as intellectual history, and gender. A step back from these fields shows that well over half of the chapters are transnational or multinational in methodology. Actually, this estimate is rather conservative because many more touch, in some way, on the international and global connections and perspectives related to World War II. About ten of the contributions examine solely or primarily the national. So, the *Companion* looks at many topics, and views them from several angles, that signify some of the leading trends in the historiography of World War II.

The *Companion to World War II* engages the scholarly and official debates, in the English-speaking community as well as other languages, and addresses the course of

the war through historiographical state-of-the field analysis, rather than narrative description, although chapters provide some historical background as a basis for understanding the reviews of the literature. Established and emerging experts in their fields have participated in this grand project, and we thank them profusely for the time and care taken to produce cutting-edge historiography. We hope that the volumes raise as many questions as they answer, or provoke researchers to read on as they investigate new topics or simply stretch the boundaries of old ones. All readers, moreover, should come away from the *Companion* with an awareness that the transformative World War II will continue to be a factor for years to come in the lives of every person, whether they realize it or not. It is the cardinal objective of these volumes to stimulate, support, and expand that realization.

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PART I

**Roots of War**

