

SHO: *BLITZKRIEG BOP*

Discuss Blitzkrieg as a practice of war.

SOURCE A: excerpt from Thomas Childers (U Penn.). World War II: A Social and Military History. Teaching Co. 1998.

...Blitzkrieg—i.e., “lightning warfare”—was more than a military tactic of Nazi Germany. It also served political, economic and foreign policy objectives. The military elements of the Blitzkrieg included armored divisions, motorized infantry, and close air support. Its military goal was to avoid static trench warfare as Germany experienced between 1914 and 1918. Blitzkrieg offered several political and economic advantages for Hitler: 1) Lightning war against a diplomatically isolated adversary could be conducted without full mobilization of Germany’s society and economy 2)A policy of armaments in breadth, not in depth, would allow Hitler to rapidly build up and deploy Germany’s armed forces. Lightning campaigns would substitute for sustained military efforts, for which Germany in late 1939 was not yet prepared.

Blitzkrieg was an offensive operation in which Luftwaffe would first destroy enemy air forces and disrupt enemy communications, and then provide close air support to attacking ground units. Then, tanks would lead the attack, followed by motorized infantry, tracked personnel carriers, and massed infantry. This strategy was intended to provide the movement, speed, and flexibility that had been conspicuously lacking during the First World War.

The idea of Blitzkrieg was developed by Heinz Guderian. Guderian had been appalled by the slaughter occasioned by the static warfare at Verdun during World War I. Guderian adopted his ideas about aggressive armored warfare from British military thinkers, especially Gen. J.F.C. Fuller and Capt. B.H. Liddell Hart. Hitler was impressed by Guderian’s ideas, although the German military high command was dubious.

1. Write a concise definition of Blitzkrieg in under 3 sentences.
2. How is Blitzkrieg a response to trench warfare in WWI and the advancement in technology since the end of WWI?
3. How does Blitzkrieg best utilize Germany’s military weaknesses (weak and small military force)?

The September Campaign

Sources

Battle Facts	Practices
Date: September 1939 Objective: Destroy the Polish Army - more important than taking territory Other: Poles have fewer than ½ planes of the Germans- most are obsolete. Warsaw is reached in less than a month Immediate Results: Occupation and division of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union.	• Germans have 52 divisions (1 million men-up from 100,000 troops in 1934) • Two pronged attack from army group north and then 1 from the south • Two pincers, “trap Polish Army west of Warsaw and annihilate it” • Germans launch a massive air attack against the civilian center of Warsaw • Soviets attack from East

Q1a. Identify the air & land practices on The September Campaign.

Q1b. Discuss the ideological & economic elements of The September Campaign.

Q2. Why does Blitzkrieg succeed in The September Campaign?

The Battle of France

Sources

Battle Facts	Practices
Date: May-June 1940 Objective: Conquest of France, Belgium and the Netherlands Other: France has invested heavily in the Maginot Line, a series of concrete bunkers and trench lines designed to prevent an infantry ground assault. Half of their military force is confined on this defensive line. Results: German victory leading to an occupation that would last over four years and a desperate British evacuation from Dunkirk that left the UK facing invasion.	Two Pronged Attack: • 29 German divisions advanced through the Netherlands and Belgium in the north • 45 further divisions, including about 2,400 tanks in 7 divisions, burst through the Allied right flank in and drive towards the English Channel-surrounding Allies* • German forces then turn in full force and head south toward the Mediterranean.

**The French get a lot of harassment for being "cheese-eating surrender monkeys." It's worth noting, however, when the Germans surrounded the Allies in Belgium and the Netherlands, Great Britain evacuated all of her troops. ALL. France was left completely alone to resist the Nazi blitz southward. Notice how the BBC article in the source packet describes Churchill's attempts "to bolster French resolve." Pretty hard to simultaneously bolster someone's resolve while abandoning them to the Nazis.*

Q1a. Identify the air & land practices on The Battle of France.

Q1b. Discuss the ideological & economic elements of The Battle of France.

Q2. Why does Blitzkrieg succeed in The Battle of France?

Operation Barbarossa

Sources

Battle Facts	Practices
Date: June-December 1941 Objective: Attack of the USSR, ideological and total destruction of Judeo-Bolshevism, Slavs, Communists, fulfilment of <i>Lebensraum</i>. Immediate Results: In the first few weeks, Germany thinks they have won handily and rack up enormous successes. Long term failure of Germany to defeat USSR marks a crucial turning point in the war. Other: Ultimately Hitler has turned away from Great Britain believing that they are too weak to constitute a threat. (<i>Woops!</i>)	• Largest land invasion in human history: three million soldiers, 19 panzer divisions, 3,000 tanks, 7,000 artillery pieces, and 2,500 aircraft. • 3 pronged attack: North toward Leningrad, Center to Moscow and South to Ukraine (This is a distance of some 1,200 miles) • Germans take hundreds of thousands of prisoners to ghastly ends • Stalin orders troops shot if they retreat • Soviets lose upwards of 3 million men between casualties and prisoners of war

Q1a. Identify the air & land practices on Operation Barbarossa.

Q1b. Discuss the ideological & economic elements of Operation Barbarossa.

Q2. Why does Blitzkrieg fail in Operation Barbarossa?

Summary Response Bullet Point Essay

Choose two of the prompts below and write a thesis statement in response to each as well as 4-5 bullet points that will be your principal support.

1. To what extent was Blitzkrieg dependent on coordination between air and land?
2. Compare and contrast the ideological elements of two different Blitzkrieg operations in WWII.
3. Compare and contrast the economic elements of two different Blitzkrieg operations in WWII.
4. Discuss the success of Blitzkrieg as a German tactic during WWII.