

Apparently irked by frequent comparisons of the current conflict to World War II, which was memorialized in Studs Terkel's best seller "The Good War," some historical revisionists are busy declaring it was not good at all. In fact maybe we shouldn't have fought it. A new book "exposing the lies" of Roosevelt and Churchill advances the theory that they were both planning war before either Tojo or Hitler struck any blows at us. Leftwing reviewers applaud this view, as proof that all war is bad, and therefore we should pull out of the military action we are now pursuing and negotiate calmly with our enemies.

As a World War II veteran I admit that I found this theory disturbing at first. After all, I remember slogans like "you can't do business with Hitler" and I see my country now selling weapons to Arabia; I remember excess profits taxes on war profiteers, and now I see Big Oil gouging us with immunity. I felt very deeply that as a nation we are forgetting the lessons of World War II. And here comes a writer who wasn't alive then, and tells us we didn't need to fight it?

Then I realized that the scandalous evidence in the book in question was nothing new. Yes, Roosevelt fooled us in some very important ways, particularly Jewish voters who supported the New Deal en masse and thought FDR was our friend, only to see his administration refuse entry to Jewish refugees from Nazi genocide and refuse even to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz. True, he had some Jews in his cabinet and his "Brain Trust" but did he have anti-Semitic attitudes? Sure he did. It remained for the much-maligned Harry Truman to overcome his own youthful anti-Semitism and rescue some refugees, and then to recognize the State of Israel. None of this is new information.

What is new about this message is the implied conclusion that isolationism is better than intervention, and that therefore the current Democratic candidates have the right idea: pull out, turn away, and the danger will evaporate. Need I point out that FDR, like Wilson before him, was a Democrat? The Democratic Party led the US into world wars twice, the second time over the objections of isolationist Republicans like Senators Borrah of Idaho and Taft of Ohio. Were they right?

OK. Politics changed a lot since then. What did not change, and what comes through in the statements of even those who are most excited about debunking the past, is this: wars do not happen because of negotiations or the lack thereof, they happen because of leaders who are bent on waging war. Chamberlain succeeded at Munich. He came back to England waving his umbrella and proclaiming “peace in our time.” His surrender did not cause the war. What caused the war was a leader – not Churchill – Hitler, and his drive for world power. In other words, it takes two to make peace. It takes only one to make war.

In today’s world that translates to some very simple realities. The Muslim world picked the West in general and America in particular as a target. No negotiated settlement will satisfy Iran, any more than another slice of Israeli territory will stop Hamas rockets.

Not only political alignments but military techniques are different today. Tojo’s kamikazes were grown men who wore uniforms and flew Zero’s for Imperial Japan. Bin Laden’s suicide bombers are boys and girls with explosive belts. They wear no uniform, so the phony moderates of the Arab world – from Abbas to the House of Saud -- can disclaim them, while encouraging street celebrations in their honor.

So this is not World War II. Indeed not. It is World War III and we had better find civilian and military leaders who can figure out how to wage it to victory.

Meanwhile, can we still learn something from WWII? I believe we can, and it’s not “look what bad guys Churchill and Roosevelt were.” We had four words that helped us win that war, and we need them now. The first two words were “total war.” Whether you were in the armed forces or working in a defense plant or serving as a civilian air-raid warden or selling war stamps or knitting Bundles for Britain, it was **your war**. All efforts went in the same direction, including even Hollywood movies.

The other two words were “unconditional surrender.” When one of those kamikazes sank an American ship, FDR did not invite Tojo to a peace conference. Granted, it could be a lot more difficult to carry out that policy when the enemy hides behind “extra-national” forces, terrorists and terror sponsors. But anything less is a formula for failure.

First win the war. Then make peace. It's the only way.

Make no mistake. Iraq is not the war. Afghanistan is not the war. They are only battles, long and hard and sometimes badly managed, but they are not the war. This war is only beginning. We can still win it. We need to rethink many of our priorities in order to do that. Given our addiction to comfort and our temptation to delude ourselves that "it can't happen here," that rethinking could be a disturbing and painful experience. But we need to do it. Otherwise we will lose this war.

If we lose, the best designed domestic policies – health care for all, economic stimuli, superb education, you name it – won't be worth the proverbial tinker's dam. Because they'll be rapidly repealed by Sharia law. Women will walk around in black pup tents. Thieves will have their hands amputated. And anyone who dares criticize Mohammed will be stoned to death, like an immodest maiden.

Want to debunk something? Here is a piece of history to debunk: the five-year-old message out of Washington that says "Islam is a religion of peace." The leaders of gangs like Al Qaeda, Hizbullah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, etc., and their sponsors, made it a religion of mass murder.

Maybe World War II was not a "good war." If there is such a thing. But it was necessary. And we won it. We can't afford to do less now.