

## Deadly Connections: Empire and Nuclear Weapons

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to Dominate the World*  
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American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us: the trade of the world must and shall be ours.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge, 1897<sup>1</sup>

If someone holds a classroom full of children hostage with a machine gun, threatening to kill them unless his demands are met, we consider him a dangerous, crazy terrorist. But if a head of state holds millions of civilians hostage with nuclear weapons, many consider this as perfectly normal. We must end that double standard and recognize nuclear weapons for what they are: instruments of terror.

Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer<sup>2</sup>

In Hiroshima, as the first anniversary of the notorious September 11 terrorist attacks against the US approached, Senji Yamaguchi addressed the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Nagasaki. He is a small disfigured man whose body and mind were seared by the Nagasaki A-bomb almost 60 years earlier. He was blessed with a friendly spirit, clear moral vision, and exceptional courage. At the height of what has been termed the "Second Cold War" in the 1980s, he addressed the UN General Assembly. Over the course of his life, he survived excruciating burns, radiation sickness, more than 20 surgical procedures, countless hospitalizations, and two suicide attempts, resulting from the Nagasaki nuclear holocaust. After beginning his talk slowly, almost quietly, his voice rose to a cry: "I firmly believe that the atomic bombing was the worst act of terrorism in history . . . Nuclear weapons must be completely abolished."

Four decades earlier, in 1965, with the Japanese press reporting that the US had sited hydrogen bombs at its air base in Danang, South Vietnam, Chieko Watanabe had spoken from essentially the same platform as Senji Yamaguchi. As an adolescent in Nagasaki, she was sent to work in an electrical machinery factory and was there on August 9, 1945. The force of

the atomic blast crumpled the building, pinning Watanabe's small body, legs akimbo, beneath twisted steel beams, and breaking her back. She never walked again and suffered debilitating radiation sickness. As she addressed the World Conference, Watanabe-san condemned US use of toxic gas and napalm which were "incinerating . . . Vietnam and murdering its people." She also warned that if people did not act, the US would use nuclear weapons against Vietnam, creating still more *Hibakusha*—A-bomb witness/survivors.

This was not hyperbole. Eighteen months later, when US forces were surrounded and besieged at Khe Sanh by at least 40,000 North Vietnamese and National Liberation Force troops, US generals and President Johnson publicly threatened to respond with nuclear weapons. Lyndon Johnson was not the first president to threaten Vietnam with nuclear attack, nor would he be the last. Since the first nuclear holocausts were inflicted on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there has been a deadly connection between US nuclear terrorism and the maintenance of the US empire.

It is widely understood that the first nuclear bombings were used to bring the war with Japan to an immediate end. Less well known is that the A-bombings were not militarily necessary. Many factors led to the decision to use the bombs, but one was determinative: their roles in winning strategic advantages for the US in the Cold War that had already begun. It is also widely believed that the Nagasaki A-bombing was the last time nuclear weapons were used. This is a fallacy. Secretary of War Stimson understood that having an atomic bomb is like having a "gun on your hip." Its ostentatious display would be terrorizing, whether US leaders chose to pull the trigger or not.<sup>3</sup> Having learned this lesson, and believing that previous US nuclear threats have succeeded, every president since Truman has prepared or threatened nuclear war during crises, confrontations, and wars to preserve Washington's global "sphere of influence." For six decades the US has used nuclear weapons to dominate the world. Washington's genocidal and potentially omnicidal nuclear arsenal and its first-strike doctrines continue to serve as ultimate enforcers of what Vice-President Cheney described as "the arrangement for the twenty-first century."

This chapter begins by introducing Truman's annihilation of Hiroshima and much of Nagasaki in order to gain strategic advantage in northeast Asia and to intimidate Joseph Stalin and other Soviet leaders. Drawing on the work of leading mainstream and revisionist scholars, as well as statements of senior US policymakers, it describes the growth of the US Empire and how it was structured and has functioned throughout most of the twentieth century. The chapter then turns to explore how, with the end of the Cold War, and with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell complaining that the Pentagon was running out of enemies, post-Cold War US governments aggressively labored to adjust to these new realities: revising

strategic doctrines, reconfiguring the US nuclear arsenal and the policies determining when and how it would be used, launching wars to consolidate US control over oil-rich regions, and reorganizing and reinforcing the military alliances that serve as the empire's coercive infrastructure.

The chapter then provides an overview of the history of the more than 30 occasions—the majority in Asia and the Middle East—when US presidents prepared and threatened to initiate genocidal or omnicidal nuclear war. To help readers understand why US leaders have so frequently found it necessary to reinforce "conventional" military operations with nuclear threats, I have drawn heavily on the analyses of US presidents and the testimonies of military leaders, as well as on published military doctrines. The chapter concludes with meditations on the origins of nuclear weapons and nuclear war-fighting doctrines in the modern Western tradition of "total war." In doing so I have moved beyond traditional analysis by confronting the deeply disturbing existential reality that "the cornerstone of US policies" is rooted in evil, threatening human survival and subverting democratic values and practice. I argue that nuclear weapons abolition and the concept of "common security," which played a major role in ending the Cold War, offer humanity the most realistic alternatives to security and survival.

#### AN IMPERIAL HAMMER

Although it is not widely known beyond academia, the consensus today among informed scholars is that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unnecessary. As Gar Alperovitz wrote on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings, "[A]lternatives to the bomb existed and . . . Truman and his advisors knew it."<sup>4</sup> As the decoded intercepts of Japanese diplomatic correspondence informed Truman and his senior advisors, Emperor Hirohito was seeking to end the war on terms they would eventually accept. In fact, senior US military leaders advised against using the new weapon for a host of reasons, including hallowed precepts of the laws of war.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, Secretary of State Byrnes and Secretary of War Stimson pressed the use of the A-bomb for its "salutary effect on relations with the Soviet Union."<sup>6</sup>

Stimson was more conflicted than Byrnes. He confided to Truman that with the US fire bombings that had razed nearly every major Japanese city to the ground, and with the atomic bombings that were to come, the US could "get the reputation of outdoing Hitler in atrocities."<sup>7</sup> But he also calculated that if the atomic bombs ended the war against Japan before the Soviets launched their East Asian offensive, Russian influence in Asia could be limited to the concessions made by Roosevelt at Yalta.

Byrnes' arguments were more primitive and parochial. Like Stimson, he was "anxious to get the Japanese affair over with before the Russians got

in.” He also anticipated that “after [the] atomic bomb Japan will surrender and Russia will not get in so much on the kill, thereby being in a position to press claims against China.”<sup>8</sup> Like Truman, he spoke in terms of revenge, justifying the atomic bombings as appropriate vengeance for the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the loss of US lives. Byrnes was also anxious to reinforce his protégé’s political future, warning Truman that he could lose the 1948 election if the electorate learned that the US had spent \$2 billion to build the bomb and then had not used it.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, to impose an immediate end to the war before the Soviet Union could seize northern China, Manchuria, Korea, the Kurile Islands, and Hokkaido in northern Japan; to terrorize the Soviet leadership for the coming Cold War; and to insulate Truman’s political ambitions, the people and cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were sacrificed on the altar of nuclear imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

As Robert Oppenheimer and other Manhattan Project scientists anticipated, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs set off a second chain-reaction: the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Other nations followed suit, seeking to counter or to emulate Washington’s ability to practice nuclear terrorism. First came the Soviet Union and Britain, then France and China. They, in turn, were followed by Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.

#### EMPIRE AND TABOO

In the last years of the Cold War, the historian Howard Zinn paid homage to George Orwell’s insight that governments work to control the past in order to control the present and the future. He explained that “[I]f the American people are . . . not given the information about the history of American intervention in the world, it is as if we were all born yesterday . . . the president’s speech on TV becomes the only fresh bit of information we have, and . . . if he says ‘Ah, we’re in danger in the Caribbean, the Russians are threatening us here and there’ without a sense of history you believe that.”<sup>11</sup>

Without an understanding of US history, especially the growth and development of its empire, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Washington’s subsequent practice of nuclear terrorism are incomprehensible. In fact, the US nuclear arsenal has been the “big stick” used by three generations of leaders to enforce US global dominance. Although many US Americans are subconsciously aware of the empire, which reached its zenith in the last years of the twentieth century, few acknowledge its existence.

While most US Americans are ignorant of their nation’s imperial history, it is widely understood in capitals and *barrios* around the world. Chandra Muzaffar, the renowned Malaysian political and religious scholar,

described the US Empire and how it works in an open letter addressed to the heads of state gathered in Indonesia to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference. The 1955 Conference which launched the Non-Aligned Movement flailed colonialism and neocolonialism, and Muzaffar’s 2005 letter chastised contemporary leaders’ complicity with the US Empire, which he described in the following terms:

global hegemony of the powerful is, perhaps, even more real today than it was in the past. The starkest manifestation of this is . . . Washington’s military hegemony. With 800 military bases that gird the globe and a military dominance that stretches from the inner depths of the ocean to the outer reaches of space, how many other nations on earth argue that [they are] truly independent and sovereign in the face of such formidable fire power? While its military might is the fulcrum of its global hegemony, Washington also seeks to maintain its dominance in other spheres. In international politics . . . a government that challenges, even obliquely, a decision which is at the heart of Washington’s foreign policy is bound to incur the wrath of the world’s sole superpower. . . . Washington is not adverse to subverting any economic move at the regional or international level which it perceives as inimical to the neo-liberal capitalist global structure that it helms. Through the information it provides and the entertainment it promotes, the US has also popularized a global culture which threatens to marginalize other value systems and worldviews . . . .

While Washington is at the apex of this hegemonic global power structure, other capitals from London and Tel Aviv and Tokyo and Canberra are integral to it . . . .<sup>12</sup>

Although Professor Muzaffar’s analysis is consistent with thinking in the elite Council on Foreign Relations and with many neoconservatives who populated the second Bush presidency, it is not what most US Americans have in mind when they pledge allegiance to the flag or sing the national anthem at the beginning of the school day or at the start of sporting events.

Why this disjunction? The sophisticated system of US censorship, self-deception, conscious and unconscious national chauvinism, and insecurities within the media and academia have combined with the dishonesty of many politicians to make it difficult for US Americans to think freely or to see reality as it is experienced by others. Few are aware that the US today is more empire than democracy, or that since 1945 successive governments have prepared and threatened nuclear attacks to expand and maintain the empire.<sup>13</sup>

For nearly a century, until US neoconservatives began using the words “imperialism” and “empire” to describe the US project, these terms were

taboo in scholarly and political discourse, and in “polite circles.” To use them resulted in marginalization and in many cases the loss of livelihood. This national self-deception, from the invasions of Cuba and the Philippines in 1898, through World War II, Vietnam, and the invasions of Iraq, has made it difficult for most US Americans to understand their country’s role in the world or the terrorism on which US global power and privilege are based.

An intriguing aspect of elite and popular imperial denial is the fact that for years, in schools across the country, young people have been taught, implicitly and explicitly, that as Rome was to Athens, so the US is to the British Empire. Left unstated is the reality that, as Zinn has written, “[w]hat the experience of Athens suggests is that a nation may be relatively liberal at home and yet totally ruthless abroad . . . An entire nation is made into mercenaries, being paid with a bit of democracy at home for participating in the destruction of life abroad.”<sup>14</sup> Recall that it was “democratic” Athens’ insistence on maintaining its empire that resulted in the Peloponnesian War and Athens’ subsequent decline.<sup>15</sup>

For a century, many euphemisms were used to enforce this dual thinking and to cope with the taboo. As World War II drew to a close, the Council on Foreign Relations planned for the management of “The Grand Area.”<sup>16</sup> Throughout the Cold War, the terms “the free world” and “US sphere of influence” were used to refer to the US dominion. Late in the Cold War, when he found it necessary to refocus the thinking of the US foreign policy establishment, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the founding Director of the Trilateral Commission and President Jimmy Carter’s national security advisor, was among the few in the US establishment to ignore the proscription. He began his article “America’s New Geostrategy,” in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, with the words: “The rumors of America’s imminent imperial decline are somewhat premature.”<sup>17</sup>

Scholars, including Noam Chomsky, William Appleman Williams, Howard Zinn and others who named and analyzed the history of US Empire, have been recognized for their unique courage as well as for their exceptional scholarship. Not until the second Bush presidency, when Washington adopted the language of unilateralism and dispatched its legions to invade Afghanistan and Iraq to consolidate US control over the world’s oil supplies, did influential neoconservatives and liberals acknowledge their endorsement of the US imperial project.<sup>18</sup> Doing so earlier would have impeded popular mobilization in the first decades of the post-colonial era, and it would have undermined support for US foreign and military policies throughout the Third World and in Europe. However, as Niall Ferguson and others have argued, in the post-Cold War era, to preserve the empire it became necessary to affirm its existence and to draw

explicitly on the lessons and precedents of previous empires. In one of the first forays into normalizing the post-Cold War imperial discourse, Walter Russell Mead, of the Council on Foreign Relations, taught that the US was simply one of a long line of great nations and empires that “have been shining and stinking since the start of recorded history.”<sup>19</sup>

From Iraq to Singapore and from the Bahamas to Diego Garcia, much of *Pax Americana* has been built on the ruins of *Pax Britannica*. Like the British, US governments “have excelled in discovering reasons that obligated them to conquer the world.”<sup>20</sup> This exceptional US destiny has been articulated across two centuries in the Monroe, Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, Carter, and Bush Doctrines. It has been manifested through repeated wars and in more than 200 military “interventions,” from Tangiers to Tokyo.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the English, who were taught to value empire and were inspired to fight to maintain the *imperium* because, among other things, it kept down the price of tea,<sup>22</sup> the US public was long insulated from the reality that the US Empire exists to serve the elite. In addition to ensuring profits by means of securing privileged access to other nations’ raw materials, labor, markets, and technologies, empire has been seen as a way to maintain “social peace” within the country by providing jobs and thus ensuring economic security.<sup>23</sup> The few who are still aware of the Lend-Lease Agreement with Britain or the wartime Anglo-American alliance, usually fail to note that Britain was saved from Nazi Germany by the US at the expense of its global empire. Similarly, few in the US know that the 1941–45 war against Japan grew out of two centuries of imperial competition for influence and control in China. That Chinese political culture continues to be profoundly influenced by the sufferings wrought in the course of this imperial history is shocking information for most US Americans.

Amidst the denial, the US “national security” elite has presided over and led a complex imperial system, the broad outlines of which most literate US Americans have unconsciously internalized. As Mead explained in his seminal work *Mortal Splendor*, a first tier of nations has long shared the benefits and costs of *Pax Americana*. These “junior partners” included Japan, the other G-7 nations, and Western European liberal democracies whose “opinions on important issues [were] usually solicited—if not always deferred to.” A second tier of nations have been those “whose economic and political situations hover[ed] between first- and third-tier conditions”: for example, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Korea, Greece, and Brazil. They have “enjoy[ed] much less freedom from external intervention in their domestic affairs” and were “more vulnerable to economic coercion” by Washington and by first-tier nations. At the bottom of the imperial pyramid are the Third and Fourth World nations of the Global South, countries such as El Salvador,

East Timor, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Haiti, Egypt, and Kuwait. They have had “minimal representation in the councils of empire,” and their “national governments in many cases are solely the representatives of foreign powers.”<sup>24</sup> In addition to functioning on state-to-state levels, the system has been reinforced by complex international institutions including the United Nations, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, and more recently by the World Trade Organization. One of the central questions of the twenty-first century is what capitalist China’s relationship to this system will be.

While British imperial cultural influences and political models predominated in shaping the US imperial state and culture, it has been influenced by other forces. Though twice defeated in world wars, Prussian military culture found a host on the western shore of the Atlantic Ocean. To defeat Germany, US political culture, its military, and its society were transformed in ways that mimicked German models, including the creation of the military-industrial complex. Even in the early years of the Cold War, outgoing President Eisenhower found the forces of this complex so subversive of democracy that he warned the country about its “total influence . . . in every city, every statehouse, every office of the Federal Government.”<sup>25</sup>

The assumption of US superiority, righteousness, and munificence which are essential to a culture of dominance and empire are deeply ingrained. For decades, World War II was incessantly relived and mythologized on television and cinema screens in documentaries, dramas, and comedies. For baby-boomers, Sunday television began and ended with lessons and propaganda about US military prowess. The Army’s *The Big Picture* greeted children at sunrise and the Navy’s *Victory at Sea* was screened before bedtime. Recasting the war in the then still strong colonial settler mentality, the image of the US as the reluctant but always successful warrior-nation came to movie theaters as *Shane* and *High Noon*, and was omnipresent as televised cowboy westerns. The message was clear: use of deadly force was as American as apple pie.

Trend-setting Broadway musicals also provided archetypes through which US Americans came to understand themselves and their places in the world. Like the English and Germans before them, “Americans” were to see themselves as a superior people, with the responsibility to refashion the world in their image, and when necessary to serve as the “world’s policeman.” Thus, in *The King and I*, our white English cousins introduced an Asian monarch to modernity. In *South Pacific*, US Americans were an anti-racist and civilizing force in a land where “Bloody Mary’s chewing beetlenuts.” And in *Camelot*, the play appropriated by the Kennedys to market themselves, US Americans were encouraged to dream what it would be like “If I Ruled the World.” This megalomaniacal fantasy, later institutionalized as the post-Cold War doctrines of the “New World Order,”

“full spectrum dominance,” and “unilateralism” was so consistent with the times that it was recorded by many of the nation’s leading crooners.<sup>26</sup>

The course of empire has its costs, or as Mead reminded readers, its stench. People are killed, often brutally, and in great numbers. Racism is reinforced, and hatreds—sometimes enduring for generations or centuries—are created. Even the most powerful economies can be devastated and distorted in the course of preparing for and fighting endless wars. Democratic values, truth, and individual freedoms are the inevitable first casualties of war and empire. The war in Vietnam and secret bombing of Cambodia led inevitably to the constitutional crisis called “Watergate.”<sup>27</sup> A generation later, the shame of systematic torture in the “gulag” extending from Guantánamo to Abu Ghraib and Afghanistan was an unavoidable consequence of wars waged in alliances with warlords, monarchs, and dictators.

Despite its rhetoric of freedom, US wars of intervention, its subversion of foreign governments, and its support for military, dictatorial, and authoritarian regimes have been a function of US policy decisions. Two years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, George Kennan, author of the Cold War “containment doctrine,” described the framework and goals of the US Empire in a 1948 TOP SECRET memorandum while serving as the head of the State Department’s Policy Planning Department:

We have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population . . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity . . . . We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction . . . . We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.<sup>28</sup>

Half a century later, after Western Europe and Japan had recovered from wartime devastation, President Clinton echoed Kennan when he stated that “We have four percent of the world’s population, and we want to keep 22 percent of the world’s wealth.”<sup>29</sup> This helps to explain why the first major commitment Clinton made on assuming the presidency was his promise not to cut the military’s budget, despite the end of the Cold War.

As demonstrated in Clinton’s “divide-and-rule” approach to Europe and the publicly announced inspiration taken by senior figures in the second Bush administration from late nineteenth-century founders of the US Empire,<sup>30</sup> the end of the Cold War marked a return to earlier imperial patterns. From Cuba

to China, US presidents again explained foreign and military policies in terms of access to markets, human rights, and the advance of civilization—much as their predecessors had done a century earlier. Once again, as the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote early in the twentieth century, there was “fighting in the Balkans.”<sup>31</sup> US Marines returned to Haiti in the name of “democracy,” while the CIA connived to restore oil-rich Venezuela to its “proper” role as a prize US estate. While turning a blind eye to client dictators and warlords, so-called “humanitarian” military interventions in Haiti, Kosovo, and East Timor served to expand or maintain US influence and to provide political legitimacy for the military establishment and its budget. Oil, however, remained “the prize.” As oil-rich nations approached peak production and global demands for oil soared, the rhetoric of democracy was again used to mobilize the US American people for war and to mismanage generational political transitions in strategically important Middle East nations.

In the midst of this complex set of diplomacy and wars, Washington’s ultimate enforcer remained “the bomb.”

#### A SUCCESSION OF IMPERIAL DOCTRINES

As the end of the Cold War began to be anticipated, the Reagan administration prepared the way for the new era with a report and doctrine titled *Discriminate Deterrence*. Developed by the Pentagon’s bipartisan Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, whose members included leading figures in the establishment—Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, General Andrew Goodpaster, General John Vessey, Samuel Huntington, and others—the report called for a global strategy to ensure that the US remained the dominant global power for “the long term.”<sup>32</sup>

The Commission’s diagnosis and prescriptions were clear: Japan and Western Europe were beginning to challenge US global hegemony.<sup>33</sup> The power of US “conventional” weapons was declining relative to several increasingly well-armed Third World nations, and as many as 40 countries could become nuclear weapons powers by the year 2010. To remain the world’s dominant power, the US should no longer attempt to control developments in every part of the world. Instead, it recommended that US power and resources focus on three regions: the Persian Gulf (to control the world’s oil supplies and the national economies dependent on that oil), the Mediterranean (to control Europe and the Middle East), and the Pacific Ocean (to control Japan and other emerging Asian-Pacific economies). As Washington faced difficult budget choices, the Commission recommended that the Pentagon give priority to modernizing its nuclear arsenal, to increasing air- and sea-lift capabilities for rapid military intervention, and to investing in high-tech weaponry.<sup>34</sup>

The “vision” for the 1990–91 “Desert Storm” war fought to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait and to create what Bush called a “New World Order” for the post-Cold War era was rooted in *Discriminate Deterrence*, but it also reflected a new doctrine that was not articulated until after the war. Preparations for the war and the US assault were designed to achieve multiple goals: to reassert US control over Middle East oil reserves (the “jugular vein” of global capitalism), to discipline US allies and reaffirm US military alliances, and to terrorize the world’s nations in a “demonstration war.” These objectives went well beyond *Discriminate Deterrence*’s prescriptions.

Under the leadership of Secretary of Defense Cheney and his assistant Paul Wolfowitz, a new doctrine was developed, the initial draft of which was leaked to the press shortly after the “Desert Storm” war. This “Defense Policy Guidance” bluntly described the Pentagon’s dangerous and ambitious commitments: “Our first objective,” it read, “is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival.” Although the doctrine named North Korea as the focus of concerns in Asia, this was a euphemism for containing China’s rising power. In the Asia-Pacific region, the report read, “we must maintain our status as a military power of the first magnitude.”<sup>35</sup> China was not explicitly named as a strategic competitor because doing so could have crystallized the emerging US–Chinese competition before Washington was prepared to do so.

The Clinton years were less “a bridge to the twenty-first century” than the span between the two Bush presidencies. Although the Cheney–Wolfowitz strategy document was ostensibly withdrawn after being leaked, it was never officially rescinded. In Asia, the Clinton administration worked to integrate China into the US–Japanese-dominated system through often conflicting commitments to diplomatic and economic engagement and military threats. To preserve US influence in Europe, Clinton and his senior advisors focused on providing new rationales for NATO to legitimize the continued presence of US forces—including nuclear weapons—across the continent. By working to expand both NATO and the European Union, it laid the foundation for playing what Donald Rumsfeld would later call “New Europe” against the “Old.”

In its final year, the Clinton Pentagon came up with a new slogan for an old ambition: “full spectrum dominance.” In the traditions of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Genghis Khan, the new doctrine of escalation dominance spelled out the commitment to achieve and maintain the ability to dominate any nation, at any time, at any level of power—including first-strike nuclear attack.

The Bush II–Cheney administration that followed brought new intensity to “full spectrum dominance.” It also introduced a radically different, and disastrous, vision of how to run the empire. Its National Security



Statement echoed Francis Fukuyama's boast that the end of the Cold War marked the "end of history." The Statement declared that the US political and economic systems were the single model for prosperity. US military power so far exceeded that of any potential rival that the administration believed it could impose what Cheney termed "the arrangement for the twenty-first century."<sup>36</sup> Instead of soliciting the opinions and support of "second-tier" nations, the Bush Doctrine stated that nations were "either for us or against us." Those who were "against us" would have to anticipate the consequences of US-enforced diplomatic and economic isolation and the devastations of US unilateral "shock and awe" military attacks and extended occupations. Going beyond Bush I's "New World Order," the Strategy Statement implicitly threatened both China and the European Union. Preemptive attacks, the doctrine stated, were warranted to prevent the *emergence* of potential regional or global rivals. Such rivals need not attack or threaten the US with attack to be destroyed. This openly articulated commitment to aggression was unprecedented in US history.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, most people in the US and elsewhere believed that the danger of nuclear war had been contained, if not completely eliminated. Unfortunately, US leaders continued to honor Roosevelt's admonition about the importance of carrying a "big stick." Despite the loss of the Soviet enemy and the International Court of Justice's ruling on the illegality of nuclear war, not to mention nuclear weapons abolition campaigns launched by retired senior US military officers and traditional peace movements, post-Cold War US governments continued to rely on implicit and explicit threats of nuclear attack to reinforce US power and ambitions.

True, Bush Sr.'s 1991 decision to reduce the dangers of nuclear war by ordering redeployment of most tactical nuclear weapons to bases in the US, to which President Mikhail Gorbachev responded with reciprocal orders, did decrease the danger of nuclear war. And those who were led to believe that he supported a fissile material cut-off treaty also found it a source of hope.<sup>37</sup>

These initiatives, however, were not the full picture. The "Desert Storm" victory over Iraq was made possible in part by the US nuclear terrorism that preceded it. A series of nuclear threats were communicated, orally and in writing, to Saddam Hussein and his foreign minister by President Bush, Vice-President Dan Quayle, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and UK Prime Minister John Major,<sup>38</sup> and an estimated 700–1,000 nuclear weapons were deployed to the countries and seas surrounding Iraq. In a chilling example of how deeply nuclear war-fighting has been integrated into day-to-day military planning, General Norman Schwarzkopf forwarded a proposal for the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Iraqi targets to the Pentagon for approval.<sup>39</sup>

With the deterioration of the Russian nuclear arsenal and its related infrastructure, President Clinton pressed the US nuclear advantage. In response to the International Court of Justice's consideration of the legality of the use and threatened use of nuclear weapons and calls by retired generals and admirals to abolish nuclear weapons, Clinton informed the world that nuclear weapons would remain "the cornerstone" of US policy. With this commitment, reinforced by his political insecurities, the Clinton administration backed away from efforts to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty, and the administration initiated no significant arms reduction negotiations. Throughout the Clinton era, 15,000 strategic and tactical nuclear weapons remained on alert or were stockpiled for possible use.<sup>40</sup>

More dangerous was the Clinton administration's initial approach to North Korea, which was widely believed to have developed an undeclared arsenal of between two and four atomic bombs. Although North Korean missiles could not reach the US, South Korea and Japan were within range. Not comprehending that an impoverished but proud nation might not jump immediately to the US tune, Clinton, in 1994, continued the tradition of threatening North Korea with nuclear attack, and in doing so strayed perilously close to a nuclear cataclysm.

Despite the apparently radical differences between Bush I's and Clinton's multilateralist approaches and Bush II's arrogant unilateralism, there was considerable continuity in nuclear doctrines. Counter-proliferation policy was inaugurated as US policy in the Clinton Nuclear Posture Review, laying the foundation for Bush II's Strategic Proliferation Security Initiative, for the Bush–Cheney assault on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and for Bush II era nuclear threats against Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. The Clinton administration's and Congressional Democrats' support for "missile defense" research and development made possible Bush II's deployments of what Chinese officials warned was a shield to complement the Pentagon's first-strike nuclear swords.

The Bush–Cheney administration's passion for and commitment to preparing and threatening first-strike nuclear wars were different and reminiscent of the first years of the Reagan presidency a generation earlier. To reinforce the imposition of Vice-President Cheney's "arrangement for the twenty-first century," the pre-inaugural recommendations of the neo-conservative Project for the Twenty-First Century were rapidly transformed into national policy. In its 2002 Nuclear Posture Review, the Bush II administration reiterated its commitment to first-strike nuclear war-fighting, named seven nations as primary nuclear targets, and urged funding for the development of new and more usable nuclear weapons. It mandated accelerated preparations at the Nevada test site to ensure that new weapons and stockpiled warheads could reliably inflict nuclear holocausts in the future.

It also pressed expansion of the nuclear weapons laboratories to design and develop a new generation of nuclear weapons to reinforce US nuclear dominance through most of the twenty-first century. Although there were major differences between father and son, Bush Jr. followed in his father's tradition in at least one regard. During the run-up to the 2003 invasion, Iraq was again threatened with nuclear attack.<sup>41</sup> As in the past, these post-Cold War nuclear policies, preparations, and threats went largely unnoticed and unremarked. Instead, US nuclear consciousness was molded by alarms about "loose nukes" and the nuclear ambitions of "rogue" regimes.

Some of these fears were legitimate. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, a major concern was that Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, inherited from the USSR, made it the world's third most powerful nuclear power. This, it was feared, would "force" Germany to become a nuclear state. India and Pakistan gate-crashed the nuclear club, and were briefly declared outlaw nations for refusing to surrender their newly demonstrated nuclear arsenals. On Russia's southern flanks, Ukraine and Kazakhstan *each* had more nuclear weapons than France, Britain, China, Pakistan, India, and Israel *combined*. North Korea did indeed have a nuclear weapons program, and it was widely feared that if Pyongyang demonstrated its nuclear capabilities, Japan, South Korea, and possibly Taiwan would follow.

As is now well known, other fears were manufactured and manipulated to provide political cover and to mobilize US Americans for "regime change" wars in oil-rich nations. In a disinformation campaign that will undermine US credibility for decades to come, Bush II and his senior advisors mobilized the US and its allies for the invasion of Iraq with a series of lies about what proved to be Baghdad's nonexistent nuclear weapons program and an illusory stockpile of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. Cheney announced that he was "convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon," and that "[t]he risks of inaction are far greater than the risks of action." Condoleezza Rice warned that "we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld testified that Saddam Hussein's "regime is determined to acquire the means to strike the U.S., its friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction." Iraq, he said, was "seeking nuclear weapons" and had "designs for at least two different nuclear devices." Bush repeated the British disinformation that Saddam Hussein could order an attack with weapons of mass destruction "within as few as forty-five minutes."<sup>42</sup>

With additional fears that weapons-grade plutonium was being smuggled from Russia through Germany and other countries, and with al-Qaeda seeking nuclear capabilities, leading Republicans and Democrats agreed that the greatest danger facing the US was the possibility of "terrorists . . . gaining weapons of mass murder."<sup>43</sup>

Obscured by this hysteria and misinformation was the fact that the US had become, as the *New York Times* editorialized, the "nuclear rogue" driving nuclear weapons proliferation, and that, as the Natural Resources Defense Council reported, the US was "faking nuclear restraint."<sup>44</sup> Missing from all but a few reports and editorials was the understanding that the Bush administration was "clear that nuclear weapons will remain the cornerstone of U.S. military power for the next fifty years."<sup>45</sup>

#### MYTHS OF NUCLEAR INNOCENCE AND THE PRACTICE OF NUCLEAR TERRORISM

For the vast majority of US Americans, nuclear weapons and nuclear war are distant abstractions, last used, we are repeatedly told, far away and long ago to win the war against Japan. Nuclear weapons are widely believed to have contained the Soviet Union. And, although most US Americans believe that the world would be more secure if no nation possessed nuclear weapons,<sup>46</sup> the common belief is that as long as the "good guys" have the biggest, best, and most nuclear weapons, there is little in the nuclear realm to worry about.

The "Mandarins of Power,"<sup>47</sup> leading scholars who implicitly or explicitly serve the empire, have learned which questions *not* to ask and bear considerable responsibility for this innocence and ignorance. With few notable exceptions,<sup>48</sup> US nuclear weapons scholarship is marked by a fascination with the scientists who won the race to build the first atomic and hydrogen bombs; with so-called "deterrence" theory and the dynamics of the US-Soviet nuclear arms race; and in recent years with the dangers of "loose nukes."

Most of the histories of the Manhattan Project and biographies of its Promethean priesthood (J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest O. Lawrence, Leo Szilard, Enrico Fermi, Edward Teller, and others) are framed in unconscious patriotism, influenced by wartime propaganda, by assumptions about the legitimacy of revenge, and by the lies spun by those most closely associated with the decision to eliminate Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The continuing debates about Oppenheimer's early flirtations with Depression-era Marxism and other scientists' collaborations with Senator Joe McCarthy often mask continuing and often covert debates about arms control, nuclear dominance, and abolition. Similarly, accounts of scientists' debates over whether the Japanese should have been warned before the bombings were ordered, whether a demonstration A-bombing of an atoll would have sufficed to win Japan's surrender, and how to control the bomb after the war reflect contention over the moral rectitude of the US.

The most disturbing information about the dawn of the nuclear age has been consigned to an Orwellian memory hole. Absent are Truman's lies to



himself and to others that the A-bombs would be used “so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children,”<sup>49</sup> that the A-bombs were dropped “to save as many American lives as possible,”<sup>50</sup> and that they were inflicted to “spare the Japanese people from utter destruction.”<sup>51</sup> Missing are the accounts of Japanese elite and governmental efforts to negotiate surrender prior to the A-bombings on the terms accepted by Truman *after the atomic bombings*. Finally, political histories of the Manhattan Project and of subsequent US nuclear war policies written within a US frame of reference devote scant attention to the human consequences of the Project’s bombs: what actually happened to individuals and their families represented in the abstracted numbers: 40,000, 70,000, 100,000, 210,000—and the survivors scarred physically and mentally for life.

Presented as necessary to “end the war,” the mythology about the heroism of the scientists and the necessity of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombings serve to legitimize continued preparations for nuclear war and thus to preserve US global dominance. A serious political motive lay behind the Air Force’s campaign to sterilize the Smithsonian Museum’s 50th anniversary commemoration of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombings and the subsequent “Enola Gay exhibit” at the Air and Space Museum in 2003. Had the museum included information about Admiral Leahy’s and General Eisenhower’s charges that “it wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing,”<sup>52</sup> about Japanese efforts to surrender, and photographs of the ravaged bodies of Sumiteru Taniguchi and other *Hibakusha*, the legitimacy of the first atomic bombings would have been seriously undermined. This in turn would have raised yet more probing questions about the legitimacy of the “cornerstone” of subsequent US foreign and military policies.

Einstein wrote that “Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity opinions which differ from the prejudices of their social environment. Most people are even incapable of forming such opinions.” This certainly describes what has passed for mainstream “scholarship” on post-Nagasaki US use of its nuclear arsenal.

Until the post-Cold War era’s focus on “loose nukes” and the Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons programs, most US nuclear weapons-related literature concentrated on the US–Soviet confrontation across divided Europe. For decades, the vast asymmetries of US and Soviet power were ignored.<sup>53</sup> Instead, we were urged to “think the unthinkable” with Herman Kahn; to be educated about nuclear weapons and foreign policy by Henry Kissinger; to learn to live with nuclear weapons along with Albert Carnesale and Samuel Huntington; to stem the tide with Glenn Seaborg; to decide with Joseph Nye whether we were nuclear hawks, doves, or owls; and to reduce—but not remove—the nuclear danger with McGeorge Bundy and Admiral Crowe.

This literature vastly exaggerated the deterrent roles of the US nuclear arsenal while understating its offensive first-strike *raison d’être*. As a result, most students and many scholars remain ignorant about the imperial purposes and functions of Washington’s nuclear arsenals.<sup>54</sup>

Kept in the dark about the history of US preparations and threats to initiate nuclear wars, US citizens cannot fully engage in constitutional democracy or fulfill their unique role in preventing nuclear war, thus helping to ensure humanity’s survival.

#### TERRORISM NOT DETERRENCE

It has long been commonly believed that deterrence is the primary role of the US nuclear arsenal. The truth is that the US nuclear arsenal has been at least as essential to maintaining the US Empire as it has been to popular conceptions of “deterrence.” Most people properly understand deterrence as preventing nuclear attack by threatening a cataclysmic, nation-destroying, second-strike attack against the source of a nuclear attack on the US. But, in 2005, the Pentagon informed the world that this was *not* its understanding. Its unofficial *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* dictated that “the central focus of deterrence is for one nation to exert such influence over a potential adversary’s decision process that the potential adversary makes a deliberate choice to refrain from a COA [course of action].”<sup>55</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s this meant dictating the parameters of Soviet and Chinese support for Vietnam. Four decades later, consistent with the Bush Doctrine, it included preventing the emergence of rivals to US regional and global dominance. With the exception of the relative US–Soviet nuclear parity from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, the US has enjoyed a “dramatic imbalance of [nuclear] power,”<sup>56</sup> which it has used to expand and to maintain its “Grand Area.”

Much of the historical record remains hidden in classified government files, but the memoirs of presidents and their aides, the public record, and scholarly research reveal the damning and little explored history of US nuclear terrorism and extortion. The low points of this history are many: Truman’s 1946 threat to annihilate Moscow if the Soviet Union failed to withdraw immediately from Azerbaijan province in northern Iran; Eisenhower’s repeated nuclear threats during crises in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America; the Cuban Missile Crisis; Johnson’s and Nixon’s preparations and threats to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam and during Middle East wars; and the “Carter Doctrine,” which threatened the use of “any means necessary” to retain control of the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

This history reveals that post-Cold War nuclear threats by the two Presidents Bush and Clinton reflected more continuity than change. Military

doctrines changed from Eisenhower's "massive retaliation" to Kennedy's "flexible response," and from the Nixon and Carter Doctrines to "full spectrum dominance" and the Clinton and Bush Nuclear Posture Reviews, but the willingness to practice nuclear terrorism remained a constant.

Before the *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* illuminated the arsenal's roles in enforcing dominance rather than deterrence, scholars documented that the Pentagon and its political allies had long exaggerated the Soviet nuclear threat to justify increased military spending and the acquisition of new weapons systems. They also demonstrated that Cold War presidents often joined in the charade to cover their anti-communist political flanks or to reduce the pressures they faced to launch disastrous foreign military interventions. Contrary to what the public was led to believe, Eisenhower knew that "If we were to release our nuclear stockpile on the Soviet Union, the main danger would arise not from retaliation but from fallout in the earth's atmosphere." Later, when the US had tens of thousands of nuclear weapons, General David C. Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified that mutual assured destruction (MAD) was not US policy, saying, "I think it is a very dangerous strategy. It is not the strategy that we are implementing today within the military . . . I do not subscribe to the idea that we ever had it as our basic strategy."<sup>57</sup>

The US nuclear arsenal has, of course, served "deterrent" functions since the first Soviet nuclear explosion in 1949, including nuclear threats to ensure that Moscow respected the post-World War II division of Europe. Deterrence has been a greater concern for lesser powers which have seen obtaining nuclear arsenals as a means of preventing possible attacks by greater nuclear powers. The Soviet Union built its nuclear arsenal to deter possible nuclear attacks by the US and Britain. China developed its arsenal to deter both the US and the Soviet Union (now Russia). While threatening Pakistan, India's nuclear program was primarily designed to counter the potential threat from China. And Pakistan's arsenal, developed with Chinese assistance, was built to deter India. France and Israel had slightly different motivations. The *force de frappe* reasserted the French claim to be a major power in the postcolonial era and provided the ultimate coin of postmodern sovereignty. Israel joined the club to augment its conventional military strength. And, in the late 1990s and in the first years of the twenty-first century, both North Korea and Iran pursued their nuclear programs to insulate their nations from US (and in the case of Iran, Israeli) threats.

The 1961 "Berlin Crisis" was long understood to be a textbook case of Cold War deterrence. The confrontation met the criteria of a US-Soviet clash in the heart of Europe. In fact, the resolution of the crisis was not a function of MAD, but a reflection of the radical asymmetry of nuclear power. It was illustrated by the readiness of the US to use nuclear threats

to reinforce its power and influence by trumping what was a *conventional* Soviet military threat. Responding to growing West German economic vitality and political strength and to US nuclear weapons deployments in Germany, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev demanded that a separate peace treaty be negotiated with East Germany. This implicitly threatened West Berlin's status as a divided city and Western access to the city which was, functionally, an island within East Germany. Kennedy countered with an uncompromising speech to communicate his "unalterable determination . . . to maintain its position and rights in West Berlin."<sup>58</sup>

While not a function of classical "nuclear deterrence," Khrushchev was deterred from following through on his demands. Like Kennedy, Khrushchev was well aware that the US could launch a "disarming first strike" against Soviet nuclear forces, and that the Pentagon knew where to find the Soviet Union's missile sites and could "catch them all on the ground." As Roger Hilsman, Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, later reported, "the whole Soviet ICBM [inter continental ballistic missile] system was . . . obsolescent,"<sup>59</sup> and its slow bomber fleet was no competition for the US Air Force. Being "rational actors," the Kremlin knew its limits and backed down in the face of Washington's overwhelming military power.

Both the Kremlin and the Washington establishment took the wrong lessons from the debacle. A year later they faced off again in the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was sparked in part by the US effort to overthrow Fidel Castro, but more by Khrushchev's desperate effort to equalize the imbalance of terror. With only four unreliable ICBMs and antiquated fleets of bombers and submarines, Khrushchev was in pursuit of a shortcut to nuclear parity and a deterrent force by secretly attempting to deploy intermediate range missiles in Cuba, well within striking range of the US.

To preserve its nuclear dominance, to reinforce the Monroe Doctrine principle that Latin America lies within the US "sphere of interest," and to demonstrate that the US had the right to deploy missiles on the Soviet border, while the Soviet Union could not reciprocate, Kennedy and most senior advisors were willing to gamble with nuclear catastrophe. As Noam Chomsky has since reflected, there may not have been such another "moment of madness and lunacy in human history" as when Kennedy and his most senior advisors escalated the crisis, which they believed carried the probability of between a third and a half that the US would initiate nuclear war.<sup>60</sup>

By the mid-1970s, with the growth of the Soviet economy and after two decades devoted to building missile, submarine, and bomber forces needed to ensure the ability to launch devastating second-strike retaliatory attack, the Soviets achieved relative nuclear parity and the ability to inflict MAD. Yet, as General Jones testified, MAD was not US policy. The Nixon

administration pressed development of Trident, MX, cruise, and Pershing II missile systems to restore US nuclear superiority.<sup>61</sup>

Almost 20 years after the end of the Cold War, despite Washington's vast nuclear superiority, MAD still defines the parameters of US–Russian relations. China possesses a “minimum deterrent force” capable of annihilating Japan and of threatening death and destruction in the western US. Worse, with an estimated 4,000 strategic nuclear weapons on alert at any given moment,<sup>62</sup> miscalculations by political leaders or simple accidents could eliminate life on earth.

With the end of the Cold War, new rationales have been needed to maintain and modernize the US nuclear arsenal. With the demise of the “Soviet threat,” deterrence lost what little legitimizing power it had. Socialized to understand the dangers of nuclear war exclusively in terms of US–Soviet confrontation, US political leaders, arms control advocates, and many in traditional nuclear disarmament movements were disoriented. Anxious to address a real but less immediate danger, Congressional Democrats and Republicans alike focused on so-called “loose nukes” in Russia's deteriorating arsenal that could be looted by the Russian Mafia or other non-state terrorists, including revolutionary Chechens or al-Qaeda. However, the genocidal US nuclear arsenal and the threat of MAD did not address these potential dangers. Threatening to savage the innocent people of Wajiristan in northwest Pakistan was unlikely to staunch whatever nuclear ambitions Osama Bin Laden might have had.

President Bush presented his rationale in his 2002 State of the Union address. Civilization, he asserted, was threatened by an “axis of evil”: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. His answer to these ostensible threats was counter-proliferation, including the threat of nuclear attacks. Although Bush's rhetoric bolstered popular support for the planned invasion of Iraq and served the neo-fascist stratagem of ruling through manipulation of fear and lies, there was no evidence that any of these nations posed a serious or immediate threat to US security.

#### OVERCOMING GEOPOLITICAL OBSTACLES

Why is Washington wedded to its practice of nuclear terrorism? The answer lies at the intersections of technology, empire, and geopolitics.

At the height of the Cold War, President Reagan enjoyed referring to the Soviet Union as the “Evil Empire,” but nuclear terrorism has played a greater role in maintaining Washington's empire than Moscow's. The Russian Empire under tsars, commissars, and now presidents has been comparatively compact. Its furthest realms are relatively accessible to the intimidating power of Moscow's repressive apparatus and “conventional” military forces.

The US Empire is different. It extends from Mexico to the Middle East and from Berlin to Bangkok, thus posing greater challenges to deploying overwhelming US “conventional” military might to the furthest reaches of its empire.

In the years following World War II, President Eisenhower explained that “It would be impossible for the United States to maintain the military commitments which it now sustains around the world . . . did we not possess atomic weapons and the will to use them when necessary.”<sup>63</sup> Two decades later, General Alexander Haig, Nixon's Chief of Staff and Reagan's Secretary of State, defended continued US reliance on nuclear terrorism by explaining that:

Those in the West who advocate the adoption of a “no first use” policy seldom go on to propose that the United States reintroduce the draft, triple the size of its armed forces and put its economy on wartime footing. Yet in the absence of such steps, a pledge of no first use effectively leaves the West nothing with which to counterbalance the Soviet conventional advantages and geopolitical position . . .<sup>64</sup>

Chomsky framed it more critically:

Our strategic nuclear weapons system provides us with a kind of umbrella within which we can carry out conventional actions, meaning aggression and subversion, without any concern that it will be impeded in any fashion . . . Harold Brown, who was the Secretary of Defense under Carter . . . said that this is the core of our security system. He said that with this system in place, our conventional forces become “meaningful instruments of military and political power.” That means that under this umbrella of strategic nuclear weapons . . . we have succeeded in sufficiently intimidating anyone who might help protect people who we are determined to attack. So . . . if we want to overthrow the government of Guatemala . . . or send a Rapid Deployment Force into the Middle East, or if we want to back a military coup in Indonesia . . . if we want to invade Vietnam . . . we can do this without too much concern that we'll be deterred because we have this intimidating power that will threaten anyone who might get in our way.<sup>65</sup>

This was the military, strategic, and technological environment that led Truman to threaten Moscow's destruction in 1946 and to rattle his nuclear saber against China and North Korea. This asymmetry of power gave Eisenhower the confidence to threaten nuclear attacks against China and Russia during Taiwan crises and Middle East wars. In other cases,

US presidents directed nuclear threats against “third-tier” nations in the South. As military doctrines changed from Eisenhower’s “new look” massive retaliation to Kennedy’s “flexible response” and Clinton’s “full spectrum dominance,” there was continuity in Washington’s reliance on first-strike nuclear attacks to maintain the empire.

Thus, even as the danger of thermonuclear exchanges abated in the wake of the Cold War, the editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* found it necessary to move the hands of the publication’s Doomsday clock closer to midnight.<sup>66</sup> While warning about the dangers of “loose nukes,” al-Qaeda, and the “axis of evil,” the first three post-Cold War presidents maintained and modernized the massive US nuclear arsenal. They pressed the development, and ultimately the deployment, of more “usable” first-strike nuclear weapons systems, and they prepared and threatened nuclear attacks against Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Russia, and China.<sup>67</sup>

#### TOTAL WAR AND THE “EVIL THING”

This history of the use of nuclear terrorism to enforce global empire raises deeper and more troubling questions which are intimated but not fully explored in the chapters that follow. As in any society, altruism and compassion have been essential to the US experience and its culture. Well into the late twentieth century, democratic seeds planted in the country’s Declaration of Independence and Constitution grew to become more inclusive of society as a whole. But, as the continuing societal scars of the genocide of Native Americans, of slavery, of the nineteenth-century US colonial conquests, and as the continued exploitation of many workers and disregard for the poor testify, other forces have also long been active in US political life. Beliefs in US exceptionalism, superiority, and its “Manifest Destiny” to dominate were integral to political culture long before Albert Einstein signed Leo Szilard’s fateful warning to President Roosevelt. The high point of US democracy, the post-World War II victories of the civil rights movement, came as President Kennedy recklessly risked hundreds of millions of lives during the Cuban Missile Crisis and as the Johnson administration crossed what it understood to be a nuclear Rubicon with its massive escalation of the US war against Vietnam.<sup>68</sup>

These dualities cannot be ignored, and they have been compounded by the embrace of nuclear terrorism as state and national policy. Near-absolute power has corrupted almost absolutely. The novelist E. L. Doctorow put it well when he wrote:

We have had the bomb on our minds since 1945. It was first our weaponry and then our diplomacy, and now it’s our economy. How can we suppose that something so monstrously powerful would not, after years, compose

our identity? The great golem we have made against our enemies is our culture, our bomb culture—its logic, its faith, its vision.<sup>69</sup>

The US, as a state and as a society, was hardly innocent at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the mobilizations for and the fighting of two “world wars” transformed the nation in fundamental ways. Some were beneficial, such as Washington’s contributions to the end of formal colonialism, hard-fought victories for racial and gender equality,<sup>70</sup> and the GI Bill, which permitted returning veterans to obtain higher educations. However, other forces were also at work.

Tragically, the decisions to fight Germany and Japan by means of “total” war—the industrialization of war-fighting and ultimately the race to build and use the atomic bomb—profoundly influenced US culture. They created a society which had more in common with the Kaiser’s Germany and Fascist Italy than has generally been recognized. This transformation had still earlier roots. The American Civil War (1861–65) is seen by many as the beginning of “total war”: the mobilization of the entire society and the targeting of the full range of the enemy’s resources, including its industry, civilian population, and even its environment, in order to prevail. The Gatling gun, introduced during the Civil War, marked a revolution in murderous firepower. And Sherman’s merciless march through Georgia included the destruction of Atlanta.

Internationally, “total war” began within weeks of Germany’s 1914 invasion of the Low Countries when a Zeppelin bombed Antwerp and shattered the foundations of centuries of international law. Soon, Zeppelins were bombing London, instilling fear among the British.

Germans were not solely responsible for total war European-style. Shortly before assuming command of French forces, Marshal Foch implored: “You must henceforth go to the limits to find the aim of war. Since the vanquished party now never yields before it has been deprived of all means of reply, *what you have to aim at is the destruction of those very means of reply.*”<sup>71</sup> The philosopher and novelist Hermann Hesse understood where this would lead, warning that “[i]f the war goes on,” it would destroy Western civilization’s Enlightenment foundations.<sup>72</sup>

President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s dramatic wartime transformation was starkly illustrative of what US adoption of total war strategy did to the nation as a whole. In 1939, horrified by the air war that had begun in Europe, he urged Europeans to cease aerial bombardments of civilians, writing:

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of hostilities . . . sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity.

If resort is had to this form of inhuman barbarism during the period of the tragic conflagration with which the world is now confronted, hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings . . . will lose their lives. I am therefore addressing this urgent appeal to every government which may be engaged in hostilities publicly to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event, and under no circumstances, undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities.<sup>73</sup>

Within three years, General Doolittle's bombers rained death on Tokyo to raise US morale, and the president was fully committed to using nuclear weapons to win the war.<sup>74</sup>

Roosevelt was not a full partner in Churchill's fire bombings of German cities, and he protested the fire bombing of Dresden. But, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives, Roosevelt presided over the fire bombing of every major Japanese city except historic Kyoto and the four cities set aside as possible A-bomb targets. In the last months of World War II and the early years of the Cold War, German and Japanese scientists and engineers were recruited to help develop the US nuclear, missile, and germ warfare programs. Incendiary and chemical weapon attacks were soon used to obliterate much of Korea and Indochina, with the Vietnamese civilian death toll approaching 3 million.<sup>75</sup>

US research and development of hydrogen bombs, some 1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs, was begun because "the Germans were probably doing it."<sup>76</sup> And, for half a century, the US has deployed and repeatedly threatened attacks with its strategic nuclear weapons, each with the capacity to kill more people than were annihilated in Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Treblinka. This, in turn, undermined the values, structure, and practice of US democracy.

Richard Falk has written that "The roots of first strike planning exist so deep as to suggest that even the posts of President and Secretary of Defense and Senator have become largely ornamental in relation to national security policy. Throwing 'the rascals' out, accordingly becomes a much more formidable task . . ." At a still deeper spiritual level, the embrace of total and nuclear war has institutionalized what Hannah Arendt described as the "banality of evil."<sup>77</sup>

Evil is "wickedness" and "moral depravity," uncompromising terms that describe the practice of nuclear terrorism. In 1945 many of the country's most senior military officials understood that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unnecessary and violated the rules of war. Knowing that Truman was aware of Emperor Hirohito's efforts to surrender, it is difficult not to be shocked by his warning immediately

following the Hiroshima bombing that "We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city . . . If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."<sup>78</sup> Leo Szilard, who had started it all with "Einstein's" letter, understood that "had Germany used atomic bombs on two allied cities, those responsible would have been 'sentenced . . . to death at Nuremberg and hanged . . .'"<sup>79</sup>

Then came the hydrogen bomb. The General Advisory Committee of senior scientists and officials assembled to advise Truman on whether or not to develop the H-bomb presented two reports. The majority report was clear that "a super-bomb should never be produced . . . we see a unique opportunity of providing . . . limitations on the totality of war and thus limiting the fear . . . of mankind." The minority report went further, advising that the "weapon cannot be justified on any ethical ground which gives a human being a certain individuality and dignity . . . The fact that no limits exist to the destructiveness of this weapon makes its very existence and the knowledge of its construction a danger to humanity as a whole. It is necessarily an evil thing considered in any light."<sup>80</sup>

When he left office, Eisenhower knew that US nuclear war plans included a Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) that anticipated "the deaths of an estimated 360–525 million people." In the years that followed, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued that a "reasonable goal" for nuclear war against the Soviet Union could be the destruction of 25 percent of its population (55 million people). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, only 51 US strategic warheads would be needed to inflict such damage, yet Washington's arsenal numbered more than 10,000 such weapons.<sup>81</sup>

Stating what should have been obvious, in 1996 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the use and threatened use of nuclear weapons violate international law. Among the principles that the ICJ drew upon were that nuclear weapons are genocidal and potentially omniscidal; they cause indiscriminate harm to combatants and non-combatants alike and inflict unnecessary suffering; they violate the requirement that military responses be proportional; they destroy the ecosystem, thus endangering future generations; they violate international treaties outlawing the use of poison gas; and they inflict unacceptable damage to neutral nations.<sup>82</sup>

The Pentagon has, in fact, adopted a doctrine that it believes could lead to "ultimate doom"—the end of human life. Its Clinton era "The Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence" commits the US to maintaining "a capability to create a fear of national extinction" in the minds of those it seeks to intimidate. Chomsky has described this doctrine, which continues to shape

US policy and practice, as among “the most horrifying documents I’ve ever read.” It asserts that “we have to rely primarily on nuclear weapons because unlike other weapons of mass destruction . . . the effects of nuclear weapons are immediate, devastating, overwhelming—not only destructive but terrifying. . . . We have to have a national persona of irrationality with forces ‘out of control’ so we really *terrify* everybody.”<sup>83</sup>

“Evil” can be better understood in intimate personal terms. Hiroshima and Nagasaki *Hibakusha* have long accused the US of using them as “guinea pigs.” Many tearfully and angrily describe what happened to them during the months and years following the A-bombings when US doctors examined them, but offered these tormented survivors no medical care or treatment.

In May 2000, Professor Shoji Sawada and Junko Kayashige, both Hiroshima *Hibakusha*, a Japanese Protestant minister, and their US hosts, met with Dr. Paul Seligman, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of the US Department of Energy. Dr. Seligman was responsible for overseeing all US studies on the health impacts of radiation. During the meeting, the *Hibakusha*’s charge of being used as guinea pigs was explained to him, and he was asked if he could put this damning charge to rest.

Seligman’s response was immediate and unambiguous: “Oh no. We’ve used those studies for everything, including the design of new nuclear weapons.”<sup>84</sup>

Hiroshima and Nagasaki *Hibakusha* are not the only ones to have been so abused. It has long been known that Japanese fishermen and the people of Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands were intentionally exposed to fallout from the 1954 “Bravo” H-bomb test. More recently it has been learned that to prepare for possible future nuclear wars, the US and Japanese governments “withheld medical findings” from fishermen, and that a decades-long secret medical program, Project 4.1, was conducted to study the effects of radiation ingested from the environment. The study “included purposefully resettling people on lands highly contaminated by many of the 67 nuclear weapons tests conducted in the air, on land, and in the seas surrounding the Marshall Islands.”<sup>85</sup> Down-winders concentrated in Utah and Idaho, uranium miners, soldiers and sailors, and other citizens were also knowingly exposed to deadly radiation across the US.

During the first three decades of the nuclear era, 23,000 US citizens were deliberately subjected to 1,400 radiation experiments, in most cases without their informed consent. These included mentally disabled children in institutional care who were fed plutonium with their breakfast cereal and soldiers ordered to march into the fallout of simulated battlefields to better prepare the Pentagon for war fighting in “nuclear environments.” In 1993, when Clinton’s newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Energy Hazel

O’Leary revealed what she had learned about these abuses, she confessed that “The only thing I could think of was Nazi Germany.”<sup>86</sup> The former Soviet Union and other nuclear powers have committed similar crimes against their peoples and others.

This history, including repeated and secret preparations and threats to initiate genocidal nuclear war, explains why the US people’s “conception of government may itself be too antiquated.”<sup>87</sup> In this light, we need to ask if the US has truly been a “democracy” for the past 60 years. Decisions, even those that could have ended the country’s national existence and extinguished human existence, were taken without the knowledge or involvement of its people. Since the beginning of the nuclear age, senior elected and military officials have systematically withheld essential information about the domestic consequences of the country’s nuclear weapons production program and about the use and threatened use of these genocidal and omnicidal weapons. Even Vice-President Truman was kept ignorant of the Manhattan Project until after he assumed the presidency.

What, then, are the meanings and consequences of the existence of a secret and ultimately all-powerful state within a state? James Madison, US president from 1809 to 1817, had the answer: “A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both.”<sup>88</sup> Two centuries later, Stewart Udall, former Secretary of the Interior, confirmed that “The atomic weapons race and the secrecy surrounding it crushed American democracy. It induced us to conduct government according to lies. It distorted justice. It undermined American morality . . .”<sup>89</sup>

**Table 1.1 Partial Listing of Incidents of Nuclear Blackmail<sup>90</sup>**

1946	Truman threatens the Soviets regarding northern Iran.
1946	Truman sends SAC bombers to intimidate Yugoslavia following the downing of a US aircraft over Yugoslavia.
1948	Truman threatens the Soviets in response to the Berlin blockade.
1950	Truman threatens the Chinese when US Marines are surrounded at Chosin Reservoir in Korea.
1951	Truman approves a military request to attack Manchuria with nuclear weapons if significant numbers of new Chinese forces enter the war.
1953	Eisenhower threatens China to force an end to the Korean War on terms acceptable to the US.
1954	Eisenhower’s Secretary of State John Foster Dulles offers the French three tactical nuclear weapons to break the siege at Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, supported by Nixon’s public trial balloons.
1954	Eisenhower uses nuclear-armed SAC bombers to reinforce a CIA-backed coup in Guatemala.

Continued



Table 1.1 Continued

1956	Nikolai Bulganin threatens London and Paris with nuclear attacks, demanding withdrawal following their invasion of Egypt.
1956	Eisenhower counters by threatening the USSR while also demanding that the British and French withdraw from Egypt.
1958	Eisenhower orders the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare to use nuclear weapons against Iraq if necessary, to prevent extension of revolution into Kuwait.
1958	Eisenhower orders the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare to use nuclear weapons against China if they invade the island of Quemoy.
1961	Kennedy threatens Soviets during the Berlin Crisis.
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis.
1967	Johnson threatens the Soviets during the Middle East War.
1967	Johnson threatens nuclear attack to break the siege at Khe Sanh.
1969	Brezhnev threatens China during border war.
1969	Nixon's "November ultimatum" against Vietnam.
1970	Nixon signals US preparations to fight a nuclear war during the Black September War in Jordan.
1973	The Israeli government threatens to use nuclear weapons during the "October War."
1973	Kissinger threatens the Soviet Union during the last hours of the "October War" in the Middle East.
1973	Nixon pledges to South Vietnamese President Thieu that he will respond with nuclear attacks or the bombing of North Vietnam's dikes if it violates the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords.
1975	Secretary of Defense Schlesinger threatens North Korea with nuclear retaliation should it attack South Korea following the US defeat in Vietnam.
1980	The Carter Doctrine is announced.
1981	Reagan reaffirms the Carter Doctrine.
1982	British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher threatens to eliminate Buenos Aires during the Falklands War.
1990	Pakistan threatens India during confrontation over Kashmir.
1990-91	Bush threatens Iraq during the Gulf War.
1993	Clinton threatens North Korea.
1994	Clinton's confrontation with North Korea.
1996	China threatens "Los Angeles" during confrontation over Taiwan.
1996	Clinton threatens Libya with nuclear attack to prevent completion of an underground chemical weapons production complex.
1998	Clinton threatens Iraq with nuclear attack.
1999	India and Pakistan threaten and prepare nuclear attacks during the Kargil War.
2001	US forces placed on a DEFCON alert in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks.
2001	Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld refuses to rule out using tactical nuclear weapons against Afghan caves believed to be sheltering Osama Bin Laden.
2002	Bush communicates an implied threat to counter any Iraqi use of chemical or biological weapons with a nuclear attack.
2003	US mobilization and implicit nuclear threats against North Korea.
2006	French President Jacques Chirac threatens first-strike nuclear attacks against nations that practice terrorism against France.
2006	Implicit US threats to bomb Iran's nuclear infrastructure with "bunker-buster" atomic bombs.

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