

World war ii essay example

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, Zinn discusses World War II, broadly considered the most popular war the United States has ever been involved in, when “ 18 million served in the armed forces 25 million workers gave of their pay envelope regularly for war bonds.” However, as with other aspects of the popular retelling of United States history, Zinn points out several flaws with the telling of U. S. involvement in the war. Leading up to the war, the United States was not clearly aligned with the principles of nonintervention by superpowers and the importance of human rights that are popularly recalled. While a munitions embargo was placed on Mussolini’s Italy after Italy invaded Ethiopia, American businesses still sold huge amounts of oil to Italy. Even a 1934 resolution that simply expressed the United States’ unhappiness with Hitler’s treatment of the Jews failed to pass the Senate. Zinn posits that the United States’ entrance into the war was not to stop Fascism but instead to advance America’s own imperial interests, exemplified by the country’s flip-flopping from anti-to pro-Soviet in the years between the World Wars. According to this perspective, the U. S. only declared war following the attack on Pearl Harbor not out of concern for civilians but because Japan attacked a key link to America’s Pacific empire. Zinn also points out that Roosevelt likely knew of the threat the Japanese posed and use the attack and its shock to the public to galvanize the support of the citizenry. Zinn also discusses how objectors to the war made up a significant portion of the prison population at the time, there was broad African American opposition to the war, that the war finally pulled the country out of the economic slump that was the Great Depression and then launches into discussion of the Cold

War.

History has proven that wars are rarely, if ever, fought solely for the principles or ideals that the majority of a country's citizens believe in but instead when the government and other powerful interests determine that war, ideally with public support, would further their own agendas. In hindsight, knowing the full extent of the atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazis, it is possible to see that U. S. involvement in the war was necessary to stop Hitler. One aspect of Zinn's revisiting of the role the United States played in World War II that I absolutely agree with is the extremely morally problematic and most likely unnecessary treatment against the Japanese, both in the atomic bombings at the end of the war and in the internment of Japanese-American citizens.

Works Cited

Zinn, Howard. "16. A People's War?" *A People's History of the United States*.

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