

**Hillsdale College Hosts Lecture from Author, Professor Victor Davis Hanson**

***Military historian and classicist draws on material from upcoming book on World War II***

By Maureen Collins

Acclaimed author and military historian Victor Davis Hanson addressed the Hillsdale College community on the beginning of World War II during his lecture on September 12 at the college’s Searle Center.

In the talk, titled “How a Border War in Europe Led to World War II,” Hanson described how the most lethal war in world history began. The initial “bully war” of the Germans, he explained, was fed by a mindset shaped both by Germany’s humiliation at the end of World War I, and hubris after early victories against inferior powers early in the conflict.

“Hitler thought that this was just another border war and he prepared the Third Reich for that purpose,” said Hanson.

But then, the Germans, along with their allies, the Japanese and the Italians, made a fatal mistake, according to Hansen: they involved two military giants—the British and the Americans—ensuring their ultimate defeat.

“Once Germany invaded Russia, the idea of ‘border wars’ disappeared, and now they were in World War II,” said Hanson. “In May of 1941, there was no other major power fighting the Third Reich or Italy except Britain, and they were all that was left. [The British] were outnumbered two to one.”

Then, the tables turned when Germany and Japan provoked 300 million Russians and Americans to enter the mix. The Germans, Italians and Japanese became outnumbered themselves.

“Why would [Hitler] do such a stupid thing?” Hanson asked. The answer has a lot to do with the idealistic mentalities and egoism of the three fascist aggressors, according to Hansen. Despite the Allies political diversity, they managed to coordinate, share plans and technology and keep each other in check.

The opposite was true of the Axis, who refused to share technology or hold each other back from destructive, ill-advised actions, such as invading Russia or bombing Pearl Harbor.

“That American practicality and British practicality—even the Soviet practicality—was much different than the world of fantasy that Mussolini, Hitler and Tojo lived in.” Hanson argued. This mentality, he said, is “something about the nature of fascism that is inherent.”

Hanson’s speech comes on the cusp of his new book’s release. *The World Wars* will hit shelves on October 17, 2017. Hanson is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow in Classics and Military History at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and a professor of Classics Emeritus at California State University - Fresno. Hanson has been a Distinguished Fellow in History at Hillsdale College since 2004, where he teaches classes on the nature of war.

*Photos from the lecture are* [*available here.*](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5vavn6hmv8g3en1/AACOhkd4vFi-3JwjFhZXQuVQa?dl=0)

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