

Statecraft Global  
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# INTERNATIONAL HISTORY POLITICS

Relations Empire  
Change

An organized section of the American  
Political Science Association (APSA)

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## International History and Politics (IHAP)

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[Website](#)

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**Newsletter  
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### Call for Announcements

Section members are invited to send their announcements about upcoming workshops, recent books, or anything else of general IHAP interest to the editor: John Emery—jremery@uci.edu

## Newsletter Summer 2020 Volume 6, Issue 1

Message from the Chair  
Cecelia Lynch

Who knew that in less than six short months the world would change as dramatically as it has? One of the things I still find difficult to fathom about COVID-19 is how its manifestations, including the discourses and routines of “social distancing,” “lockdown,” and “masking,” now have world-wide resonance – the most visible manifestation, perhaps, of contemporary globalism. But this pandemic cannot be seen in isolation from the explosive movement – also globalized – against anti-black racism that has occurred in the wake of COVID-19. What initially appeared to be egalitarian – hence the neighborhood signs, “we are all in this together,” has become one more tangible instance of gross inequality in most countries.

I know from many conversations with colleagues and friends that I am not alone in constantly thinking about what I can and should be doing to protect loved ones but also others I do not know, and to rectify racist injustices. While many of us as scholars have long struggled with questions of whether and how our work has any meaningful resonance in the world, the events of the past half year have put such questions into stark relief. The task of navigating roles of scholar/historian/diplomat/policy-maker/activist is something we know many in the past have agonized about. *We* are also going through such a time: it is now.

The contributions to this issue address the impact of another world-changing time 75 years ago: the earth-shattering implications of using nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A number of IHAP section members have devoted their careers to the pressing questions that resulted, especially including how to prevent nuclear weapons from being used again. In the poignant and thoughtful contributions in the following roundtable, we see how historical narratives, terminology, and experiences play out across eras and places, informing our analyses, silences, and renewed debates. As Toshihiro Higuchi points out in the first contribution, the very scripts for the word “Hiroshima” themselves navigate national/international and historical/contemporary claims regarding the bombing and its aftermath.

Today, how do we make sense of the death and suffering (economic, social, political) of the present time, with its dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism? What we do now will begin to set the narratives that will have to be reckoned with in the future. Here, I point to APSA’s

[statement](#) condemning systemic racism. Following our parent organization as well as other sections (see for example, the “[APSA Information Technology and Politics Section Statement of Support and Action Plan on Racial Justice and Equality](#)”), it is critical for our section to engage in action as well as ongoing reflection on inclusion regarding both our historical perspectives and our membership, panels, and our own work. Following are specifics:

- First, the IHAP Section Officers and Executive Council affirm the principles of the APSA statement and the Information Technology and Politics section (again, found [here](#) and [here](#)).
- Second, like the Information Technology and Politics Section, our section has worked on gender inclusion for several years, in part through the prohibition of “manels.” We have also long tried to be inclusive of different methodological and epistemological approaches, and two years ago we made graduate student membership in the section free as a way of including and encouraging young scholars. At last year’s (2019) Business Meeting, however, we also began a conversation about other areas, especially **racial, ethnic and geographic inclusion. We are committed to ensuring more, and deeper, scholarship** that includes what has been suppressed (sometimes violently) and ignored, to all of our peril. At this year’s APSA, for example, I **draw attention to the panel** on “**The Howard School of International Affairs: Theory and Practice,**” with papers by Errol Henderson, Pearl Robinson, Krista Johnson and Owen Rhys Brown (on **Thursday, September 10 at 10:00am MDT**). I also note that our other sponsored panels include an impressive variety of papers on a range of historical issues around the globe, from the Qing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to Manchukuo, the Spanish-American war to colonial Algeria, to contemporary reintegration in South Sudan, among other excellent papers and panels. Section officers, Executive Council members, and the Division Chair are also committed in future to giving preference to panel submissions that promote inclusion in the field.
- Third, we had intended to broaden our scholarly perspectives on global order (and inclusion of more BIPOC scholars) with a spring 2020 newsletter featuring perspectives from around the world reflecting on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. Because of COVID-19, this issue was postponed to the fall, but our newsletter editor continues to work on it. **We invite additional contributions to this issue** (please contact John Emery at [jremery@uci.edu](mailto:jremery@uci.edu)).
- Fourth, the Section Officers and Executive Council members commit ourselves to be **intentional about including BIPOC scholars in our own paper, article and book citations as well as our construction of panels.** (I know from my own experience working with scholars in and on Africa as well as on early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century IR that expanding our sources, citations, and contacts is not only absolutely necessary for responsible scholarship, but also represents an immensely exciting as well as humbling journey).
- Fifth, **we invite additional suggestions for inclusion** in the form of
  - 1) **nominations to serve on the IHAP Executive Council** (the nominating committee, including myself, Andrew Yeo, and Jonathan Agensky, is looking for **three good candidates!**; please send your nominations, including self-nominations (several lines including name, affiliation, and why you are nominating the person) to one of us by **Friday August 21<sup>st</sup>** at [clynch@uci.edu](mailto:clynch@uci.edu), [YEO@cua.edu](mailto:YEO@cua.edu), or [agensky@ohio.edu](mailto:agensky@ohio.edu) ; and
  - 2) additional suggestions for inclusion to be discussed at our [Business Meeting](#), to be held on Wednesday September 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am-10:00am MDT. This can include greater **outreach to relevant APSA sections and related groups as well as outreach to BIPOC scholars and graduate students to join and actively participate in IHAP.**
- Sixth, we will replace the traditional reception at this year’s annual meeting with a **meet and greet/mentoring session.** We invite current senior section members to offer to facilitate a small group; we also ask our members to be proactive and intentional in promoting inclusivity in inviting junior scholars and graduate students to participate.

There is a great deal of work to be done. While I am stepping down as Section Chair after this year’s annual meeting, I intend to do my part in IHAP as well as in the discipline as a whole. Thank you for the opportunity to chair our section over the past two years.

–Cecelia Lynch  
Professor of Political Science, University of California, Irvine

## IHAP at APSA 2020 – Virtual Conference

• At the 116<sup>th</sup> APSA conference in San Francisco scheduled for September 10-13, 2020 has transitioned to a virtual digital event in light of the current situation surrounding COVID-19. Please check APSA's [updated live program](#) as the Meeting has shifted from Pacific Time to Mountain Time (MT, UTC-6).

• At the upcoming APSA conference, the division will put on 5 paper panels, 1 poster session (featuring 3 presenters), 1 author-meets-critics event (on Charles Kupchan's *Isolationism*), and 1 roundtable (on Cecelia Lynch's *Wrestling With God*)

• We look forward to seeing all of you virtually at the IHAP business meeting and at our sponsored panels

## IHAP Panels, Posters, & Roundtables

### Wednesday September 9<sup>th</sup>

**\*\*\*International History and Politics Business Meeting\*\*\*** – Business Meeting on Wed. September 9, 9:00am-10:00am MDT [[More info](#)]

### Thursday September 10<sup>th</sup>

**“Violence, Order, and Rule in the International System”** Thu, September 10, 8:00 to 9:30am MDT [[More info](#)]

**“The Howard School of International Affairs: Theory and Practice”** Thu, September 10, 10:00 to 11:30am MDT [[More info](#)]

**“Actors, Agency, + Responsibility in Global Governance”** Thu, September 10, 10:00 to 11:30am MDT [[More info](#)]

**“Roundtable: Lynch, Wrestling with God: Ethical Precarity in Christianity and IR”** Thu, September 10, 2:00 to 3:30pm MDT [[More info](#)]

### Friday September 11<sup>th</sup>

**“Conflict, Governance, and International Political Order”** Fri, September 11, 8:00 to 9:30am MDT [[More info](#)]

### Saturday September 12<sup>th</sup>

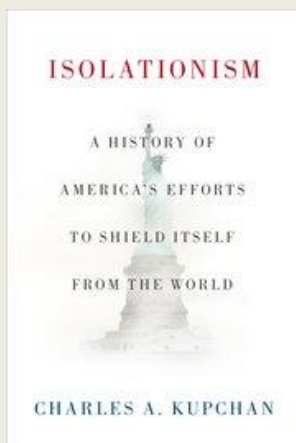
**“Grand Strategy and International Political Order”** Sat, September 12, 10:00 to 11:30am MDT [[More info](#)]

**Poster Session for IHAP** – Sat, September 12, 12:00 to 12:30pm MDT [[More info](#)]

Featuring Posters From: Jaehan Park (Johns Hopkins University), Naosuke Mukoyama (University of Oxford), and Catherine McMullen (Multnomah County)

### Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup>

**“Author Meets Critics: Charles A. Kupchan's ‘Isolationism’ (Oxford Univ Press)”** Sun, September 13, 12:00 to 1:30pm MDT [[More info](#)]



# Roundtable

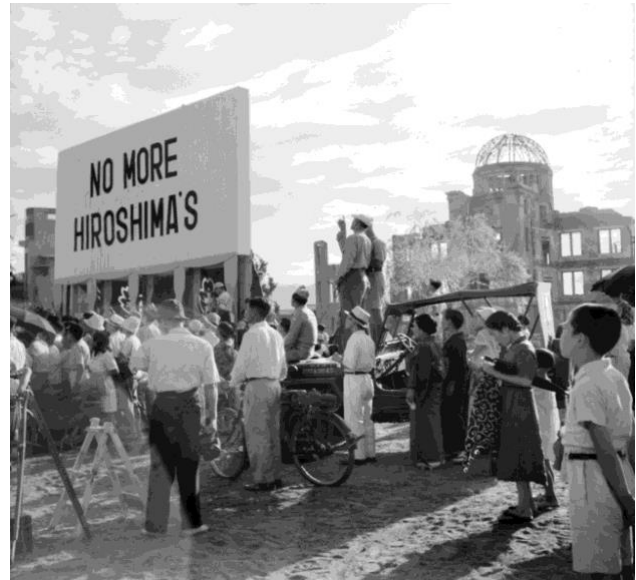
## Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki at 75

### A Tale of Two Hiroshima's

By Toshihiro Higuchi, Georgetown University

There are two different scripts for the Japanese word “Hiroshima.” One is kanji, the adopted Chinese characters, which mean a bustling city of over one-million people in western Japan with the tragic past as the first city ever to be devastated by a nuclear weapon. But the other writing system, katakana, is a curious choice, because this phonetic script is typically used to transliterate foreign words. The use of katakana has a fascinating history. In 1948, a local Christian minister named Kiyoshi Tanimoto reportedly coined a phrase, “No More Hiroshima’s,” in his public warning against repeating the tragedy anywhere in the world. The slogan was originally written in the English alphabet for the foreign audience, but its growing popularity overseas soon led Japanese intellectuals and peace activists to reclaim the phrase and transcribe the city’s name in katakana to signal its universal symbolism. The story of Hiroshima in katakana illustrates a dialectic of the historical event and the global imaginary which has engendered many and diverse meanings of Hiroshima ever since the fateful day of August 6, 1945.

Last time the commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reached a major milestone in 1995, Hiroshima stood primarily as a historical event that happened in a specific time and place; that is, “Hiroshima” in kanji. The timing explains this important, but conceptually narrow framing. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary came shortly after the end of the Cold War, which not only renewed scholarly interest in the origins of the superpower hostility, but also intensified the “memory wars” over the legacy of colonialism and violence in the Asia-Pacific region. Against this backdrop, historians clashed over the role of the atomic bomb in ending World War II. The competing narratives of the Hiroshima bombing also burst into the public domain when fiery controversy broke out over the Enola Gay exhibition at the U.S. National Air and Space Museum. Emotions ran high, and disagreements went deep, but both sides of the controversy shared the same steadfast focus on the decision to drop the atomic bombs and its immediate context as seen exclusively from Washington, Tokyo, and Moscow.



This year, which marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings, a different kind of scholarship is emerging, which explores the global and long-term implications of the world’s first nuclear war – “Hiroshima” in katakana. Earlier this year, I had the privilege of joining a roundtable hosted by the [Wilson Center](#) to discuss a co-edited volume entitled *The Age of Hiroshima*. With contributions from historians, political scientists, and sociologists who study various parts of the world, this collaborative work reexamines Hiroshima as an epoch-making global phenomenon that has radically re-shaped international relations over the last several decades. Each chapter sheds light on a different aspect of the nuclear revolution, but the volume collectively demonstrates that we cannot understand the meanings of Hiroshima without considering the fact that it was the United States that dropped the bomb. As the only country to ever use a nuclear weapon in war, it ascended to primacy in the postwar international order; political elites and citizens around the world invariably learned “lessons” from Hiroshima that reflected a country’s precarious position vis-a-vis the United States. The Soviet Union saw the atomic bombing as an intimidation and spared no effort to achieve nuclear parity with the United States. In contrast, Japan and West Germany opted to live under the U.S. nuclear umbrella while erasing their past as wartime aggressors who ultimately brought about the atomic tragedy. In the meantime, developing countries in the Global South viewed Hiroshima through the lens of neocolonialism, launching their own nuclear programs in a bid for more perfect sovereignty in the nuclear age.

This emerging scholarship of global Hiroshima is a refreshing effort to historicize the nuclear revolution in the context of global power hierarchy after World War II. Thus, Hiroshima catalyzed the creation of

nuclear apartheid that has reflected and perpetuated the privileged positions of a handful of states in the international system. While the nuclear-armed countries have consistently failed to keep their end of the nonproliferation bargain, the United States globally, and Israel regionally, have repeatedly used or threatened to use military force to unilaterally disarm their enemies suspected to harbor nuclear ambitions, often with disastrous outcomes for the belligerents and the international community. As we now stand at the crossroads in the U.S.-led postwar world order, it is essential to take stock of the bloody legacies of global Hiroshima and revisit historical Hiroshima – the lived experience of a nuclear holocaust – to chart a new path to a more peaceful and equitable world.

***“But what will ‘Hiroshima’ signify after all the survivors are gone? The eventual passing of the living witnesses of the world’s first nuclear war is especially disturbing as the Hiroshima discourse is now facing many competing narratives of victimhood.”***

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings, however, raises a pressing question about the future status of historical Hiroshima. Today, less than 150,000 atomic bomb survivors live in Japan and fewer around the world remain. As [The Age of Hiroshima](#) editors Michael Gordin and John Ikenberry have observed, the meanings of Hiroshima

multiply and diversify as the mushroom cloud fades into the past. But what will “Hiroshima” signify after all the survivors are gone? The eventual passing of the living witnesses of the world’s first nuclear war is especially disturbing as the Hiroshima discourse is now facing many competing narratives of victimhood. Today, right-wing populism and historical revisionism are sweeping many parts of the world, and the nuclear taboo, while still robust, has come under a new challenge, as shown in a recent reversal in U.S. nuclear weapons policy. How can we make sure that there will be no more Hiroshima’s after Hiroshima ceases to be a lived experience and becomes a hallowed sign?

The key to learning lessons from Hiroshima beyond the lifetime of the atomic bomb survivors may lie in its enduring material traces. Beginning in 1945, the five nuclear weapons states tested hundreds of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, scattering a massive amount of radioactivity all over the world. My newly published book, [Political Fallout](#), tells a story of this human-driven, truly global environmental crisis to rethink the Cold War in the context of the Anthropocene – an unofficial unit of geological time in which humans have become a major force of planetary changes. Today, the material legacy of the nuclear revolution has moved back into the limelight, as a group of geologists has recently proposed to designate fallout in Earth’s crust as a standard reference to classify the geological strata of the Anthropocene. This compelling evidence of the accelerating planetary crisis, both nuclear and non-nuclear, serves as a powerful reminder about humanity’s self-inflicted plight – and its responsibility for better stewardship of Spaceship Earth.

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## **Memory, Imagination, and the Use of Nuclear Weapons**

*By Lisa Langdon Koch, Claremont McKenna College*

In the initial days and weeks after the United States attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the first two atomic bombs, Americans had access to neither descriptions nor photographs depicting the human suffering wrought by these new weapons. Within a few years, however, “Hiroshima” would become shorthand for total destruction, a symbol for

something so far outside the typical human experience that it challenges and overwhelms the imagination. How Americans have remembered the atomic bombings holds meaning not only for the memory of the victims, but also for how Americans might view the potential contemporary use of nuclear weapons.

Quick deaths, not lingering agonies, were implied by early reports. A *Boston Globe* headline from August 9, 1945 (page 2) read: “200,000 Believed Dead in Inferno that Vaporized City of Hiroshima.” The reported number of dead is incorrect, but the aspect of the headline I wish to highlight is that the city is described as having been “vaporized,” a term that generates images of a clean, immediate end. Similarly, a headline from the Associated Press on August 8 referred to the city of Hiroshima as a place that had just disappeared. As printed in the *New York Herald Tribune* (page 1A): “Atom Bomb Destroyed 60% of Hiroshima; Pictures Show 4 Square Miles of City Gone.” The bombs seemed to have completed their work in an instant.

By the fall of 1945, however, months after Japan’s surrender, reports emerged that atomic bomb survivors were continuing to suffer and die, and in slow and painful ways. Radiation was identified as a likely cause. American officials who were invested in the future of nuclear weapons received these reports with alarm. The lingering effects of the bombs felt comparable to the horrors of chemical warfare, which had already been banned. Radioactivity suggested the specters of poison and contamination. General Leslie Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project and the head of the Target Committee that had planned a series of nuclear strikes on Japan, believed that Americans learning of the frightening effects of radiation might begin to sympathize with Japanese victims. He recognized that a public understanding that nuclear weapons cause such gruesome harms to their victims could limit the weapons’ use, or even render them illegitimate.

How the public would remember and understand Hiroshima and Nagasaki thus continued to be a matter of importance. President Truman chose to justify the bombings as necessary to prevent the enormous loss of American life that would have resulted from an invasion of Japan. Today, this narrative is widely considered by historians to be a *post hoc*, false rationalization for the destruction of the two cities, but it is a narrative that is still firmly entrenched in the American public consciousness. Henry L. Stimson, who had been Truman’s Secretary of War, published his justification of the use of the bombs in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1947; Paul Boyer describes

**“The lingering effects of the bombs felt comparable to the horrors of chemical warfare, which had already been banned. Radioactivity suggested the specters of poison and contamination.”**

that article as “[defining] the meaning of ‘Hiroshima and Nagasaki’ for Americans.”<sup>1</sup> And Groves used his voice and position to influence the views of government officials and the public, even testifying before Congress that radiation sickness was neither gruesome nor painful. Instead, like the early headlines and news reports that suggested a clean, quick, and perhaps even merciful end, Groves called radiation exposure a “pleasant way to die.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the emergence of vivid and disturbing information about the effects of the atomic bombs, such as John Hersey’s 1946 work “Hiroshima,” an abstract understanding of the effects of nuclear weapons, in which human suffering was largely obscured, persisted in the American public imagination throughout the Cold War. Whereas the accounts of *hibakusha* – atomic bomb survivors – focused on the people who were injured or killed, Americans tended to imagine the aftermath of a nuclear conflict in terms of material rather than human destruction, using phrases evoking emptiness and absence.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, those who have tried to raise public awareness about the consequences of nuclear weapons use have sought to use vivid imagery and information to replace the empty and abstract notions of a nuclear aftermath. In the 1950s, U.S. atomic energy commissioner Thomas Murray wanted high-ranking U.S. officials to witness a thermonuclear explosion to “directly [experience] its awful meaning,” reasoning that “the more [U.S. military and government officials] learn about our H-weapons, the more misgivings they must undoubtedly have.”<sup>4</sup> Murray believed that Americans’ vague, blankly apocalyptic imaginings of nuclear war had become trite and meaningless, and argued that

<sup>1</sup> Paul Boyer, “Exotic Resonances: Hiroshima in American Memory,” *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 299.

<sup>2</sup> Sean L. Malloy, “‘A Very Pleasant Way to Die’: Radiation Effects and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb against Japan,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 3 (2012): 516–18.

<sup>3</sup> Susan T. Fiske, “Adult Beliefs, Feelings, and Actions Regarding Nuclear War: Evidence from Surveys and

Experiments,” in *The Medical Implications of Nuclear War*, ed. F. Solomon and R. Q. Marson (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 1986), 444–66.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas E. Murray, *Nuclear Policy for War and Peace* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1960), 35.

Congress should hold open hearings on the likely effects of a nuclear attack to jolt the American public out of their complacency. Using similar reasoning, Hans Morgenthau deliberately employed vivid language in *Death in the Nuclear Age* (1961), “[harnessing] the darkest fears of annihilation . . . [and calling] upon his readers to imagine the apocalypse in order to prevent it.”<sup>5</sup>

Anti-nuclear activists have, for decades, employed vivid, humanitarian language about the consequences of nuclear attack in order to heighten the sense that nuclear weapons are immoral; some of the most recent such work has been done by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Rebecca Davis Gibbons describes how the nuclear ban movement explicitly adopted a humanitarian approach grounded in the memory of Hiroshima.<sup>6</sup> In 2010, Jakob Kellenberger, then-president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, delivered a speech in which he vividly described what happened to the citizens of Hiroshima. The notion of the “clean” death is absent; instead, he uses testimony from a Red Cross physician describing people in great pain from terrible burns, the gruesome internal damage to the body caused by exposure to radiation, and the lack of medical care for the severely wounded – approximately ninety percent of Hiroshima’s doctors and nurses were reported dead.<sup>7</sup>

ICAN chose Setsuko Thurlow, an anti-nuclear activist and Hiroshima survivor, to deliver the organization’s opening statement to the 2017 UN conference to negotiate what would become the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In her statement, she described haunting memories of the agonizing death of her four-year-old nephew from the atomic bomb, and invoked the physical and spiritual presence of “a cloud of witnesses from Hiroshima and Nagasaki” watching over the proceedings.<sup>8</sup> The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is observable; Hiroshima and Nagasaki provide the horrific evidence.

### **“a cloud of witnesses from Hiroshima and Nagasaki”**

<sup>5</sup> Alison McQueen, *Political Realism in Apocalyptic Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 181.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Davis Gibbons, “The Humanitarian Turn in Nuclear Disarmament and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 25, no. 1–2 (2018): 11–36.

<sup>7</sup> Jakob Kellenberger, “Bringing the Era of Nuclear Weapons to an End” (Geneva, April 20, 2010), <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/statement/nuclear-weapons-statement-200410.htm>.



“Myth of Tomorrow” Mural By: Tarō Okamoto – Shibuya Station, Tokyo, Japan.

How we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki – whether we center the human experience or abstract it away – may affect our willingness to use the bomb again. In a recent study using a representative sample of Americans, Matthew Wells and I found that respondents who received vivid details about the effects of nuclear weapons were statistically significantly less likely to choose to conduct a nuclear attack in a crisis scenario. In fact, people who received descriptions of the damage the weapons cause *specifically to the human body* were less likely to blame the hypothetical nuclear bomb victims for the hostile actions of their government.<sup>9</sup> Americans are less supportive of nuclear weapons use, and more sympathetic toward the civilian victims, when they understand what the consequences will be.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have symbolized not only destruction, however, but also the end of the second World War. For Americans, remembering the atomic bombs as bringers of both peace and death offers the end that may justify the means, and a possible path to future nuclear use. If the cause is important enough – if enough lives could be saved, for example – perhaps nuclear weapons could be legitimately used.

Yet scholars argue that the American cultural understanding of the part that Hiroshima and Nagasaki played in ending the war is factually wrong.

<sup>8</sup> Setsuko Thurlow, “ICAN Opening Statement to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons” (New York, March 27, 2017), [https://www.icanw.org/ican\\_statements\\_to\\_the\\_negotiating\\_conference](https://www.icanw.org/ican_statements_to_the_negotiating_conference).

<sup>9</sup> We provided respondents with information about both conventional and nuclear effects. Lisa Langdon Koch and Matthew Wells, “Still Taboo? Citizens’ Attitudes toward the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Summer 2020, 1–18.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa demonstrated in his 2005 book *Racing the Enemy* that the bombing of Hiroshima accelerated the Soviet invasion of Japan, which ultimately affected Japan's willingness to surrender to the United States. But the bombs themselves were not the proximate cause of surrender. In fact, meeting notes suggest that the bombing of Nagasaki was not discussed by the Japanese Supreme War Council as a reason to end the war, even though the news of the bombing of Nagasaki was literally delivered to the Council mid-session.<sup>10</sup> Re-telling the history of the bombs, however, would require Americans to face the horror without the balm of justification. This goes further still than a societal reckoning; as Ward Wilson put it, the story of the bomb as peacemaker affects the calculations strategists and leaders make about the utility of nuclear weapons today: "... their judgments are based, in part, on their assessment of Hiroshima."<sup>11</sup>

Seventy-five years later, American society has lost almost all living memory of the terror of World War II. We are far removed from the darkness and exhaustion of the long years of violence, citizen sacrifice, and death – and from the specific horror of the nuclear attacks. With the passing of time, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki" may become merely symbolic – solemn abstractions, rather than human events to be imagined and remembered. How we understand the consequences of nuclear weapons use, and how we understand Hiroshima and Nagasaki, depends on the ways in which we choose, or are taught, to remember.

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## **The Narrative of Necessity in the Nuclear Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

*By Sidra Hamidi, Stetson University*

August 2020 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The anniversary comes at a tumultuous time in human history, a time when the broader public is grappling with the historical legacies of slavery, empire, and the legalized and legitimated forms of violence that continue to plague modern democracy. The events of August 6 and 9 of 1945, along with the continuing legacy of the world's first nuclear tests in July of 1945, require a similar historical reckoning.

One of the enduring questions asked about the bombings, in both the academic disciplines of history and political science and in popular culture, is whether they were necessary to end the death and destruction of World War II. Much effort is spent on evaluating the decision-making of the Truman administration and contextualizing the bombings in the politics of World War II and the nascent Cold War. This debate will not be recounted here because the debate obscures the broader politics that enabled the bombings. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombings presents an opportunity to ask a different question

about the historical narrative—what are the effects of understanding the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki primarily through the narrative of necessity? How have the debates around whether or not it was necessary to end WWII through the bombings shaped our understanding of nuclear weapons and more broadly, the U.S.'s global role?

Historical analyses of these debates have largely focused on the morally-embattled nature of key individuals, both politicians and scientists, of the early nuclear age. J. Robert Oppenheimer worried about the "blood on his hands" as a result of the bombings and Truman is widely reported as having believed that the bombings ultimately saved more lives than they took. However, an inordinate focus on the *individual* moral quandaries of these leaders undermines the existing *global norms and institutions* that legitimated the bombings.

For example, one of the many concerns for the Truman administration at the time is the question of targeting—did Hiroshima and Nagasaki constitute

<sup>10</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Ward Wilson, "The Winning Weapon?: Rethinking Nuclear Weapons in Light of Hiroshima," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007): 177.



civilian or military targets? Again, the point here is not simply to answer this question but to determine how asking this question shapes our understanding of the events. Historians point to Truman's ultimate decision to forgo targeting culturally-important cities like Kyoto, thereby signifying his integrity and willingness to uphold international law. But this decision is emblematic of the permissive effects of international law and norms—the moral opprobrium of targeting Kyoto had the effect of legitimating a target that was more proximate to military installations. International law on the use of force can often work permissively in this way, explicitly prohibiting certain acts while tacitly legitimating others. In any case, this sort of critique is only possible if one moves beyond the focus on the narrative of necessity that has dominated historical analysis surrounding the bombings.

The historical debates and their focus on individual or group decision-making prevent Western historians and analysts from seeing the bombings for what they were—the ultimate violation of ethical and legal standards by a state that would go on to be the bearer of those standards in the world. From an ethical perspective, dominant historical narratives prioritize intention over effect—the effects of Hiroshima are seen as a necessary evil in accomplishing the more noble intention of ending the war.

Historians should certainly excavate the historical archive to determine the deliberations that led to the decision to drop the bomb. But in exploring the archive, scholars and others often fall into the trap of reifying the same narrative of necessity that Truman and others were perpetuating in 1945. By attempting to discern whether the bombings were *truly* necessary or not, analysts lose sight of how liberal discourses are used to legitimate violence on in the international stage. To be sure, there are many voices both in academia and the policy-making world that critique the necessity of the atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the continual specter of nuclear weapons in the world. But the question of necessity is still the dominant narrative shaping public understanding of the events. Students, both at the secondary and undergraduate education levels, are primarily taught about the events through the limited choices faced by the Truman administration. The language used by the administration is taken for granted without an understanding of what this language is doing to permit violence. To their credit, these narratives often cover the effects of the bombings on the city—horrific photographs of burns and injuries and the lingering effects of radiation are certainly mentioned. But what is less common is an

assessment of how the U.S., despite being the self-described “leader of the free world,” is able to legitimate violence.

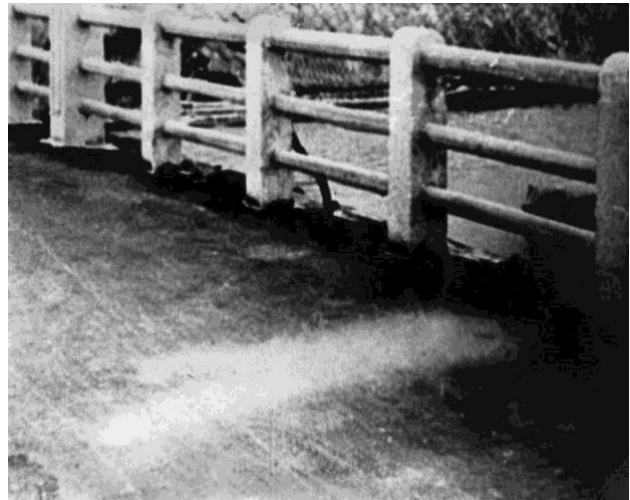
The narrative of necessity is also a rhetorical way to avoid delving into questions of responsibility, of which there are many. First, should the U.S. take responsibility for the death and destruction caused by the act? One could argue the U.S. has taken this responsibility through many symbolic acts which culminated in President Obama's 2016 speech in Hiroshima. But even this speech did not contain an actual apology. Still, there are other questions that imply a broader sense of responsibility—should the U.S. take responsibility for setting a precedent for both the use and testing of nuclear weapons on civilian populations? What is the U.S.'s responsibility in introducing and perpetuating nuclear weapons in international society? The U.S. certainly does not possess sole responsibility in perpetuating nuclear weapons, but these questions are most salient for the U.S. because of its self-identification as a global norm-setter on nonproliferation.

***“One of the physical remnants of Hiroshima casualties were their shadows—imprinted into the ground by the searing effects of radiation. The bombings continue to cast a more figurative shadow on global history”***

In the wake of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, both U.S. policymakers and scholars have moved further away from asking these difficult questions. A focus on “rogue” actors like North Korea and Iran distract and delay a true reckoning among U.S. policymakers with the many disastrous effects of the bombings, not just for Hiroshima and Nagasaki but for international society. One of the physical remnants of Hiroshima casualties were their shadows—imprinted into the ground by the searing effects of radiation. The bombings continue to cast a more figurative shadow on global history and coming to terms with this history will require more than mere policy initiatives like nonproliferation or even disarmament. It will require an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of good intentions and the power of legitimation.



United States Strategic Bombing Survey photo of the steps of Sumitomo Hiroshima Bank, Kamiya-Cho, 850 feet (260 meters) from the hypocenter – United States National Archives.



Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images. Available at: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/hiroshima-shadows>.

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## The Legacy of the Hibakusha

By Rebecca Davis Gibbons, University of Southern Maine

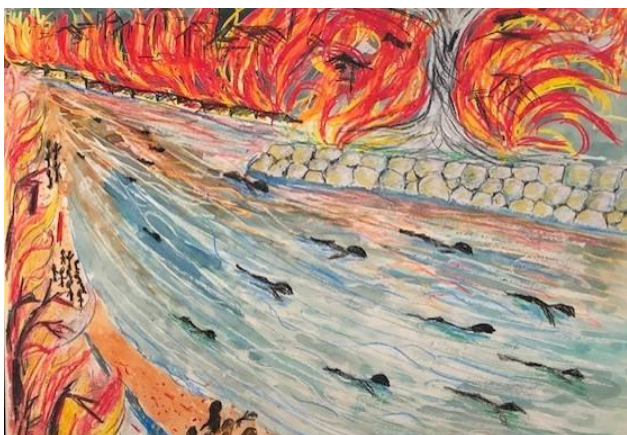
The morning of August 6, 2020 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the world entering the nuclear age. From a clear blue sky, a B-29 dropped a bomb over the center of Hiroshima, Japan killing 80,000 people immediately and approximately 100,000 people over the following months. Three days later, another bombing followed in Nagasaki, killing thousands more. A small group of American, British, and Canadian citizens working together in the Manhattan Project had entered this age the previous month having successfully built and tested a nuclear weapon in the New Mexican desert on July 16, 1945. But with the attack on Hiroshima, the whole world would learn of this new and devastating weapon.

After 75 years, we as a society do not think much about the effect of the bombings on the men, women, and children in those two unfortunate cities. We can learn about the devastation wrought by these weapons from the direct experience of the hibakusha, the Japanese word for the survivors of the two nuclear attacks. Many hibakusha travel around the world sharing what happened to them the morning of August 6 or August 9 and in the days and weeks and months and years

***“Many hibakusha...re-live the horrors of seeing family members burned to death, crushed by falling buildings or eliminated instantaneously by the explosion”***

after the bombings. They re-live the horrors of seeing family members burned to death, crushed by falling buildings, or eliminated instantaneously by the explosion. The stories continue, as they recount days of watching loved ones suffer and die with an unidentified illness. Later on many faced their own challenges, not only with illness but also discrimination for being from one of the bombed cities. Having a full appreciation of the consequences of nuclear weapons and their place in our society means learning from these stories. It means seeing the Atomic Bomb Memorial Burial Mound, where unclaimed bodies close to the hypocenter of the bombing in Hiroshima were taken and cremated. It means visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to witness careful displays of the artifacts and stories from the attack, the piecemeal remains of children’s school uniforms, lunch pails, and tricycles. It means viewing several different drawings created by survivors of the same image, one that must have been seared into their minds in the days after the attack: a parent grounded on hands and knees cradling an infant underneath for protection, the two beings forever joined in a black charred memorial to the best and worst of humanity. It also means learning

from other survivors of nuclear explosions, those who lived and worked adjacent to testing sites in Algeria, French Polynesia, Australia, the United States, France, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Western China, and Kazakhstan. There are individuals from each of these locations still suffering from the aftereffects of their experiences with nuclear weapons.



Drawing by Hiroshima bombing survivor. Photo taken by the author at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, August 2019.

Many hibakusha and survivors of nuclear testing have worked to provide testimony about their experiences in hopes of promoting global nuclear disarmament. One hibakusha, Setsuko Thurlow, accepted the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize along with the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Beatrice Fihn, for their efforts to bring attention to the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons and to promote a treaty banning nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup> The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by 122 states in July 2017. The treaty bans its members from possessing nuclear weapons and prohibits all activities related to these weapons, such as deploying them, assisting in their creation, or threatening their use.<sup>13</sup> It aims to stigmatize nuclear weapons, promoting the idea that they are unacceptable to possess due to their potential for significant and long-lasting damage to communities and the earth. The treaty grew out of an explicitly humanitarian campaign, which called attention to the ways in which nuclear explosions affect bodies, communities, and climates. This effort,

<sup>12</sup> See “The Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony 2017,” <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2017/award-video/> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> The full treaty text can be read at the United Nations’ Office for Disarmament Affairs,

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> For more on this movement, see Rebecca Davis Gibbons, “The humanitarian turn in nuclear disarmament and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Nonproliferation*

the highlight of which was a series of three humanitarian conferences in 2013 and 2014, was unique in recognizing that victims of nuclear attacks and nuclear testing have their own expertise about nuclear weapons and that all of us, whether from nuclear weapon possessing states or non-nuclear weapon possessing states, have a right to speak out about nuclear weapons.<sup>14</sup>



Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and Setsuko Thurlow, Hiroshima bombing survivor, accepting the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. From: [https://www.icanw.org/nobel\\_prize](https://www.icanw.org/nobel_prize)

By mid-July 2020, only 40 states had ratified the treaty; 50 are required for its entry into force. No nuclear weapon possessing state or state protected by extended nuclear deterrence has joined the treaty. The ban thus represents the great divide over the value placed on nuclear weapons between the world’s nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots. Those whose defense policies rely on nuclear deterrence—the United States and its allies, the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea—see these weapons as integral to their national security; those in favor of banning nuclear weapons argue that humanity’s long-term security is better served by eliminating them.

Today the United States is engaged in a long-term plan to update its nuclear arsenal, spending as much as \$500 billion over the next ten years to maintain and modernize its nuclear platforms and the bombs they deliver.<sup>15</sup> Over thirty years, the program is estimated to cost more than a trillion dollars, with the new platforms expected to last through the 2080s.<sup>16</sup> Desp-

*Review* 25, nos. 1-2 (2018): 11-36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2018.1486960>.

<sup>15</sup> “Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2019 to 2028,” Congressional Budget Office, January 24, 2019, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/54914> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Approaches for Managing the Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2017 to 2046,” Congressional Budget Office, October 31, 2017, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53211> (accessed July 15, 2020).

ite this astounding cost and the trade-offs (for other guns or butter) necessitated by spending such vast sums, there is little public discussion in the United States about this expenditure or US nuclear policy. Nuclear weapons are mostly ignored today, despite that fact that when asked, the majority of Americans favor nuclear disarmament.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, after the Hiroshima bombing, the public learned in detail about the aftermath of the attack through John Hersey's powerful piece in *The New Yorker* published in August 1946.<sup>18</sup> Nuclear weapons remained in the public conscience with the advent of more powerful thermonuclear weapons and their megaton tests, global protests of nuclear weapons, and of course, the experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the 1983, the American public was reminded of the terror of nuclear war by viewing ABC's made-for-television film, *The Day After*. Today, when polling my college students about what they know about nuclear weapons and where they learned about them, the most common source of their knowledge is video games. Few know there are still over 13,000 nuclear weapons in the world today, the majority of them significantly more destructive than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

***“Those whose defense policies rely on nuclear deterrence...see these weapons as integral to their national security; those in favor of banning nuclear weapons argue that humanity's long-term security is better served by eliminating them.”***

Though most people rarely consider nuclear weapons today outside of news stories about North Korea or Iran, these weapons still exist and remain relevant to the national security policies of about 40 states in the international system. Their vast destructive potential remains. For this reason, remembering Hiroshima and listening to the stories of nuclear survivors is more important than ever. Only with an understanding of these weapons and their effects can we have a much-needed public debate about their role in our society.

<sup>16</sup>(contd.) According to an Arms Control Association estimate that takes inflation into account, the cost is closer to \$1.7 trillion (Kingston Reif, “The Trillion (and a Half) Dollar Triad?” *Arms Control Today* 9, Issue 6, August 18, 2017, <https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2017-08/trillion-half-dollar-triad>, (accessed July 16, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Herzog, Jonathon Baron, and Rebecca Davis Gibbons, “Anti-Normative Messaging, Group Cues, and the Nuclear Ban Treaty” *The Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> John Hersey, “Hiroshima,” *The New Yorker*, August 24, 1946, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima> (accessed July 15, 2020).

# Congratulations to the 2020 IHAP Section Award Winners!

## The 2020 Outstanding Article in International History and Politics

The Outstanding Article Award in International History and Politics recognizes exceptional peer-reviewed journal articles representing the mission of the International History and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, including innovative work that brings new light to events and processes in international politics, encourages interdisciplinary conversations between political scientists and historians, and advances historiographical methods. The Outstanding Article Award is given to a published article that appeared in print in the calendar year preceding the APSA meeting at which the award is presented.

Committee Members: Helen Kinsella (Chair), Jordan Branch, and Christopher Darnton

The winners of the 2020 Outstanding Article Award are: **Eric Hundman and Sarah E Parkinson** for their article: “**Rogues, Degenerates, and Heroes: Disobedience as Politics in Military Organizations**” *European Journal of International Relations (EJIR)* Vol. 25 (3) 645-671. Please find the article available [here](#).

Article description from the Committee: This piece beautifully fits the criteria of work that is innovative and interdisciplinary, while also advancing historical methods. The committee agreed that this article (among a number of excellent submissions) offered a unique argument significant to the field of IR and also history. The article engendered a great conversation among committee members, who appreciate the chance to showcase it with the IHAP Outstanding Article Prize.

The authors also published “[When do they Shoot? The Social Origins of Officers’ Disobedience](#)” in *Political Violence at a Glance*, drawing on their now award-winning *EJIR* article.

Please check back for our Autumn IHAP Newsletter for more on the 2020 Award Winners!

## The 2020 Robert L. Jervis and Paul Schroeder Best Book Award

The Robert L. Jervis and Paul Schroeder award is for the best book on International History and Politics. The award may be granted to a single-authored or multi-authored book, or to an edited volume, and will be given to works published in the calendar year prior to the year of the APSA meeting at which the award is presented. The copyright date of a book will establish the relevant year.

Committee Members: Martin Heisler (Chair), Arjun Chowdhury, and Kathryn Lavelle

The ~~co~~-winners for Robert L. Jervis and Paul Schroeder Best Book Award are:

**Ahmed T. Kuru** for his book: *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Available [here](#).

And

**Jelena Subotić** for her book: *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance After Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019). Available [here](#).



Book descriptions, written by Martin Heisler and Arjun Chowdhury:

The Jervis-Schroeder book award for 2020 is shared by two very different books. Their main common trait is that they are outstanding works of scholarship and exemplars of international history that underpin salient issues in politics today.

The very title of Ahmet Kuru's book, *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment* suggests a project beyond the scope of any one book or even author. A millennial might be tempted to put an exclamation point after the title! Undaunted by the scale of the challenge, Kuru explores why Muslim-majority countries, which exceeded the achievements of Europe until the early modern period, are now relatively poor and autocratic, which combination in recent years has led to high levels of violence.

In a historical institutionalist vein, Kuru traces the origins of the current malaise of Muslim-majority countries to alliances between rulers threatened by various upheavals and Islamic scholars or ulema in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Prior to this, most Islamic scholars operated independently of the state, many being traders, and so there was freedom of thought and commerce from the seventh to the eleventh century. But the ulema-state alliance that developed after suppressed independent scholarship and the rise of an independent merchant class, both potential sources of development and democracy. Contingencies, such as the Mongol invasions, depressed trade and agriculture, while rulers sought to continue their alliances with the ulema, combining to consistently marginalize intelligentsia and bourgeoisie. This path-dependent trajectory unfolded while Western Europe was first spared by the Mongol invasions, and then saw constraints on inquiry diminish as the side-effect of religious conflicts.

The book ranges over a vast historical canvas, revealing the complexity and change that have characterized Muslim-majority societies. By doing so, Kuru contests two types of conventional wisdom: that the religious tenets of Islam are inimical to development and democracy, or that colonialism led to the imposition of institutions, like borders, that have disadvantaged Muslim-majority states in the last two hundred years. By identifying longer-run, but non-religious, roots for current trends, Kuru leaves us with an appreciation of how deep-seated the causes of underdevelopment and authoritarianism may be, but also optimism that because these problems are institutional in origin, reforms are imaginable that do not interfere with the religious sensibilities of citizens. Indeed, Kuru shows, these reforms have precedents in the rich history of early Muslim societies.

Jelena Subotić's *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance After Communism* appears to be an empirically well grounded, analytically discerning look at the self-serving uses to which Eastern European countries have put Holocaust memorialization in the post-Cold War era. While her in-depth original research focuses on Serbia, Croatia and Lithuania, most of the analysis applies to post-Communist Eastern Europe more generally. Subotić shows us how Holocaust memorialization, or the lack thereof, plays a fundamental role in recent reversals of democratic reforms in Eastern Europe.

In the decades following the Second World War the fates of Jews and other minorities such as Roma and Jehovah's Witnesses were subsumed under the master narrative of the heroic fight against fascism and the roles of those countries in persecuting, deporting and killing members of such minorities was elided. Since few of the latter were or could be active fighters, any effort to memorialize their fate in the Holocaust was marginalized. While such purposeful forgetting has been noted by other scholars, Subotić's analysis goes far beyond describing collective amnesia.

The search for identity and for positive self-images led to the conflation of suffering under communism with that under fascism. By 1989 actions during the war were at most distant or secondhand memory, while life under communist rule was experienced by all. Jews were, rightly or not, frequently associated with communism; anti-Communist political ideas were harnessed to nationalist, self-regarding collective identities. Such identities, connected to mythical or constructed national histories, militated for essential or pure peoplehood that left little or no room for minorities, indigenous or immigrant.

Such exclusionary politics became the underpinning of the illiberal regimes that have emerged in much of Eastern Europe. It militates against Holocaust remembrance; it targets "foreign influences" as threats to newly constructed or reconstructed nationhood; and Jews are often associated with such influences. Anti-Semitism thus becomes part of efforts to protect the nation's collective identity, and it serves the revival of far-right politics.

Subotić connects this political evolution to resistance or opposition to European or more generally cosmopolitan normative framing of the Holocaust, one that advocates learning from its horrors. And to the extent that such views emanate from the outside and challenge the new identities under construction, they are also treated as unwelcome foreign influences. The purposeful forgetting of the Holocaust thus serves to erect a normative as well as practical barrier between Eastern European countries and the European Union—of which many are members—and much of the western world.

## Highlighting Recent Publications in International History and Politics

The following recent publications have been written by IHAP members or are of interest to those who study international history and politics. If you would like your publication featured in the fall newsletter please email the newsletter editor John Emery: [jremery@uci.edu](mailto:jremery@uci.edu)

- Ballinger, Pamela. *The World Refugees Made: Decolonization and the Foundation of Postwar Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). Available [here](#).
- Brown, Archie. *The Human Factor: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Thatcher, and the End of the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Available [here](#).
- Colgan, Jeff D., and Nicholas L. Miller. (2019) “Rival Hierarchies and the Origins of Nuclear Technology Sharing.” *International Studies Quarterly* 63(2): 310–321. Available [here](#).
- Colgan, Jeff D. (2019) “American Perspectives and Blind Spots on World Politics.” Introduction to a Special Issue of *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4(3): 300–309. Available [here](#).
- Lieber, Kier A. and Daryl G. Press. *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). Available [here](#).
- McKinney, Katherine E., Scott D. Sagan, and Allen S. Weiner (2020) “Why the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima Would Be Illegal Today” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Available [here](#).
- Queralt, Didac. (2019) “War, International Finance, and Fiscal Capacity in the Long Run.” *International Organization* 73(4): 713–753. Available [here](#).
- Sand, Eric. (2020) “Desperate Measures: the Effects of Economic Isolation on Warring Powers.” *Texas National Security Review* 3(2): 12–37. Available [here](#).
- Schuessler, John M., and Joshua R. Shiffrin. (2019) “The Shadow of Exit From NATO.” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 13(3): 38–51. Available [here](#).
- Spruyt, Hendrik. *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). Available [here](#).
- Shelef, Nadav G. *Homelands: Shifting Borders and Territorial Disputes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). Available [here](#).
- Tesser, Lynn. (2019). “Identity, Contingency, and Interaction: Historical Research and Social Science Analysis of Nation-State Proliferation.” *Nationalities Papers*, 47(3), 412–428. Available [here](#).
- Trubowitz, Peter and Brian Burgoon. (2020) “The Retreat of the West,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 1–21. Available [here](#).