

# 5 Reasons Imperial Japan Was More Terrifying Than Nazi Germany

By [James Swift](#), December 5th 2016

In Internet lingo, there's this thing called Godwin's Law. Basically, it presupposes that the longer an Internet debate goes on, the greater the chances there are of someone calling someone they disagree with "Hitler" or a "Nazi." Indeed, our society considers Nazidom to be about as awful as awful gets – absolutely *nothing* is as evil, depraved and worthy of scorn as old Adolf and his goose-stepping kin (whose vileness, ironically, we don't mind *trivializing* for the sake of some banal Facebook disagreement.)



You don't need me to tell you how bad Nazi Germany was – the horror of Hitler's reign is evident to anyone who's ever cracked open a middle school-level history book. But as terrible as the Nazis were, I've done enough research to feel comfortable declaring *Imperial Japan* an even more horrifying blight on the roadmap of humanity.

A good three million Japanese civilians and military personnel died in World War II (which is about half the number of German fatalities, and just *one-ninth* the total number of Soviets who perished in WWII.) And while Japan did sustain horrific casualties in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (although the fire bombings of Tokyo claimed far more victims), there's no way around it – whatever terrors befell Japan near the *end* of WWII were just a drop in the bucket compared to the nonstop death, torture and carnage the Imperialists perpetrated throughout Asia from 1931 to 1945.

As a matter of fact, I've lined up five *rock-solid* arguments as to why Hirohito's Japan was worse than Hitler's Germany. With the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor right around the corner, how's about we reflect on the *peculiarly* downplayed atrocities perpetrated by the People of the Rising Sun during the worst conflict in human history?

## REASON NO. 1

Imperial Japan conquered and occupied a *much* larger part of the globe ...

The Nazis occupied a *lot* of countries during World War II – about two dozen, to be slightly more precise. But while the geographic scope of Hitler's reach in WWII *seems* pretty big – extending

from Norway all the way down to Morocco – the truth is that most of the Fourth Reich’s “possessions” were fairly nominal. For example, although Germany sent troops to Africa, they never controlled any country to the south of Greece, and a lot of their conquests in Europe – including France – were basically *co-held* territories. Now, compare that to the territory held by Japan during World War II – Mainland China, *both* Koreas, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, The Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore *and* Indonesia ... an amount of territory more than doubling the real estate the Nazis “acquired.” And the size of Japan’s occupied territory in terms of population numbers was *monumentally greater* than Hitler’s, too – approximately 463 million people, which was about 63 million *more* people than the TOTAL population of Europe circa 1940.

## REASON NO. 2

**... and they held them for a much longer period, of time ...**

If you ask Google, World War II didn’t *really* start until Sept. 1, 1939 – the date Germany invaded Poland. By that point, however, Imperial Japan had been invading foreign territory for nearly a decade. Before Hitler was even appointed Chancellor of Germany, the Japanese already took over Manchuria, and a full year before the Germans annexed Austria the Imperialists had already stormed mainland China and embarked upon the infamous Nanking Massacre (in which Japanese forces killed as many as 300,000 Chinese “subjects” over the course of just six weeks.) Hell, the Japanese even decided to irk the Russians by getting into battles with Mongolians in Soviet held territory before Germany kickstarted warfare in the European theater. And even 70 years after the end of WWII, there is *still* some territory Japan refuses to cede, including some potential powder kegs “shared” with China and Russia.

## REASON NO. 3

**...and they *probably* killed more people than Hitler, too...**

Now here is where things are going to get a little murky. While you can argue all day and night about what makes one mass murdering regime *qualitatively* worse than another mass murdering regime, it’s pretty hard to dispute *the cold, hard body count*. Hitler’s regime certainly killed a *ton* of people during World War II – in addition to the 11 million people killed in the Holocaust, the general consensus is that the Nazis also killed just as many Russians, if not significantly more. Although we will never get a firm estimate of just how many people died *because* of the Nazi regime, most historians agree that a good ballpark estimate for the *total* number of people *directly* killed by Germany during World War II to be somewhere between 20 million and 25 million people. Now, the records for Japan’s wartime atrocities are even less complete than those of the Nazis, but it appears the Imperialists killed WAY more people than the Fourth Reich. At least 20 million Chinese were killed in the Second Sino-Japanese War alone (and believe it and not, that’s actually the *low-end estimate*), with Japanese invaders also responsible

for the deaths of 4 million Indonesians and 2 million Vietnamese. Factoring in the estimated death tolls from Burma, the Philippines, Malaysia and other southeast Asian territories, the total number of people killed by Imperial Japan almost certainly eclipses the 30 million corpse mark.

## REASON NO. 4

**...and *arguably* in more gruesome ways than the Nazis...**

By now, we all know about the horrible, *horrible* things that went on during Hitler's reign. The images of the charred corpses at Auschwitz and living skeletons at Birkenau will never leave any of our consciousnesses, and for damned good reason. That said, while the atrocities of the Fourth Reich are well documented (for God's sake, even Slayer has a song about the horrific experiments of mad S.S. doctor Josef Mengele) the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Japan remain *strangely* understated. Hold on to your stomachs, folks, because we're about to get into some *truly* sickening stuff:



- During the aforementioned Nanking Massacre, more than 20,000 women – including preposterously young children and the elderly – were raped by Japanese occupiers. After the attacks, many were killed via genital torture, with some Japanese troops getting their jollies *forcing* parents to rape their own children at gunpoint. Be forewarned: there is photographic evidence of this floating around the Internet.
- In 1937, two troops decided to have a contest to see who could stab the most Chinese to death. Rather than shy away from the absolutely sickening display of psychopathic inhumanity, the Japanese army instead publicized it to raise nationalist morale, and even encouraged the two combatants to keep murdering people even after they hit their self-imposed quota of 100 victims.
- Another popular recreational activity among occupying Japanese soldiers? Throwing babies in the air and catching them ... with bayonets. Google search at your own peril, folks.
- Then there's the stuff that went down at Unit 731 – Japan's biological and chemical weapon R&D facility. A quarter of a million people – including children – are believed to have been used for a dizzying array of ghoulish human experiments, which ran the gamut from live vivisections to flamethrower tests to intentional hyperbaric chamber depressurizations – which sometimes have the nasty side effect of making people's internal organs explode.
- Oh, and where to begin on the civilian massacres? Do you start with the 100,000 plus Filipinos killed during the Battle of Manila? Or the machine gunning of Australian nurses? Or the raid on a hospital in Singapore, where Japanese troops walked into the operating room and shot patients while they were undergoing surgery?

And as evident by the Bataan Death March and Laha Massacre, being a P.O.W. in the “care” of Japanese troops was no cakewalk, either. While the death rate for German-held P.O.W.s was 4 percent, 27 percent of all prisoners of war taken by Japan wound up dying. And if being starved to death and used as shooting practice targets weren’t great enough indignities, sometimes P.O.W.s were actually eaten by their Japanese captors.

## REASON NO. 5

**...and oh yeah, they haven’t really apologized for it, either**

Since the end of the Second World War, Germany has gone to great lengths to make amends for its Nazi sins. They’ve banned swastikas and other Nazi iconography and jailed people for teaching their dogs to do “Sieg Heil” salutes. One could argue that *atonement state* continues to this day under the presidency (err, prime ministership) of Angela Merkel, whose *anti-nationalist*, pro-mass-immigration policies are pretty much the diametric opposite of Hitler’s “lebensraum” agenda. But while Germany has begged and pleaded the world to forgive it for the Holocaust and trying to conquer Europe, Japan – nearly 75 years after the end of WWII – has remained *peculiarly* unremorseful for their actions. Emperor Hirohito himself – the man who took over more territory than Hitler, held it for a longer period of time and ultimately wound up killing more people – didn’t even issue *any kind* of formal statement about WWII until 1971, and even then it was the rather ambiguous “yes, there are certain things which happened for which I feel personally sorry.” A year later, Japan’s prime minister said that while his “country gave great troubles to the Chinese people,” it still was enough to make him do anything more than engage in “profound self-examination.” The Emperor’s son said he felt “deep sadness” about what happened in 1992, but that’s as far as he went. It wasn’t until *50 years* after Japan’s surrender that its prime minister actually used the word “apologize” in regards to the nation’s actions in WWII – albeit, without mentioning a single specific atrocity, or even the name of any occupied or attacked countries – and 2005 was the first time a Japanese prime minister actually used the word “invasion” to describe Imperial Japan’s actions. Which brings us to Japan’s current prime minister, the right-wing nationalist Shinzo Abe, who, last year, said, although Japan “did inflict immeasurable damage and suffering,” his nation “must not let our children, grandchildren and even further generations to come, who have to do with that war, be predestined to apologize.”