

War Technology

Background

When studying the Second World War, it is easy to miss the advancement of technology.

This was a truly modern war.

Unlike the First World War, the Second World War matched advancements in technology with advancements in strategy.

The turning tide of battle was directly linked to mass industrial production.

This was total war!

Careful observation also reveals a hidden story in the development of war technology . . . the importance of oil!

Without oil, technology was useless, and therefore oil was directly linked to grand strategy.

For example, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor partially because America cut off its supply of oil. The Japanese then attacked the Dutch East Indies to gain a new supply.

The Germans were willing to back Italian troops in North Africa in order to gain oil.

After the defeat at the Battle of El Alamein, the proud Italian Fleet was docked without fuel.

Having lost North Africa, Hitler became serious about taking the Caucasus oil fields in the Soviet Union.

America never wanted for oil.

In fact, more than half of all transport ships sent out from American ports were carrying oil.

The message was very clear . . . oil equals power. Don't forget it!

Assignment

1) Define . . . "total war."

2) What keys were needed to win a modern war?

3) How did these key factors affect military strategy?

4) A) What method proved less effective than expected at cutting an enemy's capacity to wage war?

B) What form of attack was effective in this regard?

5) Identify the two machines that were most critical to the success of blitzkrieg.

6) Describe the tactics behind the concept of blitzkrieg.

7) Contrast the nature of combat in the Second World War with the First World War.
