

Presidents' Body Counts:

The Twelve Worst and Four Best American Presidents

Based on How Many Lived or Died Because of Their Actions

by Al Carroll

## About the Author

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His other books are *Medicine Bags and Dog Tags: American Indian Veteran Traditions from Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War* and *Survivors: Family Histories of Colonialism, Genocide, and War*. His next books will be *Ira Hayes: The Meaning of His Life in Native Memory and White Stereotypes*, an alternate history work *Confederate Tyranny*, and *A People's History of Texas*. He is a longtime activist and researcher for NewAgeFraud.org.

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Introduction:  
How to Judge a President,  
or the Presidency If Human Life Matters

Politics and history are far too important to leave to professionals. All people have the right to control their own fates, to not die before their time from unneeded wars or other preventable deaths, and to not be asked to approve of atrocities done in their name, often in secret. They should be able to seek out knowledge of such matters and not see control of their lives handed off to elites.

But one does not see such a belief when looking at the attitudes of many political leaders, presidential scholars, and political commentators. Too often politicians and analysts think of average people as chess pieces. This book seeks to make the chess pieces into people yet again and put the lives and welfare of all human beings front and center in politics. Far too many presidents and their admirers reflexively defend presidential power. There are too many imitators of Bismark among them, and not enough imitators of Gandhi in his later years.

By that I do not mean the often empty, rote, and shallow admiration so many pose towards Gandhi's best known disciple, Martin Luther King. I mean imitators of both men's goals and views. I am not speaking of strict pacifism, which neither man believed. Both admitted the moral and practical necessity and worth of soldiers and police.

I am speaking of something far broader. For both Gandhi and King sought system-wide social change taking the moral high ground. Both men were moralists, but ultimately pragmatic ones who sought how best to practically see that morality put into place and either legally structured, or to see immoral legal structures ended. Both sought to turn the other cheek when necessary to change the enemy's mind and also motivate the public by exposing the brutal nature of unjust systems. Both also extended these views and tactics from centers of power to the most remote village within their nations onto the farthest battlefields outside it. Though both were opposed to most (but not all) wars, both

planned their campaigns in as much detail as the best generals. This book is one moralist's argument for humanitarianism as the highest concern one should have to judge a president and for politics in general, and that presidents that were evil should be correctly remembered as such and nothing else. The just noble presidents, though fewer, should be equally remembered. One must fight with every living breath any ideology, system, policy, or official that is proudly amoral or contemptuous of human lives.

In the 1990s there emerged a bizarre urban legend, one without the tiniest bit of evidence to back it, yet believed by tens of millions of Americans. Though this politically motivated conspiracy theory emerged before most average Americans discovered and regularly used the internet as they do today, one can currently find many sites repeating this ludicrous myth.

The Clinton Body Count claims that Bill and Hillary Clinton killed dozens of people to get Bill elected president, and then the two continued to kill many to stay president or cover up alleged scandals even while in office. Conspiracy theorists argue the Clintons were involved in drug dealing, organized crime, grand larceny, bribery, ties to radical groups, and assorted alleged sexual misdeeds from adultery to prostitution to lesbianism, even rape. And of course, the Clintons supposedly either murdered or ordered the murder of fifty or more people in tandem with their lust and greed.

Obviously the purpose of this conspiracy theory is to smear the Clintons, to change their image from political opposition one disagrees with to purely downright evil people who murder, rape, and steal with impunity. Body Count proponents sought (and still seek) nothing less than to turn the Clintons into demonic figures. It takes quite a bit of blindly ideological zeal to want to do so, for Bill Clinton was mostly too mediocre a president to waste such anger on. As will be discussed later, the worst thing Clinton did is rarely the source of anger for those who hate him.

This book is nothing like the incredibly ludicrous Clinton Body Count, though I will be happy if some of the curiosity factor related to that conspiracy theory rubs off on this book. Instead what I propose to do is to judge presidents by the most nonpartisan and reliable standard: who did the most

harm and/or good to the greatest number of people, measured especially by the number of deaths they either caused or avoided, along with their intent.

Judging the good that an individual does is far more difficult than weighing their evil or injury. For presidents, one must judge such amorphous measures as how they led or at least worked with public reform movements, how many were helped or harmed by a legislative measure and just how much did that president play a role in its being passed, how issues of war and peace were carried out, and how much attention they devoted to being farsighted on issues that with 20/20 hindsight now seem so important.

Judging harm can be hazy as well. Judging outright evil is far easier. The most obvious evil is how many innocents died, or to be more blunt and less euphemistic, how many were killed or even murdered or massacred because of presidential orders. Those historians, journalists, commentators, activists, or politicians who insist on judging a president on such sideshow pabulum and superficiality as “inspiring confidence, “leadership,” or “presidential caliber” are frankly not much better than celebrity tabloid writers.

Such cheerleaders for the presidency have become far too enamored of their subjects. Like the celebrity journalist who seriously argues the artistic merits of a star's haircut, an author who judges a president for how they made the general public feel deserves little credibility. And ones who make excuses for, again, actions that must be rightly labeled evil, based so on the party or ideology of a president, deserve to be called party hacks and hypocrites. If two presidents of opposite party or belief carry out the same evil, they are both evil. One cannot in good conscience be an apologist for great evil, or even “minor” evil.

For American presidents do commit evil all the time. If one knows anything in depth about American history one cannot deny that, and only the most willfully blind shall. There are many Americans who frankly do not know the Evil That American Presidents Often Do, and this book is for them. The ignorant, unless remaining so by choice, are blameless. Most Americans were never taught

in public schools most of what is in this book.

Most journalists do a terrible job on the subject, denying the frequent evil of those in the White House for two reasons. One reason is because media elites are multi millionaires working for multi billionaires. It would defy their class interests to admit the evil of powerful institutions. The top anchors (in the UK they are more accurately described as what they are, news readers) work for businesses that are profit machines first and foremost. Delivering truthful information is a secondary concern. Two, most media reporting on the presidency become close to people in those administrations, become their friends, often business partners, occasionally even marriage partners. The media and the White House are in an incestuous relationship, and it should be no surprise that journalists make excuses for their de facto family.

In universities we can and usually are more honest about the system we live under, and for that reason partisan hacks deliberately lie and label universities as “liberal.” Only those utterly ignorant of higher education, or choosing to be blatant liars, could claim so. Those actually in academia know there are no shortages of critically thinking conservatives in universities, from business schools to military and religious institutes to law schools to agricultural and mechanical universities. (For example, in my own research interests I often find writings from US military officers that are extremely critical of government policy.) The biggest problem interfering with academic freedom today is not ideology but enormous corporate influence, the distortion and pressures applied by moneyed interests. The fields of political science, economics, and yes, journalism, are all dominated by conservatives. The history profession was openly conservative for most of its time as a profession. Up until the civil rights era, much of the supposedly liberal social sciences were also afflicted by scientific racism.

Today, most historians are neither liberal nor conservative. I, like many other scholars, regard such labels as reductionist, oversimplified, and downright anal retentive in trying to make every person and belief fit into such narrow categories. Most historians, myself included, would want to write you an essay to describe all the subtleties of their beliefs and are not deeply tied to either party or the binary

division into liberal and conservative ideology.

Insisting everyone and everything be divided into liberal or conservative is not only inaccurate. It limits debate, ignoring two things: most Americans are neither liberal nor conservative; and there is a wide range of opinion both outside of and within those two labels. America actually has a more limited range of political belief systems than most other nations. Most other nations have, for example, socialist or labor parties. (Any who try to label Democrats as “socialists” only prove how gullible they are in swallowing propaganda, or their ignorance of what the word socialist means.) Most other nations also usually have major parties to the right of the Republican Party, even its social and religious conservative wing. This work is politically neither liberal nor conservative. But I am constrained to point out when those of either ideology are destructive amoral hypocrites, and especially when presidents are either blinded by ideology, or rise above it to achieve good things.

Whether left, right, or the almost mythical political center, **what all good and insightful historians and other scholars and analysts share is being non-dogmatic**, going where the evidence takes you and being willing to test their beliefs and change one's opinions based on the results. I have no doubt some of the narrower minded critics reading this work will immediately try to pigeon hole this avowedly nonpartisan and non-ideological work as the opposite of whatever their own belief is. This work, and my own worldview, are shaped primarily by two beliefs; American Indian traditions that puts the needs of one's people first and sees warfare as inherently unnatural and destructive, and harmful to the human spirit, even while warriors who sacrifice themselves must be deeply honored; and the Catholic humanitarian tradition of social justice that seeks to save lives as well as souls.

Both spiritual traditions and peoples look at the actions of those in power instinctively with suspicion, believing one must serve spirit, not the insane fat takers of the white man's world, and not Mammon, Moloch, or Babylon. The office of president is too often seen by many American commentators as part of a civic religion, as something one must not question any more than a fundamentalist dares not question their own faith.

Many other Americans instead treat government as something distant which they are not a part of, instead of the democracy they share responsibility for. They retreat into lazy cynicism, turning sometimes their very lives over to others for disposal. By disdaining politics, they are much more vulnerable to politicians' will.

For amoral power brokers in Washington and Wall Street, both the unquestioning patriot and the indifferent cynic suit their purposes well, allowing the power hungry to pursue that power without having to really consult or answer to the public. Government and business elites often look at the public as a nuisance, objects to manipulate, flocks to fleece, or fodder for their wars. Too many elites live in or want to run a world that is amoral, one where they dare not admit to the public the brutality of their everyday business.

And for US presidents, clearly many of them committed evil. This includes in all major parties and across all political ideologies. Were these presidents judged by the standards we reserve for America's putative enemies, some of these presidents should have faced war crimes trials and been executed once convicted. For those presidents still living, the fact that we have not put several on trial for war crimes says much about the inadequacies of our theoretically republican government, and about many Americans' double standards.

Some categories are for callous indifference or deaths caused by incompetence. For them, the remedy is far easier. Those presidents deserve every bit of condemnation that can be heaped upon them, but no legal punishment. For those presidents who were men of honor, courage, and skill who enabled many to live who would have perished by war or hardship, they deserve as much praise as the worst ones deserve scorn. Even presidents who unintentionally saved lives, or who did the right thing for the wrong reasons, deserve recognition. Both praise and criticism must be nonpartisan. The list of condemnation includes both Nixon and Andrew Johnson, Reagan and Clinton. The list of praiseworthy includes Jefferson, Lincoln, and Carter. Those who did both good and evil include Lyndon Johnson, both Bushes, and FDR.

Surprisingly, some of those frequently listed by scholars as the worst presidents, like Grant, come out much better. Admired figures like Washington come across as mere caretakers. Many presidents were just there, a presence at most. Few people know most of the presidents between the end of Reconstruction and the Spanish-American War, or between the world wars, for good reason.

The methodology used in this book is simple: Did a president commit actions that knowingly led directly to the deaths of innocents? If yes, then that president belongs in a category for the degree of evil they carried out, the number of mass deaths. The categories are ranked in order of how many were killed as a result and how culpable a president is for these deaths, from outright genocide to the smaller numbers of deaths that occur during periods of mass incarceration of dissidents. Each president within that category is further ranked by the number of deaths, the most prolific killers at the top.

Each section begins with a definition of the category. This is followed by several brief summaries of the facts before going into a detailed discussion:

**What:** A quick summary of the atrocities done.

**The Body Count:** How many deaths, based on the best credible estimates.

**Who Also Gets the Blame:** Discussion of who besides the president is guilty of causing these atrocities, or who is often blamed.

For all sections from Section Eight on, events or presidents are listed chronologically, not ranked by the number of deaths. For these two parts, Section Eight: The Good Records of Presidents and Section Nine: What If? Who Would Have Been Far Better at Saving Lives as President?, the summaries are only a slightly bit different:

**What:** A quick summary of the events likely to lead to many lives saved.

**The Number of Lives Saved:** The most credible estimates, generally based on the events that presidents could have avoided.

**Who Also Gets the Credit:** Others, public officials, leaders, or social movements, that also

played a part in saving many lives.

As you may have already noticed, the most important facts are often in bold. Presidents are listed in order of the worst of all first, in terms of numbers of atrocities and degree of blame and evil. Best presidents are listed chronologically.

This is a book for the general public, not academia. Thus, footnotes are absent. But noting my sources is very important, since no doubt partisans of parties or ideologies will go into denial. Or there may be those wishing to know more about a topic. Sources for every entry will be listed in a future supplement, as well as further discussion of some side issues.

It is my hope this book stirs discussion and will be used as a source in classrooms, at both the university and high school levels. Students, show this book to the bored coaches who “teach” history to you at most high schools by dull quizzes, chapter summaries, and tedious pointless memorization. Let your classes become debating sessions.

For every political or history junkie, show this book to the overly partisan of both parties and watch them squirm about the choices they made voting. For the motivated voter, quote this book to politicians at town hall meetings, and let no congressmen ever blindly support a president in the name of vague and illusory “national security.” For those presidents who committed these atrocities long ago, the least we owe their victims is to be honest. To have our schools, federal buildings, airports, cities, and states named after butchers is appalling, as is a genocidal president appearing on our currency.

Enjoy the honest look, and use the ammunition I give you against dogmatists of every political stripe, not just the ones you are not part of. The final conclusions include suggestions for how to choose presidents looking beyond partisanship. Be as willing to use the facts presented herein to critique your own party or ideology. Not doing so makes you as willfully blind as the ones you criticize.

## Section One:

### Presidents' Roles in Genocide

The term genocide was first coined and defined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to describe the Holocaust, though there were many genocides before that. Lemkin's definition is pretty straight forward, listing the following elements:

**Attempted or Successful Destruction of a Nation, People, Culture, or Religious Group in Whole or in Part.** The last phrase is very important. The genocidal do not have to exterminate an entire people to be guilty of genocide. One could also be guilty of genocide by deliberately seeking to wipe out a part of a people to make it easier to control the rest. Thus Hitler's orders to wipe out about one tenth of the Polish population constituted genocide against all Poles. All three US presidents in this section did not try to kill every last person of each group. But Nixon, Reagan, and Jackson did deliberately cause deaths of such a huge percentage of these groups, and planned the killings knowing full well the results, that what they did constitutes genocide.

**Mass Murder of Non-Combatants.** Killing many soldiers is not genocide. By the same token, just because one side kills many soldiers in combat does not mean that also killing many civilians with the intent of wiping out all or a part of them is not genocide. Pointing to the fact that American Indians, Jews, Black slaves, or any other group fought back against genocide does not mean genocide did not happen. All three US presidents listed in this section approved the killings of these Cambodians, Guatemalans, and members of the Five Tribes, knowing full well these were virtually all civilians.

**Mass Rape or Rape as a War Tactic.** Individual soldiers raping is not genocide. A policy in place ordering the use of mass rapes to intimidate a people, as Columbus did by rewarding his soldiers with Native women to rape, or Serbian soldiers and militias did against Bosnian Muslims, clearly is practicing an element of genocide.

**Starvation or Disease as a War Tactic.** Famine and disease that often follows from war is not

genocide. Deliberately using them to break the enemy is. Thus the deliberate mass killing of buffalo by the US military to starve out American Indian tribes was an act of genocide, as was the use of diseased bodies by Hernan Cortes to contaminate Aztec water supplies. No doubt to the surprise of many, the US government never used diseased blankets to wipe out Natives. British General Lord Amherst did, as did American fur trappers to wipe out much of the Mandan tribe.

**Forced Sterilization.** This must be a policy attempting to wipe out or diminish a group.

**Forced Adoption.** Again, this must be a policy attempting to wipe out or diminish a group.

**Assault on or Disruption of Culture, Language, or Religion.** This must be part of an attempt to weaken a group and make it easier to conquer. Thus US government assimilation efforts aimed at immigrants are not genocide. But assimilation efforts at Indian boarding schools run by both the Canadian and US governments were cultural genocide.

Some versions of the definition of genocide insist the group under assault must be racial, ethnic, religious, or national. Such a definition would leave out Stalin's mass killing of at least twenty million Soviet peasants and dissidents. It would also leave out Mao's mass killing of tens of millions of Chinese dissidents.

Even the Holocaust would be affected. The millions of political prisoners, handicapped, gays, and criminals executed by the Nazis side by side in the same death camps as Jews, Romany, Poles, and Jehovah's Witnesses suddenly become a separate class of victims. Clearly this is unconscionable, and not what Lemkin or any other human rights activist wants.

For there is an enormous industry of genocide denial. The Holocaust, thankfully, has been recognized as such an egregious crime that only the most blind, ignorant, lunatic, or clearly bigoted would deny it happened or try to diminish the scope of the massive tragedy. But other genocides are not exempt. Hundreds of "scholars" and thousands of commentators, journalists, and government officials spend a great deal of effort denying certain genocides happened. The personalities doing so can be as horrific as the actual officials ordering the mass killings to as banal and ignorant as film and cultural

critic Michael Medved, who denies that genocide took place against American Indians.

Historian and psychologist Israel Charney formulated the most common psychological tricks that genocide deniers use, shown below in bold, followed by my comments:

### **Twelve Ways to Deny Genocide**

1. **Question the Numbers.** Holocaust deniers sometimes focus on saying “only” five instead of six million Jews were killed. Deniers that genocide happened to Natives also try to claim the Americas were almost uninhabited before Europeans invaded, when actually there were as many as 140 million Natives in 1492. In what became the US, there were as many as 18 million.

2. **Attack the Messengers.** Accuse them of being radicals, fanatics, or liars. In both Nixon's and Reagan's cases, they and their administrations claimed their critics were dupes of Communists. Even Barry Goldwater, the leading American conservative, was seen by Reagan as a Commie tool.

3. **Claims the Deaths Were Accidents.** Both Holocaust deniers and deniers of an American Indian genocide often claim disease did most or all of the killing. The second case ignores that Natives were more vulnerable to disease precisely because European and Anglo-American invaders used starvation as a war tactic. To be blunt, there is nothing as absurd as “accidental genocide” and it is offensive and illogical to claim so. Mass murder by definition is not accidental. Europeans, and later, white Americans, were guilty of genocide simply by choosing to travel to an area. Though they did not yet understand germ theory, they saw and understood the obvious result: their very presence brought deadly epidemics that killed many.

Those who deny the slave trade was genocide often claim that since the goal was economic exploitation rather than killing all Africans, somehow it was not genocide. That ignores that the definition of genocide includes “in whole *or in part.*” For every one African enslaved, as many as six were killed. The massive scope of the killing of Africans under slavery makes it genocide by definition.

4. **Focus on the “Strangeness” of the Victims.** Dehumanize the victims. Focus on details like

Orthodox Jewish victims' long beards, or take advantage of non-Natives' lack of knowledge about American Indians to portray their traditions as “savage.”

5. **Blame “Tribal Conflict.”** Claim the deaths were inevitable hatreds from longstanding conflict. But any deep study of history shows nothing was inevitable. The line between typical wars and outright genocide is clear and broad, and the first does not usually lead to the second. For every genocide, there are hundreds of wars.

6. **Blame “Out of Control Forces.”** This is much like the previous claim, except the guilty are not named. Instead, vague “forces” are blamed. This is a claim usually advanced by the sloppiest writers or public speakers seeking to confuse or capitalize on a public that may not know the history of a conflict.

7. **Claim We Must Avoid Antagonizing the Killers.** Sometimes this claim is very contemptible, that we must not anger the guilty. But often this claim is made by those hoping to end the violence.

For example, in the case of genocide in Guatemala, as with many other dictatorships, those guilty of war crimes and repression insisted on a guarantee they would not be prosecuted in exchange for giving up power. At other times, people may want to avoid antagonizing mass killers because they rightly fear reprisals. It is not unusual for survivors, witnesses, and even prosecutors and judges to be assassinated.

8. **Justify for Economic Reasons.** Some years ago, conservative commentator Fred Barnes justified genocide against American Indians on the talk show *The McLaughlin Group* by saying (paraphrasing), “Who wouldn't prefer living in a big city to living in the woods?” Besides the fact that many do enjoy living in the countryside, Barnes' argument bought into another racist assumption, that Natives are or were lazy primitives and Europeans more productive and advanced, ignoring that technologically and in terms of economic activity, Aztecs and Incas both had a better record than Europeans. In fact, many Natives did live in cities larger than European ones, and virtually all Native

societies provided for their poor better than the US does today.

9. **Claim Victims Now Being Treated Well.** Even if true, it is irrelevant to the crimes already committed. Similarly, a rape survivor's success in rebuilding her life after the assault does not mean the rape didn't happen.

10. **Argue the Definition of Genocide.** Argue the finest and most miniscule points to try and confuse the issue. Ironically, this is most often done by governments to avoid doing anything. The most bizarre and obvious example in recent years was the Clinton administration's insistence that Rwandan genocide was not genocide, only “acts of genocide.” Had they admitted genocide was going on, they would have been legally obligated to act, and politically pressured by the humanitarian concerns of the general public.

11. **Blame the Victims.** Accuse Jews of a conspiracy to control the world or Natives of being inherently warlike. Accuse Armenians or Kurds of being the cause of their own deaths or of being an internal threat to a nation by allegedly refusing to assimilate. Reagan repeatedly accuse Central Americans of being the real aggressors and threats to the US, despite the US invading first and these nations far too small and powerless to be a threat.

12. **Say Forgiveness Is More Important.** More than a few reconciliation campaigns, laws, or practices stress the importance of forgiveness. Most of the world's religions do as well. But the overwhelming majority of these practices, laws, and faiths do not use forgiveness as a reason to avoid justice and punishment, nor forget the horrors the victims suffered.

Genocide as a term often gets abused, overused, or thrown as a political football. Anti-abortion activists at times use the term to support their cause, equating abortion to genocide. Gun rights activists often spread the false claim that Nazis favored gun control and thus blame gun control for genocide. (See Section Two.) Probably the most bizarre abuse of the term is when whites who claim distant Native ancestry complain it is “genocide” for them to be seen as whites.

But ironically, the term is far more underused than overused. As said earlier, admitting that genocide is going on becomes the legal trigger for action by major world powers, as well as the United Nations. Admitting that atrocities are happening on the same level as the Holocaust naturally brings the concern of many world citizens. Since those who remember the Holocaust use “Never again!” as their call to action, admitting a genocide is being carried out and no one is stopping it brings much soul searching about the world's inaction and the inadequacies of governments, especially democracies.

For more distant genocides, historical blindness and a tendency to glamorize American leaders, presidents especially, leads to denials. It is instructive that the one president that most historians admit committed genocide is the one most distant in time, Andrew Jackson. He also has the lowest body count of the three genocides by a factor of ten to thirty. No doubt some will object that all three presidents did not set out to commit genocide. Such a claim would also defend Stalin, who killed millions of farmers in the name of modernization. Most scholars in genocide studies and human rights activists argues that the sheer scope of mass civilian deaths can itself constitute genocide.

That American presidents played central roles in two genocides very recently, within the lifetime of many of the readers of this book, begs the question: why didn't Americans try to stop either of these genocides? They both occurred well after the world's conscience supposedly had been enlightened by recognizing the horrors of the Holocaust.

Both genocides happened in lands most Americans could not find on a map, in nations most Americans knew little about. Both genocides were carried out in the name of fighting Communism, though neither nation victimized was Communist. Both sets of wars, in Southeast Asia or Central America, did inspire many protests. That much is true.

But the protests were overwhelmingly concerned with American lives. The chance of thousands more lost American lives apparently inspired more worry than the reality of hundreds of thousands of foreigners, and not white ones either, being killed by American weapons, money, and by either the order of or with the direct collaboration of American presidents. The American media's failure in

covering both genocides is especially grievous, since neither wave of atrocities were recognized as genocide. In both cases they were deemed simply conflicts, ones blamed on Communists.

Today, one of those guilty of collaborating with genocide, Reagan, remains one of the country's most popular presidents, revered as a godfather figure by conservative ideologists. Even moderate and supposedly liberal people sometimes concede him a great figure for allegedly winning the Cold War. (Most scholars outside of conservative ideologues disagree, rightly saying the Cold War was won by brave dissidents in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as Gorbachev's reforms.) For many, Reagan's personal charm matters more than his actions. His disarming smile let him literally get away with taking part in mass murder.

Another president who ordered the mass deaths of civilians, Nixon, remains remembered for two matters, his corruption and his alleged competence in foreign affairs. To those who often call the Watergate Scandal a minor matter, one must agree. But not in the manner they might expect. Covering up spying, \$15 million in bribes, burglary, and even plans to firebomb your opponents is not nearly as important as Nixon's bombings that killed up to 600,000 innocents. And as will become clearer repeatedly throughout this book, Nixon and Kissinger's alleged skill at foreign policy is largely a myth.

The two men were not only guilty of deliberate war crimes and causing immense suffering, they were both often staggeringly incompetent at foreign affairs. For when one's actions lead to the mass graves of innocent noncombatants, how much more of a bumbler can you be? And when these atrocities do not even lead to defeating the enemy and only make an ugly war into an even more horrific genocide? Seemingly, just proudly declaring you don't care about morality is enough to bedazzle many journalists and commentators, and even the less perceptive or moral historians, into thinking the two were foreign affairs geniuses.

## Nixon and Cambodia

**What:** Largely to appear tough to both the North Vietnamese government and to the pro war right wing in the US, **Nixon repeatedly ordered the massive carpet bombing of the neutral nation of Cambodia, followed by a US invasion.**

Though Nixon and military leaders proclaimed the invasion and bombing killed many National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese troops and disrupted their operations, they were far from weakened. The level of deaths Nixon caused was disastrous. **Nixon's bombings led to the Khmer Rouge coming to power as a direct result.** The KR went on to commit a second set of atrocities against Cambodians, one even higher in numbers.

**Some argue Nixon himself committed outright genocide against Cambodians.** The sheer scale of the deaths of civilians and the lack of any genuine military reason for it, they argue, make the US bombings genocide. More bombs were dropped on Cambodia than during all of World War II, on over 113,000 different sites in a nation the size of Missouri. Some bombing was indiscriminate, without even any targets. Often **American pilots dropped their bombs on random areas.**

If one accepts the genocide argument, **this makes Nixon the worst mass murderer in US history.** Those scholars that do not use the term genocide still agree these bombings were war crimes and mass atrocities. Scholars and most political analysts do agree the Khmer Rouge coming to power, and thus their genocide, would not have been possible without Nixon's heinous and illegal bombing. Yet Nixon's crimes still continue farther than that.

**Far from condemning the Khmer Rouge for genocide, Nixon and later US presidents supported them.** Prior to US bombings, the KR were less than 5,000 isolated fighters deep in the jungle. After, Cambodian outrage over the bombings gave the KR a flood of 200,000 new recruits and enough popular support to stay in power until driven out by Vietnamese troops.

**The Body Count: At least 500,000 to 600,000 civilians directly killed by American bombers and troops** according to no less than the CIA itself. The Finnish Inquiry Commission (FIC) estimated 500,000 deaths, as did Carlyle Thayer, an Indochina scholar. The FIC estimated **at least 50,000 to 60,000 of the deaths were executions**. Nixon carried out this carpet bombing against Cambodia from 1969 to 1973, only halting because Congress ordered a stop.

The Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot were able to take over Cambodia because US bombings destroyed support for the government. The KR killed **at least one million to 1.7 million Cambodians**. Thus the total death count for these two successive genocides are **at least 1.5 million to 2.3 million deaths**. Keep in mind this is from a Cambodian population of 6-7 million. Hundreds of thousands more fled as refugees, and the KR forcibly removed the entire urban population to the countryside, where many died from starvation and disease. Note that the KR killed perhaps 100,000 people by violence. Thus **Nixon ordered the deaths by violence of far more Cambodians than the Khmer Rouge did**.

The US government also supported the Khmer Rouge during and after they committed genocide with financial support and de facto tacit diplomatic recognition behind the scenes, though publicly neutral. Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter all cynically saw Cambodia's Khmer Rouge dictatorship as a counterbalance to Vietnam's power in Southeast Asia. There also was still a great deal of resentment over the US loss to North Vietnam in the US-Vietnam War.

#### **Who Also Gets the Blame :**

**Henry Kissinger** was an architect of these US military atrocities as much as Nixon. Nixon and Kissinger casually planned the bombings over breakfast, thus its codename Operation Menu, followed by Operations Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and even Snack and Dessert.

**American generals, bomber pilots, and soldiers** did the actual mass killings. Before one claims that pilots and soldiers have no choice in following orders, the Uniform Code of Military Justice specifically says one must refuse an illegal order, including targeting civilians, and especially of a

neutral country. The execution of those 50,000 to 60,000 prisoners of war was also another illegal order that military law *requires* a soldier to refuse.

One of the lesser known parts of the history of US wars in Indochina is how many American soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen refused to fight. Entire army and marine battalions and naval crews rejected orders from their officers, refused to go into combat or refused to deploy to the Vietnam war zone at all. This is certainly not to say combat resistance was easy, as some servicemen faced court martials. But because combat refusals were so widespread, the majority of servicemen were never punished, while others received only minor punishment.

While US soldiers and especially the generals commanding them have no reason to claim innocence, American pilots do have a defense. Nixon and Kissinger devised very devious methods to keep the bombings secret, even from the crews carrying them out. American pilots were given orders for targets in Vietnam. Then halfway there, they received new orders over the radio to bomb targets in Cambodia. There were thus no records of the bombings for the media to find. Neither the media nor the US public knew for the first two years.

**Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan** all continued to support the Khmer Rouge financially and diplomatically while the KR genocide continued for the next six years, and after. All three presidents calculated, correctly, that the US public would either not notice, care, or be willing to do much to stop the slaughter, being already too fatigued over the US-Vietnam War. Both also saw the Cambodian government as a counter to Vietnam. It was a particularly brutal decision to make, to prefer the more vicious of two Communist governments because one just defeated you in wartime. Under Reagan, for example, the US government paid the Khmer Rouge \$85 million and supported them in public in the United Nations assembly. Up to 40,000 KR troops were directly fed by US agencies, and the US provided satellite intelligence and military planning.

**President Lyndon Johnson** actually first ordered the US bombing of Cambodia starting in 1965. But unlike Nixon's campaign, his was limited, not indiscriminate, did not target civilians, and did

not involve an American invasion of ground troops. But Johnson did set a precedent that Nixon used, and it was still the bombing of a neutral country.

**A few high ranking members of the US Congress** were informed of the bombings when they began under both presidents. This included members of both parties. Neither party objected, but it is unlikely any congressman realized the scope of the casualties or that Cambodian civilians were dying in large numbers, thanks to Nixon and Kissinger's careful planning to keep the bombings secret. To Congress's credit, it was they who halted the bombings, as much out of their own and the public's anti-Vietnam War sentiment as from humanitarian concerns.

**The governments of China, North Korea, and Thailand** supported the Khmer Rouge financially, diplomatically, and in China's case with a military invasion against Vietnam, one that largely failed. The Chinese government provided advisers to the KR and was encouraged by the US government to do so, as was Thailand's government.

Very few journalists focus on these atrocities carried out by an American president, officers, and troops. Typically only Asian history specialists acknowledge US atrocities in Cambodia at any length. A few political analysts and journalists at the time even defended the carpet bombing. Militarily, the bombing not only accomplished nothing, it expanded, worsened, and lengthened the US-Vietnam War. As noted before, this presidential-ordered genocide put the Khmer Rouge in power, leading directly to a second genocide even higher in numbers. Within the US, Nixon's invasion of Cambodia led to a huge rise in protests, culminating in the deaths of seven students at Kent State and Jackson State universities. This sees a bit of irony, that **the deaths of these US student protesters is far better known than the reason they were protesting, and the deaths of under ten Americans looms larger in American historical memory than the deaths of millions of Cambodians.**

Even supposedly liberal media and Hollywood's depiction of the Khmer Rouge genocide leave out, hide, or minimize the earlier genocide done by the US military on Nixon's orders. In the best

known film on the subject, the Academy Award winning *The Killing Fields*, based on *New York Times* reporter Sidney Schanburg's account of his own experience, the only mention of US military actions are an accidental bombing of one village. Schanburg and *The Killing Fields* both completely whitewashed the part in genocide played by a US president, and sanitize the American military role in one of the great atrocities of the century.

Congress did file charges against Nixon for illegally bombing Cambodia. Nixon's infamous response, to not just bombing Cambodia but to any illegal actions he committed while president, was “When the president does it, that means it is not illegal.”

Kissinger's defense of bombing Cambodia has frequently been that the Cambodian government requested the attacks. But so what? “Their government also wanted these atrocities” is not a defense at all, but an admission of collaboration with a murderous ally. What Kissinger also fails to mention was the new Cambodian government was one just put into power by the US. Prince Sihanouk, who long had the popular support of most Cambodians, was overthrown in a coup and replaced by General Lon Nol with US government backing.

The charge of illegally bombing Cambodia was the only one a Congressional committee did not convict Nixon for. Democratic congressmen feared future Democratic presidents would face charges. (These Democratic congressmen were correct. But the fear of facing charges would be a badly needed deterrent to future wars.) Five congressional leaders, three Democrats and two Republicans, including future President Gerald Ford, had also been earlier informed of the bombings.

Both Nixon's Secretary of State William Rogers and Secretary of Defense William Laird opposed the bombings. In retaliation, Nixon and Kissinger planned bombing Cambodia without them. Nixon bypassed Laird in favor of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and eventually replaced Rogers with Kissinger. Kissinger had been the de facto Secretary of State anyway since, as an adviser, it was not necessary to get Congress's approval of him.

The version often preferred by American media is that only the Khmer Rouge committed

genocide. As horrific as the KR's actions were, most of the deaths they are guilty of were by starvation, forced relocation, and in turn this made many Cambodians vulnerable to disease. In the US case, most Cambodian deaths were from indiscriminate aerial bombing. Nixon ordered the carpet bombing of most of the southern and eastern two thirds of the nation. The invasion killed more, and executions still more. Disruption from the bombings and invasion certainly brought deaths from disease and starvation, but typically those deaths are counted in KR totals, not US totals.

The Khmer Rouge were finally overthrown and brought to justice, not by the US, the UN, nor western powers. The Vietnamese Communists invaded in December 1978. By January 1979, the KR were out of power. Amazingly, the United Nations and most western and major world powers strongly condemned Vietnam. Yes, you read that right. **Genocides by a US military acting on Nixon's orders and by the Khmer Rouge brought little action. But Vietnamese leaders choosing to end a genocide going on next door brought angry claims of "aggression."** China even launched an invasion of Vietnam's northern border, driving over 300 miles into Vietnamese territory, then withdrawing when the Vietnamese fought better and harder, with the Chinese suffering greater losses.

Thus what happened in Cambodia's genocide was the opposite of what Americans have been taught, to the extent Americans know about Cambodia at all. There were two genocides, one entirely done by American troops and bombers and ordered by President Nixon, that entirely failed in its declared goals of defeating North Vietnam. This led to a second genocide by the Khmer Rouge, one that was supported by Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter.

Why don't more Americans know about this? Especially during the Cold War, Americans were led to believe only the Communist enemy carries out evil. That a neutral nation would be the victim of American anti-Communism, that an even more fanatic Communist group would come to power because of an American president's incompetence, and that three US presidents would support a genocidal regime and condemn an effort to remove them, all of that seems stranger than fiction, almost surreal.

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, two other non-Communist factions arose in Cambodia. The United Nations finally intervened in a manner that actually helped Cambodia, putting together a coalition government that brought an end to wars and atrocities and bringing in peacekeepers. Non-Communists formed a coalition government, one supported covertly by both the US and UK. Some KR officials surrendered or joined the coalition government. KR leader Pol Pot died of natural causes. The Cambodian government prosecuted some KR officials for genocide.

No officials, American, Cambodian, of other nations, or the United Nations, ever proposed prosecuting Nixon or Kissinger for the genocide they carried out. The subject is rarely mentioned by anyone except scholars writing on Southeast Asia. Obviously Cambodia never had the power to prosecute American war criminals and the nation was far too occupied simply trying to survive and rebuild after several decades of horrors. Anyway, non-Communists in Cambodia depended upon the US for arms against the Khmer Rouge, and upon the UN for peacekeeping.

This remains by far the worst thing Nixon ever did, far more important than covering up a burglary and spying upon the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. This is what he should be remembered for, above all else and for all of history. But had there been any political will for true justice, Nixon and Pol Pot should both have faced trial for genocide as much as lower level officials in the Khmer Rouge did. Kissinger still should face genocide charges for Cambodia, as indeed many want him to face war crimes trial in Latin America. (See Section Seven.)

## Reagan and Central America

**What: Civil wars and campaigns of repression in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.**

**In Guatemala, the US government collaborated on campaigns that were clearly genocidal. El Salvador and Nicaragua saw mass atrocities and Reagan-sponsored terrorism.**

Reagan's support for genocide and terrorism included **American weapons, funding, CIA and military intelligence, US government recruiting and payment of mercenaries, US troops as military advisers, bombing campaigns by the US military, US government payment and direction of third party nations Argentina and Israel, US diplomatic support, and US officials covering up atrocities from the world media.**

On one side were the Reagan administration; military dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala (until very limited military controlled semi-democracies began in 1984 in El Salvador, in 1986 in Guatemala); Contra guerillas, mercenaries, and Miskito Indians (until a Miskito-Sandinista truce in 1984); and the military dictatorship of Honduras, whose country became a base for the Contras to carry out terrorist attacks against Nicaraguans.

On the other side were a democratically elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua with a broad coalition of farmers, laborers, business, churches, students, and a small number of Marxists. In El Salvador, the FMLN coalition of guerillas was a mix of leftists and Marxists. But they were not the main targets of the dictatorship, army, and death squads. A nonviolent popular protest movement of farmers, workers, and students led by the Catholic Church and civic organizations was. In Guatemala, a few tiny groups of guerillas were not the main targets of the military. Nonviolent Mayan Indian villages were the main victims of genocide.

**The Body Count: Over 325,000 Central Americans killed, at least 200,000 Guatemalans, 75,000 Salvadorans, 50,000 Nicaraguans, and 184 Hondurans.**

From **500,000 to 1,000,000 Salvadoran refugees fled to the United States**, **500,000 to 750,000 more to Mexico. One fifth of the Salvadoran population was displaced**, including within the country. **At least 15% of all Guatemalans fled their nation**, nearly all of them Mayan Indians, just from 1981-82 alone. **1.5 million Guatemalans fled** the violence either within Guatemala or by fleeing the country. **Genocide in Guatemala was so extreme, it was the only nation anywhere in Latin America to consistently decline in population.**

In Guatemala, what had been a civil war in the 1950s between the military and guerillas turned into a wave of repression against an urban population in the 1960s and 70s, and then became outright genocide against Mayan Indians in the 1980s. **626 Indian villages were massacred.** Over 85% of victims killed in the civil war were slaughtered by the Guatemalan army, 10% by paramilitary death squads. **Reagan holds the ugly distinction of causing the deaths of more Native people than any other president in US history.**

#### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

The regimes of **Generals Efraim Rios Montt, Oscar Mejia, and Fernando Lucas Garcia** in Guatemala deserve the greatest blame for genocide. Rios Montt was the most extreme of the three, a fanatic evangelical fundamentalist who believed he was directed by God to kill those he most hated, Mayan Indians and Catholics, both of whom he considered Marxists. Reagan infamously claimed Rios Montt “gets a bum rap” during the same week Rios Montt ordered the highest number of massacres.

The regime of **Rene D'Aubisson** in El Salvador, **leader of ARENA, a far right party that directed death squads.** D'Aubisson's bodyguards personally carried out the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

The **Contra mercenaries and its leaders Adolfo Calero and Ernesto Bermudez** in Nicaragua were far more terrorists than rebels. They attacked farms and villages, murdering and raping civilians, almost never fighting the military. At no point did the Contras have a popular base of support among

Nicaraguans. Many such as Bermudez were formerly of the hated National Guard, enforcers for the Somoza family dictatorship, despised by nearly all Nicaraguans. Many Contras were hired mercenaries. Some Contras were low level former Sandinistas, politically useful as front men. Only Eden Pastora, known as Comandante Zero, was a prominent former Sandinista. Pastora was based in Costa Rica and avoided other Contras, and quit fighting in 1984. Only Miskito Indian fighters in the group Misurata had a popular base among their own population.

**The CIA** shares the blame for deaths among the Miskitos when it used their fighters and territory to launch Operation Christmas, and much of the blame for all Contra terrorism. The CIA recruited Adolfo Calero all the way back in 1962. The CIA organized most Contra groups and recruited the other groups to ally together, providing training, intelligence, money, and weapons.

Dogmatic anti-Communists, including Reagan, often blamed the victims, the **Sandinistas**, though less than a tenth of the Sandinistas were Marxist-influenced, let alone Communists. But the Sandinista military did carry out reprisals and forced relocation of 10,000 Miskito Indians. With most Contras hiding, sheltered in bases in Honduras, Sandinista forces turned to attacks upon Miskito villages in a failed but bloody attempt to defeat them. The Miskitos and Sandinistas finally signed a truce in 1984, giving Miskitos an autonomous region and some self rule in 1987.

**The regime of General Policarpio Paz in Honduras and his brutal death squad Battalion 316** controlled the country until 1982, and were infamous for corruption and ties to drug cartels. His successor, Roberto Suazo, was nominally elected, but most parties were barred and the military remained the real power in the country. Honduras became a base for the Contras to launch terrorist attacks against Nicaraguan villages, schools, hospitals, farms, and industry.

Vice President and then **President George Bush Sr.** was informed throughout of the illegal funding of the Contras. After becoming president in 1988, he continued US government support for the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments and Contra terrorists carrying out atrocities. The civil wars only came to an end because of a peace process pushed by Costa Rican President Arias.

Bush also pardoned all defendants in the Iran-Contra scandal for their crimes. This enabled them to become part of his administration and then that of his son's. **Both Bush administrations set records for having the most ex-convicts of any administration.**

When the Iran-Contra scandal broke, most other criminals involved conveniently blamed the late **CIA Director William Casey**. While Casey certainly played a huge role, that does not absolve the other criminals.

Iran-Contra defendant **Colonel Oliver North** played the central role in funneling money illegally to support Contra terrorism. North directed money laundering and weapons smuggling from the White House basement.

**Elliot Abrams** led the State Department's *Human Rights* Office in *covering up atrocities and human rights abuses* and attacking human rights groups. Most notoriously, he claimed a massacre at El Mozote of over 500 Salvadoran civilians was “not credible,” arguing it was purely made up by leftist guerillas. Abrams also convinced the Sultan of Brunei to give \$10 million to Contra terrorists.

**John Negroponte** was the US Ambassador to Honduras, appointed to be a complete change from the previous ambassador appointed by Carter, who lobbied for human rights. Negroponte provided logistics support for Contra terrorists, justified human rights abuses by the Honduran dictatorship to Congress, and worked to undermine peace talks.

**Otto Reich** ran the Office of Public Diplomacy, a “white propaganda” operation spreading positive stories about the Contras to try to counterbalance massive evidence of their atrocities.

**Pat Roberson** and the **Christian Broadcasting Network** funneled millions to Contra terrorists, even holding telethons to support them in the name of fighting Communism, though none of the nations involved were Communist or in any danger of becoming so.

The **Argentine military dictatorship** sent arms and training by military advisers and intelligence agents, many of the same torturers carrying out human rights abuses in their own country.

**Israel** and **South Africa** also sent military advisers and weapons.

The **Saudi Arabian monarchy** contributed \$35 million to Contra terrorism at the request of the Reagan administration.

The **Sultan of Brunei**, like the Saudis an extremely wealthy absolute monarchy flush with oil money, contributed \$10 million. Amusingly, North's money laundering operation proved to be surprisingly incompetent and deposited it to the wrong account, and so the funds were never used.

The **Taiwanese government** allowed North to solicit \$2 million from conservative and anti-Communist Taiwanese businessmen to support Contra terrorism.

Conservative fund raiser **Carl Chanell** raised \$2.7 million for Contra terrorists, working with Otto Reich's Office of Public Diplomacy. He pleaded guilty to fraud, but then died from pneumonia.

The **US Congress** sent \$100 million to the Contras on condition it not be used for "logistics." To Congress's credit, Speaker "Tip" O'Neil and Edward Boland led the opposition to Reagan's Contra terrorism. The Boland Amendment cut off funds for the Contras, leading directly to the Iran-Contra Scandal, an attempt to continue to fund the terrorism without Congress's approval.

**Reagan was the blindest and perhaps the most fanatic man to ever be US President. His own diaries reveal a man who saw Communists everywhere**, in every nation, every profession, every group that opposed him on virtually any issue, seemingly everywhere but under his bed. The world according to Ronald Reagan was one where Communists had as much power as in Reagan's worst nightmare and Communists' wildest dream.

**To a very paranoid Ronald Reagan, tiny Nicaragua with territory seventy times smaller than the US and a population less than a third of Los Angeles was a grave threat to the US and every other nation in North America.** Even tinier Grenada, an island smaller than Reagan's home of Orange County and with a population smaller than Bloomington, Indiana, was also somehow a threat to the US and the entire region. Thus Reagan launched an invasion of Grenada in 1985. US troops found nothing but an airport being built for tourism, and so the Reagan administration put out false claims of

Soviet stockpiles of arms and a Cuban base, claiming Cuban construction workers were commandos.

**A democratic and wildly popular movement, the Sandinistas, at the time Reagan began his war, had the support of fully nine tenths of Nicaraguans, from businessmen to church groups to students, urban laborers, farmers, and the middle class.** Among them were some leaders who were Marxist-influenced, though not orthodox Communists nor favoring dictatorship. But to dogmatic anti-Communists like Reagan, this was enough. A single Communist in an organization always made it “Communist” or Communist dominated, and they assumed all Communists were controlled from Moscow. This was not even remotely true, since Communists had always fought amongst themselves since the 1920s. (See Sections Four and Nine.)

This, to be honest, delusion of Reagan's had tragic consequences for the whole region. Reagan absolutely believed Nicaragua had to be defeated, its democratic movement crushed, and he was willing to wreck all of Central America to do so. He assumed the fall of the previous government, the US allied Somoza dictatorship, had to be planned by Moscow, rather than the local uprising it was. (Somoza led a brutal regime that treated Nicaragua like his own plantation.) Reagan also assumed Castro and Cuba were controlling the Sandinistas, and Cuba in turn was run by the Kremlin. Finally, he assumed the Sandinistas must be behind uprisings in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala.

None of the claimed Communist conspiracies believed by Reagan were true. **The Sandinistas had no Soviet support in its early days, not until half a decade *after* Reagan attacked Nicaragua with the Contras.** Most early support came from, for example, democratic allies in Costa Rica and Venezuela. **Cuba's help to Nicaragua was always mostly nonmilitary, teachers, doctors, and technicians building roads and schools.** There were some small arms sent by Cuba, none by the Soviets. The Soviets did send about two dozen helicopters, *five to six years after* Reagan first attacked Nicaragua with the Contras.

In El Salvador, the country had long been ruled by the Fourteen Families, wealthy white elites

ruling over a mestizo and Indian population under a military dictatorship. A rebel group, FMLN, was a coalition of leftists, socialists, and some Marxists. While Reagan assumed they must be controlled from Nicaragua, in turn controlled by Cuba, and yet in turn controlled by the Soviets (anti Communist conspiracy theories were always ridiculously elaborate) in fact they were a popular uprising. The FMLN got no direction from other countries, only some small arms, with most of their weapons seized from the Salvadoran military or police and funding for their uprising from robbery and kidnappings.

**The Salvadoran dictatorship, always brutal, became far worse precisely because Reagan collaborated with them. US planes bombed El Salvador** from the Panama Canal Zone. US Special Forces trained Salvadoran troops, who now modeled their tactics on the US-Vietnam War. US arms poured in. Salvadoran soldiers massacred civilians, raped and tortured with impunity. The Archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero, had earlier been murdered by the Salvadoran military, and part of the crowd of his funeral mourners were massacred. Four American nuns and a lay volunteer in El Salvador had also been murdered, but not before being gang raped by soldiers. In one of the most surreal scenes in Congressional history, **Reagan's Secretary of State, Al Haig, argued before Congress the nuns must have been armed, fired on the soldiers, and then tried to run a roadblock.**

From the beginning, the Salvadoran army attacks were far more on civilians than on the rebels. The dictatorship's main targets were farmers, unions, churches, and civic groups. **The FMLN was willing to end the war in 1982, offering to give up fighting if they could run in elections.** But both the dictatorship and Reagan refused. The war would continue for the rest of Reagan's time in office, and then Bush Sr.'s. The FMLN did give up fighting in 1992, and takes part in elections to this very day, as one of the two main parties in El Salvador, and has elected Salvadoran presidents.

**The war could have ended ten years earlier, but for Reagan** and his sponsored military dictatorship. Instead, the repression worsened. There were a series of yet more massacres across the country. The dictatorship sponsored a farcical "election" in 1984. The FMLN was barred, and urged a boycott. The political left was supposedly represented by the Christian Democrats, a party that is

actually to the right of the Republican Party in the US, supporting an official state church for example. The only other major party was D'Aubission's ARENA, tied to death squads and the murder of Archbishop Romero, and even further to the right, almost fascist. ARENA's death squads killed many during the election. ARENA only lost because the CIA financed the Christian Democrats.

The level of repression stayed the same. Finally, the massacre of six Jesuit priests and their two housekeepers in 1989 was enough. The UN sponsored a human rights agreement. Costa Rican President Arias negotiated a region wide ceasefire in 1991. The FMLN took part in elections in spite of right wing death squad murders. A Truth Commission investigated and found 85% of the violence came from the army, 10% from death squads, and only 5% from the rebels, the last almost all military targets. Most of the Salvadoran-American population dates their arrival from fleeing Reagan's wars.

**To Reagan, even genocide in Guatemala was justified in the name of fighting Communists and “terrorists,” and those carrying out genocide were getting “a bum rap.”** The Guatemalan Civil War had begun all the way back in the 1950s, when Eisenhower ordered Guatemala's democratic government overthrown. Ike's reasoning was that their president was pro Communist since he no longer outlawed being a Communist. (His Secretary of State and head of the CIA, the Dulles brothers, were also big investors in the country.) A few Guatemalan soldiers revolted and the rebels were quickly crushed. Then in a pattern that would repeat itself, the military dictatorship started rounding up and killing anyone they imagined supported the guerillas.

This kind of repression continued through the 1960s and 70s, mostly targeting those in the cities, until it took a far worse turn in the early 1980s. **The dictatorship, working with the Reagan administration, committed outright genocide, deliberately targeting Mayan Indians.** This was way beyond political repression. Every element of genocide was present, targeting civilian noncombatants, race-motivated atrocities, using rape or mass rapes as a weapon, using starvation as a weapon, forced relocation, and war on culture. This was Reagan-sponsored genocide, Reagan-approved, Reagan-funded and trained. Reagan sent money, CIA training, and weapons including helicopters and tanks.

**Reagan publicly defended this genocide to the world.** Reagan thought that dictator Ríos Montt, “is a man of great personal integrity and commitment,” “totally dedicated to democracy” with “progressive efforts.” Two retired US generals told Guatemalan officials on Reagan's behalf, “Mr. Reagan recognizes that a good deal of dirty work has to be done.” The US Embassy in Guatemala insisted evidence of genocide was a Communist conspiracy of disinformation, and even accused human rights group Amnesty International of being a Communist front.

The Guatemalan army carried out scorched earth tactics, **starving Mayan Indians out, massacring villages, carrying out deaths by beheading, hacking to death, burning alive, or burying alive. An especially vicious tactic was bashing in the heads of small children on rocks, usually in front of their parents. Mass rapes were epidemic, including targeting pregnant women with rape to cause miscarriages.** Perhaps the ugliest aspect of the genocide was ordering Mayan Indians to kill other Mayan Indians. Mayan men, the lightly armed Civil Patrols, were ordered to attack other Mayans or their families would be massacred by government troops.

Guatemala was the Central American nation that received the least amount of attention from Americans and American media. Most Americans did not know where Guatemala was, especially back in the 1980s before there was a substantial Guatemalan immigrant population in the US. Thus the failure for the lack of American action to stop this genocide has to fall partly on the American media.

The US media largely failed to pay attention because, unlike El Salvador and Nicaragua, there did not seem to be any possibility of American troops being sent to Guatemala. A decade earlier, the media and US public were more concerned with the 58,000 American deaths than the more than twenty times as many Vietnamese deaths. Similarly, during the Iraq War, the public was far more concerned with under 5,000 US deaths compared to as many as *two hundred times* as many Iraqi deaths.

Virtually the only pressure put on Reagan and Guatemala's dictatorship was outside the US. Mayan author Rigoberta Menchu published her famous “testimonio,” *I, Rigoberta Menchu*. Her book won her the Nobel Peace Prize and international condemnation of genocide. Rios Montt's repression

even targeted fellow military officers. So they overthrew him. The next dictator, General Oscar Mejia, agreed to very limited elections in 1986. The winner was, as in El Salvador, a Christian Democrat to the right of the Republican Party. While mass executions continued, they were not as many.

Six years after, the rebels were finally allowed to become a political party, as was a party led by Rios Montt, the dictator who carried out the worst of the genocide. It took until 2009 before those who carried out genocide faced trial. Rios Montt finally was convicted in 2013. The verdict was overturned, but he will be retried in 2015. **Some guilty of genocide received sentences of over 6,000 years.**

**None of these three countries were in any danger of becoming Communist dictatorships.**

Nicaragua was actually a democracy, one where the Sandinistas, portrayed by Reagan as a demonic Communist threat, were actually fairly chosen by elections. The Sandinistas even peacefully gave up power after being narrowly defeated in a second set of fair elections. Guerillas in both El Salvador and Guatemala also favored popular rule, and became political parties after war's end, as they had long called for. Guatemala, the country most brutalized, is where the guerillas were smallest and weakest, and never had any remote chance of winning. But Guatemala also has the largest Indian population, and a racist elite that feared them lashed out the harshest at any possible threat to their control.

In the end, Reagan's wars accomplished little but mass murder. In the twenty first century, both El Salvador and Nicaragua freely chose the very same parties the Reagan administration carried out terrorism to prevent getting elected. In Guatemala, a former general who actually personally took part in genocide, Otto Perez Molina, recently became the country's president. There is even evidence that Perez Molina ordered the death of a Catholic bishop. This is the sole "success" Reagan and his supporters can point to in Central America. **Guatemalan society is so traumatized by genocide, slightly over half of its people will vote for a man who carried it out.**

There was widespread opposition to Reagan's state terrorism in Nicaragua and El Salvador. One of the most popular stickers of the 1980s read "El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam." The public pushed Congress, who cut off funding for Contra terrorism. This led directly to the Iran-Contra scandal, where

Colonel Oliver North sold weapons to Iran and then used the money to illegally fund Contra terrorists.

The defendants were all convicted in the Iran-Contra Scandal, not for genocide or terrorism, but for misdemeanors including lying to Congress, withholding information from Congress, and in North's case, for embezzling \$40,000. (North told Congress the rather ludicrous lie that the money came from him saving his change every day. The jury did not buy the lie during trial either.)

Bizarrely, North became a hero to many conservatives. His emotional appearance on television during the scandal hearing moved many, as did his cynically testifying in his Marine uniform. (Though still in the Marines, North never wore his uniform while working in the White House smuggling arms and laundering money.) North ran for the US Senate and came very close to winning, only being narrowly defeated because former First Lady Nancy Reagan campaigned against him, accusing him of lying by saying that Reagan approved the smuggling operation.

Whether Reagan approved of Iran-Contra or not is ultimately a distraction from crimes far more serious. It is clear that Reagan and his administration set up, sponsored, recruited for, trained, paid for, and directed terrorism in Nicaragua. In El Salvador, the Reagan administration's actions were state-sponsored repression by a military dictatorship. In Guatemala, Reagan collaborated with genocide.

Today, those Americans complicit in genocide and terrorism still prosper. Negroponte went on to become GW Bush's Ambassador to the UN, and then Ambassador to Iraq, over the objections of human rights groups and congressmen. Elliot Abrams, who spent the 1980s covering up or denying human rights abuses, became GW Bush's *adviser on human rights*. Abrams was accused of playing a role in a failed overthrow of President Chavez of Venezuela. Some Salvadoran-Americans tried to sue former Salvadoran generals for civil damages. Along with those fleeing terrorism and genocide in Central America, some war criminals also fled to avoid prosecution and are living in the US today.

## Jackson and the Trail of Tears

**What:** The forced removal of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. Except for the Seminole and one faction of the Creek, all had long peaceful relations with the US. Many Cherokee and Creek were allies of the US against the British during the War of 1812.

All Five Tribes adapted Anglo-American institutions and values in an attempt to avoid conflict with the US, including capitalism, Christianity, literacy, and even a small number of slave owners. (For all five tribes except the Cherokee, though legally “slaves,” Blacks were more de facto sharecroppers in a tribute relationship with their “masters” and also sometimes adopted into Native families.) None of the five tribes were a military threat, and all had or would later ally themselves with the US military in an attempt to avoid conflict. Some Creek tribal members even had earlier adopted Andrew Jackson. A Cherokee warrior, Junaluska, saved his life during battle.

**The Body Count: 12,500 to 16,500 American Indians of the Five Tribes dead, another 40,000 forcibly removed from their homelands. 4,000-8,000 Cherokee, 500 Chickasaws, 2,500 Choctaw, at least 3,000 Creeks, and about 2,400 Seminole dead of starvation, disease, cold weather, and warfare.**

The number of **Black slaves dying during forced removal** is unknown. Estimates are there were 10,000 to 15,000 Black slaves owned by a perhaps 5% minority of the Five Tribes who were slave owners. If these slaves died at the same rates as the Five Tribes, **proportionately there would perhaps have been 3,000 to 4,000 deaths.** But it is quite likely their death rates would have been even higher. As cases of ethnic cleansing, forced removal, and causing large numbers of almost entirely civilian deaths, the Trail of Tears was clearly genocide, and Jackson was directly responsible for it.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**President Martin Van Buren** continued the ethnic cleansing set in motion by Jackson. Most Cherokee were forcibly removed under Van Buren using the methods and plans begun by Jackson. Van Buren also continued the Second Seminole War begun by Jackson, and forcibly removed many Seminole by boat from Florida to what became Oklahoma Territory.

**Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams** had all previously called for the removal of American Indians to west of the Mississippi River. However, while Monroe had gone to war against the Seminole, neither Jefferson nor Adams called for using force, and none of the three used fraudulent treaties as Jackson did. Adams in fact tried to halt the forced removal of the Choctaw nation by the fraudulent Treaty of Dancing Rabbit, and likely would have been able to halt further removals of Native tribes. (See Section Nine.)

The **Democratic Party** at that time was originally the party of white slave-owning plantation owners in the South. But for the first time, property restrictions had been lifted in most states and many poor white males could vote. The party sought a way to appeal to poor whites and this was the main reason they pushed for forced removal. Jackson had as his campaign slogan “Vote Yourself a Farm.” Democratic racists stood squarely behind Jackson’s ethnic cleansing, voting for it overwhelmingly in Congress. The rival Whig Party was the main opposition, along with the Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker Churches.

**Anglo-American colonists in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina** were the main part of the American public pushing for forced removal. Perhaps half of all white Americans, especially in the north and in the Whig Party, opposed removal.

In 1976 a Ku Klux Klan leader, speechwriter for George Wallace, and suspect in several bombings and other murders by the name of Asa Carter reinvented himself as “Forrest” Carter and wrote *Education of Little Tree*. Carter claimed to be Cherokee and that his book of fiction was about his life as a Cherokee boy learning about the Trail of Tears. Carter spread the false claim that Natives

refused to cry on the Trail of Tears, and that their white neighbors were the only ones to cry. The image of the Stoic Indian is racist and without basis in truth. There are many accounts of Cherokee and other Natives crying from losing their loved ones on the Trail.

Again, it was largely white colonists in southern states pushing for forced removal so they could steal Native lands. Carter's intent in writing *Little Tree* was to shift blame for the Trail away from southern white racists exclusively onto the federal government. Many readers of *Little Tree* mistakenly think it is accurate, ignoring its obvious falsehoods and stereotypes. Oprah Winfrey, for one, foolishly included it on her book club until public objections got it pulled. Even after her embarrassing episode, Winfrey issued a statement defending *Little Tree*.

**Elias Boudinot and Stand Watie's treasonous faction of Cherokees.** Two plantation slave owners who had assimilated southern Anglo-American values, Boudinot and Watie signed the Treaty of New Echota, giving up all Cherokee rights to their homeland though neither man had any authority to do so. This became the legal basis for the theft of Cherokee lands and the forced removal from their homelands. For their treason, both were condemned to death by the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot was captured and executed. Watie escaped.

During the Civil War, Watie led a pro-Confederate faction of Cherokee. Watie and his guerillas targeted other Cherokee, and almost always civilian noncombatants, killing many, burning Cherokee homes and crops. As many as 7,000 Cherokee died during the Civil War, possibly more than on the Trail itself. Most Cherokee deaths in the Civil War are rightly blamed on Watie's terror tactics.

Amazingly, after the Civil War the Cherokee Nation chose to forgive Watie and his guerillas in the name of tribal unity. Some of Watie's men refused the offer, preferring to live among and only marry whites, becoming even more highly assimilated and self-hating. In the early twenty first century, some of the descendants of Watie's faction tried to form a "tribe," the Southern Cherokee, in an attempted riverboat gambling scheme. The three actual Cherokee tribes opposed the scheme, which quickly failed. The "tribe" is now divided among rival groups, each accusing the other of crimes.

What is important to note about Jackson is the level of his fanatic hatred. Jackson built his entire career upon fighting Indians. In his determination to carry out ethnic cleansing, Jackson pushed for forced removal virtually his entire two terms. He even defied the Supreme Court, the only president to do so openly, when they ruled the Treaty of New Echota was fraudulent. The manner of the removal in each case was callous, done with no warning, thus leading to many deaths by exposure, starvation, and disease. **Without Jackson, almost all of this ethnic cleansing would not have happened.**

The Choctaw were forced out first, given rations of a handful of corn and one turnip a day. The Creek Tribe was forced out by a fraudulent treaty, and managed to get the treaty annulled by US courts. The state of Georgia threw the tribe out anyway. The Seminole fought three wars against the US. They won the first two wars. The third war ended in a stalemate, thus most reluctantly agreed to go. Only the Chickasaw were given somewhat more time to prepare, thus their deaths were in the hundreds, not thousands. The Cherokee actually took their case all the way to the Supreme Court, twice, winning the second time. **Congress's vote came very close to voting to block Jackson's ethnic cleansing.**

The Five Tribes all hold memorials to those lost in the forced removals. This shameful episode is often taught in many public schools as among the worst behavior the federal government and US citizens carried out against American Indians. Since the civil rights era, Jackson has been reassessed rather harshly by historians based largely on his actions against the Five Tribes..

His standing has dropped sharply. Where once Jackson was regarded as a strong president and one who represented the common (white) man, now he is judged as the first populist to channel the rage and racism of poorer whites against minorities. In recent years there are calls to remove Jackson from the twenty dollar bill for his genocide against American Indians and for being a slave trader.

## Section Two:

### Turning a Blind Eye to Genocide

This section focuses most on two matters. First, on those humanitarian disasters where US presidents played a role in creating the eventual conditions for genocide, though not actually taking part, such as Nixon's betrayal of the Kurds. Obviously there was no intent to cause genocide itself, but anyone could see this was a situation bound to create chaos, and at the least many deaths would result.

Second, this section focuses on cases where US presidents made a deliberate effort to avoid doing anything and even tried to keep others from aiding the victims or stopping the violence, such as Clinton's elaborate efforts to do nothing about Rwandan genocide. This was morally if not legally depraved indifference, where the previous section described willful outright mass murder.

In either case, had these presidents actually been held accountable for their actions, the right thing to do would not be prosecution, but condemnation. Clinton is unique among these presidents for his wrongs being widely recognized within the US while he was still alive, and also for actually apologizing, though insincerely. The other presidents were in some cases not condemned nor their wrongs recognized for decades. In some cases the public did not know, and still largely does not know even today, about certain presidents' indifference to genocide.

## Franklin Roosevelt and the Holocaust

**What: The Holocaust**, the most notorious and best known genocide in history, **carried out by Nazis, fascist Croatians, Ukrainian auxiliaries, and other collaborators**. While the Holocaust is very well known to most Americans, **the role some American individuals, corporations, and government institutions played** in killing Jews and others, or preventing their lives from being saved, is far less well known.

**The Body Count: Six million Jews and six million other victims including Romany (Gypsies), Poles, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, the mentally and physically handicapped, political prisoners, and criminals.**

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Obviously **Hitler, the Nazi Party, the SS units, and collaborators** who carried out the killings deserve the greatest blame.

The **US State Department**, filled with senior officials from old money wealthy Protestant anti Semites who delayed, denied, and hid information from the general public. The State Department also blocked rescue efforts from both Jewish and gentile aid groups, barring Jewish refugees from entering not only the US but other countries, leading directly to many victims going to their deaths in concentration camps.

**American generals** who did not want to divert resources from the war and greatly exaggerated the difficulties in at least partially stopping the Holocaust or aiding its victims.

**Henry Ford**, who did more to spread anti-Semitism than any other American in all of US history. Ford's *Dearborn Independent* was the best-selling newspaper in the country, fourteen times as much as the nearest competitor, with a subscription included for most customers who bought a Ford

car. For many rural Americans who had never met anyone Jewish, the newspaper was the only source of information on Jews.

Ford and the *Independent* blamed Jews for wars, economic problems, and moral decline, spreading the conspiracy theories of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a hoax forged by Russian Tsarist secret police. Both the Klan and Nazis such as Heinrich Himmler and even Hitler himself admired Ford. Ford Auto Company was a haven for Nazis in the US, with theirs and other extreme right views promoted on company grounds. Ford even received a special award from Hitler, the Nazis' highest civilian honor.

An anti-Semitic **American public**. In the 1930s and 40s, some universities still tried to bar Jews, and employers posted signs reading, "If you don't come in on Friday night, don't bother coming in on Monday morning." A reference to Jewish temple on Friday night, it was another way of saying, "No Jews hired."

Today, when Jews are for the most part widely accepted and anti-Semitism is believed by a much smaller share of the American public, even often used as a dubious charge to discredit anyone who criticizes Israel, it is harder to conceive just how widespread anti-Jewish hatred once was. Anti-Semitism went into sharp decline directly as a result of first the threat of Nazism to the US in wartime and then later with the full horrors of the Holocaust being revealed. Even anti-Semitism among Christian fundamentalists, once among the most anti-Jewish segments of American society, sharply declined in the 1980s as many conservatives turned to anti-Muslim hatred and strongly supported Israel as both a bulwark against Arab Muslim nations in the Mideast and beliefs that Israel plays a part in Christian prophecies about the end of the world.

**International Business Machines or IBM** contributed technology that enabled the Nazis to track and kill several hundred thousand more Jews. IBM punch cards, an early version of computer data tracking, were used by the Third Reich to organize birth and other records. Highly assimilated German Jews who had long quit practicing, or even did not realize they had Jewish ancestors, suddenly

found themselves in death camps. The most detailed study on the topic is Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust*.

**General Motors**, who manufactured German military vehicles. When one watches old footage of the invasion of Poland in 1939, the trucks used to transport German troops are often General Motors made.

**Ford Motors**. In addition to Henry Ford's role and the company being a haven for Nazi sympathizers, the Ford Motor Company used forced Eastern European labor in its factories in Nazi occupied territory.

**Chase Manhattan**, who fired Jews and seized Jewish accounts at the Nazis' request in both Germany and occupied Europe. Chase kept its branches open in Nazi-occupied Europe for the duration of the war. The bank also worked with Nazi controlled banks in Latin America. Chase's relationship with the Nazis allowed Germany to receive US dollars at a discount.

**Standard Oil**, today known as Exxon Mobil **and Chevron**, was the largest stockholder in IG Farben. Farben manufactured Zyklon B, the notorious gas used to kill millions in the camps. Farben also built most of the bigger and more infamous death camps.

Contrary to the claims of gun lobbying groups, gun control played no real role in genocide. Gun control began when Germany was a democracy, the Weimar Republic. (It also, contrary to guns rights dogma, was somewhat successful gun control. It helped head off an overthrow by extremists on either the left or right in the chaotic aftermath of World War I.) Contrary to the frequent lies or distortions by gun lobbyists, **gun control was not begun by the Nazis. Just the opposite, Nazi Germany loosened laws on gun ownership**, getting the traditionally elitist upper class gun clubs to open their membership to middle and working class Germans.

Also contrary to the claim of gun lobbyists, the Jewish population in Nazi Germany was not disarmed. **Jews in Germany under the Nazis possessed over 200,000 guns and were still unable to stop the Holocaust.** There were about half a million Jews in Nazi Germany in 1933, so this is a ratio of

one gun for every two and a half German Jews. Compare this to the United States, where one third of the population owns guns. Many more Jews in other occupied parts of Europe also possessed guns. Clearly, genocide should be blamed on the ones carrying it out, not a mythical lack of guns on the part of Jews.

What could the US government have done to stop the Holocaust? Contrary to apologists for Franklin Roosevelt, there were many options, military, political, and humanitarian:

**Military: Send Allied bombers to bomb the railroads, especially railroad bridges and depots.** This would have made it far more difficult to ship victims to the death camps. The Third Reich would instead have to either ship victims by trucks, which would take up vehicles needed for military use, or by forced march. Either method would take far more soldiers to guard. It is still possible German units would turn to simple mass executions on the spot, something mobile SS units actually did in the Soviet Union. All these alternate methods of the Nazis were far less easy to organize and take up more enemy resources.

Bombing the camps themselves would be far riskier. As discussed later, precision bombing has always been a fantasy believed in largely by those with little understanding of air power. One might try to destroy the gas chambers and easily kill many camp prisoners instead. Even if bombing the rail lines only prevented or delayed one-tenth of the deaths, that is still 600,000 Jews and an equal number of other groups. Most would argue saving over a million lives was certainly worthy of Allied efforts.

**Political: Send a clear diplomatic message, perhaps publicly, to the Third Reich and all collaborators that they will face prosecution and possible death sentences for war crimes at war's end.** While some may scoff at any in the Third Reich acting ethically, this is not what this option calls for. Instead it relies on individual self interest, and we do know that in some cases such an approach did work. Legendary humanitarian hero Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, at one point told Nazi officials directly to their face they would face prosecution for war crimes. Wallenberg's warning worked. Much of the Jewish ghetto population of Budapest, perhaps as many as 100,000, were saved

from extermination.

**Humanitarian: Offer sanctuary to Jewish and other refugees.** This was the easiest option for Roosevelt, and his failure to offer sufficient sanctuary is his most grievous failure. Roosevelt's timidity in confronting or curbing the anti-Semitic zeal of his own State Department are part of that failure.

One of the lesser known aspects of the Holocaust is that Hitler and the Third Reich considered simply expelling all Jews from Germany and occupied territories. The Nazis turned instead to mass extermination because most countries barred large numbers of Jewish refugees.

The argument has often been made that Roosevelt's indifference is understandable given widespread anti-Semitism of the time. But other nations did offer refuge. The Dominican Republic and Bolivia both permanently accepted large numbers of Jewish refugees, many tens of thousands each. Even fascist Spain accepted hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees temporarily, though most went on to Portugal or elsewhere.

At other times the argument has been the Great Depression prevented Roosevelt from acting. How could FDR argue to bring in many Jewish refugees when so many Americans were out of work? Indeed, the federal government did deport millions of Mexican-Americans from the US, not just immigrants but citizens, often living in America since before it even became the US. Roosevelt knew this was going on, and ended federal deportations. But instead, state and local governments continued deporting Mexican-Americans, and Roosevelt made no effort to stop this. FDR was extraordinarily popular, the most beloved president the US has ever had, elected four times by landslides. But except for economic issues, he was unwilling to risk that popularity, even on literal life and death issues.

It is fairly bizarre to argue that one injustice excuses another. In fact, there were still many immigrants coming into the US during the Great Depression, both legally and illegally. Many Jews were highly skilled and educated and thus have may been more welcome than other immigrants. Especially since Roosevelt courted and won the support of Jewish voters, it is not asking too much to

expect aid in the gravest humanitarian crisis in generations.

Both then and to this day, FDR remains enormously popular among both Jewish Americans and those left of center politically who think of themselves, rightly, as strongly supporting humanitarian causes. Roosevelt did so much else was laudable, from the New Deal to leading the defeat of fascism, that it is difficult to reconcile his actions about the Holocaust, and as later discussed, his targeting of civilians. His guilt in the case of the Holocaust is not evil, but it certainly is a grievous failure to do all he could to confront or limit evil.

For other Americans whose actions worsened the Holocaust. Henry Ford and Ford Motors, IBM, Exxon, and the State Department, one hopes that in the case of corporations they at least pay reparations for their actions. Today, most Holocaust survivors have passed away or are very elderly. Their cases are being pursued by their children and grandchildren. That begs the question: if the descendants of Holocaust victims are morally right to pursue these cases, why are reparations for the descendants of slaves so strongly opposed?

## Nixon and Genocide in Bangladesh

**What: The failed attempt to crush Bangladesh's independence movement breaking away from Pakistan in 1971, carried out by Pakistan's military dictatorship.** India and Pakistan also went to war. Potentially there could have been a nuclear war between China and the USSR, or between the US and USSR.

Nixon and Kissinger hoped to use this crisis to bring closer relations with Communist China using Pakistan's dictator as a go between. Nixon continued shipping arms to Pakistan that were used in the genocide and even sent the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* to threaten India with nuclear weapons to pressure them (unsuccessfully) to stay out of the conflict. The Soviets sent their own nuclear armed vessels in response.

**The Body Count: From 300,000 to 3 million dead and 10 million refugees**, both Muslim and Hindu Bengalis killed or driven out of East Pakistan, later to be called Bangladesh. **Up to 400,000 Bengali women were raped by Pakistani soldiers and paramilitaries. Slightly under 4,000 Indians and about 9,000 Pakistanis were also killed in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, a war begun by Pakistan.**

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**General Aga Muhammad Yaya Khan** deserves the greatest blame. The strongly anti Communist military dictator of Pakistan, a leader Nixon liked and admired, planned and ordered the attacks on civilians in East Pakistan.

In addition to **the Pakistani army, religious militias Razakar, Al-Shams, and Al-Bard** carried out the atrocities, targeting civilian opposition leaders, students, intellectuals, and religious centers.

**Henry Kissinger**, Nixon's closest adviser on foreign policy, guided every step of US actions

supporting Pakistan's genocide.

The US government sent arms to Pakistan indirectly through the **governments of Iran and Jordan**, under the two dictators the **Shah of Iran and King Hussein**. Though killing thousands of their own people to stay in power, the US media tended to depict the Shah and Hussein as moderates because they were allies of the US government.

**China's government** also increased arms shipments to Pakistan, encouraged by Nixon and Kissinger. China also vetoed Bangladesh's attempt to join the United Nations and was almost the last nation to recognize them in 1975.

Nixon and Kissinger have the most blood on their hands of any American President and Secretary of State. Not only were they both guilty of genocide against the people of Cambodia (see Section One), the two failed to halt or even try to slow this genocide in Bangladesh and carried out actions leading to another genocide, against the Kurds of Iraq. (See later in this section.) Kissinger also was complicit in failing to prevent and helping to sanction yet one more genocide in East Timor. (See also later in this section.)

Bangladesh is a country few Americans know much about, even where it is, and this lack of understanding helped Nixon and Kissinger get away with their actions and is the greatest reason most know little about this episode today. When the British were forced out of their empire in India, they split the nation into India, mostly Hindu, and Pakistan, mostly Muslim. Pakistan at the time was two regions, West Pakistan which is today simply called Pakistan, and East Pakistan which would become Bangladesh.

The Bengalis of East Pakistan faced much discrimination and neglect from the national government. Most political and military power was in the hands of West Pakistanis. Only the Urdu language of West Pakistanis was an official language. The government spent little on East Pakistan, even though they were slight over a majority of the population.

The final straw was the Bhola Cyclone in 1970, killing up to half a million Bengalis. The national government response was poor, incompetent, and indifferent. East Pakistani parties won a majority in elections. The military refused to allow them to take power. The government imposed martial law and a crackdown began on East Pakistanis.

General Yaya Khan declared at a military meeting, “Kill three million of them and the rest will be eating out of our hands.” **Operation Searchlight** began. Hindus, Biharis, university students, teachers, reporters, and opposition leaders were all targeted. Hundreds of thousands of Bengali women and girls were raped, with many kept as slaves in military brothels and often forced to give birth to their rapists' children.

All of the actions of these atrocities were known to the American government almost immediately, and specifically to Nixon and Kissinger. The American consulate in Dacca, East Pakistan, reported the genocide in detail. The US Consul, Arthur Blood, sent what has become known as **the Blood Telegram**, written by him and signed by 29 diplomats:

“Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pak[istan] dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them...”

“But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional civil servants, express our dissent...”

An earlier Blood telegram described the explicit West Pakistani targeting of Bengalis. Kenneth Keating, American Ambassador to India, also described the violence as genocide. Blood and Keating's call for aid was not only ignored. Nixon and Kissinger referred to the diplomats derisively in private as “fanatics” and even “traitors.” Though he had a year and half more left at his position, Arthur Blood

was recalled from his post by Nixon.

For to Nixon and Kissinger, their main concern was to use General Yaya Khan as a go between to try and improve relations with Communist China. The opening to China has long been regarded as the high point of Nixon's presidency. There is a long pattern of amnesia over how that opening happened, not through diplomatic skill, but by pandering to a go between who committed outright genocide of the most vicious kind.

Publicly Nixon and Kissinger claimed to be staying out of the massacres, neutral and disinterested. In fact, they ordered the continued shipping of arms used in the genocide, knowing full well to what purpose they were going to. Nixon also reassured General Yaya Khan of his support with sympathetic words. "I understand the anguish you must have felt in making the difficult decisions you have faced," Nixon personally told him.

**Transcripts of Nixon in private also showed his deep racist hatred of Indians.** "Indians are cunning, traitorous people," he said. "I don't know why the hell anybody would reproduce in that damn country, but they do." As for Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Nixon referred to her as, "the old bitch." Kissinger, while not showing bigotry, seemed very indifferent to the lives lost, very much the pattern for his entire career. Even the death of a former student of his in genocide left him unaffected.

Bengali leaders declared Bangladesh independence. As the repression continued, India offered arms and diplomatic support. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi traveled extensively to win condemnation for Pakistan's genocide and support for Bengali independence. Senator Edward Kennedy also called the atrocities genocide and called for the cutoff of US aid.

Pakistan launched an air strike against India, hoping to prevent Indian intervention. The strike largely failed, and India counterattacked, finally driving Pakistani forces out, capturing over 90,000 Pakistani troops. The United Nations tried to intervene. George Bush Sr., the US Ambassador to the UN at the time, called for a ceasefire.

The Soviet Union, an ally to India, vetoed the ceasefire. **Nixon sent the *USS Enterprise*,**

**armed with nuclear weapons, off the coast of India. Soviet warships with nuclear weapons**

**followed.** Nixon had long followed a policy of brinksmanship (seeing how close one could come to nuclear war) and madmanship (trying to convince your enemy you were insane.) Even for Nixon and Kissinger, this was enormously risky, and so close to the edge as to leave little doubt of, yet again, their frequent incompetence on foreign policy.

Nixon also encouraged China to deploy its forces along the border with India. China chose not to do so, largely because eight divisions of Indian forces were already deployed and prepared to fight off attacks.

In almost every way, Nixon and Kissinger's ploy failed utterly and exposed further their incompetence. Pakistan lost half its territory and people and was condemned almost everywhere. The Pakistani public's anger was so great over the losses and humiliating defeat by India that General Yaya Khan was forced to step down and hand over power to a civilian president.

India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, derided as “the old bitch” by Nixon, came out of this matter viewed as a strong leader, having fought off not just Pakistan but enormous pressure from China and the US. Even the Soviet Union had been pressured by the US to pressure India. India's military had beaten Pakistan and liberated Bangladesh, a new ally.

Kissinger's doctrine of *realpolitik*, (realism in politics) utterly failed. Designed to pursue stability over morality, the vicious immorality of its aims became self-defeating. The region became far more unstable. For Pakistan's government chose to pursue nuclear weapons and also supported jihadists in Afghanistan to use against India.

The one sense in which Nixon and Kissinger's support of genocide could be called a success was in eventually building ties leading to US recognition of Communist China. But even on that matter, their legacy is controversial. For Nixon's strongest critics of that recognition, and the treaties that followed, were from his own party. Many conservatives remain convinced that detente with China and later the Soviets lengthened the Cold War, strengthened Communist dictatorships, and worsened lives

for dissidents in those countries.

Those worst off, of course, were the millions of Bengalis murdered, raped, or made refugees by this genocide. There were no trials for this genocide except within Bangladesh. The UN treaty providing for prosecution for genocide was not ratified until almost a decade and a half after the Bangladeshi genocide.

Almost 200 Pakistani soldiers captured by the Indian Army and accused of war crimes were pardoned and returned to Pakistan as part of a treaty agreement. Between 10,000 and 40,000 Bengalis accused of being collaborators were imprisoned and facing war crimes trials until a 1973 pardon by the Bangladesh government. The pardon was revoked two years later, but there were no other efforts to prosecute war criminals.

If a different man had been president, would US condemnation have made any difference? No one ever expected a US invasion or even bombings designed to punish Pakistan for genocide. The US public would not support such while the US-Vietnam War was still failing so utterly that it was tearing American society apart.

Nixon, even had he not been an anti-Indian racist and had he not been trying to get Pakistan as a go between for relations with China, still would never have intervened. He was busy losing the war in Indochina, and would soon accept peace terms from the North Vietnamese identical to those they first offered when Nixon took office. Thus he continued the war for five years for nothing but his own reelection. (See Section Four.) Nixon also had been occupied with carrying out his own genocide against Cambodia. (See Section One.)

Would diplomatic isolation and halting arms shipments have halted the Bengali genocide? Almost certainly not, but Nixon's fumbling and bigoted meddling certainly made matters far worse, turning an ethnic and religious conflict into a Cold War standoff. Cutting off weapons and diplomatic isolation would have slowed the genocide at best. But **saving one tenth of the up to 3 million lives lost was possible**, and certainly a worthy goal.

**Almost any other potential president at the time would not have made the decisions Nixon made.** Not Humphrey, certainly not Robert Kennedy nor McGovern, and not even Reagan would have tried such duplicity for a remote and uncertain goal. Reagan only reluctantly recognized China while running as candidate and then president, and strongly condemned Nixon's agreements with both China and the Soviets. It is difficult to imagine any of the other possible presidents at that time sending an American aircraft carrier armed with nuclear weapons. While Reagan and perhaps Humphrey may continue shipping weapons, neither would do anything as reckless as risking the nuclear confrontation that Nixon did.

Along with Cambodia and betraying the Kurds of Iraq, Nixon's support for Bengali genocide deserves to be remembered as among the worst things he ever did, far more than covering up burglary and spying during Watergate. That this tragedy is not better known in the US is due to parochialism, not teaching about this region of the world. A growing South Asian population in the US will hopefully change that.

## Clinton and Rwandan Genocide

**What: The mass murders in the 1994 genocide in the small but densely populated central African nation of Rwanda.** Using the shooting down of the plane of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana by unknown forces as an excuse, the Rwandan military and Hutu paramilitary militias, Interahamwe and Impuzamugambe, carried out killings at a rate of 8,000 a day, with little outside intervention. Genocide was finally ended by Rwanda's government being overthrown by a largely Tutsi rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

Today Rwanda has remarkably recovered, its government, system of justice, and economy often held up as a model for how to cope with great trauma. Over 130,000 genocide suspects were detained. Rwandans turned to their traditional system of justice, Gacaca, which dealt with over one million cases related to genocide. In 2012, Rwanda abolished the death penalty.

**The Body Count: 800,000 murders of Tutsis and non-racist Hutus killed in 100 days.** This was a low technology genocide, carried out with mostly machetes, spears, knives, and even farming tools. This was not for lack of trying to get small arms and other military weapons. About one out of six genocide deaths was by guns, and had more guns been available, the death count would have been far higher and the rate of murders more rapid.

In the aftermath of genocide, many of the defeated genocidists fled to the neighboring country of Congo. The chaos in eastern Congo set off the First and then Second Congo Wars, the largest and deadliest wars since the Chinese Civil War, involving nine African nations and eventually United Nations peacekeepers from France. **Estimates of deaths are from 3,000,000 to 6,000,000 from war, famine, and disease.** Without the Rwandan Genocide, it is unlikely this war would have happened.

(See Section Eleven.)

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Hutu bigots in the Rwandan Army and Interahamwe and Impuzamugambe militias** who carried out the genocide clearly deserve the greatest blame.

**Belgian colonialists** who ruled Rwanda for over forty years deserve much of the blame. It was they who created the artificial and pseudo-scientific categories of Hutu and Tutsi, dividing local African social classes based on who seemed to have more supposedly European features such as narrow noses and lighter skin.

The **French government** played a direct role in arming and training the Rwandan army. The French government supplied several dozen advisers to the military. To the French government's credit, it ceased shipping weapons once they knew the genocide was going on.

The French government also created a safe zone both inside and just outside Rwanda. This did save many Rwandan lives. But the French zone was also clearly set up with the intent of protecting former Rwandan government and army members, those who had carried out the genocide. The French government worried about a loss of influence in Rwanda, that the RPF rebel group seemed to be Anglophones, used English and sought out American and British support. So the rescue of Rwandans who carried out genocide was also designed (though it failed) to try and limit or block the RPF's victory.

**Chinese businesses** also played a role in arming the militias with cheap machetes. It's doubtful that the businesses realized the use their machetes were to be put to. Machetes are widely used worldwide in agriculture by small farmers.

**Pat Robertson, the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Operation Blessing** diverted millions in aid intended for victims of the genocide. Instead of sending medical aid as claimed, Operation Blessing spent most of its funds instead shipping equipment for Robertson's diamond mines in the area. Of the aid that was sent, much of it was insignificant, such as aspirin, tylenol, and Bibles while the victims suffered from cholera. Even today, Operation Blessing continues to collect in

Rwandans' name. Had money diverted by Operation Blessing actually been used to save cholera victims, thousands of lives could have been saved.

Robertson in 2013 “defended” his actions. His claim was that, one, he actually lost money from diamond mining, and two, that any failure to help Rwandans was due to “sloppy book keeping.” It is significant that his defense does not include any actual denial that Rwandans were not helped by Operation Blessing.

Bill Clinton's main guilt during the Rwandan genocide is one of deliberate delay, much like a man who blocks someone from calling an ambulance or the police when someone is being murdered. Legally one calls the crime depraved indifference, but not murder. In recent years, Clinton himself recognized his guilt and repeatedly publicly apologized.

What could Clinton have done? The disturbing truth is, **any major power could have sent as little as 5,000 troops and halted the great majority of the killings.** This was a genocide carried out by one of the least formidable militaries in the world, along with militias almost entirely armed with just machetes and spears. Sending forces into Rwanda two weeks after news of the atrocities got out would likely have saved perhaps three quarters of the victims. **The death toll could have been reduced from 800,000 to perhaps under 200,000.** Possible US military losses would have been very minimal, in the low hundreds. Even **Clinton himself later admitted that at a minimum 300,000 Rwandan lives could have been saved.**

Far from being an ethnic conflict, what happened in Rwanda was a class war made far worse by Belgian pseudo scientific racism. The supposed ethnic groups of Hutus and Tutsis were actually an upper class and middle class (Tutsi) versus a working class of farmers and laborers (Hutu.) That atrocities were likely to break out, virtually anyone with a knowledge of East African history could have predicted. Tutsis had massacred Hutus in neighboring Burundi in 1972. There were earlier massacres on both sides in 1959, 1963, 1969, and even 1988, only six years earlier.

Clinton cannot (and indeed today does not) claim he was ignorant about what was going on. He had access to an enormous amount of information telling him exactly what was happening in Rwanda. The US embassy in Rwanda and neighboring countries kept a steady stream of reports on the genocide as it happened. The State Department, CIA, and other intelligence agencies also steadfastly reported what was happening.

Clinton was even personally visited by Rwandan activist Monique Mujawamariya, who strongly urged him to intervene. French officials also tried to intervene and work with the US, only to be turned away. The Black Congressional Caucus also urged Clinton to act. But **Clinton and all other leaders of western powers except France limited themselves to evacuating their own citizens**. Most Clinton administration officials do not even recall cabinet level meetings on Rwanda. There were not only no actions to stop genocide, there were actual actions to make sure no other governments, or the UN, could stop genocide.

The United Nations had peacekeepers in the area monitoring a ceasefire prior to the outbreak of massacres. Once violence began, the UN tried to limit genocide as much as its lightly armed monitors could. The UN asked the Clinton administration for trucks to evacuate. Clinton's government actually dithered over who would pay for the use of American trucks. This is equal to watching murder victims dying slowly in front of you because you want someone else to pay for your gas before you take them to the hospital.

UN troops were also poorly equipped, most of their trucks broken down. The US government refused to pay its back dues, making humanitarian rescue more difficult. **The Clinton administration went one step further, successfully pushing for all UN monitoring to stop and peacekeepers to be withdrawn**. So using that analogy of a man letting victims die in front of him, Clinton in effect talked medical personnel trying to save the victims, or police at the scene trying to arrest murderers, into going away.

Not only did Clinton's administration go out of their way to avoid stopping the genocide or aid

its victims, they did so publicly. One of the more surreal episodes in recent memory was to see **Clinton's Press Secretary Mike McCurry and State Department Spokesperson Christine Shelley issue elaborate denials that this was genocide.** Instead the violence was always referred to as "acts of genocide." Kafka could have written such lines.

So why did Clinton avoid doing anything? Why did his administration refuse to act, delay, obfuscate, and refuse to admit the reality of mass murders happening in front of them? Was it racism? A third the number of deaths in Bosnia got a much stronger response only a few years later. Clinton was rightfully proud of winning the support of Black voters and being called "America's first Black president" a decade before Barack Obama. Clinton did intervene to put President Jean Aristide back in power in Haiti after his overthrow, something almost no Americans supported except civil rights leaders and Black congressmen.

But Clinton also had a history of ignoring or even denigrating Black concerns when it aided him politically. In the 1992 elections he denounced Sista Souljah, a homeless rights advocate, for comments that the media took out of context. Souljah called for an end to Black on Black crime, and the media and Clinton both bizarrely portrayed that as a call for Blacks to mass murder whites. Clinton also supported the end of some forms of welfare, allowing his opponents to race bait and portray welfare as chiefly a benefit to supposedly lazy Blacks. (Most on welfare are white and formerly middle class.) Clinton calculated, correctly as it tragically turned out, that most Americans would not care about Rwanda. It was a place most never heard of. Rwanda had no oil or other resources Americans needed or wanted. There was no economic interest, no military interest, no political interest. The number of Rwandans in the US was tiny.

Meanwhile, just prior to this, Clinton had invaded Somalia with humanitarian reasons as the rationale. Poorly planned, US troops took several dozen casualties. Somali crowds mutilated several bodies of American servicemen, publicly displaying them in a manner that outraged many Americans. Support for the Somalia invasion, never very high, fell to almost nothing. Clinton became determined

not to send another invasion, so much so he and his administration likely exaggerated in their minds the chances of one failing in Rwanda. The disturbing truth is Clinton was so determined to stay out, not even 800,000 dead Africans dying in graphic detail in front of the world's cameras deterred him.

While some may lay the blame on the American public's indifference, this is too easy and lazy. For Clinton always chose to put his political ambitions before all else. Even at the end of his two terms in office, many of his own supporters said they did not know what Clinton actually believed. His political positions often shifted with the wind. Republicans even complained he took their positions as his own. Had Clinton been a man of actual strong convictions rather than constant political calculations alone, there would be hundreds of thousands of Rwandans still alive.

It is a disturbing comment on American shortsightedness that so many focus on matters such as the Monica Lewinsky scandal over oral sex. Clinton's admirers prefer to remember economic good times. Clinton's detractors obsess over what a powerful man did below the waist, in a manner showing they are far more obsessed with sex than any philanderer.

Almost no one on either side of the political aisle remembers how Bill Clinton stood aside and let many die that he could have mostly saved fairly easily. Today Clinton spends much of his time devoted to humanitarian efforts. That cannot erase his earlier failure, but it remains to be seen if he can do as much good as he did harm.

## Ford and East Timor

**What: The eastern half of a small Asian island, the nation of East Timor**, once a Portuguese colony, is surrounded on three land and sea borders by Indonesia and a fourth sea border not far from Australia. Given its independence, **Indonesia's military immediately invaded in 1975, occupying East Timor and carrying out genocide** until forced out by worldwide political pressure and Indonesia's own political turmoil in 1999. Today, East Timor is independent, but still recovering from three decades of brutal repression.

**US President Gerald Ford** not only refused to condemn the invasion. He **quietly recognized Indonesia's conquest and continued shipping arms to Indonesia that were used in the killings**. Ford and Kissinger were both informed of the invasion in advance by Indonesian dictator Suharto during a state visit to the country. Far from objecting to it, Ford instead asked (successfully) that Suharto delay the invasion by two days so he and Kissinger could leave the country and not publicly appear to endorse the attack.

**The Body Count: 90,000 to 300,000 deaths**. Most estimates are **200,000 Timorese, about one third of the population, killed by war, famine, and disease. The killings were carried out by Indonesia's military or caused by concentration camps and deliberate starvation tactics making Timorese vulnerable to disease**.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Indonesian dictator Suharto** ordered the invasion, conquest, and genocide. This was not the first time Suharto had much blood on his hands. He came to power in one of the most brutal coups in modern times. In 1965 he overthrew his predecessor, Sukarno. A major general commanding both the Indonesian military and Muslim and Buddhist paramilitary groups, Suharto (with the CIA's aid)

ordered the mass killing of between half a million to one million rivals in the army, Communists, and other leftists and dissidents, especially many Acehnese, Christians in Nusa Tenggara, and Chinese-Indonesians in Kalimantan.

**Indonesia's military** carried out all of the killings in East Timor, nearly all civilians, as well as rapes, torture, and forcible relocation that caused mass starvation. Together with Suharto, most of the blame rightly falls on them.

**Pro-Indonesian militias in East Timor** carried out many killings during the transition to independence in the 1990s and 2000s.

**Australia's government under Malcolm Fraser** was the only nation to recognize the conquest of East Timor. When Australian activists tried to broadcast news of the genocide to the outside world, Australian government officials jammed transmission of the signal, even tracking down and arresting other activists who received and passed along news reports. Australian prime ministers as late as the 1990s repeated the defense of Indonesian conquest and genocide first used by Fraser, that the conquest of East Timor was done to prevent Communism.

To the credit of many Australians, its citizens did play a leading role in condemning the last wave of violence in the 1990s, contributing to Timorese independence. Australia's unions refused to ship arms going to pro-Indonesian militias, and other protesters kept the issue of East Timor in the world spotlight. Australia's government under Prime Minister John Howard also took the lead in a UN peacekeeping force to East Timor following mass killings by pro-Indonesian militias.

**Jimmy Carter's administration**, despite some debate and back and forth actions, did finally approve continuing to sell American weapons to Indonesia, and also covered up Ford's actions approving the invasion.

**Bill Clinton's administration** sent support to pro-Indonesian militias only a year before independence. But Clinton and his advisers did halt their support and also strongly condemned Indonesian government human rights violations, both in East Timor and elsewhere.

The **British government** provided military training, over one million pounds, and advisers to Indonesia's military.

The **American media** ignored this genocide. Today only a small fraction of Americans have ever heard of East Timor. Anarchist activist Noam Chomsky probably did more than any other person worldwide to tell the story of the Timorese genocide, and did so repeatedly to pointedly illustrate how the US media ignores atrocities when they are committed by US allies.

East Timor is yet another illustration of Kissinger's indifference and incompetence. It was Kissinger who advised Ford on his course of action: do nothing but carefully hide the fact that you are doing nothing.

Ford and Kissinger's rationale was that they wanted to maintain Indonesia as a close ally and a bulwark against Communism. Again, this shows poor planning and ideological blindness on both men's part. Indonesia was not in even the most remote danger of turning Communist. Suharto had massacred perhaps a million Communists, leftists, and assorted dissidents back in 1965, in the bloodiest democide against its own citizens of any Asian nation in recent times, except China. Neither was there any chance East Timor could turn Communist. The leading Timorese party, FRETILIN, was Catholic populist. There were never any Timorese political parties with a Communist presence.

The chance of Suharto or the Indonesian dictatorship turning away from the US was also fairly unlikely. They certainly were not about to turn to the Soviet Union or China for weapons. Possibly they might turn further instead to the British, or the French. In the short term, the only losers on the US side might be US arms dealers. Strategically, the US would only risk having one of its close allies be allies to Indonesia in addition to the US.

What could, or should, American military forces have done? Likely not much, since the American public would not favor sending US troops so soon after the huge failure of the US-Vietnam War. US troops also would be facing the large and experienced Indonesian army, fighting very close to

its home territory.

But there were many diplomatic solutions open. At the very least, **do not publicly sanction the invasion and hide evidence. Cut off shipments of weapons. Condemn the invasion publicly. Send or at least offer humanitarian aid. Allow East Timor refugees into the United States.**

All these measures, taken together, could have at least somewhat reduced the human toll. But in the end, both Ford and Carter decided the goodwill of a dictatorship was worth more than saving tens of thousands, perhaps more, Asian lives. Those lives were sacrificed in the name of fighting a supposed Communist threat that did not exist in either East Timor or Indonesia.

Suharto did eventually get overthrown by an Indonesian public fed up with enormous cronyism, government corruption, human rights abuses, and lack of democracy. **Suharto's family stole from Indonesia more than \$15 billion (yes, *billion*) during his rule. By some estimates the theft may have been as high as \$35 billion.** Most other leaders in Suharto's New Order were equally corrupt. In the mid 1990s, an economic collapse led to massive public protests. These forced Suharto out by 1998 and brought democracy in. Suharto was placed under house arrest for embezzlement of over half a billion in foreign aid, but avoided prosecution because of his declining health and the presence of many of his former appointees still in office. He finally died from heart failure while several of his family served prison terms for corruption and murder.

A series of further atrocities in East Timor the 1990s brought increasing world outrage, leading finally to the nation's independence. It is almost certainly hoping too much that protests by an American government back in the mid 1970s would lead immediately to Indonesian democracy and an independent East Timor. But it is likely earlier American protests and support for dissidents and minorities against one of the most corrupt and brutal dictators in the world would have led to a new era dawning on these islands a few years sooner. Timorese independence would also have followed sooner, and thus a lower body count.

Gerald Ford today is unfortunately remembered for the silliest of reasons, comedy routines by

Chevy Chase showing Ford as clumsy. (Ford had actually been a gifted athlete in his youth.) The second item Ford is most remembered for is his pardon of Nixon for the Watergate Scandal and other high crimes. Ford defended his pardon as needed to heal the country. It did not, since the public was nearly unanimous in condemning Nixon for his crimes. The pardon further sent the message that public officials are above the law. Ford's indifference to genocide deserves to be remembered as at least among the two worse things he did as president.

## Polk, Fillmore, Buchanan and Genocide Against California Indians

**What: Mass killings and enslavement of California Indians by Anglo-American vigilantes during the Gold Rush and after.** Formal enslavement of Indians finally came to an end in 1865 only because of the Fourteenth Amendment. In remote areas of California, there were a few cases of Indian enslavement into the 1890s.

**The Body Count: 120,000 to 270,000 deaths by murder and enslavement. Over 80-90% of the Native population was wiped out from 1848 to 1865, dropping to about 30,000. The average size of a California Indian tribe dropped from 5,000 to 6,000 to under 500.** Some California tribes number under 100 people even today.

Unlike genocide carried out against Natives in most of the rest of the Americas, most California Indians were killed by violence, not disease. Almost all violence was done by Anglo-American militias and vigilante groups who went on “Indian hunting” expeditions.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Contrary to most old western films, **most violence against American Indians was done by Anglo-American colonists**, not the US Army. A single vigilante militia killed dozens per expedition, and typically went “hunting” several times a week.

**The state government of California financed genocide, gave it legal legitimacy, and kept the US government from intervening.** The state of California set aside over \$1.5 million in bounties for the killing of American Indians, which had to be proven by bringing in their scalps as evidence. The California government in turn successfully lobbied the US government to reimburse them for paying for Native scalps.

**Some California towns like Honey Lake and Marysville also paid bounties for Indian**

**scalps**, which they in turn asked the state or federal government to reimburse.

**The California state government also legalized the enslavement of Natives.** While technically admitted as a free state, California law only barred the enslavement of Blacks, not American Indians. Under the surreal name the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, any white male could legally enslave any Native, not just children but adults of any age, by getting him declared an “orphan” by the courts. Legally, Natives and other nonwhites were barred from testifying in court, filing suit, or voting. Much of the mining during the Gold Rush was done, not by Anglo-American miners, but by enslaved California Indians doing forced labor for Anglo-American miners. The most infamous example was Sutter's Mill, where the first discovery of gold was made. Johan Sutter and his partners enslaved hundreds of California Indians. Sutter was also a slave trader and leader of militias that attacked Native villages.

**The city of Los Angeles also auctioned off Native prisoners for sale as slaves to Anglo-Americans.** Newspapers noted there were some objections to the sale of prisoners, but many locals hoped the problem would be solved instead by exterminating all Natives.

Prior to US invasion, **the Spanish military and missionaries forced American Indian tribes onto missions. Concentrated populations, disease, and overwork reduced California Indians from as high as one million to under 300,000 in less than 80 years.** California Indians had little history of organized warfare and thus were uniquely vulnerable to Spanish military power. Still, revolts broke out in several missions. Once the independence movement in Mexico began, Spanish authorities neglected California missions. Mexican authorities did so as well, and many California Indians either went back to their homelands or ran the missions for themselves.

What role did US presidents play in California Indian genocide? No president specifically issued orders for this genocide. As noted before, it was vigilante mobs and colonist militias that carried out massacres and enslavement, subsidized by the California government. **Three of the four US**

**presidents from Polk to Buchanan were guilty of standing by and letting genocide be carried out by American citizens and local governments.**

When one discusses genocide against Natives, often there are two responses, common but wrong. One is denial, saying this was somehow not really genocide. In large part the blame for that lies with US schools usually not teaching the topic. Most California public schools especially avoid mentioning the US state was founded by genocide and depict the only violence in the Gold Rush as squabbling between white miners. Another part of that response is claiming genocide was just typical warfare, often based on images of Natives as violent savages, reinforced by old Hollywood westerns and today's "Indian" sports mascots.

In part this claim misunderstands Native history. In North America, almost all Native warfare was simple raiding for food or personal revenge, very limited and with no intent to even conquer another people, much less wipe them out. But especially with California Indians, one cannot even point to organized warfare. This made them easy targets for European and Anglo-American racist violence. Unlike Plains and Southwest Indian tribes who did have strong martial traditions that helped them resist invasion for centuries, California Indians were almost exterminated in less than twenty years.

The other common but wrong response is to assume all whites were racists at the time. This is an argument made by those thinking they are properly cynical about the past. But instead this claim makes excuses for racism. By making everyone white a racist, it becomes seen as normal and no one is guilty. One also has to be very ignorant of history, or choosing to be blind, to believe it. For even young schoolchildren know about abolitionists.

More than that, one can point to **very large numbers of anti racist whites in every period of US history from colonial times on.** The Catholic Church, especially Jesuits, shielded Natives from Spanish conquerors. In the US, many Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers stood with Native peoples and the latter two churches also made up most of the abolitionist movement. As mentioned before about the Trail of Tears, the entire Whig Party and perhaps half of all white Americans opposed the forced

removal of the Five Tribes.

There were even some white Californians who opposed genocide against Natives, notably some newspapers. But they were far outnumbered by those consumed with greed for gold who were willing to exterminate Natives or enslave them to get it. Three of four presidents at the time were bigoted and indifferent, standing by while genocide and Indian slavery happened before their eyes.

The first, James Polk, was a racist and a believer in conquest for empire. It was he who more than any president was responsible for the current shape of the US, expanding it to the Pacific. For this, many historians list him as a “successful” president. More subtle historians note how he accomplished this, by deliberate deception, provoking a war of aggression. (See Section Three.) **It was Polk who made California Indian genocide possible by ordering the US conquest of California and its seizure from Mexico.**

The next president, Zachary Taylor, was in office only a little over a year before dying from illness, and thus as president is blameless. (Some argue that as a general he was not blameless when it came to atrocities against Mexican civilians. See Section Three.) His sole role in California was in supporting its immediate admission as a state to make certain Congress would have no say over its status as slave or free.

Taylor was succeeded by Millard Fillmore. Fillmore is often described as one of our worst presidents. He was later a presidential candidate for the Know Nothing Party, whose bigotry focused on Irish Catholics. (See Section Six.) Fillmore sent three commissioners to negotiate treaties with Native tribes.

**Fillmore's commissioners negotiated eighteen hopelessly failed treaties. They met with less than a third of Native leaders in the state. The eighteen treaties took away nearly all Native lands, leaving only 8% of California lands for the tribes.**

But even that was not enough for greedy colonists. Their concern was not to end conflict but to take every bit of land possible. California's elected representatives successfully pushed Congress into

rejecting all treaties in a secret vote, and then ordered documents related to the treaties kept secret for 50 years. While some wanted complete extermination, most Californians publicly called for ethnic cleansing of all Natives from the entire state.

The next president, James Buchanan, replaced the three commissioners with a single Superintendent of Indians Affairs for the state. Buchanan was an utter incompetent whose inaction and borderline treason made the Civil War almost inevitable. (See Section Four.) He was also a strong believer in slavery and the supremacy of whites over both Blacks and Indians.

**Under Buchanan, California Indian lands were reduced to almost nothing. The new superintendent created five military reservations with no more than 25,000 acres, less than 40 square miles in a state of almost 160,000 square miles.** Anglo-American volunteers worked with the military to round up Natives and remove them to reservations. Theoretically voluntary and for their protection, removal was by force.

Most superintendents and other reservation agents were quite corrupt. Federal funds and supplies intended for Native needs were mostly stolen by agents or their partners in crime. Natives, far from being sheltered on reservations, were often murdered or kidnapped and enslaved. Not too surprisingly, most California Indians fled the reservations and hid. All five reservations ended in failure, and President Buchanan and his superintendents' greed and incompetence was as much a cause as Anglo-American racist violence.

Yet to claim that because three of these presidents were bumbling bigots that California Indians were preordained to be almost wiped out is false. Any deep study of history shows that virtually nothing is inevitable. Even the famous saying about death and taxes is at least half false, for taxes and tax rates come and go. Almost every instance of mass deaths, as this study shows repeatedly, could have been prevented or at least limited.

There were other men who potentially could have easily been presidents who would have prevented the US conquest of Mexico, and thus California Indian genocide. For a president who did

delay both the conquest and genocide, turn to Section Eight on Van Buren. For a president who could have prevented permanently the conquest of Mexico and thus California Indian genocide, turn to Section Nine on Willie Mangum.

One not even need turn to possible presidents to see how things could have been different. Lincoln brought an end to California Indian slavery when the Fourteenth Amendment was passed in 1865. (See Section Eight.) California's state and local governments had to repeal their laws on Native slavery because of the amendment. One of Lincoln's final private statements before his murder was that he was going to work towards bettering the situation of California Indians.

In the 1870s, President Ulysses Grant also issued executive orders that created thirteen new Indian reservations. California Indians would not see a further substantial improvement until Franklin Roosevelt's Indian New Deal and then again under President Nixon (See Section Eight again.)

There are five museums in the US remembering the Holocaust, but none on genocide against American Indians. The obvious reason why is because condemnation of the Nazis is easy. But a hard honest look at one's own nation and, possibly, one's own ancestors is not so easy. California Indian genocide should be Exhibit A in any teachings on America's treatment of Native peoples, and that must include talking about US presidents' indifference or bumbling.

## Jefferson and the Haitian Revolution

**What: The Haitian Revolution against slavery and French rule and later British and Spanish invasions, the most successful though costly slave revolt in history.** Jefferson, once a strong critic of slavery who ended the slave trade into the US, took part in efforts to isolate Haiti, insuring its long history of future poverty.

**The Body Count: 170,000 Haitians, or 40% of the entire island population.** Napoleon's armies also suffered heavy losses, 52,000 deaths from battle and disease. British and Spanish armies also lost many. But French, British, and Spanish losses were from ordinary warfare. Some atrocities against French civilians were aberrations, with only a small number of Haitians taking part. (See Section Eleven.) Haitian armies went on to successfully occupy the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo for several decades.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**French plantation owners on Haiti** had the most brutal plantation system anywhere in the Americas. French slave owners created racial divisions between Blacks, Mulattes (mixed ancestry), and whites or Blancs. French plantation owners removed most wealth from Haiti after losing. Further guaranteeing Haitian poverty, plantation owners successfully pressured the French government to force the payment of more than ten times the value of Haiti's entire annual revenue as compensation for lost slaves and plantations, and also as a bribe to not invade again.

The **French government** also successfully diplomatically and economically isolated Haiti. Haiti took 122 years to pay off the debt and blackmail, finally done in 1947. Forced to borrow from French banks at high rates to finance the payoff, over 80% of Haitian government revenue went to paying French debts, guaranteeing no economic development for the first six generations. French

officials created myths of Haitian brutality based on race, claiming Haitians were not only inferior but savage and even demonic.

**Napoleon** tried to reinstate slavery after the French Revolution government had earlier set all Haitian slaves free. He sent a huge army in a disastrous attempt to reconquer Haiti. Napoleon's strategy was one of deliberate extermination of all Haitian adult males. In addition to Haitian deaths, Napoleon's great miscalculation cost him 52,000 troops and over a dozen French generals killed by battle and disease.

**British and Spanish invaders** seeking temporary political advantage against the French worsened Haitian famine and disease.

**Some Haitian generals and soldiers** betrayed the Haitian Revolution for the money, power, or estates given by the French. For individual Blacks to take the side of French slave owners was not unusual. Free Black and mixed blood Creole militias had helped crush slave revolts before.

What makes Jefferson's actions on Haiti more appalling was that he spent much of his earlier life fighting, successfully, to end or limit slavery. In 1778, in the Virginia Congress he led efforts to successfully ban importing slaves into Virginia. In 1784, he proposed an ordinance to ban all slavery in US territories, all lands that were not part of the original thirteen states. The ordinance failed by a single vote. The Northwest Ordinance, influenced by his bill, passed a year later and three years after banned all slavery in new states above the Ohio River, what would become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. In 1806 Jefferson proposed and passed a ban on the US international slave trade. It was now a crime to import slaves or for US citizens or ships to take part in the international slave trade, though slave trading inside the US was still legal.

But starting in the mid-1780s, Jefferson's position on slavery began to change. Many historians argue his relationship with his slave Sally Hemmings was the cause. Jefferson had just become a widow. His new "mistress" Hemmings was also half-sister to his late wife. Jefferson's father-in-law

was Hemmings' father.

Except for the 1807 law, after taking up with Hemmings, Jefferson made no further moves to end or limit slavery. In fact, he increasingly seemed to fear emancipation. An old friend and ally, Polish nobleman Tadeusz Kosciuszko, gave Jefferson money, instructing him to buy slaves and free them after Kosciuszko's death. Jefferson never carried out his friend's wishes.

Jefferson's hostility to Haiti began as Secretary of State to George Washington. **Washington and Jefferson sent \$40,000 in aid and 1,000 weapons to help put down the Haitian Revolution. As president, Jefferson loaned another \$300,000 to aid the French slave owners on the island.** (In today's terms, multiply that money by perhaps fifty.) Publicly, the US was neutral, though weapons from US business and citizens (but not the government) continued to aid French slave masters.

**The French campaign against Haitian rebels was incredibly brutal.** Napoleon raged that he would “not leave an epaulette on the shoulders of a single nigger in the colony.” Napoleon's lead general and brother-in-law Charles Leclerc agreed. “All the niggers, when they see an army, will lay down their arms. They will be only too happy that we pardon them.”

Leclerc and other French generals ordered **mass drownings, hangings, slaves burned alive, or buried up to the neck while being eaten alive by insects. Many slaves were literally ripped apart by the 1,500 imported hunting dogs** the army brought. All these tactics were designed to either exterminate all Haitian slaves so the colony could then be repopulated by new ones, or terrify the survivors into submission. This fits the definition of genocide.

But Jefferson would take the side of slave owners against slaves for virtually the rest of his life. In 1802 his worst fear came true. There was a public scandal when journalist James Callendar accused Jefferson of having a slave concubine. Jefferson never responded to the accusation. But where his old writings criticized slavery, his new writings began to describe Blacks as inferior, even comparing them to apes.

Jefferson kept reassuring slave owners, nervous about the Haitian Revolution, by his actions.

First he discouraged free Blacks from immigrating to Haiti. Working with Napoleon, the US government successfully isolated Haiti, both economically and diplomatically, from the rest of the world. Above all, Jefferson successfully pushed for Congress to deny diplomatic recognition to Haiti. Haiti was not recognized by the US until 1862, by Lincoln.

Such isolation, combined with French demands to be bribed not to invade again, almost guaranteed Haiti would remain as poor as it is today. American elites were not done with Haiti yet though. The US invaded in 1891, and then invaded again in 1914, conquering and holding the country until 1934, for twenty years. The US government collected money from poor Haitians to continue to pay the French.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the US controlled World Bank restructured the Haitian economy to benefit foreign investment, driving most Haitian farmers off their lands. The GW Bush administration carried out a final coup, against Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide. Aristide was the first democratically elected Haitian president in generations, but many US conservatives found him “radical.” Clinton later apologized for US policy harming Haitian farmers. The GW Bush administration still denies they overthrew Aristide.

There are others to blame for Haitian misery. The incredible violence needed to defeat the French created a tradition of military leaders’ absolute control of the nation. One dictator after another looted an already poor Haiti. But most blame for Haiti’s early woes goes to the French, especially the genocide carried out by Napoleon’s army. Jefferson’s guilt is not only turning a blind eye to these atrocities but of then working with the French to (unsuccessfully) avoid questions about his private life.

## Nixon Betrays the Kurds of Iraq

**What: The crushing of the 1973 uprising of Kurds in northern Iraq by the Iraq government, the first step leading to Kurdish genocide.** Nixon, the British and Israeli governments, and the Shah of Iran all supplied the Kurds with arms, intelligence, and in the Israeli case military advisers. Support for the Kurdish uprising turned out to be a cynical ploy for the Shah to help negotiate for a disputed island on the Iran-Iraq border.

Betrayals of the Iraqi Kurds continued from one American president to the next, Ford, Carter, Reagan, all the way until George Bush Sr. finally reversed course during the Gulf War.

**The Body Count: From 1973 to 1990, over 100,000 Kurds were killed by Saddam Hussein. At least 3,000 Kurds were killed in the initial crushing of the Kurd revolt,** when Nixon and Kissinger betrayed Kurdish allies once the Shah of Iran received favorable terms from the Iraqi government.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Iraqi President Ahmad Hasan Al Bakr** ordered the attacks crushing the initial revolt in 1973. Al Bakr had led the Baathist Party since the early 1960s, becoming ruler of the country in 1968 and remaining so until 1979. In addition to crushing the Kurds, he issued an order in 1978 banning all other parties, punishable by death. Al Bakr stepped down in 1979, forced out by Saddam Hussein.

**Saddam Hussein and the Baathist Party** ordered the largest wave of killings, including the infamous attack on Kurd villages with poison gas. Estimates of the deaths caused by Hussein range from 250,000 to 500,000, in addition to at least 300,000 deaths in the war with Iran.

The **Iraqi military** carried these attacks.

The **Shah of Iran** had the most to gain from supporting Kurdish attacks. The Shah claimed to

be part of an ancient dynasty, when in fact he was put in power in 1953 by a CIA coup, overthrowing the elected President Mossadegh. Estimates of political prisoners under the Shah's rule are from 25,000 to 100,000, with up to 60,000 protesters killed during his attempt to hold onto power against the Iranian Revolution in 1978. More recently, historian Emad al-Din Baghi argued the number of deaths was far lower, slightly over 3,100. Most accounts still use the higher figures, and except for Baghi, many, but not all, arguing against the previous estimates tend to be anti-Muslim bigots.

**Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush Sr.** all continued to support first Al Bakr and then Saddam Hussein knowing full well his human rights record. Bush Sr.'s support for Hussein did not end until after the invasion of Kuwait.

The Kurds have been a people without their own country for centuries. Divided among the nations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, they often faced exclusion and abuse. There are Kurdish independence movements in each of these nations, but the two largest, and the largest Kurd populations, are in Iraq and Syria.

Iraq and Iran have long been rivals for power in the Middle East. Iraq is the most populous Arab nation in Asia, while Iranians are not Arabs. Iran is overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim, while Iraq has a Shiite majority but also a large Sunni minority.

The Shah, put into power by a CIA coup and with CIA trained secret police as his enforcers, ruled Iran as a dictator until overthrown by a popular revolution in 1978. Iraq, after gaining independence from Britain, was ruled by a military dictator until the Baath Party overthrew him. Most Baathists were young army officers. Led first by Ahmad Hasan Al Bakr and then by Saddam Hussein, the Baathists were secular pan-Arabists, hoping to unite all Arabs in one large modern state. This was seen as a threat to both Israel and Iran, both US allies in the Mideast.

While Iran was a central US ally, Iraq sought support from both sides in the Cold War. This meant the US government wanted either to weaken Iraq or to turn it into a US client and ally. From

1973 to 1975 the US, Iranian, and Israeli governments supported a Kurdish revolt as a cynical ploy to strengthen Iran against Iraq. In 1975 Bakr agreed to give Iran its desired territory. Iran, the US, and Israel then cut off military aid to the Kurds. Iraqi troops then massacred Kurd rebels. The US government under Ford did nothing, even refusing asylum for Kurds.

In 1979, Saddam took power from Bakr. There was a massive purge both within the Baath Party and of the opposition. Carter's National Security Adviser Brzezinski stated publicly after the purges, "We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the US and Iraq." Part of the reason for this was the Iranian Revolution that overthrew the Shah and put a theocracy into power in Iran, followed by the Iran Hostage Crisis.

Reagan supported Iraq's dictator even more than Ford and Carter had. 1980 saw the start of Iraq's war with Iran. Reagan refused to condemn Iraq and actually favored Saddam over Iran. Reagan removed Iraq from the list of terrorist states. Donald Rumsfeld was sent to discuss trade. Reagan gave loans and subsidies to Iraq. The Reagan administration provided intelligence to help Saddam against Iran. **The US Navy even escorted Iraqi oil tankers, sank Iranian Navy boats, and shot down Iranian planes.**

The Reagan administration even provided dual use military equipment to Saddam. These are items for the military one can claim are for civilian use. The most notorious examples were military helicopters used in the chemical attacks on Kurds and Iran. Theoretically they were sold for crop dusting. Reagan funneled weapons to Iraq using other countries, Italy, Egypt, Saudi, Jordan, and Kuwait. **The Reagan administration even approved 771 licenses for \$1.5 billion in biological agents and equipment to Iraq** including Bacillus Anthracis and Clostridium Botulinum, pathogenic agents used to make anthrax and botulism.

European corporations also sold Saddam chemical weapons equipment paid for by loans from the US Commodity Credit Corporation. **In 1988, Saddam used these chemical weapons against a Kurd uprising, killing 5,000. Iran asked the UN to condemn Iraq for its chemical attacks against**

**both the Kurds and Iranian troops. Reagan tried to stop the UN vote and continued giving aid to the Iraqi military.** Congress voted for strong sanctions, which Reagan blocked. Saddam's campaign against the Kurds continued, killing up to 100,000.

By this time, Bush Sr. was US President. Far from condemning Saddam, Bush increased Iraq's credit to \$1 billion. Bush opposed Iraq sanctions right until Kuwait was invaded in 1990. To his credit, Bush later rescued many Kurds from being killed by Saddam. (See Section Eight.)

Ultimately, Nixon's, Kissinger's, and the Shah's ploy turned out to be a brutal failure anyway, and the Kurds were betrayed for nothing. Iraq and Iran began their bitter and costly border war only a few years later, killing over a half million on both sides, and they fought partly over that same piece of territory. This is yet one more example of the false myth of Nixon and Kissinger's competence on foreign policy. All this betrayal did was lead to Kurdish distrust that made later wars in Iraq more difficult for the US. **Some of the blame for US, allied, and Iraqi deaths in both the Gulf and Second Iraq Wars have to be laid at Nixon and Kissinger's callous bumbling.**

What could have been done differently? The answer is simple and obvious, not use a vulnerable people as a cynical bargaining chip for a brutal dictator. There were no other likely presidents at that time who would have made the same vicious crass error as Nixon. Not Robert Kennedy nor McGovern nor Humphrey would see the point in such duplicity. Other potential Republican presidents would not make this choice either. Nelson Rockefeller, socially liberal but a conservative anti Communist, and the premier anti-Communist in the US, Reagan, both would see little point in such destructive meddling if not done to oppose Communism. Only Nixon and Kissinger, two men whose giant egos led them to be mesmerized by delusions about their diplomatic skill, fascinated by the juvenile game playing for foreign misadventures of the nineteenth century, would make such a disastrous mistake.

## The Worst American Presidents on Slavery

**What: The genocide of the slave trade and slavery, central to the American economy from colonial times until it was abolished in steps.** The Northwest Ordinance banned slavery in new northern states in 1787. Most other northern states banned slavery after the American Revolution. The US international slave trade was abolished by Jefferson and Congress in 1807, though an internal slave trade continued until abolition. (See Section Eight.)

During the Civil War, slavery was abolished in Washington DC and Union liberated Louisiana in 1862. In 1863, Emancipation abolished slavery in areas under rebellion, and the last of Africans and Natives held under slavery ended in 1865. Some American Indians in isolated parts of California remained illegally enslaved as late as the 1890s. Some undocumented workers in the US live and work today under de facto slavery conditions.

**The Body Count: African plantation slavery in the Americas was one of the worst genocides in human history, at least 60 million deaths.** This includes deaths from wars to enslave captives in Africa. These wars generally killed several Africans for each one enslaved. Then forced marches to the coast caused more deaths, deaths from disease during imprisonment on the African coast, up to a 50% death rate in the Middle Passage, another 50% death rate breaking or “seasoning” slaves before sale, and infant mortality rates on plantations double that of even the poorest free people.

From **10-12 million Africans were enslaved by the slave trade. About 800,000 Africans kidnapped in Africa and enslaved for sale ended up in what became the US, about 6-8% of the total.** Thus proportionately, the **US share of responsibility for slave trade deaths comes to 3.6 million-4.8 million.** This includes during colonial times. The share of deaths since independence would likely be less than one fourth the last figure. **At the start of the Civil War, there were perhaps 4,000,000 Blacks forcibly enslaved, one third of the southern population.**

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Colonial powers Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and even Sweden** took part in the slave trade. Of all these nations, the British had the worst record, but also had the strongest and earliest abolitionist movement. The British Royal Navy played the greatest role in stopping the Atlantic slave trade.

**American slave traders** continued legally on an international scale until 1807, illegally all the way until the end of the Civil War. The internal slave trade continued until abolition, forcibly removing one million Africans, and became almost as big a part of the economy of the South as plantations. Well known Americans involved in the slave trade included **Presidents Andrew Jackson and James Polk. Jim Bowie**, best known for his knife and the Battle of the Alamo, was an illegal slave smuggler along with pirate Jean Lafitte.

American industries that profited off the slave trade included **banks, insurance companies, and the textile industry**. Banks held slave trade profits. The insurance industry got its start from insuring slave ships and slaves, especially from losses where the ships' crews forced to dump slaves overboard if caught smuggling slaves after the overseas trade had been banned. The textile industry depended on cotton grown and picked by slaves.

**African slave trading nations** played a central role. Entire African empires rose and fell based on enslavement of weaker neighboring peoples. In some ways slavery within Africa itself was not as horrific as in the Americas, though punishments were equally brutal. Slaves often married masters and lived in a similar culture. Internal African slavery was not racially based, and it was easier for slaves to gain their freedom. But slavery in Africa persisted longer, in some countries like Liberia into the twentieth century.

**Arab slave traders** played an intermediary role in some cases. Most of the Arab slave traders took their captives to the Middle East. The slave trade across the North African desert likely killed at

least as many Africans proportionately as the Atlantic slave trade.

**American slave owners**, especially large plantation owners, from **5-8% of Southern white families** owned slaves. Most slave owners owned fewer than ten slaves. Large plantation owners with more than 100 slaves owned the majority of slaves.

The **American government and the US Constitution** both recognized and protected slavery and the slave trade in the beginning. The Constitution protected the slave trade for twenty years and gave slave owning states greater representation in Congress.

There were fifteen US presidents before Lincoln ended slavery. By any reasonable standard, the slave trade and slavery itself were genocide. It fits all the conditions of genocide, mass murder of non-combatants, forced displacement, mass rape, and attempts to wipe out a people in whole *or in part*. That slave traders and owners were not trying to kill every last African does not make it any less genocide. Hitler did not try to kill every last Pole either, only about every tenth. Yet his actions against Poles are still widely considered genocide.

What is the record of US presidents on slavery? It is not a valid excuse to claim that since slavery was legal it was not considered immoral. Legality and morality are not always linked, such as in drug abuse, where most consider drug abuse to be immoral, but some favor the legalization of drugs. Many Americans were strongly opposed to slavery long before it was finally banned. The irony is that American presidents often more strongly opposed slavery at the start of US history, when much of the US public did not yet, and were more likely to be defenders of slavery as the time came close to it being abolished. No one president shares the majority of the blame for slavery or the slave trade, thus this entry was placed at the end of the section on ignoring genocide.

Washington, both Adams, Jefferson, and Madison all questioned the morality of slavery. All wished, privately or publicly or both, that slavery would be abolished. As discussed elsewhere, Jefferson and John Quincy Adams spent much of their political careers fighting to end slavery, with

some limited success. Yet Washington, Jefferson, and Madison were all large scale slave owners who lacked the courage to take the steps to end their own participation in an immoral genocide. All three vaguely hoped future generations would end slavery.

James Monroe is somewhere in the middle. He also owned dozens of slaves, but called for ending slavery. As Virginia Governor, he called out the militia to crush Gabriel's slave revolt. Then he pushed for mercy for many of the rebels, though they had planned to kidnap him. Some were saved from hanging and instead sold. Monroe was also a leader in the American Colonization Society, helping send several thousand Free Blacks and former slaves to Liberia.

Five presidents have the worst records on slavery:

1. **Jackson was a slave trader**, making a huge fortune off of human misery. He was the first president to not have any criticisms of slavery or question its morality. As general, he threatened a war with Spain and invaded Florida to prevent it being a sanctuary for runaway slaves.

Jackson personally owned at least 300 slaves. He fancied himself a model slave owner and spread the image far and wide, claiming that he kept slave families together. In fact, he also had a reputation for brutality, offering higher bounties if slave catchers would severely whip runaway slaves before returning them.

Jackson's slaves lived in cabins twenty feet across, with five to ten slaves per cabin. A sure sign of his lack of mild treatment on his plantation is that his most favored head slave, "old Hannah," ran away during the Civil War before Emancipation even though she was quite elderly by then.

2. William Harrison died in office after only a month. His successor **John Tyler not only expanded slavery, he committed treason**. During the Civil War he joined the Confederacy and was elected to the Confederate Congress, dying shortly before taking office. As President, Tyler pushed for the annexation of Texas as a slave state, though the war to expand slavery would be provoked by Polk. As congressman, he opposed the Missouri Compromise, believing slavery should be allowed everywhere. The one positive thing to be said about Tyler is that by most accounts his punishment of

slaves was not especially brutal.

3. **Polk fought a war with Mexico to expand slavery.** (See Section Three.) **Polk was also a slave trader**, though he carefully concealed that fact while running for president, having his cousin purchase and sell slaves for him. He was a brutal slave owner, breaking up slave families, selling off disobedient slaves, and punishing slaves severely, even publicly stating that slaves needed to be kept in line with whipping. More than half of all slave children on Polk's plantation died before fifteen, a high rate even for slavery.

Zachary Taylor was president less than a year and a half before his death. Though a slave owner, his sole influence on the slavery question was arguing for California to be admitted as a free state. When slavery advocates called for secession, Taylor publicly threatened to hang them and they backed down. His successor Millard Fillmore, though not a slave owner, strongly supported and enforced the Fugitive Slave Act, requiring all Americans to return runaway slaves to their owners.

4. **Franklin Pierce's** record on slavery is one of incompetence as well as evil. He **tried to buy Cuba to expand slavery** and pushed for using force to take it when Spain would not sell. Pierce was president during the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which ended previous compromise on slavery. He did little to stop violence in Kansas, and appointed a pro slavery governor despite free state proponents being the majority. Pierce was so unpopular he declined to run for a second term and became the first president to need bodyguards.

5. Buchanan's weakness and defense of slavery almost guaranteed the Civil War to be a long bloody mess. (See Section Four.)

### Section Three:

#### Wartime Atrocities

This section is not about battle deaths in wartime or a president going to war, but atrocities committed against civilians and the roles presidents played in those war crimes. Just committing America to a war is not always enough to get make one a war criminal. Reasonable persons can disagree about whether it was right to go into a particular war. But only the most vicious, immoral, or amoral would agree to mass murdering civilians, torture, carpet bombing cities, assassinations, or the pardon of those who commit such crimes.

And yet many Americans are reluctant to admit our presidents, generals, and soldiers, sailors, and airmen can commit precisely such crimes. People on both the political left and right often do so. A leftist might argue that the true guilt only falls on political leaders, or that soldiers have been so dehumanized they cannot be blamed. A conservative might have such a romanticized view of soldiers and veterans that they cannot believe any of them could do such atrocities. Or they may justify it by saying a soldier “had to” in order to survive. This is the deepest insult to the great majority of veterans, including combat veterans, who never committed war crimes.

The Nuremberg Trials established the precedent that **just following orders is not a defense**. **The Uniform Code of Military Justice recognizes this precedent and incorporates it into military law in the concept of command responsibility**. Not only is it illegal to commit war crimes, an officer or sergeant who fails to stop human rights violations can and should be prosecuted for failing to stop such crimes. A soldier who is ordered to commit human rights violations is bound by military law to *disobey* such illegal orders.

Presidents, unfortunately, are given sovereign immunity. By international law, no head of state can be prosecuted for war crimes while they are still in office. Even prosecuting them after they leave office proves difficult. Thankfully it is getting easier. Leading war criminals from Argentina, Chad,

Chile, Congo, Guatemala, Iraq, Liberia, Peru, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda have all been prosecuted.

Similar efforts are deservedly aimed at American war criminals. **Henry Kissinger, GW Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Alberto Gonzalez, John Yoo, and George Tenet all face likely prosecution in most of the world for war crimes.** Some jurists in South Africa also called for Obama and Biden to be arrested for drone assassinations. After they leave office, likely much of the world may wish to prosecute the two and others in the Obama administration for these atrocities as well.

This section is on the roles all American presidents played on war crimes during the time of their presidency. It includes both those who committed war crimes, whether or not the law would have prosecuted them at the time. It also includes those who permitted war crimes to be done by US military or government agents, as well as those who by going into wars of aggression created the conditions for war crimes to happen.

## McKinley and the US-Philippines War

**What: The crushing of the Filipino independence movement immediately after the Spanish-American War. US President McKinley ordered the conquest and betrayal of the Filipino people they were supposedly there to liberate in what is variously called the Filipino War, the Filipino Insurrection, or the US-Philippines War.**

**The Body Count: At least 200,000 to up to 1.4 million deaths, almost all civilians.** Many Filipino rebels and civilians were also tortured, including the first time US troops used water boarding against an enemy. The biggest losses were due to deaths from disease, mostly dysentery, directly caused by American troops herding Filipinos into concentration camps ironically named “zones of protection.” Famed Filipino historian E. San Juan Jr. argues this war constituted genocide. However, almost no other historians have agreed.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Tabloid tycoon **William Randolph Hearst** created an atmosphere of hysteria pushing America into war based largely on falsehoods. Hearst was the Rupert Murdoch of his day, a propagandist owning most US newspapers, the main source of information most Americans had at the time. Hearst's main intent was to agitate for independence for Cuba, where an independence struggle had also long been waged, both based on his own beliefs but also to make money by raising circulation for his papers.

The declining, incompetent, and corrupt **Spanish Empire** resorted to great brutality for several decades to hold on to the Philippines. Even peaceful protesters like Jose Rizal, Filipinos' independence hero, were executed by Spanish authorities.

Once Spanish military authorities faced off with more numerous and better armed US troops,

they in fact collaborated with American military leaders to betray Filipino rebels. **Governor General Fermin Jaudenes made a secret agreement with US Admiral George Dewey to surrender only to US troops and to hand over the Philippines to the US.** Jaudenes and Dewey even agreed to stage a mock battle before handing over the capital of Manila. The first elected president of the Philippines, Emilio Aguinaldo, was even warned Filipino troops would be fired on if they tried to take part in the “battle” or possession of the capital.

**General Elwell Otis** commanded US troops during the worst atrocities. Otis often acted on his own, without approval or consultation with Washington, and did his best to conceal atrocities under his command. He repeatedly ignored orders from his superiors to avoid fighting and actually turned down an early offer from Aguinaldo to end the war. Otis had earlier commanded US troops during campaigns against the Lakota in the aftermath of the Battle of Little Bighorn, and more than a few historians see similarities in the tactics used against and the treatment of the enemy and civilian populations in both wars.

US troops, writing in their diaries, letters home, and interviews with journalists in fact often referred to Filipinos as “Indians” when describing the enemy's guerilla war tactics. But when justifying atrocities, many US troops described Filipinos as “niggers” and described going “nigger hunting.” Otis's tactics and the heavier US troop losses that resulted led to a great deal of opposition to the war within the US. Otis was relieved of command after two years and replaced by Arthur MacArthur, father of Douglas MacArthur who would command US troops in the Philippines prior to World War II.

**Pseudo scientific racism and Anglo-American attitudes of racial superiority** are often blamed by scholars as the cause for US abuses of not just Filipinos but also invasions in Latin America and interventions in other parts of Asia at the time. The scientific professions were flooded at the time with poor science trying to justify European and Anglo-American conquest and exploitation of African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern peoples around the world and within their own countries as well. In its most extreme form, pseudo scientific racism would eventually mutate into eugenics, which

sought to sterilize “inferior” races. Pseudo scientific racism led American authorities to set up a Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to “civilize” certain Filipino tribes, modeled on the Bureau of Indian Affairs inside the US.

Certainly **misguided paternalistic racist notions of American benevolence and civilization** also played a central role. Many Americans, including Presidents McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, thought of themselves as humanitarians who invaded other countries for their own good. All four were openly racists, but paternalistic racists who imagined they had, in Rudyard Kipling's words, “the white man's burden.” They believed it a racial duty to “educate the Filipinos, uplift and Christianize them” as McKinley argued. Taft, for one, believed Filipinos were “our little brown brothers.” Such notions were quite ignorant of the cultures they claimed to be superior to, not knowing Filipinos had already been Christians for over three centuries.

**Filipino collaborators with America and Spain** are also often blamed. The Macabebes helped capture Philippines President Emilio Aguinaldo. Aguinaldo himself had briefly accepted Spanish money to go into exile, and once captured by the US military he issued a declaration urging Filipinos to lay down their arms. Over time, many Filipinos chose to join the Philippines Constabulary and then the Philippine Scouts. Some historians, including Filipino ones, argue there is a pattern of Ameriphilia among many Filipinos which delayed Filipino independence for decades.

But Filipino guerilla fighting did continue a decade after the war was declared “over” by US authorities. In the southern mostly Muslim island of Mindanao, resistance continued all the way until independence, almost 50 years. Some Muslim fighters continued fighting for independence from the new nation of the Philippines. One Muslim separatist guerilla group, the Moro National Liberation Front, continues to fight even today.

How did President William McKinley wind up presiding over a war to suppress peoples he claimed originally to be helping gain their independence? The original Spanish-American War was one

he did not seek either. McKinley was elected as the most pro-business president America had seen up to that point, and big business was divided over the Spanish-American War. Some opposed it as bad for business, notably steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. McKinley was definitely pushed from below by popular sentiment.

Hearst's media campaign agitating for war against made it increasingly harder to avoid war. The campaign received an unexpected dramatic boost with the explosion of the *USS Maine* in Havana harbor. Sent by McKinley as a show of force, the ship blew up mysteriously, killing hundreds of sailors. Most forensics experts in later years concluded the explosion was almost certainly an accident, a spark near ammunition.

Spain had the most to lose and the least to gain from a war, its empire in decline, incompetently run, and with much unrest at home as well. Spain lost the war quickly, in less than three months. The island of Guam, for example, surrendered without a fight since its garrison had no ammunition. Spain's aging navy near Manila was sunk in less than an hour.

Filipino fighters, though armed almost entirely with spears, arrows, and knives, still managed to drive Spanish forces from all of the Philippines except the capital Manila. McKinley, in his own words, was uncertain what to do with the new territories under US control, Cuba, Guam, and Puerto Rico as well. There was strong opposition in the US to conquest, led by the Anti-Imperialist League. Unions, most churches, some business, and the Black population all strongly favored independence for all subject peoples and did not want an American empire.

McKinley described pacing the floor and praying in the White House over the right course to take. He then issued his Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation:

“The military government maintained by the US government in...Manila is to be extended...to the whole....We come, not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives...The mission of the United States is one of BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule.”

General Otis, in yet one more controversial decision, delayed the proclamation for two weeks and posted a heavily censored version, removing any mention of US sovereignty over the islands. An original version of the proclamation was sent to US General Marcus Miller. Miller accidentally posted the original proclamation, which Filipinos quickly discovered.

**Otis's atrocities and other actions were never approved of by McKinley or virtually anyone else in Washington. But it was McKinley's decision to continue the war,** blinded by his own paternalistic racism that he and other “civilized” whites knew what was best for the Philippines far better than any Filipino could. McKinley did send the Schurman Commission to investigate the war and make recommendations. Only one of the five members was a Philippines expert. Two were military commanders in the field, including Otis, and the commission's head, Jacob Schurman, was an English literature and philosophy professor. Schurman's group came to the same paternalistic racist conclusions as McKinley, insisting Filipinos were incapable of ruling themselves.

McKinley was killed by an anarchist assassin in 1901. His successor, Teddy Roosevelt, reversed course in several ways. Roosevelt offered an amnesty for Filipino fighters and declared the war over in 1902. Military rule of the island passed to US civilians. In 1907 the Philippines elected one house of their legislature. In 1916 they elected both houses.

**Yet the US held onto the islands for thirty more years.** It was not until 1946 that the Philippines finally were allowed independence from the US, in part as recognition of Filipino struggles against the Japanese occupation. The Philippines have remained democratic ever since, except for nine years of martial law under Ferdinand Marcos.

Marcos, it should be pointed out, had US diplomatic and military support during almost his entire dictatorship. Only at the end, with Filipino anger over Marcos's assassination of an opponent, did the US government finally drop support for the dictator, and even then he was granted exile in the US. Obviously, US colonial control of the Philippines was never about democracy, and there is no reason to assume democracy would have come any sooner or later thanks to US rule. Obviously, if democracy

were the true reason for US conquest, the country would have become independent shortly after 1916, when Filipinos first elected their own congress.

What could McKinley have done differently? **General Otis** certainly played a central role in provoking and then worsening the war. **McKinley should have relieved him almost immediately, and Otis should have faced criminal charges.** McKinley's failure to punish Otis makes the president guilty of horrendous callousness with regards to Filipino lives.

Not only was Otis never punished for atrocities, virtually no other US soldiers were either. Only a few officers were reprimanded. In one of the best known cases, Major Edwin Glenn was convicted of torture for water boarding prisoners, and only received a fine. **A US congressional investigation concluded that responsibility went all the way up to Secretary of War Elihu Root, and Root should have faced charges.** But McKinley failed to hold anyone in his administration responsible, either civilian or military.

**McKinley could have granted Filipino independence almost immediately,** much like happened with Cuba. For the latter nation, it did not happen as benevolently as it might seem. The US government ordered the Cuban constitution have the "US right to intervene" written in, and the US frequently did. These US invasions of Cuba were one of the biggest reasons leading eventually to Fidel Castro's rise to power.

Some imperialists insisted US conquest was for the good of "inferior" peoples, and that other nations would simply conquer them instead. That possibility was there. Britain, Germany, and Japan all might have tried to take the Philippines as a colony. Germany actually had warships off the coast as the US invaded the Philippines.

**The simplest way to prevent other imperialists' conquest would be to make the Philippines a protectorate.** This would not be a new practice. The British and French did have treaties accepting Thailand's independence, one of the few Asian countries to remain so. One consequence of Thai independence is that the nation was far more stable and avoided most of the wars that happened in

other Asian nations.

The US-Philippines War remains one of the least known wars to most Americans. Most public schools do not teach about it, and even university history courses often neglect it. Remembering the war and its atrocities could go a long way towards teaching Americans about the folly of so called benevolent invasions or assimilation.

## Franklin Roosevelt and Truman Target German and Japanese Civilians

**What: The deliberate military targeting of German and Japanese civilians by Allied bombing.** Bombing was primarily by American planes in the Pacific Theater, both American and British air forces in Europe.

**The Body Count: At least 305,000 German civilians and 500,000 Japanese civilians killed, and over seven million Germans and five million Japanese made homeless.** Many people of occupied nations were also unintentionally killed, such as 40,000 French and 25,000 Poles.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Winston Churchill** began ordering the carpet bombing of German civilians before the US entered the war, by over a year and a half. Churchill deserves a greater share of the blame than Roosevelt. Initially both Britain and Germany agreed to avoid targeting civilians. Churchill did not change his mind because of either the Battle of Britain and German targeting of British civilians, nor because of German targeting of fleeing refugees in countries like Poland and France. Churchill ordered bombing civilian targets in 1942 as a way to placate the Soviets, to say Britain was contributing to the war effort without directly invading Europe yet.

Thus Churchill ordered the targeting of German civilians as a war tactic, not a response to human rights violations. And he and Roosevelt ordered destruction on a far greater scale than either the Nazis or Japanese fascists. Nine of the ten cities with the highest civilian death tolls during World War II were victims of Allied bombing, not Axis. The argument of some that blames **Hitler, the Nazis, Tojo, and the Japanese military** for being the first guilty of carpet bombing cities ignores that fact. If anything, the behavior of clearly evil Axis regimes is an argument for precisely why the Allies should have avoided not only imitating their barbarous practices, but doing them on a far larger and more

inhumane scale.

**Greatly overestimated technology.** So called precision bombing was anything but. Even today, air forces are not able to bomb without causing many civilian casualties, despite the best efforts of military and civilian planners. The ability of bombing campaigns to defeat an enemy or even weaken them is also usually overestimated. Bombing generally does not break an enemy's morale. If anything, it may strengthen their resolve.

Some writers blame **German anti aircraft fire** for forcing Allied bombers higher where accuracy was much less. This was not a valid argument in the Pacific Theater, where Japanese anti aircraft fire did far less, almost negligible, damage to American aircraft.

Some scholars like James Dower argue the war in Asia became a de facto race war. Dower's *War Without Mercy* documents how the Allies, largely **white nations with centuries of white supremacist practices and pseudo scientific racist teachings** felt humiliated by being defeated by an Asian or nonwhite power.

Atrocities in the Pacific Theater by US troops were widespread; execution of POWs; mutilation of enemy dead; massacres of civilians; even the collection of enemy body parts as trophies. One of the more notorious cases was a Japanese skull sent home by a Marine to his fiancée, where she posed with it for the cover of *Life* magazine. In such an atmosphere, where many Americans even called for genocide, the murder of every last Japanese as revenge for Pearl Harbor, it is appalling but not surprising there were few objections to targeting Japanese civilians.

**British General Arthur “Bomber” Harris and US General Curtis Lemay** were the greatest military proponents of massive bombing campaigns in Europe. After the defeat of Germany, Lemay was shifted to the Pacific to direct bombing against Japan. Among Lemay's staff was a young colonel named George McNamara, later to become US Secretary of Defense for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson during the US-Vietnam War.

McNamara's later assessment of his and Lemay's role in carpet bombing was harsh. In the

documentary *Fog of War*, McNamara stated both he and Lemay were war criminals. Lemay also urged Kennedy to still bomb and invade Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis even after the Soviets withdrew from the island, even though it could lead to nuclear war .

Lemay's final bit of notoriety was his argument to bomb the Soviet Union "back to the Stone Age." This comment was repeated often when Lemay ran for Vice President in 1968 as running mate for segregationist George Wallace on the American Independent ticket. But in today's culture Lemay may be best remembered as the model for the suicidal General Jack Ripper in the dark comedy *Dr. Strangelove*.

**For over half a decade before the US entered World War II, Roosevelt had stood strongly against precisely the kind of aerial atrocities he was about to commit.** When the Japanese military bombed Shanghai and Nanking, Roosevelt was among those most forcefully condemning them. When Italian fascists used aerial bombing and nerve gas against Ethiopian civilians, Roosevelt again spoke out against the offenders in thunderous tones. When Hitler's troops attacked Polish and other civilians early in the war, Roosevelt said:

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

Most observers have come to the conclusion that a series of events led many Americans to increasingly dehumanize Germans and Japanese. First Japanese militarists bombed Shanghai in 1932. Then Mussolini ordered the slaughter of Ethiopians when Italy invaded. Both German and Italian forces killed many civilians in the Spanish Civil War, the most infamous atrocity being the bombing of Guernica. Japan would again bomb Shanghai in 1937, and its soldiers committed many atrocities in

Nanking.

Hitler's invasion of Poland set off a series of spiraling, self reinforcing cycles of barbarities. Both FDR and Churchill called on Hitler to cease attacks on civilians. Hitler agreed and appeared to stop. Then the British Cabinet actually approved indiscriminate bombing of Germany in May 1940, three months before Churchill approved retaliation for the bombing of East London during the Battle of Britain. The German bombing was purely accidental, but even had the British government known that, there is little reason to doubt they would have acted any differently. Each government responded in kind with one bombing in retaliation to the others.

Churchill in May 1941 spoke of “exterminating attacks” on Germans. Famed American reporter Edward Murrow described attacks on Berlin as “orchestrated hell,” yet did not speak against the actions. For the British, one can make the argument that the slaughter of German civilians was pure revenge. But obviously one cannot make that same claim for Americans. Except for the loss of merchant seamen, no US civilians were killed by the German military.

Even if one accepts American carpet bombing of both Germany and Japan as misplaced anger over the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese attack was on a military target. Contrary to what most Americans thought at the time, it was not an undeclared “sneak” attack. Japan had sent a declaration of war shortly before the attack. Only delays in translation caused it to appear to have been sent after.

In the name of being willing to do anything to win the war, Roosevelt not only approved targeting civilians. He also began the Manhattan Project to build an A-bomb and the stockpiling of biological weapons, botulism and anthrax. Roosevelt also was unwilling to spare any US bombings to try and save Jews from the Holocaust. (See Section Two.)

It is important to note that **while Roosevelt acted on the advice of the military, their opinion was far from universal on the matter.** Lemay did say, “To worry about the morality of what we are doing...nuts.” Lemay carpet bombed Japan on such a wide scale that toward the end of the war, he was running out of cities to target. Lemay even considered the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as

“anti climatic.”

At the same time, General James Doolittle, famed for his early raids, opposed targeting civilians as, “Terrorism, without any justification on military grounds.” He argued for, “Military targets only... There is absolutely nothing to be gained by attacking residential areas.”

The German cities of Kassel, Darmstadt, and Pforzheim were all flattened by British bombers over a period of months. But the Polish city of Swinoujscie was crushed by American bombers in a single day, March 12, 1945, killing as many as 23,000 Polish civilians. Berlin lost up to 50,000 civilians killed by British, American, and Soviet bombs.

Dresden and Hamburg suffered the worst of any German cities. Incendiary bombs created a firestorm in each city. The burning cities fed on themselves, causing much of the oxygen in the area to be exhausted. Though both cities used extensive subway tunnels as bomb shelters, many residents hiding out below died from suffocation. Yet the bombing of civilians were not much of a public issue until author Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse Five* described the firestorms in Dresden he survived while a POW.

Most scholarship has not focused on the immorality of targeting civilians. Instead the writing has been primarily from military historians asking the question: Was it an effective tactic? The first survey performed by **the US military concluded bombing German civilians did not work. In fact it may have strengthened their resolve to fight on.**

Most media looking at British civilians in both world wars concluded the same thing. Nearly every commentator noted British “pluck” and “reserve.” In both countries, as well as when the Soviet Union was targeted by German bombing, attacks on the cities served as a rallying point. Experiencing hardship together made civilians more patriotic, hostile towards the enemy, and determined to keep fighting the war.

Did killing huge numbers of German civilians hurt their war effort in other ways? Obviously the loss of skilled workers hurt the economy, and many more people made homeless ties up resources that

otherwise may have gone to the war effort. Some analysts concluded it did hurt defense industries, especially oil production. Yet others point out the real blow to Germany was the loss of Romanian oil fields to Soviet armies.

Did targeting Japanese civilians break their resolve and hasten the end of the war? Here the problem was that Japanese industries were more decentralized. Traditionally much of their economy was based on small artisans in homes or shops rather than large factories.

Here also is where those insistent that the dropping of the A-bombs broke Japan's will to fight face a quandary. **Japan faced more devastation and shock from conventional bombing than the A-bombs ever wrought.** Yet Japan showed no sign of surrender.

There also remains the other logical inconsistency. Often the claim is that the A-bombs were necessary to force a supposedly very fanatic population to surrender. Yet **if Japan's population was truly so fanatic and would always fight to the last man, seemingly neither conventional bombing nor A-bombs should have brought surrender.**

The problem with these claims is their parochial nature, assuming that the US was the only enemy Japan was facing. Japan had fought the British, French, and Dutch as well, and China far longer than any others. China showed no sign of being defeated and had tied up most Japanese military resources, both men and material.

And Japan would shortly face a far more devastating enemy. The Soviets joined the war against Japan very late. Yet in less than five weeks, attacking with a million and a half men on a wide front, the Soviets took more Japanese-held territory than the US did in four years.

Much like in Europe, it was the Soviets who played the key role in defeating Japan. It was the Soviets' late entry that utterly demoralized a fading Japan and caused its surrender, much like the US's late entry into World War I insured a much faster German defeat.

Were there other tactics that could have been used, not only more effective but not horrific and morally reprehensible? Japan is an island nation, one with no oil or iron ore. Obviously a blockade

would have been both a more practical and a more humane choice than targeting civilians with either conventional or A-bombs.

To defeat Germany, obviously a sooner invasion of mainland Europe would have been a better choice. But Churchill obviously had an ulterior motive for delaying D-Day as long as possible, one that Stalin and everyone else knew. Churchill hoped that Hitler would weaken Stalin as much as possible, since he suspected Britain and America would be facing off against the Soviet Union after war's end. But as a tactic, this also made the Cold War more likely.

Harry Truman, a virtual nonentity unknown to most Americans before his nomination as Vice President, became President after Roosevelt's death. Business interests insisted that the second most popular politician in America, Vice President Henry Wallace, be replaced since Wallace was too far to the left for their taste. Truman was originally a small town hat maker elevated by one of the most corrupt, ruthless, and violent political machines in US history. He was utterly inadequate for the job of President, and by many observers' estimation, incompetent, stumbling from crisis to crisis without adequate training or understanding.

Truman's reputation today is largely built on admiration for the underdog, as he certainly was. But his lack of understanding also led him to never adequately question the targeting of civilians, either conventionally or by atomic weapons. Truman's fumbling would also lead him to use fear to gain public support, since he did not have either Roosevelt's popularity or his charisma. And that harvesting of fear would be a major reason much of the world was trapped into the Cold War that Truman largely began. (See Section Four.)

## Truman Drops the A-Bomb

**What: The targeting of the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atomic bomb.** Many scholars argue that Truman's true target was Stalin, hoping the display of the A bomb would intimidate the Soviets. It did not, in part because Soviets already had atomic bomb secrets obtained from spies.

**The Body Count: 200,000 to 220,000 immediate deaths, 370,000 severe long term injuries or early deaths** from radiation and other effects, including cancer, emphysema, leukemia, sterility, birth defects, blindness, deafness, and severe burns.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Contrary to apologists' claim for the atomic bombings, most military leaders opposed using the A-bomb. Generals Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, and Admiral Nimitz all opposed the use of A-bombs against Japan. Even “Blood and Guts” Patton opposed it. Only **General Leslie Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project**, supported the A-bomb's use.

One of the most important Asian history scholars, James Dower, argue that World War II in Asia became a de facto race war. Dower's *War Without Mercy* documents how the Allies, largely **white nations with centuries of white supremacist practices and pseudo scientific racist teachings**, felt humiliated by being defeated by an Asian or nonwhite power.

Atrocities in the Pacific Theater were widespread. (See previous entry.) In such an atmosphere, where many Americans even called for genocide, the murder of every last Japanese as revenge for Pearl Harbor, it is appalling but not surprising there were few objections to targeting Japanese civilians by the A-bomb's use. There were military targets in both cities, but they were small and could have easily been dealt with by conventional bombing.

Most who argue in favor of the bomb's use or make excuses for the mass deaths of Japanese civilians have a very racist image of the Japanese. One of the ugliest lies is the notion that all Japanese were fanatics who would rather die than surrender. Thus many racists blame either the **warrior code of Bushido, or all Japanese collectively**.

But in fact, Bushido was a code for the upper class, especially Japanese officers. Bushido is distinct from the samurai code, and the former developed relatively late, in the 1890s. Generals in the Japanese military did not start arguing for suicide as a military tactic until late 1943, and its most widespread use was extremely late, from the Fall of 1944 on. Many Japanese leaders originally objected to suicide attacks as against the spirit of Bushido, which calls for an awareness of death, not glorification of suicide.

Thus claims that all Japanese were fanatics who would have fought to the end is an argument ignorant of the basic facts, often argued by those whose view of Japanese is formed or influenced by wartime propaganda that demonized all Japanese people as subhuman monsters. There are easily half a dozen huge pieces of evidence to the contrary:

1. **Japan actually had an outstanding human rights record** for its earlier democratic period. Much like Germany, one can point to long periods of humane civilization as well as far briefer periods of atrocities. Japan had thriving democratic, liberal, socialist, and labor movements until fascism overtook the nation relatively late, in the mid 1930s.

2. **Japan's government always had strong peace factions**, both military and civilian. The navy tended to favor peace, while the army had more warmongers. The army often had to resort to threats and at times assassinations of opponents to get its way. In the end, the peace faction did win out and Japan surrendered.

3. Bushido, “fight to the last man,” and “**suicide rather than dishonor**” was an attitude of the **elite**. Though some of the government tried to indoctrinate these ideas into all Japanese, they largely did not succeed. The simplest proof of that is obvious. Japan did surrender. Extremely few Japanese

committed suicide because of surrender. Only a small number of officers and cabinet members did so. More than a few American observers were astonished at how placidly most Japanese accepted defeat, even bearing little grudge against Americans. Part of the proof of the lack of resentment is how many US servicemen came home with Japanese wives.

Even within the military, the most famous examples of suicide, kamikaze pilots, numbered less than 5,000 out of a Japanese military that numbered over six million. In the other famous instances, **“suicides” by soldiers and civilians during battles such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa were often murders or driven by threats of murder by Japanese commanding officers.** In other words, enlisted soldiers and civilians were given no option: commit suicide in battle or your commanding officer will execute you.

As Dower points out repeatedly in *War Without Mercy*, **the even greater reason most Japanese soldiers often did not surrender was because they knew that many American soldiers killed Japanese POWs**, even torturing and mutilating them. Admiral Halsey, US Navy commander in the South Pacific, openly adopted the slogan, “Kill Japs, kill Japs, and kill more more Japs.” Had so many American soldiers not executed POWs indiscriminately, many more Japanese soldiers would have surrendered.

4. Further proof is just by looking at the death rate of Japanese males as soldiers. **Three million were killed in wartime, one of every four Japanese adult males. While that is high, it is far from being the highest in history**, or supposed proof of alleged innate fanaticism as anti Japanese racists like to portray.

What nation had the highest proportion of its males killed in a war of aggression? The dubious record goes to Paraguay, with over three quarters of its adult males dying in the War of the Triple Alliance. Also high up on the list is France during World War I, with over half of its young men dying. Finally, another “nation” high on the list is the Confederacy, which lost one quarter of all its soldiers in battle or from disease. So perhaps to the surprise of anti Japanese racists, both the white supremacists

of the Confederacy and French nationalists were willing to die at a similar or a higher rate, and thus were equally or more fanatic, than Japanese soldiers. The same was true also for Paraguayans during their failed attempt to be an empire.

6. The final proof of most Japanese not being fanatics is looking at their history postwar. Not only has the Japanese government and military not committed anything close to its prior atrocities, **the nation's constitution strictly prohibits wars of aggression**. Even sending military hospital ships abroad for aid is controversial. Japan has large, thriving, and influential peace and environmentalist movements. There is a faction of the public that refuses to admit past atrocities.

Other justifications for dropping the A-bombs do not stand up to critical scrutiny either:

“It saved a million lives.” When Truman first defended dropping the A-bomb, he claimed it saved half a million lives. Only the next day, he upped the claim to one million American lives saved. Where he got the numbers is unknown. Seemingly he pulled them out of thin air. **Actual US estimates of American lives that would be lost in an invasion were as low as 30,000 to 40,000.**

“It was the only choice except an invasion.” This is very easy to refute. Japan is an island nation with no oil, and its navy and air force were wiped out by this point. **Use blockade instead.** No invasion was ever needed at all, except for one obvious factor: the Soviet Union would shortly enter the war against Japan.

In the past several decades, since the end of the Cold War, more US scholars have admitted what American egoism could not before: in World War II, in both Europe and Asia, the **fascist powers were defeated largely by the Soviet Union**. In Europe, over three quarters of all German troops fought the Soviets. (Prior to D-Day, that number was over nine tenths.) In the Pacific Theater, the Soviets ended the war quicker, not the A-bomb.

For in accounts by the principal Japanese government leadership, the entry of the Soviet Union is mentioned more often as a reason for surrender than the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviets invaded with over a million and a half troops on a wide front. Manchuria and much of Korea

were taken by the USSR in a very short time, less than five weeks, where the US had fought slowly across Pacific islands for four years.

Thus in the assessment of many scholars, the atomic bombings were really revenge for Pearl Harbor or to intimidate the Soviets into behaving postwar. If one argues revenge for Pearl Harbor was needed, it is hard not to see that as openly racist. And indeed Truman was a racist, with a documented hatred of Blacks, Jews, and especially Asians. Truman was even briefly a Ku Klux Klan member.

Truman later in life did try to overcome his own bigotry, courting Black voters, desegregating the US military and federal workforce, and supporting the new nation of Israel. But there is no evidence his change of heart came in time to affect his decision to use A-bombs against Japan. Just the opposite, Truman said publicly he “lost no sleep” and “decided it like that” (said while snapping his fingers) to drop nuclear bombs that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. Such callous racism on his part deserves to be recognized for what it was and condemned.

Finally, Truman failed in his assessment of how the bombings would affect Stalin. Since the USSR had already lost tens of millions to the war, why would anyone think the loss of a few cities would be threatening? Not only that, Stalin himself caused the death of tens of millions of his own people to wipe out opponents. Clearly he cared little for Russian lives. Any American alive at that time should have seen that, as could anyone knowing that time period. Americans not wanting to admit Truman's failure share his ideological blindness and in some cases his anti Asian racist views. But as shown in Section Four, neither the A-bomb nor targeting civilians were the greatest loss of life Truman caused. That dubious distinction belongs to his being mostly responsible for starting the Cold War.

## Polk Provokes the US-Mexico War

**What: The unprovoked war of aggression that stole one half of Mexico's land and one tenth its people. Polk began the war to expand slavery.** The war largely failed in its declared aim since only Texas was admitted as a slave state. The US-Mexico War made the Civil War far more likely since it created new states and guaranteed more bitter conflict over slavery.

**The Body Count: 45,000 casualties for the war, 20,000 Americans and 25,000 Mexicans.**

**Deaths on both sides totaled 19,000, including civilians.**

Exact figures for civilian atrocities are not easy to find. *The Encyclopedia of the Mexican-American War* lists **two of the worst atrocities against Mexican civilians as killing at least 100. The bombing of Veracruz killed at least 600 civilians. The bombing of Matamoros killed at least 200 civilians.** The same *Encyclopedia* also lists **two of the worst atrocities by Texas Rangers against Mexican civilians as killing at least 100.**

The Texas Rangers were notorious before, during, and after the war (and indeed until the twentieth century) for killing mostly innocents, and usually at random out of racist animosity. A third atrocity by **Texas Ranger Captain Mabry Gray's company killed the entire adult male population of the village of Ramos, 24 deaths.** After the death of one Ranger in Mexico City, **Captain Hays' Ranger company responded by massacring over 80 people in one neighborhood.** It is highly likely that there were **far more than at least 1000 dead in civilian atrocities total.**

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**The Texas Rangers and other volunteers from Texas**, had a much worse reputation for brutality than the regular army. This was a continuation of atrocities against Mexicans begun earlier.

**The "Texas Republic"** had been carrying out ethnic cleansing against American Indians and

Mexicans ever since the start of their insurgency. During the nine year effort to be independent of Mexico, American Indian tribes, even peaceable ones, were forced out. The Caddo, Cherokee, Delaware, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Tonkawa were all driven out, while the Mexican population of the towns of Goliad, Nacogdoches, and Victoria were also expelled by force or killed. In San Antonio, the Texans' Somervell Expedition chased out over 150 Mexican families and committed mass rapes. Texan colonist leader Stephen Austin and Texan Presidents David Burnet and Mirabeau Lamar all referred to Mexicans as “inferior races” and “mongrels.” Lamar favored genocide against all Natives in Texas.

The “Texas Republic” was never actually independent, never legally recognized nor self sufficient, nor controlling the territory it claimed. But its efforts to join the United States led directly to the US-Mexico War.

**General Zachary Taylor's** discipline of volunteers fighting in northern Mexico was notoriously poor. By contrast, General Winfield Scott's discipline practices kept atrocities by US volunteers fighting in central Mexico down to a much lower level. Taylor specifically requested the barring of any more volunteers from Texas, convinced of their tendency to murder innocent Mexican civilians.

The **belief in Manifest Destiny and many Anglo-Americans' hatred of mixed-race peoples** are often described as the principal reasons for both the US-Mexican War and atrocities against Mexican civilians during it. Contrary to the sanitized view of Manifest Destiny often taught in schools, the idea was always explicitly racist. It was not just the belief that Americans were destined to spread from coast to coast. Manifest Destiny insisted that *white* Americans were destined to rule all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and either rule over or exterminate all Native and Mexican peoples already on those lands.

The great majority of Mexicans have mixed ancestry. Less than one in ten were of entirely Spanish descent. Many more Mexicans were entirely American Indian. For most Latin Americans, there never was any prejudice against the mixing of peoples. (The exceptions tend to be among the upper class.) But for most Anglo-Americans at the time, “race mixing” was not only a huge stigma, it

was strictly illegal, regarded as anathema. This hostility carried to brutal treatment of the civilian population of Mexico.

**Anti-Catholic prejudice** also played a huge part in atrocities against Mexicans. At the same time as the US-Mexico War, there was also a wave of prejudice against Irish Catholics. (See Section Five.) Many Mexican Catholic churches were looted or vandalized, and some priests were brutalized or even killed by bigoted American Protestant soldiers.

Irish-American soldiers were appalled. Enough Irish-Americans deserted to form two entire battalions, the San Patricios (Saint Patricks), that fought on the side of Mexico. Twenty San Patricios were captured and hanged by the US military. Within Mexico, the San Patricios are still highly regarded and remembered as honored fighters today.

Many Mexicans, including historians, blame **Mexican elites seeking after their own power** for weakening their nation, making them far more vulnerable to foreign invasions, not just the US but European powers as well.

**Plantation slave owners, or “the slave owning power,”** as many abolitionists referred to them, likely played the leading role in why the US fought the war. The initial cause of the war was the US annexation of Texas, and “Texans” (most of them had been in the state less than one year) in turn tried to break away to become a US state with slavery. Texas insurgents applied to become a US state only two days after declaring independence. US President Martin Van Buren rejected them, worrying Texas would increase tension over the slavery issue.

Thus Texas was forced to try to be independent against its will. By any reasonable standard, Texas was never an independent nation. Mexico never recognized its independence, and theirs was the most important opinion. Virtually no other nation did either. The one initial exception was France. But the French ambassador never made it to Texas and stayed in New Orleans. The US did send charges d'affairs to Texas, lower ranking officials generally sent to assess a situation. Only once the US decided to annex did it become convenient for American officials to embrace the legal fiction that Texas had

been independent.

The US-Mexican War was almost entirely due to President James Polk. Polk wanted war, and he went to elaborate lengths to deliberately provoke it. Polk had been elected on the promise of the seizure of territory from Britain and Mexico and going to war against them both. For the British, Polk's promise to seize their territory was embodied in the slogan "54-40 or Fight." This meant taking all territory up to the parallel bordering 54 degrees 40 minutes on the map, right up to Russia's claim on Alaska territory.

But Polk avoided war with Britain. It was the most powerful nation on the planet and had badly beaten the US in the War of 1812, even capturing Washington and burning down the White House. Also, Britain was a white nation, and Polk's racism played a part in avoiding a war against other whites while picking a war against mixed race Mexicans.

So Polk negotiated with the British, breaking his campaign promise of 54-40 and accepting the 49th parallel, the same boundary other US presidents had proposed. The British held onto the most valuable territory in the area, Vancouver Bay, while the US accepted only a claim on Oregon Territory, at that time virtually all Native tribes.

Polk was in far more a position of strength against Mexico. The nation was very weak from constant instability since independence. Mexico's elites had been fighting amongst themselves in power struggles from the start, with many coups and uprisings. Eleven Mexican states tried to break away from Mexico, and Central America did so successfully. Mexico also was at war with a number of Native tribes, especially the Apache, Comanche, and Yaqui, and shortly, an uprising of Mayas in the Yucatan at the same time as war with the US.

There were also several invasions by other nations. For eight years after Mexican independence in 1821, Spain kept trying to reconquer Mexico, blockading, bombing, or invading Mexican ports. France also invaded in 1838-39, blockading nearly all Mexican ports and extracting a ransom over

money allegedly owed to a French pastry shop owner, the Pastry War.

Finally, **American private armies kept invading Mexico for 45 years before the US-Mexico War.** These groups were often referred to as filibusters. Armed private militias or mercenaries, they numbered from as few as 50 to as many as a thousand. Texas was invaded six times by American filibusters, in 1800, 1801, 1813, 1819, 1825, and 1835. American mercenaries also invaded the Yucatan in 1844 and California in 1845.

Thus many Americans had long wanted to take over part or all of Mexico long before Polk began this war. Filibusters often hoped their invasions would bring in the American government and thus tear away a piece of territory from Mexico. The most obvious example was the “Texas Republic,” applying to become a US slave state after beginning their uprising. But US President Martin Van Buren had blocked taking Texas to avoid conflict over slavery, preventing a war with Mexico. (See Section Eight.)

The next US President, Tyler, put a bill before Congress to take Texas. Both Tyler and Congress accepted the legal fiction that Texas was independent to make it easier to take the territory over. Polk also accepted that this meant a certain war with Mexico. Texas insurgents claimed a ludicrous amount of territory, over half of what is today New Mexico, much of what would become Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and even Wyoming, almost a thousand miles beyond any actual control. Over half of what is today the state of Texas was also not under the insurgents' control.

**Polk sent a US army under Zachary Taylor into Texas. The army, acting on Polk's orders, continued into the disputed area not actually under Texas control.** The Mexican army remained on the other side of the Rio Grande. Taylor even built an American fort on Mexican territory. Taylor would soon cross the Rio Grande and take the Mexican city of Matamoros. Taylor sent Polk a message about a minor skirmish, claiming Mexican troops “invaded our territory. American blood has been shed on American soil.” This was obviously false, and both Taylor and Polk knew it. Most congressmen knew it was a lie also, but hysteria over lost American lives was enough to force a declaration of war.

Mexico was extremely mismatched in this war, not winning a single major battle. Its troops were mostly draftees, poorly led and armed, even using outdated stone cannonballs instead of iron. As the army fell apart and atrocities against civilians increased, some Mexicans became guerilla fighters. Washington's answer was to issue a declaration to destroy guerillas' "haunts and places of rendezvous." This became an excuse to burn villages and crops. Chaos spread. Almost three dozen peasant uprisings blew up across Mexico. Mexican elites feared a race war, but their own earlier behavior was as much to blame as anything American troops did.

The government of Mexico surrendered in 1848. **Half of Mexico's territory and one tenth its population were taken by the US in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.** Theoretically, the US paid \$15 million to Mexico. In fact, the US government charged Mexico for "damages" done to American property. By incredible coincidence, the amount of damages was \$15 million. The US never paid a penny to Mexico.

Polk's war, begun to take territory to expand slavery, almost guaranteed its end. It became increasingly unlikely a civil war could be avoided. Texas would be the last slave state admitted, and the number of slaves jumped dramatically there. Cotton and tobacco plantations were already less profitable than in the past, and slavery depended more and more on an internal American slave trade now that the international one was banned.

California was admitted as a free state, though in practice that meant no slavery for Blacks, while Indians were widely enslaved. (See Section Two.) None of the other future US states were practical for plantations, so it was merely a matter of time until slavery could be abolished by vote. Polk's war thus failed at half its intended goal, insuring the continuation of slavery.

For its other goal, that of taking territory, it was somewhat successful. The northern half of Mexico became the southwest US. Both by population and by culture though, the southwest has remained at least half Mexican, a proportion that will only increase over time. Over a century of racism, land theft, violence, and forced assimilation failed to end Mexican identity among the 10% of

Mexico's population indigenous to the region.

Had a different man been president, the atrocities of the war could have been avoided, as well as genocide in California. (See Sections Two and Nine.) Teaching correctly about this war could go a long way towards ending the cyclical periods of anti immigrant hysteria. The Mexican-American population in the US is both indigenous and immigrant, but students are rarely taught this.

## Obama Orders Drone Assassinations

**What: Obama's practice of using drones or guided missiles to assassinate terrorism suspects without trial in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. The program was begun under GW Bush but greatly expanded under Obama**, in part to make loss of pilots' lives less likely. Many or perhaps almost all of those killed are not suspects but civilians.

**The Body Count: 1800-3521 dead, from 11-98% of them innocent civilians.** The enemy combatant death rate is very suspect, and the higher estimate is more likely true. The US military counts as "combatants" any male of military age in the area. For those killed who actually were Al Qaeda or Taliban, most estimates are that all but a few dozen of them were not leaders but low ranking foot soldiers.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

The **Bush administration** began drone assassination in 2002 in Yemen and in Pakistan in 2007, though the Obama administration carried out at least five times as many drone attacks as Bush's and expanded them to Somalia in 2011. Both Bush and Obama also used drone assassinations in Colombia and Mexico. (See Section Five.)

**The US Congress**, which was informed of the attacks from the beginning. To Congress's credit, a number of them have strongly protested the killings under both presidents.

**Democratic Party supporters**, who do not condemn what Obama does when they would condemn exactly the same actions were they carried out by GW Bush.

Some supporters of drone assassinations blame **Al Qaeda and Taliban** for often living among civilians. This points to the contradictions of war on terrorists. If they are soldiers in a war, then by law the war against them is bound by the articles of war. If they are criminals, they are criminal suspects

with rights to civilian trials. Either way, there is no justification for targeting that leads to likely a very high number of civilian deaths.

**The CIA** carries out the attacks, rather than the US military, in part because they are not bound by the rules of war. National security rules make it far more difficult for drone operations to be held accountable.

By the Obama administration's own account, once a week he and his top military, national security, and foreign policy advisers sit and discuss which persons will be targeted for assassination. They have a series of flash cards with names and information for possible execution victims. Each person sifts through the cards and then deal out which persons they believe should be executed, though obviously the President has the final say.

How did Obama come to this? Many believe he was elected on promises to be entirely different from GW Bush or any Republican successor. In fact, from the beginning Obama's wartime differences with GW Bush were far more cosmetic than real. On domestic issues, especially social ones, the two were very different men. But **on foreign relations, Obama always promised merely to be a more efficient version of Bush. Both men are empire builders.**

For the Iraq War, Obama had long criticized it as “the wrong war.” Not because it was unjust, inhumane, or morally wrong, but on grounds of expediency. To Obama, Iraq was the wrong war because the right war was in Afghanistan. True to his words, Obama greatly expanded the number of US troops in Afghanistan while reducing troops in Iraq as much as conditions and public pressure from conservatives allowed him to. Indeed, US troops (except a contingent at the embassy and military advisers) finally left Iraq not because of American pressure, but because an Iraqi government had enough and ordered them out. (See Section Eight.)

The drone program marks another dramatic difference between Bush and Obama. Where Bush ordered torture that led to over 100 deaths (See Section Five), some of which may be homicides,

Obama ordered a program of targeted assassinations by drones that led to possibly over 3,000 deaths. Thus by any reasonable standard, **Obama has caused far more murders than Bush, by a factor of dozens more.** The situation becomes more bizarre when seeing that Obama's conservative critics rarely denounce him for drone assassinations. They largely prefer to attack him for saving poor people from a lack of healthcare. Kill innocents in the Mideast, no problem. Save poor Americans from dying, they will fight for years and proclaim healthcare to be "tyranny."

Drone killings began in Yemen in 2002, but they were relatively rare for the first seven years of GW Bush's presidency. He finally started using them widely in his last year in office. But the high point for the number of drone strikes, deaths, and civilian casualties caused by drones is in 2010, under and ordered by Obama.

**This expanded use of government assassinations includes two Americans, one a teenager, the other accused merely of speaking in support of Al Qaeda.** In March 2013, Senator Rand Paul filibustered Congress to protest drone assassinations. Paul is rightly thought of as blindly ideological and a flake by most other congressmen and most Americans, and his libertarian views are typically viciously callous with regards to human life most of the time. But this filibuster, and Paul's reasons for doing it, were enormously popular.

Yet only a month later, Paul reversed himself and supported drone strikes. Paul's earlier speeches showed a concern that, hypothetically, drones could be used to kill Americans on American soil, and not just for terrorism but for dissident views. Actually, Paul's early concern was true. Two Americans were already been murdered by drones, and one of them for his speech, not terrorism.

That this murder program could be carried out so systematically, in spite of eight tenths of the public opposing it, and not get opposition from more than a few congressmen, is appalling but not surprising. Presidents from both parties ordered it, and thus both parties worked to cover their leaders in office. American protests against the assassinations are largely limited to activists such as Code Pink, Iraqi Veterans Against the War, and Quaker and Catholic groups.

Overseas is quite different. Pakistani protests against drones involve many thousands, and the strikes turned a public already strongly anti-US even more angry. Pakistani courts declared the drone strikes illegal, against both Pakistani and international law. The Pakistani government demanded the strikes be done from Pakistani soil and military bases, where they could be limited by the Pakistani government. The Obama administration refused for obvious reasons: If it were up to Pakistani leaders, few or none of the strikes would happen.

In Yemen, the strikes had an even worse outcome. A US drone killed the deputy governor of a province by mistake. In response, some Yemenis launched an attack against the government, and two attacks on an oil pipeline.

There is no question that drone assassinations anger other nations, making them even more hostile to the US. There is also no doubt they kill many innocents. Every study released by the government claiming success or a low rate of killing civilians has been met with skepticism, since the evidence presented is dubious. So why does the assassination program continue?

There seems little doubt Obama thought drones a better option than trying to kill by bombing runs. Reagan and both Bushes tried killing opponents overseas during their presidencies. Reagan tried to assassinate Libyan dictator Qaddafi Both Bushes tried to assassinate Saddam Hussein. Clinton considered killing Bin Laden. He declined only since Bin Laden was meeting with members of the Pakistani Parliament and the attack would have created a huge incident.

Technically, assassinations of foreign leaders were banned since a presidential order by Gerald Ford in the 1976, after a CIA scandal exposed just how often the agency tried to kill other government leaders. For official enemies though, presidents, Congress, and the public often just ignored that order. Reagan did so when he tried to kill Qaddafi, and Bush Sr. did so for Saddam Hussein. An order signed in 2004 by GW Bush allowed for assassination of terrorists. But nowhere does the order allow for killing any male in an area, as is done with drone assassinations, or killing based on political views.

Obama and his advisers were blinded by the promise that drones could be “surgical,” killing

only their intended targets and no one else. As covered elsewhere, this is a common but unrealistic fantasy that presidents keep talking themselves into. (See Section Three.) Presidents from FDR to LBJ to Reagan to now Obama have shown themselves to ultimately defer to military leaders when questions of civilian casualties come up. Military leaders by their very nature worry most of all about winning a war. They too in turn try to convince themselves of the most optimistic claims of weapons makers and researchers about how a weapon's precision.

Obama finally did realize just how ineffective drone attacks are. The moral issue seemed to bother him also. The first drone strike was only three days after he became president. Told the strike was aimed at a high level Al Qaeda leader, he approved it. When told the strike not only failed to kill its target, it killed innocents, Obama seemed visibly disturbed. Yet he continued to order more attacks.

Finally, in a speech at National Defense University, Code Pink protester Medea Benjamin shouted at Obama over the drone issue. Obama interrupted his speech to respond, saying, "The voice of that woman is worth listening to." After the speech, drone attacks dropped. Some analysts noted the drop in attacks fit with the withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan, that attacks supposedly once used to kill terrorists were actually being used as artillery against targets in Pakistan, targets that US planes could not have bombed without an international incident.

Such distinctions matter little to many in international law. Jurists in several nations still call for Obama to be arrested. Likely, much like Bush and his administration of torturers, **Obama and all who took part in ordering drone assassination may be unable to travel to most nations outside the US once he is out of office, not without facing arrest and trial.**

And that is as it should be. Drone assassination and the widespread killing of civilians are the most serious mark against Obama that keep him from being an otherwise good humanitarian president. He can point with pride to the many saved by healthcare, fewer lives ruined by racist drug laws, ending the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars (even if he had to be pushed out), and a treaty with Iran that may be as landmark as Nixon's opening to China.

But such accomplishments understandably mean little to the families of many dead civilians in five nations. Nor, for that matter, does the fact of Obama's conscience being bothered by the death of innocents matter, except to point out the man is not innately evil. The fact remains, he still ordered the strikes, knowing many innocents would die. Much like FDR, LBJ, and Reagan, his guilt remains, no matter what his other good qualities or accomplishments, no matter whether his supporters find him charming or agree with him ideologically. As of this writing, Obama agreed to end most strikes in Pakistan due to pressure from the Pakistani government. Future editions will update this entry.

## Nixon's Pardon in the My Lai Massacre

**What: The massacre of the Vietnamese village of My Lai in 1968 by US troops and its subsequent cover up by the US military. Only one soldier, Lt. William Calley, was convicted of the massacre. Nixon, bowing to pressure from his conservative supporters, pardoned him. Calley never served a day in prison.**

**The Body Count: 504 Vietnamese civilians murdered, almost all women, children, and elderly.** Many of the murder victims as well as survivors were raped and mutilated.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Lieutenant William Calley, the commander of Charlie Company, was the immediate officer carrying out the massacre and personally killed 22 Vietnamese civilians, including a three year old child.**

**Captain Ernest Medina, Calley's immediate superior, also gave orders to carry out the massacre. Medina also personally killed three of the massacre victims,** according to eyewitness accounts. Medina planned the assault on the village and was charged with war crimes. He denied ordering the killings and claimed he did not know they were being carried out until too late. His defense attorney, the famed F. Lee Bailey, successfully got him acquitted. Medina resigned after the court martial and went to work in a plant owned by Bailey.

US military law today uses **the Medina standard, also called command responsibility.** This holds that any officer who is aware of human rights violations will be held legally responsible for failing to stop them.

**At least fourteen US Army officers** were either responsible for the massacre or covering it up. **Among them was** the future Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of State, and candidate

for US President, four star General **Colin Powell**.

**At least 33 soldiers from Charlie Company** carried out the massacre. None except Calley were convicted. It is important to note, over 100 soldiers in that company committed no violent crimes. They did fail to stop or report these murders and rapes.

**A US Army hierarchy and old boy network** that first covered up and then failed to convict the soldiers guilty of the massacre. It is extremely rare for any but the lowest level US officers to be punished for war crimes. The usual pattern is that first and second lieutenants are the only officers to get punished. Among the enlisted and NCOs, privates and corporals are far more likely to be punished than high ranking NCOs.

As bad as that record is, the US military record has slightly improved since the US-Vietnam War. Along with some enlisted, a few high ranking officers were reprimanded during the torture scandal at Abu Ghraib. As bad as the US military record is, it is still far better than many military institutions around the world. In Guatemala, for example, an officer guilty of genocide became president. (See Section One.)

**An American public that reflexively admires all veterans, or believed Calley was a scapegoat**, pressured Nixon to pardon Calley. Among those calling Calley a scapegoat was the Governor of Georgia at the time, Jimmy Carter.

The massacre at My Lai was one of the most horrifying outrages of the US-Vietnam War. There were over 700 civilians in the village. The statistics are brutal: **504 villagers were murdered, 50 of them younger than three years old, 69 between four and seven years old. Many women and girls were raped. Many victims were mutilated**, with body parts chopped off, heads scalped. Some American soldiers apparently played with the body parts, and even ate their meal with dead bodies all around them.

Company C had taken 28 casualties prior to the massacre, including five dead. The dead and

wounded were from sniper fire or booby traps. But the company had not found the enemy. They were told the enemy would be at My Lai. Many of the soldiers were angry and vengeful. Many also were drunk or high, or hungover from the night before.

By most accounts, Lt. William Calley was the worst possible choice as an officer. Lightly trained and in over his head, he was both unpopular with his men and brutal and contemptuous towards them. He encouraged his men to take out their anger against the villagers, and he personally committed nearly two dozen murders as well.

How the massacre ended is as important as that it happened. **Chief Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, the chief and pilot of a helicopter crew, stopped the massacre and rescued the remaining 200 villagers.** Thompson saw the massacre from above, landed, and ordered Calley to stop. When Calley would not, Thompson ordered his crew to train their weapons on the platoon, and threatened to open fire unless the platoon stopped.

Almost immediately, officers Captain Ernest Medina, who had planned the massacre, and his superior Colonel Oran Henderson began to cover these atrocities up. The massacre would have remained unknown to the US public if not for Ron Ridenhour, a chopper gunner, writing thirty letters to Congress and the military on My Lai.

Lt. General WR Peers ordered an inquiry, calling 403 witnesses and filing charges against 28 officers and two NCOs. Army lawyers finally charged fourteen officers. Thirty soldiers were charged with committing murder, rape, sodomy, and mutilation. Seventeen left the army, and their charges were dropped.

Inquiries found 33 of the 105 soldiers in C Company committed the massacre. But charges were only filed against thirteen men. In the end, Calley was the only one convicted, found guilty of responsibility for the murder of 104 villagers. He personally murdered 22 Vietnamese civilians, including a child of three years old.

Calley never went to prison. He had only been briefly jailed before being confined to house

arrest. He was still under house arrest when he was finally pardoned, and received many visitors, including a longtime female companion.

From the beginning, much of the American public sympathized, not with hundreds of massacred Vietnamese villagers, but with Calley. Many refused to believe he had committed the crimes, or that any American soldier could have done so. Others argued the crimes were excused by wartime circumstances. Still others believed the ultimate responsibility lay with higher ranking officers or civilian leaders.

The third argument may have some validity, but does not change the fact of Calley being a mass murderer who should have faced justice, in this case the death penalty. Calley and Mendoza should have been punished as harshly as any civilian mass murderer, for they are equivalent to monsters like Jeffrey Dahmer and Timothy McVeigh.

Nixon pardoned Calley before he ever served a day in prison, claiming bizarrely he had been punished enough. Calley's pardon was obviously done to curry favor with conservative voters. One can imagine the outrage the same voters would feel had a North Vietnamese officer been pardoned for killing, hypothetically, over 500 wounded soldiers and medical personnel in an American hospital. Sympathy for a man like Calley is the rankest hypocrisy, like sympathizing with a serial killer rather than his victims.

Calley publicly apologized over 40 years later, in 2009. With more than a little irony, Calley was invited as a guest of the Kiwanis Club of Columbus, Georgia, a charity known for its worldwide endeavors for justice and children's welfare. Calley's remorse did seem genuine, but was hardly a substitute for justice.

For the apology was offered in America, to Americans and only indirectly Vietnamese, and seemed designed to get forgiveness from his fellow countrymen, not his victims or their families. A Vietnamese survivor in fact said that Calley should send an apology by mail or email, and that others guilty should also apologize, as should the US government. None of that happened.

As for Hugh Thompson, the crew commander who saved over 200 villagers and the noblest military man in the whole horrific episode, he received numerous death threats after his testimony in the My Lai trials. In 1998, he and his crewmen finally received the Soldier's Medal in recognition of their actions saving the lives of the villagers from murder by US soldiers. The military slowly learned the lessons of My Lai, as all Americans should about their military and their wars.

## Section Four:

### Mass Deaths by Incompetence or Ideological Blindness

This section is not for simple disagreement over whether a war should have been fought or a policy put in place. This section instead looks at whether a president could reasonably have done a better job, or not being able to, admit to it and turn the matter over those below him who could. Another reason a president may be judged as incompetent is when he (or anyone else) is unable to step back and see the lives lost because of failed ideas. One must say this is ideological blindness.

In any critique of Communism, for example, one can point to humanitarian disasters like forced collectivization. Private farms in Russia before Communism produced enough food to feed the nation, though many poor were still going hungry. In the name of Communist ideology, the state took over these farms and the crop yields dropped dramatically. Rather than admit the obvious solution would be to keep private farms and find ways to distribute food to the poor, collectivization continued. Tens of millions died. That is ideological blindness and moral callousness that cannot be defended.

In the US, the ideologically blind tend to be either conservatives or anti Communist Cold Warriors on either the right or left. Their body count and moral callousness caused by their willful myopia almost approaches that of the worst Communist. Truman's toll is perhaps 7 million, GW Bush's perhaps over a million. Buchanan the slavery defender who demonized abolitionists has half a million dying because of him, while both Lyndon Johnson and Nixon caused comparable deaths.

But perhaps the longest example of ongoing presidential ideological blindness is the question of government regulation in daily economic life. **More Americans die every year, preventably, because of conservative ideology about "free market" capitalism than from most wars fought overseas in almost any time frame.** It is difficult to find a higher number of conservatives anywhere on the globe more ideologically blind than in the US. A British, Canadian, or Israeli conservative who demonized poor people dying from lack of healthcare would not last long in office. But in the US one can bleat

“freedom” and red bait, even getting many of the same people who most need help to agree they should literally die in the streets, and then say it is their own fault in the bargain.

This is not an indictment of conservatism, but of a fanatic unwillingness by many to look at the evidence. There is a parallel ideological blindness on the left among Communists, who the more fanatic conservatives resemble more than they would like to admit. It was not always so. Republican pillars like Eisenhower and Teddy Roosevelt called for public healthcare. Reagan and even the NRA once favored some kinds of gun control. Conservative opposition to regulation is not always true even now. On many issues, most conservatives do favor regulation; censorship of films, TV, music, and video games; banning abortion, and for some, birth control; restricting some personal freedoms and rights, such as barring gay marriage or currently illegal drugs; barring freedom of speech and freedom to petition for groups such as labor unions; or freedom of religion for atheists, Muslims, and pagans.

What instead needs to be explained is why opposition is so strong to government intervention on some issues, but not others, and why that opposition is so strong that some will literally let people die. Conservatives, including every conservative US president, were and are not dumb people. But they clearly can be either isolated, or pander to the votes of those who are, to allow moral blindness and callousness that causes many deaths to continue. For when your neighbors die all around you because of failed ideas, and in visibly large numbers, how much more blind can you be?

## Deregulation from Reagan to GW Bush

**What: The overturning or limiting of anti poverty, banking, public health, environmental, labor, and safety laws since the 1980s and the blocking of gun control,** done for conservative ideological reasons or to benefit large corporations, resulting in huge losses of American lives. Those presidents partly responsible include not only Reagan, Bush Sr., and GW Bush, but also Clinton.

### **The Body Count:**

**Up to 875,000 preventable deaths *per year*, or over one third of *all* deaths in the US.**

**At least 26,000 preventable deaths from poor healthcare or lack of healthcare each year.**

**A heavily disputed number of preventable deaths from lack of effective gun control includes both murders and a *far higher* number of gun suicides.** The number of deaths prevented by guns is much smaller, and exaggerated by industry lobbyists by as much as a hundredfold. Part of the reason for disputes about how many lives may be saved by gun control is the NRA successfully blocks government health research on firearms deaths.

**An unknown number of earlier deaths from increased poverty** because of financial deregulation, causing the Great Recession of 2007-2012, the dot.com collapse of the 1990s, the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s, and the housing market collapse, the banking and mortgage crisis, the insurance industry crisis, and the Worldcom and Enron scandals, all the latter in the 2000s.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**The country's turn to the right** is often blamed, but this is too broad a claim. There are many cases of conservative support for government regulation of personal freedom. Some conservatives favor regulation of everything people do below the waist, except with the money in their wallet.

**Corporations pushing for deregulation for their own profit or from ideological blindness**

that imagine regulation costs profits. The US is almost unique in this mindset among business elites. Most nations have corporate elites that accept government roles, often working with them as partners. In every other nation except for Britain, modern industry was developed by the government. It's worth noting, most of the more successful economies today are mixed.

**The National Rifle Association**, which does not represent most gun owners, or even their own membership. Most NRA members favor background checks and bans on assault weapons. The NRA actually represents gun manufacturers, and thus promotes conspiracy theories about gun confiscation that do not exist. These theories sell more guns to the paranoid and the gullible.

**Libertarians and especially the Ayn Rand cult of Objectivism** are sometimes blamed. But except for the Federal Reserve, neither group had much influence until after the 2008 elections, when they were promoted by Republican leadership. Both groups have proven enormously self destructive for conservatism because of their uncompromising ideological blindness, fighting within the Republican Party as much as against their political opponents.

**Calvinism and its belief in predestination.** America was colonized predominantly by Protestants, many of them believers in predestination. Predestination divides humanity into saints and sinners, those destined to go to heaven and those bound for hell. How does one tell the saints from the sinners? The saints have money. Sinners are poor because of their sin. Seriously, this is what some churches taught, and one can see variations of this belief today every time there is a rant scapegoating those on welfare. A belief that equates wealth with "natural virtue" and poverty with sin inevitably fails to punish the wealthy for their crimes, and leads to a culture of lawlessness among financial elites.

In economics, both Communism and Libertarianism are equally wrong, callous, and dangerous examples of ideological blindness, a set of principles taken to an extreme that caused many people to die. Both are more alike than either set of fanatics (as both set of true believers are) would want to admit. Both fall back on the same defense of "there has never been a true or pure form" of their system.

Both systems have clearly failed. Libertarianism and its influence on US conservatism takes the greatest share of blame for the Great Recession and most financial elite crime waves of the past 30 years. The question then becomes, to what degree should there be a mixed system? The slogans of libertarians and many conservatives that “government is the problem” or “regulation doesn't work” are easily proven wrong, and fairly foolish lies.

This entry, much like this entire book, embodies some basic humanitarian principles, ones so obvious it seems absurd to have to even make them explicit:

- 1. Helping people obviously helps people more than not helping them.**
- 2. Watching out for and preventing or stopping abuse and harm is obviously better than not watching and not stopping abuse and harm, or even refusing to look and denying harm exists.**
- 3. Generosity and selflessness are obviously better than stinginess and selfishness,**
- 4. Democratic control obviously is better than elite control.**

And yet, in a nation that prides itself on democracy and equality, one finds many defenders of elitism and inequality among some conservatives, most libertarians, and especially objectivists. In a capitalist nation, one that often worships economic success above morality, one can find religious defenses of amorality going back pretty far.

Besides Calvinism's corrosive influence, there were men like William Graham Sumner, who proclaimed, “A drunkard in the gutter is where he ought to be.” Some churches began preaching prosperity theology in the twentieth century, turning Christian belief on its head. The Cold War and hysteria over Communism showed US elites completely misreading the level of threat it actually posed. (See next entry in this section.) From American Indians to early Mormons to socialists to hippies, American elites have always demonized anyone who does not worship at the altar of wealth.

Ayn Rand was probably the most extreme example of sociopathic belief when it comes to the worship of wealth. A refugee from Communism and a self hating Jew named Alisa Rosenbaum, Rand wrote several bloated novels that enamored a small but devoted cult, and literally no one else. A pop

philosopher who had no effect on the philosophy field, and an awful novelist who had no admirers in literary circles, Rand's appeal was to very sheltered well off individuals with a fantasy image of themselves as persecuted. The simplest way to describe her sociopathy is to describe her novels. Her hero was a rapist and terrorist who bombed public housing, made painfully bad 30 page speeches, demonized all religion and compassion, and deluded himself into thinking society would collapse without elites. Rand gloried over the mass of humanity starving until they, from her point of view, "learned their lesson" and sunk back into subservience, recognizing they existed only to serve elites.

**The strongest criticism one can make of the more libertarian version of conservatism is quite simply, it is un-Christian.** Rand was just the most extreme example of that, even influencing the Satanic Church. Some conservative followers abandon Christian beliefs for conservatism. Conservative Christians, as their self chosen label indicates, put conservatism before Christianity. They are CINOs, or Christians In Name Only. For who would Jesus let go hungry? Who would Jesus let die from lack of healthcare? How many would Jesus let be shot in bar brawls or school shootings?

The most malignant form of conservatives do stand proudly for literally letting people die on the street. They insist the mythical "free market" is absolute, arguing against all evidence that neither regulation nor government can ever work. Some have recently taken to calling them anarchists as an insult, but anarchists are populists, not elitists. A more accurate label is free market fundamentalists, for the market is certainly their religion far more than any church.

Their belief comes from faith, not evidence. To claim regulation never works? Which one, of the many? The clearest evidence of some regulation working is as obvious as the traffic light keeping you from being hit by another car, or the airplane you fly in not crashing because of air traffic controllers. To claim government never works? All of it? The clearest evidence of a government somewhat working is that it has not been replaced or collapsed.

Regulation can easily be largely trivial in the supposed harm it causes, deregulation often inherently destructive. Regulation can be either good or bad depending on how structured, but

demonization of the term is simply a ruse to get the public to hate government, which in practical terms means the public is being taught to hate democracy, and thus distrust themselves. Such a practice serves elite needs, for it means the public will either stop caring about democracy, or distrust those who care.

Deregulation can often kill, lead to greater poverty and hardship, lead to higher death rates from preventable disease, crime, preventable deaths from workplace accidents, higher child death rates, and earlier deaths for senior citizens. Here is where ideology must confront reality. So called “dependence on government” may be argued to be morally right, or harmful. But to call it “dependence” is itself a twisting of reality. We all depend on government for a wide range of things, from police to hospitals to fire protection to retirement to defense against (largely imaginary) foreign invasions. Interdependence is a good thing, for it binds a society together. What libertarians imagine is independence is isolation.

Only the most fanatically libertarians would claim we would be better off with private fire departments for example, especially since we know from bitter experience in the past they were incredibly incompetent and corrupt. Even libertarian icon Milton Friedman did not call for a privatized military, and we also know from bitter experience how poorly mercenaries worked in Iraq. To falsely claim that “dependence on government” is a bad thing, one has to pretend that in a democracy the mass of ordinary people are separate from their government when they are one and the same.

A look at the realities not blinded by politics shows that fiscal austerity often kills. A supposedly freer society, one without a social safety net, clearly leads to many more deaths. A libertarian or conservative may argue that such freedom is desirable. But they also need to be able to defend their own moral callousness in defending sending the most vulnerable to early deaths.

**Poverty is the most reliable predictor of early death.** Even conservatives and libertarians are fond of pointing this out. However, based on their ideology, they assume deregulation leads to greater prosperity economically. By that measure, Somalia should be the wealthiest nation on the planet and Sweden the poorest. But this is virtually the opposite of reality.

**Poverty rates can and have been dramatically reduced by governments.** The War on

Poverty dramatically reduced poverty under Johnson and Nixon, and other regulations saved many by making the air and water cleaner. (See Section Eight.) Every country in Scandinavia has little poverty precisely because of government intervention. The Bolivarian nations of Latin America also have a record where poverty has been cut by more than half and extreme poverty by even more. We also know that government healthcare does work, has worked in every nation that has it better than capitalism possibly could. It is just a shame that instead so far all we have is corporate welfare for insurance companies, a plan designed by conservative Republicans. (See Section Eight.)

**Government intervention also stops financial crashes. Canada has never had a banking crash,** compared to the US, which had sixteen financial collapses. Even within the US, one can point to North Dakota. North Dakota has a state run bank, which free market fundamentalists would no doubt label, somewhat correctly, socialist. The state bank began during the Great Depression, and the state can claim its bank as a reason they did far better than the rest of the US during the Great Recession. It is also important to note, very few credit unions failed, while many for profit banks did.

Yet even the blindness on limiting the everyday brutalities of capitalism cannot compare to the blindness and lack of understanding on the history of firearms in US history. These are pervasive myths about gun control: 1. Gun control does not work. 2. It is barred by the Constitution. 3. It would lead to dictatorship, or firearms keep us free. 4. Guns prevent crime/make us feel safe.

**1. Gun control clearly can work. It worked in the Old West. It worked in Germany after World War I. It worked after Prohibition. It worked in Australia in halting gun massacres. It works in any number of nations** with lower far lower death rates from both crime and suicide thanks to gun bans. To what extent a nation should have it is another issue.

There probably is no other era where ideas about it are shaped more by Hollywood than the Old West. The west was not nearly as violent as portrayed on film (except in violence done against Natives, where Hollywood has yet to depict such genocide accurately.) One of the reasons most of these small towns were not that violent was that gun control was common. Sheriffs often barred the carrying of

guns. You had to turn yours in to the sheriff as you entered town, and you picked it up as you left.

In Weimar Germany, immediately following World War I, Communists and other leftists tried to overthrow the government. One way they were defeated was by the government banning and seizing guns. Keep in mind a democracy did this. **German gun control stopped a Communist revolution. The Nazis, when they came to power, loosened gun control.** (See Section Two.) Because of Prohibition, the US successfully barred sawed off shotguns, machine guns, and buying guns by mail.

Australia is just the latest example of a nation's gun control efficiency. Since passing in the 1990s, some murder or suicide rates have dropped by at least a third, by some estimates as high as three quarters. What is often missed by both sides of the debate is that gun suicides kill many more than violent crime. Cutting off access to guns to the mentally ill would be the biggest source of saving lives.

Why would suicides drop? Wouldn't people just kill themselves with something else? No, most suicides are cries for help. Once a suicide fails, or others intervene, many don't try suicide again. Many other ways of killing yourself, like sleeping pills, are not as effective as guns. People take too much and throw up, or are saved by getting their stomachs pumped. A bullet to the temple is far more final.

**2. Gun control is *not* barred by the Constitution.** The NRA, acting for the gun industry, has pushed a lot of false ideas, with the intent of spreading paranoia and thus gun sales. There was little standing army in the US at the time of the Constitution. Thus the NRA sometimes claims a militia was meant to be “every adult male.” This is false. Militias meant “every adult *white* male.”

The purpose of a militia was not “to preserve freedom.” Just the opposite, **militias were designed to preserve slavery and murder Indians or rebellious slaves. Militias were slave catching patrols. They also were vigilante groups designed to attack Indians.** There was nothing noble about militias, and it is ludicrous and ignorant of basic history to paint them as such. With the end of slavery and war against Natives, their purpose is gone, long since dead.

In over 200 years, the courts only ruled on gun control twice. In *US v Cruikshank* in 1876, **the Supreme Court ruled “the right to bears arms is *not* granted by the Constitution.”** That is a direct

quote from their decision. In *US v Miller* in 1939, the Supreme Court ruled the federal government can limit any weapons not related to a militia. If you are not part of the National Guard or reserves, the Constitution does not protect your gun ownership. The last decision by the court, the Heller case, was obviously influenced by decades of NRA rhetoric. The court ruled 5-4, along purely ideological lines.

It may surprise many readers, but the NRA did not get involved in gun control issues until the 1970s. It was mostly an apolitical gun safety organization, until Wayne LaPierre, conspiracy crackpot that he is, was elected president. The NRA actually favored some gun control as late as the 1980s, such as background checks. To keep gun sales up, LaPierre has become more deranged, peddling more extreme conspiracy theories over the years.

3. This is the easiest one to dispose of. **Guns do not keep a nation free. The voice of its people does.** Guns do not guarantee freedom because governments can always get more powerful weapons than the public can. There are many democracies with gun control, some with greater freedom than the US. Every nation in Scandinavia, for example, has strict gun control but nothing like the Patriot Act. Dictatorships do not fear gun ownership, but free voices. Typically their first acts are to shut down universities, newspapers, unions, and churches, not gun shops. **Dictatorships even hand out guns.** Latin American dictatorships created paramilitaries for their supporters.

4. **Guns sometimes prevent crime, but not as much as banning them does.** The study often quoted by the gun industry claims guns are used over 2 million times a year to stop crime. It has obvious exaggerations and even outright lies. Much of what many in the study claimed was stopping crime never happened, and in many cases the gun owner was committing a crime, assault or threats. No credible study has found over 100,000 uses of a gun for self defense a year. The Department of Justice only found about 83,000 cases of self defense for six years, or less than 16,000 a year. The number of deaths or injuries from guns in those same years was one and a half times as high.

There are still perfectly valid reasons for gun ownership, such as hunting. Even self-defense can be a valid argument, but not for blind unthinking gun worship. Guns rights defenders should not argue

from ignorance of the cause they believe in, or from irrational conspiracy theories. No one, virtually no major organization or political leader seeks to ban all guns. **Gun groups have put their cause in the bizarre situation of even defending wife beaters' alleged "right" to have a gun.** Such an approach will backfire, leading to stricter regulation down the line.

What role did presidents play in deregulation, in letting each of these series of laws loosen and large numbers of deaths result? Which were the most ideologically blind? The list of blame includes both parties:

**Reagan spent most of his career, for almost 30 years** before he became president, **as a corporate shill for deregulation.** When his movie career died, he was a spokesman for General Electric. In the 1960s he gave a series of notorious speeches as a shill for the American Medical Association, claiming if Medicare became law, Americans would tell their children "what it once was like in America when men were free." For welfare, Reagan invented two notorious race baiting lies. The first was a Black "welfare queen" who supposedly lived in luxury stealing hundreds of thousands. The woman actually stole \$8,000. The second was a speech about "young bucks" (a derogatory term for young Blacks) buying steaks on welfare.

**Reagan ended the successful War on Poverty** programs of both Johnson and Nixon. He cut taxes for the very wealthy. The greater inequality we have today, at its most unequal since the Great Depression, began under Reagan. He gutted financial regulation, leading directly to the Savings and Loan Scandal that cost \$160 billion.

Reagan and Bush Sr. both practiced high deficit spending deliberately. The anti poverty programs were too popular to entirely end, and both wanted both low taxes on wealthy elites and the highest defense spending seen since World War II. Deficit spending was a tactic to limit anti poverty programs. The end of the Cold War brought a slightly smaller military, but not a smaller deficit.

Clinton was every bit as much a conservative on economic issues as Reagan and Bush.

**Clinton's deregulation led directly to the Great Recession and financial scandals of the 2000s.** He

repealed Glass-Steagall, an act that had regulated banks since the Great Depression. He signed other laws that allowed credit default swaps and gave banks looser rules in lending to low income areas. Clinton also took a leading role in cutting public assistance (welfare), adding to human misery.

GW Bush pulled FBI agents off investigating insider trading and financial fraud in order to track down terrorists' financial networks. Wanting to do the latter is certainly understandable and the right thing to do, except that in his own words, he did not care about tracking down Bin Laden.

Under Obama, there has been more of a mixed picture. **Unlike Roosevelt, Obama did not jail or even try to charge lawless financial elites.** Both GW Bush and Obama bailed out banks, insurance companies, and in Obama's case, also the auto industry. The many Americans who lost their homes or most of their home's value were not bailed out, though some got limited help. (Racists such as Rush Limbaugh chose to blame the victims, mostly minority and lower income.) Obama did provide some relief for student loans, did get the tax rate raised slightly for the wealthiest, and at this writing is trying to raise the minimum wage. But none of the underlying problems with the financial system were solved. There is no reason another crash may happen again five to fifteen years from now.

The biggest change recently is that, thanks to the Occupy movement, the public recognizes inequality. The public realizes elites are preaching class warfare of the well off against everyone else. Mitt Romney, running for president in 2012, notoriously said, "There are 47 percent... who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them....***My job is not to worry about those people.***" (Italics and bold are mine.) The comment, recorded at a secretive meeting of financial elites, likely cost him the election, as it should have. It is difficult to think of a more un-Christian sentiment, to boldly proclaim you are not your brother's keeper and hold the poorer half of the nation in contempt.

## Truman and the Cold War

**What: The Cold War, a mix of declared and undeclared, official and unofficial wars and conflicts that lasted 40 years.**

**The Body Count:** The list below is limited to the wars with the highest death tolls directly caused by the Cold War between Communist and anti-Communist forces. Left out are conflicts which were largely anti-colonial struggles or between nations which, though partly proxy wars, had primarily other causes.

**The Greek Civil War 1946-49 killed at least 150,000.**

**The Korean War killed at least 2.5 million.**

**The massacre of Indonesian dissidents in 1965-66 killed 500,000 to 1 million.**

**The US-Vietnamese War killed 1-3 million.**

**The two genocides against Cambodians killed 1.7 million to 2.2 million.**

**Two Central American civil wars and genocide in Guatemala killed at least 325,000.**

Not included are deaths caused by Communist governments and movements against their own populations. Obviously such deaths deserved to be blamed solely on Communism.

One estimate from Joshua Goldstein of *Foreign Policy* **for the entire Cold War is 180,000 average deaths per year from 1950 to 1989, or a total of 7,020,000 deaths altogether.** The Association for Responsible Dissent, mostly former CIA agents, estimates 6 million deaths from CIA actions. However, not all those deaths were related to the Cold War, and obviously deaths caused by other sides in the Cold War are not included.

**Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Vladimir Lenin** as the founder of the Soviet Union and the first successful Communist

revolution, is often blamed for all subsequent conflicts over Communism.

**Joseph Stalin** is often blamed as the one who perverted “true” Communism from its original course. However, repression under Communism began under Lenin, and Lenin directly ordered the deaths of many.

**Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and all Communist movements** are often collectively blamed for the Cold War.

“**Appeasers**” or “**fellow travelers**” were the favorite target during the most extreme years of the Cold War, those presumed to not be taking a strong enough stand against the enemy. Among those most often blamed as weak on Communism are **Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Jimmy Carter**. Not too surprisingly, advocates of this argument tend to be Republicans. At times they include **Richard Nixon** among those who appeased Communists.

**Reinhard Gehlen and his fascist intelligence network, recruited through Operation Paperclip**, prolonged the Cold War by greatly exaggerated estimates of Soviet nuclear weapons and other military capabilities.

**Joseph McCarthy and McCarthyism** are obvious examples of the worst Cold War hysteria. But while McCarthy was an extremist who ruined hundreds of lives, the Cold War predated his campaign by half a decade. He was a symptom of the worst of the Cold War, but not in any way its cause.

Other **hardliners on Communism, including Kennedy and Reagan**, prolonged the Cold War, notably argued by George Kennan, the analyst and architect of US Containment policy.

**George Marshall and the Marshall Plan** are often criticized for deepening the Cold War, bringing greater mistrust between the Soviets and the west.

How does the Cold War start and who is most to blame for it and its continuation? There are three main theories among historians.

1. **The US as the International Good Guy view.** This sees a Soviet worldwide conspiracy as entirely to blame. Believers in this theory are divided in their view of the Soviets though. While most see Communism as inherently aggressive and evil, some argue Communism is unstable. Some argue Communism is dangerous because it is powerful, while others argue it is dangerous precisely because their system is weak.

**The big strength of this theory is that it sees Communism as what it truly was, an incredibly brutal and evil system that killed tens of millions**, imprisoning and torturing many more. Only the most incredibly blind or ideological could deny this. Communism was every bit as horrific as the systems it was intended to replace or fight. Communism, fascism, and capitalism are all equally immoral, inhumane, and failed ideologies, each causing roughly equal amounts of great human suffering, with body counts in the many tens of millions.

**The big problem with this theory is that it is a conspiracy theory, and as delusional as most conspiracy theories tend to be.** (See Section Eleven.) The idea that a small group of men in the Kremlin, the old Soviet center of power, could control every Communist everywhere is just not the slightest bit credible.

In just the old Soviet Union alone, Communists were divided into Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Kronstadters, Leninists, Trotskyists, and Stalinists. The different factions hated each other, fought each other, and finally killed each other in large numbers. In different parts of the world one could find Maoist Communists, Titoist Communists, the Viet Minh, the Khmer Rouge, the Pathet Lao, and Castroist Communists.

Even in the US where the Communist movement was always tiny, never numbering over 50,000, there were at least four main Communist parties, the Communist Party USA, the American Communist Party, the Communist Workers Party, and the Communist Labor Party. Again, each party hated each other, fought each other, and sometimes assassinated each other.

Not only that, Communist nations often invaded each other. The Soviets invaded Hungary and

China, China invaded Vietnam, and Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Communist nations turned out to be every bit as nationalist as capitalist countries. There was rarely much cooperation between Communist nations, except when done so by force.

Obviously, many conservatives love this theory, even while they ignore the huge problems with it and its obvious falsehoods. The theory allows their movement to look good and seem to always be in the right, excuse the unintended pun. But it just does not have even the most cursory bit of evidence to back it up, and only the most ideologically blind still believe in it. Extremely few historians support this. Most conservative commentators who still push this theory are relying on their followers either not knowing history, or being too fanatic to care.

**2. The second theory blames American hegemony, US elites, especially Truman as primarily but not exclusively to blame for the Cold War. Anti Communism is seen as just a flimsy excuse for US economic and military domination of the world.** Hegemony is another way of describing domination. But it argues domination does not just come from sheer brute force. Hegemony means the dominated group also takes part in its own oppression by agreeing to it. This theory has the most evidence for it, and is accepted by the largest number of historians. I will go into more detail on it after first putting aside the final theory.

**3. The third and final theory is called Post Revisionist. The Cold War is blamed on mutual ignorance, miscalculation, and a self reinforcing paranoia that becomes self fulfilling prophecy.** This theory has the strength of pointing out just how little most Americans understood about Russia, especially back in the 1940s and 50s. Russia had long been an isolated society, including under the Tsars prior to Communist takeover.

But this theory is ultimately a cop out. No one is responsible for anything. Things just happen and it is all one big misunderstanding. It also does not explain much about later conflicts in the Cold War, as the second theory does.

“America is today the worldwide leader of an ANTI revolutionary movement in defense of

vested interests...supporting the rich against the poor.” So said noted historian Arthur Toynbee, best known for his Christian moralist view of history. What Toynbee and other historians often point out is that frequently the US went to war against supposed Communists in struggles that were not, in fact, mostly Communists.

The best known and most obvious example of a war claimed to be about Communism that was not is the US-Vietnamese War. Most Vietnamese fought for nationalist reasons, to drive out the foreign invaders and their puppets. The so called Viet Cong were actually called the National Liberation Front, a coalition group including far more Buddhists and peasants than Communists. Cong means Communist in Vietnamese, but it is a propaganda term used by their enemies. Most “VC” were not Communists.

The same was true as well in Central America. (See Section One.) In much of the world after World War II, the true struggle was between local peoples wanting independence and fading empires trying to hold onto their colonies, or demand economic domination even after independence. But a few people merely speaking to Communist nations or accepting arms or training from them was enough for anti-Communists to label them all “Communist.”

**Communist, commie, pinko, and socialist all became labels that often simply meant whatever the ignorant hated, feared, distrusted, or most often did not understand.** The list of those falsely accused of being Communist include:

Socialists; liberals; moderates; some conservatives; the US Army command; the State Department; Presidents Eisenhower, Truman, Carter, and Obama; the Civil Rights Movement including Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez (both devout Christians); labor unions; Catholic priests, nuns, monks, bishops, and even Pope Francis; Rock music (including Elvis); drug dealers and hippies; Sandinistas (who were a coalition with only a small minority of Marxists); Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress; the ACLU; “race mixing” and desegregation; German and Russian immigrants; Jews (yes, all of them); gays; pacifists (though most were devout Christians); anti-war

movements; feminists; sex researchers; and even librarians and the Girl Scouts.

Even fluoridated water was accused of being a Communist conspiracy. In American academia, over 3,000 professors were fired. In Hollywood, up to 500 actors, writers, and directors were blacklisted. The list of accused Communists even included the future Nancy Reagan, plus Lucille Ball, Charlie Chaplin, James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, and Gregory Peck. Today one can still hear anti Communist hysteria with ludicrous claims that Obama or Obama care are Commie or socialist. Obama care was originally written, almost word for word, by conservative Republicans, the Heritage Foundation.

One can find obvious damning evidence of American government leaders knowing what they were fighting was not Communism by reading their own documents. **National Security Council Memo 68 became the US Cold War blueprint.**

The document describes any peace movement as “a device to divide and immobilize the non-Communist world.” The authors went on to admit, “*Even if there were no Soviet Union* we would face the great problem...in a shrinking world the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable...**A policy which we would probably pursue even if there were no Soviet threat**...is to create...the Inter-American system.”

The memo goes on to describe in what institutions they expected to find Communists, “labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media.” The memo continued to describe how they would fight the Cold War, with “overt psychological warfare....economic warfare and political and psychological warfare...internal security and civilian defense programs.”

Who can this anti-Communist hysteria, paranoia, and persecution of anything even vaguely suspicious be ascribed to? The architect of this fear mongering was at the very top. Truman himself, for example, required loyalty oaths within the federal government in 1947, three years before McCarthy began his campaign of hysteria and witch hunts. McCarthy was really only carrying out in a more reckless way what Truman had already begun.

For Truman had to use fear to win Americans to his side. He became president almost by accident, as the least objectionable choice for vice president. Franklin Roosevelt, by contrast, was the most popular president the US ever had, getting elected four times. He was enormously charismatic, a magnetic public speaker, and the most admired man in America. Many Americans felt they knew Roosevelt personally through his famous fireside chats on radio.

Truman had none of Roosevelt's abilities or popularity. He was a small, homely, nerdy looking man with a high annoying voice. In recent years, some have pushed a more favorable view of him because he seems like an average guy, plain spoken, therefore sympathetic. But what people forget is that he was insistent at propagating fear. He was a poor administrator and strategist, but worked hard at being a propagandist. For example, Truman repeatedly lied about why he dropped the atomic bomb and its necessity. (See Section Three.)

Overseas, Truman formulated what has often been called the Truman Doctrine. Though there were confrontations before, this is generally considered to be the start of the Cold War. In Greece, there was a civil war between leftists and Communists on one side and royalists and militarists on the other side, fighting since World War II. The leftists had won two thirds control of the country until Truman intervened.

With his new doctrine, Truman promised that the US would always "support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities." What this ignored was obvious: Greece was not free before. It was a monarchy, and would not be free once the royalists won. The side the US government supported was not truly democratic, and the other side was certainly not a minority and was only partly Communist. But this mattered little to Truman. In his own words, he wanted to "scare the hell out" of Congress and the American people.

He followed up his doctrine with the Marshall Plan. \$13 billion in US aid (easily five times that amount in today's money) went to Western Europe. Today the plan is often taught as generous aid to the starving. But its central purpose was to strengthen Europe enough to resist any appeal of Communism

for workers and anti-fascists. The plan also had more cynical and mercenary aims. Rebuild Europe's economies and you provide markets for US goods. The plan also required that it would be US goods going to aid Europe, not local goods. Germany also was to be reoriented away from both fascism and Communism, to insure another Hitler could not arise.

Another aim was to offer its aid to Eastern Europe, to newly Communist states from Poland to Bulgaria. Not only was this intended to undermine the Soviet Union, the plan insisted aid would be only through capitalist markets, never through state run enterprises. Soviet elites deeply feared what the plan would bring, turmoil in Eastern Europe and especially a rearmed Germany. For Stalin, who had just led a war against Germany that killed 20 million Russians, the nightmare was a rebuilt Germany allied with the US.

The effects of the Marshall Plan were exactly what Stalin feared. Germany rearmed, this time as a US ally, with over 200,000 US troops in over 200 permanent bases across Germany. Soviet elites were more paranoid than ever. If there was ever a plan designed to guarantee peace would not be possible, this was it.

The legacy of the Cold War was 40 years of conflict around the world, wars on almost every continent, and an arms race that built **70,000 nuclear weapons at a cost of over \$4 trillion**. Lost to US bases, ranges, and nuclear testing were traditional homelands like Koho'alawe in Hawaii, Aeta tribal lands in the Philippines, Bikini Island, Vieques in Puerto Rico, Diego Garcia, much of the Okinawa Islands, and Thule in Greenland. These were entirely blameless indigenous peoples caught in the middle of the Cold War, including deaths from nuclear contamination. (See Section Seven.)

For 40 years, the world lurched from one nuclear war crisis to another. The first was in 1946, when the US threatened USSR over control of Iran and Azerbaijan. There was a second nuclear crisis the same year, when the US issued threats to Yugoslavia over US planes shot down. There were fifteen more nuclear standoffs before the Cold War finally ended, in Berlin 1948-49; North Korea in 1953; threatening Vietnam in 1954; threatening China and the USSR over disputed Chinese islands; the

USSR and US threatening the UK and France over the invasion of Egypt in 1954; threatening China and the USSR over Chinese attacks on Taiwan in 1958; two crises over Berlin in 1959 and 1961; the Cuban missile crisis in 1962; the US threatening Vietnam in 1969; then Jordan in 1970; threatening the Soviets over Israel in 1973; and in 1980 the US threatening Iran.

The final crisis was in the mid-1980s over the silliest of reasons. Reagan made a joke over an open microphone, that we “will outlaw Russia forever. The bombing begins in five minutes.” Unsure if he was serious, Soviet nuclear forces went on alert. As one can see from the list above, most of the nuclear threats came from the US government, not the Soviets.

The Soviet system was enormously evil, but its leaders were not suicidal. The Soviets knew they were far less powerful than the west, and they practiced it by being less aggressive, comparatively, than the US was. **The number of nations invaded by the US during the Cold War far outnumbered those invaded by Soviets. Soviet invasions were almost all neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, while most US invasions took place far from the US, such as Vietnam.**

In the end the Soviets were far less a threat than many Americans thought. When the first Communist regimes began falling in Eastern Europe and then the Soviets, the end was far quicker and easier than many expected. **The Soviet system, its economy falling apart, had actually been dying since the late 1960s. As evil as Communism undoubtedly was, it remained primarily a threat to people within the nations under its control.**

**Communist systems also surprised many by being willing to reform.** It was Gorbachev's reforms that made the fall of Soviet Communism possible. China proved extremely willing to change its economic system to the point where it is a mix of capitalism combined with socialist safety nets. Even its political system is now more open.

Cuba as well is far more open than its critics admit. Its economy is mixed. There is a thriving and quite free artistic, literary, film, and music tradition. In the past decade the party even lifted its monopoly on elections, and the number of political prisoners dropped dramatically to almost none. The

only true totalitarian Communist state remaining in the world is North Korea, and its system is as much influenced by fascist xenophobia as Communism.

Truman, by his bumbling and fear mongering, initiated a Cold War that did not need to happen. Even George Kennan, one of the original architects of Containment, admitted his error. "Cold War extremism delayed rather than hastened the end of the Soviet Union."

Truman's fault in this instance is not that of an evil man. It is that of an incompetent one, and one so blinded by his own anti Communist ideology that he failed to understand the enemy, believing the earlier Red Scares that had consumed America. There were other options and men who realized how best to achieve them. Two other better choices as president, Henry Wallace or Adlai Stevenson, could have prevented the Cold War entirely or greatly shortened it. (See Section Nine.)

Truman's failure led to millions of unnecessary deaths and the most dangerously militarized the world has ever been. In a very real sense, it is just blind luck we are still here. For all it would have taken is one nuclear panic, one side or even a few people on one side miscalculating, and most of the world would now be a radioactive wasteland.

## Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, and the US-Vietnam War

**What: The US-Vietnam War from 1965 to 1973. Vietnamese had fought and defeated the French in 1945-54.** US troops were in Vietnam as advisers from 1950 to 1965, and actually provided most of the funding for the French government.

The war is widely referred to as the Vietnam War by Americans, the American War by Vietnamese, and the Second Indochina War by scholars when including conflicts in Laos and Cambodia, though the two Cambodian genocides are often not included.

**The Body Count: Between 1 million to 3.8 million Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Americans killed.** The estimates of dead killed varies widely, except for Americans, with most counts around 58,000 deaths.

From 200,000 to 500,000 Vietnamese civilians were killed. The Defense Department estimated almost a million National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese troops were killed. But that estimate has been heavily disputed, with war critics arguing the figures were both highly inflated and included many civilians. Most notably, a 1982 *60 Minutes* special maintained the estimates were knowingly falsified. General William Westmoreland, commander of US troops during the war, sued, but then dropped the case, with neither side admitting wrongdoing.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

While **Presidents, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy** sent troops to Vietnam as advisers, Johnson expanded the war dramatically. While Nixon did not begin the war, he did continue the war for five more years, mostly just to get re-elected. The war ended on virtually identical terms to what were offered by North Vietnam at the start of Nixon's presidency, without peace or honor.

The **US Congress** voted to authorize Johnson using massive military force, based on accounts

of alleged attacks on US ships in the **Gulf of Tonkin**. Later evidence showed there was no attack.

Congress proved to be one of the main sources of resistance to the war, cutting off funding for the war when Nixon tried to continue despite massive public opposition.

**Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand** each sent troops to Vietnam. All five sent troops mostly to prove their commitment to the anti Communist cause. South Korean forces had an especially brutal record in Vietnam, with more massacres of civilians carried out by them than any other nation's forces. This was true even though there were more than twenty times more American troops than South Korean in Vietnam.

**The South Vietnamese government and military, ARVN**, was largely led by former French collaborators. Many were French-Vietnamese mixed ancestry and/or Catholics. The business class was mostly ethnic Chinese. The effect of this is that building support for the South Vietnamese government was difficult since most Vietnamese viewed them as alien outsiders.

**Anti Communist belief, stubbornness, or even hysteria** is often advanced as an explanation for why the US fought on for so long, even after lack of success, when most Americans knew little about Vietnam and Vietnam was not of any real strategic or economic interest to the US. One of the most common claims of the time was the **Domino Theory**, that if one nation were to fall to Communism so would other nearby nations.

As Johnson famously said, "If we quit Vietnam, tomorrow we'll be fighting in Hawaii and next week in San Francisco." He said this despite also referring to Vietnam as a, "raggedy fourth rate country" not worth America's efforts. But of course, the US lost in Vietnam and Communism did not spread from there to outside Southeast Asia.

**Anti-Communists blamed Communism and even suggested antiwar people were Communists or their dupes.** Nixon had the antiwar movement extensively investigated. Even after the FBI found no evidence of Soviet involvement in the antiwar movement he still insisted they must be tied to the Soviets somehow.

Many anti Communists or conservatives blame **the antiwar movement, liberals, or the US media** for losing the war. This is yet another conspiracy theory, as irrational and paranoid as most conspiracy theories are. There are three huge problems with that claim:

1. The antiwar movement was enormous and not centrally controlled, including conservatives, moderates, liberals, religious protesters, and many military veterans, especially servicemen returned from Vietnam. **Seven million Americans took part in antiwar protests**, or more than one out of every twenty adults.

2. Many liberals were also strongly anti Communist, including Johnson and his Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, who ran for president in 1968 promising to continue the war. Both liberals and the Democratic Party were split down the middle over the war.

Many people also tend to forget there were quite a few moderate and liberal Republicans at the time who opposed the war. Many conservatives also opposed the war as being badly run, wanting to get in and out quickly.

3. Most media, both then and now, were and are conservatives. Claims that the media is mostly liberal are based on poorly done studies that only survey small parts of the media, such as the press corps that covers the White House. Many of the more famous investigative journalists tended to be liberal, such as Edward Murrow. Their fame and impact gives a false impression of who makes up most of the media.

Survey after survey has found almost all media owners, managers, or editors were and are conservatives. For example, the founder and owner of *Time* magazine for over 40 years was famed conservative Henry Luce. Almost all media is owned by six huge media conglomerates. The idea that multi billionaires would fund media opposed to their interests is absurd.

Not only that, many conservative leaders openly admit the claim of a liberal media is a lie, a deliberate tactic to “work the ref” as GW Bush's campaign manager admitted. Conservatives from McCarthy to Nixon to Dan Quayle to Ann Coulter admit openly to lying, that they are using this tactic

knowing full well they control most of the media, not liberals.

For the US-Vietnam war, most media coverage was actually favorable to the US, including to the military. Because it was not an officially declared war, there was no censorship as in prior wars. Thus some very famous graphic images of war, such as the My Lai massacre, did make it on the news. But most images were at least neutral or even favorable, such as US soldiers sending greetings back home to their families.

The US-Vietnam war was a watershed moment for American empire. It was the first US defeat since the Indian Wars, the first massive defeat since the War of 1812. **The US dropped more than three times the number of bombs on Vietnam than during all of World War II across both Europe and the Pacific Theater. Add to this massive chemical attacks**, defoliants designed to destroy plant life that also harmed many people, including US troops. Yet somehow a guerilla force was able to fight on against both the US and French for a quarter century, losing up to twenty times as many troops, and yet still win the war.

Two presidents refused to halt the war, kept it going for nine in spite of massive public opposition for the last five of those years. A combination of ego, stubbornness, a determination not to appear weak, macho bluster, and simple refusal to face reality trapped both presidents. The US-Vietnam War has often been referred to as a quagmire, something that sucks you in and you cannot get out of, drags you down farther the more you try to get out. How could two of the most intelligent and skilled politicians the US has ever seen fail to perceive what was coming?

Truman sent in an advisory group to Vietnam in 1950. Eisenhower continued the advisers, even paying for much of the French war effort. Kennedy, despite the later invented image of him as a peacemaker, was as strongly anti-Communist as Eisenhower or Nixon. All three limited the US role to advisory. There were fewer than a hundred US deaths in Vietnam when Johnson became president.

**The US-Vietnam War was not primarily against Communists.** (See Truman and the Cold

War.) Most Vietnamese fighting the US were nationalists wanting American invaders to leave. Even the North Vietnam leader Ho Chi Minh was more a nationalist than a Communist. The US buildup in Vietnam had to be gradual, with limited troops sent in initially and bombing slowly increasing. This had to be done because slightly over a year earlier had been the Cuban Missile Crisis. Johnson did not want to risk another nuclear confrontation.

Much has been written about the character of Johnson and his administration, most of them holdovers from Kennedy. These were *The Best and the Brightest* as one historian termed them, Ivy League intellectuals of incredible ability leading both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Yet precisely because they were from elite backgrounds, high achievers all, they could never publicly admit defeat.

In the documentary *The Fog of War*, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara admitted that he knew very early that the US-Vietnam War could not be won. In November 1967, he suggested to Johnson the US pull out its troops and leave the fighting solely to the South Vietnamese government. Johnson refused. By March 1968 McNamara resigned. Yet he refused to speak out publicly about his doubts on the war until 1995, two decades after the war ended.

Much has been written about Johnson's machismo. This was a man who prided himself on his toughness to draw a contrast between him and Kennedy. He showed his surgery scars on television, held meetings with aides while sitting on the toilet, and also would grope and brag about his penis size. But for all of his frontier posturing, Johnson was a lifelong politician from a family line of politicians.

For Vietnam was not intended to be as central to what Johnson wanted to accomplish as it became. He hoped the issue would resolve itself, and that he would not be the first US president to lose a war in over a century. Newsman John Chancellor described with fascination how Johnson press conferences became the president practically begging the country, "Why don't you like me?" His ideological blindness and stubbornness became fatal to tens of thousands of US troops and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese.

For Nixon, the US-Vietnam War was also all about his own political fortune. Nixon had begun his political career as a hardline anti-Communist in the 1940s. But even in his first campaign, he showed that belief to be subordinate to how it could help his career. He became a Republican by responding to an ad by the local Republican Party, and won his first office by red baiting his opponent to defeat. A second election against Helen Gahagan was even more vicious, spreading rumors that she was backed by “Jew Communists” and had given birth to a Black man’s baby. Nixon’s harsh brand of anti Communism was popular enough to get him chosen as vice president.

But once president, Nixon’s anti Communism receded. He was a great student of history and noted correctly that great presidents were often ranked so by their foreign policy achievements. For domestic policy, he often dealt with it on Monday mornings alone, leaving the entire rest of the week devoted to foreign affairs. Thus to avoid consuming his time, Nixon conceded virtually every domestic issue to liberals. (See Section Eight.)

Nixon realized simply maintaining a hardline on Communism would not be enough. He needed a dramatic foreign policy achievement. That would be achieving some measure of peace and stability with the Soviets and China, called detente (relaxation.) The US-Vietnam War stood in the way of that goal.

But to end the war, he would also have to placate his own conservative base. Nixon had promised “peace with honor,” that the US would not only not be defeated in Vietnam, but that peace would be one the nation could take pride in. It was an enormously deft and subtle manipulation, designed to appeal to both war hawks and doves.

To both appease anti Communists and to weaken North Vietnam, **Nixon ordered the most massive bombing campaigns of the war.** Where Johnson’s bombings had been limited but gradually increasing and confined to military targets, Nixon ordered as much bombing as possible. Johnson had even halted the bombing against North Vietnam and successfully gotten North Vietnam to the Paris Peace Talks.

Against the neutral nation of Cambodia, Nixon expanded the war. Some argue he committed outright genocide, the worst of any US President. (See Section One.) There are claims, heavily disputed, that Nixon and Kissinger even sabotaged the peace talks, offering North Vietnam's leadership the chance that a Nixon administration would be more favorable, in order to defeat Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's Vice President, in the 1968 election.

Once in office, Nixon and Kissinger searched for a way to weaken North Vietnam's position. Kissinger shuttled back and forth in secret negotiations with China, the Soviets, and North Vietnam. The Paris Peace Talks were largely ignored by Nixon and Kissinger for three years. Kissinger's talks with China did little, until the Pakistani government's genocide against Bangladesh gave the Nixon administration an opening. (See Section Two.)

China and the Soviets had been on uneasy terms for decades, disagreeing on ideology and tactics. (See Section Four.) In 1969 there was even a seven month border war between the two. Nixon and Kissinger hoped to use the split to their advantage.

In the end, Nixon dragged out the US-Vietnam War for five more years, agreeing to terms identical to what those on the left proposed before Nixon was elected, and to what North Vietnam wanted all along anyway. **Nixon continued the war and increased the bombing campaign solely to get re elected and convince hardline anti Communists he was not being soft.** There is no other case in US history of so many US servicemen and so many people of another nation dying for a politician's desire to look good to his followers.

There also probably is no other US president who succeeded in convincing historians and commentators he was skilled when he repeatedly failed not only at doing good for the country, but even at his own self declared goals. Keeping the US-Vietnam War going was a lesser goal compared to opening up relations with China.

Nixon's own stated goals for China relations were three. One, bring a peaceful settlement of the dispute between Taiwan and China. That failed, for the two nations are still in dispute 40 years later.

Two, block Soviet influence within the Communist world. The Soviets were already weakening economically since the late 60s, but Nixon failed to realize that. When the USSR fell, it was due to Gorbachev's reforms and very brave protesters inside Russia and Eastern Europe, not because of anything Nixon did.

**Finally, Nixon wanted his “peace with honor” promise on Vietnam fulfilled. This also failed. There was neither peace nor honor.** Nixon tried Vietnamization, to get South Vietnamese troops to take over for American troops. ARVN troops remained miserable failures, high desertions and a poor combat record in spite of tens of billions spent on them. Within two years, South Vietnam fell. It was a US puppet state, not wanted by the Vietnamese public.

**The US loss in Vietnam, due to both Johnson and Nixon's staggering incompetence and ideological blindness, was one of the most visible and traumatic failures of any presidents in US history.** Anyone alive at the time remembers the horrifying images of South Vietnamese fleeing during the fall of Saigon, and US helicopters being dumped off US ships because the ships were overloaded with Vietnamese refugees.

For the American left, the main lesson coming out of Vietnam was to never trust the US government and never let such wars repeat themselves. One of the most common bumper stickers in the 1980s was “El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam.” The memory of Vietnam prevented Reagan from a direct US invasion of Latin America, but not from intervening in El Salvador's civil war, a campaign of state terrorism in Nicaragua, and collaborating with outright genocide in Guatemala. (See Section One.)

Many American conservatives turned to believing in a variation of the Stab in the Back theory, first believed by Germans after World War I. This theory claimed the nation did not really lose the war, but were betrayed. Where Germans in the 1920s and 30s blamed Jews for their loss, US conservatives from the 1970s until today blame liberals, the media, and the counterculture. The level of hatred in both cases is almost equally fanatic, and the conspiracy theories both equally ludicrous and paranoid.

The Stab in the Back theory suits government elites quite well, for it distracts much of the

public from elite failures. It lets Nixon and even Johnson off the hook, lets the public forget that the generals not only failed, but often lied to the public as much as politicians. George Bush Sr. even used the alleged need to get over the Vietnam Syndrome as an argument for the Gulf War.

Much of the public even believed in conspiracy theories about POW-MIAs still supposedly trapped in Vietnam. (There were actually fewer MIAs in the US-Vietnam War than most other major wars. World War II had nearly 100 times as many.) Ross Perot was one of the more extreme examples of this, even sponsoring a private mercenary mission. Much of the public went to the *Missing in Action* and *Rambo* film series, vicariously imagining fighting the war again.

The Stab in the Back conspiracy theory distracts from two uncomfortable truths. **Johnson stumbled into a much larger war simply out of a macho desire not to appear defeated or unmanly.** Many who want to believe the US did not really lose the war have the same psychological hang up. Their manhood feels threatened if they cannot convince themselves America is the toughest and most unbeatable nation ever. **Nixon could have cared less about the war, the troops, or the trauma the country was going through. His concern was to look good** in the eyes of easily impressed and not too discerning followers and commentators.

Virtually the only success to come out of Nixon's opening to China was trade between it and the US, and in how this in turn pushed the Soviets to sit down for arms talks. Even that success is limited, for Khrushchev had tried to push for arms talks far earlier, for most of his time as Soviet leader.

## GW Bush and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars

**What: Two failed wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.** The Iraq War, by virtually everyone else's view besides Bush and neo conservatives, was entirely unnecessary, a failed war against a nation that had not attacked the US. Even the great majority of conservatives and Republicans concede it was a failure. Claimed to be intended to bring democracy, the Iraq War led to an extremely corrupt and limited system where torture continued at a higher rate than under Saddam Hussein.

The Afghanistan War has a far more debated legacy. While most today argue it is a failed war, many Democrats and even some progressives believe it to have at one point been a necessary war, including Bush's successor, Obama.

**The Body Count: Up to 1,033,000 Iraqi civilian deaths, about 110,000 Iraqi combat deaths, about 6,800 American military deaths, about 1,500 other coalition deaths, about 2,600 mercenary deaths, and an unknown and very uncertain number of Afghan deaths.**

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Others in the Bush administration especially **Vice President Cheney, Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, and Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates** all played central roles in beginning or continuing both wars.

**The Republican Party**, with the exception of a few libertarians, overwhelmingly supported both wars from the start.

**Much of the Democratic Party** supported both wars. Slightly over half of Democratic congressmen initially voted in favor of both wars. Many Democrats no longer opposed the wars, or kept their criticism quiet, once the wars were under control of Obama.

**The neo conservative movement, especially the Project for a New American Century or**

**PNAC**, had been pushing for the invasion of Iraq since 1997. Neo conservatives dominated foreign policy for the Bush administration. PNAC members made up 18 of the top 28 foreign policy officials, including Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, administrator of Iraq's occupation.

**Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress**, set up and sponsored by the CIA, was intended to take over Iraq after Hussein's overthrow. Chalabi is one of the more bizarre figures of recent years, a mathematician raised in the west who is wanted for bank fraud and embezzlement in Jordan. That the CIA thought Iraqis would accept him as a leader shows a failure of intelligence, in both meanings of the word. The INC, a loose coalition of Iraqi opposition, was essentially a group of lobbyists passing themselves off as intelligence gatherers. The INC pushed some of the worst, most inaccurate claims. Trying to declare Chalabi the new president of Iraq after Hussein's overthrow, this failed within the first week because of opposition from Iraqis and the US military.

**Obama and his administration** continued the Iraq War until finally pushed out by the Iraqi government. (See Section Nine.) The Obama administration actually expanded the Afghanistan War, more than doubling the number of troops, though almost all Al Qaeda and many Taliban had already fled the country to Pakistan.

**Fox News and talk radio** played the biggest role in building public support for the wars and continuing them. Fox has always been a de facto propaganda arm for the Republican Party, run by a former Republican Party chairman, Roger Ailes. Fox executives typically coordinated their broadcasts with party leaders to fit party needs, and this was never more true than in the push for war.

**Much of the remaining major media** coverage was often warmongering propaganda every bit the equal of Fox. But rather than actively pushing for war, they largely passively repeated the official government line. A story to Judith Miller from the *New York Times* about a source codenamed Curveball claimed Iraq was building nuclear weapons. The CIA called Curveball “crazy” and a “con man.” Yet that did not stop the administration repeating the nuclear claim many times.

Many of the supposedly objective analysts for news networks, claiming to be retired military, were in fact still working for the government. The **Defense Department had a unit of 40 full time propaganda producers, while the State Department had 30. Twenty agencies made hundreds of “news” segments broadcast by the major networks,** and the Bush administration spent a quarter billion on public relations to sell the war to the US public.

**British Prime Minister John Major** was the strongest ally of GW Bush in the war, supporting the war over the opposition of much of his own Labor Party and the British public.

Coalition forces in Afghanistan were technically under the orders of **NATO**. Begun as a Cold War coalition in Europe, NATO had been searching for a mission ever since the Cold War ended.

The **“Coalition of the Willing,” 39 mostly small nations** that supported the Iraq War for mostly financial or political advantage. The coalition served to give the impression of greater world support, but all 39 nations left Iraq well before the US, sometimes by over five years. Originally, GW Bush claimed there were 49 nations in the coalition. Some were included without asking, while others were too small to have armies. That a few of their citizens joined the US military was enough to include them in the coalition. The nation with the smallest number of troops in Iraq was Iceland, which sent only two men, then reduced it to just one.

The most ideologically blind blame solely **Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Saddam Hussein and the Baathist Party**. Obviously Al Qaeda deserves full blame for the deaths on September 11 and other terrorist attacks they carried out. But blaming the second two for these wars is ludicrous. Before the invasion, the Taliban actually offered to turn Bin Laden over to a third party to face criminal charges, only to be turned down by Bush. Hussein had no connection to Al Qaeda and was not a threat to the US, indeed had not even been a threat prior to the Gulf War. (See Section Five.)

The public hysteria in America following the attacks on September 11 was the most extreme the nation had seen since Pearl Harbor, and with some similar results. Both attacks led to calls for revenge.

Both led to widespread hatred and even physical attacks on entire broad ethnic groups, Asians and Middle Easterners. Both led to wars most Americans would not have considered before. (Both attacks also were followed by ludicrous conspiracy theories with no evidence. See Section Eleven.)

But for the presidents in command, there are many more differences than similarities. Franklin Roosevelt was an accomplished man with great success in ending the Great Depression, non-dogmatic in his thinking and practices, and the most popular US president of all time, elected four times. GW Bush owed all he had in life to family connections, was one of the most ideologically blind and inflexible presidents, had been appointed to office by a partisan part of the Supreme Court after losing the election, and was in office less than eight months before the attacks.

Where Roosevelt was the most skilled wartime leader the US ever had besides Lincoln, GW Bush was the most incompetent wartime president the US had since James Madison. (See Section Four.) **Some of Bush's harsher critics liked to joke about how stupid Bush was. This is false. He was the smartest liar America has ever seen. But he was ignorant about most other matters, and worse, uninterested in learning.**

The distinction between stupid and ignorant is important. Stupid you are born with. Ignorance can be cured, by study and by curiosity. Bush did not like study, and had little curiosity. Bush was definitely an intelligent man, with an MBA from Harvard Business School. He has a bit of dyslexia, which he took advantage of to give the impression of being an average guy, and also getting his opponents to “misunderestimate” him. Bush was quite adept at outmaneuvering his political opponents in Congress, and in manipulating the media.

A clear example of this is using the falsehood that tried to tie Al Qaeda to Iraq. There was never any evidence of such ties. In fact, Bin Laden issued a call for Hussein's overthrow and called him an infidel, socialist, and tool of the US. But Bush deliberately talked about Bin Laden and Hussein at the same time, often the same sentence, to give audiences the impression there was such a tie.

Sadly for everyone involved, Bush was also quite ignorant of Iraq and Afghanistan, their people

and cultures. The clear evidence of this is believing US troops would be “welcomed as liberators” in Dick Cheney's word. The even clearer evidence of ideological blindness was continuing to believe so for six years when massive Iraqi demonstrations against US occupation began *the first week after US troops overthrew Hussein*. Indeed, both Bush and Cheney continue to delude themselves to this very day, with Cheney even continuing to publicly claim falsely that Hussein backed Al Qaeda.

Within less than a day after the September 11 attacks, Cheney pushed for an invasion of Iraq. By November, Bush agreed. **By some accounts, Bush wanted to overthrow Hussein before he even became president** as revenge for Hussein's plot to kill his father Bush Sr. Whether those accounts are accurate or not, the facts remains that Bush went to war knowing (or he should have known) that Iraq had nothing to do with Al Qaeda. While the more cynical put the blame on Dick Cheney for his control of government intelligence, again this plays upon the falsehood of Bush as unintelligent. Information on the lack of ties was widely available, through public sources, to anyone who cared to look.

As said before, Bush was simply uninterested in any information that contradicted his ideological blindness. He ignored evidence the war was doomed to failure repeatedly. Most political, military, cultural and social experts on Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Mideast, predicted the failure of these two wars. Even Bush's own father had avoided war in Iraq itself. Army Chief of Staff General Erik Shinseki asked for 200,000 to 300,000 troops for Iraq. Bush and Cheney originally wanted to send less than a quarter that number, then were finally talked into sending slightly over 100,000 for the invasion.

Some of Bush's other mistakes were public, indeed worldwide, embarrassments. He famously bragged like he was in a Hollywood film, calling for Iraqi insurgents to “bring it on” and saying he wanted Hussein “dead or alive.” Others were absurdities to anyone angered over losses to terrorists, such as publicly admitting he did not care about finding Bin Laden. The most embarrassing failure of all was to find absolutely no nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons in Iraq. The latter two weapons had been destroyed by UN teams over a decade before. The dictator who was supposedly another Hitler turned out to be poorly armed and could not survive even a month against the US.

As predictors of the future and war planners, Bush and Cheney were nothing if not consistent. They always got it wrong. The Iraq War was supposed to be over in “weeks, not months.” Instead it lasted eight years, with both men utterly failing to predict an insurgency from a wide range of groups against the US and its sponsored Iraqi government. Bush sent only 8,000 US troops to Afghanistan, only to fail to capture Bin Laden by an hour's time, and having to increase US troop numbers fourfold.

Contrary to what Bush's harshest opponents claim, with the two grave exceptions of lying to go to war and ordering torture, there is no other credible evidence of Bush as an evil man. He is far more an utterly incompetent and willfully blind one. The end result of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars is truly a stunning failure, unequal to any other wars in US history. By comparison, both the War of 1812 and the US-Vietnam War were far lesser mistakes. **The failed Iraq and Afghanistan Wars mean no less than the end of the American empire.**

**The eventual cost of these wars will reach \$4 trillion.** Both Bush and Cheney absurdly predicted both wars would pay for themselves, financed by Iraq's oil. Bush even cut taxes during wartime, something unheard of. Typically a nation at war not only raises taxes, they must take out loans and sell bonds. But Bush knew any cost to war would bring even more enormous opposition. Much of the public actually turned against the war when it pushed the price of gas over \$3 a gallon. These wars, along with the failures of capitalism in the Great Recession, and the bailouts of Wall Street, banking, and housing markets, mean there is no financial way to pursue major wars for some time.

More importantly, and thankfully, **there is no will anymore among Americans for more wars. Massive opposition to the US intervening in the Syrian Civil War proves that.** Even a likely short bombing campaign that would have lasted perhaps only days was opposed by virtually all Americans across the political spectrum, by even the most conservative and the most fundamentalist. When the US-Vietnam War failed, it took a decade and a half before the US public could support a war again, and then only half the public, and then only with extensive propaganda. The chance of a major US war the public would support before 2030 is now luckily quite remote, and something to celebrate.

By then the demographics of the US will have changed even more. Minorities, those in large cities, the college educated, immigrants, the less religious, and the young tend to be far more opposed to wars, while whites, the less educated, those from the south and rural areas, fundamentalists, and the generation older than baby boomers are more likely to favor wars. All of the first group are increasing in number while all of the second are decreasing, except for fundamentalists. But even among many fundamentalists, there is an increasing split between the more reactionary and the more progressive.

The end of American empire is itself a very good thing. A democracy should never try to be or act like an empire since it is inherently inhumane and destructive to both the ruler and ruled. But **one of the most disturbing consequences of both wars is that the US military is now largely privatized for the first time.** Contractors, or as they should be more accurately described, **mercenaries, actually outnumbered US troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.**

This privatizing of war is something even libertarian icon Milton Friedman opposed. **The antiwar movement against both wars was largely ineffective.** After the first two years, very few peace demonstrators showed up. **The blame for that falls squarely on John Kerry.** When he ran for president in 2004, his campaign asked peace groups to quit demonstrating, vaguely claiming Kerry would halt these wars. (In fact, Kerry favored keeping both wars going.) Once Kerry was defeated, demonstrations that once attracted tens of thousands now had hundreds, even dozens.

For most antiwar Americans, the only effective way to oppose the war became refusing to join the military, or trying to convince one's family and friends not to join. As both wars worsened, military recruiters had several years' trouble meeting their goals. Bush shrewdly avoided even proposing a draft, for it had been such a huge rallying point against the US-Vietnam War. At first, US troops were kept beyond their enlistments with the Stop Loss program.

Then when that did not keep enough troops, Bush turned to mercenaries, the most notorious being Blackwater. Mercenaries had no rules of conduct to follow in Iraq as the military does. But they also were exempt from prosecution under local laws, just like US troops. This was the worst possible

combination. In the most notorious incident, Blackwater mercenaries opened fire on a crowd of civilians, killing fourteen without cause. In another incident, **a drunken Blackwater mercenary killed no less than the bodyguard of Iraq's Vice President.**

Beyond the ethical and practical issues, relying on mercenaries is a way to get around having to seek and maintain popular support for a war. Most mercenaries in both wars were not Americans. Some had very questionable pasts, including in death squads in dictatorships. Indeed, some of those who carried out torture in the Abu Ghraib scandal may have been private contractors. Added to that, US military recruiters increasingly relied upon immigrants, who made up to one out of six recruits by the Iraq War's end. There were even very ironic calls from a few US conservatives arguing that immigrants without their papers be allowed to join the military.

Other empires, notably the Romans, Ottomans, and British, relied on mercenaries, and it usually has been to their discredit and infamy. For a mercenary has no loyalty to country, only to the highest paycheck. **The mercenary option may be a way another future president could keep a war going in spite of public opposition, much the way GW Bush did.**

A final caution: Mercenaries are often notoriously unreliable, sometimes deserting as Hessians did from British service during the American Revolution. They even turn on the empire that hired them, as the Praetorian Guard did on the Romans and the Janissaries did on the Ottomans. Mercenaries hired to guard that empire often decide who will be that empire's leader, and can bring an empire down.

## James Buchanan and the Civil War

**What: President James Buchanan's weakness, incompetence, defense of slavery, and sympathy for slave owning elites led directly to the Civil War.** Had Buchanan confronted southern secessionists more forcefully, they would not have gathered support or more importantly troops and weapons that enabled the Civil War to go on for as long or with as high a cost in human lives. The war may even have been prevented.

**The Body Count:** The greatest number of Americans killed in any war, **at least 600,000**. This includes battle deaths, disease, and famine caused as much by Confederate government incompetence and ideological blindness as the war.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Confederate leaders** deserve virtually all the blame for the Civil War. They began it, and they kept fighting long after they had no chance to win, so great was their hatred for the idea of living as equals with Blacks.

For the war was fought by the United States (the Union) to end slavery, once the Emancipation was issued. We know that most Union soldiers favored abolition by reading their letters and diaries. And clearly, for the Confederacy it was always fought to continue slavery. Anyone doubting so need only read the Declaration of Causes written by Confederate state governments, each explicitly explaining their reason for secession was to defend, continue, and expand slavery.

The **Democratic Party**, at that time the party primarily of racist plantation slave owners. While the party often chose northern candidates, it always chose pro slavery ones. The party remained segregationist until the 1970s, when most southern racists became Republicans instead.

**Stephen Douglas**, who undermined the Missouri Compromise for his own political career

advancement by offering the Kansas Missouri Act in 1854. The US had somewhat stabilized in its debate over slavery. Douglas's proposal was, in this argument, unnecessary. While true, the problem with this claim is it leaves the morally indefensible system of slavery still in place, where it may have continued for at least another twenty years.

White supremacists and Confederate apologists have long blamed **abolitionists or the United States (i.e. the Union)** for the Civil War. Obviously this argument is false. The Confederacy began the Civil War by attacking first, at Fort Sumter. Even before that, the Confederacy had already attacked the US dozens of times, by its takeover of federal forts, customs houses, courthouses, and other federal buildings.

This argument almost literally stands reality on its head. By any measure, the Confederacy and Confederates (excluding the many southerners forced to fight against their will) were simply traitors. The Confederacy went to war because they did not agree with the results of a fair election, and started the war because there was an outside chance the lawful winner, Lincoln, might somewhat restrict slavery in the future from expanding. Lincoln explicitly did not get elected to end slavery. Ironically the Confederacy made slavery end sooner, and pushed Lincoln into Emancipation. Confederates' ideological blindness and exaggerated image of their own military abilities made them miscalculate how the war would end.

Some also blame **northerners or Yankees**. The problems with this argument are two. One is its bigotry, its open hatred and stereotyping of all people from one region of the country. The second problem with this argument is that **most southerners were Union supporters**, loyal to the US. (See Section Eleven.)

**Most Confederate soldiers were unwilling.** They were either draftees or being held in service after their enlistment ended. Most southern men either dodged the draft or deserted the Confederate Army, often more than once. Desertion and draft dodging in the Confederacy were more than double that in the Union.

A central part of the two arguments above from Confederate apologists is not blaming Black slaves, who they assume to be inferior, passive, and happier “knowing their place” under slavery. That Black slaves to a great extent freed themselves is left out.

If there is any president who is a better cautionary example of the failure of ideas about limited government, Buchanan is it. Buchanan routinely winds up at the bottom in most scholars' rankings of US presidents, with good reason. In his own time as well, Buchanan was one of the most lowly regarded leaders. Had Buchanan stood up to secessionists, the war may have not happened. Or at the very least, the war would have been over far sooner, perhaps in less than a year with not even one tenth the loss of life.

Buchanan was elected largely because Fillmore, running as a Know Nothing, split the vote. (See Section Six.) He came to office promising to end division over slavery. But immediately as his term began, he sided with slave owners. The Supreme Court ruled in the *Dred Scott* decision that slavery could not be restricted anywhere, and Buchanan agreed with the court. A more pragmatic president would have vowed to find a way to continue earlier compromises.

Kansas was already being ripped apart over slavery. Both pro and anti slavery factions tried to set up their own governments to declare the state free or slave, using violence against the other. Rather than remain neutral, Buchanan appointed a pro slavery territorial governor, though free staters were the majority. Buchanan approved the fraudulent constitution adopted by pro slavery forces.

Even his own appointed governor resigned in disgust. Buchanan tried to force the constitution, and Kansas as a slave state, through Congress, offering jobs, issuing threats, and even cash bribes to do so. But the effort failed, and deeply divided Buchanan's own Democratic Party. The episode led to a failed impeachment attempt against Buchanan, charging him with bribery.

The divisions would only worsen. Buchanan tried diverting attention from the slavery issue by threatening war against Mormons in what would become Utah over the issue of polygamy. He sent an

invasion force, but the campaign quickly turned into a farce. Church leaders had their own defense force, the Mormon Battalion.

So to avoid bloodshed, both sides maneuvered, staying away from battle. Finally, the leader of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young, had a revelation and Mormons accepted US authority. A few years later another revelation agreed to the end of Mormon polygamy, though some fundamentalists continued practicing. Most Americans considered the Mormon War a failure, devoting US troops to a minor issue when they could have been used to stop bloodshed in Kansas. American troops were also needed to try and prevent secessionists from building up their own militias, what would become the Confederate Army.

By the last two years of his term, Buchanan was increasingly weak and unpopular. By many accounts, he developed nervous tics, had migraines, and could not sleep. Some thought he was coming close to a nervous breakdown or exhaustion. But more and more, Buchanan insisted abolitionists were the problem. That secessionists were the ones threatening violence, the ones forming private armies, smuggling or seizing weapons, openly drilling for war and planning to break away and form their own government, he never even tried to prevent.

Some argued the problem was not his incompetence but the treasonous actions of those around him. **Some of his own cabinet diverted (in other words, stole) weapons and ammunition, sending it to secessionists. Even his own nephew was a secessionist.** Buchanan was the only bachelor to be a president, so his nephew was viewed as being the closest thing to a son he had. (In secret, Buchanan was the first gay president. He shared his home for many years with his partner who was, publicly, his best friend. We have love letters between the two that leave little room for doubt.)

Though Lincoln was elected president, and **Buchanan was warned by his leading general, Winfield Scott, that seven states might secede, Buchanan made no effort to stop these treasonous plans.** Buchanan loathed Lincoln, and he blamed the Republicans for much of the crisis. Yet when federal facility after facility was seized by Confederates, and they formed and declared their new

government, Buchanan still did nothing.

Finally Fort Sumter was threatened with seizure. The commander had moved from an indefensible position into the island fort in Charleston Harbor. Buchanan actually ordered the commander to return to the indefensible position, where his troops would almost certainly be overwhelmed.

It was at this point Lincoln became president. There was almost no way Buchanan could have left a worst situation for him. Lincoln ordered the commander to stay at Fort Sumter and resupplied him. The Confederacy opened fire, starting the war that would be the most devastating in all of US history. Yet it certainly did not have to be that way. **Virtually no other potential president would have made the mistakes Buchanan did.** Not Fremont, not Stephen Douglas, not Breckinridge, not even Fillmore.

What would any other president have done? **Do not allow federal weapons to be stolen. Fire cabinet members if they try to do so. Strengthen federal forts and facilities. Call out the army to its full strength and call for volunteers. Do not back down from traitors.**

**Two previous presidents had gotten secessionists to back down by standing firm.** Andrew Jackson, though a slave trader, publicly called secessionist John Calhoun's bluff in the Nullification Crisis. South Carolina, which had threatened secession, backed down. There would be no serious threats of secession for over a decade and a half. Zachary Taylor, another slave owner, also publicly said he would hang any attempted secessionists. They backed down as well, and their efforts went even less far than during the Nullification Crisis.

Simply by standing strong, any other president could have reduced secessionists to a lone state, South Carolina. The best case scenario is that there would only be a revolt in South Carolina, likely over in months, perhaps even weeks, with a death toll perhaps as low as in the hundreds. Even in the worst case scenarios under the other potential presidents, the Civil War is over in less than a year and with a tenth as many deaths. But because of Buchanan's weakness, and in the eyes of some, near

treason, over half a million Americans died needlessly.

“Treason never prospers.” At least, it does not prosper when it is faced down. Limited government also does not work. Buchanan is the proof of it. Into a vacuum steps anarchy, not of the poor and weak, but of the most avaricious elites, in this case the violent tyranny of white supremacist slave-owning traitors.

## The War on Drugs from Reagan to Obama

**What: The outlawing of some drugs that were legal for centuries and the resulting deaths caused by drug prohibition**, while many other drugs remained legal though they caused far more deaths. While drug prohibition dates back to the 1910s, **the War on Drugs increased dramatically starting with Reagan. Bush Sr. turned it into a literal war with the invasion of Panama. Clinton, GW Bush, and Obama all continued the literal War on Drugs with Plan Colombia.**

**The Body Count: Unknown, and with wildly varying estimates, but likely in the hundreds of thousands to millions of preventable deaths.**

One obvious death toll is **the invasion of Panama in 1989 by Bush Sr., killing 2,000 to 4,000 Panamanians.**

**Plan Colombia has killed from 20,000 to 300,000 and displaced 3 million mostly Black and indigenous Colombian people. Some estimates for all the deaths in drug wars in Colombia from the 1980s to the present is 150,000 to 300,000 deaths and 4 million internal refugees.**

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Robert Anslinger** was head of the Bureau of Prohibition and then the Federal Bureau of Narcotics for over 30 years. More than any other individual, the prohibition of currently illegal drugs can be traced to him. Anslinger worked with publisher William Randolph Hearst to criminalize marijuana, spreading stories from his "Gore File" of incidents blaming the drug, often without evidence, for sensational and violent crimes. His stories pandered to racism, arguing Blacks and Mexicans were likely to be violent and animalistic, and especially to rape white women, if they used marijuana or cocaine.

**Nixon** was the president prior to Reagan who put the most effort into drug prohibition. Harding,

Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and FDR each signed drug prohibition laws, but all followed the lead of Anslinger and J. Edgar Hoover. Nixon found drug prohibition to be a politically useful issue, a way to win middle America voters and criticize the counter culture. Unlike previous presidents, he ignored or attacked advice from officials below him, including studies showing the relative safety of marijuana urging it be legal again.

**The Hollywood film industry** played the largest role in promoting false notions of the effects of drugs with sensational films like *Reefer Madness* and *Marihuana Assassin of Youth*. Television later promoted anti drug hysteria with series like *COPS* and *Miami Vice*. For a period, as the Hollywood studio monopoly crumbled in the 1960s and 70s, some young directors promoted an open attitude towards prohibited drugs, notably in *Easy Rider* and Cheech and Chong films.

But in the 1980s, pushed by Nancy Reagan's Just Say No campaign, Hollywood once again demonized illegal drug use. Latin American drug dealers and smugglers became stock villains, depicted very stereotypically. The ratings code today lists illegal drug use (but not alcohol, tobacco, or pills such as tranquilizers) as a factor that may get a film an R rating. The film *Whale Rider* received a PG-13 rating solely for showing a marijuana pipe (but no drug use) for a few seconds, while *Rango*, an animated children's film, had over 60 characters depicting smoking tobacco as cool throughout the entire film, but still received a PG rating.

**Presidents GW Bush and Obama both continued Plan Colombia and added a new tactic, drone assassinations against FARC leaders**, in theory because of FARC's involvement in drugs. No similar assassinations were carried out against right wing paramilitaries like AUC who smuggled drugs. ELN guerillas are also targeted with drone assassinations, even though ELN has no involvement with drugs. The reason is obvious, FARC and ELN are leftist while right wing paramilitaries work with the US and Colombian governments.

Every president since Coolidge, except to an extent Obama (See Section Eight), has endorsed

anti drug hysteria. But in most cases these presidents were pushed from below by popular pressure. In some cases they did not seem to really believe in the anti drug cause deeply themselves.

But Reagan, certainly, was quite different. Reagan made an anti drug crusade a central part of his presidency, calling it his most important domestic issue. His wife Nancy made her Just Say No crusade her central issue as First Lady, carrying it into schools and spreading her message through the media. Both Reagans made a prime time appeal, carried by all networks, to “Just Say No.”

It is difficult for those not alive in the 1980s to realize just how pervasive anti drug hysteria was. In many ways it became a witch hunt much like McCarthyism. **The Just Say No campaign is when drug testing first became common**, in the military, many places of work, professional and college sports, and as a condition for parole or probation. There were even calls to drug test all students, all workers for every job, and every person who receives public assistance.

Florida finally tried drug testing those on welfare in 2012. Only 2% tested positive, less than one fifth the rate of the general public. Not surprisingly, there have never been calls to drug test corporate executives who received corporate welfare, even though drugs like cocaine are largely used by the well to do. One study even found that illegal drug use can often go up with income.

For a time it also became a standard demand of the media for all candidates for public office, framed much like the old McCarthyism question: Do you now or have you ever been a user of illegal drugs? Bill Clinton's one time clumsy use of marijuana became a huge campaign issue when he ran in 1992, and there was a minor sensation near the end of Reagan's time in office when tabloid author Kitty Kelly alleged that both Ronald and Nancy Reagan themselves tried marijuana with, of all people, Groucho Marx and his wife at their home.

The most devastating impact of the Drug Wars was on minority communities. **Though most drug dealers and users were and are white, minority communities were the most targeted.** In part this was due to bigoted and sensational images on the news, television, and film. Poverty and neglect also meant that open air drug markets were more often driven into minority neighborhoods, while many

white users were able to get their drugs behind closed doors.

Sentences for drug possession became even longer. Timid (and successful) marijuana law reform efforts in Alaska and Oregon ended. Worst of all was the hysteria over crack cocaine. Media spread false stories about “crack babies” that supposedly were born severely deformed and mentally challenged and would never be normal. But “crack babies” in fact were unharmed by their mothers' drug use. **New sentences for crack put users in prison 100 times longer than for the same amount of powdered cocaine.** Since crack was falsely perceived as a Black person's drug, the sentences were harsher. (Blacks use all drugs, including alcohol, at a *lower* rate than whites.) **Prisons filled up, for the first time in US history, with mostly nonviolent drug users.** As a nation we became so accustomed to huge prison populations from drug offenses, we forget that only 35 years ago, this was not yet true.

Police forces became more militarized, using SWAT teams, semi automatic weapons, and even armored tanks. Sweeps of neighborhoods became disturbingly common. There were calls to use the military against drug dealers, and for drug dealing to carry the death penalty. As the Cold War ended, some called for drug dealers and cartels to replace Communists as America's Enemy Number One. Some called for US troops to Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The National Guard in several states were sent to the border with Mexico in stunts designed to win votes. Army AWAC planes, once used to prepare for war against the Soviet Union, were used to try to stop drug smugglers. The effort was declared a “success” because seizures stopped an estimated 10% of illegal drugs where once they stopped perhaps 1%.

The US did fight a literal war on drugs, against the nation of Panama. Manuel Noriega became the military dictator of Panama in 1983. The nation had long been notoriously corrupt. But where most US allies worked with the CIA, Panama worked more with the US Army because of the Panama Canal.

The US Army had long found the easiest way to handle Panama's government was bribery. As a very poor country with no assets besides the canal, bribery was also extremely cheap. **Noriega himself had long been a US intelligence asset, on the payroll since 1967. Through most of the 1980s, he**

**worked with Reagan, allowing the Panama Canal Zone to be used as a base for US planes to bomb El Salvador** and allowing US intelligence to set up listening posts in Panama. (See Section One.) Thus the US government looked the other way when Noriega ordered the Panamanian election of 1984 stolen, and then ordered the murder of opponent Hugo Spadafora.

Noriega claimed the campaign to overthrow him was because he would not help the US and Contra terrorists overthrow Nicaragua's democratic government. Noriega also claimed the US government paid him almost \$10 million over the years. At his later trial, the US government claimed the true figure was \$220,000, still a huge sum in that nation. What is certain is that by the end of Reagan's term, he wanted Noriega removed. News reports uncovered Noriega's ties to Colombian drug cartel leader Pablo Escobar, at the time the most wanted man in the world. Noriega allowed Panama to be used as a halfway point for drug shipments to the US. Panama's banks laundered drug money.

By 1988, Noriega's cartel ties made the cover of *Time* magazine. They became an issue in the election, with then Vice President George Bush Sr. having to defend himself during his run for president. Bush had been head of the CIA in the 1970s, while the agency had Noriega on the payroll. Another stolen election in 1989 provided Bush an excuse to overthrow him, especially after Noriega supporters beat a candidate for Vice President in full view of TV cameras.

The invasion was brief, very one sided, and bloody. Panama's military was under 16,000, and included "Dignity Battalions," Noriega supporters armed mostly with clubs. Twice that many US troops invaded, defeating Panama's army in only three days. US planes bombed Panamanian slums by mistake, killing thousands. Noriega was tried in Miami, served a long sentence, then was recently tried for crimes in France, where he remains today. **The invasion did not stop drug traffic or money laundering, which actually increased under the new President Guillermo Endara.** The Panama Canal went back under US control, overturning the treaty returning the canal to Panama. Panama's army was disbanded. The canal did not return to Panama's control until 1999.

In Colombia, there had been a civil war since the 1960s between leftist guerillas and a right

wing government allied with paramilitaries. The main guerilla groups were FARC and ELN, both Marxists but never allied to the Soviet Union. In the 1960s, the Colombian military attacked peasant leagues in rural areas, earlier organized by Colombia's Communist Party. FARC and ELN were created in response to these attacks. FARC eventually succeeded in controlling up to a third of Colombia.

FARC and ELN financed themselves through kidnappings. But for FARC the biggest source of money was a tax on the drug trade and control of gold mines. **Nixon began Plan Colombia**, US aid, weapons, and training against the guerillas. It also included **chemical weapons attacks, herbicide sprayed to eliminate coca that very likely caused deaths and injuries.**

Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, and GW Bush all continued and expanded Plan Colombia, even though **during the 1990s and 2000s, Colombia had the worst human rights record anywhere in the Americas.** That is saying quite a bit, a worse record than Communist Cuba, or Guatemala with its repression of Mayan Indians. Almost all those who suffer from Plan Colombia are African descent or indigenous, especially the huge numbers displaced by fighting. **Among the few not harmed by Plan Colombia: right wing paramilitaries like AUC that deal drugs as much as FARC.** FARC is in decline today, in part because President Alvaro Uribe launched a brutal military campaign and in part because Castro of Cuba and Chavez of Venezuela negotiated for FARC to end their uprising and become a political party, as they were before the Colombian government attacked them in the 1960s.

Chemical weapons attacks on coca continued, even though there is no evidence it worked, and much that it harmed. The herbicide's manufacturer recommends handling with rubber gloves only, and hospitals reported constantly treating farmers sickened by the poison. Not only that, coca farmers quickly learned they could stop the poison from killing coca plants simply by washing it off with water. Yet the runoff from the poison killed other crops and wildlife.

As for the Drug War in the US, most scholarly studies show it harms more than helps. Those fanatically opposed to drug legalization often confuse wanting legalizing with wanting to take or abuse illegal drugs. Very few people want to see substance abuse or overdoses. It is simply a matter of

strategy, treating a largely medical problem as a more manageable medical problem rather than turning it into an intractable crime problem.

The cost in lives is heavily debated and not always easy to measure. But obviously such costs include; deaths among drug cartels at war with each other over business competition; deaths among street dealers fighting over markets; innocent bystanders killed during both of the above; deaths from impure forms of the drugs, which would not happen were the drugs legal; deaths from smugglers and dealers pushing ever more potent forms of the drugs, which could be better regulated were these drugs legal; deaths from addicts less able to seek treatment due to these drugs being illegal; and deaths from increased crime due to the high cost of these drugs, thanks to their being illegal.

There are several obvious models one could use for legalization. Other countries such as the Netherlands have success with legalization, needle exchange programs, and other forms of harm reduction. Another model is the US itself, in how alcohol and tobacco addiction have been reduced and lives saved. Prohibition of alcohol had very limited success. Deaths from alcoholism did decline, but deaths from alcohol poisoning and criminal syndicates rose. As for tobacco, public awareness has done far more good than prohibition did. This is not widely known, but much of Europe did once try to prohibit tobacco. In the early modern period, the first drug war was against tobacco, and it did not have any more success than today's drug war.

As of this writing, seventeen US states have legalized marijuana, while six more allow it for medical use. This entry will be updated in future editions.

## James Madison and the War of 1812

**What: The first major US war since independence, and the most disastrous US war until the Iraq War.** By most measures, the war was a greater and more humiliating defeat for the US than the US-Vietnam War, with most of Washington, the White House, and Capital building burned down, and most battles ending in huge embarrassing defeats for US troops, who sometimes surrendered at the first shot. Madison was directly at fault, yet amazingly he was not blamed by most of the US public.

**The Body Count: 15,000 to 24,000 deaths**, most from disease rather than combat.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**The War Hawks**, gung ho hyper nationalist Congressmen favoring war against both Britain and Spain and invasions of Canada and Florida.

Many pro war Americans at the time blamed solely **the British**, sometimes **American Indians** as well. The British were blamed for kidnapping or “impressment” of American sailors and for allegedly inciting Native uprisings. However, the impressment issue was an excuse for war, and Native “uprisings” were actually resisting American invasions. (See Section Five.)

Some scholars blame **Jefferson** for not building up the US military prior to the war, or for not “standing up” to Britain. But Jefferson had done his best to avoid war while president, and saw that a war would be disastrous. (See Section Eight.) Yet once his Secretary of State, Madison, was now president, Jefferson kept advising Madison to go to war.

The first American invasion of another country happened early, in 1797. An American private army, or filibusters, invaded Canada. This was only ten years after the Constitution. From the start, there were many Americans convinced that wars of aggression were right and just. A simple look at

America's Indian Wars shows that, or wars against Latin America. (See Section Five again.)

This aggression was certainly not wanted by all Americans. Most of New England, the Federalist Party, and some Democrats opposed the War of 1812, and Jefferson successfully avoided war with Britain his entire time in office. (See Section Eight.) But time and again a gung ho minority has managed to pull the rest of the US into war. The War of 1812 was the first time that happened

**Madison's** leadership during the war, or lack of it, was a disaster. He was a very timid and uncharismatic man, **unable to rally half the nation behind him. Not one Federalist voted for the war.** Had three congressmen changed their vote, there would have been no declaration of war. **The entire New England region went so far as to forbid their state militias to join the military effort. New England even considered and came close to breaking away from the US.**

Madison also made a series of huge tactical mistakes. He relied upon military leaders from the Revolution era, who were mostly too old, or untrained militia leaders. The War Hawks pushed for an invasion of Canada, and Madison agreed to it. General William Hull led a US army into Ontario, hesitated, retreated, and then surrendered to a much smaller British force almost without a shot fired. Most American soldiers went back to the US after promising to not fight anymore. Fort Detroit also surrendered, giving the British control of Michigan Territory. Then yet a third US army surrendered, at Queenston Heights near Niagara.

Most US troops were militias, not regular army. Poorly disciplined, they looted and burned York, Ontario. In retaliation, British troops invaded Washington DC itself. They burned down the White House, the Capital building, and the Library of Congress. Amusingly, what most US students are taught is to remember is Dolly Madison rescuing paintings and the Star Spangled Banner. Rarely taught is that **Francis Scott Key's lyrics also celebrate US troops defeating runaway slaves**, who were among the British troops. Other lyrics added to the song during the Civil War changed Key's pro-slavery meaning completely, and celebrated the end of slavery.

Some accounts claim that Madison himself led troops into battle. Actually he briefly consulted

with generals prior to the battle, then left before it started. The Battle of Badensburg was another disastrous defeat for the US. The US Secretary of War, John Armstrong, failed to see it coming. The British would have taken the capital unopposed except they stopped to rest. The US Naval commander even destroyed his own fleet and fled onto land. British soldiers were outnumbered roughly two to three by US militia. But American troops fled almost at the first shot. More British actually died in the battle from heat exhaustion than combat. Madison and most of the federal government fled the capital, narrowly avoiding capture.

There were limited US naval successes, greatly exaggerated because there were so few US triumphs during the war. The British blockaded US ports, burned Norfolk, and were about to invade New York City, Savannah, and Charleston when the war ended. The only big US victory in the war was **the utterly useless Battle of New Orleans, after war's end.** News of the war's end had not yet reached the city.

The Battle of New Orleans shows the power of self delusion among ardent warmongers. News of the battle convinced many Americans the war had been a success. A wave of patriotic fervor hit the country again, so strong the Federalist Party was harshly condemned for opposing the war. The party fell apart, and Madison won re election almost unopposed, the so called Era of Good Feelings.

**That is the biggest legacy of the war, unrealistic images.** Most Americans ignored that nothing was changed by the war. The British never halted kidnapping sailors. Canada was not conquered. Britain conceded nothing to the US. The Battle of New Orleans led to Jackson's rise to be president. The US would have been far better off had the war not been fought. A US with either John Quincy Adams or Henry Clay elected instead of Jackson would see a better future. (See Section Eight.)

## Teddy Roosevelt and the Panama Canal

**What: Roosevelt's sending US Navy ships to break Panama away from Colombia, followed by the many deaths in building the Panama Canal, and far later, deaths in rioting against US control of the canal.**

**The Body Count: Over 5,600 deaths from the US effort to build the Panama Canal. 32 deaths on Martyrs' Day riots protesting US control of the canal in 1964, 28 Panamanians killed by US forces and four Americans dead.**

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Phillipe Bunau Varilla**, a corrupt French businessman, played a central role in the scheming for Panamanian independence to get the canal for the US. Bunau Varilla signed for the Panamanians, though he had no legal authority, and took much of the millions the US paid. Bunau Varilla wrote the Canal Treaty and bribed his way into becoming Panama's president.

Some authors blame **Colombian neglect** of the province of Panama. Panama was isolated from the rest of Colombia by geography, high mountains cutting off contact except by the sea.

Others blame **a new wave of US imperialism or renewed belief in Manifest Destiny**. But while this sentiment did support Roosevelt, it does not change his central role.

Many conservatives and supporters of American empire blamed Panamanian Commander **Omar Torrijos** for deaths in the riots because of his opposition to US control of the canal.

There had been US efforts to build a canal in Central America for 60 years before the scheming that led to the Panamanian uprising for independence. Several mercenary expeditions tried to take over Nicaragua to build a canal there, notably William Walker in the 1840s and 50s. But no one person

created the canal more than Teddy Roosevelt. It is fair to say that without Roosevelt there would not be a nation of Panama, nor its canal that was for so long been a hated symbol of US imperialism.

From a humanitarian point of view, Teddy Roosevelt was a disaster. **One can argue Roosevelt was an important president. It is much harder to argue he was a good one, and certainly not a noble one.** Roosevelt began the most famed part of his career as a bored rich man playing at being soldier, a dilettante and warmonger with little understanding of war who greatly exaggerated his own role in a minor skirmish against an outgunned enemy of draftees in a failing empire. Born extremely sheltered and privileged, Roosevelt's family connections helped get him elected to the New York legislature and several other posts that led to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, where he schemed to get the US involved in the Spanish-American War while the actual Secretary of the Navy was on vacation.

Where President McKinley fretted about the rightness of going to war, Roosevelt had no such moral qualms. His fear was that war would not happen. When public hysteria pushed the US into war, Roosevelt resigned, leading his famed Rough Riders, many of them bored socialites like him. At the famous Battle of San Juan Hill, Roosevelt charged the hill in his custom made Brooks Brother uniform. The entire war was over in less than two months. Roosevelt's part in it was a minor skirmish lasting a few hours and some weeks in the tropics. Such an easy victory over a slight enemy gave him an enormously distorted view of war, one he carried until the end of his life.

As president, he was the first of the progressive presidents, later followed by Taft and Wilson. One should not confuse progressives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with those of today. Early progressives were reformers, often from elite or upper middle class backgrounds. The name is about all they had in common with those of today. **Early progressives were strong believers in both pseudo scientific racism and class warfare.** For the latter, they practiced warfare by the wealthy and upper middle class against the working class. They did not believe minorities, immigrants, and other working class people were capable of running their own lives. Early progressives wanted to reform politics and end corruption, but they assumed such corruption came from easily manipulated

poor or nonwhite people unable to govern themselves. Roosevelt believed in pseudo scientific racism, and was trained at Harvard by some of the worst pseudo scientific racists in America. He believe that other races were inferior, but thought they could “progress” given time.

Becoming president because of McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt was an unapologetic empire builder. He supported the US-Philippines War and defended the conquest because of his racist belief Filipinos could not rule their own nation. Only after being pushed by public outcry against atrocities did he agree to a ceasefire, declaring amnesty for Filipino patriots.

Roosevelt was a capable negotiator, but for empire. His Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine had the US collecting debts for other imperial powers. At that time, believe it or not, empires routinely went to war to collect money owed to businesses in their countries. To keep Britain and France from invading Latin America, Roosevelt agreed to have US troops invade Latin America if British and French debts were not paid. This was saber rattling to protect one's self proclaimed turf. **Roosevelt invaded repeatedly; Panama in 1903, Honduras three times, in 1903, 1905, and 1907; the Dominican Republic in 1903, staying over a year; Mexico in 1905; Cuba in 1906, staying three years; and Nicaragua in 1907.**

Some historians point to his negotiating treaties, but again this was from his desire to flex the new US imperial muscle, not nobility. His results were debatable. The Treaty of Portsmouth ended the Russo-Japanese War. Japan easily won the war, but the Japanese public was shocked by the treaty since Japan received so little of the territories they fought for. Their anger pushed the nation more towards eventual fascism. In the Morocco Crisis of 1905-06, some historians give him credit for preventing an earlier World War I. Others argue the crisis only set the stage for World War I. There is no consensus.

It was the Panama Canal that showed Roosevelt as his most nakedly imperial. Panama was a province of Colombia, had been a part of the nation since the breakup of Gran Colombia over 70 years before. Many in Panama sometimes complained of neglect. There had been riots and even uprisings for several decades. At the same time, several nations competed to build a canal in Central America for

over half a century, including both Mexico and Nicaragua. The French had financed an earlier effort in Panama that failed due to malaria, though they did build part of it.

Roosevelt and a corrupt French businessman, Philippe Bunau Varilla, stepped in. Roosevelt negotiated to build and then rent the canal, signing the Hays-Herran Treaty. Colombia's Congress refused the treaty, since Herran had negotiated without consulting them and the treaty price was very low. **Roosevelt then told rebels in Panama he would help them if they revolted. The uprising began, and the *USS Tennessee* blocked Colombian troops from crushing the revolt** since the only route to Panama was by sea.

Roosevelt immediately recognized Panama as independent. He now negotiated and signed **the new Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty. No Panamanian signed it. Bunau Varilla was signing for them as Panama's president, an office he had bought. He also designed Panama's constitution, flag, and military. He even offered to finance the government entirely from his own money.** What made him so eager to do all this was that, if the treaty was not signed and no canal built, Bunau Varilla stood to lose \$40 million he had tied up in the canal, and that was in 1900s dollars.

Colombia's government was understandably angry. Their Congress offered to reconsider the Hays-Herran Treaty. One official even offered to move Colombia's capital to Panama. Roosevelt refused. In 1921, President Harding apologized to Colombia and paid \$21 million to the nation. Roosevelt's theft of the canal area came to nothing, except for Panamanian independence, since the cost was eventually more than if he had paid Colombia fairly at the start. For in addition to paying Colombia, the US also bought out Bunau Varilla's company for \$40 million.

**Building the Panama Canal caused over 5,600 deaths from disease.** This was actually far fewer deaths than the French attempt. White workers from the US, who made up the skilled workers and supervisors, lived in spacious clean homes with good sanitation. They had clubhouses, gyms, tennis courts, pool halls, baseball fields, and even ice cream parlors, all managed by the YMCA. The white worker areas also were a model of how to stop malaria and yellow fever. Before white workers

even showed up, the military spent two years draining swamps and spraying with insecticide. White workers' hospitals also were excellent, taking good care of any remaining malaria victims.

**But because of racist segregation, Black West Indians who made up almost all the laborers could not live in the white worker areas. They lived in tent cities outside. Black workers died from disease at rates ten times that of white workers.** Roosevelt, by his single minded dedication to build the canal, shares some of the blame for these deaths. The US Army could easily have kept down the number of Black worker deaths also. Panamanian society, with mostly mixed ancestry people, did not practice segregation. Segregated camps were a US import, causing thousands of deaths.

**The Panama Canal became a hated symbol of US imperialism all across Latin America.** Riots broke out in 1964. Kennedy had agreed to allow the Panamanian flag to be flown in the canal zone next to US flags. The canal zone governor later reinterpreted the order to say neither flag be flown. American students in the canal zone raised a US flag at one school, and then did not allow Panamanian students to add their flag, and beat them. Other Panamanians demonstrated and dozens were killed by US police, who were later reinforced by US troops. That day is remembered in Panama as Martyrs Day. Anger from that day eventually led to the Panama Canal Treaty, when Jimmy Carter gave the canal back, somewhat restoring good relations. (See Section Eight.) Much of that goodwill was undone by a US invasion in 1989. (See Section Four.)

Teddy Roosevelt was above all an imperial president, but never a noble one. He remains admired by some for early environmental or progressive ideas, and by others for being the most prominent president to confuse bullying small nations with being a great nation.

## GW Bush and Hurricane Katrina

What: The **first Global Warming disaster and Global Warming refugees in the US.**

**The Body Count: 1836-3500 deaths** in Louisiana and Mississippi. Many of the victims were elderly, overwhelmingly poor, and disproportionately Black and Latino, along with poor whites.

**Who else gets the blame:**

**FEMA director Michael Brown** became the most visible symbol of incompetence. Brown had little experience in disaster management, only having been an intern and assistant on a committee in a small town. He had primarily been commissioner of a racehorse owners association, and became the head of FEMA based on being a longtime friend of Bush's campaign manager Joe Albaugh. Only eight days into Katrina, Brown was replaced by Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thad Allen. Brown resigned four days later, claiming he had become a scapegoat.

In fact, the blame was well deserved. Brown directly told fire and rescue departments from outside the hurricane area *not* to help unless directly asked. Some city governments like Chicago's pledged help only to be turned away. Brown did not know about refugees trapped in the Superdome until told by the media, despite it being widely shown on TV, and ignorantly criticized trapped refugees as people who "chose not to evacuate." Brown's emails showed him complaining about having to work hard and a casual attitude toward the disaster.

Some pointed the blame at the **Governor of Louisiana Blanco, Democrat, and the Mayor of New Orleans, also a Democrat**, for their poor coordination with the federal government. Much of the accusations aimed at the two were clearly politically motivated, an attempt to shift blame away from Bush and Brown. Disaster relief is legally and for practical reasons a federal function, with local authorities only as assistants taking direction.

Very conveniently, the same accusations were not immediately directed at the **Governor of Mississippi, a Republican, Haley Barbour** or the mayors of cities like Meridian, Natchez, or Gulfport, all also devastated by Katrina, and the mayors all Republican or nonpartisan. Barbour did receive praise for his handling of the evacuation, aggressively moving some people out of the path of the storm. Ironically, he is praised for doing what the federal government under Bush failed to do.

Barbour also received enormous criticism after Katrina. While Louisiana was far more damaged by the storm, Mississippi received almost three quarters of all federal aid, clearly rewarded for him not criticizing Bush. Federal funds also seemed to be awarded to make Barbour look good if he ran for president. (He decided against it. His religious conservatism was jarring to most of the country.) Finally, awarding monies to Mississippi seemed like pure political favoritism, punishing Democratic Louisiana Governor Blanco for publicly criticizing Bush.

Disaster aid, evacuation, and relief are all federal matters. State and local authorities quickly hand over jurisdiction and work in cooperation with the federal government. This had been done successfully many times before and since, most notably for Hurricane Sandy, when Democratic President Obama worked quite well with Republican Governor of New Jersey Chris Christie.

Amusingly, some conspiracy theorists, including the Republican candidate for President, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, claimed Hurricane Sandy was part of a conspiracy to get Obama re elected. Some of the nuttier types even claimed Obama could control the weather. Pray for such people, and keep them away from sharp objects.

Believe it or not, right wing talk radio and conspiracy theorists **blamed the victims themselves**. Racists like Rush Limbaugh put an enormous effort into smearing the victims as all criminals, savages, rapists, animals, and others who deserve to die, and the refugees as a threat to decent people. The internet was deluged for years with lurid mail forwards by the gullible, or racists asserting that Katrina refugees brought crime waves with them. These rumors played upon stereotypes of Blacks as inherently dangerous and more likely to be commit crimes. (More than two thirds of crimes in the US are

committed by whites. More than three quarters of white crime victims are victimized by other whites.) Even former First Lady Barbara Bush repeated the rumors before apologizing.

Mainstream media often pushed racist images as well, depicting the Superdome refugees as out of control and violent, falsely claiming Black gangs were attacking white neighborhoods. In fact, the opposite was true. White police in the area often closed off white neighborhoods, locking out minorities and preventing evacuation. In some cases the police attacked minorities unprovoked.

While clearly not all of the deaths were caused by Bush and his administration's incompetence, most of them were. A more competent president and head of FEMA could and should have prevented many of these deaths, as well as property loss and long term economic damage. Bush's main guilt in Katrina involve two huge errors. Bush hired Michael Brown as head of FEMA with few qualifications. Most sensible people know you do not reward friends of friends with sensitive jobs where lives could be lost. You should not hire them period, in an ideal world. But if one must reward cushy prestige jobs, make them the Ambassador to Luxemburg or another position where they cannot do any harm.

But not GW Bush. Brown, or "Brownie" was given one of the most sensitive positions requiring the greatest skill, or many people would die. Many did die, precisely because Brown, and Bush as well, did not know what they were doing. At a press conference, an out of touch and clueless Bush loudly praised Brown, "You're doing a heckuva job, Brownie!" The public reacted with horror. Conservatives and Republicans like commentator Fred Barnes were appalled as much as everyone else.

The most memorable public reaction came from country music singers Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, who called the government response to Katrina, and Bush's in particular, "embarrassing," "humiliating," and even "bullshit." "When you have people dying because they're poor and Black, or poor and white...that is the most wrong thing," said McGraw when asked by the press. Both singers are from the areas most affected, and Hill publicly teared up as she described her anger over the loss of life.

A comparison of the response to Hurricane Katrina to that of Hurricane Sandy shows the difference an efficient, more competent, and more compassionate response can make. Sandy was by

some measures the more powerful of the two storms, and it hit a larger area and one more heavily populated, mostly New Jersey and New York compared to Katrina hitting primarily Louisiana and Mississippi.

The death toll for Sandy was only 109, compared to 1,836 for Katrina. It is not reasonable to assume the death toll would be exactly the same had both hurricanes been dealt with by either competent or incompetent leaders. In fact, had Bush been president when Sandy hit, the death toll and economic damage likely would have been *even higher* than Katrina's, since the area has a higher population.

The reverse is also true. **Had a better president been on the job besides GW Bush, likely 1,700 dead or more, almost all of those killed by Katrina, would still have been alive after the storm. GW Bush and “Brownie” bear the direct responsibility for most, but not all, of the 1,836-3,600 deaths from Hurricane Katrina.** “Heckuva job” indeed.

Bush's incredible bumbling on Katrina played a direct role in Obama getting elected. Even many lifelong Republicans refused to vote for their party, instead voting for Obama, staying home on election day, or voting for a third party. The most lasting legacy of Bush's failures on Katrina is the devastation wrought on New Orleans, The city has yet to fully recover.

Most of the victims were senior citizens who could not be evacuated. Over half were Black. Virtually all of them, Black, white, or Latino, were the poorest of the poor. In perhaps the most famous comment about Katrina, rapper Kanye West said at a benefit for the victims, “George Bush doesn't care about Black people.” Bush later said it was the worst day of his being president. This comment only further cemented Bush's reputation as remote and callous. Most Americans likely would have named the September 11 attacks, the start of the Iraq War, or Katrina itself.

But West's claim about Bush was clearly inaccurate, though not entirely unfair. A more accurate statement would be, “George Bush doesn't know how to do his job, and Black, Latino, and white people died because of that.” There has never been evidence of GW Bush being a racist. Just the

opposite, his actions on AIDS in Africa and Latin American immigration show him strongly opposed to prejudice.

His party is another matter. Republican leadership and candidates have been pandering to racists since the 1960s, especially in the south. It is accurate to say that the great majority of American racists are Republicans. Obviously not all Republicans are racist. But perhaps as many as half are. And even the many non-racist Republicans include many who are dismissive of the damage done by racism, and willing to pander to or at least tolerate the huge numbers of racists in their midst. It was this party which was indifferent to aiding or rebuilding New Orleans, and its members on talk radio went out of their way to smear the mostly Black victims.

No, Bush's guilt is largely a matter of pure incompetence as an administrator, not very different from the many failings he had in appointing people to administer Iraq, and indeed in prosecuting and planning the quagmire of the Iraq War. More than a few observers joked that Bush is not very intelligent. This is clearly false. He was quite skilled politically in pushing through the Iraq War over the objections of some Democrats and keeping the war going over the opposition of most of the American public. But on many matters Bush was clearly uninformed on, and worse, uninterested, his ignorance proved to be fatal to thousands of Americans in Louisiana and Mississippi.

## Bill Clinton and the Branch Davidians

**What: The disastrous Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms raid on the Branch Davidian cult compound in Waco, Texas in 1993.**

**The Body Count: 80 Branch Davidian deaths including 20 children. Four ATF agents were killed and sixteen wounded** in the shootout, shot by Branch Davidian members.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**The Branch Davidians** themselves and leader **David Koresh** in particular were often blamed by the Clinton administration and much of the public.

**Attorney General Janet Reno**, who supervised the raid and gave the order for the final assault on the compound that led to most Davidian deaths. Reno argued she had to order the assault because of the danger of children being abused. But such crimes are under local jurisdiction, not federal. She also claimed the Davidians were planning to commit mass suicide and must have killed themselves. In fact suicide was against Davidian belief. Their deaths were caused by being burned to death and smoke inhalation, with the government raid blocking their escape. There were no Davidian suicides, only deaths caused by Reno's incompetence.

**FBI Director Louis Freeh**, who jointly ran the siege with Reno. The FBI has jurisdiction over the murder of any federal agents.

**Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Director Steve Higgins** planned and approved the raid, hoping for a high profile success.

The Branch Davidians are a breakaway group from another breakaway group that split from the Seventh Day Adventists in the 1950s. The Davidians believed the Apocalypse and the return of Christ

were imminent and so moved to a compound outside of Waco, Texas. A young Vernon Howell, later renaming himself David Koresh, led part of that group to split off yet again and form their own faction of Davidians. Several of Koresh's Davidians were tried for attempted murder of the leader of the original faction in 1987, but were acquitted. There were claims that Koresh was abusing children, marrying himself illegally to underage brides as young as twelve. The cult also had a business buying and selling weapons, and the ATF believed the group might be stockpiling weapons.

The ATF put the cult under surveillance, with several agents moving into a neighboring house and an undercover agent planted among the Davidians. ATF surveillance was very clumsy. Posing as college students, the agents were all older than most typical students and never attended classes. So the cult knew in advance the ATF planned to raid them. The ATF obtained a warrant claiming the cult had illegal guns and parts. But all the group's weapons were legal. The ATF's undercover agent informed the raid planners that the group knew the raid was coming. Still, the raid went forward.

There are conflicting reports of who fired the first shot, ATF agents or cult members. What is certain is that **this was the most disastrous day in the agency's history. Four agents were killed and sixteen wounded. The ATF team only withdrew because they ran out of ammunition. Five cult members were killed** in the shootout, and Koresh himself was badly wounded in the belly. The siege that followed lasted seven weeks, making headlines worldwide, with live television coverage.

FBI negotiators took over for the ATF. Koresh told the FBI he had to finish tapes of religious significance before he could surrender. FBI agents became convinced he was stalling. Attorney General Janet Reno ordered an assault. Government tanks punched holes in the compound building with their turrets and pumped in tear gas. At some point the building caught fire, fed by the flammable tear gas. Most cult members were burned to death or died of smoke inhalation. The fire department was not allowed to put out the fire or carry out rescue because of fear they would be fired on. Most Davidians were trapped from escaping the building by the rubble knocked over by government tanks.

Twelve surviving Davidians were put on trial. A jury found four of them innocent of all charges.

**None of the remaining eight were convicted of murdering federal agents.** Five of them were convicted of manslaughter, all eight convicted of firearms charges. Over 100 family members of Davidians filed civil suits against the government. Judges dismissed all the cases.

Clinton had no involvement during the first raid. He also had little involvement in the day to day siege, leaving that to agents on the scene and their supervisors. But **Clinton did approve the final assault in the siege, kept Reno in spite of her deadly incompetence, and defended her actions and his own afterward.** In one interview, Clinton, in a rare display of temper, practically shouted at reporter Chris Wallace when criticized about the many deaths at Waco.

The deaths may have been more directly caused by Janet Reno, but Clinton could and should have halted her from carrying out the raid. It is not and never should have been a federal job to pursue alleged child abusers. In any case, there was no evidence of any abuse of children going on during the siege. Did Reno seriously think Koresh was assaulting young girls while suffering from a severe belly wound? Most evidence points towards ATF leaders wanting a high profile success in a gun prosecution case, hoping the capture of the Davidians would rescue their image. **That the Branch Davidians may have a strange religion to many is completely irrelevant and borderline bigoted.**

This standoff prompted many conspiracy theories, and still does. But there is no credible evidence, as those on the fringe claim, that the Davidians were deliberately murdered. Even evidence that law enforcement may have accidentally started the deadly fires is mixed at best.

But what is clear is that the raid should never have happened in the first place. If still begun, it should have been planned far better, should have had a better administration than Janet Reno's, and authorities should not have chosen to end the siege so forcefully, especially with a group that had such apocalyptic beliefs and an erratic leader. Just as unconscionable, there were clearly several in federal law enforcement who should have been fired for their utter incompetence. **No one was punished for causing these deaths. Louis Freeh remained Director of the FBI and Reno remained Attorney General for five more years, the rest of Clinton's time in office.** Steven Higgs of the ATF resigned

after a critical report on the ATF's actions. Both Higgins and Reno, plus the ATF planners on the site of the original raid, should have faced strong consequences, perhaps even trial for the almost 80 deaths caused by their negligence.

The siege made martyrs out of the Davidians, a group certainly not deserving such status. The **failure to punish government officials responsible for their deaths fed paranoia within the far right**, militias, white supremacists, millennial cults, libertarians, gun fanatics, and the more conspiracy minded conservatives. Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh cited the Waco siege as his biggest motivation to become a terrorist and mass murderer. (*The Turner Diaries*, a poorly written fantasy from a vanity press about a white supremacist uprising mass murdering Blacks, Jews, Mexicans, and Asians, also influenced McVeigh.) The increase in right wing militia terrorism (see Section Seven) is partly due to Clinton and Reno's actions. After leaving office, Reno ran for governor of Florida and narrowly lost.

Few outside of the conspiracy minded remember how Clinton failing to rein in Reno caused Davidian deaths. Like most conspiracy claims, their presence distracts from actual evidence and useful solutions. That some are willing to dismiss or forget their deaths because of the Davidians' beliefs is shameful. That Clinton's critics focused on the Lewinsky scandal instead is almost as shameful. Deaths caused by government incompetence at Waco were the second worst thing Clinton ever did, after ignoring Rwandan genocide.

## Section Five:

### Other American Wars of Aggression

This sections is for all the remaining wars of aggression. As should already be clear, America has a long habit of starting wars. As one author termed it, many Americans are *Addicted to Militarism*. The US being militarily strong and aggressive is a central part of the identity and personality of some Americans. There are some whose very masculinity is tied to a love of war.

Yet clearly there are many good people who oppose most wars, or people who honestly think a war to be fought for the right reasons. Over the years, scholars have proposed a belief in Manifest Destiny or anti-Communism as the central reason for why most American wars were fought. Yet both those reasons are long gone, and American invasions keep happening.

What most Americans do not know is the sheer scope of US invasions, that the American military has been ordered to invade other nations literally hundreds of times. This section tries to give the reader the broad view and ask which presidents invaded most often, why, and how many deaths resulted.

## Indian Wars Were Really American Invasions

**What: The systematic conquest and removal of Native tribal nations, and theft and cheating of Native lands.**

**The Body Count: Genocide against Natives in all of the Americas killed between 75 million to 112 million American Indians out of a total population of 125 to 140 million in 1492.**

**Within what is now the US, the Native population dropped from 12 to 18 million in 1492 to 200,000 in 1900.** After 1900 the Native population began to recover. Today the Native population in the US is between 4 to 7 million.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**The biggest form of genocide denial is to blame disease**, as though all deaths from disease spread to Native peoples were purely accidental. In some cases, diseases were deliberately spread. Cortez used biological warfare against the Aztecs, throwing diseased bodies into the capital's water supply. British General Lord Jeffrey Amherst gave out smallpox infected blankets. American fur traders also gave infected blankets that nearly wiped out the Mandan tribe.

But though many claim that Europeans and Anglo-Americans did not spread disease on purpose, this is not accurate. These invaders knew diseases' effects. Though they did not yet understand germ theory, they could see and did know the obvious: **When whites came into an area with Natives, Natives died from disease in huge numbers, at a 90-98% death rate. Thus by choosing to come into contact with Natives, Europeans and Anglo-Americans were guilty of knowingly spreading disease**, much like an AIDS infected patient knowingly having unprotected sex.

Another form of genocide denial is to claim that Natives were more vulnerable to disease because of isolation from the rest of the world prior to Columbus's invasion. In fact, **there were other**

**peoples who came to the Americas before 1492. Polynesians, Vikings, and Australian Aboriginals are all proven to have been in the Americas well before Columbus.** There is also evidence that other groups possibly came to the Americas, though not enough proof to be definitive. None of these groups brought epidemics, including the European Vikings. (See more discussion of this in Notes.)

**What made Natives vulnerable to epidemics was the deliberate starvation tactics used by Europeans and then Anglo-Americans.** Starvation weakens the body, making diseases far more deadly. In the US case, the government hired hunters to kill off the buffalo herds, driving their numbers down from hundreds of millions to less than 1,000 by 1900. Using starvation and disease as a weapon of war is, by definition, a part of genocide. (See Section One.) Without these starvation tactics, the death rate would have been far lower.

**Most deaths east of the Mississippi River were during English colonial times.** Where French and Spaniards mixed freely with Natives and intermarried, English racism believed in cultural and later racial segregation. Thus many English colonists practiced extermination more freely.

These were the atrocities in US history that were not combat, but attempts to exterminate Native tribes by outright massacres:

Thirty Iroquois towns destroyed during the American Revolution by Washington's troops.

The Gnadenhutzen Massacre of Delawares in 1782.

The Hillabee and Autosee Massacres of Creeks in 1813-14.

The Fall Creek Massacre of Senecas in 1822.

The Dressing Point Massacre of Karankawas in 1826.

The Battle Axe Massacre of the Sac and Fox in 1832.

The Johnson Massacre of Apaches in 1837.

The Council House and Colorado River Massacres of Comanches in 1840.

The Clear Lake Massacre of Pomos and Wyos in 1840.



The Campo Seco Massacre of Yahis in 1868.

The Marias Massacre of Piegans in 1870.

The Wounded Knee Massacre of Lakota in 1890.

As you can see, the list of massacres is disturbingly long, and likely this list is not complete.

(For anyone wondering, most “massacres” done by Natives were actually combat defeats of US troops or colonist militias.) Nearly half of those massacres were in California, which was a clear case of genocide. (See Section Two.) Besides the California Indian genocide, which three US presidents deliberately ignored, what role did US presidents play in these other massacres, as well as in biological warfare and wiping out the buffalo and other starvation tactics?

**There is no clear evidence of the US government using biological warfare against Native tribes.** British General Amherst and Spanish conqueror Cortes did. The “Republic of Texas” had an official genocide policy (see Section Three) but this did not include disease. Confederate Colonel John Baylor planned to poison Native tribes during peace talks, but never carried it out. American fur trappers used contaminated blankets against the Mandans. But the US government is innocent of this when it comes to Natives.

Did the US government, or any American president, have an official genocide policy? No, but this does not mean much. There is no piece of paper where Hitler ordered the extermination of Jews either, but he was still guilty of genocide. Was it the practice of the US government, or US presidents, to try to wipe out all Natives? When asking this question, there are often two knee jerk responses, both equally wrong. One is denial, wanting to blame most deaths on accidental disease, wanting to blame Natives themselves, assuming this was ordinary warfare, or even justifying conquest and genocide as inevitable, as best for American progress.

The other response, by those who imagine they are properly cynical enough, is “of course.” This is equally wrong. There were US presidents like Grant who did much to halt extermination efforts. (See Section Eight.) There were some presidents like John Quincy Adams who thought Natives inferior, but

still believed Native peoples should not be cheated or have force used against them. (See Section Nine.) Many presidents were indifferent, as in the California Indian genocide. But **most violence against Native tribes came from white colonists**, while the US Army sometimes tried to limit the violence. In some cases, US generals like Custer committed atrocities that the US government did not want. (See Section Ten.)

Besides California genocide, these presidents had the worst record for atrocities against Natives:

**Washington as general ordered the destruction of 30 Iroquois towns.** As president, he called for treaties to prevent violence between Natives and Anglo-Americans. But colonists still invaded Native lands. When Natives fought back, Washington sent armies into the Ohio Valley. Washington then signed **the Treaty of Grenville, forcing all tribes out of Ohio.** He also signed the Treaty of New York that somewhat protected the Creek tribe for a time.

Jackson committed genocide by removing the Five Tribes as president. (See Section One.) As US General he waged war upon the Creek. Van Buren continued forced removal of one of the Five Tribes, the Cherokee, and war against the Seminole. Forced removal was almost all Jackson's doing. The Seminole Wars began long before Van Buren and continued long after him. His guilt is in failing to stop either. Andrew Johnson carried out most of the Long March against Navajos. (See Section Eight.)

What about **the extermination of the buffalo**? This was precisely what weakened the Plains tribes and left them vulnerable to disease, and forced them onto reservations far more than battles with either colonists or the military. Most evidence points to the US Army, especially Generals William Sherman and Phillip Sheridan, as most responsible for wiping out buffalo. White colonists share the blame. Extermination **began under Andrew Johnson, was somewhat halted under Grant, but then continued under Rutherford. Army generals did so on their own.** Johnson and Rutherford's guilt is in failing to stop this extermination and starvation tactic.

## The Many Other Latin American Invasions

**What: US invasions, US government-ordered overthrows, and military threats against Latin American nations. In every single case except mercenary invasions, these invasions, coups, or threats were ordered by US presidents.**

**The Body Count:** It is extremely difficult to get clear figures for most of these invasions. The US military often does not keep records of enemy deaths or civilian deaths. When they do so, they always err on the side of caution, listing only confirmed deaths, not estimates. Estimates thus almost always come from outside sources, foreign journalism accounts especially.

It is a fair guess that **each of these invasions resulted in anywhere from several hundred to several thousand deaths.** What is even more difficult to guess is how many deaths resulted in the long term because of US takeovers of these countries, disruptions of these societies, crushed movements for self government, worsened economies, and continued poverty. Ironically, the rationale often given for these invasions is help local peoples.

**Who Also Gets the Blame:** The list of ideologies blamed for US invasions is itself almost as long as the list of invasions themselves.

Manifest Destiny is now being taught about in American high schools, something generally not true twenty years ago. But students are often being give the sanitized version, that the belief is America was destined to span “sea to shining sea.” That makes the belief seem both inspiring and psychic. In fact, **Manifest Destiny was always an explicitly racist belief, that *white* Americans were destined to rule over all land between the oceans, and over *all peoples already there*,** either controlling them or wiping them out. It was an ideology of conquest or extermination against both indigenous groups,

American Indians and Mexicans.

**“Maintaining order”** has always been a self serving notion, **sometimes referred to as the World's Policeman**, that the US has a self designated responsibility as a world power to keep other nations in line, especially in Latin America. Part of the intent of this claim has been to pretend these invasions or overthrows are done reluctantly.

**“The Flag Follows the Dollar”** was an argument most famously advanced by Marine Corp Commandant Smedley Butler that American invasions and ordered overthrows were because there were US companies out to make money off Latin Americans. But in many cases there were not any substantial US investments or property in the country being invaded.

**Pseudo scientific racism or paternalistic racism**, the notion that nonwhites were incapable of running their own nations and thus must bow to American elites who supposedly know better, clearly did play a part in some overthrows, especially under Presidents McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson.

**Fighting Communism** as a reason or excuse for invasion goes back fairly far, almost right after the Bolshevik Revolution. Wilson was the first president to use anti-Communism as a rationale for invasion, by the US of the Soviet Union in 1919. Dedicated anti-Communists were extremely fanatic and conspiracy minded, imagining Communism where there often was none. (See Sections One and Four.) But US invasions did not stop with the Cold War.

**Fighting terrorism** is the latest rationale, sometimes of countries that did not actually support terrorism such as Iraq. (See Section Four.) In Latin America, the latest nation to be falsely accused of supporting terrorism is Venezuela. It is a fair guess that, were Al Qaeda destroyed tomorrow, US ordered overthrows likely would not cease.

**US invasions rise or fall depending on how sick the American public is of seeing American deaths.** Deaths of people in other countries can be another matter, since the media often dehumanizes

foreigners, especially nonwhite ones. Often this is made easier by many Americans knowing little of other cultures.

There were two main types of US invasions before the Civil War. US government ordered invasions included the War of 1812, the US-Mexico War, and the dozens of US invasions of Native tribes. **There were also many US invasions done by private mercenary armies, often called filibusters.** Most Americans are not aware that Americans invaded Canada five times, four times by private armies in 1797, 1837, 1838, 1839, and of course by US armies in the War of 1812.

The list of other places invaded by private US armies is long. Texas was invaded six times by US mercenaries, in 1800, 1801, 1813, 1819, 1825, and finally in 1835. That makes the fact of the US finally decided to take it both less inevitable and over less surprising. Other countries that US mercenaries tried to take over and make part of the US include; Venezuela in 1806; Tristan de Cunha in 1810; the Spanish colony of La Florida in 1812 and 1818; Mexico in 1844 and California in 1845, both before the US-Mexico War; the Spanish colony of Cuba four times, in 1848, 1849, 1850, and 1851; Nicaragua in 1855; Costa Rica in 1856; Mexico in 1857, hoping to take away the state of Sonora; and Honduras in 1860.

**For a quarter century after the Civil War, there were no US invasions of Latin America because most Americans had enough of wartime violence. But as the Civil War generation died off, there were almost three dozen US invasions in slightly over 40 years, from 1890 until the 1930s.** The first was Argentina in 1890; then Chile in 1891, Haiti the same year; Nicaragua no less than seven times, in 1894, 1898, 1899, 1907, 1909, 1910, and then in 1912, when US troops controlled the country for the next 21 years; Panama in 1895, 1903 (See Section Five), 1912, 1918, and 1925; Honduras six times, in 1903, 1905, 1907, 1911, 1912, and 1924 ; the Dominican Republic in 1903, 1914, and then 1916, when US troops controlled the country until 1924; Mexico in 1905 and 1914; Cuba in 1906, 1912, and 1917, when US troops controlled the country until 1933. Haiti was invaded again in 1914 and US troops controlled the country until 1934, and Guatemala in 1920, 1921.

These invasions almost came to an end for a decade and a half. Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy declared an end to wars against nations in America's "backyard" and he vowed to always negotiate, avoiding being pushed into war with Mexico. (See Section Eight.) The big exception to that is Panama in 1941, when he recognized the overthrow of a fascist dictator.

**In some cases, money was the motive for invading.** US companies' investments had been or were perceived to be threatened. Often US troops were sent to collect debts, break unions, guard property, or crush governments or rebel groups said to be unfriendly to the US. Marine Corps Commandant Smedley Butler, who himself took part in many of these invasions, bluntly described it:

“I helped make Mexico...safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-12. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903....Looking back on it, I felt I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three city districts. We Marines operated on three continents.”

Butler continued his angry denunciation: “The flag follows the dollar and the soldiers follow the flag. I wouldn't go to war again as I have done to protect some lousy investment of bankers. There are only two things we should fight for. One is the defense of our homes and the other is the Bill of Rights. War for any other reason is simply a racket.” Later Butler got his chance to stop bankers and protect the Bill of Rights, when some of Wall Street's elites tried to overthrow Roosevelt with a private army and set up a fascist state. (See Section Eleven.)

The Cold War brought a new set of justifications to invade, overthrow, or threaten Latin American nations. **Many fanatic anti-Communists believed in unrealistic conspiracies that imagined even small nations could be a threat to the US, and often saw Communist threats where**

**there were none.** (See Section Four.) So the US threatened little Uruguay in 1947, sending nuclear armed planes to its presidential inauguration. A Puerto Rican independence uprising was crushed in 1950. Guatemala, trying its first timid reforms, was smeared as Communist and then its government overthrown in 1954 simply for *no longer outlawing Communists*. This began a long civil war that, with Reagan's complicity, turned into outright genocide in the 1980s. (See Section One.) In Panama, demonstrators against the canal were killed by US Canal Zone police. (See Section Four.)

Cuba faced perhaps more US assaults than any other nation in the Americas, a US bombing and invasion followed by the threat of nuclear war (Section Eleven again), then likely biological warfare (See Section Five) and extended terrorist attacks from Cuban-Americans for decades (See Section Six). The Dominican Republic was invaded and taken over by US troops from 1965 to 1966, simply because Lyndon Johnson falsely imagined a democratic movement might be Communist. In Bolivia, the US sent Special Forces against a tiny rebel group in 1967. In El Salvador, the US military bombed the country for much of the 1980s, sent in advisers and a campaign of repression to break a protesters and a rebel movement. (See Section One.) In Nicaragua, the US government mined the harbors and sponsored terrorists. (Section One again.) In tiny Grenada, the US invasion force was one tenth the size of the entire island's population. Not finding the Cuban base Reagan claimed was there, his administration fabricated a claim that construction workers were Cuban commandos.

Yet the end of the Cold War did not end US invasions in Latin American either. In 1989 a US invasion overthrew the Panamanian government as part of the Drug War. (See Section Four.) In 1994 it was Haiti where a US invasion overthrew the government, this time to put back into power a president overthrown by secret police working with the CIA. In Colombia in 2000, US troops were again sent as part of the Drug War. In Venezuela in 2002, a military coup advised by the US government failed to overthrow the nation's president. Again in Haiti, in 2004, CIA funded rebels overthrew the same president put back into power by the US in 1994. In Honduras and Paraguay, the overthrowing of two presidents was US-supported after the fact.

Which presidents were to blame for these invasions? Unlike invasions of Native tribal lands and wars of extermination, which were often done by Anglo-American colonists or US Army generals against the orders of presidents, **every single one of these invasions or overthrows after 1890 was done with presidential approval.** Here are the Latin American invasions, overthrown governments, or sending of the US military to Latin America that each president was responsible for:

Jackson- Spanish Florida (as general)

Polk- Mexico

Benjamin Harrison- Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Nicaragua

Cleveland- Nicaragua, Colombia (Panama)

McKinley- Nicaragua (twice), Puerto Rico

Teddy Roosevelt- Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras (three times), Mexico, Panama

Taft- Honduras (twice), Nicaragua (twice), Panama

Wilson- Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Panama

Harding- none, but continued occupations begun by Wilson.

Coolidge- Honduras, also continued occupations begun by Wilson.

Hoover- El Salvador, also continued occupations begun by Wilson.

Truman- Puerto Rico, Uruguay

Eisenhower- Guatemala, Panama, Cuba (planning stages)

Kennedy- Cuba (failed)

Lyndon Johnson- Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala

Nixon- Chile, Colombia (See also Operation Condor.)

Reagan- Colombia, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Nicaragua

Bush Sr.- Colombia, Panama

Clinton- Colombia, Haiti

GW Bush- Colombia, Haiti, Venezuela (failed)

Obama- Colombia, Honduras and Paraguay (both supported after the fact)

Some names are conspicuously absent. Except for Polk, there are no US presidents before 1890. Franklin Roosevelt, because of his Good Neighbor Policy, left Latin America alone for a decade and a half. Jimmy Carter also did because of his human rights policy. Ford did the same, partly because he was only president for two and a half years, but also because a CIA scandal was recent.

**In terms of just how destructive these invasions were, no other president comes close to Reagan, with two campaigns of state terrorism and one complicity with genocide, plus one direct invasion. In terms of who invaded the most often, Wilson clearly has that dubious distinction. His invasions were also much longer lasting, in several cases for decades.** Wilson notoriously stated, "I'm going to teach the South American republics to elect good men," followed by several decades of US control where no elections were allowed.

Smedley Butler was, in the larger view, mostly wrong. **US invasions of Latin America have mostly not been about money. Most of the time they are because an American president decided he knew, or convinced himself he knew, what was best more than the people of that nation themselves.**

Today, of course, the US has just been through two very costly, enormously destructive, and almost useless wars. If the pattern of the past holds, it should be 15-30 years before the US invades another Latin American nation. For Obama, so far the only military force he has sent have been drones used for assassinations in Colombia.

US Government Use of Biological and Chemical Warfare  
and Presidents' Roles

**What: The development, creation, and use of biological and chemical weapons under direct orders from Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson. Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. enabled the use of biological and chemical weapons by Iraq. (See Section Two.) Reagan, Bush Sr., and GW Bush blocked efforts to end or limit bio-chemical weapons.**

**The Body Count:**

**Hundreds of thousands killed by napalm in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Napalm killed at least 80,000 in Tokyo alone.** Napalm is a chemical weapon today banned internationally for use against civilians, legal but widely condemned even when used against soldiers. In Japan during World War II, the US Air Force mostly used it against civilians in cities. In Korea, the US and UN military widely used it against both Chinese and North Korean soldiers, and civilians in cities. In the US-Vietnam War its use became notorious, especially the infamous photo of a young girl running, burned and screaming.

**An unknown number infected or killed** by 239 US military mock attacks on US cities from New York to San Francisco from 1947 to 1969.

**An unknown number of Blacks** in Newport News and Norfolk, Virginia infected by fungus in 1951. Military researchers were looking at attacks that Blacks were more susceptible to.

**An unknown number of Seventh Day Adventists** exposed to germs in Operation Whitecoat from 1955 to 1973. 2,200 volunteers gave informed consent. How many became ill or suffered is unknown since less than half were questioned after the testing.

**400,000 Vietnamese deaths and maimings, 500,000 children with birth defects, and 2 million with cancer or other illnesses due to Agent Orange.** How many died due to starvation due to Agent Orange is unknown and difficult to estimate. An unknown number of US troops were affected. How many is difficult to determine because of restrictions on filing for claims with the US government.

**An unknown number of possible Colombian and Ecuadoran deaths or injuries** due to US spraying glyphosate, an herbicide designed to destroy coca. How many deaths due to starvation or increased poverty due to crops and animal deaths in the region is unknown and difficult to estimate. The spraying program began in the early 1980s under Reagan, was greatly expanded under GW Bush, and then quickly came to an end under Obama.

#### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**The US military** carried out most of these attacks, and often lobbied for their use and against their use coming to an end. In the US-Vietnam War, Lyndon Johnson considered ending the use of Agent Orange, but backed off because of military opposition.

**Scientists and researchers** developed all of these weapons. In some cases, notably biological weapons researchers, they lobbied against the weapons they themselves developed.

**US intelligence, especially the CIA,** carried out some of these attacks, especially on Cuba.

**Three presidents deserve the most blame for the US acquiring and then using nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons: Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Truman.** Wilson ordered the stockpiling of chemical weapons during World War I. US troops used mustard gas and phosgene against German troops, though these were chemical weapons from the French, not US supplies. Roosevelt ordered not only the development of the A-bomb. He also ordered chemical weapons stockpiles expanded and began the US biological weapons program in 1941. Roosevelt's use of chemical weapons was napalm against Japanese civilians. (See Section Three.)

Truman, of course, used the A-bomb against Japanese civilians though almost all military leaders opposed this. (See Section Three.) Truman also ordered the development and stockpiling of nerve gas, first researched by the Third Reich. He also ordered a crash program in 1950 to develop the H-bomb, thousands of times more powerful than the A-bomb, in spite of opposition from scientists who argued it had no military use and could only be a weapon of genocide against civilians. Truman also ordered extensive nuclear testing, with both civilians and soldiers used as test subjects, often without their consent or even knowledge. Among the victims were many Pacific Island peoples. (See Section Six.) But Truman's biggest use of chemical weapons was using napalm against Chinese and North Korean troops and North Korean civilians.

All three of these presidents justified these WMDs by pointing to either the enemy possessing them or possibly developing them. Chemical weapons so horrified many during World War I that none of the Allied or Axis nations seriously considered using them during World War II, not even Hitler. **When a nation's military uses chemical weapons, as the US did against Vietnamese civilians during the US-Vietnam War and Iraq did against Iran and its own Kurdish people, the world almost universally condemns them.** That condemnation has not stopped most American presidents from developing, stockpiling, and sometimes using such weapons, and from making certain they could use them and blocking efforts to end chemical weapons.

Both Eisenhower and Kennedy continued US programs of bio-chemical weapons. Kennedy's administration, as the dedicated anti-Communist he was, more than quadrupled chemical warfare spending to a third of a billion dollars.

**Both Lyndon Johnson and Nixon ordered the widespread use of both napalm and Agent Orange in the US-Vietnam War.** Johnson considered ending Agent Orange use, but backed off under pressure from military leaders. Nixon never had any such qualms about napalm. Though he did publicly declare the US was ending its chemical weapons program, napalm was not included.

Gerald Ford as a congressman had successfully pushed to give the military first strike authority

on chemical weapons, meaning that generals could use them without having to wait for the enemy to use them first. But as president he followed through with the bio-chemical ban begun by Nixon. Ford and Carter were the only US presidents until Obama to not expand or use bio-chemical weapons.

**In 1984, Reagan had hundreds of thousands of rockets refashioned to use nerve gas. He also had the military begin testing biological weapons in the open air. Three years later he pushed Congress to allow building chemical weapons again.** The Senate vote was tied three times. Each time Vice President Bush used his vote to break the tie, and the chemical weapons program went forward. Very shortly, of course, the Berlin Wall fell, followed by the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As noted before, Reagan was perhaps the most ideologically blind of all presidents. But under Bush Sr., the US and USSR both reduced their bio-chemical weapons with a series of pledges and treaties. Under both presidents, the US was following the lead from Gorbachev. Both presidents had greatly helped Saddam Hussein acquire bio-chemical weapons and blocked the UN from condemning him. (See Section Two.)

Under Clinton, several sites in Iraq claimed to have bio-chemical weapons were bombed. He also ordered a missile attack on the Sudan on a supposed chemical weapons factory. It turned out to be a pharmaceutical factory, and its bombing harmed efforts to stop genocide in Darfur. (See Section Eleven.) In 2001, GW Bush had the US leave an international convention to end biological weapons. In 2003, Syria proposed the Mideast be a zone free of both bio-chemical and nuclear weapons. Bush had the US government reject the zone, likely to protect Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Post Cold War Invasions,  
Bush Sr. in the Gulf War and Clinton in Somalia

**What: The invasions of Kuwait and Somalia,** claimed to be for humanitarian reasons, to punish dictators, or stop aggression.

**The Body Count: 2,500 to 205,000 deaths for the Gulf War.** The US government and military both explicitly refused to gather data on Iraqi deaths. Estimates of deaths vary wildly, often based on the partisan views of the one estimating. **Most estimates are around 50,000.**

**1,500 to 3,000 deaths in the Somalia invasion.** Again, the US military did not gather data on enemy or civilian casualties. Most casualties were teenaged militia members.

**Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party** are sometimes blamed by pro war supporters.

**The Republican Party** supported the Gulf War overwhelmingly. Many were quite skeptical and critical of US troops in Somalia, especially since it was under the UN.

**CNN** presented the Gulf War as almost like a video game, even selling videotapes of the war packaged like entertainment. Its coverage played a central part in building support for the war.

**Mohammed Adid and his militia** fought US troops in Somalia. From their point of view, they were fighting outside invaders.

**The United Nations** passed resolutions supporting both these wars, though in both cases they were first proposed by the Bush administration. In Somalia, all troops except the American force were under UN peacekeeping command.

The Cold War did not bring an end to American invasions. These two wars were begun by presidents still trying to figure out American roles after the fall of Communism, and put the lie to that claim that American actions were purely defensive. Both wars to an extent claimed to be humanitarian invasions, that most bizarre and contradictory phrase. Essentially, the claim is that, “We are invading your country to help you.” Try making that claim to anyone not American, and see their reaction be one of either ridicule or anger.

Bush had earlier invaded Panama to overthrow a dictator who had become an embarrassment because of his ties to drug cartels while being on the US payroll. (See Section Five.) Ironically, Bush was often mocked during the 1988 election by commentators claiming he could not be elected because of “the wimp factor.” This was a strange claim to make, since Bush was a highly decorated combat pilot during World War II. Some speculated his willingness to order two invasions was an attempt to overcome the wimp image, but there is little evidence for that.

Saddam Hussein had a long series of ties to the US, was on the CIA payroll since the 1950s, and his atrocities did not trouble any US president. (See Sections Three and Four.) In 1989, he met with US Ambassador April Glass. Hussein complained that Kuwait had overproduced oil, harming Iraq's economy. He also pointed out, correctly, that Kuwait was never a nation. It was a province of Iraq separated from Iraq by the British empire.

Hussein threatened to take over Kuwait. Essentially he was asking for US permission for his planned invasion. Glass spoke without making a US commitment. But **Hussein interpreted Glass's lack of objections as meaning he had US permission.** Hussein was surprised that Bush went to war over Kuwait. Even Bush's own cabinet and advisers were surprised. They had proposed only sanctions and diplomatic condemnation.

**Fully half of all Americans opposed the Gulf War before it began.** Even to gain the support of that half, Bush had to use enormous government propaganda. The US, and the Kuwait government in exile, used over 70 public relations firms, spending over \$20 million to build US public support.

Notably, they used some memorable lies to win over doubters, fabricating claims that babies ripped out of hospital incubators and left to die. A member of the Kuwaiti royal family, posing as a nurse, told the tearful lie on the floor of the US Congress. The most ludicrous claim of all was that Hussein was the next Hitler, for Iraqi troops did not even last five days against US invasion.

Exactly the opposite of his son, GW Bush, **Bush Sr. succeeded in winning over most international opinion far more than US public opinion.** The UN passed resolutions condemning Hussein's invasion and calling for "all necessary means" to remove him from Kuwait, including force. NATO and most Mideast nations sent troops allied to the US. Bush also "passed the tin cup" as he put it, getting Mideast nations to pay tens of billions for the cost of the invasion and to keep oil prices low. No matter how much one disagrees with the reasons given for the war, it was clear that Bush was quite skilled at managing a war, unlike his son.

The Gulf War was incredibly one sided. Less than 500 coalition forces were killed, many of them by accident by their own air forces, compared to perhaps 50,000 Iraqis. Iraqi forces were already very weak from a long war with Iran, with morale so bad that many surrendered to foreign journalists. The air bombardment was over in slightly more than three months, the ground invasion slightly over four days. Hussein never used the bio-chemical weapons he developed with help from the US and European companies because he feared US nuclear weapons.

Most Americans considered the war a failure since Hussein stayed in power. Bush was defeated for re election. A popular slogan during the 1992 campaign was, "Saddam still has a job. Do you?" Certainly the Kuwaiti royal family kept their jobs. **Democracy never came to Kuwait as promised. It was not a free nation before Hussein invaded, and still is not, over 30 years later. The one good thing to come out of the war was destroying Hussein's bio-chemical weapons,** though you could never convince supporters of the Second Iraq War of that.

Alexander Downes in *Targeting Civilians in War* argued that, unlike World War II, neither the Bush administration nor the US military ordered targeting civilians in Iraq. Truthfully, to claim so

makes no sense. The US military had such an overwhelming superiority there was no military motive for doing so. Just the opposite, targeting civilians would destroyed support for the war effort among Americans and US allies and strengthen Saddam Hussein. There certainly were many civilian deaths in the Gulf War. As stated earlier, precisely targeted bombing or smart bombs are a myth. Even with current technology and the best efforts of civilian and military planners, many civilians die from bombing military targets. If one says that this is unacceptable, then one is making an argument that war should never be fought. Ideally, one hopes so. Practically, mankind is not yet there.

Shortly before Bush left office, he proposed a peacekeeping force in Somalia. The nation was divided among different warlords ever since the fall of its military dictatorship in 1986. There were at least two dozen factions, shifting alliances, no real ideology or substantial differences among the factions beyond ethnic and religious groupings, and hundreds of thousands of casualties.

Bush proposed the peacekeeping force to prevent a further humanitarian disaster. One radical critic, anarchist Noam Chomsky, proposed that the invasion force was pure publicity for the military, trying to find them a purpose in a post Cold War world with few Communists to fight. The UN agreed to the peacekeepers, but Bush was out of office by that time.

The UN force was known as UNOSOM and had over 30,000 troops from over two dozen nations. US troops were under 1,200, and were a separate force staying under US control and stationed off the coast. The UN proposed a coalition government for Somalia of all the factions. UNOSOM was to provide security for humanitarian relief while the warlords' forces disarmed.

Clinton inherited a problem he had little understanding of. Protesters loyal to one warlord, Mohammed Adid, fought and killed Pakistani peacekeepers. US troops launched a series of attacks trying to capture Adid. Clinton sent 400 more US troops, elite Rangers and Delta Force. The commandos, looking for Adid, invaded a Somali neighborhood run by a mostly teenaged militia. Somali militia fought back, losing several thousand teens and even preteen boys. Yet rather **bizarrely and in a downright racist manner, the news media and subsequent films like *Black Hawk Down***

**portrayed American soldiers as the true victims** because less than two dozen invaders were killed.

Somali anger over the several thousand deaths led one crowd to mutilate the bodies of dead commandos, in images broadcast worldwide. Clinton quickly pulled out of Somalia. His withdrawal had a ripple effect, with several other nations pulling out their troops. Several months later, the UN voted to pull out all troops. Adid was killed in battle two years later. His son took over, and he had himself been a Marine who took part in the US invasion. Somalia remains divided, under different factions' control, still fighting a civil war. **The UN operation did have some success. It saved 100,000 lives**, still quite praiseworthy. But the civil war since then killed several times that number.

Clinton time and again showed himself incapable on foreign and military matters, in Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and above all, Rwanda. Virtually his only real success was on Northern Ireland, in getting all parties to talk and finally end terrorism on both sides. For Bosnia, he was slow and at first ineffective. Clinton showed himself incapable in law enforcement matters, in Waco and in dealing with right wing terrorists. (See Sections Four and Six.) He showed himself incapable of much of anything except getting elected and keeping relative popular support with a good economy. Even on that, he showed himself to be short sighted in deregulating, making him partly responsible for the Great Recession. Yet it is rare to find anyone who judges him on anything but how he fits with their own partisan beliefs.

## Section Six:

### Ignoring American Terrorism

Americans have been victimized by terrorism long before September 11. What often makes the difference between the reaction to 9-11 and these other terrorists is that **powerful elites and large segments of American people wanted these terrorists to succeed.** Vengeful white supremacists, including President Andrew Johnson himself, were happy to see terrorism during Reconstruction against Blacks trying to assert civil rights and anti racist whites allied with them. Along with millions of American Protestants, Presidents Polk and Fillmore shared the anti-Catholic hatred of the Know Nothings. Cuban-American hostility against Castro has been very useful for several presidents. Kennedy helped organize Cuban-American terrorists. Bush Sr. pardoned the worst terrorist among them, Luis Posada Carriles. Finally, right wing terrorism has been a serious problem since the early 1980s, with many bombings and hundreds dead. Not one single president has succeeded in halting their terror campaigns. Only Obama even made a serious effort.

## Andrew Johnson and White Supremacist Terrorists in Reconstruction

**What: Racially and politically motivated violence, lynchings, assassinations, bombings, beatings, rapes, mob violence, and organized attacks by private vigilante armies designed to maintain white supremacy and keep Blacks, Mexicans, and anti racist whites too terrorized to practice their civil rights.**

**The Body Count: At least 50,000 deaths in the five years following the Civil War, Blacks, anti racist whites, and Mexicans in Texas all murdered by white supremacists, mostly ex Confederates, with a body count over a dozen times higher than that of Al Qaeda and its affiliates.**

**The Confederate Secret Service also killed perhaps 2,000 Americans with its state sponsored terrorism, bombing over 200 ships.** The worst act of terrorism prior to September 11 was carried out by the Confederacy, the bombing of the *USS Sultana*. The CSS's most famous victim was Abraham Lincoln. John Wilkes Booth was a CSS agent who temporarily escaped thanks to a network of fellow CSS agents. CSS plots included plans to spread smallpox and yellow fever in New Orleans, Norfolk, and Washington DC and burn down New York City, Chicago, Boston, and Cincinnati. The biological warfare and arson plots only failed due to CSS incompetence.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**The Ku Klux Klan, White League, Red Shirts and other racist terrorists** have the dubious distinction of being the most dangerous and most disturbingly successful of all terrorists the US has ever faced. This is because they either worked with authorities, or in some instances, the authorities were one and the same, were the terrorists.

**President US Grant** gets some of the blame. He did make a strenuous effort to stop terrorism,

but was often far too trusting of colleagues that often turned out to be quite corrupt. Grant did succeed in limiting violence, especially in Georgia and South Carolina. (See Section Eight.) But in the end his desire for reconciliation among whites led him to pardon many Confederate traitors.

**Corrupt administrators** in both the Johnson and Grant administrations are sometimes blamed. Confederate apologists often claim the south suffered greatly from “carpetbaggers” the derogatory term applied to northerners who moved south. In fact, corruption was far worse among white racist state governments after Reconstruction.

Until the Civil Rights Era, **most Confederate apologists and white racists blamed the victims themselves, Blacks**, for “not knowing their place” or supposedly being inherently savage or incapable of being civilized.

Many of these same **apologists and racists also blamed the federal government and “Yankees,”** inventing falsehoods of federal tyranny. Racist terrorists actually operated with virtual impunity and were usually not punished. Most of the northerners demonized as exploitative Yanks were actually soldiers, teachers, or charity workers.

Choosing Andrew Johnson as his Vice President was the biggest mistake Lincoln ever made. Johnson was the worst possible choice to be president after the Civil War. **The most deeply racist president in US history, embittered, an outright drunk, an insecure, mean, petty little man, Johnson managed to make a recovery from a destructive civil war into an extended period of the worst terrorism America ever faced.** Al Qaeda in their darkest fantasies could not have done as much damage to America as Johnson did by his sheer utter incompetence.

Johnson grew up poor, and remained insecure about that fact his entire life. After serving in the militia briefly, he long after insisted on being addressed as “Colonel.” He became a successful businessman, enough to have eight to ten slaves in his home. He was the last US President to be a slave owner, and as congressman led a successful effort to strip Free Blacks in Tennessee of the vote. He

became a Democratic Senator, and when Tennessee seceded, he spoke against it, but also against abolitionists. When Tennessee was liberated from the Confederacy, Johnson became its military governor. He convinced Lincoln to make Tennessee exempt from Emancipation. When Lincoln ran for re election in 1864, he chose Johnson to replace Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, a Republican abolitionist from Maine. Johnson was intended to be a symbol of unity and reconciliation across party and regional lines.

Johnson got roaring drunk at the inauguration and gave one of the most bizarre speeches ever given by a politician. He stumbled for a quarter of an hour, then kissed the Bible. Then he was rarely seen until six weeks later. With Lincoln's murder by a Confederate Secret Service agent, Johnson was now president. It was more than seven months until Congress met again. One of Johnson's first acts was to pardon all Confederate traitors, except for the wealthy. The wealthy had to apply to him personally. Over time almost all traitors were pardoned.

His second act was to declare the matter of Blacks voting was to be left to states, now to come back under the control of pardoned Confederates. Essentially Johnson threw away most of what Unionist fought the Civil War for, ending slavery and punishing treason. (See Sections Eight and Eleven.) The Confederates were being handed back much of what they had lost. **Worst of all, Johnson fired thousands of federal officials.** These ranged from generals upholding the law in southern states to Blacks working for the post office, one of the few secure refuges for minorities before the end of segregation.

Thanks to Johnson, white supremacists had virtual impunity. Ex-Confederates took office all across the south, even former Confederate Vice President Stephens. These states passed **Black Codes, recreating slavery as much as possible.** Blacks had to sign work contracts they could not quit. To be without a contract meant you would be arrested for vagrancy, where you were hired out (unpaid) to plantation owners in the day and locked in jail at night. Blacks were forbidden to rent or own their own farms, carry guns, and barred from almost all schools. In some cases the laws even required Blacks to

get off the sidewalk if whites were on it, address all whites as “sir,” and barred looking whites in the eye or shaking their hand.

Johnson, instead of seeking to undo the damage done by ex-Confederates, turned his anger on Republicans, abolitionists, and Blacks. He vetoed the first Civil Rights Bill. He tried to abolish the Freedmen's Bureau, set up to aid former slaves. Then he gave an angry speech attacking Republicans, even **accusing congressmen by name of plotting to kill him**. In the congressional elections of 1866, Johnson toured giving speeches trying to defeat Republicans. He was often drunk during his speeches, compared himself to Christ, and got into shouting matches with hecklers. Republicans won huge majorities, enough to finally override his vetoes. Johnson tried to delay the Fourteenth Amendment, making Blacks citizens and guaranteeing voting rights, as long as possible, to the very end of his term.

Across the south, mob violence tried to keep both Blacks and anti racist whites from voting, and intimidate anyone trying to change the old ways. But what was even more vicious than violence at polling stations was the new phenomenon of racist lynchings. Lynching criminals without trial was not new. Lynching as terrorism, to intimidate those seeking civil rights, was.

Most readers are likely aware that it was quite common for slave owners to rape slaves. Once slavery came to an end, that stopped. Now, newly freed Black women and girls could be raped by anyone, and the law usually did not protect them. Sometimes it was done to “send a message” or intimidate. But more often it was done for the disturbing reason that the rapists knew they could get away with it, that it would never be punished. For nearly a century it became a sick phenomenon throughout the south, that racists would get their sexual thrills through rape.

The usual pretext of most lynchings was the accusation of Blacks' rape or attempted rapes of white women. This is what psychologists call projecting. **The violent stereotype was projected onto Black males, when actually virtually all the violence being done was by white racists, including the new epidemic of rapes of Black women and girls.** The usual targets of lynchings were rarely guilty of rape. Far more often, lynching victims were those seeking or exercising their civil or legal

rights or with a defiant or “uppity” attitude of not “knowing their place.” The lynch victim had perhaps tried to vote, had spoken out publicly (especially ministers), or had committed a minor transgression like failing to get off the sidewalk or address someone white as “sir.”

Lynching by nature was a public execution with no fear of punishment. Sheriffs and mayors were either conveniently absent or sometimes even took part. “Lynch parties” were social occasions, with drinking and sometimes refreshments bought and sold there. Often parents brought their children, and courting couples treated a lynching like a date. People often took souvenirs at lynchings, collecting body parts as gruesome trophies. Violence was not limited to hangings either, and included burning to death, whippings, beatings, tar and feathering, or shooting. Sometimes instead of lynchings, racist terrorists bombed churches or engaged in pitched street battles.

An important point is **organized racist violence targeted anti racist whites as well, and in Texas many Mexicans. The first year of Reconstruction, more whites were lynched than Blacks.** This was a clear way of sending a message, stand with them and we will kill you too.

What did Johnson do to stop any of this? Nothing, and worse than nothing, he encouraged it and cheered it. For Johnson was an utterly repugnant racist, way beyond even most of the typical racists of his day. He obsessed over, in his own words, being “trodden underfoot by niggers.” His private diaries, letters, and conversations showed a morbid fear of interracial sex and mixing, one rarely equaled by any but the most vicious bigots. To him, Blacks were “inferior to the White Man in intellect...is every splay footed, hump backed, thick lipped, flat nosed, wooly headed, ebon colored Negro.”

Johnson's words sound strikingly similar to white racists today, and not just in their race baiting. Again and again, Johnson and other racists claimed that any civil rights laws were anti white and thus racist, that whites were the true victims, and that Blacks were inherently violent and had to be kept in line with greater violence up to and including murder.

Thus **when US Army generals tried to enforce the law, Johnson fired almost all of the m.** Johnson did not want the federal government involved in law enforcement anyway. When US Army

generals confiscated plantation land and gave it to those who actually worked on it, former slaves, Johnson handed the land back to the former slave owners. Amazingly, Johnson even tried to form his own army, the “Army of the Atlantic” stationed in DC, to try and intimidate Republicans.

Congress, and most of the public, finally had enough. Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act. Johnson could no longer fire officials for enforcing the nation's laws. Johnson defied Congress and fired Secretary of War Stanton, who had been appointed by Lincoln and was a dedicated abolitionist. Since US troops were in the south trying to prevent violence, firing Stanton was firing the highest federal official trying to stop lynchings and enforce civil rights.

Congress moved to impeach Johnson. The House voted to impeach by well over the two thirds margin, almost three to one. The Senate failed to impeach him by a single vote. **Johnson narrowly avoided being impeached by bribing senators, with both money and the promise of offices.** Some authors defend his not being impeached, but the nation was obviously worse off.

Johnson finished office. He tried to get elected as president on his own, openly proclaiming he was the best hope to stop Black equality. But he got virtually no votes at the end of the Democratic Convention. At the inauguration, the next President, US Grant, the former Union commander during the Civil War, refused to share the same carriage with Johnson, something ingoing and outgoing presidents had always done before.

In spite of Johnson, Congress, Union generals, abolitionists, the Freedmen's Bureau, and newly freed Blacks exercising their civil rights could point to some accomplishments. Sixteen Blacks were elected to US Congress, some of them former slaves who had taught themselves to read only a few years before. Some of these same congressmen were re elected for up over 30 years, until 1900. Hundreds of Blacks were elected to Republican Conventions and in local offices. The three Reconstruction Amendments were passed, one before Johnson, one in spite of him during his time in office, and one after he left office. In spite of Johnson, Reconstruction saw the beginnings of Black autonomy, mobility, self assertion, and civil rights. Reconstruction under the so called Radical

Republicans and Grant built 4,400 Black schools. The Black community began 35,000 Black churches and 60 Black newspapers. One out nine Blacks in the cities owned land, homes or businesses.

**Lynchings continued all the way until the *late 1980s*.** They first dropped off dramatically in the 1950s and 60s. Ida Wells led an anti lynching campaign, but it was international pressure during the Cold War, combined with the Civil Rights movement that led to the sharpest decline in lynchings. (See Section Eight.) Johnson died seven years after he left office, unrepentant over what he had done and not done. There were others who were better choices, who could have led the country far better. (See Section Nine.) Grant, contrary to some critics of his, was largely a far better president and partly ended racist violence. (See Section Eight again.)

In fact it is hard to imagine a worse president for that time than Johnson. Johnson did more damage to the US than any president up to that time except Buchanan. But where Buchanan almost guaranteed a long destructive civil war, Johnson guaranteed a destructive peace, one that acquiesced to terrorism. Future generations of nonwhites were consigned to subservience and limited lives, more likely to die younger and live in greater poverty, their possibilities limited to manual labor or insulated communities. Future generations of whites were taught this was how it had to be, the natural order. Their fate was tragic as well, for many whites were trained to blame and hate the Other rather than look at their own failings.

Cuban-American Terrorists:

Organized by Kennedy, Pardoned by Bush Sr.

**What: Bombings, assassinations, and other attacks by militant anti-Castro Cuban-Americans of airplanes, hotels, homes, cars, and ships. There was also a plot to kill President Ronald Reagan.**

**The Body Count:** An estimated **3,562 dead and wounded**. The Cuban government reports **3,479 people killed in Cuba by Cuban-American terrorists based in the US, at times supported by the US government**. There were also 73 deaths from an airplane bombing, and Cuban-American bombings elsewhere in Latin America, of critics of Cuban-American terrorists, and factions of Cuban-American terrorists attacking each other in power struggles for control of their own groups.

**Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Cuban-American terrorist groups** deserve the greatest blame, namely the the **Cuban-American National Foundation, Alpha 66, Brothers to the Rescue, Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations or CORU, Cuban Power, and as many as 100 other groups**. Some of these groups have documented histories of terrorism going back decades.

The **federal government and the CIA** provided support to some of these terrorists going back to before the Bay of Pigs. In a real sense, these terrorists were CIA creations.

Much of the **Cuban-American community** provided shelter and political and financial support for terrorism. This was far more true in the past than now. The majority of Cuban-Americans today, especially younger generations, place far less importance on being opposed to Castro, or are far less fanatic about it. But to a substantial though declining group, these terrorists are heroes.

In recent years, the **Venezuelan-American community** has joined some Cuban-Americans in their fanatic opposition to anything perceived as too far to the left, or aiding the poor or nonwhites. Like the original Cuban-American exile community, Venezuelan-Americans tend to be white and far wealthier on average, elites who fled their nation out of fear or disagreement with a new government. Both groups are strongest in Miami, allied, and have an outsized influence on depictions of their home country's government.

The **Republican Party** sought the support of Cuban-Americans as allies in the Cold War. The community often provided the swing vote in Florida. Republican congressmen **Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond**, and **Ileana Ros-Lehinton** all publicly cheered these terrorists' violence or supported their cause. Ros-Lehinton lobbied for the release and pardon of several of the worst terrorists. **Florida Governor Jeb Bush** obtained a full pardon for one terrorist through his father George Bush Sr.

### **Bombings in Miami in the late 1960s and 1970s were at a higher rate than in Lebanon.**

Cuban-American exiles even plotted to kill Reagan. Many Americans were unaware of just how fanatic some Cuban-Americans were until the Elian Gonzalez case. This young boy came to the US, escaping Cuba on a boat with his mother. His mother died shortly after arrival. His father back in Cuba wanted the son returned. Distant relatives in the US held the boy, defended by angry Cuban crowds armed with guns. A Border Patrol team retrieved the boy. Cuban-American crowds rioted, battling police.

The roots of this fanaticism go back to before Castro's rise. Cuban elites trace their roots back to slavery days. In Cuba, slavery survived in the Spanish colony much longer. A final slave revolt at last forced Spain to abolish slavery. Still, Afro-Cubans again revolted and drove out Spanish authorities from two thirds of the island. At that point that the US intervened with the Spanish-American War. (See Section Three.) But once Spain was driven out, US generals ordered Afro-Cuban generals to step down. The US Army, segregated, saw Black Cuban rebels as a bad example. US authorities not only invited Spanish plantation owners back, they returned their plantations and further encouraged Spanish

immigration, hoping to “whiten” Cuba's population.

When Afro-Cubans tried a revolt again in 1912, this time Cuban elites went even further in crushing it. In a bizarre bit of unreasoning much like some US racists today, the Cuban government passed a law stating that to protest or organize against racism was itself racist. A revolt by Cuban army sergeants in 1933 brought Fulgencio Batista to power. Batista originally was a reformer. But he came to an accommodation with Cuban elites. Though Batista was mixed Black and Chinese, the almost entirely white Cuban elites accepted him as a way to stave off more radical reforms.

When Batista overturned the results of an election, a newly elected senator, Fidel Castro, led a revolt. His rebels were mostly Afro-Cubans, and the Cuban Revolution succeeded in ending job discrimination, with Blacks especially prominent in the military today. Cuba's former elites greeted his revolution with horror and anger. Cuban-American exiles were largely white and wealthy, somewhat changing with later waves. But almost immediately, they plotted to overthrow Castro. That, of course, led to the disastrous failed Bay of Pigs invasion. (See Section Eleven.)

**Kennedy, humiliated by the failed invasion, immediately plotted to overthrow or undermine Castro. The CIA repeatedly tried and failed to kill Castro, by one count 638 failed assassination attempts. US intelligence used biological warfare against Cuba. (See Section Five.)** Kennedy ordered Operation Mongoose, designed to sabotage the Cuban economy. Mongoose involved extensive guerilla activities, burning sugarcane fields and blowing up industry.

There also was **Operation Northwood, never carried out, plans to stage a “false flag” attack on South Florida. US agents would pose as Cuban troops and launch an attack designed to provoke the US public into supporting a second invasion.** There were also proposals to stage the shooting down of a US civilian jet or blow up a US Navy ship in Guantanamo and blame either incident on Cuba. **Northwood planned the invasion for October 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis prevented any of these staged attacks, or the second invasion.** After the crisis, Kennedy backed off. Part of his deal with Khrushchev was to publicly pledge not to invade Cuba again.

By the mid 1960s, increasingly angry elements of the Cuban-American community turned to terrorism against Cuba. They also turned to terrorism against other Cuban-Americans or anyone who criticized their violent approach. **In 1967 and 1968, over two dozen bombings rocked Miami each year**, of cars, homes, businesses, a peace center, and a Cuban government office. Hijackings planes to Cuba became so frequent they became a running bit used by television stand up comedians. The *Miami Herald* actually kept running tallies of bombings entitled “Bombing Box Score.”

The bombing campaign expanded to include any government or business which traded with Cuba. Diplomatic missions to Latin American, Asian, and European countries were bombed. Airlines were bombed. In the 1970s and early 80s, the campaign expanded to include media outlets, reporters, or commentators that were critical of anti-Castro terrorism, in a blatant attempt to silence or intimidate them. **From 1975 to 1983, there were 119 bombings.** The Miami Police stated at least half were Cuban-American terrorists. Some were done by organized crime, at times related to terrorism since Cuban-American paramilitaries were often using extortion to fund themselves.

The worst act of terrorism by Cuban-American fanatics was in 1976. **Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, a former CIA agent, bombed a Cuban airliner, killing 73 people**, many of them members of the Cuban national fencing team. Posada also bombed Cuban hotels, killing and wounding tourists. When questioned about the charges against him, Posada replied, “I sleep like a baby.”

Cuban-American terrorist targets became increasingly ambitious. US intelligence discovered a **plot to assassinate Secretary of State Kissinger in 1976 in Costa Rica, and the Foreign Minister of Costa Rica** as well. Orlando Bosch, the head of Alpha 66, was stopped in connection with the plot. Cuban intelligence informed the Reagan administration of an exile plot to kill no less than Reagan himself. No doubt Castro hoped the warning would help build better relations. It obviously did not.

The bombings in Miami started to taper off starting in the mid 1980s. In the late 1980s, there were “only” 25 bombings in four years in the city. In all of the 1990s, there were three Miami bombings. Increasingly, Cuban-American terrorists focused on bombings overseas, in both Cuba and

elsewhere in Latin America. Alpha 66 sank Cuban fishing boats, killing and kidnapping the crews. Accion Cubana attacked Cuban property in five countries. FLNC claimed credit for blowing up the Cuban embassy and a Cuban airlines office in Mexico City.

Cuban-American terrorists were declining in numbers and their influence in the Cuban community was fading. The Miami Police listed over 105 groups in the early 1970s, but admitted their number were always in flux. But clearly all the bombings and assassinations had little effect on trade with or recognition of Cuba by other countries.

The next tactic was to try to keep the failing embargo going against Cuba. **Brothers to the Rescue invaded Cuban airspace repeatedly, dropping propaganda leaflets over major cities. The group planned to attack Cuban military targets**, according to one member. The Cuban government informed the US government of the intrusions, and federal agents were starting legal action against BR. BR sent three planes into Cuban airspace again. Two were shot down, the third escaping because Cuban pilots broke off pursuit. Their tactic of deliberate provocation, while likely miscalculating it would lead to the deaths of their own men, had the desired effect. The embargo was tightened.

What role did US presidents play in Cuban-American terrorism? **Kennedy created a clear case of what the CIA calls blowback, a Frankenstein monster** that turns on its creator. When Kennedy quit working with the exiles publicly, only two years later the bombing campaigns began. There is no evidence of most other presidents working with Cuban-American terrorists. The Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Clinton, and even Reagan administrations all had extensive FBI investigations and prosecutions in an attempt to crack down on these terrorists. But much like racist terrorists during Reconstruction, often Miami juries failed to convict, from either fear of the terrorists or sharing their fanaticism.

There were three presidents who did collude with Cuban-American terrorists. Luis Posada Carriles took part in Iran-Contra. **Posada worked with Oliver North to carry out air drops of supplies to Contra terrorists. The FBI believed Posada carried out as many as 41 bombings in Honduras.** Posada wrote that he received financial help with medical bills from Jorge Mas Canosa of

the Cuban-American National Foundation, while recovering from a failed execution attempt. Whether Reagan was responsible for Posada's actions there depends on if you believe Reagan knew what was happening during the Iran-Contra scandal.

What is highly suspicious is how two later US presidents and a possible candidate for president went to such lengths to protect Posada and Bosch. In 2000, Posada and three other Cuban-Americans tried to kill Castro when he visited Panama. Tried and found guilty, he was pardoned by Panama's President Moscoso. The Bush administration publicly refused to condemn the murder plot. **Most observers believe Moscoso pardoned Posada at GW Bush's insistence.** Posada remains in the US today after failed efforts by Venezuela to extradite him to face charges there.

**Posada's partner in the Cuban airline bombing, Orlando Bosch, was pardoned earlier by no less than Bush Sr. at the request of his son, Florida Governor Jeb Bush.** Try to imagine the outcry were any president to pardon an Al Qaeda terrorist. Recall the huge outcry against Clinton for pardoning Puerto Rican terrorists, though none of them killed anyone. (See Section Eleven.) Keep in mind **Bosch not only murdered 73 civilians in the airline bombing. He also fired on a Polish ship in Florida with anti-tank artillery, bombed two buildings in Venezuela, was involved in bombing four Cuban embassies, and tried to kill the Cuban ambassador to Argentina.**

Yet Bush Sr. suffered no political damage from pardoning perhaps the worst US serial terrorist in recent history. Moreover, Jeb Bush as Governor of Florida lobbied for this terrorist. We shall see if Jeb Bush's role in pardoning a horrific fanatic mass murderer becomes an issue should Jeb run for president. It definitely should. Bosch died in 2011, having never faced justice thanks to the Bushes.

## Right Wing Terrorism from Reagan to Obama

**What: Bombings, assassinations, and other attacks by right wing terrorists, militias, and white supremacists from 1980 to today.**

**The Body Count: At least 288 murders and 588 wounded from 60 plots from 1995 to 2012. 33 of the 60 plots were successful, 27 unsuccessful.**

**Additional terrorism by Christian extremists against abortion clinics and their workers included 8 murders, 41 bombings, 173 arsons, 91 attempted bombings or arsons, 619 bomb threats, and 1264 vandalisms of clinics.**

Plots included the **attempted assassinations of Presidents Clinton, GW Bush (while still governor of Texas), Obama, and other federal officials**. Right wing terrorism has more often been foiled by right wing, militia, and white supremacist incompetence rather than successfully prevented by US government or public vigilance.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Fox News, talk radio, and various conservative commentators like Bill O'Reilly and Michelle Malkin** worked consistently to deny there is any right wing terrorism. They successfully pressured the government to end monitoring and investigating these terrorists. Many have also created an atmosphere of intimidation promoting violence. In 1994, talk show host and Watergate felon **Gordon Liddy** urged the murder of federal agents. O'Reilly himself publicly threatened violence against abortion doctor George Tiller on two occasions. **Sarah Palin** often encouraged or explicitly refused to discourage violent threats by her followers against opponents.

**The National Rifle Association and the firearms manufacturers they represent.** Originally

an apolitical gun safety organization, by the late 1970s the NRA turned to hysterical conspiracy theories of a coming gun confiscation by the government that has never happened, or even been planned or proposed by any major figure or organization.

The **Tea Party Movement** has sometimes been blamed for promoting violence. At its rallies, some members carried loaded guns or threatened violence, calling for Obama's murder or that of federal judges or congressmen, or the government's overthrow. A few spit on Black congressmen or vandalized Democratic offices.

However, to call the Tea Party a movement is not accurate. They were initiated and funded by fairly standard Republican organizations as Freedom Works and leaders such as Dick Armey and the Koch brothers. Most observers accurately describe it as an astroturf movement rather than grassroots. While a few members promote violence, many are fairly easily manipulated and not very bright retirees living on government aid even while they protest against government aid.

The **general turn to the right politically** of the country has sometimes been blamed. This is too broad a claim, since most conservatives do not favor terrorism and condemn violence such as abortion clinic bombings. Every large anti-abortion organization has condemned abortion clinic bombings and violence against clinic workers. At the same time, some observers blame the country's turn to the left under Obama. Clearly both cannot be true. Clearly also, it is not right or accurate to blame masses of ordinary people for the actions of those on the fringe.

Certain individual politicians have sought the political support of right wing terrorist groups. **Governor Rick Perry of Texas** sought the support of the Republic Texas militia group, even after it carried out kidnappings, murders of law enforcement officers, attempted to obtain biological weapons, and attempted the assassination of then-Governor GW Bush and President Clinton, sending his chief of staff to seek the militia's support. Perry also spoke in favor of the militia's cause, Texas's secession from the United States. Perry repeatedly denied he spoke in favor of secession, but he is documented doing so, twice.

Another official who sought the support of terrorist groups was **Congresswoman Helen Chenoweth** of Montana. After the Oklahoma City bombing she defended the militia movement, agreeing with their beliefs but disapproving of violence. She held hearings on black helicopters, a conspiracy theory claiming the UN is planning to take over the US. What Chenoweth thought were UN helicopters were owned by the Park Service.

The list of right wing terrorists is long, their plots and actions even longer. In the late 1960s and 70s, the US faced relatively minor but widely reported attempts at left wing or counter culture terrorism. The Weather Underground, Black Liberation Army, Symbionese Liberation Army, and five Puerto Rican nationalist groups were willing to use violence, mostly bombings to destroy property or draw attention to their causes. (See Section Eleven.)

Between them they caused a little under two dozen deaths. All except the BLA and SLA had policies to avoid deaths when possible. Some deaths were unintentional, but these groups should have realized that deaths were likely. In some cases the deaths were from poor planning, as when several Weathermen accidentally blew themselves up making bombs. **Of all leftist or counter culture terrorists, only the BLA deliberately planned to kill people.** The SLA was one of the stranger groups, a supposed Black liberation movement with only a single Black member, essentially a gang of bank robbers made up of sheltered white kids posing as revolutionaries.

Compare the efforts to end their at times ludicrous attempts at terrorism to that of right wing terrorists, and it is clear much of the media has an ideological bias that is right wing, not leftist. The best examples are O'Reilly and Malkin leading their campaign to stop investigation of right wing terrorism. It is also clear law enforcement often has an enormous ideological bias. For example, anarchist Chris Plummer received a fifteen year prison sentence for breaking into a home and burning neo-Nazi recruiting materials, while Don Black, a white supremacist who tried to overthrow the government of Dominica, received only a three year US prison term. Libertarian Party candidate Ron

Paul by some accounts knew of the plot in advance, but was never charged.

Right wing terrorists can be broadly divided into:

**Anti-abortion fanatics and other Christian extremists.** There is a small segment within the pro-life movement that is willing to use or threaten violence, that sees deaths of abortion clinic doctors, nurses, clinic staff, and even receptionists as a necessary sacrifice to stop abortion. Fox commentator Bill O'Reilly campaigned for years against abortion provider Dr. Tiller, even publicly threatening violence against him twice with, "If I could get my hands on him..." and "If there is a judgment day..." The Nuremberg Files was a websites with personal information to make it easier to track workers at abortion clinics. Many doctors and other clinic workers live under siege, often having to use survival tactics not so different from politicians fearing assassination such as wearing bullet proof vests, checking for bombs in their mail, and constantly altering their travel routes. In a few cases, Christian extremism overlaps with white supremacy, such as the Phineas Priesthood.

**White supremacists, white nationalists, and white separatists.** These include not only the many older KKK groups but others such as Aryan Nations, Confederate Hammerskins, Council of Conservative Citizens (formerly the White Citizens Council), Creativity Movement, National Alliance, the Minutemen, National Vanguard, Phineas Priesthood, Stormfront, Volksfront, and White Aryan Resistance. There are also white supremacists who avoid violence to seek wider acceptance, such as American Renaissance with its pseudo science eugenics, and VDARE using the immigration issue to push white nationalism.

**Militia movement, secessionists, and sovereign citizen groups.** The militia movement was founded by white supremacists with the intention of infiltrating and recruiting gun rights activists, especially conspiracy theorists who imagined Clinton was going to take away privately owned guns. It began right after Clinton's election, and its biggest loss of membership was right after the Oklahoma City bombing.

Secessionists are made up mostly of Neo-Confederates, white supremacists hoping to bring

back the Confederacy. The largest Neo-Confederate groups are the League of the South and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Other secessionists include the Republic of Texas militia, the Texas Nationalist Movement, and two of the strangest groups, the Washitaw Empire and the Pembina Little Shells. The Washitaws are Black supremacists allied with the Republic of Texas militia, many of whom are white supremacists. The Pembina Little Shells claim to be a Native tribe but are essentially the Delorme family and anyone they let join, including an East Indian involved in a coup in the nation of Fiji.

There are legitimate secession groups with a legal basis to their claims, but they generally call themselves independence movements. These were actual nations seeking to become independent of the US again, in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. (See Section Seven.) There are also protest movements by either anti-environmentalist or anti-corporate groups who call for secession but are not violent, independence groups in Alaska and Vermont.

The sovereign citizen movement was an offshoot of the militias, essentially an attempt at paper terrorism trying to use arcane legal arguments to claim to be free of government control. Typically they sell these bad legal arguments to the naïve and the desperate facing debt or foreclosures. Some also use false liens to cheat or defraud others, while some issue their own driver's licenses, plates, money, and even ministerial credentials. The courts always dismiss these faux-legal arguments as frivolous. While most sovereign citizens prefer paper terrorism, there are also dozens of incidents of violence committed by them. While many are white racists, an increasing number are from Moorish Science groups, Black supremacists who call themselves “Asiatics.”

The early 1980s is when right wing terrorism surged. In part this was backlash against a counter culture and perceived changes in society. Bluntly, some white racists did not like seeing much of the country no longer was white like them. Just as hateful to racists, many whites no longer agreed with racism. There was also much anti-government sentiment brought by the Watergate and CIA scandals and disillusionment over the US-Vietnam War. In the US, racism and anti-government beliefs had been tied together since before the Civil War. For the abortion issue, much like anti-government sentiment,

obviously the great majority of both groups never turned to violence, only an irrational fringe.

**Four presidents, from Reagan to GW Bush, could have cracked down on right wing terrorism, but did not.** One of Reagan's earliest acts was allowing the CIA to spy inside the US again and giving the FBI a large anti-terrorism unit and resources. But Reagan prominently supported right wing terrorism overseas, the Contras in Nicaragua, dictatorships throughout Latin America, and he blocked boycotts of the apartheid regime in South Africa. In fact, Reagan had Nelson Mandela and the ANC labeled “terrorists.” They were not taken off the terrorist watch list until 2008.

Neither Bush Sr. nor Clinton can claim much success against right wing terrorists either. Bush Sr. pardoned the most notorious Cuban-American terrorist. (See previous entry.) **Clinton worsened right wing terrorism by his incompetence.** His failure to stop his Attorney General's disastrous raid on the Branch Davidians led to a wave of paranoia and recruitment by right extremists. (See Section Four.) His administration went on to bungle several other standoffs, first with survivalist Randy Weaver and then with the Republic of Texas militia. The Weaver case turned him into yet another martyr for conspiracy theorists. The Republic of Texas militia committed terrorist acts long before and after the standoff, with government action usually only after the fact.

GW Bush pulled many FBI agents off investigating anything not related to Al Qaeda. This not only made right wing terrorism easier. It also led to the Great Recession, since FBI agents usually investigating Wall Street fraud were diverted. (See Section Four.) The most notorious failure of the GW Bush administration on right wing terrorism was the anthrax threats. Congressmen and major media figures received letters with anthrax, or powder designed to mimic it.

**Bush falsely claimed Al Qaeda carried out the anthrax attacks and used them to argue for war with Iraq.** Yet there was never any evidence tying either Al Qaeda or Iraq to any of these attacks. The two main suspects, Stephen Hatfill and Bruce Ivins, were both white American scientists. Hatfill was completely cleared. Ivins committed suicide, and the FBI declared him the one guilty of all the actual anthrax attacks. Many scientists and investigators doubted the FBI's conclusions.

But what is certain is that there were thousands of cases of anthrax hoaxes, powder sent as threats. Many of them were sent by right wing terrorists. The Army of God, anti-abortion fanatics, claimed credit for mailing hundreds of them to abortion clinics. There had even been similar threats, anthrax hoaxes, in 1998 and 2000. The intended victims of anthrax hoaxes were all hated by the right wing, liberal congressmen, major media, and abortion clinics. Had Al Qaeda done these attacks, the obvious objectives would be strategic political targets as done on September 11, namely the White House, the Pentagon, and economic targets like the World Trade Center.

Why did these presidents ignore the threat of right wing terrorism? None of the presidents from Reagan to the present even remotely supported any of these groups. Some far right leaders did endorse these presidents, or even began their careers working for them. Several of these presidents openly pandered to racist voters. Reagan was endorsed by the KKK, though he quickly renounced it. He announced his election bid in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the site of the murder of three civil rights volunteers by the KKK, in a transparent attempt to court racist voters. Reagan also created one of the most vicious stereotypes, the myth of the “welfare queen,” that Blacks on welfare cheated and lived well at government expense. Most on welfare are white, mostly recently divorced single mothers. The “queen” that Reagan referred to stole a total of \$8,000 over several years.

Though neither of the Bush presidents were remotely racist, Bush Sr. did pander to racists with his notorious Willie Horton campaign ads, promoting stereotypes of Blacks as dangerous criminals. Clinton also was not a racist, but did pander to the same stereotypes that Reagan used when discussing welfare. Bush Sr. was one of the few major Republican figures to stand up to the hard right, but after leaving office. The NRA publicly attacked federal agents as “jack booted thugs” in political ads. Bush publicly denounced them and quit his NRA membership.

No, the reason for ignoring these terrorist threats was either being busy with other matters, in the case of both Bushes, being incompetent in Clinton's case, or ideological blindness in Reagan's case.

## Know Nothing Terrorists and Fillmore

**What: A wave of anti Irish, anti Catholic, and anti immigrant violence from the 1840s and 50s.** Such violence was directed at Irish Catholic churches, schools, neighborhoods, businesses, and even orphanages and monasteries.

**The Body Count: At last fifty deaths directly from attacks by vigilantes armed with guns and even artillery in Baltimore, Louisville, Maine, Philadelphia, and Washington DC.** How many Irish and others died earlier deaths from being intimidated and forced into lower paying jobs and poorer neighborhoods by such violence is far more difficult to say.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

The **American Party AKA the Know Nothings**, who became one of the largest third parties in American history. For perhaps a decade and a half they were a political force to be reckoned with, concentrating on calls to ban all Catholics from immigrating to the US.

**William Hoyte, JJ Slocum, and George Bourne's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal***, a sensational lurid expose claimed that Catholic nunneries were harems for priests filled with secret passages and graveyards filled with murdered newborn babies. Hoyte had a teenage mistress named Maria Monk. Monk had a long history of mental illness and had been expelled from an asylum after getting pregnant. Hoyte, together with Protestant ministers Slocum and Bourne, wrote *Awful Disclosures*, claiming it was Monk's own experience. The book sold 300,000 copies, greatly contributing to anti-Catholic hatred. The three authors had a falling out over money, and Monk became Slocum's mistress. Her book was exposed as a hoax by William Stone, who investigated and found neither secret passages nor children's graves in the nunnery.

**Anglo-American gangs and mobs**, best known to today's public by the film *Gangs of New York*. Such mobs were often the hired thugs for political machines used to control elections and neighborhoods.

**British authorities**, whose policies worsened the Potato Famine and drove many Irish to the US. While Ireland suffered from famine partly due to a potato blight made worse by over dependence on potatoes, the **British government and absentee landlords still insisted on growing food for export and profit even while from three-quarters of a million to one and a half million Irish died of starvation and disease**. At least one million Irish also fled the country. In some parts of Ireland the population dropped by one third.

Irish Catholics had been in America long before the biggest wave hit in the 1840s. Some were in Jamestown and the Plymouth colony. But longstanding bigotry taught in many Protestant churches forced many Irish underground. Many calling themselves Scotch-Irish Americans were actually originally simply Irish. Many chose to deal with bigotry by converting to Protestant faiths, calling themselves Scotch-Irish, and then hiding their Irish ancestry. One of the most famous examples was Bill Clinton's family line, who had long claimed to be Scotch-Irish. When he ran for president, genealogists uncovered the actual town of his Irish ancestors.

By the early 1840s, Irish immigrants were coming in much larger numbers fleeing the man made potato famine. Anti-Catholic hatred has a long history among Protestantism, and the US as a mostly Protestant nation had quite a bit of hostility towards what was derogatorily called Popery or Romanism. Anti-Catholic laws went back to colonial times, when both Massachusetts and Virginia banned Catholic colonists.

**Irish immigrants were considered to be Black people for the first generation most came to America**. Pseudo scientific racists argued that Irish and Africans shared similar features; curly hair, broad noses, thick lips, low foreheads, and dull eyes. Thus from their “reasoning” they were both Black

people, though they might not share the same skin tone. The Irish were often referred to with the same insults as Blacks, as apes and monkeys, described as subhuman and violent, and even called “Irish niggers.” Blacks in turn were sometimes referred to as “smoked Irish” or “Irish turned inside out.”

Works like *Awful Disclosures* fed hysterical claims of a Popish conspiracy to take over the US using Irish immigrants and even supposedly build a new Vatican on the Mississippi River. Parties and secret societies called the American Republican Party, the Native American Party, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, and the Order of United Americans rose up, growing astonishingly fast in two waves, in 1844 and then in 1855. Often members of these orders were called Know Nothings because they pledged to never talk to authorities when questioned.

Know Nothings elected mayors and most of the councilmen in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Salem, and Washington DC in the 1850s. A California chapter added Chinese immigrants to the list of groups targeted. In Chicago, all immigrants were barred from city jobs. In Massachusetts the Know Nothing controlled the state legislature. Part of the reason for their success was the Whig Party had collapsed. They were the only alternative to the Democratic Party.

Some Know Nothings were terrorists in addition to being a political party. The first violence was in Philadelphia in 1844. Know Nothing mobs burned down a convent, three churches, a fire station in an Irish neighborhood, several dozen homes, and a market. The violence did not end until the militia halted it. Amazingly, a grand jury blamed the Irish, claiming they planned to force the removal of the Bible from schools. (Yes, they really were that ignorant of Catholic belief.) A second wave of violence included **Know Nothings firing on a Catholic church using cannons**. Even a state militia using its own cannon could not disperse the terrorists, and they attacked the soldiers. There were at least fifteen deaths, and again a grand jury blamed the victims, Irish Catholics.

Louisville was an even more notorious case of organized vigilante violence, killing 22. Know Nothings violently prevented immigrants from voting. In Baltimore in three separate elections they used violence, intimidation, and vote rigging. In one election they even used a cannon. In Bath, Bangor,

and Portland, Maine, Know Nothings attacked priests, parishioners, and even an archbishop, smashing several churches.

Former President Fillmore did the most appalling thing possible. He ran as the Know Nothing candidate for president. He had been president during a relative lull in the violence, from 1850 to 1853. The first wave of violence was in 1844. The second wave of violence was longer lasting, from 1855 to 1856, was far more violent, and happened in more cities. **Fillmore ran as their candidate right in the middle of the worst wave of Know Nothing anti-Catholic terrorism.**

There are claims that Fillmore himself was not prejudiced. These are based on two assertions. One is that Fillmore merely wanted to use the party to promote compromise on the slavery issue. The second claim is that Fillmore could not be prejudiced because his daughter attended a Catholic school. Such claims of a lack of prejudice are not only false, even if true they would be irrelevant. The fact is Fillmore became the public face of anti-Catholic bigotry. We also know there have been cases of politicians pandering to bigotry even if they were not personally bigoted. George Wallace is the best known example, but both Bush presidents also often pandered to bigots while not being so themselves.

The claim of Fillmore supporting compromise on slavery is just not true. Fillmore supported and signed the Fugitive Slave Act. It became part of the Compromise of 1850. But in part thanks to Fillmore, the “compromise” no longer was. The law favored slave owners against abolitionists, forcing all northerners to return fugitive slaves, no matter what the state laws were or the personal beliefs of abolitionists. Fillmore also pushed for New Mexico Territory to be open to slavery, even sending federal troops to the territory to pressure abolitionists in Congress. Fillmore even supported a private mercenary army that tried to take Cuba away from Spain to become a US slave state. He was very disappointed when the mercenaries were defeated and executed.

We also know Fillmore was personally bigoted against Catholics. Fillmore did meet with the Pope and later issued the standard bigot's disclaimer, “Some of my best friends are...” Fillmore was recruited for the Know Nothings by Anna Carroll. At a speech in New York, she introduced him with a

harangue repeating *Awful Disclosures'* claims that nunneries were harems for Catholic priests, with graveyards filled with murdered babies. He was always comfortable with such anti Catholic groups.

Fillmore's daughter only attended Catholic school for one year, and Fillmore may have chosen it simply because it was a boarding school. He publicly stated that America was only for the native born, not immigrants. Fillmore was anti-Semitic as well, pushing for a treaty with Switzerland that had anti-Jewish provisions. The final **proof of his anti-Catholic bigotry is that after his defeat he blamed his loss on “foreign Catholics,” agreeing with the central premise of Know-Nothing belief, that the Catholic Church was conspiring to take over America.**

To have run for office as the front man for a bigoted terrorist organization, while they were at the height of committing mob violence and terrorism, is deeply contemptible. In more recent terms, imagine a white congressman of either major party quitting their party to run for president for a neo-Nazi or other white racist organization. (The closest to that ever happening was when Texas Governor Rick Perry sought the support of the Republic of Texas militia, which has a faction within it which is white supremacist. This is a militia which tried to kill GW Bush when he was governor of Texas, as well as President Clinton, and was still carrying out terrorism when Perry sought their support. But Perry somewhat distanced himself from their secessionist platform when he ran for president.)

Fillmore's stated, if hypocritical, goal of claiming to run for compromise on the slavery issue failed. Most of his former party, the Whigs, joined the Republican Party. True to his earlier beliefs though, Fillmore later opposed both secession and Emancipation. With the Republicans as a strong party to compete with the Democrats, the Know-Nothings went into a sharp decline. Today their name is a nickname for ignorant bigots.

As for the Irish Catholics so feared by the Know-Nothings, they discovered how to assimilate into American society: Take part in bigotry against others. Where once Blacks and Irish had worked together, lived in the same neighborhoods, and even intermarried, Irish-American bigotry against Blacks became common as a way to distinguish themselves and try to avoid prejudice from whites. In

the Civil War draft riots in New York City, Irish mobs targeted Blacks as well as draft authorities. By the mid 1860s, Irish were no longer considered Black people, but whites. As the book *How the Irish Became White* (the source of much of the information for this entry) described it, they learned to stop being green and became one more group of whites.

Anti-Catholic bigotry remained a big part of American society, widespread until it started to become discredited during World War II. By 1960, America even elected a Catholic president. Today anti-Catholic bigotry is largely believed in only by some fundamentalists, and increasingly by militant atheists. One obvious example of recent anti-Catholic bigotry is the singling out of the Catholic Church for sexual abuse by priests, when such abuse was and still is an equally serious problem in Protestant and evangelical churches, Orthodox Jewish communities, and others such as the New Age and pagan movements.

## Section Seven:

### Homegrown Repression

Repression has a long history in America every bit as old in the nation. Most Americans are not taught, for example, that most founding fathers did not want the Bill of Rights. The original Constitution, before any of the amendments, was clearly a document of power, who has it and can use it, and does not have any mention of rights.

What distinguishes this section from atrocities in wartime is intent. In the US-Vietnamese War, for example, there were four separate actions each requiring their own criticisms of a presidency. There was the war itself, launched for reasons of ideological blindness and run with extreme incompetence. There were atrocities within the war, not intended by presidents nor their administration, but pardoned after the fact. There was biological and chemical warfare in the use of Agent Orange and napalm. Finally there was a campaign of repression, the Phoenix Program, approved by two presidents and maintained for over half a decade. All these campaigns of repression either originated in Washington, or Washington worked side by side with campaigns of repression overseas from virtually the beginning.

## Nixon and Operation Condor

**What: Coordinated assassinations of dissidents by the dictatorships of Argentina, Bolivia Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay, assisted and supported by Nixon and Kissinger.**

There was also **an Operation Condor plot to assassinate then-Congressman Ed Koch**, later the Mayor of New York City, and murders inside the US, such as killing Orlando Letelier on Embassy Row in Washington DC.

**The Body Count: 36,000-60,000 murders of dissidents in the southern cone of Latin America, including sometimes those who fled to other countries. This included assassination inside the US.**

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

Many scholars argue the wave of repression in Latin America began with **Kennedy's Alliance For Progress**. AFP included programs for military training and cooperation between the US and Latin America's dictatorship, starting in the early 1960s. AFP was primarily economic aid, but it insisted upon central control. During Nixon's administration AFP was abandoned.

**The School of the Americas, today renamed WHINSEC or Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation**, is in Fort Benning, Georgia. Beginning in 1961, it trained military officers of many Latin American nations, including future dictators. As late as the 1990s, the curriculum included the use of torture. WHINSEC states today their curriculum includes human rights issues.

**Henry Kissinger**, who personally knew of and permitted the murder of dissident Orlando Letelier. Kissinger stated the US government approval of all political murders by telling Argentina's dictatorship in 1976, “Look, *our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed...*The quicker you

succeed the better...The human rights problem is a growing one...We won't cause you unnecessary difficulties. If you can finish before [the US] Congress gets back, the better."

**Ford** continued Operation Condor during his time in office. Jimmy Carter ended the US's part in Operation Condor. **Reagan** began Condor again almost immediately upon taking office. Condor only ended because of Argentina's defeat in the Falklands War and the fall of its dictatorship in 1983. Reagan's support for dictatorships continued to the end of his time in office, including sanction of state terrorism and outright genocide. (See Section One.)

**Argentina's series of military dictatorships** began under Juan Peron, who led a populist movement with elements of both left wing unionism and right wing fascism. Peron was overthrown in 1955, and the military ruled either directly or through civilian front men until Peron returned in 1973. He died a year later, and direct military dictatorship returned. A small number of Peronist guerillas became the excuse for the so called **Dirty War**. It was not a war at all. The guerillas were wiped out in a short time, but the reign of repression lasted until 1983, after the failed Falklands War. Up to 30,000 were killed by these dictatorships.

**Bolivia's military dictatorship of Hugo Banzer began in 1971 and lasted until 1978.** The elected **President Juan Jose Torres** was a left leaning army officer of mostly Indian ancestry. He **was overthrown in 1971, fled, and was murdered under Operation Condor in 1976.** All parties were banned, universities were closed, and several thousand Bolivians murdered or fled.

**Brazil's military dictatorship** began in 1964, and by 1968 had absolute power, barring all parties, dissent, and even cultural movements. There was a small guerilla resistance, but the dictatorship mostly targeted dissidents. The regime did not leave power until the 1980s, partly due to Jimmy Carter's human rights policy. (See Section Eight.)

**Chile's military dictatorship came to power directly as a result of Nixon's efforts.** Socialist Salvador Allende was legally elected in 1970, and Nixon immediately conspired with **the CIA** and phone company **AT&T** to overthrow him with a blockade, strikes, paid agitators, until finally a military

coup brought him down. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship killed at least 2,000 and tortured at least 27,000. Because of popular protests, Pinochet allowed a heavily rigged election in 1988. To his surprise he was still defeated. Fearing a popular uprising, he quit the presidency, but stayed head of the army and an honorary congressman to avoid prosecution. He was then tried in Spain but still avoided punishment due to claimed (likely feigned) ill health. He died unpunished.

**Paraguay's military dictatorship** tradition began with independence. Most civilian presidents were removed by force. **Alfredo Stroessner** was the longest ruling dictator, from 1954 to 1989. Paraguay became notorious as a refuge for drug dealers and war criminals. Stroessner was finally overthrown by another General, Andres Rodriguez, who was also his best friend. Rodriguez ended the dictatorship and stepped down after elections.

**Uruguay's military dictatorship** began in 1973, but President Jorge Pacheco had limited civil rights starting in 1968 because of a guerilla uprising. Uruguay did not become a democracy until 1984.

In 1974, military leaders within dictatorships met to discuss their mutual problem. Dissidents were often fleeing from their home countries to find refuge in neighboring nations. They devised a plan to assist each other in tracking down dissidents, even carrying out assassinations or torture on another nation's behalf. But this was not the start of Condor.

As early as 1968, US General Robert Porter urged, "In order to facilitate the *coordinated employment of internal security forces* within and among Latin American countries, *we* [US military and intelligence] are...endeavoring to foster inter-service and regional cooperation by assisting in the organization of integrated command and control centers; the establishment of common operating procedures; and the conduct of joint and combined training exercises." This was a call for a coordinated plan to use each others secret police to aid each other in tracking down dissidents.

The plan was deadly effective. From beginning to end, these dictatorships killed tens of thousands of dissidents in the name of national security or fighting Communism. But there was not

even a remote chance any of these national governments would be overthrown by Communists. In all cases, **the list of targets was enormously wide, made up mostly of peaceful dissidents** and groups a dictatorship just did not like. Folk singer Victor Jara was tortured and murdered by Chile's dictatorship, his body dumped in a slum. Brazil's leading lyricist of tropicalismo music, Torquato Neto, committed suicide after torture and forced "psychiatric care." Neither was even remotely a military threat. Both were targeted purely for their political beliefs and for their art criticizing their governments.

To be truly effective, **assassinations were carried out across international boundaries.**

Chilean General Carlos Prats and his wife were killed in Buenos Aires, Argentina by car bomb. Leaders of MIR, a Chilean guerilla group, were also assassinated in Argentina. Chilean secret police hired Croatian and Italian fascists and the Shah of Iran's secret police to kill targets for them. The niece of Juan Gelman, an Argentinian poet, was kidnapped and murdered by Uruguayan secret police.

**This happened in the US as well, with the knowledge of US Presidents and US intelligence.**

Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier was killed in Washington DC by Cuban-American terrorists, CORU, led by Orlando Bosh and Luis Posada Carriles. (See Section Five.) New York Congressman Ed Koch, later Mayor of New York, was targeted by Uruguayan secret police in retaliation for his proposing to cut off military aid to the dictatorship. Koch asked for FBI protection and got none.

**Nixon, Kissinger, and US intelligence knew about Operation Condor early on, and collaborated with them.** US intelligence provided a secure communications network for Condor, centered in the Panama Canal Zone. The two most central nations involved in Condor were Argentina and Chile. Chile's head of the secret police, Miguel Contreras, was on the CIA's payroll until 1977. Paraguay's secret police also sent requests to track down dissidents to the CIA, FBI, and US embassy, and received requests from them as well. The FBI also helped track down people wanted by Chile's secret police. Argentina created a team for Condor modeled on US Special Forces.

Kissinger's office knew about Letelier's murder in advance, but sent orders to US Ambassadors to "take no action" about Condor only a day before the bomb killed him. **Argentinian, Chilean,**

**French, and Uruguayan authorities have all tried to question or subpoena Kissinger about his role in Condor.** Kissinger has also long been accused of ordering the murder of General Rene Schneider of Chile for refusing to overthrow the elected President, Salvador Allende. It was in Chile that Nixon and Kissinger played the biggest role in Condor, for the dictatorship would never have existed without their direct orders. Strangely enough, Kissinger does not deny considering the overthrow of Chile's government. His defense is that he changed his mind about doing it.

In Chile, Socialist leader Allende was elected in a coalition that included some Communists. This was not unusual, and in no cases did it result in a Communist state. Similar coalitions were also elected multiple times in France and Italy. In Chile's case, AT&T played a large role in the government's overthrow since it feared losing profits should the phone company become government run. **AT&T financed “destabilizing” Chile's government with tens of millions**, as did the CIA.

The Church Committee of the US Congress concluded the CIA was not directly involved in the coup itself. But Congress was only looking at if the CIA gave direct orders to the military, not the fact of years of efforts to weaken the government and openly hoping for an overthrow. Once Allende was overthrown, US money flooded back in. Chile had increased access to credit. The blockade was lifted. Strikes ended, not just because they were no longer being paid to strike, but because unions were outlawed by the dictatorship and union leaders imprisoned or executed. What Nixon and the CIA did was roughly equivalent to telling professional killers how much you wanted someone dead and leaving money on the table, but not directly handing them the money or saying the words, “Kill him.”

Using anti-Communism as a pretext, five nations were terrorized by brutal military dictatorships for decades. But in none of these nations were there armed Communists with a realistic chance of overthrowing the government. In none of these nations were there any evidence of ties to the Soviet Union. In none of these nations were there any large movements with ties to Cuba. In fact, most movements were distinctly non-Communist. In Argentina, the largest armed rebels were left wing Peronists. In Chile, the government's main targets were unions, journalists, and church groups. In

Brazil, the government spent much of its efforts attacking the sixties counterculture. In Bolivia, Condor killed dissidents in the MNR, a reformist party with some leftists but no Communists. Only in Uruguay were the Tupamaro guerillas Marxists.

Condor has become a byword for repression in Latin America, a reminder that sums up in one word most of what Latin Americans do not like about the US government. Today most of Latin America is divided between two groups of leftists. There are the Bolivarians, revolutionary socialists in Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and some island nations. Then there are “moderate” leftists almost everywhere else. Only in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico can one find rightist conservative parties dominant. For all the deaths, all Condor and Nixon did was delay Latin America's swing to the left, and Condor may have actually pushed more Latin Americans to the left. Condor is yet more evidence of both Nixon's brutal nature, and his and Kissinger's incompetence.

## Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, and the Phoenix Program

**What: The Phoenix Program, designed to neutralize popular Vietnamese support for the National Liberation Front through recruitment, bribery, spying, blackmail, and torture.**

**The Body Count:** Though assassination was not the preferred outcome and far more Vietnamese were “turned,” **the program killed, by the own admissions of its defenders, between 20,000 and 26,369 Vietnamese, mostly civilians, many of them falsely accused of being Communists. The South Vietnamese government estimate was 40,000 deaths.** Many of the accused were arrested based on faulty information, personal grudges, or the desire to fill quotas.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**Local South Vietnamese soldiers and police** actually did most of the killings and much of the torture. The program's purpose was to “turn” as many of the enemy as possible and gather intelligence. Assassination defeated these purposes.

**Robert Komer began and formulated the Phoenix Program under Johnson. William Colby directed it under Nixon.** Both did so with presidential knowledge and approval.

Some defenders of the program blame **the media and antiwar protesters** for spreading false information about the program. While some information is inaccurate, clearly they have no blame for the many deaths under Phoenix.

Defenders of the program also point to the **many imposters claiming to have been part of Phoenix.** A number of those prominently quoted by critics of the program in fact were not part of Phoenix and have been exposed as frauds.

The Phoenix Program was based on older counterinsurgency programs carried out by colonial powers, the British in Kenya and what was then Rhodesia, the Portuguese in Mozambique, and especially the French earlier in Vietnam itself. The intent was to undermine popular support for anti colonialism and independence efforts. Suspected enemies were brought to interrogation centers with the hope of “turning” them, getting them to switch sides and spy for the colonial power.

Contrary to some media claims, the program's main purpose was not assassination but gathering intelligence. Its main methods were, in order, revenge, bribery, blackmail, threats, and finally brutal torture that often led to death. Sometimes suspects were also raped. But most suspects were first approached with the carrot, not the stick. Suspects who lost family members to the uprisings were enticed with the chance to take revenge on their relative's killers. Others were bribed with money or goods.

If neither of those approaches worked, prisoners were often blackmailed, “Spy for us or you will be publicly identified as an informer.” In some cases, they were threatened with informing the local police the suspect was a Communist, which would have led to further imprisonment, perhaps execution. At times the prisoner was threatened with having a family member falsely identified, imprisoned, or killed.

If none of these approaches worked, a prisoner could be tortured. **Torture methods included beatings, whippings, hangings, water torture, electrocution, attacks by trained dogs, rapes including gang rapes or repeated rapes** by the interrogators. At times rapists used objects and even animals such as eels and snakes. Many suspects did not survive torture.

If torture did not work, or if torture did not result in death, then the last resort was execution, far more often done by South Vietnamese military or police than American forces. But since intelligence gathering was the intent far more than simply disrupting enemy popular support, this was discouraged if possible.

Most of those carrying out Phoenix were South Vietnamese. The program was US government

created, approved, directed, and planned. Most interrogations had a US official, either a civilian CIA or Special Forces soldier, present and directing it. **The program was approved at the highest levels, initiated by Lyndon Johnson and directed by his appointee, Robert Komer.**

Komer had come to Vietnam to coordinate all counterinsurgency programs. He found a series of poorly planned programs and streamlined them into one far deadlier, and somewhat more efficient. By early 1968, Phoenix officially began, though elements of the program had been around since 1965. Nixon was fully informed of the program and approved of it. His administration even defended it once it was publicly exposed in 1971.

Phoenix's own estimates were that 81,740 Vietnamese were “neutralized.” Supporters of the program point out that often many people assumed neutralized meant assassinated. In fact, the roughly 65,000 Vietnamese who were not killed became informers for revenge, bribes, or fear of blackmail. It is true that estimates of the deaths caused by Phoenix are often too high. But it is not much of a defense to say “only” 26,000 were tortured to death.

**William Colby, later head of the CIA, directed Phoenix after Komer.** Colby said that Phoenix officers had orders to avoid killing civilians. The big exception was in combat. Colby also claimed that Phoenix officers were under orders to avoid killing prisoners. Some defenders of the program instead blame a culture of police and military brutality in Southeast Asia. Yet it is also clear that the great majority of torture deaths happened under CIA or Special Forces supervision, if not direct orders.

The final defense of the Phoenix Program is the claim that it did work. The National Liberation Front did say that Phoenix disrupted their uprising, even causing them to imprison many loyal members on suspicion of them having become Phoenix informers. Some dispute this claim, noting that most of the suspects caught were very low level, and not even 3% of the suspects were part of the NLF upper echelons.

Yet it is also undeniable that Phoenix hurt the US occupation of Vietnam. There were many

cases of Phoenix being abused by corrupt officers. Local officials demanded bribes. The innocent were often falsely accused by those settling personal scores. The quota system encouraged such practices. Phoenix added to an already fearful atmosphere, making more Vietnamese wish US forces would go away. The exposure of Phoenix greatly damaged US credibility, made US government forces appear as brutal as the Communists they claimed to be trying to free Vietnamese from.

**No American official was ever punished for Phoenix's tens of thousands of tortures and murders.** Some South Vietnamese torturers were likely captured after the government fell. Other escaped to the US. The US government shut down Phoenix because of embarrassment, and no more. Johnson was still alive, though he would die of natural causes two years after Phoenix was exposed. Nixon resigned to avoid impeachment for the Watergate Scandal and was then pardoned. His crimes were covering up a burglary and bribery, but nothing as serious as many thousands dead from war crimes. There were no efforts to prosecute either president.

Komer lived over 30 more years. He went on to become Ambassador to Turkey, Undersecretary of Defense under Jimmy Carter, and then an analyst for the Rand Corporation. William Colby was also not punished but promoted. He shortly became the Director of the CIA. Colby went on to found a prominent DC law firm and write books defending his actions running Phoenix, *Honorable Men* and *Lost Victory*.

In both the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, there were calls to bring back Phoenix and use it against insurgents. There were also a few reports of possible assassination programs underway, not including drone assassinations. (See Section Three.) This is moral bankruptcy of the highest order. In a just world, we would see prosecution of war criminals, not revival of their horrors.

## GW Bush and Torture Deaths

**What: Torture of prisoners, most of them falsely accused of terrorism, by US military, government agents, or private contractors in prisons in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantanamo Naval Base, or in prisons in third party countries at US government request or supervision.**

**The Body Count: At least 108 deaths in custody.** How many were deliberate murders, manslaughter, depraved indifference, or accidents is far from clear.

**About 92% of prisoners at Guantanamo were falsely imprisoned. Only 8% were Al Qaeda or Taliban.** Most were local residents or refugees. Some were aid workers or missionaries. Five were British citizens. Over 600 out of 779 prisoners have been released, but also refused entry to their home countries or the US. Instead, sixteen nations have taken them in as political refugees.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Vice President Dick Cheney** amassed the most power and influence of any Vice President in US history, using his reach mostly in intelligence. Cheney defends torture or “enhanced interrogation” to this day and maintains that it led to saving lives and prevented terrorist attacks. This is a lie. In fact, torture led to lives lost. Suspects often gave inaccurate information, telling their abusers whatever they could think of to stop the torture, leading to resources diverted to stopping attacks that were never going to happen.

**Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld** approved the torture policy, specifically signing off on practices such as water boarding.

**Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez** led the formulation of the legal defense of torture.

**Solicitor John Yoo** specifically crafted the government memos legally defending torture.

**CIA interrogators** carried out some interrogations, but more often supervised or directed the kidnapping of suspects to be tortured in third party countries, usually dictatorships with no laws against torture.

**US officers and enlisted at Baghram and Guantanamo** guarded the prisoners and carried out the better known abuses such as sexual humiliation. Most of those punished were low ranking enlisted who clumsily took photographic evidence of their crimes.

**Unknown private contractors**, likely former military intelligence or CIA, carried out most of the interrogations at US bases. One of the side effects of conservative control of these wars was that both torture and intelligence gathering were privatized. Some intelligence officers volunteered for Iraq or Afghanistan knowing that after a short period they could resign and then be hired by private firms to do the same work for several times the pay.

**A US public with a large segment that supports torture** made it easier to be carried out and more difficult for war criminals to be tried.

**Fox News, talk radio, and Hollywood productions** such as the television show *24* that endorsed torture, including films such as *Iron Man* that show torture as only done by the enemy, played a large role in the US public's acceptance of torture as necessary, even patriotic.

For most of US history, the military had a relatively good record of opposing torture as inhumane, unworthy of a soldier, and inefficient since it tends to produce false information. In most wars, even when the enemy was hated, US soldiers rarely tortured the other side. Atrocities against civilians and murders of POWs, yes, but torture was not common in wars against Natives. British, Confederates, Germans, North Koreans, or Iraqis.

The major exceptions were four. US soldiers often tortured Mexican civilians and Catholic priests in the US-Mexico War, Filipino guerillas and civilians in the US-Philippines War, and tortured or mutilated Japanese POWs in World War II. These first three **practices of widespread torture were**

**more often done for retaliation, racist hatred, or to terrorize the enemy than any intent to get information.**

As brutal as the US wartime record often was, most US soldiers, officers, and civilian leaders often maintained that the US military should maintain moral superiority. Torture was what the enemy did, and not doing so made Americans better than them. Not only that, torture was considered a heinous war crime. **Japanese military who ordered the torture of Allied servicemen were executed for their atrocities.**

During the Korean War, some US servicemen were captured. North Korean torturers attempted to get soldiers to betray their country and switch sides. About 50 did, in widely reported cases of “brainwashing.” US intelligence obtained copies of North Korean interrogation, brainwashing, and torture manuals. **Those same North Korean manuals were used as the model for US torture of terrorism suspects and falsely accused.**

For the public, US government torture practices were exposed by the scandal at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. *CBS News* got hold of photos by US soldiers guarding Iraqi prisoners. The photos showed beatings, death threats, threats with guard dogs, sexual humiliation, prolonged stress positions, sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, smearing prisoners with feces and urine, simulated drowning, and disorientation using loud sounds. Yet US officials, all the way up to Bush, maintained none of this was torture. **The US Justice Department had redefined torture to not be torture unless it resulted in “organ failure or deaths.”** One prisoner, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, was water boarded over 180 times, but still gave false information.

Yet even that torture was still not enough for some in the Bush administration. Some suspects were sent to other countries, dictatorships where there were no laws against torture. **“Ghost detainees” could be tortured at will in even more extreme ways, usually with US officials present and often directing the torture. At least 54 governments carried out torture for the US including Iran and Syria.** Governments that helped kidnap suspects and send them to other nations to be tortured were

mostly in the Middle East or Eastern Europe.

Many suspects and falsely accused were sent to Guantanamo Bay. A US base on Cuban soil (held for over 50 years against the wishes of Cuba) Bush sent the prisoners there for two reasons. Since this was not US soil, torture there could not be prosecuted under US laws. And by sending the prisoners there, it maintained the fiction that these were all incredibly dangerous fanatics.

**Only 8% of the prisoners at Guantanamo were actually Al Qaeda or Taliban.** Nearly all the remaining prisoners were innocent, falsely accused. At least 55% of the prisoners never fought anyone. The noncombatants included refugees, missionaries, and aid workers. The most famous falsely accused were six British citizens of Pakistani descent who were in Afghanistan for a friend's wedding.

The Bush administration used a bounty system. Afghan militias had financial incentive to claim anyone they captured and turned over to the US was a terrorism suspect. But Bush refused to admit any wrongdoing. This was beyond ideological blindness. This was simply trying to hide your incompetence and being willing to continue to torture and falsely imprison to do so.

As of this writing, only six Guantanamo prisoners have ever been tried. Seven more still face charges over a decade after being imprisoned. The use of torture makes trials far more difficult. Instead of civilian courts, the suspects are tried by military tribunals, where many US military officers refuse to take part if possible.

Over 600 of the 779 prisoners were released when Obama became president. Barred from the US thanks to a campaign of hysteria and fear for political gain by Republicans, instead they became refugees in sixteen nations that accepted them. And much like prisons often produce more hardened criminals, the long abuse and torture in Guantanamo turned a few of the falsely imprisoned into recruits for terrorist groups.

Only eleven US soldiers were convicted for abusing prisoners, mostly those low level guards at Abu Ghraib who foolishly took photos of their abuse. Most of the actual torturers we do not know. As for the ones who ordered the torture, Bush, Cheney, et al, they remain at large, wanted for prosecution

in other countries for their war crimes. One of the first acts of Obama was to proclaim he would not prosecute Bush and other war criminals. Indeed, the Obama administration never used the term war criminal, but did admit repeatedly that crimes were committed. Bush retired and makes huge speaking fees at events where security carefully screens out protesters.

Alberto Gonzalez resigned in 2007, not for his role in torture nor another controversy over illegal spying, but for revelations he forced US Attorneys out of the Justice Department to replace them with Republicans. Gonzalez had trouble finding work for two years before he became a diversity recruiter at Texas Tech University over the protests of much of the faculty and student body. In 2011 he became a law professor at Belmont University. He remains under indictment by courts in Europe. John Yoo also remains under indictment in Europe as well, was banned from Russia for his role in torture, and likely cannot travel in most of the world without facing charges. The torture memo he authored was immediately repudiated by the Obama administration. Yoo is still a professor at UC Berkeley.

**Had the top Bush administration officials been punished the same as Japanese war criminals who committed the exact same war crimes, at least six Bush officials and Bush himself would have and should have faced the death penalty for torture.** Only sovereign immunity protected Bush while in office, and he cannot travel in most of the world today. In both Canada and Switzerland he was forced to cancel planned speeches for fear he could be detained or tried.

## Franklin Roosevelt and Japanese-American and Aleut Internment

**What: 110,000 Japanese Americans (one half of them children, two thirds of them US citizens), 2,200 Japanese-Peruvians, and 1,000 Aleuts in Alaska falsely imprisoned based on the claim they would be spies or saboteurs for the Japanese government.**

**The Body Count: “Some” Japanese-American deaths from poor healthcare in the camps. Six Japanese-American inmates were killed by guards for allegedly trying to escape. (In at least one case the inmate had a history of mental illness and another was an elderly man hard of hearing.) Two inmates were killed by guards in a riot at Tule Lake camp. There were 57 Aleut deaths from disease in the camps.**

One study found the life expectancy of Japanese-American inmates may have been shortened on average from two to three years. For Aleuts we are uncertain. For Japanese-Peruvians we have virtually no information.

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**Anglo-American racist farmers in California** who wanted Japanese-American farmers' land to remove the economic competition.

**Scientific racists** who thought the Aleuts racially similar to Japanese and imprisoned them for no other reason. Some also claimed the islanders were removed to protect them from a Japanese invasion force. But had that been true, the Aleuts would have been relocated but not imprisoned.

**The US Supreme Court** who ruled 6-3 the camps were constitutional. In three separate cases, *Yasui v. US*, *Korematsu v. US*, and *Hirabayashi v US*, the Supreme Court ruled twice that curfew laws aimed at one race were legal and then that detention based on race was legal. In all three cases, the

majority sidestepped the race issue and simply deferred to the president's authority in wartime. In the minority dissents in *Korematsu*, justices noted that the decision was purely racist and that *Korematsu* was not in any way a threat or disloyal.

**General John Dewitt**, who ran the internment camps. It was Dewitt who first called on Roosevelt to issue orders locking up Japanese-Americans. Though there had been no sabotage, Dewitt was convinced there would be. Many of Dewitt's orders were very arbitrary.

First Dewitt declared a curfew for Japanese-Americans on the west coast. Though Hawaii had the largest Japanese-American population in the country, they were left alone. Numbering almost 40% of the population, locking them all up would be too disruptive to the economy. Travel to and from Alaska was banned without a permit. Italian-Americans and German-Americans, unlike in World War I, were not collectively targeted. Only a few fascist collaborators were detained.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor led to a wave of racist hysteria in the US. Within only a few days, the declaration of war against Japan was followed by Germany declaring war on the US, and then the US declaring war on Germany also. But **no similar wave of hysteria and persecution hit German-Americans**. American wartime propaganda stressed racial solidarity, that racism was what the other side believed in, and was also wrong because it hurt the war effort.

For in this total war that would commit the US public more than any other war had except the Civil War, every group was called upon to contribute, and many did so expecting a greater equality to follow. Women joined the workforce in much higher numbers. Asians, Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians joined in higher numbers in spite of discrimination, and returning veterans were central to the civil rights movement.

But though racism was officially said to be unpatriotic, it seemed as if all that racism was instead focused on solely one ethnic group, Japanese-Americans, and another group perceived to be physically similar, Aleut Indians. One result of that intense hatred was the dropping of the A-bomb.

Another was the targeting of Japanese civilians, though German civilians greatly suffered as well. (See Section Three.)

All across the US a wave of hatred targeted Asians. Indeed, the biggest fear of many Chinese-Americans, Filipinos, and other Asians was to be mistaken for Japanese. Some actually posted signs on their businesses and even themselves, saying "I am Chinese," "I am Filipino," etc. *Time* magazine actually published an article, "How to Tell Your Friends From the Japs." The article listed a series of stereotypes as supposed differences between Chinese and Japanese.

**Anti Japanese hatred was stirred by official US government propaganda** depicting Japanese as apes, insects, literal monsters with fangs, bucked teeth, huge horn rimmed glasses, and exaggerated slanted eyes. Japanese in propaganda seemed always to be leering, shrieking, consumed with anger, in the midst of rape or murder. Official anti Japanese propaganda sometimes came from unlikely sources. Theodore Geisel, better known to the world as children's author Dr. Seuss, made a series of racist cartoons of Japanese during World War II.

Average Americans responded in kind. One of the most common sights on the home front were home made "Jap hunting licenses" made of paper, or on medallions or buttons. Both Bugs Bunny and Superman beat on "Japs" on movie screens, comic books, and newspaper cartoons, and the epithet became common.

Indeed, anti Asian hatred had gone on since the Gold Rush. Asians were driven out of the fields by a Foreign Miners Tax, restricted from immigration by racially based quotas, and banned from owning land in many states. To get around the latter laws, many turned to Anglo-American front men as silent partners, while the Japanese-American farmer continued to work some of the most productive and successful farms anywhere in the US.

In California, Washington, and Oregon, many Anglo-Americans turned to outright violence in the 1920s and 30s. In Turlock, Delano, Porterville, Ester, Stockton, and Watsonville California, Anglo-Americans rioted against Asian-Americans. Similar violence hit Yakama, Washington and Toledo,

Oregon. Bombings even rocked Asian-American communities in Reedley and Imperial California. Thus when Dewitt began rounding up Japanese-Americans, few objected.

Two thirds of all detainees were US citizens, many of them third or fourth generation. Few born in the US had ever been to Japan. Fully half of all those locked up were children. Virtually the only way to get out of the camps was to volunteer for the military. Several thousand young men from the camps made up large parts of the 100th and 442nd Regiments, the most highly decorated American units of the entire war. The units received over 18,000 awards, including 21 members awarded the Medal of Honor.

Detainees were confined in over two dozen camps mostly in remote rural areas, especially Indian reservations. (Bureau of Indian Affairs head John Collier pushed for placement on tribal lands in the hope of seeing government buildings and roads left behind for the tribes at war's end.) The camps were run by the Department of Justice, the War Relocation Authority, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the US Army.

Conditions were livable but ran from basic to grim. Centers included migrant workers camps, racetrack stables, park campgrounds, and military prisons. Most centers, however, had no prior living quarters and new ones had to be built quickly. A typical new shelter was a tarpaper or aluminum roof topped military barracks, but with perhaps eight to ten families living in a large room intended for about 40 single military recruits.

Some detainees were given less than an hours notice. Others received as much as two days warning. In either case, most property was lost, seized in their absence or sold for tiny amounts given the short notice. If the property was not lost it was often vandalized. **Internment destroyed Japanese-American communities.** Where most west coast cities have Chinatowns, those same cities no longer have Japantowns.

A movement to redress Japanese-American losses was inspired by the civil rights movement. It took until 1988 before Congress finally voted for reparations. (An earlier bill in 1948 allowed for

claims to be filed, but few Japanese-Americans had property records since internment had been so sudden.) Each individual received \$20,000, far below the value of the property most had lost. Each also agreed that by accepting the funds, they could not sue in the future.

**Aleut internees faced even worse treatment.** Their camps were abandoned mining camps and canneries, falling apart and often with contaminated water. Pneumonia and tuberculosis killed nearly five dozen, or about one in sixteen Aleuts. Like Japanese-Americans, one of the few ways to get out of the camp was to join the military, and 25 of them did, three of them taking part in driving the Japanese off of Attu Island.

Since the Aleuts lived in small fishing villages, there was no economic pressure to intern them, just bizarre scientific racism. Their land was not seized, but most of the homes and churches were vandalized. Aleuts received reparations and an apology at the same time as Japanese-Americans, but reparations were limited to \$12,000 each.

Many American schools finally started to teach about Japanese-American internment after the apology and reparations. Few do the same about the Aleut. One positive effect is that knowledge of the internments likely helped head off any possible mass deportations or internment of Arabs or Muslims after 9-11. Possibly the strangest result of the episode is the rise of Michelle Malkin, a Filipina who is a white supremacist (seriously) starting her career defending targeting Asians in internment camps.

Franklin Roosevelt's role in this episode has been one of the strongest blows to his image as a great president. There was no military justification for the removal, and in addition to killing dozens, uprooting over 100,000, and destroying neighborhoods, it was a huge waste of resources. **The FBI, Naval Intelligence, and the Justice Department all opposed internment**, as did some of Roosevelt's own staff. Though one of the most anti racist presidents America has ever had, Roosevelt let himself get pushed into using the federal government as the agent for bigots.

## Repression in American Colonies:

Guam, Hawaii, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands

**What: The conquest, occupation, and repression of independent island nations in the Pacific, and the repression of independence movements on Caribbean islands taken over from other colonial powers.** Five of these island peoples live under colonialism, with their resources controlled by outsiders and four of them unable to vote in national elections. The islands of Micronesia also lived under colonial control until finally getting self rule in the 1970s and 80s.

### **The Body Count:**

**167 Bikini Islanders** forcibly removed, starved for six months, and exposed to an extra one in seven higher risk of death from cancer from atomic bomb testing.

**Hundreds of Marshall Islanders on Rongelap, Rongerik, Ailinginae, and Utrik Atolls, 23 Japanese fishermen, and 28 US weathermen** exposed to radiation from atomic bomb tests.

**Over 4,000 US servicemen exposed to radiation** during the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll. Six died during the cleanup, an unknown number died early deaths.

**200,000 Hawaiian deaths from disease** introduced by American and British missionaries and traders. Americans and Europeans had even less excuse than they did in early colonial times. By the time of these epidemics, from 1804 to 1853, whites knew full well that they brought disease with them that would kill large numbers of indigenous people. They had seen so for over three centuries of experience with not just American Indians, but with other Pacific Island peoples.

**55 dead, 318 wounded in revolts and massacres in Puerto Rico from 1935 to 1950.** This includes both peaceful protesters and dissidents killed by authorities, as well as independence partisans and US troops and police killed in armed uprisings.

**Seven deaths, an unknown number wounded in the Samoan Civil War**, with factions allied with the US or Germany.

**15 Samoan chiefs falsely imprisoned for 5-7 years** during the Samoan Mau independence movement of the 1930s. Samoan chief Samuelu Ripley was permanently barred from Samoa.

**False imprisonment and torture of five Virgin Island independence activists** convicted of the murder of eight tourists in a sham trial in the 1970s.

### **Who Else Gets the Blame:**

**American imperialism and Manifest Destiny** are often blamed in the abstract. More often these islands were seized as strategic naval bases.

**American economic interests** especially sugar cane plantation owners were the ones who overthrew the Kingdom of Hawaii.

**Fear of Germany** was the reason often given for taking over the Virgin Islands.

**Cold War hysteria and anti Communism**, the rather bizarre fear that somehow Castro could take over Puerto Rico, is often blamed for suppressing their independence movement. While some nationalists made the pretense of being Marxists after the 1950s, there was no evidence of anything but vague ideological ties to Cuba. There is not the slightest bit of evidence that Castro could ever credibly hope for a foothold on Puerto Rico, either militarily or politically.

**White racists in Hawaii** overthrew the Hawaiian national government, suppressed an attempted uprising, persecuted Hawaiians, stole land, suppressed Hawaiian culture, banned the Hawaiian language, and pushed for Hawaiian statehood over the objections of Native Hawaiians. Their descendants today, not surprisingly, often oppose the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. There are a few vocal anti Hawaiian racist authors, especially **Ken Conklin**, **Thurston Twigg-Smith**, and a bizarre racist previously mentioned, the white supremacist Filipina, **Michelle Malkin**.

**Anti Puerto Rican racists in the US** such as **Phyllis Schlafley** fear making Puerto Rico a state

since it would be the first state in 150 years where English is not the first language of most people.

Many Republicans also oppose statehood since more Puerto Ricans vote Democratic than Republican.

It likely comes to a surprise to many Americans to hear the US has colonies, has had them for over a century, and that much of these colonial populations would like independence, or in some cases to be independent again as they were before US conquest. **All five peoples were conquered or annexed without their consent.** Four of these peoples have no say in the national political system and varying amounts of local control. In all of these five peoples' homelands, resources and workers flow out to the US mainland and in all cases except Samoa, local peoples have a more limited say in the economy than elites in the mainland US.

**Starting about 1890, the US tried to become a colonial empire not very different from the British, French, German, and Spanish empires.** All these empires were built because of a mix of national pride, pseudo scientific racism that insisted whites knew best how to run the world, and just plain old fashioned greed, taking local resources to make money off the local people. The US's first major attempt at empire was the Spanish-American War. The failing Spanish empire was defeated and Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico were conquered. In the Philippines, a revolt had to be crushed with great brutality, killing as many as a million Filipinos. (See Section Three.) Cuba became at times semi-independent, sometimes directly ruled by the US, until Castro came to power.

Two other island nations and one colony also were taken into the US empire. Samoa was carved up between Germany and the US. The Kingdom of Hawaii first was conquered by the US on behalf of American-born plantation owners, and then later taken over by the US in the aftermath of war fever from the Spanish-American War. Finally, near the start of American entry into World War I, the Virgin Islands were sold by Denmark to the US. Like all the other island peoples in this entry, the inhabitants were not asked.

Guam, once it was seized from Spain in 1898, was wanted by the US as a naval base. A US

Naval Governor ruled the island until 1950. The Chamorro language was banned. In a series of decisions from 1901 to 1922, the Supreme Court ruled the US Constitution does not apply to territories like Guam. During World War II, many Chamorros died during a brutal Japanese occupation. At war's end, many Chamorros protested they should be rewarded for their suffering with at least local self-rule. In 1950, Chamorros finally got US citizenship. But there were no elections until 1968, and no local constitution until 1979. **Today the island's economy is utterly dependent on the US military. US bases make up most of the island, and US servicemen and Filipino migrant workers almost outnumber Chamorros.** Thus there is no substantial movement for Guam's independence.

Samoa's suffering was different from Guam. Their civil wars in the 1880s and 90s saw both the US and Germany stepping in to aid the two rival factions. German ships bombarded Samoan villages and the US sent its own warships. A typhoon at the start of the Second Samoan Civil War kept the three sides (Britain decided it wanted Samoa too) from fighting. German Samoa was handed over to New Zealand after World War I. **There was an independence movement in both Samoas called the Mau (Firm Strength or Unwavering). The leader of the movement, Samuelu Ripley, was permanently exiled and Samoan chiefs imprisoned.** The last Samoan king was only allowed his title after promising US authorities he would be the last. An attempt to revive the kingship in 1924 was blocked by the US governor.

But by comparison to either Guam or Hawaii, the first US Naval Governor interfered less. He decided to somewhat leave Samoan culture and people largely alone. **Traditional land ownership continues to this day, as do traditional Samoan titles.** As the saying goes, the hard part is not knowing who is chief in Samoa, but who is not. Titles are widespread, but authority is limited to being a counselor, and the titles are awarded based on consensus. Unlike Hawaii, almost all Samoan land is still owned by Samoans, and communally.

Today, Samoans are legally US Nationals, but not citizens. They think of themselves as Samoans, not Americans, but can move freely to the US without passports. There is a large Samoan

community on the west coast, especially Los Angeles. There is no organized Samoan independence movement, not because the islands depend on the US as Guam and Puerto Rico do, but because they consider themselves to have gotten the best of the bargain, being part of the US, but not giving up being Samoan to be American. That does not change the original wrongdoing of their being seized by the US, nor deaths in their civil wars, nor false imprisonment and exile for their leaders.

Hawaii has suffered the most from colonialism of any American island colonies. There is a tendency to forget, or more often to never teach in US schools, that **for almost 70 years, Hawaii was an independent kingdom with diplomatic recognition, relations, and treaties with major nations including the US.** British and American merchants and missionaries brought disease with them, and still came knowing this could kill many locals. The missionaries and their children turned into plantation owners, coveting Hawaii's rich soil, ideal for sugarcane. Plantation owners recruited labor from China, Japan, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Blacks from the US. By 1900, Native Hawaiians made up only 20% of the nation's population.

Anglo-American plantation owners determined they would rule Hawaii. They set up their own private paramilitary, the Honolulu Rifles. **In 1887, the Rifles forced the appropriately named Bayonet Constitution upon Hawaii. The Rifles arrested the King's minister and stripped the King of all power.** Whites were virtually the only ones who could vote. Asians were specifically barred from the vote, and most Hawaiians were barred by literacy tests and property requirements.

In 1893, Liliuokalani became Queen. She called for a new constitution, one where Hawaiians would rule their own islands again. The so called Committee of Safety, plantation owners, told the US Ambassador their plan to overthrow the Queen. **The US Ambassador offered a company of US Marines, from a US warship in port, who overthrew the Queen.** The committee declared the Republic of Hawaii and called for the US to take over. President Cleveland refused and condemned the overthrow. A Native Hawaiian counterrevolution failed, and their petition to the US Congress failed to get US troops to restore the Queen. The US took over in 1898, during the war fever of the Spanish-

American War. **The Hawaiian language was banned until 1986. The Hawaiian religion was also banned.** A white exploiter, Max Freedom Long, later invented a false impersonation of Hawaiian religion he called Huna, which some whites today naively believe is Hawaiian.

Hawaii continued to have a turbulent history, with some one of the most radical labor conflicts in the US, seeing major strikes in 1900, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1909, 1912, 1920, 1924, 1934, 1938, and 1940. The plantation owners kept a racial hierarchy in place, whites at the top, followed by Japanese, other Asians, other nonwhites, and Native Hawaiians at the bottom socially and economically in their own homeland. After World War II, the UN pressured empires to set free their colonies. The US finally held an illegal statehood vote. Many non-Hawaiians voted, mostly US servicemen, while many Asians were barred. **Most scholarly specialists agree with the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement, that Hawaii remains an occupied nation under illegal US rule.** It is also a colony, since tourism as the main industry mostly sends its economic benefits to the mainland. Native Hawaiians continue to work for a return to independence, and can point to some victories, the end of the language ban, restoration of voting rights, Hawaiian language schools, and a cultural renaissance.

**Puerto Rico was on its way to independence when it was taken over by the US.** The fading Spanish empire hoped to prevent further revolts on the island. So they gave self rule to Puerto Rico. The first elections were in March 1898. In April 1898, a US invasion took over the island. US military rule was replaced by a US governor and Americanization program. The island was set up with a Congress, one house US appointed, the other elected. **In 1917, US citizenship was imposed on Puerto Ricans without their consent. The elected house voted unanimously for independence.**

**Puerto Rican independence protesters were massacred in 1935 and 1937. There was a violent uprising crushed in 1950,** and Puerto Rican terrorists also tried to kill Truman. Four years later more terrorists broke onto the floor of the US Capital and tried to kill US Congressmen. In the 1970s and 80s there were bombing campaigns by still more Puerto Rican terrorists. (See Section Eleven.) In 1992, there were revelation of US government files on over 100,000 out of 3.5 Million

Puerto Ricans, perhaps one out of every 25 adults. But since the mid 1950s, most Puerto Ricans no longer support independence. The island is very dependent on money sent back by relatives working on the US mainland. Yet like Chamorros and Samoans, most Puerto Ricans do not identify as American.

The Virgin Islands were a Dutch colony bought by the US in 1917, supposedly because of an imaginary threat of a German takeover. Germany was in its last days during World War I and could not take Paris, much less remote islands in another hemisphere. The actual reason was to provide a naval base on sea lanes going to the Panama Canal. The US government had tried to buy the islands since 1902. The islanders were made US citizens in 1927, without consent. Local self rule came in 1936.

In 1972, the Virgin Island Five were charged with the murder of eight tourists. All five were independence movement and Black Power activists. All five were tortured by police and then convicted in sham trials, which included jury members threatened by police. **Independence sentiment is the strongest in Virgin Islanders of any of these island peoples except Native Hawaiians.** Four of the fifteen territorial congressmen elected in the last election favor independence. There also is a recent petition signed by one tenth of the islanders on St. Croix asking to be a separate territory.

Micronesia, the broad group of northern Pacific islands, was made a US Trust Territory in 1947. The UN granted the islands to the US with the intent of guiding them towards self rule. Their lack of a legal voice made the islanders very easy targets for atomic bomb testing. **Bikini Atoll became permanently contaminated by radiation after H-bomb tests.** The island remained dangerous to live on. The islanders were taken off their homeland and dumped for six months on Rongerik Atoll, nearly starving to death. Many Marshall Islanders, Japanese fishermen, and US servicemen were also killed by radiation from H-bomb tests or, for servicemen, from the cleanup after.

What role did presidents play in the takeovers or repression of independence movements of these island nations or colonies?

**McKinley ordered the conquest of Guam and Puerto Rico** as part of the Spanish-American War, **and the US takeover of Hawaii**, where the previous President Cleveland refused to. McKinley

also signed the Foraker Act for colonial rule of Puerto Rico.

**Wilson bought** US control of **the Virgin Islands. He also imposed US citizenship on Puerto Ricans** against their will. This was in line with Wilson's belief in pseudo scientific racism, and his long pattern of invading Latin American nations.

**Franklin Roosevelt appointed General Blanton Winship as Governor of Puerto Rico.** He suppressed the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, unions, and other independence movement supporters. Winship also tried to block the new minimum wage laws from applying to Puerto Rico. Roosevelt did order a special act of the New Deal to reconstruct Puerto Rico. Winship spent much of his time trying to block this reconstruction. Far worse, Winship brutally crushed independence demonstrations in two infamous massacres, at Rio Piedras in 1935 and Ponce in 1937. Two nationalists were executed on the spot without trial at Rio Piedras. Winship tried to interfere with an investigation into Ponce. Roosevelt finally fired him in 1939 when Winship was facing new charges. Had FDR never appointed him, or fired him four years earlier, after Rio Piedras, much of the violence could have been avoided.

Truman was blamed by Puerto Rican nationalists for US control. Truman did commute the sentence of the assassins who tried to kill him to life imprisonment. But **Truman appointed as Governor Jesus Pinero, who passed a Gag Law barring speech or writings about independence,** to organize or assemble to promote independence, or even display the Puerto Rican flag. His successor Luiz Munoz Marin arrested thousands under this law.

**Truman and Eisenhower both ordered H bomb tests on Pacific islands.** When Ike's election opponent, Adlai Stevenson, called for an end to nuclear weapons testing, Ike called that "a moratorium on common sense." There is little sign that either president gave much thought to Pacific Islanders. Yet neither man could claim to be ignorant of the bomb's effects. Eisenhower also signed the illegal statehood bill for Hawaii, over the objections of most Native Hawaiians. Ike had supported statehood from the start of his time as president.

Some presidents do have a better record on these islands. Cleveland as an anti-imperialist

refused to annex Hawaii. Every president from Ford to Obama has publicly pledged to allow Puerto Rico to determine its own future, as a commonwealth, independent, or a state. Both major parties included Guam, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands in their presidential primaries starting in 1976, and most major candidates have campaigned for their votes. **Puerto Rico has a larger population than 22 US states**, making it especially important during primaries. Obama has publicly vowed to sign the Akaka Bill if Congress passes it, which would grant Native Hawaiians status similar to an American Indian tribe, a reservation and government to government relations with the US.

Pacific Islanders and the peoples of the Caribbean are often little known or understood by many Americans. For example, without professional sports it is doubtful if many Americans would even realize there are Samoan people. In my own teaching, it is rare to find students who know about the US takeover of Hawaii. It is this lack of knowledge that is the biggest barrier to giving these islanders rule over their own lives. With the exception of some anti-Hawaiian and anti-Puerto Rican bigotry from a few like Malkin and Schlafley, US control of these islands is largely a legacy of the old colonialism rather than any current evil intent. Were more Americans to know and understand this past, self rule for these peoples would come sooner.

## Woodrow Wilson and Dissent in World War I

**What: The wave of anti-German hysteria that led to German-Americans falsely imprisoned along with Austro-Hungarians, Greeks, Dutch, French, Belgians, Ukrainians, Polish, Serbs, and Italians. Dissidents such as the anarchist union the IWW, Jehovah's Witnesses, Socialists, and conscientious objectors were also imprisoned.**

**The Body Count: 6,000 falsely imprisoned, two German-Americans murdered by anti-German bigots. One German-American killed in an escape attempt, an unknown number dead in an influenza epidemic at Fort Oglethorpe.**

### **Who Also Gets the Blame:**

**The Committee on Public Information** created an atmosphere of hatred, paranoia and fear. Businesses spied on their employees. Parents spied on their children and children on their parents. Neighbors spied on neighbors. All of these activities were directed, encouraged, and rewarded by the Committee.

**Congress passed the Espionage Act.** This punished with a sentence of up to twenty years imprisonment should any person "utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal...or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the military...or the flag."

**The American Protective League** were auxiliary cops, vigilantes given sanction by the federal and local authorities. Numbering 300,000, they reported more than 3 million cases of disloyalty, vaguely defined. They rounded up and imprisoned 6,000 dissidents and ethnic groups considered suspect, holding some in custody for up to two years after the end of the war.

Woodrow Wilson was re elected on the promise, “He Kept Us Out of War.” There were many Americans opposed to entering the war, especially those remembering the disastrous US-Filipino War. (See Section Three.) Many did not want to take part in this world war fought among imperial powers for advantage, driven by propaganda and nationalism, destined to take tens of millions of lives, bring down dynasties, and create the first fascist and communist states.

But the US finally entered the war because of sympathy for the Allies, Britain, France, Italy, and Russia. The first three nations were seen as fellow democracies and there were cultural ties, with many people of the same ancestry inside the US. There was much more hostility against the less democratic Central Powers of Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. There were far fewer Ottoman-Americans, for example. Submarine warfare by Germany against neutral shipping also turned some Americans against the Central Powers. Britain borrowing heavily from US banks also led to financial elites pushing for US entry into the war.

**At first, there was little public support for the war.** Only 73,000 joined the US military in response to Wilson's call for a million volunteers. While the public was skeptical, both major parties and most business and other institutions rallied behind Wilson, Most of the opposition came from socialists, pacifist religious groups, and anarchists. This was the height of the Socialist Party in US history, when up to one out of six Americans voted Socialist.

To counter this opposition, Wilson set up one of the earliest and ugliest propaganda campaigns in US history. The Committee on Public Information made some of the first widespread uses of public relations. Hired pro war speakers gave speeches in 5000 cities across the US, all the way down to small towns, to give the false impression of mass support for the war. The committee also paid informants to spy on those who were antiwar, neutral, or even insufficiently pro war.

Anti-German hysteria spread and became vicious and violent. Millions of German-Americans suddenly found their loyalty questioned and their very culture denigrated as barbaric. In some states laws were passed barring teaching or even speaking German. Sauerkraut was renamed “victory

cabbage" and hamburgers "victory steak." Anti-German mobs beat and in a few cases lynched German-Americans. Many German-Americans lost their jobs or their businesses. The government often seized German-American property without cause or compensation. Some fearfully changed their German names, anglicizing them to avoid persecution. Where German-Americans had been one of the most strongly bilingual ethnic groups, with Germans as pioneers in the bilingual education field and publishing many German language newspapers, magazines, and books, much of that came to an end.

**Today only a small fraction of German-Americans speak German, a legacy of the persecution of World War I and after.**

The Espionage Act also made it illegal to criticize the war, or the US in even the vaguest way. Even *Spirit of 76*, a film about the American Revolution, was censored for criticizing the British, now US allies. Officially sanctioned vigilantes the American Protective League proceeded to lock up antiwar protesters, socialists, even Jehovah's Witnesses as well as conscientious religious objectors. Proving that bigots do not have the best grasp of other cultures, they also imprisoned many people they mistook for Germans and Austro-Hungarians: Greeks, Dutch, French, Belgians, Ukrainians, Polish, Serbs, and Italians. Some prisoners were locked up until two years after war's end. **Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs** went to prison for an antiwar speech. That did not stop him from **running for president from prison**, the only candidate to ever do so, and still **getting over a million votes**.

Wilson's campaign of hysteria and bigotry had deadly consequences. Several German-Americans were murdered. More than that, an undetermined number of prisoners were killed by an epidemic inside prison walls. The greatest toll of all, of course, was the 200,000 US deaths during World War I.

Wilson made the decision to go to war based on manipulation by British intelligence and his own fear of nonwhites. **The Zimmerman telegram, an offer from Germany to ally with Mexico in exchange for the return of the southwest to Mexico, was what pushed Wilson to change his mind about war. The telegram was *deliberately leaked to the US Ambassador by British intelligence*. But**

**Mexico's President had already *turned down* the German offer.** They were in the middle of an incredibly divisive ten year revolution that killed ten million Mexicans and sent ten million more fleeing as refugees. Mexico's territory was still split, parts of it run by several different rebel armies. The idea of Mexico invading the US was ludicrous.

Since both sides in World War I were fighting for imperial gain and falsely claiming it was for freedom, most Americans were rightly skeptical and showed greater wisdom than Wilson in trying to stay out. There is more than a little anti-German bigotry in some of fears of disaster should Germany have won this war. Imperial Germany was not Nazi Germany. Nor was their empire especially worse than the British or French empires, only its emperor much more reckless. Germany had an elected parliament with strong Catholic and socialist parties as well as the right wing, and a partly progressive system with a strong social safety net.

Add to this that **more than likely Germany would still lose the war without the US joining the Allies.** It would simply lose it more slowly or decisively, perhaps in 1919 instead of 1918. Or it is possible the war simply ends in a stalemate, both sides exhausted. It is still quite possible the same uprising against the Kaiser happens, followed by the Weimar Republic. But without a decisive loss and harsh peace imposed by the Allies, the Nazis do not arise, and Hitler likely remains an obscure failed artist.

Without Wilson's campaign of bigoted propaganda, German-American culture would not have been crippled. Other intolerant postwar hysterias, the Red Scare, and the rise of the new version of the Ku Klux Klan, would not have happened or at least been less.

## Section Eight:

### The Good Records of Presidents

This section is not a record of which president supported or carried out any ideological position. The introduction argued that substituting a political position checklist for humanitarian results is excuse making for one side or the other. It is dishonest, hypocritical, ultimately useless and obscuring of any attempt at honest judgment of the good or evil of presidents.

And just as there clearly were many evil presidents, there were also a smaller number of good presidents, noble and heroic men who by their actions saved many lives or improved many lives. This section gives proof of that. There were also many more presidents whose legacy is largely indifferent, men of little effect who were largely inconsequential caretakers, men who are largely unknown today for good reason. There are yet other presidents who paradoxically committed both great good and horrific evil, sometimes even on the same issue. Their evil outcomes came sometimes through neglect, at other times through moral cowardice or political convenience, yet other times through willful ideological blindness.

Anyone who argues that presidents must be tough, that the demands of the job insist upon an immoral or amoral man who must be above morality is really arguing a variation of might is right. Such arguments often come from three main sources; the *realpolitik* school of thought, beloved by admirers of Nixon and Kissinger; neoconservatives; and other journalists and politicians who are believers in American empire, or at the very least try never to admit Americans or American leaders can ever do any wrong.

It should be obvious from the evidence presented earlier that Nixon and Kissinger's foreign policy expertise is almost always overrated. At a minimum, even when successful in its goals, the two men were morally reprehensible in the most indefensible way, guilty of no less than playing a direct role in genocide, the latter for which Kissinger is still facing calls for prosecutions for war crimes in

much of the world. Kissinger's name will live in as much infamy in Latin America as much as some who worship American presidential power naively or hypocritically admire him.

Neo conservatism's failures are as obvious as saying "Iraq." The incompetence of neoconservatives in Iraq and elsewhere is a clear example of ideology ignoring basic facts on the ground. And though they would sneer at such terms, the moral callousness of neo conservatism has been equally disastrous, the wide cause of misery that itself was the central cause of neo conservatism's many failures. Put simply, by their lack of empathy, neoconservatives become very poor predictors of how their efforts will be perceived. Their amoral nature makes them bad analysts and administrators.

Let the evidence speak for itself: presidents clearly can do evil and must be condemned for it. Just as important, we should remember and honor those presidents who have done right. One can also point to presidents who have done both great harm and great good. The same Franklin Roosevelt who ignored the Holocaust and imprisoned Japanese-Americans and Aleuts also saved many lives with the New Deal, the Good Neighbor Policy, and leading the defeat of the Axis. The GW Bush who tortured mostly innocents and killed possibly over one million in Iraq and thousands in Louisiana with his bumbling partly redeemed himself by the many African lives saved from AIDS.

Jefferson Ended the US International Slave Trade,  
Avoided Wars with Britain and France

**What: The passage of the Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves in 1807, proposed and championed by Jefferson. Jefferson's highly unpopular efforts to avoid wars by passing the Embargo Act and Non Intercourse Act.**

**The Number of Lives Saved:** Jefferson avoided a war similar to the later War of 1812. There were **20,000 deaths** in the War of 1812.

The number of lives saved by ending the US international slave trade is complicated and difficult to say beyond some estimates. Roughly 600,000 Africans were brought to the American colonies. The slave trade had greatly varying death rates of 10-50%. Thus from 60,000 to 600,000 Africans, could have been killed in crossing the Atlantic and being broken, "seasoned." Easily that many likely were killed in Africa to capture those 660,000-1.2 million for the crossing. That means perhaps 1.26 to 1.8 million deaths to bring over 600,000 slaves.

Divided by the slightly less than 200 years of slavery starting in colonial times, that comes from 3,300 to a bit under 9,000 deaths a year to bring in under 3,000 slaves a year. **Jefferson's law prevented slightly under 50 more years of the international slave trade to the US. Had the ban been vigorously enforced, it could have stopped the enslavement of perhaps 150,000 Africans and the deaths of as many as 450,000 more.**

**But since it was not well enforced, the number of lives saved was perhaps no more than half that, perhaps much less.** Weak enforcement was not solely Jefferson's fault. Congress did not push for enforcement as well, and was still dominated by slave owners. Of course the greatest guilt for deaths and enslavement goes directly to slave traders. Slave traders began using faster sloops and took advantage of the huge coastline and open borders.

We do know that because of the ban, slave owners began treating their slaves more humanely so that slaves could increase in number mostly by giving birth. In absolute numbers the slave population increased from under a million to nearly 4 million in under 60 years, nearly three times the increase in absolute numbers for previous centuries. Thus **Jefferson and the US Navy deserve credit for cutting the slave infant mortality rate dramatically.**

### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**The Abolitionist movement** had been around in the US since colonial times. It began growing in the 1790s, but would not become a strong popular movement until the 1830s.

**Methodist and Quaker churches and much of the Baptist and Catholic churches** led the movement against slavery. Among Baptists, there was a split in opinion. Proslavery Baptists founded the Southern Baptists. Some elements of the Catholic Church opposed slavery as early as the Middle Ages. Some of the Jesuit, Franciscan, and Dominican orders led the fight against enslavement of both Natives and Africans, while other order members justified and profited from the slave trade. Some Popes condemned “unjust” slavery while sanctioning “just” slavery.

**Enlightenment thinkers John Locke, Jean Jaques Rousseau, Voltaire, and fellow founders Benjamin Franklin and John Adams** had the greatest influence on Jefferson's ideas on slavery.

Many of the Founding Fathers were ambivalent and hypocritical about slavery, often sharply critical and opposed in theory, but continuing to own many slaves and live off slavery profits. The Constitution was part of that ambivalent hypocrisy. The Constitution recognized and implicitly protected slavery. Jefferson had originally criticized slavery in the Declaration of Independence, but other slave owning delegates forced that passage's removal.

The Constitution blocked any ban on the slave trade for twenty years, until 1808. After his reelection in 1804, Jefferson, assured of his popularity, saw an opportunity to end the slave trade to the

US for good.

Banning the slave trade was an issue Jefferson devoted decades of his life to. While still a delegate to Virginia in colonial times, Jefferson successfully pushed for a ban on importing slaves into the state. One state after another followed Virginia's lead. By the time of the nationwide ban, only South Carolina still legally allowed slaves brought in from overseas.

These bans were part of a growing antislavery movement across the US. Following the American Revolution, more and more people realized the contradiction between a nation theoretically founded on freedom yet still enslaving based on race. In one northern state after another, slavery was banned. This was made in part easier since slavery was not as important to their economy. Antislavery churches were also far more numerous in the north. **One out of eight slaves in the US were set free.**

In 1794, Congress banned any US ship, ship owner, or ship captain from taking part in the international slave trade. It was now illegal for any American to own a slave ship, build one, equip a ship to become a slave ship, or captain a slave ship flying under the American flag. Anyone breaking the law forfeited their ship and also faced huge fines. The first prosecution came only a year later.

There had even been an attempt to ban slavery from all future US states. Congress, again led by Jefferson, tried so only shortly after the American Revolution. The ban failed to pass by only a single vote. Another ban shortly passed, the Northwest Ordinance, which banned slavery from all territory north of the Ohio River, what would become the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Thus when Jefferson sent his State of the Union message to the nation in 1806, he felt confident it would be well received. He called on Congress "...to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country, have long been eager to proscribe." Note that **his call was a moral call to duty, one appealing to human rights and maintaining Africans were innocent, undeserving of enslavement.**

**Congress not only passed the ban. They took it one step further and classified slave trading as piracy, an act punishable by death.** Then the US Navy as a regular part of its duties patrolled between the US, Cuba, and South America to catch slave traders, using its African Squadron. The size of the US coast and small US Navy made the ban difficult to enforce. The international slave trade was far more effectively stopped by the British Royal Navy's Africa Squadron, which patrolled close to Africa. Most other nations agreed to allow their ships to be stopped by the British Navy. The US did not. Not until the 1842 Treaty of Webster Ashburton did the two nations cooperate to end slavery.

The passage of the slave trade ban was the high point of abolitionism until the Civil War. Jefferson remained silent for most of the rest of his life due to fear his relationship with Sally Hemmings would become a public scandal. (See Section Two.) It even led to his turning a blind eye to genocide by the French army during the Haitian Revolution.

Many slave traders kept shipping in slaves illegally, the best known being pirate Jean Lafitte and his partner Jim Bowie. The internal slave trade became more important to the southern economy. The upper southern states sold off their slaves to the deep south and slave states farther west. In the deep south, Christian ministers sought to convert more slaves to Christianity and encouraged slave owners to think of themselves as father figures. But more and more, slave owners became more entrenched in their defense of slavery. **Jefferson had taken limits on slavery to as far as any US president ever would, until Lincoln.**

Europe's Napoleonic Wars affected the US as well. Both nations "impressed," or more honestly, kidnapped, foreign sailors into their navy, as well as their merchant marines. In a few very public cases, the British Navy fired on or boarded US ships searching for escaped kidnap victims. Some Americans, indignant and more patriotic than sensible, called for war, completely ignoring just how powerful both Britain and France were. Jefferson's compromise was to pass first the Embargo Act and then the Non-Intercourse Act, banning trade between the US and both Britain and France. Jefferson hoped to use this

as an intermediate step before war, to give public anger time to cool, and also to prepare for war should it come.

More than a few historians call Jefferson's presidency a failure. Many point especially to his foreign policy with Britain and France and decry what they call his weakness. Some argue he should have confronted the two nations. His embargo did fail in that it did not harm either Britain or France. British and French goods were smuggled in, while American goods could not be shipped out. Jefferson and his embargo became enormously unpopular.

But such a focus on punishing enemies or personal popularity misses the main point. For the short term, Jefferson avoided war with Britain, which as the later War of 1812 shows, would have been disastrous, an almost guaranteed heavy loss. **Jefferson also avoided war with France entirely, earlier having good enough relations to buy the French claim to the Louisiana Territory.** The previous president, John Adams, had blundered so badly that his minister Charles Pickney was forced to flee to Belgium.

The French foreign minister, Talleyrand, demanded bribes, standard practice at the time. Adams decided to publish the demand, angering the US public enough that the two nations stumbled into what is often called the Quasi War, mostly a buildup of the US military and bluffing. There were also three minor naval battles, each nation capturing one of the other's ships. Only by a combination of Napoleon's naval losses to the British and Jefferson's negotiations did the two countries go from a state of war to the Louisiana Purchase.

Strangely, some scholars praise Jefferson for the Barbary War against pirates, though that ended in an inconclusive failure. Some historians argue Jefferson should be blamed for US weakness militarily prior to the War of 1812. But most rightly blame the War of 1812 on the appropriately named War Hawks. A hyper nationalistic faction deluding itself they could take on the most powerful empire in the world, their war brought ruin to the US. Some compare them to today's neo conservative movement.

**Jefferson's only alternative would have been to go to war in 1807, one the US would have lost even more disastrously than in 1812.** As it is, the War of 1812 was already more of a defeat than the US-Vietnam War, for Washington itself was occupied and the White House and Capital burned down. British troops only withdrew from DC because of storms. It shows both leadership and courage to sacrifice one's popularity and future standing in history for the greater good of the nation. But that is what Jefferson chose to do.

Van Buren Avoided Wars with Britain and Mexico,  
Delayed Genocide of California Indians

**What:** By his principled opposition to slavery (though he felt bound by the Constitution's recognition of it) **Van Buren delayed both a war of aggression with Mexico to expand slavery and the genocide of California Indians that followed. He also twice avoided another likely disastrous war with Britain.**

**The Number of Lives Saved:** The later war with Mexico begun by President Polk killed 19,000. Genocide against California Indians killed 120,000 to 300,000. An earlier war with Britain killed 20,000, though this potential war likely would have been longer, cost more lives, and inconclusive.

**Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**The Whig Party** led opposition in Congress to slavery and war with Mexico.

**Abolitionists** were the main force nationwide opposing the taking of Texas from Mexico.

Van Buren spent most of his life as a pure political climber, working his way up the ladder building a political machine, then joining the Jackson administration, going from Secretary of State to Vice President and finally candidate for President. He spent most of his life trying to get the office only to be hated once he was president, and happy to leave the office after one term where he acquired the nickname "Martin Van Ruin."

Yet simply by being more independent minded and decent once he was in office, Van Buren prevented two wars, one very useless and the other a war of aggression, and held off a genocide for a decade. Doing so disappointed his sponsor, Andrew Jackson, and other Democrats wanting conquest.

That makes Van Buren all the more admirable. A final two points, these sure to anger anti-immigrant types: Van Buren was the only US president to speak English as his second language. He was also the first US-born president, all the previous ones having been born on British territory.

Almost immediately, Van Buren faced a possible war with Britain. **In two separate incidents, some Americans tried to provoke war.** In Canada, independence fighters rose up, fled to upstate New York and recruited Americans to their side. British forces attacked their refuge, an island in between the two nations, killing an American. Some Americans in the area burned a British ship and then called for war.

Van Buren sent General Winfield Scott to make it clear he would meet vigilante violence with his own violence. He declared the US neutral on Canadian independence, and passed through Congress a neutrality law making it illegal for Americans to invade another nation. Only a year later, trouble broke out in Maine. Some Americans occupied disputed territory and the British removed them. The Governor of Maine called for troops.

Again, Van Buren sent Scott. This time the two countries signed the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Both crises made Van Buren very unpopular in New York and Maine. But a war with Britain over small pieces of unimportant territory would have cost thousands of lives and likely still ended in US defeat. The treaty also helped stop the illegal slave trade, saving thousands of Africans. (See the prior entry.)

In stopping a war with Mexico, Van Buren showed even greater courage. He was the only president between Jefferson and Lincoln to stand up to the power of slave owning elites and prevent an expansion of slavery. In doing so, Van Buren also unintentionally helped delay a genocide in California.

Anglo-American colonists tried to take over Texas. Though invited in by the government of Mexico, they quickly began to defy the nation's laws, especially on owning slaves. Many were also deeply racist towards indigenous Mexicans, who they regarded as barbaric for their Indian ancestry. Some exaggerated Mexican government infighting among elites as “tyranny.” Santa Ana, the President

of Mexico, was quite incompetent, but never killed any opponents except insurgents committing treason.

Despite most Anglo-Americans living in Texas less than a year, they declared the land to be theirs and rose up in an insurgency. Their intent from the beginning was to take Texas away from Mexico to be a slave state in the US. **Anglo-American insurgents applied to be a US state only two days after beginning their uprising.**

Van Buren publicly opposed taking Texas from Mexico. At the time of the insurgents' call, their uprising was far from a sure thing. The insurgents made enormous tactical mistakes and were so badly defeated at the Battles of the Alamo and Goliad that both rebel groups were entirely wiped out. The remains of the entire insurgency fled east, most of the way to the US border. Only a clumsy tactical mistake (forgetting to post sentries) by Santa Ana at the Battle of San Jacinto brought a chance victory.

Santa Ana was captured and forced to sign an invalid treaty, pretending Texas was independent. But in fact Texas was never truly independent. No nation recognized them except France, whose ambassador failed to show, and later on the US once the government decided it wanted Texas. Then it suited the federal government to agree to the legal fiction of Texas independence.

But that would be nine years in the future. When news hit the US of the insurgents' call for a US takeover of Texas, many Americans were outraged. The Whig Party, with many antiwar and antislavery voters, opposed such a theft of Mexico's territory. Van Buren's own Democratic Party was split down the middle.

Van Buren wisely came out against the takeover of Texas from Mexico. The insurgent call to be part of the US appealed to both American patriotism and racism. They stressed how much in common they had with the US, where most had come from only months or even weeks before. They also race baited, referred to Mexicans as "barbarians."

Van Buren's reply was far more diplomatic than the insurgents' crude appeal. He did not tackle the question of Texas' dubious claim of independence. Though there were ministers from the Texas

insurgents in Washington, the US sent only a series of charge d'affairs to the area the invaders semi-controlled, lower ranked officials sent to assess a situation.

Van Buren in his reply stated there was no US precedent for taking another (alleged) nation. He also stated correctly that claiming Texas would start a war with Mexico. This implied he recognized Mexico's right to its own territory of Texas. Van Buren went on to say he saw no conflict in treaties between Texas and the nations of Europe. In essence he challenged insurgents to prove their independence and get recognition from Europe first.

This angered the insurgents. Their plans to be a US slave state fell apart for now. They turned to trying to get recognition from Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Prussia, and France. Every nation turned them down except for France, and that attempt faltered due to the failure to exchange ambassadors. The takeover of Texas by the US would have to wait until a pro slavery president (even a slave trader, in secret) named James Polk took office.

An earlier war with Mexico would likely have killed even higher numbers. Such a war would have happened not only at the same time as US conflicts with Britain, but close to the same time as Mexico's conflicts with France over unpaid debts led to the Pastry War. **With both the US and Mexico likely fighting other nations at the same time, an earlier US-Mexico War would have been longer, bloodier, and maybe inconclusive.** The US was also in the middle of losing the Second Seminole War. That war took over 10,000 US troops, over 1,600 of them dying in war. The Seminole Wars began 30 years before Van Buren and continued almost 20 years after he left office.

As an alternative to stop the US-Mexico War, Van Buren's diplomatic nature could have proposed a compromise with Mexico. Both could have accepted the actual Texas border at the Nueces River rather than the ludicrous claims of the Rio Grande boundary extending all the way to modern day Wyoming. Texas would be perhaps half the size it is today, without the southern and western areas that are far more Latino than the rest of the state culturally. That assumes Mexico would take the offer, since they had turned down two previous US offers to buy Texas. What may make a settlement more

likely is not just the other conflicts complicating the war. Van Buren was not nearly the fanatic believer in American conquest that Polk was.

There were also several minor revolts in California, somewhat like Texas, insurgencies by foreign invaders from the US. Unlike Texas, they were not trying to take the state away for a slave state. None of the revolts lasted even a month, and some involved only a few dozen rebels. Had US-Mexico conflict stopped with a Texas compromise, there is every reason to believe California and the rest of the northern territory (what became the southwest US) would remain part of Mexico.

The final and most important thing Van Buren did was purely unintentional. He stopped the genocide of California Indians. There is no sign that Van Buren had any concern for Natives in California. This work has argued that presidents should get at least some credit for doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Should a president also be given partial credit for accidentally halting an evil for entirely unrelated reasons, one he does not even recognize as evil?

Van Buren certainly was indifferent to Native lives. For it was he who partly carried out the forced removal of one of the Five Tribes, the Trail of Tears. Forced removal was pushed, planned, and engineered by Jackson for his entire two terms in office. In fact Jackson made it a central part of his election strategy. But it was Van Buren who sent troops to remove the Cherokee less than a year into his own term. This is a further reason an earlier US-Mexico War would be disastrous, more drawn out, and cost more lives. Most of the US Army was forcibly removing the Five Tribes.

Over time Van Buren became more strongly opposed to slavery. As president he considered it an evil but vowed to protect it where it already existed while blocking its spread. He ran for president again in 1848 for the Free Soil Party, whose position was the same as his own. Van Buren later supported Lincoln for president. The political climber became more principled with time.

## Lincoln, the Civil War, and Emancipation of Both Blacks and California Indians

**What:** This may be the most widely known and least disputed argument in this book. **Lincoln won the Civil War, keeping the United States united and abolishing slavery.** Most who dispute Lincoln's success fall into two camps, white racists or Black racists. The former hate Lincoln because they hate Blacks and/or defend slavery and the white supremacist Confederacy created solely to defend enslavement based on race. The latter hate Lincoln because they hate whites and believe no white man can be trusted. What is far less known is that Emancipation enabled a Republican effort that freed California Indians as well.

**The Number of Lives Saved: American slaves had an infant mortality rate double that of free people.** This includes a higher death rate than either poor whites or free Blacks. Every additional year of slavery in the US killed thousands of Black and Indian infants.

**The Confederacy also planned to bring back the slave trade.** This would have brought a **death rate from 10-50% for slaves smuggled in** despite the British Navy's efforts to stop the slave trade. In Cuba and Brazil, the slave trade continued illegally right up to the time of abolition. In the US the last illegal slave ship docked in the US in 1859. The Confederacy could not smuggle in slaves any more because of the Union blockade, but no doubt would have. Their internal slave trade continued right up until surrender. When Richmond fell, American troops found slaves still in the slave pens and auction houses.

**The Confederacy also planned wars of aggression against Mexico and the Dominican Republic. There were also plans for war against Spain to take Cuba and Puerto Rico, or buy the colonies.** Since the Confederate government was broke and its economy crippled by blockade and a slave general strike and huge numbers of escaped slaves, they did not have money to buy these

colonies. It is unlikely the CSA could invade Guam and the Philippines as the US did in the Spanish-American War. The CSA lacked the ability to send an invasion halfway around the world. The rather pathetic Confederate Navy was always small, most of them destroyed by the US Navy, scuttled, or unseaworthy. (There were also Confederate pirates that had little effect on the war.) But an invasion only 90 miles from Florida was possible.

The death toll from similar wars ranged from perhaps 90,000 deaths in the Spanish-American War, at least 10,000 deaths in the Dominican War of Restoration, and at least 24,000 deaths from the French invasion of Mexico. It is uncertain if the death toll would be as high for the last, since their intent was to take several states, not all of Mexico.

But the toll would be even higher for any conquest of Cuba or the Dominican Republic. Both the Dominicans and Mexicans defeated French and Spanish invaders, and Cuban rebels took control of two thirds of Cuba before US troops joined the war. Any Confederate wars thus would be longer and costlier. So **Lincoln's defeat of the Confederacy may have saved more than 124,000 lives in four nations from three potential Confederate wars of aggression.**

There is no denying war is evil, but there are also righteous wars that must be fought for the greater good of humanity. The Civil War was one of two such wars in US history, against an irredeemably evil foe defending an irredeemably evil institution. Lincoln deserves credit for ending the monstrosity that was slavery and the equally monstrous Confederacy.

**Emancipation greatly slowed but did not end the sharp decline of the California Indian population.** Genocide and enslavement ended, but reservation conditions still led to Native population declines from starvation, disease, and violence from Anglo-American colonists. The California Indian population, just like Natives population on reservations nationwide, did not finally start to grow again until the 1900s.

**Who Else Gets the Credit:**

**Black slaves**, who largely freed themselves and brought down the plantation slave-owning elites who had run the US since colonial times.

**Abolitionists**, who along with Blacks transformed the war from a pragmatic if faltering attempt to keep the Union into a successful moral crusade to end slavery.

**Feminists** were a central part of the abolitionist movement. Almost all early feminists were abolitionists, and vice versa.

**Southern Unionists** who stayed loyal to the United States and did not commit treason as Confederates did. **Over 300,000 fought as part of the US Army**, and many others kept large areas of the south out of Confederate control before Union troops liberated the areas.

**Confederate draft dodgers and deserters** were far higher in number, proportionately, than in the Union, showing that for most poor southerners, this was seen as a “rich man's war and a poor man's fight.” The Confederacy was an oligarchy, an elite run government, not anything close to a democracy. The high resistance of most southerners to fighting this war shows that. Huge regions of the south resisted the Confederacy, recognizing it as unjust and tyrannical.

**The United States (Union) Army and Navy, especially Generals Grant and Sherman** successfully defeated the Confederacy despite huge tactical disadvantages. Confederate territory was enormous, half the size of Europe. This land was mostly shielded by the Appalachian Mountains. To defeat the Confederate insurgents, the US Army had to basically march down the barrel of a shotgun, fighting their way either through northern Virginia or the Mississippi Valley. The US Navy also faced the daunting task trying to blockade over 3000 miles of coast, plus seizing the Mississippi River. In the end the US military found it easier to simply take port cities.

Ironically, **the Confederate government and military played a big part in their own defeat through their incompetence.** The CSA government often was divided and bickering with state governments. Such bumbling led to famine in the south, with both Georgia and Texas governors refusing to allow their food to aid the hungry.

**Confederate generals such as Robert Lee were also often less competent than their reputation.** Though Lee did halt US armies, he did so by losing proportionately greater numbers of his own men in a number of pyrrhic victories. Lee also was badly beaten in four battles, the first loss earning him the nickname “Granny.” Lee only seems a great general for two reasons: by comparison to even worse commanders such as McClellan, and because former Confederates endlessly promoted him despite the facts.

Lee's promoters and other Confederacy defenders are known as the Lost Cause or Redeemers, and their devotion to him was as fanatic as any fundamentalist's and as immune to facts or reason. Originally led by former CSA General Jubal Early, they established the Southern Historical Society. Most images of Lee, Jackson, and Stuart as noble Confederate heroes can be traced back to the Lost Cause. Lost Cause partisans also led long campaigns to denigrate Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman, creating myths such as the supposed horrors of the march through Georgia. (See Section Eleven.)

The Lost Cause continues today, promoted by white supremacists in the Neo Confederate movement, especially the Sons of Confederate Veterans and its *Confederate Veterans* magazine, the League of the South secessionists, the segregationist Conservative Citizens Council (formerly the White Citizens Council), and the Southern Legal Resource Center. Perhaps the Neo Confederates' greatest success has been popularizing their slogan “Heritage not Hate” while successfully hiding their white supremacist beliefs from much of the public. The SCV even hoodwinked the State of Georgia into offering the slogan on their license plates, and part of the fee goes to the SCV. This means ***Georgia state taxpayer money goes directly to this white supremacist organization.***

**The Republican Party of California, Lincoln's appointees and allies,** brought an end to legal enslavement of California Indians.

Much of what Lincoln accomplished is well known to the public, but is still no less important or impressive. A slight majority of northerners actually initially favored letting the Confederacy secede.

Even many of his own cabinet were defeatist. Incompetence mixed with outright sabotage and collaboration with Confederates by Buchanan's administration made Lincoln's task almost impossible. (See Section Four.) Many did not believe the United States would stay one nation. Lincoln himself had many doubts.

Yet by a mixture of eloquence, political skill, and canny coalition building, Lincoln united Congress and elements of the US public, from Abolitionist churches to German free thinking radicals to free Blacks to working class southern whites. There were large sections of the northern areas disloyal or apathetic, rural whites in the Ohio Valley and urban Irish populations in large cities. Contrary to some claims, border slave states were mostly loyal, with three quarters of the population staying pro US. Confederate armies invading north found few sympathizers.

Racists, both white and Black, often spread lies about Lincoln's abolitionism, as do others. One of the most obvious lies is that Lincoln supposedly owned slaves. Claiming that a man living almost all his life in a free state (Illinois) who was a poor country lawyer barely able to afford a small home could be a slave owner is ludicrous. The more complicated lie is to accuse Lincoln of racism.

Was Lincoln a racist? This claim usually comes from Confederate apologists who care nothing about racism, and it is virtually impossible to be more racist than Confederate leaders. **Lincoln, like every other great civil rights president, started off as a conflicted racist, but then became a reformed racist fighting against his former nature.**

Prior to the Civil War, Lincoln at times argued Blacks were inferior. In the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, Douglas as the far more racist of the two angrily accused Lincoln of being "the Black man's friend." Lincoln responded with a qualified defense of Black civil rights. He said he did not favor intermarriage nor Blacks on juries, but he did believe Blacks had the right to earn a living and live free from slavery and violent racism.

Early on, Lincoln favored colonization of former slaves, voluntarily trying to send them to Africa, the Caribbean, or Central America. But **from 1862 until the end of his life, Lincoln was a**

**dedicated anti racist and the strongest advocate for Black equality possible.** In newly free Louisiana, Lincoln ended slavery, ordered the vote for Blacks, free schools, and publicly spoke for the equality of Blacks. His opinion changed both from searching his own conscience and from frequent meetings with Frederick Douglass. Douglass described Lincoln as one of the few white men he ever met to truly treat him as an equal.

At the start of the war Lincoln feared trying to emancipate all slaves would alienate the border states and large parts of the north hostile or indifferent to abolitionism. Emancipation was both a wily military and political strategy and a sincere effort that transformed the war into a moral cause. The Emancipation Proclamation crippled the Confederate economy, leading to even greater numbers of runaway slaves and a wider general strike among slaves still on plantations.

Emancipation also ended any chance for the Confederacy to ever get recognition from other nations, for abolition was already a fact in most of Europe and Latin America and as appealing to the masses of ordinary people as it was hated by elites. Emancipation transformed the war from one of self-preservation to a great crusade for justice. **US soldiers were far more abolitionist than the general public.** We know this from reading their letters and diaries. The general pattern became; abolitionist young men joined the military; or they became abolitionists after seeing slavery firsthand in the south; soldiers then tried to win their family and friends to the abolitionist cause in their letters; upon returning home, veterans pushed anti slavery beliefs even more to those they knew.

Abolishing slavery also meant there was a huge pool of Blacks for both the US military and its labor needs. **By war's end, Blacks made up as much as a quarter of the US Army** and many others worked as army laborers. Former slaves also became most of the guides and spies for the US Army. Bands of runaway slaves fought the Confederate military.

By contrast there were fewer than 100 Blacks in the Confederate Army. That has not stopped Confederate apologists from spreading the "Black Confederate" lie. Almost all those portrayed as Black Confederate troops were actually slaves drafted as laborers or brought by their owners to be

personal servants.

As Confederates began to lose the war, its leaders finally turned in desperation to the thought of offering freedom to Black slaves who enlisted. The debate went on for almost two years, with most CSA leaders still strongly opposed. Finally, barely a month before the war's end, the Confederate Army accepted less than 100 Black slaves and made them hospital orderlies. During the siege of Petersburg, a few of them were given guns and marched towards the front. There is little evidence these orderlies-turned-infantry actually fought in battle.

Lincoln's record on American Indians, though limited by his focus on the Civil War, is a mixture of neglect, brute force, and attempts to bring better treatment for Natives. In two instances, Lincoln was party to great atrocities. In the southwest, Colonel Kit Carson, on the orders of General Carleton, attacked Navajo villages and tried to round up the entire tribe. Thousands of Navajo were force marched to Bosque Redondo in the Long Walk, much like the Trail of Tears. Bosque Redondo has some of the most barren land in the US, its water mostly undrinkable but an easy source of malaria. After years of protest, the Navajo were returned to their homelands in a very reduced reservation.

The Long Walk began in the last year of Lincoln's life but was mostly carried out under Johnson, and the Navajos returned to their homeland shortly before Grant became president. There is little sign Lincoln paid much attention to the Long Walk. Lincoln did approve using Bosque Redondo to hold the Navajo, on Carleton's recommendation. There is little evidence Lincoln knew of the grim conditions or what Carson's tactics would be.

Late in Johnson's term, news of the high number of Navajo deaths in Bosque Redondo hit the national papers, and tribal leaders Barboncito and Manuelito came to Washington to plead their people's case. Johnson, as much of a delayer and believer in half measures as usual, only agreed to send General Sherman to investigate. Sherman did so, and despite his portrayal by some as being anti Native, he agreed removal to Bosque Redondo was unjust and conditions inhumane. Sherman signed the treaty returning the Navajo to their homeland.

In Minnesota, the Dakota tribe suffered as well, and here Lincoln has less of an excuse but far more of a mixed record. The Dakota reservation could not feed the Dakota people. White colonists worsened conditions by squatting on reservation land, farming, logging, or hunting illegally. Crooked agents often stole funds intended for the Dakota, or supplied spoiled food and shoddy equipment.

When federal agents refused to give Dakota food on credit, some warriors attacked the agency. Soon warriors began raiding colonist farms, and then killing in revenge for colonist thefts from the reservation. An escalating cycle of retribution brought in local militias and the regular army.

Most Dakota warriors surrendered within a few months. Several hundred colonists and over 100 Dakota were dead. Slightly over 300 Dakota were tried in military courts and sentenced to death. Most “trials” lasted under five minutes, were held in English and not explained to the accused. The Dakota had no lawyers, were not allowed to testify, and likely none of them even knew what was happening.

**Lincoln reviewed the cases and spared over five sixths of the accused Dakota. He overturned the verdicts on all but 38 of the 301 Dakota prisoners, setting 263 prisoners free. Lincoln took special care that no Dakota accused only of taking part in battle was executed, allowing only those found guilty of both murder and rape of civilians to be executed.**

But it is certain the remaining 38 did not have fair trials and many were likely innocent. Some Christian religious leaders urged all Dakota be set free. General Pope and Minnesota Governor Ramsey told Lincoln there were white vigilantes waiting to carry out reprisals on the reservation if some Dakota were not executed. Lincoln feared a continuing cycle of retribution, but the right thing for him to have done was use US troops to protect Dakota from the colonists.

Next election the Republican Party did poorly in Minnesota. Ramsey told Lincoln the vote would be different with more executed Dakotas. Lincoln replied acidly, “I could not afford to hang more men for votes.” As for the remaining Dakota, they were forced off their Minnesota homeland into what became South Dakota. Two more Dakota warriors who fled to Canada were kidnapped and then executed after similar farcical trials.

In California, most Natives had been either mass murdered or enslaved even before the state of California legalized Indian slavery during the Gold Rush (See Section Two.) A Democratic state legislature majority even succeeded in 1860 in expanding Indian slavery from “orphans” and “vagrants” to virtually any Indian by forcing ten year apprenticeships on them, de facto slavery. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation pressured California's state government to change its laws.

Lincoln's newly appointed Superintendent of California Indian Affairs, George Hanson, was the first government agent to harshly prosecute the kidnapping of Indians. Republican congressmen overturned the apprenticeship laws in 1863. Lincoln passing the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 abolished slavery, period, whether Black or Indian. When Anglo-American slave owners tried using debt slavery, California Indian agents stopped them in 1867 with the Anti Peonage Act.

**Almost all the anti slavery laws were intended to end Black slavery or aid former Black slaves. But Lincoln or his appointees and Republican allies used them to end Indian slavery in California.** Shortly before his death, Lincoln said to aides that California Indians had been very poorly treated and one of his next priorities would be doing more for them.

Grant's Reconstruction and  
Peace Policy with American Indians

**What: US Grant officially declared an end to the practice of exterminating Natives and replaced Indian Bureau agents with missionaries and military officers to end corruption on reservations. He also used military force to protect Black lives and civil rights during Reconstruction.**

**The Number of Lives Saved: The number of battles between the US Army and Native tribes declined from 101 in 1869 to only 15 in 1875.** Finding numbers on how many lives were saved from improved conditions on reservations is much harder, but there definitely was less corruption. KKK terrorism dramatically declined in states where Grant intervened.

**Who Also Gets the Credit:**

Grant's **Director of the Indian Bureau, Ely Parker**, the first American Indian director, was from the Seneca nation. Parker was a military engineer in the US Army and later Grant's military secretary. It was Parker who actually wrote out the surrender terms at Appomattox. Parker was only at the Bureau two years, but he set the policy under Grant's orders. An opponent fabricated a scandal that cost Parker his office. He was found innocent of all charges.

**Missionaries from churches** who actually ran the reservations for an eight year period. The reservations were divided up between the denominations very arbitrarily. Most missionaries had honest records, but very paternalistic ones as well. Cultural assimilation was the goal, and many missionaries had a poor understanding of the people they were theoretically there to help. Culturally, they could be quite destructive. In terms of stopping deaths, they had a far better record.

**General George Crook** spoke on behalf of the Ponca in the *Standing Bear* case, lobbied for

Apache scouts falsely imprisoned, and spent his years in retirement speaking for better treatment of the same Indian tribes he fought.

**Newspaper editors and activists who took up the American Indian cause, notably Helen Hunt Jackson, author of *Century of Dishonor*, and Thomas Tibbles** for his involvement in the *Standing Bear* case before the Supreme Court.

**Natives themselves, notably activists Standing Bear, Suzette Lافlesche, and Sarah Winnemucca. Later Native activists George Eastman and Carlos Montezuma** also played a role, though in the decades after the Peace Policy, in lobbying for more humane treatment.

**The *Standing Bear* case was the most important one in granting Natives legal rights under US law for the first time.** Standing Bear was imprisoned for leaving the reservation for a funeral. He, Laflesche, and Tibbles successfully argued before the courts for a writ of habeas corpus. The court ruled the federal government was legally bound to treat Indians as wards of the state and provide healthcare, education and legal protection. Indians could now sue the federal government when treaties were not honored.

So called **Radical Republicans** were not radical at all by today's standards. Their ideas seem fairly moderate today, that Blacks should have voting and civil rights and not be murdered for practicing either. It was Radical Republicans who fought President Johnson's and former Confederates' racism every step of the way and who pushed far more consistently than Grant.

A more corrupt and mercenary wave of Republican leaders came into power when the Compromise of 1876 betrayed Black civil rights. In the Compromise, Republican leaders stole the presidential election and agreed to withdraw federal troops from southern states, giving up local control to white supremacist former Confederates.

Grant came into office denouncing what the previous president, Johnson, had done. Johnson was notoriously incompetent, often a drunk, and a racist who did all he could to favor white southern

racist elites over newly freed Blacks. (See Section Five.) In Reconstruction, Grant's policy was mixed. He sought to protect Blacks from terrorism and guard their civil rights as valued Republican allies. It was under Grant that the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, and he pushed states to ratify it. **He put Georgia under martial law to stop KKK terrorism and suspended habeas corpus in South Carolina, arresting many Klansmen.**

**Grant appointed an attorney general and solicitor general who ordered indictments of over 3,000 Klan terrorists, with about 600 convictions. But as the numbers show, Grant did not go far enough.** Juries feared reprisals from terrorists. Most Klansmen were not convicted, and those that were got small sentences or fines. Grant finally decided he wanted reconciliation with Confederate traitors. He was far too lenient and granted many of them amnesty for their treason during the Civil War, pardoning all but a few hundred.

It would not be until occupying Germany after World War II that the US learned the right way to deal with a defeated enemy with an evil ideology determined to start wars: execute all the leaders guilty of war crimes and waging aggressive war, while removing the rest from government for good. Germany even permanently banned the Nazi Party and its symbols. The US would have been a far better nation had the same been done to Confederate traitors. Instead the US sees the surreal situation of millions of Americans wearing a symbol of treason and being taught to admire traitors who tried to destroy the US because of their own fanatic belief in white supremacy.

For his Peace Policy, Grant appointed a ten man Board of Indian Commissioners to advise him and oversee the Indian Bureau. All ten were Protestant ministers or missionaries, serving without pay. The reservations were no longer run by corrupt agents. Instead, missionaries (including Catholic ones) or Army officers were the ranking bureaucrats on agencies.

Grant's approach, combined with that of public reformers and Natives themselves, was one of cultural assimilation. Grant, reformers like Tibbles and Helen Hunt Jackson, and even Native activists like Laflesche and later Eastman and Montezuma, all favored an end to some Native traditions. All

believed in integrating Natives into capitalism and most aspects of western culture. Most Native activists like Winnemucca and Eastman, and even a few white ones, did want to see many aspects of Native cultures continue, though integrating them with adaptation to white society.

Grant was largely unconcerned with cultural issues. He was elected with the slogan, "Let us have peace." In his address to Congress in 1872, he spoke of "wars of extermination" as "wicked and demoralizing" and wanted to limit violence. Unlike the later Indian Boarding Schools (See Section Eleven) Grant's methods tried to avoid force. Native reservations, once intended to be dumping grounds with the worst land few whites wanted, were now to be safe havens from white colonists' violence.

This did mean getting tribes to reservations and asking them to give up hunting lifestyles. Though almost all tribes were already farmers, their farming was now to be for markets, not for subsistence. Tribes who had before entered into treaties with Congress now could only turn to military officers for agreements. Where tribes had been independent peoples, now Natives became US citizens if they left the reservation and assimilated. Putting missionaries in charge of reservations guaranteed that not only would there be a push to train Natives in vocations, but also to Christianize them.

Grant personally met with Lakota leaders Red Cloud and Spotted Tail and treated them much like any other foreign dignitary. Both men told Grant about invasions of their homeland, so Grant ordered the military to keep white colonists off Native land even though it made him very unpopular with western voters. Yet there were limits to Grant's claimed good intentions. If tribes did not move to designated land by choice, they were taken by force. Ultimately the federal government still insisted on the final say, and the intent was still to remake Natives in the white man's image.

**But in largely stopping warfare and turning away from extermination, Grant's change in approach was largely permanent.** The list of Native peoples outright massacred by the US Army and white colonists before Grant is disturbingly long. (See Sections Two and Five.) In California alone there were dozens of extermination attempts and outright genocide. During eight years of the Peace

Policy, there were still five massacres of Natives. After the Peace Policy, the list of massacres is thankfully shorter, five massacres in thirteen years. The last massacre was in 1890, over 300 dead at Wounded Knee. It may seem strange to point to “only” hundreds of deaths compared to hundreds of thousands of deaths as an improvement. But it clearly was, by a factor of over 100, and one Grant deserves credit for.

What started Grant's Peace Policy was his disgust at the massacre of Indians. Custer's defeat, and the shocked public reaction, largely marked its end. Though Custer was the aggressor and his men's deaths were largely his fault, to much of the white public he became a martyr. (See Section Ten.)

Parts of the Peace Policy stayed in place. Indian Commissioners continued until the 1900s. The end of treaties, replaced with federal agreements negotiated by officers, also stayed. Some parts worsened. Indian boarding schools abused Native children, killing thousands by disease. (See Section Eleven.)

For both his efforts in Reconstruction and his Peace Policy, Grant was inconsistent and did not go nearly far enough. His missionaries did not break up the corruption, only lessened it. He did not use enough troops or enough force to stop white racists from killing either Blacks or Indians. The best solution is one he did not consider, giving both Blacks and Natives the means with which to defend themselves and become self-sufficient.

But for saving many lives and fighting racism, though not saving all he could have and fighting as strongly as he should have, Grant still deserves credit. Thousands of Blacks and Natives living is worthy of praise. Grant, though not as much as Lincoln, was a strong example of an early anti-racist president. There were other potential presidents, William Butler and Hannibal Hamlin, who would have gone even farther than Grant or Lincoln did. (See Section Ten.)

Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal,  
the Good Neighbor Policy, and World War II

**What: The New Deal committed the federal government to intervening for average people for the first time, not just wealthy elites. The Good Neighbor Policy for a decade and a half brought an end to constant US invasions of Latin America.**

**Though the Axis powers were mostly defeated by the Soviet Union, Roosevelt did lead the US in playing a major part in their defeat.**

**The Number of Lives Saved:** There were 35 invasions in the 42 years before Roosevelt was in office, occupations lasting from weeks to up to twenty years in Haiti's case. Because of Roosevelt, **there was not one single US invasion of Latin America during the twelve years he was in office. Based on averages of previous years, there would typically have been ten or more US invasions of Latin America during those twelve years, with deaths ranging from several hundred to several thousand each.** US control of these nations also retarded local democracy and self sufficient economies.

There would not be an American invasion in Latin America again until Eisenhower was president. There were two cases of US government support for coups, in Panama in 1941 and El Salvador in 1944. Panama's government was fascist and pro-Axis, but El Salvador's was a new democracy.

The New Deal led to measurably better lives for all Americans. **Social Security is the most successful anti poverty program in US history, and poverty is the biggest cause and most reliable predictor of early deaths. Recognition of unions, unemployment insurance, a 40 hour work week, and child labor laws all are successful anti poverty practices that led to longer, healthier lives. Roosevelt's New Deal for Indians also brought self determination for Native tribes, leading to**

**their economic success and longer life spans.**

World War II, along with the Civil War, is one of the only two righteous and justifiable wars in US history. **Roosevelt's alliance with other Allied nations defeated the Axis powers, preventing further atrocities in the millions and Axis domination of the world for the next half century.**

Credit for the Axis defeat belongs mostly to the Soviet Union, but also Britain, the US, Allies across the world, and resistance fighters within Axis occupied nations.

### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**Huey Long and Francis Townsend** first proposed and popularized Social Security. Long was both a US Senator and Governor of Louisiana. Townsend was a doctor and elderly activist. Together with Reverend Charles Coughlin, they formed the Union of Social Justice Party, a leftist coalition opposed to Roosevelt's New Deal as not going far enough. Coughlin is often falsely portrayed as a fascist because of his later anti-Semitism, but had not made his hatred of Jews public at the time the Union Party was formed.

**John Collier, Director of the Indian Bureau,** formulated the New Deal for Indians. This ended the utter control that white government agents had on reservations and returned self rule to Native tribes. The New Deal for Indians also ended forced assimilation in boarding schools that killed thousands of Native children and destroyed cultures and languages. (See Section Eleven.) In its place came bilingual and bi-cultural education that preserved Native cultures and taught self-sufficiency on Native terms.

Allotment, the breakup of tribal land bases, also came to an end. Tribal councils unfortunately today often resemble boards of directors for corporations more than traditional councils. Collier's laws set up councils based on majority rule, where most tribes traditionally ruled by consensus or by councils of respected elders. Some tribes like the Navajo chose to create tribal governments outside of the new rules and closer to their traditions, and they are today far more representative and responsive to

tribal needs than Collier's creations.

**Roosevelt's advisers, often called the Brain Trust, especially Frances Perkins, Louis Brandeis, Harry Hopkins, Felix Frankfurter, and Harold Ickes,** formulated the New Deal. FDR himself was very non-dogmatic, willing to try one idea after another and discard any part of the New Deal that either did not work or faced too much opposition.

**Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs Sumner Wells** formulated the Good Neighbor Policy with Roosevelt and carried it out.

**The opposition of insurgent and protest movements in Latin America, especially populist leaders like Lazaro Cardenas, President of Mexico, and rebel leaders like Ernesto Sandino of Nicaragua,** played a role in how Roosevelt adopted and carried out his new policy. Cardenas pushed Roosevelt to take his policy further than FDR expected. The cost of occupation in nations such as Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua, in addition it being inhumane and undemocratic, was also a reason for ending US invasions. Sandino was such a symbol of resistance that the later Sandinista movement is named after him.

Almost 80 years later, the New Deal remains controversial. Many conservatives despise it, understandably since its success contradicts much of their philosophy. Some wealthy elites hated Roosevelt so much they plotted to overthrow him and put in a fascist dictatorship. (See Section Eleven.)

In his own time, Roosevelt was often falsely accused of being a socialist by those on the right. In fact, Roosevelt was from one of the wealthiest and most elite families in US history. No other president had so many ancestors on the Mayflower, or a family fortune so large.

Actual socialists opposed Roosevelt almost as strongly as those on the right. Huey Long, for example, was a Socialist Party member as a young man. Under his proposed Share the Wealth program every family was to have a guaranteed minimum income of \$5000. No family fortune could be over

\$50 million while no person could make over \$5 million per year. (In today's terms, multiply by five.) Long's Share the Wealth Clubs had over 8 million members.

**Roosevelt's New Deal was corporate liberalism, not socialism.** Corporate liberalism, like the name implies, benefits large business as much as the public and has as its goal just enough reform to satisfy the public and avoid truly radical solutions. Roosevelt bailed out the banks and had the government insure them. A socialist would seize the banks. Roosevelt regulated Wall Street to make it safer for investors. A socialist would take over Wall Street or shut it down.

Roosevelt also passed the Wagner Act, recognizing union rights for the first time. But where a socialist would bring unions into the government, Roosevelt sought government control over unions. Unions now had to apply to the federal government to be certified. **The federal government today routinely de certifies and strips of recognition over 400 union locals each year.** Imagine how hard a time any other lobbyists would have, from gun rights to abortion to feminists to religious groups, were the government to shut down 400 of their chapters every year.

The New Deal also turned to using the federal government to boost the economy by creating demand. The government bought up crops and meat, or paid farmers to grow less to raise the price. Again, a socialist would buy or seize farms to make them government run, not buy farmers' goods to make farmers more money.

The government hired over 9 million workers for public works projects, building roads, dams, bridges, bringing electric power to rural America for the first time, and creating 800 new national parks. In terms of building infrastructure and providing relief, public works were a double success. These government created jobs were the closest the New Deal ever came to partial socialism. But broader measures of the New Deal called the National Recovery Act were shut down by the courts.

**What infuriates conservatives the most is that the New Deal worked, and that conservative and libertarian economic practices obviously both created and worsened the Depression.** What much of the public does not realize is that there were actually two waves to the

Great Depression, the better known one starting in 1929, another in FDR's second term. What created the first was over reliance on wealthy elites' spending, in other words, inequality.

Libertarian economists like Milton Friedman claimed the opposite, that the government caused the Depression by failing to expand the money supply. It is more than a little ironic, a libertarian complaining of not enough government intervention. The bigger criticism of Libertarianism generally is that there has never been a nation or society where it is shown to have existed, let alone worked. For all their claims of loving, wanting, and promoting freedom, Libertarian policies have been tried exactly twice, first under the military dictatorship of Chile, where they worsened the lives of most Chileans, enriching elites while others were worse off. Friedman's disciples in the dictatorship gave Chile higher unemployment, more debt, more bankruptcies, a sharp drop in wages, and almost destroyed Chilean public education.

After military dictators, Friedman's second best known disciple was Alan Greenspan, longtime Chairman of the Federal Reserve. His reliance on Friedman's ideas was one the biggest causes of the Great Recession in 2007. Greenspan publicly apologized before Congress for his failures, admitting his mistakes, including that he did not even fully understand what happened.

What caused the second economic slump in the Great Depression was cuts in government spending. Much like many of today's conservatives, elites in the 1930s worried about a growing federal deficit. So to lower that deficit, New Deal programs were cut during FDR's second term. Predictably, cutting back on demand led to another economic slump. When World War II began, high wartime demand led to greater prosperity, for once shared by the majority. The destruction of World War II removed most economic competition, continuing American boom times.

Unions helped spread that prosperity. **Unions plus FDR plus World War II turned the US from a mostly poor nation to a mostly middle class nation, both in incomes and attitudes.** Today the US is the only nation where most working class people from janitors to secretaries think of themselves as middle class. Many well off professionals such as lawyers and upper management pose

as middle class as well.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment the New Deal could point to was Social Security. The elderly, who had been the poorest age group in the US, are now the wealthiest. Like many other Roosevelt accomplishments, he was pushed from farther to the left but then altered the idea in line with corporate liberalism.

**Social Security in the beginning was not only less generous than Long and Townsend wanted. It was limited to only about half of all workers.** Farmers, farm workers, servants, merchant marines, and manual laborers were left out, which meant that a much higher number of American Indians, Asians, Blacks, and Latinos were not eligible. Most women could not get SS either, except through their husbands. Some scholars have misinterpreted early SS to be deliberately racist. This is false. In part FDR agreed to these exclusions to please southern racists. In part these exclusions were because the program was at first partly under the control of state governments, and their leaders were often racist.

It is also worth noting, given all the resistance to Obama care and complaints about its slowness, that SS was passed in 1935. No one received an SS check until five years later, in 1940. And just like with Obama care, there was enormous resistance, with many of the people it would help the most trying to avoid signing up. One of my grandfathers, a sawmill worker during the Great Depression, thought the worst about SS for decades and believed every falsehood put out by opponents. But when he was finally old enough to need it, he accepted it and was glad for the help.

The more important and often overlooked point about SS is how it was passed and why it has remained so long. **The SS tax is regressive, meaning that the wealthy pay less than everyone else.** By law, one only pays SS tax on the first \$110,000 of income. So someone making \$110,000 a year pays the same as Bill Gates, who is worth over \$60 billion. Even noted liberals like Ted Kennedy never tried to challenge this reverse Robin Hood tax. SS supporters fear that if the wealthy have to pay more than the middle and working class, or even the same, elites will try to overturn the law.

Fear of losing elite support is also the reason that SS is paid to the wealthy who do not need it. In a fairer system, the wealthy would pay a progressive SS tax much like on income tax, and only the working class (including the many who imagine themselves to be middle class) would get Social Security. Such a fairer system would also not be facing funding problems. Seemingly the only way to permanently protect SS would be either to break the power of wealthy elites or, more realistically, protect SS by passing a constitutional amendment.

On Latin America, Roosevelt was also a far greater president than those before or after him. The first invasion of Latin America from the US was only ten years after independence. American mercenaries or the US government tried to take over or take away pieces of Latin American nations right up to the time FDR became president. US President Polk provoked a war with Mexico to steal half its land and a tenth of its people. (See Section Three.) President McKinley even conquered Puerto Rico, an island the US was supposed to be freeing from Spanish tyranny, even though Spain had actually granted self rule to Puerto Rico only a month before. (See Section Three again.)

**At the time FDR came into office, US troops were in control of Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua. All three countries had been invaded multiple times by the US, and had been run by the US for anywhere from 15-20 years.** The US government under Herbert Hoover had also just supported the crushing of a popular uprising in El Salvador, its dictator Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez killing perhaps 30,000. Hoover had been prepared to send US ships and troops to take part in La Matanza (“the massacre”).

One of the biggest reasons for US control of Latin America was paternalistic racism. As in the Philippines, some American presidents believed nonwhites were unable to run their own nations. They thought of nonwhites as their “little brown brothers” and were utterly convinced by pseudo scientific racism that whites knew far better what was best. (See Section Three.) When Roosevelt took office, all three of these nations had been under US control since Woodrow Wilson, who holds the record for most countries invaded by a US president. (See Section Five.)

Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Wells were all determined to change that. For one thing, the three men were not racists as McKinley and Wilson were. But human rights were not the only reason to halt the constant invasions. Troops and ships cost money the US did not have during a depression.

More than the cost was the amount of time it took for the US government to run other nations. From Teddy Roosevelt to Hoover, each US president spent much of their time trying to sort out local politics in Central America and the Caribbean, decide who should be supported, who should be fought, when elections should be held if ever, how education should be run locally, etc. Paternalistic racism was definitely racist, but it also insisted upon as much time as a parent spends raising a child. The US President during a depression did not have time to spare.

The Good Neighbor Policy began almost immediately when Roosevelt took office. In March 1933 he announced, "I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor, the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others."

**That year, US troops left Cuba and Nicaragua. The next year they left Haiti.** FDR also renounced the Platt Amendment, where the US required Cuba to accept invasion any time the US government wished. Unlike every other US president during the Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan Wars, Roosevelt did not delay for year after year or make excuses.

FDR also hoped better relations with Latin America would lead to more trade. Perhaps the biggest challenge came in 1938. President Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico took over US oil companies in Mexico, putting them under Mexican government control. The seizure made him one of the most popular presidents in Mexican history, a national hero still on their money and monuments. The day US oil companies were taken is still a Mexican national holiday.

In the US, many called for a blockade or invasion, to punish Mexico by a mix of force and economic and diplomatic weapons. Under any prior US president from McKinley to Hoover, an invasion would have been almost certain. Cardenas was a leftist president, leading the Institutional

Revolution Party, with a Mexican constitution influenced by the anarchist and indigenous ideas of Ricardo Flores Magon and Emiliano Zapata. Cardenas even gave refuge to Communist leader Leon Trotsky. The red baiting hysteria in the US was not long before this.

But Roosevelt immediately rejected any call to use force. Instead he sent diplomats to sit down and discuss paying US oil companies. Actually the US oil companies had long been very predatory. They took Mexican oil under very favorable rates because contracts had been negotiated while Mexico was still under the very corrupt dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. Just prior to Cardenas' takeover, US companies tried to break Mexican oil workers unions, firing three entire workforces, then defying two orders from Mexican courts ruling in favor of the unions.

In the end, US oil companies got market value for “their” property. Nationalized Mexican oil helped Mexico pay for industrialization. Mexico today is still poorer than the US, but not nearly as poor as it would have been without Cardenas’s actions. In recent decades Mexicans have even begun to suffer from a new problem, an obesity epidemic.

World War II brought a new challenge to Roosevelt’s policy. In Panama, the local dictator was fascist and pro-Axis. The US government did not overthrow him, but did support a movement that did. In El Salvador, FDR’s actions were less excusable.

In El Salvador, as FDR came to power, military dictator Maximiliano Hernandez openly supported the Axis and had German military advisers. But when the US and Germany went to war, El Salvador’s markets in Europe were cut off. Hernandez kept his fascist beliefs restrained, even declaring war on Germany. US pressure forced him to allow some free speech. His opponents succeeded in overthrowing him in 1944. These very same opponents were then overthrown only months later. FDR recognized this coup and was very harshly criticized for it.

The Good Neighbor Policy did not survive Roosevelt. Only two years after FDR’s death, Truman sent B-29 bombers, used to deliver A-bombs, to the inauguration of the President of Uruguay, a very unsubtle threat. Three years after that US troops crushed an independence uprising in Puerto Rico.

From Truman to Obama, every US president except Carter and Ford either invaded nations in Latin America or supported dictatorships and the overthrow of Latino democracies. Obama supported two coups, in Honduras and Uruguay, while Hillary Clinton's adviser worked with Republicans to publicly campaign for crushing democracy in Honduras. (See Section Eleven.)

A return to a Good Neighbor Policy may seem needed more than ever. But it may be less necessary since Latin America is the most independent from US control it has ever been. For the first time, every major nation in the region except Mexico and Peru is entirely free from US control, as are most smaller nations.

In part this is due to the Bolivarian movement, led by leftist populists like Evo Morales and formerly by Hugo Chavez. But even without Bolivarianism, most of the area turned away from the US, which is good for all. Colonialism harms the colonizer almost as much as colonial subjects. The US would be far better off no longer being an empire or acting like one.

Roosevelt also deserves credit as one of the US's greatest wartime leaders, the equal of Lincoln. It is more than a little strange to see conservatives rewrite history and claim World War II as their victory when it was won by the most liberal president the US ever had, with advisers often to his left. Most conservatives in the 1930s and 40s were isolationists. Some were pro fascist, even working with Hitler and taking part in the Holocaust or plotting to overthrow FDR and install fascism in the US. (See Sections Two and Nine.) Some like John Wayne dodged the draft, while others like Reagan played token roles at best.

**Roosevelt united the US in a war effort in ways few other potential presidents at the time could have.** He was enormously charismatic and adept at using the media. It is difficult to imagine a Republican President Wilkie, Lindbergh, or Taft doing the same. Indeed Lindbergh or Taft as dedicated isolationists would try to stay neutral for longer. Lindbergh also believed in pseudo-scientific racism and truly admired the Nazis, though he would not have pushed the US to join the Axis. Potential Democratic Presidents Huey Long or Henry Wallace would have joined the war at similar points as

FDR. But being to Roosevelt's left, they may have been less able to rally US society as a whole. Long was also notoriously corrupt and that likely would carry over to running the wartime effort. While he despised Hitler, Long was also an isolationist, and so prior to Pearl Harbor would have avoided not just war, but even preparing for war as FDR did with a draft and military buildup in 1940.

The defeat of the Axis prevented likely tens of millions of future atrocities. This includes not only continuing deaths in the Holocaust but widespread deaths in Slavic countries, especially Poland. Axis collaborators would continue to persecute their fellow countrymen. The number of dissidents killed every year would remain high. In Asia, Japanese militarists were notoriously brutal in their treatment of other Asians, mass executions of civilians, forced labor camps, rape camps filled with local "comfort women," even germ warfare experiments. Allied defeat of the Axis, with FDR playing as a central part, prevented that. Though fascism would have fallen on its own eventually, as it did in Spain, many years of fascism avoided was a great humanitarian achievement that saved many millions.

After the start of the Cold War, many argued the US should have joined World War II earlier, or Britain and France should have confronted Hitler sooner. Isolationism became almost a swear word, appeasement even more so. The failure to stop Hitler sooner became a potent argument for strong anti Communist sentiment.

But while defenders of war and big defense budgets agree, fewer scholars today accept this argument. Soviets and Nazis were not the same enemy with the same resources or defenses. Germany was and is highly industrial and thus more able to launch overseas invasions. Germany also is more able to be conquered since it is a medium sized nation in the middle of Europe. Russia with its huge size and brutal winters is almost unconquerable. (Thus claims that Germany could defeat it in World War II are suspect, and it took a unique set of circumstances to bring Russian surrender in World War I.) The Soviet system had severe internal problems from the start that meant it would die eventually. Fascism, as simply the more extreme version of capitalism and nationalism, might continue longer. The Soviets also never had the ability to successfully invade the US across oceans dominated by the US

Navy, or frozen Alaska.

In any case, how could anyone have gotten the US public to back war earlier, given the failed effort to halt war and imperialism with the League of Nations? That failure was, again, one caused by US conservatives' own prior isolationism, yet strangely their criticism was aimed at peace activists on the left. Britain and France's alleged failure to confront Hitler is also often falsely portrayed. Britain and France were, in fact, confronting him. **Appeasement of Hitler was an effort to buy time** and build up their militaries, not a way to pretend there was no problem, and certainly not a surrender.

The New Deal and his leadership during World War II are why Roosevelt is rightly deemed by scholars as one of the most important and accomplished American presidents. The Good Neighbor Policy is often overlooked and needs as much attention as the other two, for curbing American aggression for so long is impressive. His three huge failures, doing nothing on the Holocaust, targeting Axis civilians with carpet bombing and some US civilians with mass repression, prevent him from being an unqualified great president.

How does one reconcile his greatness with such massive ethical failures? In all three cases he failed to challenge the experts around him, failed to see the bigoted immorality of old money anti Semites in the State Department, Anglo-American farmers and scientific racists, and the amorality of military planners in love with their own weapons. These failures are as troubling as his successes are inspiring.

## Lyndon Johnson and Nixon on Civil Rights and the War on Poverty

**What: Civil rights acts of the 1960s, Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty, and Nixon's continuation and expansion of many of them.**

**The Number of Lives Saved: Lynchings and other political violence by white supremacists killed hundreds a year. The political and social exclusion these atrocities enforced kept nonwhites disproportionately poor and more likely to die younger. Anti poverty programs of the Great Society successfully reduced the US poverty rate from going as high as 31% to only 15%. Deep poverty among children dropped from 20% to under 6%. We know these programs worked. The biggest failure was not doing them on a wider permanent scale and largely giving up after less than fifteen years.**

### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**Civil rights movements (plural).** While most Americans know about Black civil rights groups and leaders such as **Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Non Violent Coordination Committee, the Freedom Riders, and the NAACP**, fewer know about leaders and groups like **Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, Dr. Hector Garcia and the GI Forum, LULAC, MALDEF, MAYO, and the National Congress of American Indians.**

**Black power, brown power, and red power groups like the Black Panthers, La Raza Unida, and the American Indian Movement** did not, for the most part, succeed in passing many laws. But they did play a huge role in normalizing cultural pride. All three pride movements defeated assimilation as a goal sought by minorities. The most obvious sign of their success is that even most conservative whites find it strange that a minority would deny their heritage or not want to celebrate their ancestry.

**The GI Bill** enlarged American Indian, Asian, Black, and Latino middle classes. For the first time since Civil War pensions, the federal government aided a large segment of the public without regard to race. Millions of minorities fought in World War II, from the famous Code Talkers of twelve different Native tribes to the Japanese-American 100th and 442nd Battalions to the Tuskegee Airmen, to millions of lesser known minority veterans in both combat and support roles. Military service played a huge role in spurring activism. After facing bombs and bullets, a lynching seemed far less frightening. Both combat and military discipline provided confidence to take on racists, and service provided patriotic legitimacy to activists.

**World War II** also created many expectations for returning veterans. Official government propaganda stated that prejudice was wrong because it hurt the war effort. Since the enemy was a white supremacist dictatorship, for many the war was the Double V Campaign, victory over racism both abroad and at home. Since the Nazis were obvious racists, racism became much harder for white Americans to justify.

**The Cold War** forced the federal government to intervene to aid civil rights. Since the US was seeking allies in the Third World, in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Mideast, one could not easily recruit such allies if there were images of police attacking nonwhites in papers and on television. In some cases the federal government directly intervened, getting city governments to desegregate so that military officers from Third World nations training in the US would not be humiliated by whites only and colored only separate bathrooms, theaters, etc.

**The union movement, including socialists and non-dogmatic communists** played a central role in aiding the civil rights movements. Many early unions were whites only. Often the only labor activists who would recruit minorities were socialist or communists (not allied with the Soviet Union) such as **A Philip Randolph and Emma Tenayuca**.

**Tribal governments and other local governments** often were the first place minorities achieved self rule. Tribal councils successfully defeated Termination, the federal effort to shut down

reservations. Many cities like Lawrence, Louisville, Memphis, San Antonio, Santa Fe, and Tulsa had thriving minority communities that managed to elect minorities to city council, school boards, and even mayors' offices well before the civil rights era.

**Cultural movements** including hundreds of blues, folk, funk, gospel, rhythm and blues, rock, and soul artists all helped spread civil rights messages, gave the movements a voice and popular support, reaching people emotionally as much as intellectually. Perhaps the best known example is the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." Though popularized by folk singer Pete Seeger, the song has its roots in Black gospel music.

**The Supreme Court under Justice Earl Warren** ruled on a series of decisions aiding civil rights. Most notably the Warren court ruled in *Brown v Board of Education* that segregation in schools was illegal and ending it must proceed as quickly as possible. For the first and only time in its history, the court in this era sided with the less powerful. Both before and after the Warren court, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of wealthy elites, racists, and greater government power, and against minorities, unions and working people, consumers, women, and limits on government power.

**Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy** are often given limited credit for some civil rights accomplishments. Truman did desegregate the US military during the Korean War, recognized Israel, and courted those Blacks able to vote. But his record also includes the Termination effort against Native reservations, a civil rights proposal he was unable to pass, and worst of all, dropping the A-bomb on Japan in part because of his own anti-Asian racism. (See Section Two.)

Eisenhower was no racist, but did little for civil rights unless pushed. For years he dragged his feet about segregation, not wanting to antagonize southern racists. Not until several years of protests and finally deaths did he send (unarmed) federal troops to Little Rock, where racists sniped at them at will and were never punished. Eisenhower also fully endorsed Termination his entire time in office.

John Kennedy's reputation is almost as overrated on civil rights as it is on peace. (See Section Nine.) When Kennedy and Nixon ran for president in 1960, there was little difference between them.

Martin Luther King almost endorsed Nixon before deciding it best not to endorse either man. A single phone call by Kennedy after one of King's arrests created the false impression Kennedy backed civil rights. Kennedy dragged his feet even more than Eisenhower. Transcripts of the phone calls between Kennedy and King show the two men loathed each other. At one point Kennedy called King an embarrassment. Only after years of protests did Kennedy reluctantly put forward a civil rights bill that he was unable to pass.

Johnson came into office after Kennedy's assassination and very cleverly called for passage of the Civil Rights Act as tribute to Kennedy. It suited Johnson to pretend Kennedy was a strong supporter of civil rights, as it suits many Democrats and liberals to either pretend as well, or naively believe so.

But Johnson likely could have and would have passed a civil rights bill had he been elected president entirely on his own. Johnson had several decades of successfully winning the support of Mexican and Black voters in his home district, and he did so by both working with and for them and also by being one of the craftiest politicians in US history. His level of persuasion, deal making, and even intimidation were legendary, and he had practiced politicking since the New Deal, as his father had done for decades before that.

**The Civil Rights Act finally put an end to violence and intimidation at the polls.** It is virtually impossible to understate the amount of terrorism and devious tactics used to keep minorities from voting. (See Section Four.) A monopoly on political power by racists meant that minorities lived in the worst areas, worked the worst jobs or were more often jobless than whites, and ultimately lived shorter and grimmer lives. Many never got education, never lived a normal life span, and had every aspect of their much shorter lives limited. The Civil Rights Act opened up possibilities. Neither Black billionaires nor a Black president would have been possible without these acts.

**Johnson was the only US president since Lincoln to both sincerely favor and be able to pass strong civil rights laws that changed many lives permanently and for the better.** He was far from acting alone, as the long list before shows. He was pushed from below by millions of people and

hundreds of dedicated leaders across a wide spectrum. Civil rights protesters were truly a mass movement, the same size as the largest peace movements, feminists, and unions.

But unlike Truman, who favored civil rights but did not accomplish as much as he wanted, Eisenhower and Kennedy, who did as little as possible and had to be pushed for years to do even that, and Nixon, who agreed to continue what happened before out of indifference and to have a free hand on other matters, Johnson passionately believed in what he did, did all he could, and put the entire strength of the presidency and his own skill into it. Johnson spoke publicly of his support for civil rights, even quoting “We shall overcome” in a speech. He also appointed Thurgood Marshall as the first Black Supreme Court justice. Johnson, by appointing Marshall, set a precedent that the Supreme Court should reflect the ethnic makeup of the US.

There were three big effects of Johnson's Civil Rights Act. Minorities could finally vote without fear, leading to minorities finally elected into office in numbers close to their proportion of the population. Laws barring interracial marriage and racist immigration quotas were overturned. America went from nine tenths white to two thirds white in 40 years, and soon will not have any racial majority.

Finally, the Democrats lost the support of southern racists. Southern racists switched to being Republicans. Nixon and most major GOP leaders openly courted them with their southern strategy. The Democrats lost many elections, both congressional and presidential, because of the Civil Rights Act. **Johnson chose what was right over what would get his party votes, and deserves credit for that.** Republicans, once the party of Emancipation and Reconstruction, have openly welcomed racists ever since the 1960s, and deserve condemnation for that.

Johnson's Great Society was ambitious, almost a Marshall Plan for the poor of America. The War on Poverty did work, though not nearly as well as either supporters or critics wanted. It cut poverty rates, and as said before, poverty rates are the best predictors of life expectancy.

One of the biggest successes of government anti poverty programs is in saving and improving the lives of small children. School lunch programs and Head Start have a measurable effect on helping

improve school performance and graduation rates. This in turn lowers both poverty rates and crime rates. Aid to the poor, or its hated synonym welfare, also dramatically improves the lives of youth. Contrary to stereotype, most people on welfare are white, were once middle class, only use welfare for a short time, and are helped by it. The biggest group on welfare is recently divorced or abandoned mothers with children, made poor for the first time because the fathers cannot or will not support them. The one thing welfare does not do is stop or discourage people from working. Most people on it also work, but don't make enough to live on.

**Nixon, the famed anti Communist hardliner and early conservative culture warrior, actually was far more moderate and even liberal in practice than either his supporters or critics often know or admit.** Devoted and even obsessed with foreign policy alone (though not nearly as skilled as many claim, as discussed elsewhere) Nixon largely chose to ignore domestic policy. Thus it suited Nixon to concede virtually everything the left wanted domestically.

Though he was doing many right things for the wrong reason, Nixon still should get credit. Just listing what Nixon agreed to during his time is impressive; extending the Voting Rights Act to protect civil rights; Title IX, which helped end sexism in education; the Clean Air Act that gave the country less pollution; and workplace safety rules that saved lives.

Nixon imitated and expanded both FDR's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society. He also passed cost of living increases for Social Security, expanded Social Security to the handicapped unable to work, and increased food stamps and unemployment benefits. Nixon even tried an explicitly socialist idea, wage and price controls. The former red baiting Cold Warrior came out in favor of what he considered Communist in the first twenty years of his career.

It was Nixon, not Democrats or liberals, who began Affirmative Action (AA). Contrary to what critics of AA claim, it has largely been a success. AA is far more about sexism than racism, and those who harp about largely mythical reverse racism do not even try to hide their own racism. AA mostly helps secure and protect white women's jobs and education far more than minorities. Again, a drop in

poverty leads to saved and longer lives.

It was also Nixon, not Democrats nor liberals, who began the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has been a success, though more limited. Air pollution dropped over the past four decades, leading to healthier and longer lives. Water pollution also dropped, but not nearly as much. Because water supplies are often under local control, and state and governments can be pressured or persuaded by corporate interests easier than at the federal level, many more local water supplies remain unsafe and harm children especially.

Nixon also had a good record on treatment and relations with American Indian tribal nations. The Indian Civil Rights Act, passed under Johnson, made civil rights laws apply to reservations. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement, passed by Nixon, marked the first time Natives were justly compensated for stolen and cheated lands. The Indian Self Determination Act, also passed by Nixon, gave tribes the right to directly run their own facilities for the first time, from schools to water and power to jails and courts.

Nixon passed laws favorable to Natives for purely pragmatic political reasons, in an attempt to pretend he was not a racist. Nixon's own words in private, captured on the Watergate tapes, show the opposite, long bigoted rants against Blacks and Jews, even demands for lists of influential Jews. Often he even ranted about Jews to Kissinger, who had lost family in the Holocaust. Kissinger, true to his mindless love of power, would agree. Nixon made lives better for many ethnic groups he held in deeply racist contempt, one of the more surreal episodes in presidential history.

## Carter and Human Rights

**What: Carter was the first and only US president to proclaim human rights the center of foreign relations.** As Cambodia and East Timor both show (see Sections One and Two), it was not a practice uniformly followed, with huge gaps and contradictions. But Carter's policy did save many lives, very imperfectly. **Many dissidents in right wing and military dictatorships were saved. Dictatorships limited their repression or even ended sooner because of Carter.**

Even more surprising to those on the right who think little of Carter, **his human rights policy enormously aided dissidents in Communist countries and helped bring that evil system to an end,** far more effectively than hardline anti Communism from Reagan and others that prolonged the Cold War. (See Section Four.)

**The Number of Lives Saved: The Carter administration claimed over 40 countries changed for the better because of human rights pressure. Not all those claims stand up.** But the following nations were better off directly because of Carter.

The dictatorship of Argentina cut off military ties to the US and turned to Britain and Israel for weapons and military training. This made them far more vulnerable during the Falklands War with Britain, leading to the dictatorship's fall. Reagan overturned the weapons ban, publicly praising the dictatorship until the invasion of the Falkland Islands. While publicly neutral during the war, US intelligence aided the British. **Carter's pressure saved lives in Argentina, with kidnappings by the military dropping from over 500 in 1978 to less than 50 in 1979.** Some conservative critics like William Buckley later admitted they were wrong about Carter, that his intervention likely kept most prisoners from being executed. **Perhaps 1,000 Argentinians were not kidnapped nor killed because of Carter.**

Bolivia's dictatorship refused US military aid because of Carter's pledges for human rights and

democracy. The country stumbled through three corrupt elections in the late 1970s. A military dictatorship returned in 1980. General Luis Garcia Meza was so brutal and corrupt, including alliances with drug cartels and neo Nazis, that even Reagan agreed with Carter the US should have no ties to Meza. In 1982, Meza fell and was convicted of murder. After several other brief military dictatorships, democracy returned to Bolivia. **Both Carter and Reagan deserve partial credit for Meza's fall.**

In Brazil, the Carter administration did aid the pro democracy movement. The military dictatorship did not end until five years after Carter's presidency. But **when ex Carter visited Brazil as an ex president, human rights activists hailed him for aiding the return of Brazil's democracy.**

Carter also tried to stop Brazil from developing nuclear weapons, but did not succeed. He pushed two US banks to stop trade with Brazil's government and stopped nuclear material going from Germany to Brazil. The country's nuclear program did not end until the late 80s, when both the Brazilian and Argentinian governments agreed to end their rivalry.

Chile's military dictatorship also cut off military ties to the US and publicly refused to hear criticisms about human rights. But just like Argentina, the dictatorship changed. **There were no military kidnappings of dissidents in Chile after 1978.** Chilean dictators killed perhaps 13,000 and falsely imprisoned 27,000 more. A very rough estimate is that, averaged out over the 27 years of dictatorship, **Carter in two years saved perhaps 1,200 Chileans.**

**In Cuba, Castro released 3,600 political prisoners in response to Carter's pressure. Later Castro released all US prisoners and any prisoner with dual citizenship.** Carter tried to establish relations with Cuba, setting up a US Interest Section and planning to end the US embargo that harms Cubans far more than Castro. Carter halted recognizing Cuba when Castro sent troops to support the Ethiopian Communist dictatorship in the Ogaden War against Somalia.

Carter and Castro did temporarily end the travel embargo on Cuba, letting 110,000 Cuban-Americans visit relatives in Cuba in 1979. This likely led to the discontent in Cuba that caused **over 125,000 Cubans to flee to Florida in boats or by seeking refuge in embassies.** There have been

sensational claims about Castro dumping criminals and mentally ill among the refugees, most notably in the stereotype filled film *Scarface*. But one study found that such types only numbered about 2,700, less than 3% of all the refugees..

**In the Dominican Republic, the Carter administration prevented a military coup.** The military stopped ballot counting in the 1978 election. Carter quietly sent a message saying the US would boycott the country. The military backed down, letting the count continue. Antonio Guzman, the winner of the election, thanked Carter. The Balaguer dictatorship of twelve years that arrested and killed many dissidents was ended by this election. In 1986, Balaguer returned to power. Reagan bizarrely praised him as the “father of Dominican democracy.” This is one of several countries where Reagan later undercut Carter and supported dictators.

In Ecuador, Carter pledged to support the return of democracy in 1978, though he blocked the US sale of Israeli jets with American parts.

Egypt signed the Camp Davis peace accords, ending the state of war with Israel and getting the Sinai Peninsula and the Israeli-occupied side of the Suez Canal returned plus funds and peacekeepers from the US to monitor the withdrawal and new Israeli-Egypt border. **There were six conflicts in 25 years between Egypt and Israel before Camp David, killing from 80,000 to 100,000 on all sides. The peace achieved at Camp David successfully prevented perhaps a similar number of future wars and deaths.**

For his accomplishment, Carter received the Nobel Peace Prize, and unlike either Obama or Kissinger, actually deserved it. For without Carter, there would never have been a peace. Both Egyptian and Israeli leaders were noted warmongers. Egypt's Sadat launched a bloody failed war against Israel in 1973. Begin started as an outright terrorist, killing not only Arabs and British, but extorting even from fellow Israelis, and a failed attempt to kill German Prime Minister Adenauer. Camp David was the high point of Carter's presidency, peace achieved almost entirely from his strenuous efforts, over the hardened objections of two dedicated enemies.

El Salvador's dictator General Humberto Romero cut off US aid rather than be pressured on human rights. Moderate officers overthrew him and worked with civilian leaders. The US supported the new leadership, but they were pushed out by the right wing. Even so, Carter's people pushed for reforms, only to see limited land reform combined with repression and death squads. **In El Salvador, it is clear Carter's policy failed.** Toward the end Carter even sent military aid to fight guerillas. The only real success Carter could point to was getting the dictatorship to investigate the murder of four American nuns killed by Salvadoran soldiers. Several soldiers were convicted and officers fired, but the top officials responsible were never convicted or even charged.

Guatemala's extremely repressive military dictatorship also refused US military aid rather than be pressured on human rights. Then the dictatorship briefly brought the Christian Democrats into the government. This lasted only a few months until death squads killed off the moderate leaders. **In Guatemala, Carter's policy also failed.** Reagan completely reversed what Carter tried in Central America, sending US bomber and advisers, sponsoring state terrorism and even genocide that killed 325,000 in the region. (See Section One.)

**In Haiti, dictator Jean Claude Duvalier released political prisoners as Carter came into office.** Duvalier later re-arrested many of the same people as soon as Carter left office and Reagan became president. Reagan still continued US aid to the dictator. In this case the failure is both Duvalier's and Reagan's.

**In Honduras, Carter successfully pressured the dictatorship into allowing elections,** though the left was barred from taking part. Once more this progress was undone when Reagan came into office, when the US sent huge amounts of military aid to use Honduras as a base for terrorism against Nicaragua's elected government. Honduran civilian leaders were overthrown and the military dictatorship began again.

**In Indonesia, at least 30,000 political prisoners were set free,** 10,000 every year for three years. Given dictator Suharto's record, it is almost certain most if not all would have been executed.

This is Carter's second greatest success on human rights, besides aiding the fall of Communism, but also one of his lesser known.

In Iran, **the Shah of Iran tried democratic reforms, ending the arrest of most political prisoners**, because of pressure from Carter. His dictatorship ending is partly due to Carter, a cause worthy of celebrating. The Shah's regime by most estimates killed 80,000 dissidents.

Some revisionists tried to blame the Iranian Revolution and the Islamic regime on Carter. While it is certainly repressive, even today it is still more democratic than the Shah's dictatorship was. For its first five years, the Islamic Republic of Iran was democratic and represented the popular will of most Iranians. Its greatest repressiveness and corruption came later, actually after Carter left office.

**Israel signed the Camp Davids peace accords, ending a long state of war with Egypt.**

Egypt had fought six wars with Israel, the most powerful enemy Israel faced. Camp David made Israel far more secure and eased quite a bit of tension in the Mideast. Egypt went from being allied to the Soviets to US allies. This was no better for Egyptians though, because in both cases Egypt's Sadat and his successor Mubarak were brutal dictators.

For Palestinians, the Camp David accords did little beyond promise to keep talking. They were not represented at the talks, and their situation actually worsened over time. Carter himself in recent years described conditions in Gaza and the West Bank as “apartheid” with widespread segregation, discrimination, and the entire population collectively punished by the Israeli government. For this, Carter faced the ludicrous accusation of being an anti-Semite. Even including Truman's recognition, no US president has done more for Israel or Jews than Carter.

**In Jamaica, First Lady Rosalyn Carter pledged on behalf of her husband that the US would not try to overthrow the government as Nixon and Ford both tried before.** Jamaican politically allied gangs called posses had terrorized Jamaica for much of the 1970s, killing hundreds. Their most notable victim was a failed murder attempt of Bob Marley, his wife, and manager. Political violence dropped off in Jamaica.

**In Nicaragua, the Carter administration called publicly for the end of the Somoza family dictatorship** the US government had put in power and supported for over 40 years. But almost all credit for ending Somoza's dictatorship goes to the popular Sandinista movement, a wide coalition of Nicaraguan business, churches, farmers, labor unions, and students. At first the Carter administration called for compromise. When Somoza refused, the US instead called for him to leave. Most other US presidents would not have supported the Nicaraguan public. Johnson or Reagan would not have permitted the revolution to happen and likely sent US troops. Reagan later tried to overthrow the Sandinistas, organizing the Contra terrorists with US money, weapons, and advisers, killing 75,000 Nicaraguans. (See Section One.)

**In Pakistan the military dictatorship released 11,000 political prisoners** because of pressure from Carter. Carter was far less successful in trying to prevent Pakistan from building nuclear weapons. Despite much pressure and a cutoff of aid, Pakistan had the bomb by 1988.

**The Panama Canal was returned**, undoing an injustice of almost 80 years and likely **preventing further deaths from riots or terrorism against the canal**. Carter described the return of the canal as more difficult than getting elected president. Reagan in particular led a jingoistic campaign falsely claiming the canal was "ours." Returning the canal improved US relations with all of Latin America since it was a symbol of US imperialism. The canal treaty was almost sabotaged by a demand from conservatives giving the US the "right" to invade. Another amendment was put in the treaty, pledging not to invade.

Peru pledged to support democratic reforms in response to pressures from Carter. But the country's dictatorship had been failing even before Carter came into office. General Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrew the government back in 1968, but was himself overthrown in 1975 by General Francisco Bermudez. In 1979, Peru returned to democracy. Even this is not a cause entirely to be celebrated, for Peru's democracy was dominated by large landowners, and the dictatorship did achieve some reforms. Peru spent most of the 1980s in civil war. Carter can neither be credited nor blamed for

most of what happened in Peru.

**Carter supported the UN boycott against South African apartheid.** Reagan overturned the ban and worked with the apartheid regime. Apartheid finally ended when Bush Sr. was president. Most activists point to the anti-apartheid campaign as an example of human rights success in spite of Reagan.

**South Korea became more democratic partly because of pressure from Carter,** but far more because of radical student protests. The military dictatorship informed the Carter administration in advance it would use force against demonstrators in Gwangju. Carter urged restraint and support for democracy, and also calm and order. To Carter's shock, the Korean military massacred as many as 2,000.

Carter condemned the violence and repeated his earlier calls. The South Korean government published Carter's call for order, while repeatedly censoring his calls for peace and liberty. Many Koreans, hearing only the censored version, falsely believed Carter supported the massacre. Some US leftists, either for ideological reasons or simple sloppy research, repeat the lie to this day that Carter was to blame for Gwangju. Protests over the massacre eventually led to South Korean democracy in 1987.

**The Soviet Union allowed the immigration of many more Jews and released political prisoners. Up to 160,000 Jews were given refuge in the US under both Carter and Reagan. The Soviet Union's fall was partly due to Carter,** though far more to Gorbachev and dissident protests. Carter and Soviet leaders also signed the SALT II treaty to limit nuclear weapons, in spite of right wing attempts to sabotage it. Congress never ratified the treaty but Carter and the Soviets still agreed to observe it. Reagan, despite quite a bit of bluster in his public statements in 1982 and 1985, decided to also abide by the treaty. (See final entry in this section.)

**In Zimbabwe, Carter successfully pressured a racist white minority into holding free elections, ending a system as evil as apartheid.** Carter's actions were in line with what previous Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, as well as several British Prime Ministers, had worked for. A few

conservatives blame Carter for the later dictatorship of Robert Mugabe. But this dictatorship did not arise until after Carter was out of office. Mugabe has since been publicly condemned by presidents from Reagan to Obama.

For Communist China, Carter continued the recognition process begun by Nixon, but cut short because of Nixon's self destruction in the Watergate Scandal. Ideological Communists in China went into decline, replaced by more pragmatic ones favoring trade with the west. This did not immediately make China more democratic. Over 30 years later, China is still not close to being a democracy, but it is not as repressive as it once was. For this, part of the credit goes to both Nixon and Carter.

**A very rough estimate of dissident lives directly saved by Carter as president is at least 50,000. Up to 100,000 lives were possibly saved by the Camp David Accords. Another 125,000 Cubans and perhaps 80,000 Soviet Jews were given refuge from Communism by Carter. At least 25 nations became more democratic in part because of Carter.**

#### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**Protesters, especially church groups and intellectuals in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union,** deserve most of the credit for ending the Cold War. These include the labor union Solidarity, the Association of Young Democrats, Charter 77, and Swords Into Plowshares.

**Dissidents in the Third World, church groups, labor unions, socialists, and others** who brought democracy back to regions of the world once dominated by dictatorships supported by the US government.

**Human rights and peace groups** in the US, western Europe, and elsewhere, who worked with dissidents, publicized their causes, and lobbied for them in the west. Human rights and peace groups ranged from leftist pacifists to conservative anti-Communists to church groups on both the left and right to those lobbying for members of their fellow ethnic groups living under dictatorships.

**Jimmy Carter left office a very unpopular president, but today is consistently the most popular ex president of all time.** Yet there remains a dedicated core that truly hates him with a passion usually reserved for, ironically, dictators. In part this group is made up of ideologues who remain convinced that such a man and a belief system cannot possibly be real or work in the real world. For their ideology, sometimes their very masculinity, is tied up in the image of America as strong and unbeatable, and to them Carter threatens that.

Carter's election in 1976 was an enormous fluke. It is difficult to imagine him winning had he first run in 1972 or 1980. Only in the aftermath of the Watergate Scandal, CIA spying scandals, Vice President Agnew's leaving office under a bribery scandal, and over a decade of turmoil over the US-Vietnam War could an almost unknown governor become president. Carter was from outside of Washington, and the public wanted that. He was resolutely honest and sincere, and the public truly needed that after Nixon.

Carter was also the most humane man to ever be US President. He bragged in his last State of the Union address that his biggest achievement was that no US soldier died in battle overseas while he was president. It is difficult to imagine any other president making such a statement. For **the key to understanding Carter is that he is a man utterly dedicated to his faith.** Except for Martin Luther King, there is no larger US figure of the twentieth century so devoted to his faith publicly, and using that faith to guide his actions.

When Carter came into office, the US supported military dictatorships around the world in the name of fighting Communism. Most Latin American nations were under military rule, many of them put there by US coups, in some cases US troops. The US government also supported dictatorships in the Mideast and Asia with money, weapons, and often military and intelligence training. Outside of North America and Europe, democracies were outnumbered. One US president after another, in both parties, had been indifferent to human rights, as long as other nation's leaders were anti-Communist.

Carter's human rights policy received enormous attention in the field of international affairs,

both by those opposing it who want to insist in spite of all the evidence it could not possibly have worked, and by those favoring it who wished it worked even better. To the minds of “realists,” it could not possibly work, and those who even try are extremely naive. Yet the evidence is clear: It did work, in fact worked better than supposed realism.

Even within his own administration, there was that tension between idealists and supposed realists. Cyrus Vance, Carter's Secretary of State and formerly of the Johnson administration, was seen as the idealist. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Adviser and a Columbia University professor, was the self proclaimed realist. Formerly from Poland, Brzezinski was a strong anti-Communist. For him, a focus on human rights was mostly a tool to embarrass, harass, and weaken Communist states.

From the start, dedicated anti-Communists worried the focus on human rights would lead to defeats in the Cold War. No one said that criticism more loudly than Reagan, backed up by his later Ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick was one of the first neo conservatives in government. Like most neo conservatives, ironically she began her career trained as a Marxist. The more cynical observers argue neo conservatives were and are so eager to gain power they completely reverse or betray their previous views. One can find obvious Communist influence on neo conservatives, especially their propaganda techniques, willingness to use deception, and celebration of amorality in the name of winning long term goals.

Kirkpatrick argued that right wing and military dictatorships were fine as long as they were anti-Communist since they would eventually become democratic, while Communist countries would never become democratic and always remain fanatic dictatorships. In fact this is the opposite of reality, and even when Kirkpatrick wrote that, anyone but the most blinded by propaganda could see this was wrong. Military dictatorships tend to only give up power by being forced out, and they often still insist on both veto power over what the public decides in elections and immunity from being punished for their atrocities. In contrast, except for North Korea, every other Communist country without exception

allowed reforms, often became at least partly democratic or at least less oppressive. (See Section Three.) Just to take the most obvious examples that Kirkpatrick chose to ignore or lie about, the USSR became far less tyrannical after Stalin died, as did China after Mao died.

Within Carter's administration, Vance and Brzezinski often clashed, with Brzezinski arguing, much like many conservatives, that human rights were less important than anti Communism. The invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR brought a more conservative approach by Carter. Carter was also challenged in his own party's primary by Ted Kennedy, the leading liberal, and also by John Anderson, one of the last liberal Republicans, running in 1980 as an independent. When Carter gave up on diplomacy to rescue US hostages in Iran and tried a military rescue, Vance resigned in protest. By this time, April 1980, the human rights focus had been almost abandoned even by Carter himself.

Many tend to forget that, except for the most ideological conservatives, **most of the anger or derision aimed at Carter came late in his presidency. He was a popular president for the first three years in office.** The one defining event for those who dislike him was the Iran hostage crisis. Iranian students took over the US embassy in Tehran and held 50 officials hostage for over a year and half. Had the rescue mission in Iran succeeded, Carter likely would have been re elected. If so, it is hard to say if he would have governed somewhat like Reagan, or would have returned to his earlier reform efforts. Ending Communism ultimately rose or fell based on its own failures or successes, or reform efforts from within.

**Carter was not the only US President brought down by a hostage crisis. Other US citizens were held hostage in the Mideast under both Reagan and Bush Sr.** Reagan became so frustrated over their fate he was willing to trade over 800 US missiles plus aircraft fighter parts to Iran for these hostages. The effort backfired disastrously. No hostages were ever released, and the ensuing scandal, Iran-Contra, caused Reagan to leave office in disgrace and even more unpopular than Carter had been.

It would not be until a third US president, George Bush Sr., faced yet another hostage crisis that the solution to such terrorism became clear. During the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein threatened that over

800 Americans and other westerners would be used as hostages against US and Allied bombing. This was a crisis with over fifteen times as many potential victims. But Bush pointedly ignored Hussein's threats, saying publicly he would continue the war undeterred. Hussein never carried out his threats, backed down, and allowed all hostages to leave.

Bush's success at ending this hostage taking was stunning. Who would have imagined the way to free hostages was to almost ignore the threats against them? Yet it is difficult to imagine either Carter or Reagan doing what Bush did without suffering greatly politically. Carter had the bad luck to have the hostage crisis begin when there was a slow news cycle and a media, in the years after Watergate, dedicated to proving how critical they could be of presidents. A similar hostage crisis under Lyndon Johnson, the seizure of the *USS Pueblo* by North Korea, had little effect on public opinion of him.

Carter is today the most admired ex president of all time, and his humanitarian endeavors make him the greatest of all former presidents. (See Appendix.) The core of his critics are too ideologically fanatic to be convinced, no matter what the evidence, and indeed take pride in their ignorance. It would be a shame were Carter's great humane endeavors as an ex president to ironically overshadow equally great deeds as president.

In 1980, Henry Forde, the foreign minister of Barbados, speaking at the Organization of American States, summed up the view of Carter held by much of the world:

"It is our view that it [the human rights policy] has been the single most creative act of policy in the hemisphere in many a long year. It has raised the consciousness and stirred the consciences of many a leader in this region. It has given hope to many an oppressed citizen. It has helped, perhaps more than any other element of policy, to correct the image of the United States as an unfeeling giant, casting its shadow over its neighbors."

## Bush Sr.'s Rescue of the Kurds of Iraq

**What: Operations Provide Comfort I and II and the establishment of the No Fly Zones in Operation Northern Watch and Operation Southern Watch following the Gulf War.**

**The Number of Lives Saved: Previous attacks by Saddam Hussein on the Kurds had killed as many as 100,000.** But since Hussein was attacking both Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south, potentially deaths could have been double that or more. Up to a million Kurds fled Iraq immediately after the Gulf War. Up to several hundred initially died each day. **These operations resettled 700,000 refugees,** providing food, shelter, medical care, and protection against the Iraqi military.

### **Who Else Gets the Credit:**

**Much of US public opinion, especially antiwar activists and Democrats** pushed for the protection of Kurds once images of civilian deaths by warfare and starvation were broadcast by **American media.** Conservatives, Republicans, and pro war supporters generally opposed the rescue efforts.

**The United Nations** called for an end to repression of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein with Resolution 688. The UN resolution played a major part in winning European support for these operations.

**American, British, French, Saudi, and other coalition troops and pilots** carried out these operations with an admirable display of efficiency, with little notice but rapid response.

**Presidents Clinton and GW Bush** continued the no fly zones and rescue operations. **Kurdish leaders** eventually ran the northern zone as de facto self government.

In the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein appeared to be weakening.

Hussein's Baathist Party was mostly Sunni, where nearly three quarters of Iraqis were Shiites, especially in the south. The Kurdish minority, mostly in the north, also had a long history of facing repression by Hussein that had killed up to 100,000. (See Section Two.)

The Iraqi military had already been badly weakened by a disastrous war with Iran that killed perhaps half a million Iranians and Iraqis. The Gulf War killed perhaps 50,000 more Iraqi soldiers. (See Section Five.) The Iraqi Air Force was mostly destroyed or its planes seized by Iran. About half of Iraqi tanks and other armor were destroyed by US and coalition troops or bombing, though most helicopters remained. The war was so one sided that many Iraqi soldiers surrendered to journalists in desperation.

Many Iraqis saw this as a chance to finally overthrow Hussein. In both the Kurdish north and Shiite south, revolts broke out, often called the National Uprisings. Many towns fell to local control. Bush broadcast several messages on the *Voice of America* radio urging Iraqis on, to completely overthrow Hussein. Many Iraqi troops mutinied. At one point the majority of Iraqi provinces were under rebel control.

But Hussein still had most of his elite Republican Guard, as well as half his army's armor and many helicopters. Indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, including some reported chemical attacks, broke the rebels after only a month. Perhaps two million Iraqis tried to escape to other countries. The international media, a heavy presence due to the war, was there to report the sight of so many refugees' deaths by Iraqi troop attacks, starvation, or cold.

The UN passed Resolution 688. The No Fly Zone, US and coalition planes keeping out Iraqi planes and troops, began, as did air drops of food, medicine, and other necessities. While at first the Iraqi military made no move against coalition forces, over time the planes were fired on hundreds of times, bringing coalition retaliation.

Units involved in these operations included not just combat aircraft but hundreds of cargo planes, helicopters, thousands of support personnel, military police, civil affairs, engineers, Marines, commandos, medical units, and even dental health teams. The effect of this rescue effort was

admirable. **The death rate in the Kurdish zone actually was actually lower than before the war.**

The southern zone, while protected from air attacks or indiscriminate bombing, remained under Hussein's control though.

A strong controversy at the time was whether US troops should have invaded Iraq itself to overthrow Hussein. There is no reason to believe it would have turned out any different than the failed Iraq War of 2003 to 2010. Bush Sr. was far less dogmatic and stubborn than his son though, so likely he would simply have left early, leaving another dictator friendly to the US in power rather than hoping to start a democracy.

A second controversy was the claim that Bush Sr. should have supported the Iraqi uprising, or even had encouraged but abandoned it. But at no point did Bush promise US support for an uprising. He could not abandon something he never proposed. Generals Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf later spoke with regret of not having used US forces to shoot down Iraqi helicopters. But doing that would not have guaranteed Iraqi rebels winning. The uprising was very uncoordinated and unplanned.

Bush Sr.'s rescue of the Kurds, and to an extent Iraqis in the south, was noble, but not done for noble reasons. Bush was pushed into it, and he felt he had to due to public pressure both American and international. While he did speak of democracy and right and wrong while winning support for the war, Bush was far too pragmatic and ultimately cynical to actually believe in these words. In a sense, his practical skeptical nature was good in that he avoided the deeply destructive and doomed to fail war that entrapped his son.

Ironically, Bush lost re election in 1992, in part because many considered the Gulf War a failure because Hussein was not overthrown. He was condemned more for the Iraq War he failed to fight, one that would have failed, rather than condemned for the Gulf War that should not have been fought at all.

## GW Bush and AIDS in Africa

**What: GW Bush's efforts to end AIDS in Africa**, pushed largely by his own conservative Christian convictions, have won the praise even of his strongest opponents on the opposite side of the political aisle.

**The Number of Lives Saved: As many as 46 million Africans were treated, tested, counseled, or in other ways helped by anti AIDS programs. This includes treatment for 5 million people, testing and counseling for 11 million pregnant women, and support for 15 million orphans and vulnerable children.**

How many lives were saved by prevention is often difficult to predict, despite the vague but likely true claim that “millions” were saved. What is clear is that many AIDS survivors have much better lives. One clear statistic we can point to is **the use of retro viral drugs on pregnant women that allowed 230,000 children to be born AIDS free.**

### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

This program is a tribute to the successful use of government intervention, run by the **Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, USAID, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Health and Human Services.** The Departments of Commerce, Defense, and Labor, and the Peace Corps all help provide support.

**Obama** expanded the program to serve as many as four times as many people thanks to increasing efficiency.

GW Bush was one of the blindest presidents, ideologically, and often an incredibly incompetent one. But **one of the most unfair and untrue claims against him is that he is racist.** As the Governor

of Texas, Bush came out against the anti immigration hysteria in his own party back in the early 1990s. In part this was due to his own party's history in Texas, where business leaders long recognized more of their profits depend on trade with Mexico than on trade with the rest of the US, and much of the workforce is made up of immigrant labor. Bush also has Latinos within his own family, in laws, nieces, and nephews.

Where the most despicable actions Bush did have to do with the Mideast, the most admirable actions of his presidency have to do with Africa. AIDS has hit that continent harder than anywhere else in the world. Poverty, weak underfunded governments, lack of healthcare, and even lack of basic prevention like condoms all combine to make AIDS even deadlier than elsewhere.

AIDS prevention is something that Bush has somewhat shown, for the only time in his presidential career, a strong lack of ideological blindness. A conservative is supposed to think of market solutions first. A religious conservative such as Bush would naturally turn to greater support for charities, perhaps at most getting government funding for church run charities.

Bush, to his credit, turned to the solution that works best for healthcare, government programs. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief or PEPFAR is a program most conservatives would oppose had it been proposed in the US, or by anyone not a conservative. It is also international in scope, and many conservatives hold international projects in suspicion unless they are military or favor US trade. Finally, it directly helps millions of poor people with money, often financially supporting them. Had this been done in the US, many conservatives would accuse these poor of being lazy and demanded they get a job, perhaps even blame their illness on the victims.

On top of all this, AIDS prevention in Africa was not a project that benefited Bush politically. While it was begun early in his presidency, it did not receive much attention until well after his re election. PEPFAR showed no sign it would help his party.

PEPFAR is not without its critics. The first head of PEPFAR was the former head of drug company Eli Lilly, which also make drugs that treat AIDS, a clear conflict of interest. The program also

drained away medical professionals from Third World countries through its higher salaries. PEPFAR also emphasizes abstinence as prevention, and abstinence programs generally do not work. Abstinence programs often lead simply to more unprotected sex.

PEPFAR also has a circumcision program, based on the premise that circumcision makes it more difficult to get infected. A simpler solution, one that does not involve genital mutilation, would be to make condoms available. It also would be far cheaper and humane, since a lifetime of condoms is less expensive than a circumcision and not physically traumatic, nor have the intent of making sex and masturbation less pleasurable as circumcision originally did. But birth control contradicts some conservative Christians' beliefs.

A more disturbing criticism is who **PEPFAR largely excludes** because of its focus on abstinence. **Gays, prostitutes, and IV drug users** are often left out, the people often most at risk. But they are also, from some fundamentalists' point of view, those who are most guilty by their own behavior. Program users have to sign an anti prostitution pledge, one that may drive away sex workers who are most in need of treatment. PEPFAR also does not use needle exchanges, a proven way of dropping the AIDS infection rate.

All the criticisms add up the program not working as well as it potentially could. But **PEPFAR undoubtedly does help millions, has helped limit the epidemic in Africa, and may even eventually defeat it.** That is enormously praiseworthy by any measure. A side benefit to Bush is that Africa may be one of the few places in the world he can travel to without fear of arrest for his torture program. It remains to be seen which Bush will be more remembered for, devastation in the Mideast and the end of American empire, or lives saved in Africa.

## Obama's Wars, the Great Recession, and Healthcare

**What: The end of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, avoiding war in Iran, the Arab Spring, preventing another Great Depression, and the very imperfect but still landmark healthcare program.**

**The Number of Lives Saved: There are 30,000 preventable deaths in the US a year by inadequate healthcare. Each additional year of war in Iraq or Afghanistan would likely have cost hundreds of American lives and tens of thousands of Iraqi and Afghan lives. Another Great Depression would have seen unemployment and poverty double, leading to higher death rates.**

### **Who Also Gets the Credit:**

**The Iraqi government** which told Obama to leave, as it had told GW Bush for years.

**The Afghanistan government**, which also told Obama to leave. Both nations had agreements negotiated under GW Bush, designed by his administration to give the appearance of independence. Much to the surprise of both US administrations, neither government wanted US troops to stay. The final sticking point was the US demand that US troops be above Iraqi and Afghan law. Neither government wanted that due to high profile cases of US troop or mercenary (contractor) murders of civilians.

**The Iraqi and Afghan public**, both overwhelmingly opposed to a US military presence in their nations from the beginning. Within a week after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqis held huge demonstrations calling on the US to leave.

**The American public and antiwar activists** who pressured Obama to leave, and were greatly responsible for electing him. Obama's winning the Democratic primary in 2008 was largely due to antiwar activists favoring him over Hillary Clinton.

## **US healthcare activists, particularly unions, doctors, nurses, and patients' rights groups**

had pushed hard for a public healthcare law for decades.

**Michael Moore** probably did more than any other single person to bring the public healthcare issue center stage with his documentary *Sicko*, in spite of an extraordinary effort by the health insurance industry and corporate media to sabotage the film and demonize him personally. Most notably, CNN's Sanjay Gupta falsely claimed Moore lied in his film. CNN later issued a partial apology. Gupta's nomination for Surgeon General of the US failed because of opposition from Moore's supporters.

Moore also played probably the single greatest role of any one person in mobilizing antiwar sentiment with the enormously successful *Fahrenheit 9-11*, the most popular documentary in all of film history, again in the face of an enormous campaign attacking him, even efforts to ban the film. There were no less than four anti-Moore “documentaries” put out in the month after *Fahrenheit* was released. All four failed, both at the box office and in trying to blunt *Fahrenheit* and Moore's influence.

By this point, Obama's faults are familiar to most. (His actual faults, not imaginary ones like birther claims. See Section Eleven.) This entry is written with the caution that at this writing, there are still over two years left in his term. Future editions will update this entry.

Much like Carter, it is difficult to imagine Obama could win the presidency in any other election except after another president's disastrous failures. In 2008, the US had been in two disastrous wars for over five years, with most of the public strongly opposed to them. GW Bush was actually less popular than Nixon was before resigning because of the Watergate Scandal. Bush's administration was one of the most corrupt and incompetent in history, equal to Harding's and Reagan's. Bush bungled not just both wars but the response to Hurricane Katrina. (See Section Four.) On top of that, the economy had just collapsed in 2007 due to inequality, plus theft and corruption on the part of the banking and housing industries. When Obama was elected, satire website *The Onion* posted the headline, “Black

man given nation's worst job.”

In the face of all these challenges, and judging him not on politics and ideological tests, Obama can point to humanitarian victories, limited but still impressive. Yet understandably most who voted for him are disappointed because he did not do anything close to what he could have, or what he was elected for. Those in the left progressive community hoped for a Franklin Roosevelt, and quickly expressed their disappointment he was closer to Clinton, a moderate compromiser who looked good only compared to the president before.

Actually Obama is closer to both Carter and Grant, with somewhat successful humane victories and opposition that demonizes him. Those on the right saw him sometimes literally as the devil incarnate. There are large segments of conservatives who claim, in all seriousness, that he is the Antichrist, a lizard man in human form, a secret Muslim, a Communist, a fascist as evil as Hitler, a would be dictator, or somehow a bizarre combination of all these already ludicrous claims all at once. Most on the right said, in Rush Limbaugh's words, “I hope he fails.” They were so fanatically opposed to him many were willing to sabotage the government, the economy, the country itself in the failed hope it would bring Obama down.

At the core of perhaps half those who oppose him is their deep racism. The right often portrayed him as a monkey, a witch doctor, a pimp, a gangster, dressed in a turban or Muslim robes. The most common image during the healthcare debate was Obama in white face, portrayed as the Joker. This is a rather surreal claim that by trying to pass public healthcare, Obama is a psychotic who will murder us all. Sarah Palin race baited Obama as “shucking and jiving” while Glenn Beck accused a half white Obama raised by a white mother of “deeply hating whites.”

It is difficult to find examples of presidents as fanatically opposed as Obama. In some ways his opponents are much like John Quincy Adams's, where Jackson's supporters spent an entire four years sabotaging Adams just to put Jackson into power next election. Some Obama opponents resemble the most fanatic FDR haters. Where the American Liberty League plotted to overthrow Roosevelt, many

conservatives outright threatened that Obama be overthrown if he does not give in to their demands. The Tea Party movement featured rallies with heavily armed members demanding Obama leave office or be overthrown, and engineered several government shutdowns. The number of militias tripled once Obama became president. Gun sales spiked and threats to assassinate him are so numerous the Secret Service cannot handle them all.

Roosevelt had comfortable majorities in Congress most of his time in office and huge popularity. Obama's party had control of Congress only a few months, while his support was almost never higher than slightly over half. His opponents set new records, the most filibusters in US history, government shutdowns, and refusals to allow officials to be appointed.

Yet much of Obama's problems were self inflicted. An overly cautious man, he also tended to give way to opponents and instead concentrated on getting his allies to compromise too. The most dramatic example happened early. To deal with the recession, Obama called for a large financial stimulus. This was the old Roosevelt solution that worked well in the Great Recession, stimulate demand using the government.

Republicans, not wanting Obama to succeed anyway, concentrated on tax cuts and sabotaging unions, both guaranteed to worsen the economy. The stimulus was limited, almost as much tax cuts for the well off as spending to help the economy. Republicans deliberately limited federal money to keep teaching jobs since teachers vote Democratic. Republicans also sent the Post Office into bankruptcy, forcing the funding of their pensions for 80 years, to try to break postal unions.

**In spite of sabotage, the stimulus did work. It prevented the Great Recession from becoming a Second Great Depression.** Even conservative media like *US News and World Report* admit its success, as did 80% of economists in one survey. Six economists' studies found it worked very well. Without it, unemployment would have gone to perhaps 12% instead of its high at slightly under 9%. The stimulus also boosted the economy by half a trillion dollars and saved or created up to 3.7 million jobs.

One way where Obama failed was in challenging wealthy elites. Where Roosevelt encouraged unions as a way to reduce inequality but kept them under government control, Obama never challenged anti unionism. He could easily have pushed for card check, a measure to make it easier for unions to organize. He could have supported unions in their struggles to stop union busting, but did not.

The supposedly socialist Obama instead courted Wall Street, and refused to prosecute virtually anyone in the banking industry. Where FDR sent hundreds of bankers to jail, Obama sent no one. **Not only did Obama bail out the banks, as Bush did before him, Obama gave over \$7 trillion in loans to banks, over half the value of the entire US economy. Like Roosevelt, Obama practices corporate liberalism, not anything resembling socialism.**

The second big compromise Obama did was on wars and terrorism. Immediately he refused to prosecute the many war criminals in the Bush administration. About half of the public wanted trials for war crimes, and the evidence is absolutely clear. Bush and several others openly admitted their crimes. But where Ford had pardoned Nixon for Watergate, Obama tried to avoid the subject entirely. Putting US war criminals on trial would have sent a strong message to anyone daring such atrocities in the future. It would have exposed their crimes more fully and made it impossible to deny these crimes happened. Yet for convenience, in the name of illusory public unity that never happened for either president, both men sent the message that leading criminals in the government are above the law.

Obama did try to shut down Guantanamo Prison, a worldwide scandal of abuse and torture that harmed America far more than terrorists. Virtually all prisoners in Guantanamo were innocent, over 90%. Yet with shameless fear mongering and bigotry, Republicans portrayed them all as terrorists who were too dangerous to be let go or tried in civilian courts.

For Obama, Iraq was always the wrong war, while Afghanistan was the good and necessary war. He did cautiously and slowly end the Iraq War, in spite of yet more fear mongering and delays by opposition. **In the end what pushed Obama out of Iraq was the Iraqi government. In Afghanistan he actually increased the number of troops at first. In the end Obama was driven out, again, by**

**an Afghan government and public** that had not wanted the US there for years.

Does he deserve credit for being, technically, forced out? Yes. By the account of his own Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, he was never committed to these wars and always looking to leave quickly. GW Bush, for example, would have found a way to stay at war, and every major Republican leader called for these wars to continue, as did some Democrats like Lieberman.

Two other wars are relevant to Obama's record. In 2011, the Arab Spring uprisings forced out long time dictatorships in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, with failed efforts in almost every other Arab nation. Obama, along with most other western leaders, realized these were widely popular and largely nonviolent uprisings too big to dismiss, cheered these revolutions, and recognized them. To the surprise and often horror of many US conservatives, these nonviolent revolutions were far more successful at bringing democracy than a decade of war and hundreds of thousands of US troops in Iraq or Afghanistan. Many US conservatives reacted with hysteria, claiming these revolutions must be “radical Muslim.” To many bigots or the ignorant, Islam must be radical, anti US, and anti-Israel. Yet except for some Egyptian and Palestinian protesters, there was little sign of any concern with Israel at all for most in the Arab Spring.

In Libya, the uprising turned into an armed civil war. Led first by France and then Russia, eventually over a dozen western states, mostly part of NATO, invaded to help Libyan rebels. Obama ordered US planes to join French and Russian ones enforcing a no fly zone and naval blockade. For both his roles, Obama deserves praise. Conservatives split in their criticism, some wanting a larger invasion, others none at all. Both conservative views were proved wrong.

On another war, Syria, Obama's actions were mixed. Assad has been a brutal dictator ruling the nation for over a decade. Rebels trying to overthrow him are not much better, actual allies of Al Qaeda. Obama went to the public with reports that Assad had used poison gas against the rebels, and called for bombing Assad. Reporter Seymour Hersh presented evidence that Obama knowingly used poor intelligence, that poison gas could have come from the rebels.

If true (and Hersch's report was rejected by two media outlets), that is as contemptible as GW Bush's lies on Iraq. But there were still two pieces of good news on Syria. One is that **Assad agreed to remove his chemical weapons**. The other is the US public reaction. More than eight tenths of the public, both left and right, opposed going to war in Syria. Obama listened to the public and backed down from his call for bombing. GW Bush would not have, and gone to war anyway, continuing to lie about his reasons like he did in Iraq. **Obama may have set a new precedent for presidents backing down from starting a war when the public demands so.**

One dramatic success Obama can point to is Iran. In spite of decades of neo conservative calls for war with Iran going all the way back to the 1990s, Obama not only refused to go to war, he negotiated a treaty to stop Iran from developing an atomic bomb. The UN and US government had before agreed to a near blockade of Iran, and the treaty traded a partial end to the blockade in exchange for inspections.

Both this treaty and the blockade actually unfairly targeted Iran. There was no evidence at all Iran ever tried to develop an A-bomb, and no effort at all to rein in Israel which has over 100 H-bombs since the 1970s, its weapons developed from an alliance with South Africa under apartheid and plutonium stolen from the US. Still, **the treaty between the US and Iran is as big a landmark as when Nixon recognized China**. It virtually guarantees better relations and makes a war very unlikely. As of this writing, the treaty is still being debated, with a strong pro war and pro Israel faction in Congress hoping the treaty will fail, looking for an excuse to target Iran with US or Israeli bombing. Should the treaty succeed over the long term, the number of deaths prevented are easily in the thousands, likely tens of thousands.

Healthcare, or Obama care, is likely what he will be remembered for as much as Roosevelt is remembered for Social Security. Much like FDR, Obama was pushed from his left, and like FDR, Obama took a far more corporate approach. Obama care began as Romney care. The program is Republican in origin, first passed in Massachusetts by Governor Mitt Romney, Obama's opponent in

the 2012 elections. Even more Republican, the proposal was first written by the Heritage Foundation, a Republican think tank.

**Obama care/Romney care/Heritage care is a good example of corporate liberalism, designed to benefit corporations as much or more than the public and head off any truly radical solutions.** It is not even remotely socialist or government run. It is in fact corporate welfare, giving enormous amounts of government money to insurance corporations for customers they would not have had before.

A true socialist solution would obviously be government run healthcare, and it would be far more efficient and life saving than any corporate or conservative solution could ever be. This has been done successfully in one nation after another, across most of Europe, Israel, Japan, Canada, and Australia. Even Cuba, a very poor country under a blockade for over 50 years, has better healthcare than the US. Socialism does a very poor job of running industries like airlines and mines, but it almost always does a better job on healthcare. The obvious evidence of that is clear: In every single nation mentioned before, people live much longer and healthier lives and their children are less likely to die young precisely because they have government run healthcare.

In the US, such a solution was called Medicare for all. Medicare for retirees is an enormously successful and efficient program, and it is somewhat socialistic. What many forget is the huge conservative outcry against Medicare and Medicaid when they were proposed. Reagan gave speeches warning that, if Medicare passed, “one day we will be telling our grandchildren what freedom used to be like.”

The military healthcare system is also socialist, and though its bureaucracy can be frustrating, servicemen get extremely good healthcare. A dramatic example is that one out of three soldiers wounded in combat in Vietnam died. But in Iraq and Afghanistan, fewer than one in six wounded soldiers died. A true conservative system would have servicemen pay for their own insurance and combat medics, doctors, and hospitals. Yet there is no conservative outcry against the military's

socialist healthcare, simply because it is part of the military.

Obama made the huge strategic error of agreeing not to push for Medicare for all. Some progressives then hoped for a compromise called the public option. Members of the public, or state governments, could choose to get government run healthcare while others could choose to stay on their private insurance. Conservatives and corporations immediately rejected the public option for the obvious reason: Government healthcare is more efficient, better and cheaper. There is no way corporations could compete since what they do is inherently inferior, costs more and saves fewer lives since its main motive is profit, not health. Obama accepted their objections. The public option was also never proposed.

What was left then was only the corporate welfare option, the Republican plan from the Heritage Foundation. The insurance industry supported this since they would benefit. Doctors and nurses, as professions trained to aid the sick, also favored it though most preferred Medicare for all. The only real opposition was ideological political posturing. The nation saw the surreal spectacle of Republicans and conservatives opposing a conservative Republican healthcare solution, simply because Obama agreed to it.

This is beyond ideological blindness to schizophrenia on an enormous scale. Such schizoid reasoning bizarrely has *conservatives* demonizing a *conservative* solution because they demonized a timid moderate compromiser as a socialist-fascist-Communist-Muslim-Antichrist. Once healthcare passed, *Republicans* in Congress then tried to repeal *Republican healthcare* over 40 times.

*Republican leaders* even led campaigns urging people not to sign up, hoping to sabotage *Republican healthcare*. Hackers even tried to attack healthcare websites.

From any humanitarian's point of view, this is incredible moral callousness, literally wishing thousands of poor people die just to make your ideological point. And indeed, during the Republican primary debates in 2012, a conservative audience did precisely that, actually cheered letting people die rather give them "government" (actually corporate and Republican) healthcare. There has probably

been no more surreal and morally degenerate episode in recent US elections.

But by passing this healthcare, as inadequate and corporate as it is, Obama likely will be well remembered. Recall that Social Security and Medicare were equally demonized and not very well run in the beginning. (See the earlier entry on FDR in this section.) So far the biggest problem with Obama care has been a poorly run website, and that is a failure by a private company, not any defect of government healthcare. Thought it was once Heritage care and then Romney care, the name Obama care will likely stick, and will be remembered as the start of something quite great. For by its passing, tens of thousands of people will live every year.

A final accomplishment which has received almost no attention: the ending of one of the worst, most destructive, and most racist parts of the Drug War. Under Reagan, the laws were changed to sentence crack cocaine users to 100 times prison time that powdered cocaine. Racist media coverage led to racist targeting of minorities for arrests and prosecution. The law locked up primarily Blacks for longer sentences, though most cocaine users and dealers, both crack and powdered, are white. (See Section Six.) Obama tried to end the law entirely. Some Republican congressmen tried to block the change. A compromise settled on eighteen times as long a sentence for crack compared to powdered cocaine. Still since many of these prison times began in the 1980s, quite a few drug users who had served more time than most murderers were finally set free.

Taken together, all of Obama's accomplishments, limited, very compromised, and getting done only because he was pushed from his left or by Afghans and Iraqis, all still add up to potentially being remembered as a good president. The one thing preventing him from being judged as an unqualified humanitarian president is his drone assassination program. That puts him in the same category as Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, presidents who carried out both great good and horrific evil.

## The Best Presidents on Arms Control

**What: Efforts to control or end biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons by Presidents Lincoln, Harding, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, and Obama.**

### **The Number of Lives Saved:**

**A full scale nuclear war could have killed *billions worldwide*. Nuclear weapons are far more deadly than any other weapons ever invented by mankind, potentially *ending all life on the planet*.**

**Chemical weapons actually have death rates slightly lower than conventional bombing. Biological weapons tend to be very unpredictable and harm the user as much as the target.** For some nations, the earlier preferred use of biological weapons was far more disturbing. These nations, including the US, preferred to let nature's own diseases wipe out indigenous people, and they “helped” along the process by deliberate forced starvation, making indigenous people very vulnerable to disease. This fits the definition of genocide.

### **Who Else Deserves Credit:**

**Peace activists and human rights groups** worldwide, including within Communist countries, deserve the greatest credit for working to end nuclear war.

The second greatest credit for ending the threat of nuclear war goes to **Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev**.

**Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping** deserves the greatest credit for ending the threat of war between China and the US.

**German Prime Minister Willy Brandt** was the first leader to try to end the Cold War, beginning from his time originally as the mayor of West Berlin.

**A worldwide anti nuclear weapons movement succeeded in getting nuclear weapons free zones across Africa, Central Asia, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific.** There have been several attempts at a nuclear weapons free zone in the Mideast, undercut by Israel's opposition and possession of 100 to 200 H-bombs, and formerly by Iraq's efforts to build an A-bomb back in the 1980s. Contrary to sensational propaganda claims, Iran never tried to develop nuclear weapons. There was also an attempt at a Nordic nuclear-free zone, failing because it also tried to ban nuclear power. Mongolia also declared itself a nuclear weapons free zone.

**The UN succeeded in barring nuclear weapons from Antarctica, the ocean beds, and in space. The greatest successes the UN can point to is its ban on chemical weapons agreed to by 190 out of 196 nations in the world and its Non Proliferation Treaty, in which all but nine countries in the world agreed to never develop nuclear weapons.** The nine nations with nuclear weapons, in order from most to least are: US, USSR, France, UK, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.

**South Africa's apartheid regime, in its last dying days, developed six A-bombs in the 1980s, then dismantled them by the early 1990s.** President FW de Clerk realized they were expensive, had little military use, only made their nation and the region less stable, and would only have turned world opinion further against South Africa. Israel and South Africa both worked together to build their first nuclear weapons.

Nine US presidents deserve limited credit for trying to limit nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The list includes both sides of the political spectrum and both parties, from moderates like Eisenhower, Carter, Bush Sr., Clinton, and Obama to hardcore anti-Communists like Kennedy, Nixon, and Reagan. (Notably, there has not been a liberal president elected since the start of Cold War, none besides Franklin Roosevelt.) That so many presidents and other leaders of WMD armed nations tried to end or reduce these weapons tells something very obvious: Each leader ultimately recognized the incredible threat of nuclear (and to a far lesser extent biochemical) warfare,

no matter how ideologically blind they may have once been.

**Lincoln was both the first US president to condemn chemical weapons and the first to propose a code of conduct for war, influencing other world leaders.** Immediately after the Emancipation, Confederate leaders issued one of the most surreal claims ever made by any leader: They argued freeing and arming former slaves, or Blacks whether free or slave, was against the laws of civilized nations, and would be condemned by the world. In fact, freeing and arming slaves had been done by the British, French, and by American leaders during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Even Andrew Jackson, a slave trader, freed slaves to fight at the Battle of New Orleans.

The Confederacy publicly declared all Blacks, whether free or former slaves, would be executed or re enslaved. Lincoln responded with the Lieber Code, a defense of emancipation. The code forbade “poisons” in warfare, assassinations of enemy leaders, executions of POWs, and limited any punishment of civilians to property seizure and imprisonment. The Lieber Code later influenced the Hague Convention in 1899 called by the Tsar of Russia.

**The first US president to push for an end to WMDs internationally was Harding,** otherwise an undistinguished incompetent known for his administration's many scandals. The Washington Arms Conference Treaty in 1922 proposed banning all chemical weapons. The ban failed because the French government opposed it, though the treaty did limit the size of navies.

**Eisenhower agreed to a nuclear test ban treaty in 1958, but it was not his idea.** He agreed privately, but publicly was pushed into it by others. Adlai Stevenson, his opponent in the 1952 and 1956 elections, was one of two leaders to propose it. Soviet leader Khrushchev had proposed the idea since 1955. In 1958 he announced the USSR would stop testing on its own, and Ike then announced the US would also for one year. The test ban was undermined by the scandal over an American U-2 spy plane being shot down. Both sides finally agreed to the ban in 1962. Both the US and USSR hoped the test ban would pressure China to not develop its nuclear weapons. That failed. Kennedy also agreed to a direct hotline between the Soviets and the US after the confused bumbling of the Cuban missile crisis.

Nixon barred almost all weapons designed to shoot down nuclear missiles. Nixon also proposed an end to all chemical and biological weapons, and the US began to destroy its stockpiles. The SALT I and SALT II treaties limited nuclear weapons themselves for the first time. **This makes Nixon the most successful world leader in ending WMDs, with the exception of Gorbachev.** But as noted elsewhere, Nixon's motives were not noble but selfish. He hoped to secure a place for himself in history as an admired man. Still, Nixon deserves credit for badly needed humanitarian accomplishments, even if for his own self aggrandizement. As far as biochemical weapons, Nixon also realized they are militarily not only almost useless, they are self destructive and destabilizing.

Carter continued with the SALT II treaty. Congress refused to ratify it, but Carter agreed to observe its terms anyway. Reagan led the opposition to SALT II and tried to undercut both Nixon's ban on anti ballistic missiles and the US ban on weapons in space by his "Star Wars" program. **Only after Reagan consulted with his wife's astrologer and numerology did he finally agree to nuclear negotiations.** Both Reagan and Bush Sr. agreed to the greatest arms cuts in history, well beyond what Nixon achieved. But they did so in response to Gorbachev's reforms, and he deserves most of the credit. In fact, Reagan delayed and turned down negotiations that Soviet leaders wanted back in 1981.

In 1991, Bush Sr. pulled US nuclear weapons out of South Korea to try to defuse tensions between the two Koreas. **Clinton successfully delayed North Korea from developing nuclear weapons for almost a decade.** North Korea had been trying to develop its own A-bombs since the early 1960s, and by the early 1990s were close. The US essentially bribed the North Korean government, giving them oil, food, and money to hold off building their weapons.

Outsiders often misunderstand North Korea, admittedly one of the most difficult and isolated societies to interpret. Its leaders' provocative statements and actions are virtually the only way for them to get aid, for North Korea has nothing that outsiders want except for them to not be a threat. GW Bush and his administration did not understand that, and so issued its own angry let's-get-tough statements, then were naively surprised when their attempts to negotiate failed. By 2003, North Korea admitted to

nuclear weapons. GW Bush's angry statements got nowhere with North Korea for the rest of his presidency. Bush also set back disarmament treaties by pushing, as Reagan had, for a missile defense system.

At the start of his presidency, Obama proposed an end to all nuclear weapons worldwide. **The New START treaty was signed in 2010 and cuts the number of nuclear warheads by two thirds from the original START treaty.** By the end of this treaty, the number of nuclear weapons will be down to less than 2,000 each for the US and USSR. This is far from abolished, but it is still a great achievement. It is the latest in a number of huge steps from when the arms race was at its worst in Reagan's time, with over 60,000 nuclear weapons between the two nations. Obama proposed in 2013 even further cuts, yet one third more of all long range nuclear weapons.

Obama's final accomplishments on weapons of mass destruction are two. First, in a stand off with Syria, the dictator Assad agreed to give up his chemical weapons. The second is a treaty insuring Iran will never try to develop them. In part this is a treaty that exists to placate the right wing on a problem that did not exist, except as an excuse to punish Iran. Iran not only never tried to develop weapons, its reactors never enriched uranium above 20%, and only for electric power and medical research. For nuclear weapons, one needs at least 95% purity. Though the treaty is a landmark and benefits Israel more than anyone, the Israeli right wing and its US supporters complain, believe it or not, that the treaty prevents the war they want. As of this writing, the treaty has already begun, and its opponents failed to stop it. Future editions will update this section.

## Section Nine: What Ifs?

### Who Would Have Been Far Better as Presidents?

To be included in this section, there must have been a real possibility they could have become president. Third party candidates from Victoria Woodhull to Ralph Nader had no chance of actually being elected and thus are not discussed, no matter what one may think of their ideas and plans.

A potential president must also have been objectively far better at saving or improving lives, regardless of party or ideology, and there must be tangible proof they would have behaved so in their words and deeds. Even presidents who do the right thing for the wrong reasons, for political gain or who unintentionally avoid courses that lead to ruin, deserve praise.

## John Quincy Adams or Henry Clay Avoid the Trail of Tears

JQ Adams is remembered today largely for two things, for his strong antislavery stance and for the allegation of a “corrupt bargain” against him by Jackson's supporters. The first happened later in his career. After losing the presidency, he became a congressman and campaigned against slavery for almost three decades. But there was none of his antislavery fire while president. (See Appendix.)

The second claim is false, and hypocritical since Jackson did virtually the same. (See Section Five.) What is far less known about Adams is that he was one of the first voices to try to stop or slow the forced removal of the Five Tribes, what became the Trail of Tears and the Second Seminole War.

Adams had a low opinion of Natives, believing them barbaric. He did favor eventual removal of the Five Tribes. But unlike Jackson, he strongly opposed either force or illegal treaties. His principled, though limited, opposition would have stopped the Trail of Tears and removal of some of the tribes.

Some have the false impression that all white Americans before 1900 or so, presidents included, were all deeply racist towards Natives and waged unceasing war on them. This belief is common for both racists who hate Natives and anti racists who think they are being properly cynical about US history. But America's history with Native people was very mixed. **Though overall what happened to Natives clearly was genocide, it was not persistent unceasing atrocities. It was very much stop and start, with some presidents favoring, others opposed for both pragmatic reasons and genuine anti racism.**

Andrew Jackson was unique in his downright fanatic hatred of Natives, the most destructive anti-American Indian president in history after Reagan. (See Section One.) Jackson pushed harder than any other president in history to take Native land. It was his central campaign promise, “Vote Yourself a Farm.” Jackson's central appeal was based on being an Indian fighter, both on the battlefield and off.

If Jackson were defeated, or more likely never ran in either 1824 or 1828, there is a strong chance Adams could stop removal. As President, Adams canceled a fraudulent treaty between the Creek

tribe and Georgia, the Treaty of the Dancing Rabbit. When the treaty was presented to him he realized it was signed by Creeks who were not leaders of the tribe and had no right to sign away their land. He urged Georgia to negotiate again. At one point Adams even threatened to send US troops to stop white colonists' theft of Creek lands. The governor of Georgia challenged him. Adams backed down and the Creeks were illegally removed.

But though he favored removal and failed to stop one tribe's removal, what this episode shows is important. Adams was committed to the rule of law and ethical negotiations. **If Adams had been re elected, he would never recognize the illegal Treaty of New Echota that forcibly removed the Cherokee. More than that, he would certainly not defy the Supreme Court as Jackson did. He would respect the court's decision.**

The biggest difficulty is imagining Adams re elected. It was not a close election. The most likely scenario that makes Adams' re election possible is if Jackson never ran at all. If Jackson had been killed in battle, not only would Adams be far more likely to be re elected, his first term would be far more successful without Jackson's supporters trying to vengefully sabotage it.

Jackson was nearly killed in the Creek War. A Cherokee warrior allied with the US, Junaluska, saved his life from a Creek warrior. When Jackson forcibly removed the Cherokee and the other Five Tribes, Junaluska from then on regretted saving Jackson's life. He remarked later that, had he known the future, he would have killed Jackson himself.

Who would lead the Democrats if not Jackson and run against Adams? The two other main candidates in 1824 were William Crawford and Henry Clay. Crawford suffered a stroke in 1823 that left him too weak to campaign in 1824. Almost certainly his health is too poor to be elected in 1828.

If Clay had won in 1824, his views were fairly close to Adams on many matters, part of the reason Adams chose him as Secretary of State. **Clay's views on Natives especially were very close to Adams's.** Both considered Natives inferior, but both also strongly argued for their legal rights. **Neither would have enforced the fraudulent Treaties of the Dancing Rabbit or New Echota.** Where Clay

was different from Adams was his skill in negotiations. Clay likely would outmaneuver the Governor of Georgia and protected the Creek tribe, letting them remain in at least part of their homeland.

What about Jackson's supporters, if Jackson had died earlier? There were still many angry populists and Indian haters. Their most likely champion was John Calhoun, Adams' Vice President. Calhoun had run for president but withdrew, and accepted being VP under both Adams and then Jackson. What Calhoun is best remembered for today is his defense of slavery, secession, and states rights, three causes beloved by southern racists like Calhoun himself, their intellectual godfather. He was the first to propose nullification, that states could supposedly choose to cancel any national law. Calhoun was also one of the first and the most infamous of racists to claim slavery was not a necessary evil but even "a positive good" for the slave.

As for Natives, Calhoun created the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which often bribed land office officials to help them swindle Native land. Calhoun also helped negotiate the taking of Texas from Mexico, though he opposed war with Mexico. He realized, unlike other slavery advocates, that most stolen land would not become slave states. More than any other official, he created the Confederacy. More than any official besides Polk or Buchanan, he started the US on the path to Civil War.

The good news is, Calhoun was likely to lose to either Adams or Clay. While skilled at mounting intellectual defenses of racism and slavery, Calhoun had none of Jackson's ability to rally angry poor whites. Calhoun tried to unite southern racists and secessionists in his Address of the Southern Delegates in 1849. But most southern congressmen did not rally behind him.

How would the US be different with most or all of the Five Tribes not ethnically cleansed? This may head off or slow forced removal of Midwest tribes. The south itself might have a different character. It might be culturally closer to Arizona, where much of the white population directs their still deep racism at Natives rather than invents fanciful stories of an Indian in the family as southerners do.

## Willie Mangum Avoids War with Mexico and California Indian Genocide

Mangum is one of the most intriguing and contradictory major figures of US history that almost no one has heard of. Mangum was a Whig, a party largely anti slavery and popular in the north, while Mangum was from the south and favored slavery. Yet Mangum was also a lifelong friend and supporter of free Blacks. At the same time he opposed annexing most of Mexico because he feared mixed blood people becoming part of the US.

**President John Tyler, a Democrat, was almost accidentally killed by an explosion on a US Navy ship in 1844.** The Vice Presidency was vacant, as it had been for three years. At that time most Americans thought even less of the Vice Presidency than most do now, and so no one pushed for the vacancy to be filled. Had Tyler been killed, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Mangum was next in line and would be president.

It was President John Tyler who pushed for the US takeover of Texas from Mexico. The prior president, Van Buren, opposed the takeover because he saw correctly that it would lead to a prolonged and divisive war with Mexico. (See Section Four.) **One of Tyler's last major acts as president was to push through Congress an annexation bill to take over Texas. But with Tyler dead, such a bill is never proposed.**

Mangum certainly would not propose such a bill because he spoke publicly against the US-Mexico War, both before and during. At the war's end the All Mexico Movement called for taking all of Mexico and its people, from California and Texas all the way to the south of Mexico to the border with Guatemala. Mangum argued forcefully against them. His reasoning was that Mexicans were too alien, and their mixed ancestry made them a racial threat to an American society obsessed with racial separation.

Mangum would only be president for slightly over a year, and the election campaign would begin almost from the time he took office. Could James Polk, the man who provoked the war with

Mexico, still have become the next president anyway? Unlikely, since he was the first “dark horse candidate,” the first to come from behind, largely unknown. Polk had taken advantage of the Texas takeover passed by Tyler. But it was Tyler's issue. Without Tyler, Polk as an unknown would be pushing for the taking of Texas that had not yet happened, plus a war with Mexico.

The other likely candidates, James Buchanan and Lewis Cass, were handicapped. Buchanan, as was shown by his time as president before the Civil War, was just too incompetent to accomplish much. It is unlikely he could successfully take Texas, and if war comes with Mexico, it is one he would stumble into and be unable to run, much as he failed in both the Mormon War and preparing for the Civil War. (See Section Four.)

Lewis Cass also favored taking Texas, but wanted popular sovereignty for all new territories, that each state's population could choose to be a free state or a slave state. Cass later resigned from Buchanan's administration because of his objection to Buchanan favoring Confederates. Texas insurgents would have to carry out violence to get a successful vote for slavery in the new state, much like happened in Bleeding Kansas a decade later. Unlike Kansas, the violence would be far more racialized since both the German and Mexican populations of Texas overwhelmingly opposed slavery.

A third possible candidate, John Calhoun as Secretary of State under Tyler, had devised the takeover plan on Texas. Had he run and won, then the takeover proceeds, just a year later. But war with Mexico is not certain. Unlike Polk, Calhoun opposed war and was unlikely to provoke a war with Mexico. It is possible that Calhoun may accept the Nueces border, meaning a smaller Texas and the rest of the northern half of Mexico staying Mexican.

**For most of these scenarios, California is likely to remain part of Mexico and thus California Indian genocide and enslavement are prevented.** Could Mangum have been elected president himself? That is unlikely. Mangum was not a nationally known figure and had no following outside his home state. But his single year in office would be enough to prevent a war and a genocide, and leave several other intriguing possibilities.

Could Texas survive its ugly, unplanned, unwilling attempt to be a nation? It came into existence to be a US slave state, and practiced ethnic cleansing against both Mexicans and Natives, even friendly tribes. As noted before, **Texan attempts at government were utterly incompetent. It may finally be part of Mexico again** once the worst of Mexican elites are removed by Juarez and the Liberal Party. But that was not until the mid 1850s, a decade away.

An interesting proposal was floated in the mid 1840s. **Sam Houston proposed that Texas become a British colony.** Had both parties agreed, slavery ends in Texas, as it had a decade earlier in all British colonies. Where would Britain then get labor for Texas cotton plantations? It may bring in laborers from India, much as it did in part of the Caribbean. Texas may become more Indian from India than American Indian, Mexican, or Anglo-American.

Another interesting side issue is the would be nation of Deseret. The Mormon colony deliberately situated itself on the border between Mexico and the US. With Mexico's defeat in the US-Mexico War, Deseret went on to face its own defeat in the Mormon War and was annexed by the US. Mormons went from being fairly radical, practicing communal living, to today one of the most politically conservative groups in America.

Without a US-Mexico War, can Deseret survive? Some of its leaders spoke hopefully of having a huge territory stretching all the way from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. That is very unlikely. Gold was discovered in California in 1849. A gold rush under Mexico still happens, though there are likely few Americans. It is extremely unlikely Mexico would allow Mormon control over California. Instead more Mexican from further south raise the population. But an enclave of **Deseret may still potentially remain, with Mormons staying socialist radicals, holding onto perhaps the northern half of what is today Utah.**

As for Alta California, without it under US control, California Indian genocide is greatly limited. Mexico's record of war with its own Native peoples could be almost as brutal, especially in the Yaqui Wars. But its main practice was assimilation, not extermination. In California, most Native

deaths under Spain were by disease and overwork in the missions, not killing every Indian in sight as Anglo-Americans did. (See Section Two.) Mexico had largely abandoned supporting its missions, and most California Natives went back to their homelands. There they likely remain. They will still suffer atrocities and land loss, but not genocide as under the US.

A final interesting question is Oregon. Would the president after Mangum succeed in negotiating it away from Britain? Very likely, for the only territory of much interest to Britain was Vancouver Island and Bay, some proposals from the US left that alone. But the US with a much smaller Pacific coast and Mexico's much larger, **Mexico may be more of a Pacific power than the US.** Mexico will be more prosperous from the Gold Rush and from having never had its northern half stolen. The two nations likely become roughly equal in power.

## Hannibal Hamlin's Successful Reconstruction

Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's first Vice President, a Radical Republican senator from Maine, would have been a far better president than Andrew Johnson during Reconstruction. Hoping to win Democratic votes, Lincoln replaced Hamlin with Johnson, a Democrat from the south. At Lincoln's death, Johnson the raging racist and drunk took power, to the tragedy of American history. **Up to 50,000 political murders by racist terrorists took place in five years, almost all of them unpunished.** (See Section Six.)

For Johnson fired almost every Union general trying to enforce the law and protect Blacks and anti racist whites from terrorism. He forced the return of confiscated land turned over to former slaves, stripping them of the chance at economic self sufficiency. Finally, Johnson pardoned virtually every Confederate traitor.

For Reconstruction to succeed, three things had to happen:

1. The laws had to be enforced. US troops had to stay in place and increase in number. If not enough troops were not available, then Blacks and anti racist whites had to successfully arm and defend themselves from white supremacist terrorism.
2. Blacks had to be truly independent, economically self sufficient, and have political power to protect their economic gains. Economic self sufficiency would lead to many more educated Blacks and the start of a professional class.
3. For both of the above to happen, former Confederates and white supremacist terrorists had to be punished, not pardoned. Union generals, instead of being fired by Johnson for enforcing the law, would have more successfully arrested racist terrorists. When Grant did enforce the law for a time, KKK violence dropped dramatically. (See Section Eight.)

Hamlin would not have blocked any of the three above choices as Johnson did. The US would have seen a Congress and president united in their intent to rebuild, united in their efforts for Black

equality, and united to punish Confederate traitors and terrorists. Of the 50,000 political murders by racist terrorists, like that number is greatly reduced. by half at least. What is less certain is how many Black lives may be saved in the future not only from lynchings and related race-motivated violence, but from lessened poverty and discrimination.

Other accomplishments are not certain, but they are very likely. The Freedmen's Bureau, no longer crippled by Johnson, likely is expanded. Anti racist southern whites are no longer lynched alongside Blacks, and this political alliance, split by extensive violence, endures into the present.

**The biggest and most important accomplishment of all would be land redistributed to Union veterans.** Union Generals Sherman and Saxton had already tried experiments in redistributing land to former slaves in Savannah, Georgia and the Sea Islands of South Carolina. Congress had already passed a law giving the Freedmen's Bureau power to give land to former slaves, but Johnson vetoed it. What would likely be a more successful experiment would be giving land to Union veterans instead of all former slaves. Reparations for slaves was (and is) far more controversial than giving lands to veterans, which has a long precedent. What politician would commit political suicide by denying rewards to veterans?

This still means the Black community would be given a land base and a chance for self sufficiency, for there were at least 180,000 Black Union veterans. Giving large numbers of white Union veterans land has them moving south, bringing their families. There were over a million white Union veterans. Even if only a quarter accepted the land offer, that would turn the tide. Together that would be at least **more than 400,000 Union veterans, armed, trained, in place for the long term defending their land base, and not willing to tolerate the violence of white supremacist terrorists, the former Confederates they had just fought. This means groups like the KKK will lose.**

In the short term, one would expect to see even more violence from vengeful and jealous racists. But in the long term, the combination of continuing American troops in the south enforcing the law and groups of former Union veterans organized to fight the Klan and other terrorists means that ex-

Confederate racists cannot win. With the defeat of terrorism, Blacks become as influential in the south as whites. Combined with the many anti racist whites, this is an unbeatable coalition. It is even possible **the Democratic Party could end.** It was largely the party of southern white racists, until the 1960s when these same racists almost all became Republicans. Once defeated, the Democrats may dissolve for good.

Hamlin likely continues as president for a second term, until 1872. In actual history he served two more terms as Senator before retiring in 1880. Grant may then become the next US President from 1872 to 1876. A second term for Grant is possible. This time his reconciliation would be timed just right, with racist terrorists already broken. The main issue from the 1870s on would no longer be race but class. With the coming industrialization of America, labor struggles would define America for the next century. The Populist Party in actual history began in 1891, but earlier farmer's groups began as early as 1876. The Populists may begin earlier. America's two parties may today be Republicans and Populists. Or if the Populists fail, our two parties may even be Republicans and Socialists. At one point, one sixth of all US voters were Socialists.

## Benjamin Wade and a Successful Reconstruction (Maybe)

**Benjamin Wade, Senator and President Pro Tempore of the Senate, may have become the US President because of Andrew Johnson's impeachment** possibly leading to a successful Reconstruction. Much depends on when Andrew Johnson is impeached. A vote expelling Johnson from office in early 1868, barely a year before his term ends, gives Wade little time to salvage Reconstruction, and Congress little incentive to work with him.

The first impeachment effort against Johnson was in 1866. Had this succeeded, Wade has three years and not one. The worst of Johnson's actions can be overturned. Like Hamlin, Wade would have been an ideal president to carry this out. Wade was even more of a Radical, favoring not just equal rights for Blacks but the vote for women and recognition of unions.

Earlier scholars, most notably John Kennedy's ghost writer for *Profiles in Courage*, Ted Sorenson, argued that impeachment would set a dangerous precedent. Certainly the charges against Johnson were minor, but they reflected very real abuses of power. An earlier charge of impeachment would have been far better, on genuine charges. **Johnson was certainly no martyr. The evidence, bank accounts and receipts, points to Johnson only escaping impeachment by outright bribery.**

Virtually every action that would have been done by Hannibal Hamlin would also have been done by Wade. (See previous entry on Hamlin.) The three likely differences would be:

1. The Reconstruction Amendments were aimed at rights for Blacks. But they are worded as rights for "persons." Potentially such rights could have been extended to women as well, which Wade favored. He likely would have pushed for women's right to vote, back in the 1860s.

2. Wade was not well liked by many other Republican leaders, as difficult to work with. It is unlikely he would receive their support for a term elected on his own. Only if he is extremely successful and wanted by the public for a second term would they back him. If Wade is not re elected,

Grant is still the most likely next president.

3. Wade supported union rights. When labor struggles began on a bigger scale, especially the huge railroad strike in 1876, Wade would support that. But by that time he was very elderly, and died in 1877. It is uncertain how much of an effect he could have.

Had Johnson been successfully impeached this would have set a badly needed precedent limiting the power of the president. Nixon likely would have been impeached earlier, and perhaps for bombing Cambodia as well as Watergate. Reagan would not have escaped impeachment for Iran-Contra, nor GW Bush for deliberately lying to go to war against Iraq. Particularly had Johnson's impeachment been earlier over his actual abuses of power, the precedent would have made it more difficult to use impeachment for such utterly frivolous and absurd cases as impeaching Clinton for lying about oral sex, or downright surreal and delusional birth certificate theories about Obama. An America with a weaker presidency is one less likely to go to wars, better for both America and the rest of the world.

William Jennings Bryan Avoids the US-Filipino War,  
Ends American Empire

Bryan was a small p populist, not a member of the Populist Party but very much of their mindset and principles. Most of the Populist Party thought so well of him, they endorsed him in 1896. Unabashedly a commoner, Bryan was anti elite, anti business, a powerful public speaker, but also bigoted and ignorant, an extreme fundamentalist who distrusted science and knew little but his own political sphere. But Bryan was also the best hope the US had to avoid becoming a colonial empire, dominating other nations.

Bryan, it is true, was once an avid imperialist, a grand total of one time. He was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Spanish-American War. But Bryan was also strongly opposed to US control of the Philippines. He was one of the most mesmerizing speakers and writers ever to run for president, able to whip into crowds into near hysteria. His “cross of gold” speech was hailed as one of the most powerful ever given, able to win him the Democratic nomination in 1896 through sheer eloquence alone.

But Bryan was also a very poor administrator. His record as Secretary of State shows a man largely indifferent to the subtleties of statecraft. He was largely isolationist, except for the Spanish-American War. For the humanitarian purpose of preventing high body counts, this is a good thing. **At least 200,000, possibly as many as over a million Filipinos would not be killed or die of disease or hunger brought by war.**

It is not easy to imagine how Bryan wins the election, given how fanatically business opposed him. Wealthy elites spent massive amounts to defeat him, over \$3 billion in today's terms. Bryan would have to win all five of the states with the closest margins of defeat for him, under 5%. That narrowly hands him the election.

There was a third party, the National Democrats, made up of pro business Democrats opposed

to Bryan, even financially supported by Republicans. Their candidates were two of the oldest men to ever run for president and vice president, John Palmer and Simon Buckner at, respectively, 79 and 73 years old. Keep in mind this was in 1896, when the average life expectancy was under 50. An illness ending Palmer's life, or even keeping him recovering in a hospital, would be enough to end the National Democrats and make Bryan's election easier.

In 1897, when Bryan would take office, the Spanish-American War was over a year away. Hawaii's queen had been overthrown by American plantation owners with the help of US Marines, against the wish of the previous president, Grover Cleveland. Cleveland then refused to take Hawaii and make it part of the US. When McKinley became president, he was still reluctantly avoiding war. But all that changed when the *USS Maine* blew up accidentally. Americans' war hysteria blamed Spain and pushed the US into war.

How would Bryan deal with it? As said before, he supported the Spanish-American War but opposed US conquest of the Philippines. The Spanish-American War likely happens even quicker, since Bryan had none of McKinley's hesitation. Spain still loses its territories to the US. The change happens when US General Otis betrays Filipinos and pursues war without Washington's approval or knowledge. **Bryan would fire Otis, perhaps even charge Otis and other Army officers with war crimes, and halt the war.** The US-Philippines War ends quickly, within a month or two instead of three brutal years, and the Philippines becomes an independent nation under its new President Emilio Aguinaldo.

Bryan's ineptness at foreign policy does mean **it is quite possible the Philippines may face a take over from another power, likely Britain, Germany or Japan.** Of the three, the most likely would be Germany. German warships had actually been off the coast of the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. German imperial conquest, even before the Third Reich, could be extremely brutal, as their record shows in Namibia where German troops tried to exterminate the Herero. But German colonialism would also be for only twenty years, since Germany was defeated in 1918. The League of Nations may choose to give independence to the Philippines, or they may pass control to

Japan as the closest major power.

The Japanese Empire likely would treat the Philippines much as they had Korea and Taiwan. There would be campaigns of extreme brutality and forced assimilation for a little over a quarter century. But after Japanese defeat in World War II (still almost a certainty), the Philippines would be independent. The same is true if it had been Japan trying to conquer the Philippines after the US left.

Britain already had control of some Pacific islands plus Hong Kong in China. It may choose to try and take the Philippines. If so, the Philippines likely become independent about the same time as another former British colony, Malaysia. And like Malaysia, the Philippines become independent after the British crush another Communist uprising in a brutal war. Or, since Britain fought the disastrous unpopular Boer War only a year after the Spanish-American War, Britain may back off their attempted conquest of the Philippines.

**All these potential conquests may be avoided if Bryan appoints an able cabinet with even a single member, or a general or admiral, that pushes him to make the Philippines an American protectorate.** A Philippines with a US naval base in Manila would keep out Germany or any other empire. But the Philippines today would not necessarily be more prosperous. It has long been dominated by a mestizo elite of Spanish-Filipino and Spanish-Chinese ancestry that keeps other Filipinos poor, and Aguinaldo and most other Filipino presidents were part of that elite. Still, up to a million deaths avoided is praiseworthy by any standard.

What of the other former Spanish colonies take by the US? Cuba likely is far better off. In our own times, Congress passed the Teller Amendment narrowly, barring the US from taking over Cuba. Likely it passes by a greater margin or is never even needed, with Bryan giving independence to Cuba almost immediately. If US interference is less, the chance of Castro or another like him coming to power is also lessened.

Puerto Rico also likely becomes independent. Spain had already given Puerto Rico local self rule only a month before the US invasion. There is an outside chance Britain or France may seek to

take over either island. Again, US protectorate and navy bases could stop that and still leave both nations independent. **Independent Puerto Rico likely would be much like its neighbor the Dominican Republic, right wing dictatorships backed by the US alternating with leftist populist governments.** It would be poorer than it is now, but also not utterly dependent on the US economy.

Perhaps only Guam might not be given independence, given its small size and nearness to Japan. What would happen to Hawaii? Plantation owners not only overthrew the legitimate Hawaiian Queen, Liliuokalani, they defeated an attempt by Hawaiians to retake their homeland. **The so called Republic of Hawaii limited the vote to only 4,000** out of a population of over 100,000. **Only white property owners** could vote, with Asian voting specifically forbidden and almost all Native Hawaiians barred by literacy tests. It was a one party state, and in the only election, less than 1% of the population voted. There is no reason to think this republic-in-name-only would be any different had it continued.

The US Congress in their Blount Report recognized the overthrow was illegal. But previous President Cleveland briefly recognized the Hawaiian plantation owners' government and declined to push them out. Bryan opposed the take over of Hawaii by the US. Whether he would send in troops to give Hawaii back to Hawaiians is difficult to say. He believed in the US as an advocate of freedom, but he was also an ugly racist. (His infamous comment on Haiti was, "Imagine it, niggers speaking French.") Pulling out US troops is one thing, but sending US troops against other white Americans is another.

Whether Hawaii stays independent and never becomes part of the US depends on if Bryan is re elected. Would he be? His opponents feared his most popular issue, free silver, hurting the economy. Free silver was a crackpot idea, that coining silver and fixing its price could help farmers. Even trying to do so could wreck the economy. But it was the economic crash of 1893 that made many sympathetic to Populist ideas. **Another crash could lead to fairly radical Populist ideas becoming law.**

These ideas included **public ownership of railroads and telephone companies, public cooperative farmers' monopolies, and a ban on government money to wealthy people or companies,**

or as we would call it today, corporate welfare, as well as ideas not controversial today like income tax and direct election of senators. (There were also bigoted ideas in Populism, restricting immigration and foreign ownership of land.) If so, Bryan is re elected, and Hawaii stays an independent nation.

Ironically, one Populist proposal was only a single term for presidents. But any amendment for that would take time, and Bryan's enormous ego likely would push him to seek a second term until that amendment passed.

Hawaii's white racist minority plantation elites could not stay in power indefinitely. Every time they had labor strikes, they brought in workers from another nation, first China, then Japan, then Black Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos. The islands have some of the most troubled labor history anywhere. At some point the plantation owners may fall from a general strike. More likely, Japan may decide to take over. Or these white racist elites could ask to be a British colony as the second best choice after the US.

If Japan takes over, much like any possible takeover of the Philippines, they rule with great brutality and forced assimilation. Again, any takeover ends with their defeat in World War II, which is still almost certain. Instead of Pearl Harbor being bombed, the target may be San Diego. If Britain takes over, Hawaiian independence may come at about the same time as Malaysia's, in the 1960s.

But a better parallel would be Singapore's. Both nations are ideal in their location for trade. In the 1950s, Hawaii in the middle of the Pacific would be a perfect stop over for growing international air travel. **An independent Hawaii would be far more prosperous**, perhaps without the crasser tourism, and self rule instead of being a colony with much of her wealth exported to the mainland US.

If Bryan had become president, both populism and anti imperialism would be mainstream ideas. Both radical economic ideas and, unfortunately, anti immigrant beliefs receive a boost. Above all, American empire is far more likely to never be, better for both the US and the world.

## Henry Wallace Avoids the Cold War

For dogmatic anti Communists, it has long been an article of faith that the fate of the US and the world was narrowly saved by Truman being president rather than Wallace. But as the section Truman and the Cold War showed, Truman as a president was likely the worst possible choice for the US and the world. More than a few scholars blame Truman's bumbling and rigidity for the Cold War, as much or even more than Stalin.

There were alternatives. In the 1930s and 40s Henry Wallace was the second most popular man in America. First as Secretary of Agriculture, he modernized farming and rescued much of rural America. In 1940 he became Roosevelt's Vice President. Wallace helped convince twelve Latin American nations join the Allies to fight against the Axis, which he saw as a war against racism.

Wallace was not only strongly anti racist, he was anti colonialist and anti capitalist. He believed in technocracy, the scientific management of government and society. He knew that capitalism is inherently inhumane and inefficient since its central priority is personal profit. His anti capitalism worried business elites. So they convinced Roosevelt to drop Wallace and replace him with Harry Truman, a nobody from a corrupt political machine. The result of that poor choice was a Cold War that did not need to happen and could have led to another nuclear war.

What rigid anti Communists are often confused about is their belief that anything less than chest thumping and blustery calls for war means one is weak or not sufficiently anti Communist enough. It always was simply a matter of the best strategy. How practical was it to ever propose an invasion of the Soviet Union? Russia had beaten Napoleon and Hitler. The last person to conquer the length of Russia was Genghis Khan, and it took most of his life and slaughter on a scale no sane person would call for.

Fanatic anti Communists also did not understand or overestimated the power of the USSR. How believable was it ever that the Soviets would conquer the US? How could they hope to cross oceans with a US Navy easily three times that of Soviet strength? How could any invasion of Alaska succeed

over a frozen strait with no major ports and some of the highest frozen mountains in the world? **Both the US and USSR are essentially unconquerable.**

Some anti Communists even considered, literally, bringing the world to an end. How practical was it to go to nuclear war to stop Communism? Even under the “best” circumstances one is still looking at five million American deaths and, equally important, tens of millions of Russian deaths, most of them innocent victims of Communism themselves. Under the worst circumstances, the extinction of most of humanity is likely. Most nuclear crises were over comparatively minor issues. Would one really want to see a nuclear war over whether Vietnam had free elections, for example?

Fanatic anti Communists also had (and have) a disturbing lack of faith in democracy. In part they were victims of believing their own propaganda about the power of enemy ideas. In essence, dogmatic anti-Communists believe in an unrealistic conspiracy theory. **Communism was not a monolith. They were actually sharply divided** among themselves and destined to fall of their own contradictions. (See Section Four.) **Those divisions were obvious as far back as the 1920s**, but many anti Communists were too ideologically blind to see them.

Wallace was appointed Secretary of Commerce by Truman, then fired two years later for strongly criticizing Truman's Cold War. Wallace was halfway right in predicting Truman would cause “a century of fear.” The fear was true, but it was for a half century. Wallace formed the Progressive Party which proposed co existence with the Soviet Union as well as civil rights, an end to segregation, government healthcare, and a government run energy industry. On many issues Wallace was amazingly brave and before his time, such as campaigning in the deep south with Black candidates and refusing to speak to segregated audiences.

Wallace's campaign was sunk by red baiting He was widely accused of being a stooge for Communism because he refused to condemn or force out Communists within his party. He got less than 3% of the vote nationwide, in part because he was barred from the ballot in Illinois. Much was made over Wallace's visit to a Potemkin village in 1944. Soviet generals created a fake village, staffed by

prisoners, for Wallace's delegation to visit. Wallace compared the village to those in New England.

Wallace took the trip with Owen Lattimore, a scholar on Asia later smeared as a Communist agent by Joe McCarthy. Lattimore has been vindicated by scholars, but on Wallace opinions are divided. Two points are important: Wallace's opinion of the Soviets during World War II, when they were US allies against the Axis, was not unusual. Also, Wallace himself later admitted his errors in his book *Where I Was Wrong*, blaming it on lack of information.

For had Wallace become president when Roosevelt died, Wallace would have been fully informed on Soviet atrocities instead of having blinders on and seeing the Soviets as a wartime ally. What critics of Wallace often fail to note is something else: Stalin was certainly an irredeemably evil man, but he was not a suicidal one. **One year before his death in 1953, Stalin sent the famed Stalin Note. He proposed Germany be reunified as a neutral country.** American leaders thought it a bluff and turned Stalin down. Germany would not be one nation again until 1990.

By the mid 1940s, Stalin was also very old and sick. All his adult life he was a heavy smoker and drank much hard liquor. In 1945 he suffered a first a mild stroke in the spring and then a massive heart attack in the fall. When he finally died in 1953, the official cause of death was a massive stroke. There are persistent claims and contradictory evidence over whether Stalin was poisoned. In the year before Stalin's death, he purged Soviet Jews with the bizarre claim of the Doctors' Plot, that Jewish doctors were planning to poison top officials.

Had Wallace been president in 1945, this would have been at the earliest stages of a possible confrontation. Wallace proposed in 1948 accepting Soviet control of Eastern Europe. This wound up happening anyway under Truman. **If Wallace had been president, Stalin may ask for a united neutral Germany years earlier, maybe as early as 1945.** Wallace would no doubt accept. Germany was one of the central battlegrounds for the Cold War. **With a neutral Germany, there are no crises in Berlin, no Berlin Airlift, and no Berlin Wall.**

Another event affected would be the Greek Civil War. After World War II, Communists and

other leftists fought against monarchists and militarists. Truman sent aid to the right wing, falsely believing the left was receiving aid from Stalin. With Wallace as president, Greeks decide the outcome of the Greek Civil War, not the US. The left may still lose. But even had they won, these were not Soviet puppets. Most likely, Greece becomes like their Yugoslavian Communist allies, a Communist state but one independent of the Soviets.

**Much of the six to seven million deaths in the Cold War could have been avoided. The long list of countries invaded by the US, or governments overthrown by US troops, the CIA, or military dictatorships supported by the US, would be far less.** For not only was Wallace pushing for an end to confrontation with the Soviets, he also opposed colonialism. Wallace would take the side of oppressed people suffering under the failing British, Dutch, French, and Portuguese empires. These empires may end a few years sooner, and these colonies become independent nations.

American empire may also come to an end. The Philippines certainly becomes independent immediately, as it did anyway in 1946. **Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Samoa may become independent nations.** Hawaii only became a US state in 1957 because the UN was pressuring empires to set their colonies free. In the 1940s, most Puerto Ricans still favored independence. That would not change until the 1950s, when the economy became dependent on money sent back by Puerto Ricans living in the US mainland.

The more skeptical may wonder, what if Stalin does not agree to coexistence? That is certainly possible, that he may take Wallace as weak and try to be more aggressive. But those who imagine the worst, “Oh my God, Commies rule the world!” are paranoid, unrealistic, and do not know their history. Again, the Soviets never had the power to take over the world or even the US. **Much of the world only wanted to be free of imperial control, but both Communists and anti-Communists misunderstood anti-colonialism as sympathy for Communism. Even under the worst case scenario, most of the world would never become Communist.** And if remote Third World countries went Communist? Could Angola or Laos or Bolivia invade the US? Only the most deluded could imagine so. (See Section

One. Reagan actually did.)

George Kennan, the scholar who created the US strategy of Containment, argued that only certain countries needing to be kept from becoming Communist anyway. These were the nations capable of launching an amphibious attack on the US, namely western Europe and Japan. If non-industrial countries fall to Communism, it was not a threat to the US. Both Korea and Vietnam were not important enough to send in US troops, in Kennan's view. American presidents ignored Kennan's argument, to the tragedy of those peoples and American military who died unnecessarily.

As said before, with more sources of information, Wallace would understand completely how brutal the Soviet system was. By 1952, he was strongly anti Communist entirely on his own. Likely as president, that understanding comes by 1945 or 1946, much the same as Truman, but without Truman's fear mongering, incompetence, and ideological blindness.

Wallace as president likely would push for civil rights much harder than Truman. Wallace also would push for government healthcare, over 60 years before Obama, and actual government healthcare, not corporate welfare for insurance companies. Had Wallace succeeded at both, the results would be hundreds of thousands of lives saved a year. A Wallace presidency also likely means that over *\$7 trillion* spent on a nuclear arms race is unlikely.

Would Wallace be reelected? That is very difficult to predict and depends on how successful coexistence with the Soviets was, as well as the success of civil rights and government healthcare. But it is almost certain that three or seven years of a President Wallace would be far better than a President Truman.

## Adlai Stevenson Ends the Cold War

General Dwight Eisenhower, former commander of all Allied forces in Europe in World War II, was a very popular president from 1952-60, a conservative (though not by today's standards) but not fanatic, anti Communist but also somewhat against McCarthyism. He was also a conservative in the sense of being cautious, and a defender of things as they were. Such a man could at best promote stability, and would never try for anything as revolutionary as ending the Cold War that threatened to end all life on Earth.

For Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate in 1952 and 1956, to become president, one has to imagine Eisenhower not running, that instead a lesser candidate such as Robert Taft or Thomas Dewey, or even Joe McCarthy at his most self-destructive, was the Republican candidate. Taft the isolationist, Dewey the dull but earnest reformer, or McCarthy at his most drunken and hysterical would all likely lose to Stevenson.

Unlike with Wallace, there is far less of a concern with Stalin betraying any agreement. Stalin would be in the final stages of dying by the time Stevenson became president. In fact Stalin had been in poor health for almost a decade. In 1945 he had a major heart attack and suffered from hardening of the arteries and his own heavy smoking for the rest of his life.

**Stalin's death means any number of Soviet leaders who are less hardline, more willing to avoid conflict, and by Communist standards, less repressive.** This does not mean full democracy by any means, or anything but the most cautious peace. But it does mean the death toll from repression falls from tens of millions to thousands and Soviet leaders looking to avoid further Cold War that both Truman and Stalin trapped their nations into.

Stevenson began as a moderate, an anti Communist but a thoughtful one, an enormously smart intellectual who learned and moved his positions to the left over time. As the Cold War worsened, Stevenson was among the first to call for an end to nuclear testing. As Governor of Illinois, he stood up

to anti Communist hysteria, vetoing a bill requiring loyalty oaths. He even defended Alger Hiss, a diplomat smeared as a Soviet spy by Nixon, an enormously brave act in the middle of McCarthyism.

The first problem Stevenson would face is the Korean War, two years old and bogged down in a stalemate. There are no good choices here. North Korea was and is one of the most brutal dictatorships. But so was the South Korean government under its dictator Syngman Rhee. Eisenhower finally resorted to hinting he was going to use the A-bomb against North Korea. Rhee wanted to continue fighting and demanded the US conquer North Korea for him.

Ike bluntly told Rhee the war was now ended. (See Section Eleven.) Stevenson is very unlikely to bluff about using the A-bomb. But continuing support for Rhee is also unlikely, and the war may end much like World War I had the US never intervened, all sides simply exhausted.

Eisenhower overthrew governments in both Guatemala and Iran on vague suspicions they might in some way be Communist sympathizers. In both countries the coups turned out disastrously in the long run, eventually leading to genocide in Guatemala in the 1980s and an Islamic theocracy in Iran in the 1970s until today. With Stevenson, both outcomes may be avoided. Ike also supported the French in their attempt to hold onto their colony in Vietnam, and even sent the first US troops there.

The biggest question of all, of course, is how the Cold War is different. For several years after Stalin's death, there was a power struggle among Soviet leaders Beria, Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Molotov. Khrushchev eventually won in 1956, and both he and Beria freed huge numbers of political prisoners. One of the most important things Khrushchev did was the so called **Secret Speech**. Read to Soviet congresses and then to Eastern European leaders, the speech **listed all of Stalin's crimes and denounced them**. The speech was part of the reason Hungary rose up against Soviet control in 1956. Khrushchev **also allowed some freedom of speech in the arts, allowed many western tourists for the first time, cut the number of Soviet troops by a third, gave up plans for a large navy, and even abolished special tribunals, bringing an end to almost all trials for political prisoners.**

But to dogmatic anti-Communists, this was all ignored or seen as a trick, a conspiracy to fool

the west to let their guard down. One of the strongest anti-Communists was then Vice President Richard Nixon, who even got into practically a shouting match with Khrushchev in the so called Kitchen Debate. When Eisenhower and Khrushchev were due to meet for a summit, Ike had U-2 spy planes fly over the USSR. One was shot down, and the scandal ended any hope of an agreement at the summit.

But with Stevenson, this is not a president or administration believing that reforms are a trick. Instead there are two reform minded and peace minded leaders in both the US and USSR. There would have been an earlier test ban treaty. Without the U-2 scandal, there likely will be an early agreement to allow monitoring of each others nuclear arsenals, and possibly an agreement on Berlin. What this all potentially adds up to is an end of the Cold War, and reforms in the Soviet Union eventually much like what happened with Gorbachev in the late 1980s, but 30 years earlier.

**The Cuban missile crisis? Likely it never happens. The US-Vietnam War? Likely it never happens either.** Vietnam is united under Ho Chi Minh, and without over two decades of fighting that strengthened Vietnam's Communists, the government is more nationalist than Communist. **Both the hippie counterculture of the 1960s and the conservative backlash of the 70s and 80s are far less likely, or they take very different forms.**

Would Stevenson be re elected? That is quite likely, unless the Korean War somehow turned even worse and dragged on close to the elections in 1956. The mid 1950s were somewhat prosperous, which made for a happy nation and re election of the party in power. Stevenson's reforms seeking to end the Cold War, once they are seen to work, likely make him more popular, even in spite of anti-Communists' anger and suspicion. We likely remember Stevenson, accurately, as one of two men who ended the Cold War, much the way many today inaccurately "remember" Reagan ending the Cold War.

Robert Kennedy Ends the US-Vietnam War,  
Avoids Genocide in Cambodia

John Kennedy certainly has an undeserved reputation as a man of peace. He was an unabashed Cold Warrior, strongly anti Communist. John Kennedy was re imagined into a man of peace after his death by a party anxious to create a martyr and people wanting to create meaning for his murder. This image was never accurate. Oliver Stone's conspiracy film *JFK*, for example, claims John Kennedy wanted to withdraw US troops from Vietnam and issued an order recalling several thousand US troops. In fact, this was a routine rotation of troops, soon to be replaced by others.

Robert Kennedy was a more complicated case. For much of his life and political career, he was equally as rigid an anti Communist as his brother. But the final few years of his life saw a dramatic change in the man. Increasingly he opposed the continuing US-Vietnam War.

He was reluctant to oppose Lyndon Johnson for the nomination of the Democratic Party until Eugene McCarthy did extremely well in the New Hampshire primary. Then Johnson announced he would no longer seek a second term as president. Robert Kennedy then joined the race. He did extremely well, winning most of the important primaries until his assassination.

**Had Robert Kennedy not been assassinated, he might well have won against Nixon in the general election.** Hubert Humphrey, the actual candidate, came within a few tenths of one percent from winning. In eight states, five of them carried by Nixon, the margin of victory was under three percentage points. Humphrey pledged to continue the war in Vietnam, and many antiwar Democrats stayed home.

It is certain Robert Kennedy would withdraw US troops from Vietnam. He would have little choice, as it was primarily this position that caused people to vote him president in the first place, elevating him in the primaries.

It would not be an immediate withdrawal, as McCarthy proposed and Kennedy criticized him

for saying so. **Robert Kennedy publicly proposed a US withdrawal combined with UN troops coming in to supervise an election** where South Vietnamese could decide to vote to join the North or not. Kennedy had proposed this plan to Johnson and his Secretary of Defense McNamara. McNamara convinced Johnson to reject it, believing the North would never agree to withdraw and let an election decide.

Yet whether the North agreed to withdraw or not, an election would only confirm what most observers already knew. The South Vietnamese government had little support or legitimacy with its population. Its government was made up of mixed French-Vietnamese people and Catholic converts, along with a largely ethnic Chinese business class, all seen as alien by most Vietnamese. The National Liberation Front was a broad coalition of peasants, students, Buddhists, and Communists, perhaps four fifths of the people. Northern control was just a matter of when and how.

Kennedy, pressed by his own base, would have little choice to withdraw US troops. The almost certain deadline would be the upcoming 1970 congressional elections, with the first troops returning home before then. Kennedy would need to show voters his party could bring peace, or they would face a strong defeat in midterm elections. The last US troops likely are out by the end of 1971 for Kennedy to have a chance of re election in 1972.

Ideally, Kennedy would soften the harshness of Communist control of all of Vietnam by evacuating all US allies. But this is not certain. Kennedy was not a very experienced or especially able administrator or planner. His prosecutions of organized crime figures had a mixed record. His main contribution to his brother's administration was to be a sounding board and assistant within the cabinet, a buffer between his brother and other officials.

It is possible as many Vietnamese may be killed or imprisoned by the Vietnamese Communist government as happened in our own times. But Vietnam as a nation is still far better off with four to five less years of war, far fewer deaths and destruction of the environment and national infrastructure.

Certainly Cambodia would be far better off. There is no reason Kennedy would order a carpet

bombing of a neutral nation to appear tough to the US right wing, as Nixon did, playing a role in genocide in the process. (See Section One.) Kennedy did not subscribe to such ludicrous failed tactics as “madmanship” as Nixon did.

**From 500,000-1,000,000 Vietnamese and 20,000-25,000 American troops could be saved, depending on when the war ends. 500,000-600,000 Cambodians would not be killed by US bombs or troops. The Khmer Rouge never comes to power, saving 1,000,000 to 1,700,000 more Cambodian lives.**

A reunited Vietnam may still later invade Cambodia. Such an invasion has less of a chance of succeeding, so the body count may be lessened.

Nixon, of course, established relations with China and negotiated arms control with the Soviet Union. It is uncertain Robert Kennedy could do the same. It is not that Nixon or Kissinger were any better at negotiations. They were not, they were quite overrated. What won them praise is their doing exactly what moderates or liberals would have done, negotiate for peace and arms control. Nixon's support for negotiations came from Democrats and moderate Republicans, while conservatives generally opposed him.

Thus while most of Robert Kennedy's own party would support both China relations and arms control (most had called for both for decades), the opposition from the right wing would be fierce. The good news is, any recognition of China would not be through the US turning a blind eye to genocide in Bangladesh. Genocide deaths may be reduced by one tenth. **Perhaps 30,000 to 300,000 Bangladeshis, are not killed.**

It is also unlikely Robert Kennedy would agree to support and then betray the Kurds of Iraq as Nixon did. (See Section Two.) However, the Israeli government and the Shah of Iran may still do so, and so the Kurds may still be used cynically as pawns and then die in their uprising. The difference is, no betrayal of the Kurds in the early 70s by a US president may not lead to great distrust of the US later on.

Finally, there is little reason to believe Robert Kennedy, or any other possible president at the time such as Humphrey, Reagan, or Rockefeller, would get involved in anything like Watergate. That scandal was caused by a series of personal weaknesses peculiar to Nixon, his deep paranoia and inferiority complex.

Robert Kennedy would certainly continue the anti poverty and civil rights programs of Lyndon Johnson. Whether he would be president again in 1972 is difficult to say. Ending the war would boost his popularity. But some of his likely opponents such as Reagan were quite skilled politicians and public speakers.

A Nixon who never became president likely spends his life writing books and working with law firms. This would be better for him, the nation, and all of humanity. A world without Kissinger in power is better off as well, had he never done more than write amoral books.

## Al Gore Avoids the Iraq War and Possibly Most Katrina Deaths

Imagining Al Gore winning the election in 2000 is extremely easy. It does not take any imagination for the simple and self evident truth: Gore did win. He won both the popular vote and the electoral vote. The second was only awarded to GW Bush based on the most spectacular and brazen bit of election theft seen in the US since 1876. (See further discussion in Notes.)

The immediate cause of Gore being prevented from taking office were five openly partisan Supreme Court justices and intimidation efforts by Republicans in Florida. To imagine Gore being allowed to take his rightful office one has to only have a single one of the five justices decide to actually follow the law. Another possibility is the obvious: Gore could have run a campaign not so utterly incompetent and beaten Bush more decisively. (The most ludicrous and hyper-partisan claim blamed the Green Party and Ralph Nader. Most Nader voters never voted before, and the remaining would have voted roughly evenly for Bush and Gore had Nader not run.)

The unnecessary Second Iraq War, the failed response to Hurricane Katrina, and the bungled Afghanistan War were all direct consequences of GW Bush being appointed president. Had the 2000 election not been stolen, all of these tragedies are prevented. **From 100,000 to 1 million deaths in the Second Iraq War are avoided. Nine tenths of the deaths from Hurricane Katrina may be avoided. The number of deaths in the Afghanistan War also likely are greatly reduced.**

The attacks on September 11 brought a wave of outrage and a mix of demands for both justice and revenge against Al Qaeda terrorists. Much like the sinking of the *USS Maine* enraged the public to seek a war against Spain when it had nothing to do with the sinking, many Americans were misled into a war with Iraq, a nation that had no ties to Al Qaeda. Yet even with that flood of anger, it still look quite a lot to push the US public into war.

Opposition to both the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars was the highest in both US and world history, even greater than either the US-Vietnam War or the Gulf War. Demonstrations against these wars on

February 15, 2003 in over 600 cities drew over seven million people and are listed by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest in world history. Within the US, opposition ranged from Catholic bishops and libertarian minded conservatives to the Green Party and soldiers refusing to deploy to Iraq. Governments in 54 nations opposed the Second Iraq War. The United Nations, especially Secretary Kofi Annan and Inspector Hans Blix, were a leading source of opposition as were religious leaders Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Democratic Party was split, with slightly over half of Democratic Congressmen voting for the war initially. John Kerry, Democratic presidential candidate in 2004, voted for war, and his campaign undercut antiwar protesters, asking them to stop demonstrating. But Gore opposed the Iraq War from the beginning. With him as president leading an already strong opposition, the Second Iraq War never happens. Saddam Hussein likely remains in power, isolated, with a Kurdish region in practice remaining independent. **Iraq remains a dictatorship instead of an extremely limited corrupt attempt at democracy.**

Believe it or not, **Iraq would be better off. Up to a million Iraqis do not die in civil war. One in seven Iraqis do not have to flee Iraq**, and one in seven more do not have to flee within Iraq. There are even fewer people tortured. The Iraqi government today carries out a higher rate of torture than Hussein did. It is quite possible Hussein may be overthrown later instead, perhaps during the Arab Spring of 2011, if it happens.

**As for the Afghanistan War, Gore likely would order a larger invasion force than Bush did.** It is difficult to think of a potential president at the time who would not invade Afghanistan. Not Gore, not GW Bush nor Jeb Bush nor McCain. Perhaps only Bill Bradley or Ralph Nader would not invade Afghanistan, and neither of them had a chance of winning.

With the US only fighting the Afghanistan War instead of a useless war in Iraq most experts correctly predicted would fail, it is likely Al Qaeda and the Taliban are defeated far sooner. **Osama Bin Laden likely would be captured quite early. In December 2001**, US troops came within one hour of

capturing him at Tora Bora, Afghanistan.

The failure to capture him was partly because so few troops were sent. Only 8,000 US troops initially went to Afghanistan. There are more police in many major US cities. So few troops were sent because the Bush administration was going to send them to Iraq instead. Without the Iraq diversion, Gore agrees to a larger force that captures Bin Laden. Al Qaeda would be decapitated, badly weakened within four months of September 11. The lack of an Iraq War also means Al Qaeda has far less of a recruiting tool as well as an easy target for terrorism, US troops in Iraq.

How the Afghanistan War ultimately turns out is more difficult to predict. There is no reason Gore would not be drawn into nation building in Afghanistan, much as Bush chose to. The invasion would likely be every bit as difficult and costly. But without over 100,000 US troops bogged down in Iraq, Afghanistan nation building has more of a chance.

Would Gore be re elected? If the Afghanistan War goes poorly, he may face a challenge from his left, such as Kucinich, who is very unlikely to win the nomination. From John Kerry, who is slightly to Gore's right, the challenge would be more credible. The most likely GOP opponents are GW Bush again, John McCain, and perhaps Jeb Bush. Should any of these four defeat Gore, they likely send even more troops to Afghanistan. While either Bush or McCain favor a war with Iraq, without the recent anger from September 11, the public is far less likely to allow it. By 2004, American opinion even on the war in Afghanistan was already split down the middle. UN inspectors also found no biochemical weapons in Iraq back in 2002. The fact that Saddam Hussein visibly failed to be much of a threat to anyone besides Iraqis makes an invasion almost impossible to force.

If Gore is re elected, or if any of the other possible candidates defeat Gore besides GW Bush, Louisiana and Mississippi are likely much better off during Hurricane Katrina. It took a unique mix of cronyism and incompetence to bungle the response to Katrina by appointing a campaign manager's friend with virtually no experience as the head of FEMA. Likely nine tenths or more of the deaths from Katrina are avoided. (See Section Four.)

But **Africa would be worse off without GW Bush.** Gore, Kerry, McCain, and Jeb Bush have never indicated any concern for AIDS in Africa. Gore in fact faced protests by AIDS activists over his lobbying for drug companies, pressuring South Africa's government to not allow cheaper generic anti-AIDS drugs. McCain also seem confused by the issue, publicly saying he was not sure if condoms help prevent AIDS. Except for the AIDS issue, the world is far better off if GW Bush had not been appointed president by five Supreme Court justices, instead remaining a poor businessman and a figurehead as the Governor of Texas.

## Section Ten: What If?

### Who Would Have Been Far Worse in Presidential Body Counts?

Much like the previous section, to be included in this section, there must have been a real possibility they could have become president. Third party or less known candidates of the two main parties of the most horrific kind, from Strom Thurmond to George Wallace to David Duke to Pat Buchanan to Ron Paul, thankfully never a chance of actually being elected president.

A potential president must also have been objectively far worse at potentially causing deaths, regardless of party or ideology, and there must be tangible proof they would have behaved so in their own words and deeds. Even presidents who did what they believed to be the right thing that would obviously have turned out disastrously, usually because of their ideological blindness, deserve almost as much condemnation as those who do evil either for a deeply amoral nature or for political gain.

## Jackson as President in 1824

It is hard to find a president more petty, more vindictive, more vicious, and more determined than Jackson. When Jackson lost the election in 1824, he resigned as congressman and spent the next four years undermining President John Quincy Adams, just so he could get elected. Jackson believed he had won the election in 1824, but he did not. There were four major candidates, and none of them won enough votes to be declared the winner.

The election went into the House of Representatives. Jackson had the most popular (40%) and electoral (99 of the 133 needed) votes and so believed he should have been chosen. This kind of situation was new to the US, though common in Europe. In Europe and indeed every nation with a Parliament system, what happens even today is that parties bargain back and forth. Parties form coalitions, with each getting something.

This is what happened in 1824. Henry Clay agreed to support Adams since their stances on many issues were fairly close. Clay also believed Jackson was too ignorant and unqualified to be president. Clay was offered Secretary of State. Jackson claimed there was a “corrupt bargain.” He and his supporters claimed the two were rewarding their followers with government offices. But Jackson did the exact same practice once elected, even calling it the Spoils System.

For Jackson to become president in 1824 is as easy as Clay releasing his supporters to vote for who they choose. While most would likely still support Adams, even a few, plus a few of the other candidate William Crawford, would be enough for Jackson to be elected.

The main difference is that the Trail of Tears begins earlier. Adams made a failed effort to halt the forced removal of the Choctaw nation from their homeland. (See Section Nine.) He realized the Treaty of the Dancing Rabbit was invalid, since the Choctaws who signed it had no authority to do so. Adams called for a renegotiation of the treaty. The state of Georgia threatened any such negotiation. Georgia racists began seizing Choctaw land, even daring the federal government to try and stop them.

Adams hesitated and finally back down.

Jackson would not even have made the effort to halt a fraudulent treaty. Instead the Choctaw would have been forced off that much sooner, perhaps violently. It is also likely the timetable for forcibly removing the other four tribes is moved up. The state of Georgia had actually started trying to remove Cherokees on its own, fearing the federal government would not. But with Jackson that is unnecessary. **An earlier Trail of Tears likely means a more unprepared tribe and thus a higher body count.**

What about wars overseas? Adams was one of the most skilled secretaries of State the US ever had, negotiating many treaties and formulating the Monroe Doctrine. As President, Jackson was lucky Adam's successes freed him from major crises. For **Jackson was an incredible blunderer, one of the least diplomatic presidents.** Jackson threatened France with military reprisals over an unpaid debt. The crisis was only defused by British intervention. Jackson also sent an agent, Anthony Butler, to Mexico to try to buy Texas. Butler tried to bribe Mexican officials, and suspicions that began under Jackson would play a part eventually leading to the US-Mexico War. An earlier Jackson presidency, without four years of Adam's cushion, could lead to more conflict with France and Mexico.

Both nations were more chaotic in 1824-28 than later in 1828-32. France was led by absolute monarchist Charles X, though there were many liberals and constitutional monarchists. Charles X held absolute power and could have threatened or gone to war more easily than under later more liberal government.

In 1824, Mexico had just changed from an empire to a republic, kicking out self styled Emperor Iturbide, and only three years earlier had finally gained independence from Spain after over a decade of war. A more chaotic Mexico is more likely to stumble into war with the US. In neither case is war certain, only more likely.

## McClellan's Failed Civil War and Reconstruction

McClellan is the second most controversial military leader in US history, after Custer. A superb organizer, he was a timid general who repeatedly failed to defeat the enemy, though his forces always outnumbered them. He did win early victories against much smaller forces, earning him the ludicrous overblown title the Young Napoleon. After that, his only major victory, at Antietam, was as much due to Robert Lee's mistakes as his own abilities.

He was finally fired by Lincoln for his failures and insubordination. But he remained popular with the troops and much of the public. In 1864 he ran as a Democrat for president. Lincoln could quite easily have lost the election. Up until late, Lincoln himself believed he was likely to lose, and only a series of battle victories helped him get re elected.

White racists and other Confederate apologists, as well those with a naive or poor understanding of the white supremacist nature of the Confederacy, like to endlessly obsess over a possible Union defeat. Many armchair generals also will go into excruciating detail about turning points of Civil War battles. It is as bad as being trapped in an elevator with a stamp collector or obsessed baseball fan who can cite statistics all day long.

To put it simply enough to not bore people, to imagine a Confederate victory in 1864 is not easy. In 1863 it is somewhat easier at the turning points of Gettysburg and Vicksburg. (Even those armchair generals who imagine a victory at Gettysburg would bring US defeat are deluding themselves. See Notes for more.) But that time had passed. The Confederacy was fighting mostly holding actions in 1864, hoping to last long enough so that Union voters would vote out Lincoln.

One does not have to imagine Confederate victories for Lincoln to lose the election, just no great Union victories. The Democratic Party platform called for immediately ending the war and talks with the Confederacy. But McClellan rejected the platform, wanting to continue the war and keep the US one nation. He was opposed to ending slavery. But except for that, the main difference between him

and Lincoln was McClellan's belief he could run the war better.

Should McClellan win, he faces the problem of his own party disagreeing with him, and Republicans only half agreeing with him too. He would continue the war, but remain very handicapped by divisions in Congress and public perception that he would give in to the treason of the Confederacy. The best McClellan could hope for is winning the Civil War, the Union reunited, but a longer war than under Lincoln since McClellan was more timid.

The worst case scenario is not the white supremacist fantasy of a powerful Confederacy winning a clear victory. **The worst case is likely an exhausted Union public forcing McClellan to allow the pitiful remnants of the Confederacy independence, while all territory held by the Union stays in the Union.**

This means first and foremost the entire Mississippi Valley will stay in the United States, along with the major port city of New Orleans and all the river cities of Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and Baton Rouge. The eastern third of Louisiana stays Union, as does the west half of the state of Mississippi. All of Tennessee and the northern thirds of Alabama and Arkansas also stay Union. Much of these areas were made up of mostly Unionists anyway. Most southerners always supported the Union, not the Confederacy. (See Section Eleven.)

In Virginia, much of the state remains Union. The northernmost part, the ports of Newport News and Norfolk, along with most of the peninsula leading to Richmond had been under Union control for most of the war. There were large parts of the Confederacy that were either under the control of southern Unionists or wished to be, such as south Mississippi, north Alabama, southwest Georgia, western North Carolina, and south Texas. McClellan may be publicly pressured, or may wish to, see these areas remain part of the US. That might be a condition for peace between the two sides. Florida was also sparsely populated then, only 140,000 people, nearly all on the border with Alabama and Georgia. It may be strategically useful for McClellan to order the southern half taken by Union troops, perhaps colonized by US civilians.

**A surviving Confederacy is going to be greatly reduced and split in two.** In the western third, General Kirby Smith had already been ruling by martial law in Texas and the rump states of Arkansas and Louisiana. Except for El Paso, half of Texas was still largely under Native tribes' control, and likely will later come under United States control. Jefferson Davis thus rules over only half of Mississippi, two thirds of Alabama, and perhaps three quarters of North Carolina and Virginia. Only Georgia, Florida (maybe), and South Carolina remain almost all Confederate, with Atlanta and Georgia territory to the north and the port of Jacksonville under Union control. Davis ruled by martial law for much of the Civil War, and likely that continues as well.

The Confederacy faces huge problems on top of losing much territory and being split. Its army was close to collapse. A quarter of all its military age males were killed in the war. Fully **half of all southern white men dodged the draft**, sometimes forming gangs to drive away Confederate officials. **Two thirds of all Confederate soldiers deserted, often multiple times**, encouraged by their wives, fiancées, sisters, and mothers. Women had turned increasingly against the Confederacy, rioting in cities, including female mobs publicly jeering Davis in Richmond itself.

Not only that, its central work force was either on strike or had fled to freedom. Slave uprisings exploded during the Civil War. Slaves burned down Charleston, burned many boats in New Orleans, and even burned Jefferson Davis's home. Where there had been perhaps 100,000 successful slave escapes during more than two centuries before the war, **in four years runaway slaves jumped to a half million. Over one of every eight slaves escaped**, and most often these slaves were the most valuable slaves, young males. Everywhere the Union Army went huge throngs of slaves followed.

In those southern areas that remain Union, slavery will be abolished. Despite McClellan's opposition, it is very unlikely he can reverse Emancipation. In Louisiana, Lincoln had ordered not just abolition but the vote for Blacks and free education. The Republican Party, plus distrust of McClellan by his own Democratic Party, makes it unlikely that could be reversed either. Former Confederate areas close to Union borders would continue to be a magnet for runaways.

Much of the remaining slave workforce had gone on strike, quit working except to provide for themselves. With many males away, such resistance became far easier. It would take returning veterans to force them back to work, and many veterans would not return. In addition to the high death rate, most of the remaining Confederate Army likely has to stay in the field and is very occupied trying to regain control of areas run by Unionist bands, stopping runaway slaves, and guarding borders.

**The Confederacy will have to resort to the same tyranny it always had. It was never a democracy, always run by a tiny oligarchy.** Mail, telegraph, books, magazines, newspapers, and even pamphlets were censored. Abolitionist writings were punished with death or exile. Political parties were banned, with usually only a single candidate on the ballot. Voters, often limited to large property owners, could only vote yes or no, and turnout was very low. The Confederate Congress usually met in secret and often imposed gag orders on issues. Cabinet posts were rotated among wealthy elites. There were over 4,000 political prisoners in the Confederacy, and likely those numbers would increase to regain control of their territory. There were also mass executions of dissidents at Nueces, Gainsville, and Kinston. Again, to regain control, there likely would be more executions.

Once regaining control, the Confederate economy will still be at a huge disadvantage. The government ordered the stockpiling of cotton to offset Union blockades. With the blockade ended, that would flood the market and bring the price down. On top of that, Europeans had simply turned to cotton from India while the war was on, and there is not much reason to change back. The Union also holds many former Confederate ports, Norfolk, Newport News, Mobile, Jacksonville, and New Orleans.

This means the Confederacy will rely upon, ironically, the United States for its cotton market. This had been true during the war, with much smuggling going on and all the corruption that entails. But the Confederate economy will take another hit in the 1870s, when cotton prices collapse worldwide. A collapsing economy could lead to a surplus of slaves, class conflict, and thus more slave uprisings and brutality to keep down those uprisings.

It has long been an enormous act of denial to pretend the Civil War and Confederacy were not about slavery. Actually, **Confederate officials explicitly said from the beginning in their Declaration of Causes they were fighting for slavery, and their constitution forbade states without slavery.** For the US, once Emancipation was issued, the war became about slavery for the Union.

Confederate apologists often claim the Confederacy would abolish slavery on its own. Would this be true under a surviving though greatly reduced Confederacy? Not unless they want to slit their own economic throats. Cotton price collapses might be the only thing to lead to abolishing slavery. A newly freed Black population would be forced into sharecropping and segregation upheld by violence. They would be easy scapegoats, and likely many flee the Confederacy.

In fact, it is likely **the Confederacy would begin the slave trade again immediately after the Civil War and go to war yet again to expand slavery.** Confederate officials spoke openly of both. With so many slaves freed or revolting, the owners will need replacements. And the internal slave trade, from eastern US states to further west, had become increasingly important to the southern economy before the war.

The most likely target for a Confederate war is Spain. With a weakening empire, the Spanish-American War might have come 20 or 30 years earlier and been a Spanish-Confederate War. Spain lost the Spanish-American War in only a few months. Though the Confederacy is far weaker militarily and economically than the US, Spain likely would still lose. That is, unless the United States steps in, hostile and seeking revenge for the memory of so many deaths in the Civil War. Potentially this could lead to a second US Civil War, one the Confederacy would surely lose and may even be reabsorbed back into the US.

What about the US in the aftermath of the Civil War, under McClellan? How would he handle Reconstruction? McClellan truly hated abolitionists and had racist opinions of both Blacks and Mexicans as far back as the US-Mexico War. He could not by himself reverse Emancipation, not even with the help of Democrats in Congress and a war weary US public. The Thirteenth Amendment

formally abolishing slavery was passed under Lincoln. But as the new president he could stop any attempt at the other Reconstruction Amendments, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth, or at least delay it until another president is elected, much like Johnson had. This means Black civil rights would be much less protected.

Would McClellan have been as incompetent as Andrew Johnson? Would his racism lead him to ignore or even encourage white supremacist terrorists, as Johnson did? Likely the KKK and other terrorists never arise at all, or do so and are quickly crushed. In the Confederacy they would not be needed, since slavery continues and the Confederate authorities keep the Black population more oppressed than ever.

In the border states and former Confederate territory now part of the Union, the Klan likely either does not arise or does so only to end quickly. Much of that territory had been pro-Union from the start. The Klan was made up overwhelmingly of Confederate veterans. Those from the pro-Union areas are the least likely to become terrorists. Those who were truly pro-Confederacy are less likely to take up terrorism because they may stay within the remains of the Confederacy.

Other terrorists arose during Reconstruction, the Red Shirts in Mississippi and the White League in Louisiana. Unlike the Klan, they did not hide their identities. They did not need to at this point since the Klan had been so successful in its terrorism, and being terrorists openly sent the message of their impunity.

Would Congress and Republicans fight as long and hard with McClellan as Johnson did? A Reconstruction Congress likely would be just as opposed to letting former Confederates take over the south under Union control, and would defend just as strongly Black civil rights. But McClellan would be different in several important ways.

One, McClellan was a far more efficient administrator than Johnson. He also was not a drunk as Johnson was. McClellan likely would administer the former Confederate areas more effectively, though he would disagree strongly with Radical Republican aims. McClellan also was the product of a Whig

Party background, snobbish and elitist, where Johnson grew up poor and detested the wealthy.

McClellan likely tries to force labor contracts upon former slaves, much as Johnson did.

Likely the US public becomes fed up with McClellan by 1868. Grant is again the most likely successor. There is little reason to think Grant would act any differently under these scenarios than he did in actual history. Would there be a stolen election in 1876? Likely no. The Democrats are far less numerous without former Confederate states. Whether Grant remains president (he had actually run again in 1880) or Rutherford Hayes wins, likely neither need the infamous Compromise of 1876. The Compromise included an agreement to no longer enforce Black civil rights and withdraw US troops from the south. There is no way a former Union general like McClellan, nor Grant, would want US troops removed from Confederate borders.

If the Confederacy was not reabsorbed by the US during a Spanish-Confederate War, we may see another war between the US and the Confederacy around 1914-18. Most authors writing alternate history think the Confederacy would ally itself with Imperial Germany and the Central Powers. World War I may be fought in North America as well as Europe.

This is yet one more possible reabsorbing of the Confederacy. If that does not happen, the Confederacy could develop its own fascist movement in the 1920s and 30s. It may become fascist itself and ally with the Axis. The most disturbing possibility is that Nazi anti-Semitism could influence Confederate fascists to seek a Final Solution to their "negro problem." Especially if slavery had ended, Blacks may be seen as surplus, a burden and a threat to be solved with deportation, sterilization, and finally death camps.

By that point, the new A-bomb may be part of the equation. The Confederacy, being far less industrial thanks to slavery, would not be able to develop the bomb in time. The US develops it first, and perhaps even tests it in New Mexico. The Confederacy could finally die an atomic death. What city would be the most likely target? Birmingham might make for an ironic choice, given its history during the civil rights era.

It is extremely unlikely the Confederacy could survive to the present and avoid losing every war it fights. For white supremacists and those in denial of the true nature of that thankfully dead attempt at a nation, their Confederate dreams are purely unrealistic fantasies.

McClellan's win could have split the nation for anywhere from two to eight decades. He would have set Black civil rights almost as far back as Johnson and put in motion several possible future wars. Ironically the Confederacy suffers far more from McClellan enabling their independence, even possibly a future atomic destruction.

## Custer's Many Wars

One of the most persistent claims about George Custer is that he wanted to be president and hoped that a huge victory against American Indians would help him do so. This is also one of the most heavily disputed claims about Custer. The majority of scholars argue it is not true. Of all authors writing on Custer, novelist Larry McMurtry is the most persistent to make this argument. His book claiming so is also his least popular among his fan base.

Mari Sandoz is the best known historian to claim Custer aspired to be president. Her approach, writing from the points of view of both whites and Natives, was groundbreaking at the time, and much of the hostility towards her argument came from the old guard, some who viewed Indians with openly racist contempt, and an even larger faction that admired Custer and hold him up as a martyr, an almost Christ like figure whose death was supposedly necessary to “tame” the west. But today there are easily as many scholars who are not admirers of Custer. The two main depictions of Custer are either as a doomed martyr, or as a glory hound who led his men to preventable deaths.

Whether he wished to be president or not, what I am looking at is the obvious possibility: He could have become president had he so wished. Had he won a victory, or even anything that could be portrayed as not a defeat, there was enough public admiration for him to win the presidency.

There are certainly other cases of generals reluctantly running for president, Eisenhower, Zachary Taylor, even George Washington. Custer may have another motive for running. He had been depicted as a perjurer in a scandal involving the brother of President US Grant. Custer was a Democrat, and after his death often depicted by Democrats as a martyr to Republican incompetence or corruption.

In fact, shortly before his death, Grant almost denied Custer the command of the Seventh Cavalry, perhaps as retaliation for his testimony. Only the arguments of General Alfred Terry that there were no other officers available allowed Custer to go.

If Custer had decided, against his own inclinations, to run it would be perhaps be in 1880, not

1876. The Battle of Little Bighorn was in early July 1876, and the conventions for both parties had already been held in June. Custer also was quite young, only 36 at his death. He was only eligible to be president by a year, and would have been the youngest ever had he been elected. He also would have been ten years younger than any president up to that time.

In 1880, the election was mostly about the end of Reconstruction. In 1876, Republicans stole the election. (See Section Five.) Though Democrats had more popular and electoral votes, electors in several states ignored the popular vote and switched their vote. In exchange for Republicans selling out Blacks in the southern states and agreeing to no longer try to enforce civil rights. Democratic leaders agreed to no longer protest the stolen election.

But the Republican President, Rutherford, agreed to not run for a second term. James Garfield won the nomination. Among those running for the nomination was former President US Grant. Given Grant's role in accusing Custer of perjury, revenge may be another motive for Custer to run.

Winfield Scott Hancock was the Democratic nominee. A famed Civil War general, Hancock suffered from wartime injuries for the rest of his life. He also had been in command of a military district during Reconstruction. Andrew Johnson chose him because he correctly perceived Hancock would support white supremacists in the South over the rights of the Black population (See Section Five again.) If his injuries cause him to decide against running, or his failures during Reconstruction become an issue, the Democrats may choose Custer, another general perceived to be great, in Custer's case, inaccurately.

The election was extremely close, Rutherford only winning by 3,000 votes. In seven states the margin of victory for the Republicans was under 5%. Custer would have a strong chance of winning.

What kind of a president would Custer have been? Disastrous. The most obvious change would be in Indian policy. Custer is widely reviled among American Indians, and for good reason. After all, **Custer massacred over 140 Cheyenne at the “battle” of the Washita.** The Cheyenne had signed a peace treaty with the US. Custer massacred almost all noncombatants, women, children, and elderly.

The men were mostly away. Custer's men even left Cheyenne babies to die of exposure and ripped open the bellies of pregnant women.

Custer's admirers have often falsely claimed that he was moderate toward Natives and defended them. This is false. Custer did describe Natives in a romanticized fashion at times. But he also disparaged them as "savages" and "beasts." Much like the "Indian" sports mascots of today, such an image of the Noble Savage is done to assuage white guilt and enhance the prestige of racists who justify conquest.

We also know that Custer's wife had an extremely racist view of Blacks during Custer's time stationed in Texas during Reconstruction, and that Custer failed to protect Black civil rights during his time there. This was part of why Johnson chose him, and why many Democrats, at that time the party of white supremacists, admired him.

Finally, the massacre on the Washita and Custer's clumsy lies to justify it show his racism. He maintained his men killed the women because they fought back with rocks, though Custer made no defense of killing children or elderly. **Custer's troops, by all other accounts including the soldiers, killed women, children, and elderly indiscriminately.** There were a small number of warriors present, but Custer dispersed them with a despicable tactic, **using previously captured women as human shields.** It is true Custer did not massacre all Cheyenne women at the Washita. That is only because those captured were intended for use as shields later on.

By 1880, almost all Natives had been forcibly removed to reservations, except many Apache. Facing the Apache were Generals Howard and Miles, both of whom had genuine sympathy for Natives and lobbied for better treatment of their former enemies once they were confined. Custer likely would have relieved them and replaced them with more brutal commanders. But it was both men's respect that led to many Apache surrendering. **Likely Custer's tactics prolongs the war**, much like how the Washita Massacre sent a clear message to Natives that they could expect little mercy, causing them to fight even harder.

We also know that Custer strongly opposed assimilation of Natives, “kill the Indian, save the man.” He argued Natives should be confined to reservations and then left entirely alone. The good part of this policy is there would be no war on Native cultures, and attempts to destroy Native languages stop or are at least delayed. But a policy of isolation also means neglect. Most reservations were not self sufficient. The land was too poor, thus at times Native hunters went hunting off reservation. That led to conflict between Natives and whites.

Most reservations had been run by missionaries when US Grant was president. (See Section Eight.) That practice had declined since Grant left office, but Custer would likely kill it entirely. Since missionaries tried to convert Natives, Custer would see that as interfering with their “noble savagery.” Missionaries, at least, were far more honest than the notoriously greedy agents running reservations before and after the missionaries. **A Custer presidency means more Natives cheated of their meager supplies.**

Custer's recklessness was legendary. Indeed, the central phrase used to describe Custer for generations has been “glory hunter” an egomaniac and poor general risking his troops needlessly for his own self promotion. There is no reason to think this trait would not carry over into every aspect of his presidency.

Since the end of the Civil War, US interventions, or more accurately, invasions, had largely stopped overseas. (See Section Five.) From 1859 to 1890, the US did not invade Latin America. With Custer that will likely change a decade sooner. A strong believer in Manifest Destiny such as him likely would try for permanent US colonies.

By 1880 Cuba was already in revolt against the declining Spanish Empire. **There may be an earlier Spanish-American War under Custer.** One would also expect an equally brutal campaign against Filipinos. (See Section Four.) A conqueror and seeker after glory like **Custer also likely would want Cuba as a colony, not independent.** US troops would have to put down Cuban independence, with great loss of life on both sides.

The body count under a Custer presidency thus would be more deaths in the last war against Natives and an earlier Spanish-American War and brutal crushing of the Filipino independence movement. Likely there would also be a second independence movement crushed in Cuba. That makes for one longer war and three wars of aggression by choice. Custer would not be remembered as a martyr by those who think conquest inevitable or glorious as they do today. But he would be remembered even more as a glory hunter and bad military tactician.

## McKinley Survives Assassination

In September 1901, only seven months after the start of his second term, McKinley was assassinated. Leon Czolgoz was out of work, an immigrant, and an anarchist. His actions and later conviction led to a greater wave of hostility for all three groups. Czolgoz fired three times, hitting McKinley twice. One shot only grazed him, the second buried itself deep in the obese president's body. Doctors were unable to find it and McKinley died of gangrene. An experimental X-ray machine was nearby, but never used to locate the bullet.

McKinley's Vice President Teddy Roosevelt became president. Political boss Mark Hanna originally pushed for Roosevelt to become Vice President, hoping it would keep the reform minded young New York Governor out of the way. Had McKinley lived to finish his term, he would have done some things quite differently from Roosevelt.

Today Roosevelt is well known for many of firsts, the first president to take on corporate power, to recognize unions, to push for conservation and environmentalism. McKinley was for none of those. He was elected as the most pro-business president ever, supported by elites that feared both the Populist Party and small p populists such as his opponent, William Jennings Bryant. (See Section Eight.)

Overseas, one of Roosevelt's most important actions was to declare the US-Philippines War over, offer amnesty to Filipino nationalists, and push for Filipino independence, however slowly. McKinley would not have done any of this. (See Section Three.) He remained convinced to the end of his life that Filipinos were too inferior to govern themselves. McKinley's arrogant and racist actions caused the unnecessary war in the Philippines in the first place, people he theoretically had launched a war to liberate. McKinley did nothing to halt the many atrocities carried out by General Otis and others. A surviving McKinley means a Philippines much worse off, one that has to wait until the end of his term for possible changes. **The additional Filipino death toll from three more years war and disease would be at least tens of thousands, possibly more.**

Within the US one could point to additional deaths as well. Teddy Roosevelt's reforms included the Pure Food and Drug Act, which created the Food and Drug Administration. Before this, there were no guarantees one's food or medicine was safe. The most notorious case was the poisoning of thousands of US soldiers given canned beef preserved with formaldehyde, the same chemical used to preserve corpses.

Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* also shocked the US public. Roosevelt sent a committee to investigate. They confirmed the novel's accuracy. He agreed to keep their report secret as long as Congress passed his act. **McKinley would have never done anything similar. Activists had been trying and failing to pass the act for 27 years. Many Americans would continue to die from tainted products** until such a law was finally passed, perhaps under Wilson in 1912.

## The American Liberty League's Irene Du Pont and Gerald Maguire

This is one of the lesser known but important episodes in US history. **The American Liberty League plotted to overthrow Franklin Roosevelt**, sometimes referred to as the Business Plot. Some US businessmen were so opposed to the New Deal they planned to bring down Roosevelt by force using a private army and install a fascist government.

The list of plotters included some of the most prominent businessmen in the country. Irene Du Pont of the Dupont family, one of the wealthiest in the nation, worth hundreds of millions, was a white supremacist and founder of the American Liberty League. Grayson Murphy was the treasurer for the League, Director of Goodyear, mining and rail companies, and on the boards of Bethlehem Steel and JP Morgan. William Doyle and Gerald McGuire were both leaders in the American Legion, one of the largest veterans' organizations, one much further to the right than the VFW. John Davis and Al Smith were both former Democratic presidential candidates. John Raskob was an officer in Du Pont and the former Chairman of the Democratic Party. Robert Clark was a Wall Street banker and stockbroker who provided \$15 million in funding for the plot. Alfred Sloan was the President, CEO, and Chairman of General Motors. He also owned Remington and would supply arms for the coup as well as \$300 million in funds.

The plot was exposed by General Smedley Butler, former Commandant of the US Marine Corps. Butler was approached by Gerald Maguire, who offered him command of an army of half a million World War I veterans from the American Legion. The plan was to hand an ultimatum to Roosevelt: pose as sick while a newly created office of the Secretary of General Affairs takes over and runs the country in his name.

What kind of a government did the League want? **Gerald MacGuire was quite open that, "We need a fascist government in this country," modeled on Mussolini's fascist state, the French fascist group Croix de Feu, and Dutch fascists.**

When Butler was offered command of this army, he refused and went to Roosevelt with the details of the plot. But Roosevelt feared the arrest of famous figures such as a Du Pont on treason charges would crash the Stock Market again. Roosevelt dealt with the coup by leaking the story to the press. The plot was publicly exposed and could proceed no further.

The media had mixed reactions to news of the plot. The *New York Times* claimed it was all a hoax. Douglas MacArthur, allegedly named as the second choice for commanding the League's army if Butler refused, called the claim a joke. Congress formed a special committee to investigate. The committee never summoned almost any of the plotters. Maguire was the only one to testify. Likely, the committee feared, much like Roosevelt, that public exposure of treason by leading elites might crash the economy again.

The committee published its report after a delay of four years. **All of Butler's claims were substantiated with extensive bank records, letters, and witnesses.** But the committee issued no indictments for treason as they deserved. Again, trials and convictions of elites for treason would trigger economic panic. Most historians agree there was a plot. The evidence is clear. Where many disagree is how far the plot had gone. Historian Arthur Schlesinger argued it was a "cocktail plot," talk that was still in the planning stages.

If the plot had gone forward, if they had found a commander who would not expose the plot, could it have succeeded? Between the world wars, the US Army only numbered 140,000, less than a third of the size of the League's army. The US government was more decentralized in 1934. State governors controlled the militias and National Guard much more than today. It took time for governors to transfer control to the President.

But it is virtually certain Roosevelt would not back down. Rejecting the ultimatum leads to a second civil war, one likely more destructive than the first. While Roosevelt was the most popular president in US history, those opposed to him and his New Deal were a solid 35-40% of the nation. Many of them were fanatic, and some were violent. Groups like the KKK, German-American Bund,

Silver Shirts, and Christian Front were fanatically anti Communist, seeing “reds” where there were none, and many also openly fascist. The League would unite all these with substantial financial backing and weaponry. The League's leader Du Pont argued for uniting “all property owners” with the Ku Klux Klan.

We might find a model of what would happen in the Spanish Civil War at about the same time. In Spain there was a fascist coup aimed at a popular government that united the left and center. The Spanish Civil War killed from 600,000 to 1.2 million. The US population at the time was three times that of Spain. As in Spain, the great majority of the US population favored the democratic left government and would fight fiercely to hold onto it. Thus **casualties from a second US civil war might have reached as high as 3.6 million.**

How would this second civil war end? In Spain, the fascist party the Falange won. They won because other fascist governments aided them while most democracies stood by and let Spain's popular government be destroyed by force. Germany sent weapons and bombers, who most infamously destroyed the city of Guernica. Italy sent weapons and troops. Both nations likely would send the same to the US.

In Spain, the civil war was so devastating they remained neutral during World War II. Spain stayed fascist until the 1970s. Over time Spanish youth grew increasingly cynical under fascist rule and the nation returned to democracy. **We might see the same for the US, neutrality during World War II, and fascist until the 1970s.**

It is uncertain who would have been the de facto president. Du Pont was head of the League. Maguire may have been commander of the League's army and thus de facto president. One central difference between the League and Spanish fascists is that Falangists were militarists but not racists. Moorish troops took the fascist side. The League believed in not just white supremacy but eugenics.

Eugenics was pure pseudo science, the claim that one could improve humanity by sterilizing supposed inferior peoples. Eugenics and forcible sterilization already was widely practiced in the US

since 1907, in over 30 states, and had a huge influence on Nazi Germany. In most cases the targets were supposed mental defectives or criminals. But in North Carolina many poor Black women were targeted. As late as the 1970s, Native women were sterilized without their consent or knowledge. (See Section Eleven.)

With the League in power, one could see eugenics widely applied to anyone not white. US eugenics included both sterilization and “euthanasia.” Euthanasia is a euphemism for mass murder by gas chambers, which were proposed by eugenics advocates but never widely practiced. Minorities could either flee to avoid mass murder and sterilization, hide in remote areas, or if possible try to pass as white.

**The US would be ethnically cleansed.** For 40 years, the only remaining nonwhites in the US would either be unable to produce children or in hiding. Blacks might flee to the Caribbean, Latinos to Latin America, American Indians to either Canada or Mexico, Asians to Asia or Hawaii (which likely would no longer be part of the US), and Jews to any country that would take them, most likely Canada, Argentina, or Bolivia.

It is quite possible other powers may choose to take advantage of the Second US Civil War. The Soviets under Stalin may see a chance to take Alaska. Hawaii may be taken by Japanese fascists, or the British may take Hawaii as well as Puerto Rico and the Panama Canal to prevent other powers having them.

The most disturbing possibility of all is that **the Holocaust may come to America.** Jews in Nazi Germany's allies of Italy and Spain were not targeted in the beginning. But fascist Spain did draw up lists of Jews and watch them closely. In Italy, as the war continued and German influence became stronger, Jews were rounded up and sent to death camps much like in the rest of occupied Europe. The League leaders were anti Semites. Though the League issued a public declaration against anti Antisemitism in 1936, in fact they allied with and funded a number of organizations that hated Jews, including the Southern Committee to Uphold the Constitution, the Sentinels of the Republic, and the

## Silver Shirts.

Except for nuclear war, this scenario is the most horrifying possibility in American history that luckily never came true. Even a Confederate victory in the Civil War leading to slavery continuing does not end in as high a death toll. The US population in 1940 was almost 132 million, about 116 million of them white. That means **as many as 16 million nonwhites may be sterilized, executed, or have to flee, hide, or pass as white.**

It is virtually impossible to guess how those numbers would break down. The chaos of a recent civil war might make it easier to flee and more difficult to be tracked down. Sterilization was much more widely practiced by eugenics advocates than execution, so mass deaths might not happen until later, or at all. The isolation of many rural Black, Latino, and Native communities might protect them, but it also might make it more difficult to hear of the coming atrocities in time to escape.

I often teach my students that this episode actually shows just how much of a difference one man can make. One man, Smedley Butler, prevented this by simply speaking out. It should make a fitting epitaph for him, “He saved America from fascism.” This episode should be taught as evidence of the worst side of America's right wing and business leaders.

## Douglas MacArthur Starts a Nuclear War

Famed General Douglas MacArthur Jr. was widely regarded as a military genius, perhaps most of all by himself. He spent almost his entire adult life in the military. Commanding US forces in the Pacific Theater during World War II, he liberated the Philippines and many other Pacific islands from Japanese conquest. After the war he presided over an enormously benevolent occupation of Japan, transforming a fascist state into an officially pacifist liberal democracy, one with an enviable progressive record of environmentalism, feminism, labor rights, and economic prosperity and technological development. In the Korean War, he carried out one of the most astonishing modern military maneuvers, landing behind North Korean lines and driving them almost back to the border with China.

So how and why did he end his military and then political careers so disastrously? How could he have likely started a nuclear war had he been elected president?

MacArthur's military record, while rightly famed, was far from perfect. In charge of US forces in the Philippines when they were surprised by a Japanese attack (happening at the same time as Pearl Harbor), MacArthur's command was a disaster. Caught off guard, he panicked, went into a deep depression, and did little for several days.

Then he retreated to Bataan. His forces were surrounded and forced to surrender. Melodramatically offering to fight to the end with his troops, MacArthur was ordered by Roosevelt to slip out of the Philippines by submarine.

Once the tide of the war began to turn for the US, MacArthur pushed for retaking the Philippines. This was militarily unnecessary. The US military could have bypassed the Philippines as it did many other islands, saving tens of thousands of lives by doing so. But MacArthur's ego wanted to see the shame of his defeat removed.

An even greater failure was his during the Korean War. By pushing to conquer all of North

Korea instead of just retaking all of South Korean territory, MacArthur was not seeing that this provoked newly Communist China. Mao intervened, sending in a huge wave of troops that pushed MacArthur's men almost all the way back to the old North Korea-South Korea border. Only a massive bombing campaign, including chemical warfare with napalm, slowed and then halted the Chinese armies.

That was when MacArthur made his third major military (and the first of several huge political) mistakes. He publicly called for nuclear bombs to be used to stop Chinese troops. He proposed that 30 A-bombs be detonated in a line along the border between North Korea and China to prevent reinforcements, along with heavy conventional bombing to break up Chinese troops within North Korea.

For Truman, these statements were recklessness that could lead to another world war, one involving the Soviets and a nuclear confrontation. He sent a message to MacArthur calling for him to come meet him in Washington. In an episode perfectly revealing his ego, MacArthur sent back a message saying Truman would have to come to Korea. In essence, "I'm too busy, busier than you are, Mr. President. You come see me."

In one of the more surreal episodes in US history, Truman and MacArthur's staffs then began negotiating a meeting place. They finally settled on Wake Island, with MacArthur traveling far less of the distance than Truman. What happened next is the subject of a persistent story. **Both Truman's aide and a general present denied the following ever happened.** But the fact that many believed it did says much:

Both planes arrived at roughly the same time. The usual protocol is the lower ranking official lands first and is there to greet the President as he comes off the plane. But MacArthur, in a petty gesture of one upmanship, ordered his pilot to circle and force Truman's plane to land first.

Truman's pilot informed the President as to what was happening. Truman in turn ordered his pilot to circle and force MacArthur's plane to land. But Truman's plane had come much farther and low

fuel finally forced them to land first. Truman, furious, was on the ground and there to greet MacArthur as he came off the plane.

Again, the top people involved say the story is not true. For one thing, MacArthur's plane actually arrived first. But we do know the meeting was frosty. MacArthur did not salute the President, instead shaking his hand, which Truman thought insubordinate. MacArthur listened as Truman ordered him to stay quiet and not provoke a wider war. MacArthur listened, nodded, and went back to Korea. Shortly he ignored everything Truman had said and made a public call for an armistice with China, without consulting or even informing President Truman.

That was the final straw. Truman fired MacArthur. (Or “relieved” if you prefer the official euphemism.) **There was a huge public uproar, congressional hearings, even calls for Truman's impeachment.** But the consensus of most is clear, that Truman made the right decision. Generals cannot undermine presidents, and civilian command over the military is a principle that goes back to the founding of the US, preventing the military from intervening in politics as happened so often in Latin America.

One of the lesser known facts is that MacArthur actually had requested the right to use nuclear weapons without needing the President's approval. The Joint Chiefs of Staff turned him down. Subsequent accounts, including that of a MacArthur meeting with Richard Nixon, claimed MacArthur opposed using nuclear weapons. That is based on a misunderstanding. He opposed the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki because it was targeting civilians. But **MacArthur had submitted a list of 26 “retardation targets” for A-bombs plus four more A-bombs to target Chinese ground troops and four to use against Chinese air power concentrations.**

MacArthur had run in three Republican Party primaries, in 1944, 1948, and 1952. The chance of anyone unseating Franklin Roosevelt during World War II was remote. In 1948 MacArthur declined to actively pursue the nomination since he was an active general. In 1952 he did very poorly because Eisenhower also ran. Like him, Eisenhower was a conservative (though not by today's standards)

general with an impressive wartime record. Unlike MacArthur, Eisenhower did not possess such negative qualities as egomania and a tendency to speak without thinking. In fact Ike's cautious and diplomatic nature had led to his rise as a general.

MacArthur could possibly have won in 1948 by resigning to devote full time to campaigning, arguing that his leadership was necessary to save the country. Truman was enormously unpopular and only narrowly won. His civil rights program angered southern racists, and despite using fear, Cold War propaganda only somewhat helped rally Americans to his side. Ironically many Americans, driven by the fears Truman helped create, felt he had not gone far enough in fighting Communism.

In 1952 MacArthur would have a much better chance to win had Eisenhower not run. Ike only reluctantly entered the race, having turned down the chance in 1948. He had also been approached by both parties, and though a conservative was rightly worried about the effect fanatic McCarthyist anti-Communism was having on the country.

Had MacArthur been president in 1948, he would have been in office at the start of the Korean War. Thus there is little doubt he would have authorized nuclear weapons against China, likely in December 1950 as he proposed.

Had he been elected in 1952, taking office January 1953, the war was in a stalemate by that point. Peace talks had been in a stalemate for months, though they would finally conclude in July. But there was an offensive launched by the Chinese in early July. MacArthur may choose to simply threaten nuclear war to break the stalemate. Or he may decide this is the chance to do what he had tried early on as general, take all of Korea all the way to the Chinese border.

**Either the first or second scenarios would lead to several hundred thousand Chinese and North Korean troop losses. The China-North Korea border is not heavily populated, but perhaps as many as 100,000 civilians, both Chinese and Koreans killed.** Radiation-related deaths will push that higher over time, and contamination will prevent Chinese reinforcements.

But it is likely that UN troops, mostly from the US, would then push into Chinese and North

Korean lines, walking through radioactive clouds. US nuclear testing had done this to troops before. Still, the immediate death toll would be far lower than the Communist side, allowing a “win” even if at least one quarter of the territory of the small Korean nation suffers from fallout and radiation-related deaths for the next half century.

Korea is reunited, but at a heavy price. And what sort of nation would it be? South Korea was not even remotely a democracy. Contrary to Cold War propaganda, this was a battle between two dictatorships. Syngman Rhee's South Korean dictatorship was made up of many fascist pro-Japanese collaborators. It also included the landlord class, who held power over Korean peasants in an almost feudal relationship.

Finally, Rhee himself was the product of US education and missionaries' influence. He was one of a small group of largely Protestant and pro-capitalist rebels who had fought against the Japanese. He maintained power both through sheer brutality and by enormous corruption. Other parties were often banned, and opponents assassinated. Just two years prior to the North Korean invasion, **Rhee led a brutal campaign that destroyed most of the island of Cheju, killing 75,000 and rounding up 100,000 dissidents. Rhee actually launched attacks on North Korea first.** Thus some scholars argue Rhee partly caused the Korean War, sharing as much responsibility as North Korea's dictator Kim Il Sung.

Thus if South Korea “wins” the war, for the rest of the decade Rhee would stay dictator over all of Korea. In actual history, Rhee, then military dictators, and then autocratic rulers ruthlessly ruled South Korea for almost four decades more. South Korea did not become a democracy until the late 1980s. Contrary to what one may wish to believe, Korean democracy did not come from US influence. In fact Korean democracy came largely due to radical student protests, many of them strongly anti-American.

If MacArthur uses nuclear weapons, Korea certainly does not become free, and it is nuclear contaminated as well. Nuclear weapon use may have the same effect on their population as it did on

Japan's, a nation calling for official pacifism, or at least an end to military aggression as policy.

But that assumes the war ends with US nuclear weapon use. It is quite possible the Soviets may step in. MacArthur thought they would not, that the Soviets and China disagreed too much for the Soviets to take a risk for China. MacArthur was at least partly wrong. The two Communist nations often did quarrel, but the end of their mutual alliance was almost a decade away.

China could call on its Soviet ally to step in. The Chinese may simply ask to send their troops through Soviet territory, be ferried by Soviet ships, have Soviet aircraft fight UN forces, or some combination. China could strike at the US by trying an attack on Taiwan, or attacking French forces in Vietnam. The Soviets may even try an attack on northern Japan, or provoke a confrontation in Europe, especially Berlin.

The more daunting possibility is nuclear war. Any of these confrontations could lead to an all out nuclear war between the US and USSR. China at that time was years away from its own nuclear weapons, though the Soviets may choose instead to give them the means. So what would a full scale nuclear war look like in 1950, or 1953?

The US at the time had a little over 400 nuclear weapons, the USSR perhaps 25. Clearly the US would “win.” **Several hundred weapons would be used against the Soviets, destroying perhaps 100-200 cities plus an equal number of military targets. The Soviet death toll likely would be at least 50 million, perhaps double that.**

Success is far from guaranteed, even with so many Soviet deaths. The USSR is huge, and the nation had just survived perhaps 20 million deaths in World War II, plus 20 million deaths earlier in Stalin's purges, without any serious attempt to remove him from power. Perhaps the best that could be hoped for is a USSR too weak to try anything aggressive for some time. Stalin was quite ailing by this time, and a successor would be more reasonable.

Perhaps two dozen Soviet nuclear weapons can do an enormous amount of damage to the US. If the Soviets retaliate solely at military targets, deaths may be “only” a few hundred thousand. **An attack**

**on the US itself could easily kill 5 million Americans. Think of the effect of the largest two dozen US cities crippled and radiated. MacArthur himself may be killed** and the government thrown into chaos. Civil defense emergency plans for nuclear war were only three years old in 1953, only a few months old in 1950.

So what if the Soviets had not retaliated? Then we are left with an almost as disturbing scenario and precedent, that “limited” nuclear war become a regular practice when the US gets bogged down in a war. **Imagine nuclear weapons used against North Vietnam. Imagine them used against Cuba or Nicaragua or Angola,** or against Communist (or those falsely perceived to be Communists) guerillas virtually anywhere in the world.

Of course, radiation travels. Its particles are carried by the wind. “Limited” nuclear wars would lead to a worldwide spike in deaths from cancer, leukemia, and other illnesses. Sites that have been bombed can stay radiated for decades. Even today, testing sites in Micronesia are too dangerous to live on. (See Section Five.)

It is quite possible nuclear weapon use could lead to a worldwide campaign for disarmament. Japan's constitution renounced war partly because of the A-bomb attacks. Nuclear weapon use may also lead to a great deal of hostility against scientists, even science itself. There are few things grimmer than imagining what MacArthur's miscalculation and ego could have done to the world.

## Reagan as President in 1976

Those not yet around in 1976 may not realize just how close Reagan came to becoming president that election. Reagan came in a very close second to Ford in the Republican primaries. Ford had been badly weakened by his association with Nixon's unpopular presidency. Ford's pardoning of Nixon for his crimes during the Watergate Scandal, defended by Ford as best for the country, were seen by many as a quid pro quo, a payoff, with the pardon being exchanged for being appointed Vice President and then becoming President. Likely the incredibly unpopular pardon cost Ford the election. Had Reagan won the primaries, without public anger over the pardon he could very well have defeated Carter in the general election.

Reagan as president in 1976 would have been objectively a disaster in terms of body counts of innocents. Reagan would never have a focus on human rights in foreign policy as Carter did. Thus dictatorships around the world would continue their actions unworried by concerns of an American government. The most obvious results:

**Reagan may choose to carry out Nixon and Kissinger's plans for the US-Vietnam War,** using American bombing to weaken Vietnam. This would not stop the fall of South Vietnam, which had no popular support because its largely Catholic and French-Vietnamese ruling class were viewed as alien by most Vietnamese. There is also no way an American public or Congress would agree to sending US troops back to Vietnam.

**Reagan would likely have intervened in Angola** with more aid, arms, and perhaps advisers and US bombing. If not direct bombing, Reagan may turn to South Africa and provide aid for the South Africans to carry out their proxy war. Apartheid in South Africa may last longer, and Reagan's failed and ultimately hypocritical and insincere policy of constructive engagement may not even be attempted as it was in the 1980s.

**Reagan would have ignored genocides in East Timor** as Ford did, **and in Cambodia** as

Carter did and Reagan later did anyway.

**Reagan certainly would not allow the Sandinistas to win their popular revolution in Nicaragua in the late 1970s.** His administration would have sent US arms, advisers, money, and likely American bombers as they did in El Salvador in the 1980s. But Somoza was reviled by virtually all Nicaraguans, so **Reagan may have to send 30,000 US troops to stop this uprising**, much as Lyndon Johnson did in the Dominican Republic. The Somoza family dictatorship would continue, as would human rights violations. The US invasion of the Dominican Republic cost 2,000 lives on both sides. An invasion of Nicaragua would likely cost the same.

Public pressure certainly would limit any long term occupation, and may cause his administration to concede the formality of some extremely limited appearance of a democracy, much as happened in El Salvador in the mid 80s and Guatemala in the late 80s. But the military would continue to run the country, blocking or even killing any real opposition, again as in El Salvador or Guatemala in the 1980s.

**Reagan would not have allowed the return of the Panama Canal to Panama.** He campaigned strongly against its return under the slogan, “We built it, we paid for it, it's ours.” (None of the three claims are true. West Indian laborers built it. The land was taken after the US Navy helped Panama break away from Colombia. The canal treaty was signed by a Frenchman, with no say from Panamanians. Most payments went to a French company, not Panamanians. And the US Supreme Court ruled early on the Canal Zone is not US territory.) It is possible the canal could be sabotaged by terrorism. At the very least there would continue to be massive protests against the American occupation.

Most important of all, Carter's focus on human rights played a direct role in weakening the Soviet Union, both in their own nation and in Eastern Europe. Dissidents, after the fall of the Soviet Union, frequently pointed to the human rights policy as not only a great source of strength and moral support for them, but also as pressure that in many cases was the only thing keeping them alive. **The**

**Soviet Union likely lasts longer, as does their presence in Eastern Europe, as does the Cold War, because of Reagan in office earlier.**

Should Reagan win re election in 1980, all these practices continue. Reagan would certainly support genocide in Guatemala and terrorism against Salvadorans fighting against the military's dictatorship, as he did in our own time. The fall of the Soviet Union would certainly happen while a different man is president.

Perhaps the only positive thing to come out of Reagan being president four years earlier is no one would make the unsustainable claim that Reagan ended the Cold War. Most historians and other scholars, as well as most people outside of American conservatives, know the truth, that the Cold War was ended by very brave people in Eastern Europe, Soviet dissidents, and Gorbachev's reforms.

## Ross Perot in 1992

**The most successful third party candidate since the Bull Moose Party in 1912, Perot at several points was leading in the polls.** In the middle of the campaign, Perot pulled out, claiming unnamed political dirty tricksters were out to sabotage him and harm his daughter. He rejoined the race, but by then it was too late. He finished with 18% of the popular vote and not a single state.

Had he stayed in the race and listened to more experienced campaigners, there was a real possibility he could have won. Perot was a billionaire who could have easily outspent the others. George Bush Sr. was fairly colorless, a bland and uninspiring man that conservatives in his own party distrusted. Bill Clinton was a charismatic public speaker but with enormous personal failings. The first time most Americans heard his name was in allegations of an affair with model Gennifer Flowers.

There was an enormous public desire for an alternative to the two party system, and still is. Perot had an enormous appeal with his plain spoken nature and reputation for being driven and getting things done. In his home state of Texas he pushed for education reform and managed to outmaneuver and defeat both major parties. Perot was drafted to run for president by public demand, and his followers tended to be politically moderate and not inclined to vote for either party.

His two main mistakes were obvious. He withdrew from the race halfway through. He did so because of his paranoid conspiracy minded nature. Perot also claimed his security had some years earlier stopped a “six man Viet Cong-Black Panther hit squad” sent to kill him for trying to rescue POWs still imprisoned in Vietnam. (The POW-MIA claim is itself a persistent but untrue rumor.) Molly Ivins, a Texas humorist, recalled that hit squad claim with amusement, noting there were only five Black Panther members in Texas, most of them police informers. More than a few observers noted Perot's personal hostility towards Bush Sr., since Perot believed Bush was covering up evidence of US POWs in Vietnam.

If Perot had won, what kind of a presidency would this peculiarly conspiracy minded man have

had? His main focus would have been on issues like term limits, campaign finance reform, and the deficit, as that is what he promised while running. But whatever the merits of these proposals he would have been enormously handicapped with no party in Congress to back him, a hostile and undiplomatic temper, and a tendency to imagine dark plots.

As newsman John Chancellor commented, “The public seems to want to inflict him upon Washington.” The public was fed up with Washington's lack of action, and wanted someone who would bulldoze his way through. But because of his faults and circumstances beyond his control, most of Perot's efforts would have little chance to succeed.

The one big exception is on drug laws. Perot eagerly embraced the War on Drugs, taking part in Nancy Reagan's “Just Say No” campaign. In an atmosphere of utter hysteria (See Section Five) Perot would have taken it farther than most. He called for harsher punishments even for less harmful drugs like marijuana, wanting a rating system on judges based on how hard their sentences were. **Perot proposed martial law and blocking off minority neighborhoods, going house to house searching for drugs and drug users.** Harsher drug laws mean more ruined lives, perhaps even his own drug war invasion of another nation. Where Bush Sr. invaded Panama, Perot may push for US troops sent to war in Colombia or Mexico.

In 1993, Perot accused Clinton of trying to start a war or get involved in the civil war in Bosnia to distract others from his own problems at home. Unlike most major figures that get accused of being isolationist, Perot actually had a strong streak of it himself. But he was also a person who could be easily moved by emotional appeals and images, and tended to always look for the most direct, if not simplistic, solution.

So we could expect **Perot would absolutely refuse to intervene in first Bosnia, then Somalia, and finally in Rwanda, until he suddenly reversed himself each time** and sent in as much of the military as possible. In Bosnia and Rwanda that would likely mean no intervention until dramatic photos made the evening news, followed by US bombers and troops, followed by leaving quickly, and

the chaos resuming. Perot's own history is one of dramatic reversals, even mood swings, and that makes for an unpredictability that would cost the lives of US servicemen and civilians of whichever unfortunate nation he invaded.

Perot often seemed out of touch and to always be looking for a quick or easy fix. For example, he spoke publicly of “surgical strikes” to take out dictators. That is a nice fantasy, but it does not exist in reality. If they were possible, everyone from Franklin Roosevelt to Obama would carry these strikes out. Should Perot try, he would either be drawn into campaigns of indiscriminate bombing, as Roosevelt did, or bombings as quick but ineffective temper tantrums, much like Reagan and Clinton both tried.

The Reform Party continued after Perot's loss. Its best known success was electing Jesse Ventura, a wrestler, as Minnesota governor. Ventura was a crackpot. He had no interest in governing, hosting the absurd *Conspiracy Files* later. The Reform Party lurched wildly, running white supremacist Pat Buchanan in 2000, former Green Party candidate Ralph Nader in 2004, then obscure candidates. There is little reason to think the party will do better had Perot won.

## Cheney's Many Wars

**On May 10, 2005, a man named Vladimir Arutyunian tried to assassinate GW Bush.** Bush was on a state visit to the Georgian capital when Arutyunian tossed a live grenade wrapped in cloth. The cloth prevented the striker on the grenade from releasing. The grenade landed about 60 feet from where Bush was speaking, near the Georgian president and First Lady Laura Bush. Grenade fragments are deadliest within 50 feet, but can travel up to 600 feet.

A fatal or incapacitating assassination would make Dick Cheney the President. Possibly Cheney may choose as his vice presidential successor the Speaker of the House, Tom Delay. Delay was only a few months away from the scandal that removed him from office, indictment in September for violating election laws and money laundering that would lead to his resignation in June 2006 and conviction in 2010, later overturned.

It would be a very chaotic three years remaining in Cheney's time as president. Only four months later, in September 2005 Cheney underwent a multiple bypass for his heart. In 2010 he suffered a mild heart attack and was given a heart valve for congestive heart failure. Keep in mind that the presidency is an enormously stressful job. By some estimates a president ages five years for every year as president.

Cheney's presidency would be a nightmare for any but the most hardened of neo conservatives. He was and remains an enormously polarizing figure, despised by many in his own party, especially libertarian minded conservatives, almost as much as those on the political left and center. 2005 also marked the point at which support for the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars dropped sharply and the majority of Americans opposed both wars for the first time.

In 2006, Republicans lost badly in the midterm elections. Such losses would be greater under Cheney. He is known both for his uncompromising nature and for his belief in a conspiracy between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, which never happened. More than a few observers maintained Cheney

was the true force behind Bush's presidency. It is true that he was the most powerful vice president the US has ever had, not just gathering intelligence but “shaping” (many would say falsifying) it as an instrument to guide policy.

But it is also true that **Bush and Cheney often disagreed.** Cheney did not want Donald Rumsfeld, the equally unpopular Secretary of Defense, removed from office. Cheney also devoted an enormous amount of time to pushing for a pardon for Scooter Libby, a staff member convicted of perjury and obstructing the investigation of a leak exposing the identity of a CIA agent. Many observers thought Libby's obstruction was to hide the fact that the one who exposed the CIA agent's identity may have been adviser Karl Rove or even Bush himself.

Most importantly, Cheney disagreed strongly with Bush over Iran. **Cheney, along with many other advocates for Israel and fellow neo conservatives pushed for bombing Iran during 2008, but Bush decided against it.** A CIA intelligence estimate that Iran was unlikely to develop the atomic bomb soon (as indeed they have not for the six years since then) strengthened the case of those opposed to bombing Iran. But with Cheney as president, it is quite likely he could “shape” intelligence on the subject.

The consequences of bombing Iran, as many pointed out at the time, would be disastrous. Iran could easily retaliate by blocking the Straits of Hormuz. Even sinking a single ship could cut off the narrow straits. Kuwaiti, Qatari, and Emirates oil would be unable to reach western countries, as would much Saudi oil. Starting in 2007, the US was already in the Great Recession. Oil potentially reaching \$10 or even \$20 a gallon would worsen the Recession far more.

Iran's government was also allies with terrorists inside Iraq, in Lebanon, and elsewhere. The government could encourage them to strike at US troops in Iraq, embassies, and other American targets worldwide, as well as Israel. If Israel strikes Iran, the potential for a war across the entire Middle East was there.

Some neoconservatives called for not just bombing but the invasion of Iran, and a campaign of

terrorism could lead to just such a war. Iran is five times the size of Iraq, with a population three times greater. Iran was not weakened by a previous war and long blockade, as Iraq had been. Any invasion would take at least two or three times as many troops as Iraq or Afghanistan.

**The worst case scenarios thus involve Cheney as president with a weak heart and a vice president who is under indictment for money laundering, and the US fighting three wars plus worldwide terrorism, plus an even greater recession, all at the same time.**

The best case scenarios might actually involve Cheney mercifully passing away, but not before appointing a more moderate or at least pragmatic vice president once Delay is indicted. Another possibility is that should Cheney try to alter intelligence, he may be impeached. If a more pragmatic vice president were in office, Cheney's deep unpopularity may make it far easier to impeach him after the 2006 elections return a more Democratic Congress.

Of course, Cheney has never been an unintelligent man. He may appoint someone equally as neo conservative and unpopular as his vice president, like Donald Rumsfeld. Cheney is also a survivor and may survive the presidency, his health problems, and impeachment.

But he would not be foolish enough to run as president in 2008. Any Republican would likely go down to an even greater defeat than John McCain did. In that case, Obama has an even worse situation to deal with, ending three wars, not two, and an even worse economy. But worse problems likely mean a more Democratic Congress, more freedom to act, and a greater chance of success.

## McCain's and Palin's Many Wars

Even with disastrous wars and a recession, Obama could have lost the election. One of McCain's most fateful mistakes was suspending his campaign in the middle of congressional talks on the budget and stimulus. His loss in the polls during that episode was roughly equal to the margin he lost the election by.

It is also quite possible Obama was not even the Democratic nominee. Had Hillary Clinton's campaign been initially better run, she could have won the nomination. Her stance on war was almost identical to that of conservatives and Republicans. Thus many Democrats may have stayed home, and McCain might win.

We know fairly well what McCain would have done overseas. He seemingly never met a war he did not like. In 1997 he called for bombing infrastructure (roads, bridges, power stations, even hospitals) in Serbia. **In 2007 he called for bombing Iran**, even lightheartedly singing about it to the tune of the old Beach Boys song “Barbara Ann,” “Bomb, bomb, bomb...bomb Iran.” **In 2008 he called for staying in Iraq “maybe 100 years.”**

It is thus certain he would stay in Iraq until forced out either by US public opinion or, more likely, the Iraqi government kicking him out. He did support more troops sent to Iraq in 2005, and likely would have wanted more troops in Afghanistan.

It is also likely he would have bombed Libya far sooner than Obama did, and supported sending the rebels military aid. While he did support bombing Syria earlier and arming rebels, we do not know if McCain would have still been president that late.

Again, the presidency takes many years off those who are in office. When McCain ran in 2008, he was older than Reagan, the oldest man to ever be president, was when he was elected to office. (Recall that Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's his last two years in office.) A year of captivity as a POW takes several years off your life, and McCain was a captive for over five years. He also

survived a plane crash and was a heavy smoker for a quarter century.

Should he have died or been incapacitated as president, Sarah Palin could be president for at least the rest of that term. Almost as much as Dick Cheney, she remains a deeply polarizing figure. But unlike Cheney, she does not have his political skill, experience, or even drive. Not long after the failed election bid, she resigned suddenly as governor after only two years. Prior to that she had been a small town mayor. Her academic career is modest, to be kind, a four year communications degree earned from four different schools over a five year period.

Her lack of understanding on issues has become legendary, and plentiful material for comedians. An even greater problem is the mutual contempt between her and her own party. McCain's staff, the Republican Party leadership, and most major figures within the party do not care for her. Her base remains discontented populists within the party, some Fox News viewers, what would shortly become the Tea Party, and male sexists who support her simply for finding her physically attractive.

No matter at what point she potentially became president, she would be facing enormous handicaps, governing with perhaps half of one party supporting her. That portion of the party, and she herself, have frequently been accused of racism, and **she and many of her supporters clearly are racists**. Palin compared the federal debt to slavery, race baited Obama as “shucking and jiving,” compared disagreeing with her to the anti Semitic myth of blood libel, and appeared at rallies where her supporters screamed racist epithets, waved the Confederate flag, and called for her opponents' assassinations.

Whether her comments were deliberate provocations or careless anger, her lack of diplomacy would make her one of the worst presidents in relations with other countries. Ambassadors and diplomats would spend much of their time trying to ease the rancor she would create. Indeed, there is no evidence she would even seek to avoid conflict. One of her most provocative comments was on the civil war in Syria, where she argued, “Let Allah sort them out.” In other words, who cares, let them kill each other. To anger over a billion Muslims by casually dismissing the value of their lives in five words

is quite a feat, but she did so.

Another concern is her borderline mental instability, not simply a lack of grace under fire, but delusional behavior. Her own aides noted a history of disturbing patterns, becoming erratic and withdrawn when criticized, even going into a “catatonic stupor.” McCain's campaign sheltered her as much as possible from the media and public, but that is not possible as president. Shutting down during a crisis would worsen its problems, lengthen it, dismay allies and comfort enemies.

It is a virtual certainty she would try to find ways to keep wars in Iraq and Afghanistan going. Even after the Iraqi government told US troops to leave, she likely would look for a way to keep them there. A war with Iran is a virtual certainty, as is US ground troops likely sent into Libya sooner, and kept there. The body count from Palin's Wars would be disturbingly long, and one that God would indeed take quite long to sort out.

Neither McCain nor Palin would resort to a stimulus in response to the Great Recession. Their preferred placebo is tax cuts, which would only lengthen an economic crash and deepen inequality. Tax cuts are the worst possible solution for recessions or depressions, since they cut back on demand. One also would be curious as to who either McCain or Palin would choose for the Supreme Court, and see the decisions resulting.

One of the easiest predictions is who would be president after Palin. It would not be a Republican. The only possible exception would be if Palin did not finish her half term as president, which is a real possibility. Since she resigned under the pressure of being governor of Alaska, one of the least populated states, how long could she handle the pressures of being president?

Who would Palin have chosen as her own vice president? Since she may very well quit, or be asked to step down for her mental state, that is relevant. In 2012 she came close to endorsing former House speaker Newt Gingrich. The two share in common their unpopularity with both the general public and their own party, plus their reputation for often offensive and not very well thought out speeches and positions.

Gingrich, for example, called for poor students to be given jobs cleaning toilets at public schools so they “wouldn't have to become a pimp or a prostitute or a drug dealer.” Gingrich and Palin also have a similar history of ethical violations, both of them using political donations and public office for their personal benefit.

Though Gingrich is far more experienced than Palin, he remains so unpopular with both his own party and the general public it is hard to imagine him being reelected. **A McCain presidency could have led to the curious sight of three presidents in one term from the same party, going on to being defeated the next election.** The body count for these three presidencies includes many more dead US soldiers, Iraqis, Afghans, Libyans, Iranians, and collateral damage from increased terrorist attacks.

## Hillary Clinton Continues GW Bush's Wars and More

It is difficult to think of a recent figure that more people have unrealistic ideas about than Hillary Clinton. To much of the right, she is a dragon woman, to much of the left a heroine. The right tends to ignore that Hillary Clinton thinks and acts much like them, especially on war and peace issues. Much of the left ignores that she is not, in fact, anything close to being one of them on virtually any issue besides abortion rights.

On war and peace in particular, Ms. Clinton's own words show a history of being a neo conservative, an empire builder and reckless warmonger the equal of GW Bush. Some of her advisers were also GW Bush's, and indeed one Clinton adviser lobbied hard for support for a coup in Honduras. Clinton supported and voted for the invasion of Iraq, and refused to apologize or admit wrongdoing despite being pressed repeatedly by her own supporters.

The most striking words from her are her stance **on Iran. In 2008, she called for “massive retaliation.”** This is a Cold War nuclear doctrine that argues one should launch an all out attack on civilian populations. When pressed further, Clinton later followed up with the vow, “I want the Iranians to know, **if I'm the president, we will attack Iran...**” if there were an attack on Israel. Later in the same interview, **she bragged, “We would be able to totally obliterate them.”** It is clear that was more than just a military response, but threatening the mass murder of Iranian civilians. That was how it was interpreted around much of the world, with the UN Secretary General concerned. “If she becomes president and she keeps saying that, then we'll have to react.”

Clinton's long history of saying belligerent things off the cuff delight her supporters and anger her opponents. Back in 1992 she made comments that appeared to denigrate housewives. The remarks themselves matter little in the long run. What is more relevant is her history of picking fights when she did not need to, alienating people who did not have an opinion of her before. For most conservative women in the US, these comments were the first time they heard of her. For many in the Mideast, her

calls to “obliterate” Iran were the first comments they had heard from her. Much of the complaints against her by conservative opponents are fabricated, but others are genuine, for she keeps giving them easy targets.

Clinton would come into office already opposed by both conservatives and much of the left, almost all of one party and perhaps half of her own. Any healthcare efforts by her would be in the shadow of her previous one, a corporate welfare effort which still could not get passed though her own party had majorities in both houses. She has since opposed any immediate national healthcare, and proposed, along with Newt Gingrich a gradual approach. This is a thinly veiled way to say it would not be national, not be government run, and would be even more corporate welfare and thus inefficient.

On the Great Recession, her husband's deregulation played a major role in the housing and banking collapses. She likely would have pushed for bailouts, and then failed to punish any Wall Street criminals, much like happened under Obama.

Overseas she would differ very little from GW Bush. As Secretary of State, she pushed for more troops to Afghanistan and the US invasion of Libya, often arguing against Vice President Biden. If she had been president, she no doubt would do the same.

Where she would go contrary to Obama and perhaps even beyond what GW Bush would have done is Syria. **She and General Petraeus presented a plan for arming Syrian rebels.** Obama rejected it, as many on both the left and right did, for drawing the US into a civil war. On one side is a brutal dictator, on the other fundamentalists allied with Al Qaeda. Potentially Clinton's plan could have backfired as badly as CIA support for Osama Bin Laden. Clinton or another president could have faced terrorist attacks from a former ally. Possibly victorious Syrian rebels may attack Israel or support terrorists doing the same.

On Iraq, Clinton's history is following the winds of popular opinion. She voted for the war to avoid appearing soft. She supported the war with numerous votes, even after most of her own party opposed it. It took until 2007, five years later and two years after most of the public opposed the war,

for her to finally vote for a bill calling for a timetable for withdrawal. By that same standard, **she may have waited two years longer than Obama did to finally pull US troops from Iraq.**

Would she go to war with Iran? Or were her earlier words just bluster to win over pro-Israel voters? She has long supported sanctions, which she openly says are designed to bring down the Iranian government. She also has long pushed for diplomatic talks to halt Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, even though the CIA said the evidence shows Iran is not trying to develop nuclear weapons.

There has been a powerful lobby calling for war with Iran since the 1990s. Some are pro-Israel, some neo conservatives. Clinton's closest adviser was Richard Holbrooke, who likely would have been her Secretary of State. Holbrooke had a long history of humanitarian causes, but also two troubling episodes. Holbrooke was sent to press Indonesian dictator Suharto about the genocide he carried out in East Timor. (See Section Two.) Instead Holbrooke publicly praised Suharto. Holbrooke also successfully blocked a UN effort to create an envoy to negotiate with the Taliban in 2009. The evidence seems clear that she and her adviser prefer war to diplomacy, and thus an Iran war is quite possible.

At this writing, Clinton is widely seen as most likely our next president. Her advisers continue to be neo conservatives, believers in American empire. It remains to be seen if she may act differently in office than indicated by her past statements and positions. If she does back away from war as the first solution for dealing with purported enemies, it most likely will be because of public opposition rather than deep conviction.

## Romney Tries to Return to War in Iraq and Torture

What Romney would have done as president depends on whether one takes him at his word during the campaign, or argues he only said these remarks to pander to pro-war conservatives who looked at him with suspicion. Romney is certainly a religious conservative, though of a church some Protestants hold suspect, especially in the south. But in terms of his actions, **his elected political career shows a moderate who successfully won the support of both left and right, who often called himself both “moderate” and even “progressive.”**

Romney, for example, balanced the budget as Massachusetts Governor by ending corporate loopholes over the opposition of business. He passed Romney care, the precedent and model for Obama care, the first state government directed healthcare for the poor. He was pro-choice and even favored benefits for gay couples, but not gay marriage itself.

All that dramatically changed with his run for president, with the exception of his switch from pro-choice to pro-life which happened earlier. Every other major candidate for the Republican primary was more conservative than he was. He turned sharply to the right to win over conservatives. It did not work. Right up to the election itself many conservatives remained convinced he was not one of them, contributing to his defeat.

Imagining his winning the election itself takes some doing. Some mistakes are obvious, his “47%” remark, castigating almost half the country as lazy leeches. (Ironically, his vote count in the election was 47%.) He did poorly in the debates. He chose as his running mate an intellectual lightweight, Paul Ryan. Photos and stories of his past, growing up very privileged, cemented his image as an unlikable rich kid, the kind of boss most people hated.

The election was, electorally, a landslide, with the polls almost never changing. But if he had avoided every single mistake and narrowly won, what type of president would he have been? Quite clearly, a disastrous one viewed solely in terms of loss of human life and not political partisanship. For

to hold onto his base he would have to carry out what they wished.

That likely means the US bombing of Iran. **Romney spoke of bombing Iran and blockades.** As pointed out before, that means almost certain retaliation by terrorists against US servicemen in Iraq and US installations worldwide. That leaves open the possibility of an invasion of Iran as public outcry and neo conservative cynicism would push for retaliation. That means a war even greater and more disastrous than in Iraq. Romney went one step further and said he would not need the approval of Congress to go to war.

Romney even issued nuclear threats against Iran during the campaign, saying “You don't take options off the table,” when questioned about it. Still, it is hard to imagine him actually carrying them out. As noted before, there is no clear evidence of Iran trying to develop nuclear weapons, just the opposite. Romney issued his threat only as a possibility if Iran did appear to be building an A-bomb. But if US bombings lead to terrorism which leads to a US invasion, there is the daunting possibility of nuclear threats or even use to try and end that war. For Romney said openly his goal would be to overthrow the Iranian government.

**Romney also favored arming “moderate” Syrian rebels.** The problem is, there are not any, only Al Qaeda allies. As pointed out before, arming groups that hate the US likely would backfire as much as the CIA's association with Bin Laden.

Romney during the campaign actually went further than most of his own party. He spoke of seeking to return US troops to war in Iraq. The death toll of returning to a continuing war in Iraq might have stayed as high as tens of thousands of Iraqis and hundreds of Americans a year. But luckily such a proposal had almost no chance of success. Even most of his own party thought the war in Iraq was a mistake. The Iraqi government would never allow any more US troops to return either. Recall they kicked US troops out, over Obama's objections.

**Romney also supports “enhanced interrogation techniques”** while claiming to oppose torture. This is double speak, playing with words to hide your intentions, trying to appeal to the large

number of Republicans who do in fact favor torture, but using a euphemism to avoid bad public relations. Likely there would be a return to torture under Romney, to water boarding, sexual abuse, sensory deprivation, and threatening prisoners with dogs. “Enhanced” techniques are torture under another name. To pretend otherwise is, to borrow George Orwell's phrase, “to make lies sound truthful, murder sound respectable, and give the appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

What about laws inside the US? Would Romney have been guilty of ideological blindness, leading to American deaths? For national healthcare, he has been very contradictory, passing a statewide version, but calling for the repeal of the national version. What he would replace it with is unclear. It is certain his base would push for it. But a repeal would not pass unless the Democratic majority in the Senate ended.

One way we know he would be ideologically blind is on Medicare. His running mate Paul Ryan proposed turning all of Medicare, part of Medicaid, and part of Social Security over to private business. Wealthy elites get their taxes cut in half while most others see their taxes rise from a national consumption (sales) tax. Government vouchers pay for private insurance.

Essentially this would partly loot the treasury for private companies to make money off the elderly while raising taxes for nearly everyone but the wealthy. This is both reverse Robin Hood and corporate welfare at its worst. Romney described Ryan's plan as “almost identical” to what he supported.

Most critics argue this would actually end Medicare and weaken the other two programs, the three most successful anti poverty programs the US has ever had. That is precisely why many libertarians and conservatives hate these programs, because they show how much better government saves and improves lives than capitalism.

Looked at from the point of view of lives saved or lost, this would lead to many more lives lost. **One study after another shows Medicare saves lives of the elderly far better than private insurance.** It is simple common sense, better access to healthcare means longer lives. A government

handout of corporate welfare to private insurance is less efficient than government-run healthcare, leading to loss of lives. That has been shown in one nation after another.

Thus the death toll from a Romney presidency includes terrorism from both Syrian rebels and Iran, bombing and possibly war against Iran, deaths by torture much like under GW Bush, and his ideological blindness leading to many more deaths of the elderly.

## Section Eleven:

### Why Weren't They Included?

The following are in rough chronological order. Though almost all were certainly atrocities and wrongful deaths, some were not included. In some cases the deaths were horrific, but not preventable. In other cases those guilty of these atrocities did not include presidents.

In several of these cases, the atrocities either did not even exist or they are not being described accurately. Myths about these events have been promoted by those with various agendas, especially white supremacists.

## John Adams and the Sedition Acts

When John Adams became president in 1800, the US seemed to be close to war with both Britain and France. Adam's Federalist Party pushed through the Sedition and Alien Acts, outlawing criticism of the president and deporting aliens who were deemed a threat. **Twenty five people were arrested and ten convicted for up to eighteen months in prison. An unknown number of French immigrants fled.**

As repression goes, the Sedition Acts are minor. Yet they receive quite a bit of attention from historians, in part as a way to study how a nation claiming to have only a few decades before fought for freedom was willing to throw people in jail solely for their views. In one case a man was even jailed for his outburst while drunk.

Adams certainly deserves much of the blame for these acts. He pushed for them, and he led the party which passed them. But there were no deaths from these acts, thus they are not included. Even the deportations were only threatened, and no orders were ever signed or carried out.

The Lie of “Genocide Against Whites”  
in Haiti, Algeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe

These four nations all share in common that supposed genocide against whites looms large in the imaginations and fears of white racists, white supremacists, and other whites with persecution complexes. All four nations are or were often held up by racists as supposed proof that nonwhites are inherently incapable of government and will seek out revenge against white oppression, so therefore white oppression should continue.

There are just enough facts in the claims to be confusing to those who do not know the history of these nations in detail. In all four countries, there were or are either atrocities or political persecution. But to claim that any of the violence that happened constituted anything close to genocide against whites is false. In all of these cases, to even claim that whites were targeted solely for being white is false. More often, whites were included as targets, along with local collaborators, as occupiers, or for their political control or economic domination. **It was their power that made them a target, not their color.**

In Haiti in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, two genocides happened at the time, neither against whites. The slave trade was itself genocide, killing tens of millions. (See Section Two.) Haiti was the site of one of the most extreme forms of slavery the world had ever seen. Slaves were often literally worked to death, with torture, mutilation, and rape routine. Up to one million slaves were killed by Haitian plantation owners. That genocide led to the most successful slave revolt in history. (Also see Section Two.) The French slave owners' attempt to crush that revolt led to a second genocide, killing 170,000 more Haitians.

In 1804, after having fought off French, Spanish, and English troops, one of the Haitian leaders, Dessalines, ordered the massacre of some remaining French civilians. As many as 4,000 may have been murdered. The effect of this massacre was cataclysmic. For decades, slave owners and other racists

would point to this as an inherent sign of Haitian or African savagery, and it became the excuse to isolate Haiti.

But to claim this massacre was genocide is false. To say that there was a systematic campaign against whites on the island is also false. Start with the obvious: The Haitian Revolution began in 1791. If there were still so many French civilians on the island thirteen years later, that is a sign of the opposite, that the French were not being targeted collectively or for their race alone.

Not only that, **Haitian ex slave armies and militias had Europeans or mixed race people as allies.** The first Black militias on Haiti were free Blacks, or mixed blood Creoles, some of whom had Black slaves. Creole militias actually helped to crush earlier slave revolts in exchange for rights of their own. It was Napoleon's attempt to reinstate slavery after it had been ordered abolished by the French Revolution that led to the Haitian slave uprising.

Many mixed blood leaders were prominent among the slave revolt. This should not be surprising, since they had military training and in some cases education. Not only that, some French colonists and soldiers chose to side with the Haitian revolt. Some were anti-slavery, and some fought for money or social positions or power.

Finally, Haitians at times allied with the British or Spaniards for their own advantage. Though some Haitian slaves did target slave owners, overseers, or French soldiers, one can hardly blame them any more than one could blame Jews targeting Nazis. **The truly surprising thing about the massacre is how reluctantly that small number of Haitians involved took part.** First, start with the obvious: most Haitians had nothing to do with the massacre. A few thousand did out of a population of hundreds of thousands. Some in the army carried out scattered killings when ordered by Dessalines. But in most cases, Dessalines had to be personally present to make sure the executions happened as he ordered.

In any case, since this book is in large part about presidential roles in atrocities, US presidents did respond. (See Section Two.) If anything, they responded far out of proportion to the crimes. All Haitians were collectively punished for half a century for what a few did. Haiti was still being punished

by the French government as late as the mid twentieth century.

An independence movement in the north African nation of Algeria in the 1950s and 60s is often accused of being anti white or anti European. Both the Algerian independence fighters and French soldiers and Algerian collaborators were guilty of many horrific atrocities, random killing of civilians, torture, and terrorism. But in no sense did the atrocities approach genocide. **Algerian independence fighters targeted collaborators, not just whites.** While a majority of Algerian-born Europeans did flee, many stayed after Algeria's independence. Even France's own government expected no more than a fourth would leave Algeria. What both sides carried out was terrorism. What most Algerian-born French fled from was not just terrorism, but also fear that their own terrorism would bring reprisals, harassment, or property seizure.

The US, including presidents, had little response to the Algerian War for Independence. Some hysterical racists in the US like George Wallace did use the war to demonize nonwhites. Truman's administration only called for "continued progress," never defining what that was. Eisenhower, seeing the war was obviously an independence movement with many Islamists taking part, refused to step in as he did in Vietnam. Kennedy did play a minor role, but in opposition to Algerian independence, refusing to support it at the UN.

In Kenya in the 1950s, a rebel group called the Mau Mau tried a revolt calling for killing all European occupiers and local collaborators. Left out from the claims of "white genocide" is, first, that it was a revolt against the conquerors, not a race, and second, the fact that it failed utterly. **Most victims of the Mau Mau were Kenyan collaborators with the British. Those victims were far outnumbered, by more than ten times, by those killed by the British in retaliation.** US involvement, and that of presidents, in this uprising was minimal.

In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe has ruled the nation since independence in 1980, only winning the first election fairly, every other by fraud and force. In part because white members of the military tried to assassinate him several times and white farmers controlled almost all farmland in the nation,

Mugabe has often demonized the small white minority.

Mugabe clearly is a racist and deeply corrupt. But his actions against white Zimbabweans do not come anywhere close to genocide. At first he encouraged white farmers to sell their land to Blacks. When very few of them did, his government stood aside while some farms were seized by militias. A few farmers were killed, but more often they were driven off. **Far from being genocide, one newspaper account reported the death toll as eleven white farmers out of over 4,000.** This also happened over more than a ten year period as well.

Two other groups were and are far more threatened by Mugabe than well off whites losing their land. Gays have been the target of Mugabe's anger, with him threatening to kill them all. Also, **Black Zimbabweans are far more harmed by Mugabe than whites.** Tellingly, western media focus far more on white land loss than huge numbers of Black lives lost.

Mugabe's regime withholds food from opponents. Large parts of the nation are starving in an entirely man made famine. This is an element of genocide, using starvation as a war tactic. Yet the hysteria coming from far right racist publications like *World Net Daily* and *Front Page Mag* reserve their sympathy for solely for whites.

American presidents certainly have not neglected Zimbabwean human rights. Reagan cut off Zimbabwean aid based on human rights concerns, something he notably never did for right wing or military dictatorships. George Bush Sr. restored much of the aid.

Since 2000, both administrations of GW Bush and Obama condemned Mugabe's regime and cut off military aid and most non-humanitarian aid, as well as sanctioning people within Mugabe's administration. In 2009, Obama publicly stated he would keep sanctions against Zimbabwe because of human rights concerns. The US has continued to send food aid to Zimbabwe to aid against starvation.

## Some Overseas Atrocities Before 1890, 1917, or 1941

One might notice that the atrocities discussed in this work often are far more heavily weighted towards the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Many earlier atrocities happening outside the US are not discussed, notably the Irish Famine, the Taiping Rebellion, King Leopold's genocide in the Congo, and the massacre of Haitians in the Dominican Republic in 1937.

One might wonder why those tragedies and not others? Surely the Irish in the 1840s, Chinese in the 1850s, Africans in the 1890s, and Haitians in 1937, all of whom died or were killed in huge numbers, deserve as much consideration for why a president did nothing as Blacks under slavery, California Indians, Holocaust victims, or Rwandans do.

One thing this work promotes is the basic spiritual principle of the humanity of all peoples, no matter how unfamiliar the people may be to many Americans. An American life is no more or less valuable than a Rwandan's, though most Americans could not tell you a single fact about Rwanda besides there having been a genocide there (and some not even that.)

That many more Americans (including presidents) were deeply racist as the time is not an excuse either. A great many whites also were not. So Black slaves and California Natives were no less human and there is no justifiable reason for ignoring atrocities done against them.

So why not include the first four named groups, as well as many others? There are several considerations for why they were not included in this work:

1. **Were the atrocities widely known, and known in time to have been stopped?** Technology at the time was not what it is today. Communication took weeks under the most ideal circumstances, more often months, not seconds as today. There was no internet nor satellite television. The younger readers may not know that one of the first times social media technology made concealing atrocities far more difficult was the Tiananmen Square massacre, and that was in 1989.

In the case of the Congo, King Leopold began taking over the region in 1885, and his worst

atrocities began in the 1890s. But widespread reporting on the genocide he was carrying out did not reach Europe until 1900. The Congo was extremely remote from communication methods at the time, with reports from the deepest interior taking as long as eight months.

In the Dominican Republic in 1937, the massacre happened very quickly, 12,000 to 35,000 Haitian deaths in only five days. There was really no way to gather a military force to stop it in time. Roosevelt's response was complicated by his Good Neighbor Policy, vowing to no longer send US troops to Latin America. Roosevelt and Haitian President Stenio Vincent did get reparations for the victims' families. Corrupt Haitian officials embezzled almost all of the reparations paid.

**2. Was it practical for the US and American presidents to have intervened at the time?** US military power in 1860, for example, was nowhere near what it is today. The US Army at the start of the Civil War was only 16,000. This was not a small army for that time either. People often forget the entire world population did not reach one billion until the twentieth century. All three huge (for that time) American, British, and French armies at the Battle of Yorktown were not even 22,000 men.

But in the Taiping Rebellion, 20 million died in China, which already had a population numbering over 100 million. Each side in the rebellion had at least half a million troops. In theory, 5,000 US troops traveling to the other side of the world were unlikely to stop the war's humanitarian catastrophe. (There were foreigners already fighting in the rebellion, British and French mercenaries against the rebels. Americans often fought on the side of the rebels since they were fellow Christians.)

Many also tend to forget the US did not become a superpower until after World War II. In the case of the Irish Famine, the British Empire was the most powerful nation on the planet at the time, with the most powerful navy, and Ireland was next door to Britain. It is very unlikely US power could have challenged the British, even had the public wanted to.

**3. Was the American public isolationist, inclined to stay out of foreign affairs entirely, even to stop preventable atrocities?** This did not happen nearly as much as many claim. Isolationism is perhaps the most overrated threat in the minds of those who worship the ideas of American power and

American empire. It has been invoked many times, throughout the Cold War and after, as an argument for why the US should always be a superpower and involved whenever the amorphous idea of “national security” is brought up. The term can mean anything from business interests to the need for military bases to simply punishing any nation that does not agree with the US government.

American isolationism before World War II is greatly overstated. (See Sections Three and Five.) Private armies of Americans invaded dozens of countries before the Civil War. The US fought five wars to expand slavery, and conquered territory from the Mississippi River to the Pacific and beyond, to Hawaii and the Philippines. Any American who remembers basic facts from high school history recalls the Monroe Doctrine, essentially declaring Latin America was the US's turf. (European powers ignored it until after World War II, but that does not change it being declared.) As the US recovered from the Civil War and those with memories of it died off, starting in the 1890s the US military invaded Latin American nations dozens of times, at times occupying countries for decades. (See Section Five.)

But this is still in the Americas, and only in the nations near the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. One has to consider those dates at the title of this entry, 1890, 1917, and 1941. Before 1890, the US neither had the military power nor the state of mind to invade overseas, except for the northernmost parts of Latin America. After 1917, much of the US was somewhat inclined to invade overseas if humanitarian reasons or preserving order was the rationale. But there was also a large part of the public that was deeply skeptical. In part this was because many of them recognized “the flag follows the dollar,” that these invasions were often done for economic domination, or became such domination after the fact. After 1941 is when the US was fully committed as a world power, having both the military might and the will to send troops overseas.

## Lincoln and Sherman's March Through Georgia

This supposed atrocity may be the most overblown case of hysteria and grievance politics in all of American history. Confederate admirers and apologists will tell you endlessly about the supposed horrors of Sherman's March Through Georgia. To hear them tell it, no people ever suffered so much in all of human history. There was not much to the march besides a lot of property damage, scorched earth tactics designed to deny resources to the enemy that are standard for most armies, both before and since the march. Sherman's army did destroy railroads. That's what armies do. They destroyed telegraph lines. Most armies do that. They burned crops, food stores, barns, etc., in order to deny them to the enemy. Again, most armies do that.

In fact, **Confederate armies did exactly the same scorched earth tactics in their invasions of northern states. Confederate armies also did the same *in their own states* to deny food to the Union.** Confederate armies did even worse tactics, enslaving escaped slaves and Free Blacks.

Truthfully, much of the damage done on the march was simple foraging. Sherman's men took food to feed themselves rather than relying on federal supply lines. This, if anything, made the march faster and less of a hardship on Georgians. **Sherman's orders specifically barred taking goods or destroying property if US troops were not under attack by gue rillas. Sherman also ordered enough food always left for civilians.**

There was a famine in Georgia and elsewhere in many southern states. But it began before the march and continued long after. Famine did not come primarily from Union armies or even the war itself. Famine came mostly from Confederate government incompetence and Confederate army seizure of southern crops and animals. One of the lesser known aspects of the Confederacy is, even more than modern conservatism, its abhorrence of taxes, especially high taxes on the wealthy. So where did the Confederate army get its food? It seized it.

Most Confederate supplies, both for the army and the civilian government, came from direct

seizures of individual property. Most Confederate government revenue came from selling seized property taken from southerners. And since Confederate leaders tended to be big plantation owners, wealthy men's property often went untouched. It was the mid-sized and especially small southern farmer who suffered the most from the Confederacy.

A lot of southerners starved simply because the Confederate government was so incompetent. Several state governors, notably Texas, refused to allow their foodstuffs to be used to feed people of other states. Ideological stubbornness over states' rights had the ugly side effect of killing some of its believers. Thus Texas, with all of its cattle, had its beef uneaten while Georgians starved. Normally that Texas cattle went to large northern cities. With that market gone, Texas government and cattle owners refused to let its cattle be given away to feed the hungry, not without a profit to be made.

What about other atrocities? Surely in its claim of Georgians being so outraged by the dreaded "Yankees," the Confederate apologists can point to deaths, rapes, wanton violence? No, they cannot. Outright killings of civilians by the Union Army were very few. Even battle deaths were not that high on the march. Confederate troops mostly went north in a failed attempt to draw Sherman's army away. Sherman had enough men that he could send one part of his army north, his troops defeat the Confederates in Tennessee, and still march through Georgia almost unopposed. Some killings were done by bands of Union deserters, for whose actions the Union Army cannot rightly be blamed.

The worst atrocities done during the march were by Confederate guerillas, who hung Union POWs or slit their throats, leaving their bodies hanging as a warning. Most Georgians at the time thought **General Wheeler's Confederate troops far more savage than anything Sherman's army carried out.**

Even **the famed burning of Atlanta**, turned into a myth of horrific suffering by incredibly inaccurate books and films like *Gone With the Wind*, had less harm than most have been led to believe. To start with, Atlanta was actually a small town at the time. About 3,500 residents were evacuated, and much of the public praised Sherman for doing so. **The town was far from completely burned down.**

**Many of the wealthiest residents remained, as did most Blacks, loyal Unionists, and workers for the federal government. Much of the looting was done by southern looters, or damaged by Confederate troops** themselves carrying out scorched earth tactics to deny the city to the Union.

Other atrocities? Rapes by Union troops were pretty rare. US were either stayed faithful to their wives, partook of the numerous prostitutes that followed Union armies, or found more than a few willing southern women, both prostitutes and simply willing girlfriends. Rape of southern women in wartime was mostly done by deserters, including Confederate deserters.

Union troops as a rule had a far better record of humane treatment of civilians and POWs than Confederate ones. Confederate raiders carried out actual terrorism. Notorious outfits like Quantrill's Raiders and Angry Anderson's carried out mass murders of civilians that were so horrifying, the Confederate leadership disavowed them. Confederate troops also had the ugly practice of the Black Flag. Flying the Black Flag meant Confederate troops should show No Quarter to Blacks in uniform. Black soldiers were often massacred, as at the Battles of the Crater and Fort Pillow.

In fact, the greatest damage the Union Army did to southern "property" was also the most noble thing the Union Army did. Everywhere the Union Army went, thousands of Black slaves ran away and sought refuge with them. Many thousands flocked to Sherman's army. Many found work as laborers, and many more would join the army itself. Black Union soldiers had distinguished records and many decorations, including Congressional Medals of Honor. Many former slaves worked as scouts or spies.

So why does the legend of Sherman's March as supposedly so devastating persist? Partly because of inaccurate films like *Gone With the Wind*. Partly because **southern white racists like to pose as being persecuted or imagine themselves to be wronged**. But mostly the legend persists because many don't know any better and have not been taught the truth, that the Confederacy harmed the great majority of southerners far more than the United States ever did. Many still believe the Myth of Southern Unity, that all southerners supported the Confederacy, and the legend of Sherman's March backs up that myth.

In fact, most southerners supported the United States (i.e. the Union) in the Civil War. Blacks, most Mexicans, and most American Indians in the south were pro-Union. So were most southern whites, just the opposite of what the Myth of Southern Unity claims. Most obviously, the Border States were mostly loyal Unionists by a ratio of three to one in the white population, not “neutral” as Confederate apologists pretend.

Large sections of the Confederacy itself were pro Union and not treasonous as Confederates were. North Alabama, north Arkansas, south Florida, southwest Georgia, southeast Louisiana, south Mississippi, western North Carolina, east Tennessee, northeast Texas, south Texas, central Texas, and southwest Virginia were all overwhelmingly loyal Americans, and large sections of these areas freed themselves of Confederate rule before United States troops liberated the areas. These regions were made up mostly of poor farmers who had nothing in common with plantation elites, and contempt for the Confederacy as a rich man's government.

Over 300,000 southerners fought for the Union. Many southerners in the Confederate Army were not there by choice, drafted or kept on after their enlistment expired. Over two thirds of Confederate soldiers deserted, at a rate twice that of American ones. Entire Confederate units switched to the Union side, sometimes mid battle as at the Battle of Pea Ridge. Half of all southern white men dodged the draft, even forming bands that drove away Confederate officials.

The Confederacy, after all, was founded and led by plantation owners and big slave-owning elites. Most poor white southerners rejected the Confederacy as a rich man's government expecting the poor to fight a rich man's war. But the myth surrounding Sherman's March denies all this. Very few historians now give the myth much credibility anymore, except the few remaining diehard Confederate apologists, most of them outright racists.

## Indian Boarding Schools

From the late 1870s until today, many Native children were sent to federal boarding schools. For the first 50 years, these schools were designed to forcibly assimilate them, make them culturally white by “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” Starting in the late 1920s and especially with the start of the Indian New Deal, forced assimilation programs ended. (See Section Eight.)

But for about 50 years, Native children were often kidnapped, stripped of their cultures, language, religions, and heritages. The regimen at the schools was brutal. Natives as young as five years old faced military discipline, fourteen hour workdays of forced labor, and physical punishment that included whippings and being chained to their work stations.

The effects were catastrophic. Since that time, greater than nine tenths of Natives cannot speak a Native language. Graduates returned home alienated from their people, unable to even speak to their own families, turning in despair to alcoholism and suicide. Very few were able to find work with the skills they acquired, due to continuing prejudice.

Not only that, **there was a high death rate at boarding schools from disease, up to six and a half times that of other ethnic groups.** At a single boarding school alone, Carlisle, deaths numbered in the hundreds. The boarding school program caused thousand of deaths of Native children. In Canada, their very similar boarding school program has often been called genocidal.

So why was it not included? US boarding schools were federal. But the blame has largely been directed at one man, Captain Richard Pratt. Pratt began the first boarding school programs at Carlisle, running the school as a model program for almost three decades.

There was certainly blame enough to go around. Self appointed Friends of the Indian, largely well off dilettantes at philanthropy, became the dominant voice in the debate over what should be the fate of Natives once forced onto reservations. Congress repeatedly approved the schools, and the Supreme Court repeatedly restricted the rights of Natives over many decades. Even many Native

parents themselves played a role, voluntarily sending their children to the schools, hoping they would be better fed and clothed than the deep poverty and neglect of reservation life.

Presidents' roles in the boarding schools were minimal. There is little evidence that most presidents after Grant and before Franklin Roosevelt gave much thought to Indian policy, especially the schools. Into that vacuum stepped Congress, Friends of the Indian, and above all, the operators of the boarding schools, like Pratt. The deaths of thousands of Native children is rightly blamed on them, and the memory of what they did is remembered by tribes in memorials. Their experiences are a clear warning on the dangers of forcible assimilation.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis

As said before, John Kennedy's reputation as both an advocate for civil rights and a peacemaker on the US-Vietnam War are false and undeserved. (See Section Eleven.) Even leaving those aside, some admirers point to the Cuban Missile Crisis and believe Kennedy prevented a nuclear war. Had this been true, the number of lives saved could easily be in the hundreds of millions.

The roots of the crisis began under Eisenhower. Ike ordered the overthrow of Fidel Castro, the revolutionary who defeated dictator Fulgencio Batista. Batista was supported by the US for decades. Ike ordered Castro's overthrow supposedly because he was Communist. In fact, Fidel Castro was not, not yet. The revolutionary movement was a wide coalition. Of the four major leaders, only his brother Raul Castro and Che Guevara were Communists. Fidel Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos were not. (Cienfuegos died in a mysterious plane crash.)

Not only that, the Communist Party of Cuba was actually allied with Batista, who gave the party control of Cuba's unions. Castro early on made an effort for good relations, even trying to buy planes from Britain and arms from Belgium. The US blocked the British sale and Belgian arms were destroyed in a mysterious explosion. Cuba was then forced to buy arms from the Soviet Union. This gave Ike an excuse to overthrow Castro. Ike's real motive was to reclaim US companies' "property" reclaimed by the Cuban government.

The plan was the notoriously bungled Bay of Pigs invasion. The CIA recruited about 1,400 Cuban-Americans, mostly well off with little military training, called Brigade 2506. By the time the plan was ready, Kennedy was president. Kennedy, the CIA, and the Brigade deserve equal blame for the invasion's failure. The CIA deceived Kennedy, telling him 2506 were highly trained and could hide in the hills if the invasion failed. Kennedy reduced the number of US Air Force bombings of Cuba. Members of Brigade 2506 openly talked about the invasion in Miami. Both the bombings and 2506's loose talk meant Cuban forces knew in advance and easily defeated 2506. Most Brigade members were

captured, then exchanged for tractors from the US.

The invasion was a disaster in so many ways. Castro became stronger, with most Cubans rallying behind him. He declared himself and Cuba to be openly Communist for the first time. If anything, he became the most radical of Communists in the world, with Cuban troops eventually fighting in Angola and Ethiopia and also helping to defeat apartheid in South Africa and other white minority racist governments in Mozambique and Rhodesia.

In the short term, Castro was driven closer to the Soviet Union. His biggest decision was looking for a way to make sure the US would not invade again by asking for Soviet missiles to be stationed in Cuba. US intelligence discovered the missile sites before most missiles had been sent. Kennedy almost immediately announced the discovery, and demanded the missiles be removed, implying that not doing so would lead to war.

But **the entire crisis was unnecessary**. Kennedy complained that Soviet missiles would be able to reach almost anywhere in the US. But the Soviets faced something very similar for years. There were US missiles based in Turkey, and they could reach almost the entire USSR. **Soviet missiles could have stayed in Cuba and little would change, except politically. Kennedy and the Democrats would have suffered losses in the elections and been accused of being soft on Communism.** Thus Kennedy needlessly endangered the entire world just to avoid being seen as weak.

Both Kennedy and the Soviet leader Khrushchev stumbled along during the crisis. Had either one made the mistake of going to war, many of us would not be here. How Kennedy resolved the issue is often overlooked. **Kennedy agreed to remove US missiles from southern Italy and Turkey some months later, never admitting publicly he backed down.** Kennedy also pledged the US would not invade Cuba again.

Some Soviet leaders felt Khrushchev had been humiliated and forced him out of power two years later. Castro was angry that the US and Soviets decided the end of the crisis without him, and determined to do as he wished without listening to the USSR. The crisis affected how Kennedy's

successor, Lyndon Johnson, fought the US-Vietnam War. Johnson worried about another crisis, and so ordered the US troop buildup and bombing campaign to be gradual.

As for Kennedy, his murder allowed the Democratic Party and liberals to reinvent him.

Kennedy was turned into a man he never was. The hardline anti Communist and bumbler who started a nuclear war crisis to avoid losing elections was remade into a skilled diplomat who avoided war. There is often a tendency to not want to speak ill of the dead. Much like Reagan, JFK's admirers use his death give him credit for things he never did, and for being a man he actually was not.

## COINTELPRO

In the 1950s, J. Edgar Hoover, longtime director of the FBI, began the Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELRO. The program went after the Civil Rights Movement, anti war activists, feminists, environmentalists, Puerto Rican independence supporters, and later the Black Power, Brown Power, and Red Power movements. Activists were spied on, harassed, and targeted in numerous illegal ways.

The FBI spread rumors through the media, publishing false publications claiming to be from these groups, set up false front movements, broke into homes and offices, and forced employers and others to cause problems. FBI informers pushed organizations into crimes that could discredit their movements, gave perjured testimony, falsified evidence, and used the law to intimidate. Some were wrongfully imprisoned. Perhaps the most notorious action was the FBI sending a letter to Martin Luther King urging him to kill himself before accepting the Nobel Peace Prize or they would reveal his extramarital affairs.

To this day, the FBI and COINTELPRO are dogged by accusations they assassinated Dr. King and numerous other figures. However, in spite of conspiracy theories, there is still no credible proof of complicity.

So why wasn't COINTELPRO included? Some deaths clearly resulted from it. The Black Panthers alone suffered from dozens of assassinations under mysterious or unjust situations. Most of those deaths were from police and police or FBI informers, and COINTELPRO was clearly culpable for many deaths.

Some presidents clearly benefited from COINTELPRO, using the FBI intelligence for their own needs. The Kennedy administration, Robert Kennedy in particular, received intelligence on Martin Luther King. Lyndon Johnson asked for FBI spying on Barry Goldwater's staff, his Republican opponent in 1964.

But both the FBI and COINTELPRO were clearly under J Edgar Hoover's control, not any presidents. For over 40 years, Hoover was unchallenged, beyond the control of any president or congress. Hoover gathered intelligence on everyone, every major politician, entertainers, intellectuals, scientists, artists, activists, and public figure, including presidents. Some presidents were intimidated by Hoover. Others found it convenient to use his intelligence. Some, Nixon in particular, deeply admired Hoover. Hoover remained untouched because of fear that a president could be ruined or exposed should they try to bring him under control.

## Sterilization of American Indian Women

This is one of the least known acts of genocide in American history. **In the 1960s and 70s, the Indian Health Services, the federal agency responsible for healthcare on reservations, forcibly sterilized from between one out of four Native women to as many as two out of five**, often without even their knowledge.

Native women on public assistance were the most likely to be targeted. Often they were given a choice between continuing to receive public assistance for their children, or being sterilized. In many cases they were never told, coming in for routine procedures like getting their tonsils out and then having their tubes tied without consent.

The federal government denied these acts were happening until exposed by a series of protests from Native women, followed by lawsuits. The highest estimates are as many as 60,000 female sterilizations. Senator James Abourzek called for an investigation. The GAO, looking at only four IHS offices, found over 3,000 cases. Still, the GAO denied this was genocide. The *Straight Dope* newspaper column did as well, even when I presented them with links and articles, including by a late colleague of mine in graduate school, Jane Lawrence.

Though all the sterilizations happened when Nixon was president, there is no evidence Nixon knew of or approved the sterilization program. Nixon, recall, found it politically useful to grant a few Native demands while in office to make it appear he was not racist. (See Section Eight.) By the time sterilizations were exposed, Nixon was already on his way out of office because of the Watergate Scandal.

## Animal Rights Activists and “Eco Terrorists”

Even while conservative commentators successfully lobbied to halt intelligence gathering on right wing terrorists (See Section Seven) for three decades there have been continued to be overblown claims of “eco-terrorists,” radical environmentalists who use vandalism as a tactic. To many conservatives, any form of environmentalism is “radical.” Some of them demonize environmentalism even though as much as 80% of public agrees with its causes in most polls. Environmentalism is so mainstream, George Bush Sr. called himself the Environmental President.

Eco terrorists are generally defined as those that focus almost exclusively on property damage, including the freeing of animals by animal rights activists. This includes sabotage like pouring sugar in gasoline tanks of bulldozers, setting fires, putting metal spikes in trees in old growth forests so they cannot be cut down, and vandalism against testing laboratories using animals. Listing these tactics, one might think it inevitable that some people have died or been crippled, even accidentally.

**But the number of deaths caused by eco terrorists is zero, not one single person. With rare exceptions, such activists almost never intentionally try to kill.** More than a few environmentalists and animal rights activists are extreme and absolute pacifists when it comes to living creatures, both human and other animals. Many are vegetarian or vegan. How ludicrous is it to claim someone who will not eat an egg or use animal fats in cooking is going to deliberately try to kill people?

By the FBI's estimates, so called eco terrorists caused \$100 million in property damage in both the US and Canada. Thus the best criticisms of both eco terrorism and animal rights groups are how ineffective they are, and how they harm their own causes. For \$100 million is less than many major companies spend on public relations. Such tactics are an irritant, a slightly costly nuisance. By using violence which potentially could harm or kill, such fringe types could alienate a public which is otherwise very sympathetic to environmentalism.

If anything, the federal government has cracked down on these groups far beyond the dangers

they actually represent. More accurate labels for them would be vandals and saboteurs, not terrorists. They are somewhat comparable to antiwar activists during the US-Vietnam War who vandalized army recruiting stations and ROTC offices. Compare the death toll from vandal environmentalists, absolutely zero, to the hundreds from actual US terrorists on the far right. (See Section Seven again.)

What about presidents who cracked down on vandal environmentalists? These go back fairly far. The first federal law targeting vandal environmentalists was under Reagan in 1988. Putting metal spikes in trees was, rather bizarrely, made illegal under the Drug Act. The Animal Enterprise Protection Act targeting animal rights saboteurs was passed under George Bush Sr. in 1992. An updated version passed in 2006 under GW Bush won the support of congressmen on the left and right, co sponsored by Diane Feinstein.

One also cannot point to any president who has gone easy on them or ignored their crimes. One of the more ludicrous claims in recent years has surrounded the Unabomber, Ted Kacynski. Kacynski, by any reasonable standard, was no terrorist. He was a serial killer, with gaps as long as six years between his bombings. Terrorists have a cause. By definition, they use terror to promote or achieve that cause.

But no one knew Kacynski's supposed cause for more than a decade and a half. His motives remained mysterious to the public, his victims, and law enforcement. There was also no conceivable way his cause, a very wide anti technology hostility, could have been achieved by his bombings against university professors, lumber company and airline executives, and computer store owners. An anti technologist should have targeted power stations and factories, not almost random individuals. Compared to actual terrorists he simply was not as deadly as most. In sixteen bombings, he killed three people. He was not very competent either, much more often injuring people. Two of the deaths were the very last bombings.

Equally ludicrous was the attempt by some conservatives to equate Kacynski with either the Clinton administration or Al Gore specifically. Kacynski was anti technology, where the Clinton

administration played a huge role in promotion of internet technologies. No, Al Gore never claimed to invent the internet. That is a lie spread by opponents during Gore's run for president. But the administration did create an atmosphere very hospitable to IT companies.

The federal government's attempts to go after vandal environmentalists was so broad that some environmentalists complain of a Green Scare, a witch hunt mentality much like the Red Scares of the 1920s and 50s. This claim is half right, but half overblown. There is no wide public hysteria against environmentalism, only among a few on the fringes of conservatism. But there is definitely a very heavy handed government prosecution of vandal environmentalists.

The ideological bias of the law, prosecutors, and investigators are obvious. These vandals are prosecuted and sentenced far out of proportion to their crimes, while actual terrorists on the right wing are at times not even seriously investigated until after the fact. Yet while this prosecution is also persecution, it is not deadly. Just like the Alien and Sedition Acts and the Patriot Act, one cannot point to any resulting deaths caused by the government or presidents.

## Sanctions Against Iraq

In August 1990, George Bush Sr. ordered the US military, working with other militaries, especially the British and French, to begin to enforce UN imposed sanctions against Iraq. The UN agreed to sanctions to punish Saddam Hussein for weapons of mass destruction and insure he would not be able to reacquire them. The sanctions were kept in place from 1990 to 2003, under Presidents Bush Sr., Clinton, and GW Bush. No unmonitored commercial trade was allowed between Iraq and the outside world. The geography of Iraq made it difficult to sneak through the blockade. No oil could be sold without permission, and Iraq could not buy any goods from other nations that could have a military use. But food and medicine were specifically allowed in.

Most evidence shows the sanctions killed quite a few Iraqis, mostly children and elderly. Medicine was still very hard to get in spite of not being banned. Chlorine, used to purify water, could not be sold because of fears it could be used to make chlorine gas. Iraq was very dependent on oil. Its agriculture had declined and prior to war most food was imported.

**Estimates of the deaths ranged from 170,00 to 567,000.** The charity UNICEF estimated half a million children under five years old died. A UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, Denis Halladay, estimated 239,000. The Project on Defense Alternatives thought 170,000. Slate Explainer estimated 350,000. Columbia Professor of Nursing Richard Garfield estimated 345,000 to 530,000. Lancet medical journal had the highest estimate at 567,000.

Though there were some who claimed estimates were too high, it is almost certain there were many deaths due to sanctions. So why are both Presidents Bush as well as Clinton not listed under wartime atrocities for sanctions? All three presidents played a role in sanctions, but so did the UN. It was the UN that voted these sanctions, and a mixed military force that enforced them. The largest number of military came from the US, but the operation was a UN operation.

Not only that, **all three presidents plus the UN made efforts to avoid Iraqis suffering and**

**dying from sanctions.** Medicine and food were both allowed. Under the sanctions Iraq traded food directly for oil. Sanctions began August 1990. By August 1991, the rules altered so Iraq could sell over a billion and a half dollars worth of oil for food. By 1996, the rules changed again to allow \$5.6 billion of oil to be sold for food. Yet Iraqis clearly still starved and still died of disease when malnutrition made them vulnerable. Hundreds of thousands of children died from usually trivial illnesses like diarrhea that led to death by dehydration. What happened?

One can see who the culprit was more clearly by looking to the north. **In the UN and US protected zone for Kurds, the death rate was dramatically less, in fact lower than before the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein's regime was embezzling the money from oil.** Many feared he might be trying to rebuild his arsenal. But he never again had chemical or biological weapons, despite the false claims of GW Bush and his administration. (See Section Four.) Most of his regime were content to simply steal for themselves.

Thus the blame for the deaths goes to Saddam Hussein's regime. The only way to stop the regime from continuing to embezzle oil for food money would be to invade Iraq and overthrow them, something which, as we saw in the Second Iraq War, only led to even more deaths. In this case, these three presidents and the UN were faced with two horrifying options. The Iraqi people as well were caught in a Catch-22. The only way to end man made starvation and disease was to overthrow Saddam Hussein. But deprivation made much of the population too weak for revolt.

## Bosnia: Civil War or Genocide?

The Bosnian War began in 1992. The nation of Yugoslavia was breaking up, its six ethnic groups no longer held together by Cold War fears or a Communist dictatorship. The leader of Serbia, Slobodan Milosovic, used fear of Croats, Bosnians, and Muslims to unite Serbians and carry out warfare against these other groups.

The war lasted three years and was extremely brutal. Serbian troops and militia routinely targeted civilians in campaigns called "ethnic cleansing." Milosovic's plan was to kill one third of all Bosnians, drive out one third of Bosnians, and culturally assimilate one third. **Estimates of the death toll were from 100,000 to 200,000. Tens of thousands of Bosnian women and girls were raped,** often forced to bear their captors' children.

Why wasn't Bosnia included under genocide? After three years of little action, the UN, NATO, and the US under Bill Clinton finally began to intervene. There was intervention, somewhat successful, but not enough, certainly not early enough. There also has been a great deal of disagreement over whether this was a civil war or a genocide.

Clinton and NATO launched a series of bombings on Serbian positions. At first the bombings did little damage and only led to defiance by Milosovic, painting himself as a David taking on Goliaths. But more bombings led to Serbian forces backing down. Milosovic fell, and faced war crimes trials along with other Serbian leaders. There also were rescue efforts and quite a bit of media attention. UN peacekeepers came in, and Bosnia eventually became independent.

In the end, **UN war crimes trials only convicted Serbian war criminals for genocide for one massacre, at Srebrenica.** The debate over genocide has centered over two main questions: Were all civilians targeted or not? Were other sides in the war equally guilty?

Some argue that Serbian forces targeted only military age males. But this is clearly not the case. Rapes in particular systematically targeted females. Both older males and young children also were

frequent murder victims.

Other sides in the war definitely committed atrocities though. Croatian forces in particular carried out massacres of both Bosnians and Serbians. Bosnian forces rarely did the same, in part because they did not have the military capability to do so. Most war crimes carried out by Serbians were by Bosnian Serb militias allied with the Serbian military, with the Serbian military committing a lesser number.

The Clinton administration clearly did respond to atrocities in Bosnia. For most of three years, this was their central foreign policy concern. For the first two years they tried to work through both the UN and NATO, ironically the same criticism that many had of GW Bush for not doing in the Iraq War. The UN tried to put in place an embargo, but in 1993, Clinton tried to end the embargo so that Bosnians could defend themselves better. In 1994, the Clinton administration spent much of its time trying to convince NATO to carry out air strikes.

Finally, in 1995, the situation seemed to be worsening enough for NATO to agree. Within three weeks of the air strikes, Serbia backed down. There are many grounds for criticizing Clinton, but **there is no consensus either on his actions or on the question of genocide.**

## Bill Clinton's Pardon of Puerto Rican Nationalist Terrorists

There has always been an independence movement in Puerto Rico, one which seeks to be free of the US just as earlier they sought freedom from Spain. (See Section Seven.) Some independence activists used violence. **In the 1970s and 80s, there were six deaths from nationalist bombings in Puerto Rico and the US mainland.** That these groups were terrorists, willing to kill for a cause, is beyond doubt. Bill Clinton, in the final days of his administration, issued presidential pardons for members of sixteen members of five Puerto Rican nationalist terrorists.

Some particularly partisan Republicans blamed Hillary Clinton, arguing her husband wanted Puerto Rican votes for her to get elected as Senator of New York. In fact the pardons hurt her campaign and she denounced them publicly. Some blamed current Attorney General Eric Holder for recommending the pardons. At the time he was Assistant Attorney General and pushed for pardons when most of the Attorney General's office opposed the pardons.

The problem with objections to the pardons is that there was certainly no ignoring of terrorists' actions. The FBI and Justice Department certainly has been diligent and devoted enormous resources to tracking down, arresting, convicting, and imprisoning both groups.

Collectively, these groups committed terrorism that killed six people and wounded many others. But others committed those crimes, not the pardoned prisoners. **None of the sixteen pardoned terrorists were ever convicted of any of these murders, or physically harming anyone.** There were five different Puerto Rican nationalist terrorist groups active in the 1970s and 80s, but virtually no criminal activity since then. Of the five, four groups are inactive. Only the Macheteros remain strong, and are largely nonviolent now.

All sixteen prisoners had already served very long sentences, nineteen years each. That is far longer than is typically served by a murderer who received a life sentence, where they are usually eligible for parole after seven years. (Only about 2% of murderers receive the death penalty. Typically

the death sentence is for murder plus another felony.)

There is no doubt these were violent offenders, guilty of robbery or bomb making as well as possession of illegal weapons. But they had already served lengthier prison sentences than many murderers, and had to renounce violence of any kind in order to receive their pardons. Two had to serve additional time, and the remaining had to agree to traditional parole. None were in fact totally set free, but free with conditions much like most parolees.

**There is no evidence any of the sixteen were a continuing threat to others.** That is part of the reason that ten Nobel Laureates lobbied for their early release. The Archbishop of Puerto Rico and the Catholic Cardinal of New York City also argued for clemency. Indeed none of them have committed any violence since their release. You may disagree with the decision, as most of Congress did, and as Hillary Clinton herself publicly did when running for office.

But there is no credible claim that Bill Clinton or any other US president was lax about going after Puerto Rican nationalist terrorists. There is also no denying the sixteen were already punished. The question is whether you think sixteen years is enough for robbery or weapons charges. Or whether you think someone should be sentenced to an even longer prison sentence because some of those whose cause they associate with are guilty of murders.

## Conspiracy Theories:

### The Long List of Nonsense Many Believe With Little or Poor Evidence

The list of nonsense many conspiracists believe in is long:

Franklin Roosevelt knowing about Pearl Harbor in advance and allowing it to happen.

Chemtrails, claims that planes spray the air with chemical or biological weapons.

FEMA death camps or concentration camps.

Jewish or Zionist Conspiracies to control the world, start wars, control banking, etc.

GW Bush blamed for 9-11 deaths, not just for inaction, but as supposedly ordering the attacks by missiles, fighter planes, or controlled demolitions.

Obama care death panels, or Obama care as a supposed sign of socialism or Communism.

Vaccination scares, claims that they cause autism or other diseases.

Benghazi CIA Station deaths supposedly caused by inaction.

Numerous conspiracy theories involving assassinations of presidents and other major public figures, supposedly done by government agencies or ordered by other presidents.

Why weren't any of these above included? Because they are all crackpot nonsense with no evidence, believed by gullible people with a lot of fears but not much sense. Period.

OK, perhaps you want longer explanations. In my US history college courses I have to devote an entire lecture to pointing out all the obvious problems with these theories, mostly based on bad science. But there are already entire books debunking this nonsense. Robert Wolstedter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning or Decision*, for example, debunked the claim about Roosevelt's supposed blame for Pearl Harbor. *Popular Mechanics* devoted an entire issue to debunking the bad science behind 9-11 Truthers nonsense. The Benghazi CIA station deaths theory was debunked within the first two weeks. Not even most Republican congressmen believed it. Again, every single one of these theories had little to them to

begin with, and the evidence against them is very clear, once one gets away from the self isolating bubble many conspiracy believers live in.

Conspiracy theorists tend to be immune to things like facts, reason, and common sense. Arguing with their wave of paranoia is like trying to keep back the ocean with a toothbrush. It would require a whole series of books, so I will let others who have done so continue to try to get through to those who can be reached.

For those conspiracy believers, I only offer these two pieces of advice: Cynicism is an excuse for being too lazy to try to actually change things. Most conspiracy believers enjoy wallowing in feeling helpless.

Ironically, **conspiracy theorists are not skeptical enough.** They need to be as skeptical of sources purporting to know “the truth” as they are of governments. Making money off of conspiracy believers who are either gullible or ignorant of basic science and history is a huge multi billion dollar industry. In fact **the only credible conspiracy theories involve governments *encouraging* conspiracy theory beliefs.** Conspiracy beliefs divert their followers from doing things that might actually make a difference. It is harder to imagine a greater waste of time than obsessing over conspiracies.

## The Patriot Act

Immediately in the aftermath of 9-11, the Patriot Act was rammed through with one of the fastest votes in US history given how complex the law was. Even today, much of it is classified, making total assessment of it difficult. That the law has limited liberties is clear. We do know that records and communications of Americans are subject to more spying than ever before, phone records, emails, financial records, even for a time what one checked out of libraries, often done without warrants.

Not just President GW Bush but also Presidents Clinton and Obama bear responsibility for the Patriot Act, as do both parties. Both parties voted for it the first time in overwhelming numbers, and again to renew it. Much of the Patriot Act was planned under the Clinton administration. Obama's administration approved the act the second time.

It is not overstating to call the Patriot Act repression. So why was it not included? While repression is certainly true, pointing to deaths is far harder, especially since many of the ways the law is used are still not known to the public. The law does provide for expanding the death penalty for terrorists, but so far that has not been used. Defenders of the act claim that many lives have been saved, terrorists captured or attacks prevented. But the evidence they provide is inconclusive, often including material unrelated to the Patriot Act.

## The Congo Wars

In the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide, over one million refugees destabilized the already weak, chaotic, and desperately poor nation of the Congo. Some of the refugees actually carried out the Rwandan genocide and were fugitives fleeing punishment.

The chaos overthrew the government of longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Eventually the First and Second Congo Wars involved nine African nations, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Libya, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Some intervened for their own political or economic advantage, others seeking to end the violence. There are also over twenty different rebel groups and militias.

**The wars caused three to six million deaths.** The lower estimates do admit that five to six million deaths happened, but claim that such deaths would be “normal and expected” in such an extremely poor nation as Congo.

Why wasn't it included? There are some human rights or activist groups that describe the Congo Wars as genocide. But most observers, from the UN to the US State Department to most human rights groups and activists to most journalists, do not. Most genocides are fairly straight forward. Government A or Group A kills Group B based on hatred of B's ethnicity, religion, or nationality. But the Congo Wars involved seven nations all seeking their own advantage. Within the Congo itself there were also the government, the Rwandan genocidists, and rebel groups from several different tribes. There was no one clear group to blame.

The Congo Wars were enormously destructive, with huge loss of life. There is no evidence that any of the nine nations of multiple groups fighting for the control of the government and the nation of Congo were out to exterminate any one ethnic group. There were massacres and atrocities, but no systematic genocide. Instead there was the depressingly typical violence against civilians of many wars.

So why weren't the Congo Wars included under Deaths by Incompetence? Because many officials in governments did make an effort to end the violence. Many used all diplomatic means at their disposal, pressure, consultations, offers of peacekeepers and humanitarian aid, efforts to cut off weapons shipments. Could more have been done? Likely, yes. Especially in the aftermath of September 11 and the US being caught up in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, much of the US's attention was devoted to there. As covered elsewhere, while the decision to invade Afghanistan was perhaps justifiable (and not all agree it was) only the most ideologically blind could agree the unprovoked war on Iraq was right or necessary.

Was this lack of greater focus on Congo due to racism? Clearly not. GW Bush was an utterly incompetent president, but he never was and is not a racist, as his record shows. Secretaries of State Colin Powell and then Condoleezza Rice (both Black) did what they could for the Congo. Bush's successor Obama is Black, as is one of Obama's advisers, Susan Rice. There are no credible claims of racism for any of the senior advisers under either GW Bush or Obama. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN, is also Black, and the majority of UN member states are predominantly nonwhite countries, a large number of them African.

The Congo Wars were extremely destructive wars much like World War I in that every major power and nation involved failed to anticipate them and then was unable or unwilling to stop them once under way.

## Darfur Genocide

One of the world's most appalling recent genocides is made more disturbing by a hard to face truth. Darfur was not, and is not, logistically easy or perhaps even possible to intervene in to stop the atrocities.

The killings began on a mass scale in April of 2004, and at this writing have not stopped. A series of militias made up largely of Arab Muslim northerners is killing largely Black African Christians in the south and west. The militias are Sudanese government funded, armed, trained, and supported politically.

Numerous political leaders called the mass killings genocide, including President GW Bush and his Secretary of State Colin Powell on several occasions. Some others declined to call it genocide. Either way, it is definitely atrocities on a massive scale against noncombatants, which is both the UN and the dictionary definition of genocide.

So why didn't either president intervene in the Darfur genocide?

**Darfur is remote and not easily accessible** to any world's military except the Sudan's. Darfur is 1200 miles from the nearest seaport, one controlled by Sudan. It is 700 miles from the nearest major airport, again one controlled by Sudan, in the capital Khartoum. There are not even any paved roads into Darfur.

A rescue effort would have to get permission from the Sudanese government to land at its port or airport and send a large military force perhaps seven hundred to twelve hundred miles away. But since Clinton ordered a missile attack on Sudan in 1998, the country's leaders are not on friendly terms with the US or other western nations. **A land rescue effort might have to conquer all of Sudan itself, a country five times the size of Texas, most of it desert and much of it very mountainous.**

Once there, the military rescue effort would then have to fight against militias that know the land extremely well and are very mobile. This force would have to be supplied over extremely long

supply lines, and the lines would themselves need to be defended.

It is not hard to see that the military force necessary might easily be much larger as that invading Iraq or Afghanistan. Keep in mind some advised that 200,000 to 300,000 troops were what was required for Iraq, and Sudan is much larger. **Likely half a million troops might be needed.** US public opinion would not support such an invasion, especially after the failed quagmires in other wars. Winning public support is made even more difficult by most Americans not knowing anything about the Sudan.

What about just using air power? Again, Darfur is extremely remote. The militias are not a fixed target either. Bombing could cause them quite a bit of casualties, but probably not stop the genocide entirely. In fact, such bombing could make matters even worse. The militias may take out their anger on the people of Darfur.

What about using air power on the government of Sudan? Couldn't that pressure them to stop arming the militias? Perhaps, but Sudan has been bombed by the US before. When Clinton sent missile attacks aimed at an alleged chemical weapons factory for Al Qaeda, the factory turned out to be making medicines. Clinton's bombing killed hundreds, and by some estimates deprived the country of much of its medical needs, killing thousands indirectly. Sudan's government is not on good terms with the US anyway, and it would take quite a lot of bombing to pressure them. Sudan has little economically the west wants, and vice versa. This basically leaves diplomatic and political pressure, and Clinton's bungled bombing makes even that unlikely to work.

Of the two presidents, GW Bush has done the most, albeit still not much. In fairness to Bush and all others facing the difficulties of trying to deal with matters this horrific, in part nothing is done because there are so many limits on what can reasonably be done. Bush did condemn the genocide, and actually called it genocide. Obama, perhaps because of fear of a quagmire, has not even addressed the genocide or pressured Sudan in any way.

Partly this is because of their respective voting bases. Bush's included many conservative

Christians, and he is one himself, appalled by deaths of their fellow Christians. Many in Obama's base, which include both liberal Christians and human rights activists, are likewise outraged. But Obama has long taken pride in ignoring those in his base to his left, even openly mocking them.

Could at least humanitarian aid be offered? This has been done, largely by non-state actors. It is also interesting to note that, as often as conservatives bash Hollywood celebrities for activism (even while voting for Reagan or Schwarzenegger) those who have done quite a bit on Darfur include actors George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Don Cheadle, and Matt Damon. The four of them sponsor the charity Not On Our Watch, which funds a spy satellite to monitor for evidence of genocide. All four take advantage of their celebrity to focus attention on the genocide. Condemnation and watchfulness, perhaps diplomatic isolation, are the limits of what can be done, and it is being done.

Conclusions:

Here are **our worst presidents:**

- 1. Nixon**
- 2. Reagan**
- 3. Jackson**
- 4. Buchanan**
- 5. Polk**
- 6. Fillmore**
- 7. Clinton**
- 8. Ford**
- 9. Truman**
- 10. McKinley**
- 11. GW Bush**
- 12. Andrew Johnson**

Here are **our best:**

- 1. Lincoln**
- 2. Van Buren**
- 3. Carter**
- 4. Grant**

Those that have a mixed legacy, with actions among both the best and worst that a president could do, cannot be ranked, are only listed chronologically:

Jefferson

Franklin Roosevelt

Lyndon Johnson

Bush Sr.

Obama.

Let us look in more detail as to why, what those rankings in polls mean, and what other rankings of presidents by scholars and the public should reflect, but often do not.

## Adding Up the Numbers:

### Best vs Worst Presidents and Historians' Rankings

For all the gravity with which the presidency is written about, assessments of presidents are often at least partly based on ridiculous fluff more suitable for Hollywood than Washington. Among the criteria that presidential rankings use are leadership, accomplishments, political skill, and character. Every one of those but accomplishments are extremely vague to the point where no two people could agree on a definition. All of these assessment qualities except character are pointedly amoral. Technically, Foreign Minister Von Ribbentrop of the Third Reich was quite adept at political skill. For such amoral use of skill, he was rightly hanged at Nuremburg. There were skilled American officials, and even presidents, who committed similar crimes as Von Ribbentrop and should have faced similar punishments.

Other criteria used over the years include handling of the economy, communication, ability to compromise, foreign policy accomplishments, intelligence, imagination, family, education, and experience. For all except the economy and foreign policy, these are qualities more suited to middle management at a corporation than president. One looks in vain for heroic qualities, or even moral ones or basic decency.

For the president is not a CEO. Except for managing subordinates, the business field has some of the worst set of guidelines one could choose for political office. One's ability to turn a profit for one's self or a company has nothing to do with running a country. The two better models would be, one, running a charity. Does a president possess the abilities to run an organization designed to rescue people from disaster, poverty, disease, crime, or war?

The other model one could use should be either unions or civil rights organizations. I can already imagine many conservatives blanching at the thought. But what both outfits share are their ability to work to unite masses of people in a cause, fairer treatment for people of a class, profession, or

ethnic group. It is no coincidence that in Europe and Latin America, union organizers are far more often elected than in America, where the US tends to elect businessmen and lawyers. The practices comes from, and results in, a far more unequal society. In fact, civil rights organizers are among the few American congressmen with a history of consistently putting popular concerns above elite ones.

The first ranking of presidents by historians was done in 1948 by the venerable Arthur Schlesinger. Later surveys came from his son, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., also quite the revered figure within the profession. Both men's personas, methods, and writing styles reflect much of the profession's foibles. Both are or were nominally liberal, but the most timid, middling, and cautious form of liberalism possible. Ideologically, both were or are just barely to the left of center, and in terms of approach are conservative as in very cautious.

Most rankings of presidents by historians have not gotten much better. The *Chicago Tribune*, Sienna College, *C-Span*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the Federalist Society, *Newsweek*, and *History News Network* have all done surveys of presidential historians with fairly consistent results. At the top are the names one would expect, Washington, Lincoln, and both Roosevelts. At the second tier one finds in almost all surveys Truman, Eisenhower, Wilson, and Reagan, usually followed by Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

The two dramatic exceptions to these results, not surprisingly, are the *Wall Street Journal* and Federalist Society. As one would expect from institutions speaking solely for financial elites or their disciples, they gave higher ratings to Reagan and even GW Bush. Their most ludicrous result was GW Bush rated as the sixth greatest president of all time.

Public opinion surveys are not far different from historians. The reasoning, though, is likely different. Washington will always be near the top of the rankings, despite most Americans being unable to tell you anything he did as president beyond being the first one. Public opinions of presidents are largely recognition tests, the most famous ones plus the most recent.

For my own rankings, I am hesitant to simply rank by the greatest number of deaths and thus place a great deal of weight based on intent. Simply adding up deaths has the danger to turn any study into a simple minded obscene beauty contest in reverse. Nixon and Jackson both were parties to genocide, but Nixon's victims numbered many times more. But if your relative or ancestor was one of the victims, the trauma is no less.

Obviously malice matters more than neglect, and neglect in turn more than incompetence. Intent matters above all. Even more difficult is weighing a president guilty of horrific crimes, yet sometimes doing good. There is a separate category for such men.

Compare the best presidents as routinely ranked by presidential scholars: Washington, Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Wilson, Reagan, Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson. Sometimes Jackson and Polk make the top ten.

The worst ranked by scholars' polls, with worst at the start: Harding, Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, Pierce, GW Bush, Fillmore, Grant, Taylor, Harrison, and Tyler.

Looking at the rankings in this book, clearly the worst have to be expanded to twelve. Numbers are only part of the reason for the rankings. Genocide definitely means one should be ranked among the very worst. This is followed by; making genocide possible or ignoring genocide; atomic, biological, or chemical warfare; partial responsibility for mass deaths; and finally deaths by incompetence or ideological blindness. Not having mitigating factors of humanitarian accomplishments also affects rankings. Uncertain factors are also listed.

### **The Worst President in US History: Richard Nixon**

**Deaths directly caused by him: 512,000 to 612,000.**

Direct responsibility for 500,000 to 600,000 in the US-directed Cambodian **genocide**, partial responsibility for 1 million to 1.75 million deaths by the Khmer Rouge genocide.

Direct responsibility for at least 10,000 deaths by torture in the Phoenix Program.

Direct responsibility for over 2,000 deaths in the overthrow of the Chilean government.

**Chemical warfare**, perhaps 200,000 deaths by Agent Orange and hundreds of thousands of deaths by napalm in the US-Vietnam War.

**Partial responsibility for 1.86 million to 4.72 million.**

**500,000 to 1.5 million deaths by ideological blindness or incompetence.**

Partial responsibility for 300,000 to 3 million deaths ignored in the Bengali genocide.

3,000 Kurds killed by betrayal, creating conditions for 100,000 deaths by Hussein's genocide.

Partial responsibility for 30,000 to 60,000 deaths in Operation Condor.

500,000-1.5 million deaths by incompetence and ideological blindness in the US-Vietnam War.

Pardoning mass murderer Lt. Calley.

**Mitigated by:** Disarmament treaties with the USSR.

Biological and chemical weapons ban.

Trade with China leading to a somewhat less repressive Communist state.

Continuing and expanding civil rights and anti-poverty programs begun by Lyndon Johnson.

**Uncertain factors:** Some evidence points toward biological warfare against Cuba in the 1970s, which would have begun during Nixon's time in office. One epidemic killed over 100 Cuban children, another wiped out most pigs on the island. But Nixon's role is unknown, and the evidence is highly disputed.

### **The Second Worst President in US History: Ronald Reagan**

**Total deaths directly caused by him: 325,000.**

325,000 deaths by **genocide** in Guatemala, US sponsored Contra terrorism in Nicaragua, support for repression in El Salvador and Honduras, bombing El Salvador, and invasion of Grenada.

**Chemical warfare**, Plan Colombia spraying of herbicide glyphosate, caused unknown number of Colombian and Ecuadoran deaths

**Partial responsibility for unknown number of other deaths.**

Unknown number of deaths by ideological blindness and incompetence on the Cold War.

Unknown number of deaths by ideological blindness on deregulation and drug wars.

Selling biological and chemical weapons material to Saddam Hussein.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

**Uncertain factors:** Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's his last two years in office. How much he understood or even remembered what was done in that time is unknown.

**The Third Worst President in US History: Andrew Jackson**

**Total deaths directly caused by him: 12,500-20,500.**

12,500-16,500 deaths by **genocide** against the Five Tribes. Perhaps 4,000 Black slaves also died.

Slave trader, warfare against the Creeks as general and threatened invasion of Florida.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

**The Fourth Worst President in US History: James Buchanan**

**Partial responsibility for 620,00-800,000 deaths.**

120,000-300,000 deaths **ignored** in the California Indian **genocide**.

500,000 deaths by incompetence and ideological blindness worsening the Civil War.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

**The Fifth Worst President in US History: James Polk**

**Partial responsibility for 139,000-319,000 deaths.**

120,000-300,000 deaths by **making** California Indian **genocide possible**.

19,000 deaths by provoking the US-Mexico War including at least 1,000 civilian atrocities.

Starting the US-Mexico War expanded slavery and partly contributed to the eventual Civil War.

Slave trader.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

### **The Sixth Worst President in US History: Millard Fillmore**

**Partial responsibility for 120,000-300,000 deaths.**

120,000-300,000 deaths **ignored** in the California Indian **genocide**.

Being a presidential candidate for Know Nothing terrorists.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

### **The Seventh Worst President in US History: Bill Clinton**

**Partial responsibility for over 300,000 to 600,000 deaths.**

800,000 deaths **ignored** in the Rwandan **genocide**. Likely three quarters of the deaths could have been prevented. Even Clinton admits 300,000 could have been saved.

Unknown number caused by ideological blindness on deregulation, leading to Great Recession.

Incompetence in Somalia invasion leading to 2,000 deaths.

Incompetence leading to the deaths of 80 Branch Davidians.

Incompetence leading to greater number of deaths by right wing terrorism in US.

**Mitigated by:** Delayed North Korean development of the A-bomb by almost a decade.

Partial credit for intervention, though late and not effective at first, to stop atrocities in Bosnia.

Partial credit for the peace process ending terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Though the number of deaths Clinton ignored or caused by incompetence is more than double that of Polk or Fillmore, they did nothing good to mitigate their records.

### **The Eighth Worst President in US History: Gerald Ford**

**Partial responsibility for 20,000 deaths or more.**

200,000 deaths **ignored** in **genocide** in East Timor. Diplomatic intervention, arms embargo, and offering refuge could have saved at least one tenth.

Continuing Operation Condor begun by Nixon. Unlike Nixon we have no evidence of his direct approval, only his administration's, and his own failure to stop it.

Some would argue his pardon of Nixon adds to his poor record. But this is true for humanitarian reasons only if Nixon had been facing charges for Cambodia. Congress dropped those charges.

**Mitigated by:** Continuing arms control agreements begun by Nixon.

### **The Ninth Worst President in US History: Harry Truman**

**Direct responsibility for hundreds of thousands of deaths.**

**Atomic warfare** targeting Japanese civilians with A-bombs killed at least 200,000 and did not end the war nor intimidate the Soviets as intended.

**Chemical warfare**, an unknown but likely quite high number of Chinese and North Korean deaths by napalm in the Korean War.

Targeting civilians during World War II killed 800,000. Truman shares this responsibility with Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill.

Atomic bomb testing on Pacific Islanders.

**Deaths partly caused by incompetence and ideological blindness: Up to 7 million.**

Unknown number by incompetence and ideological blindness leading to the Cold War. The highest estimate for the Cold War is 7 million deaths. Truman did largely start the Cold War, but clearly did not continue it for most of its 40 plus years. His responsibility is shared with many.

**Mitigated by:** Civil rights accomplishments included desegregating the federal government, the US military, and defense contracting companies. Recognizing and aiding Israel.

### **The Tenth Worst President in US History: William McKinley**

**Deaths caused by war of aggression: 200,000 to over 1 million.**

200,000 to over 1 million deaths by war of aggression against Filipinos, failure to stop atrocities.

Conquest of Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Samoa as part of American empire.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

### **The Eleventh Worst President in US History: GW Bush**

**Direct responsibility for 108 deaths** by torture.

**Chemical warfare**, greatly expanding the use of the herbicide glyphosate in Plan Colombia, likely killing an unknown number of Colombians and Ecuadorans.

**Deaths caused by ideological blindness and incompetence: Over 100,000 to over 1 million.**

100,000 to over 1 million deaths by incompetence and ideological blindness in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.

1800-3000 deaths in Hurricane Katrina. Likely more than nine tenths were preventable.

Unknown number of deaths by ideological blindness on deregulation causing Great Recession.

Blocking chemical warfare treaty and nuclear free zone in the Mideast.

**Mitigated by:** Actions on AIDS in Africa saving or preventing the deaths of an unknown number, estimates from 200,000 to 5 million. These actions are themselves mitigated by the program's neglect of aid to gays, sex workers, and intravenous drug users.

### **The Twelfth Worst President in US History: Andrew Johnson**

**Deaths caused by incompetence and ideological blindness: Up to 50,000.**

Blocked law enforcement against most of 50,000 murders by racist terrorists during Reconstruction.

Pardoned Confederate traitors, who carried out the terrorism.

Unknown number of deaths by increased poverty and discrimination.

The Long Walk, forced removal of the Navajo, almost entirely happened under Johnson.

**Mitigated by:** Nothing, no humanitarian accomplishments.

**Dishonorable Mentions for Other Presidents:**

**Teddy Roosevelt**-Over 5,000 deaths building the Panama Canal.

Invasions of multiple Latin American nations.

Forced Americanization program against Puerto Ricans.

**Woodrow Wilson**-Chemical warfare, use of mustard and phosgene gas in World War I.

Deaths from internment of German-Americans and dissidents.

Invasions of multiple Latin American nations.

Forced American citizenship upon Puerto Ricans, against their unanimous opposition.

**Dwight Eisenhower**- Atomic bomb testing on Pacific Islanders.

Overthrows of elected governments in Latin America and the Mideast.

The best presidents actually have to be limited to four at most. For all presidents listed as best, the number of lives saved must greatly outweigh any failures that led to preventable deaths.

**The Best President in US History: Abraham Lincoln**

**Total number of lives saved by him: Over 4 million set free, at least 120,000 to likely millions of lives saved.**

Emancipation of over 4,000,000 Black slaves and 30,000 American Indian slaves.

Slaves had a child mortality rate double that of free people. Slavery likely would continue 15-25 more years without the Civil War. Ending slavery saved an unknown number of Black children.

Defeating the Confederacy prevented wars of aggression against the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Spain, as well as future wars against the US, saving at least 120,000 lives.

First treaty banning chemical warfare.

Pardons in the Dakota War prevented 263 Dakota deaths.

**Mitigated by:** 38 Dakota who were still executed and should at least have been fairly tried.

Failing to stop the start of the Long Walk against the Navajos.

Choosing Andrew Johnson as Vice President.

### **The Second Best President in US History: Van Buren**

**Total number of lives saved by him: 174,000 to 354,000.**

Delaying the genocide of California Indians, 120,000 to 300,000 lives saved.

Avoiding war with Britain. The War of 1812 cost 19,000 deaths.

Avoiding war with Mexico: The US-Mexico War killed 35,000.

**Mitigated by:** Carrying out the Trail of Tears, the forced removal of the Cherokee planned and put into place by Jackson and narrowly passed by Congress.

Continuing war of aggression against the Seminole, begun before Van Buren and continuing after him.

### **The Third Best President in US History: Jimmy Carter**

**Total number of lives saved by him: At least 50,000, likely over 150,000. Perhaps another 205,000 refugees rescued from Communism.**

The Camp David Accords may have saved as many as 100,000 lives from future Mideast wars.

His human rights policy directly saved at least 50,000 dissidents worldwide and helped end dictatorships in 25 countries, thus also preventing future deaths from repression as well.

The policy also contributed to ending the Cold War sooner, saving dissidents under Communism and liberating future generations.

125,000 Cubans and perhaps 80,000 Soviet Jews rescued from Communism.

Continuing arms control agreements begun by Nixon.

**Mitigated by:** Not applying human rights policies to Cambodia, or Indonesia in East Timor.

Funding and arming Mujahadeen in Afghanistan, some of whom later became Al Qaeda.

### **The Fourth Best President in US History: Ulysses Grant**

**Total number of lives saved by him: Likely in the tens of thousands.**

His Peace Policy reduced the number of battles between the US Army and Natives by greater than four fifths and ended extermination of Natives as a practice by the US government.

His efforts during Reconstruction largely ended KKK violence in Georgia and South Carolina.

**Mitigated by:** Not continuing to defend Blacks during Reconstruction.

Continuing to pardon Confederate traitors.

Those with a mixed legacy, both saving and causing many deaths, can only be grouped chronologically and not ranked. The biggest reason otherwise good presidents committed great harm was by following the advice of military experts.

### **Thomas Jefferson**

**Partial responsibility for 170,000 deaths.**

**Ignored genocide** in Haiti.

**Total number of lives saved by him: perhaps up to 238,000.**

Banning the US international slave trade may have saved up to 200,000 African lives.

Avoided war with Britain. The War of 1812 killed 19,000.

Avoided war with France. Likely a similar death rate to that of the War of 1812.

### **Franklin Roosevelt**

**Direct responsibility for at least hundreds of thousands of deaths,.**

More than 65 Japanese-Americans and Aleuts dying during internment.

Targeting German and Japanese civilians in World War II killed at least 800,000. Both Churchill and Truman share responsibility with Roosevelt for this.

**Partial responsibility for over 2 million deaths.**

Failure to save lives during the Holocaust. Of the 12 million deaths, perhaps one tenth could have been saved by Allied intervention by bombing rail lines or offering refuge.

Repression in Puerto Rico, including massacres, where FDR failed to fire those responsible.

Programs to build atomic, biological, and chemical weapons.

**Total number of lives saved by him: Entirely responsible for millions, partly responsible for tens of millions saved.**

The New Deal and Social Security saved the lives of millions by greatly limiting poverty.

Partly responsible for defeating fascism in World War II prevented tens of millions of deaths from further genocide and repression, and future wars.

The Good Neighbor Policy saved thousands of lives directly by preventing invasions, indirectly led to greater independence and self sufficiency, likely saving hundreds of thousands.

**Lyndon Johnson**

**Total number of directly deaths caused by him: hundreds of thousands.**

**Chemical warfare**, perhaps 200,000 deaths by Agent Orange and hundreds of thousands of deaths by napalm in the US-Vietnam War.

Torture in the Phoenix Program killed at least 10,000.

Invasion of the Dominican Republic killed at least 2,000.

**Deaths caused by incompetence and ideological blindness in the US-Vietnam War: 500,000 to 1.5 million.**

**Total number of lives saved by him: unknown, at least hundreds of thousands.**

The War on Poverty likely saved at least hundreds of thousands by reducing poverty rates and

preventing early deaths.

Partly responsible for the most sweeping civil rights laws in history, which saved at least hundreds of thousands of minority lives by opening opportunities and leading to self sufficiency.

### **George Bush Sr.**

**Deaths directly caused by him: over 52,000.**

Launched war of aggression against Iraq killed over 50,000.

Launched war of aggression against Panama killed 2,000 to 4,000.

Partial responsibility for unknown number of deaths by ideological blindness by deregulation and drug wars.

Pardoning terrorist Orlando Bosch.

**Total number of lives saved by him: 100,000 to 700,000.**

Rescuing Kurds in Operation Restore Hope I and II. Hussein had already killed 100,000 Kurds. Both operations provided aid to 700,000 Kurds.

### **Obama**

**Deaths directly caused by him: 1,800 to 3,200 in program of drone assassinations.**

**Total number of lives saved by him: Hundreds of thousands at least.**

National healthcare system may save as many as 30,000 lives a year. The numbers depend on how much more efforts to sabotage it there are or if the system is replaced by a better one.

Ending the Second Iraq War saved a minimum of 36,000 (UN estimate for war deaths in 2006) to as many as 100,000 Iraqis (Opinion Research Business study estimate) for every additional year of war that another president like McCain or Palin would have done.

Ending the Afghanistan War saved an unknown number. Since there are few accurate figures kept on Afghan civilian deaths, it is hard to know. **For both wars, Obama deserves only partial credit for**

**ending, with more credit due to Afghan, Iraqi, and US public opposition.**

Ending chemical warfare in Colombia, the spraying of glyphosate designed to eradicate coca, saved an unknown number of Colombian and Ecuadoran lives.

Arms control agreements reducing nuclear weapons by two thirds.

Partly responsible for ending Libyan dictatorship and their biochemical weapons program.

Partly responsible for ending Syrian biochemical weapons program.

Partly ending racist drug sentencing.

It is quite striking to see how many presidents hailed as supposed our greatest were actually among our worst, and almost as striking to see some of our most disliked among our best in saving lives. That many presidents were both best and worst says much about the power of the office, that neglect, carelessness, or lack of ideological reflection can cause mass deaths to take place. Some supposed great presidents do not make any of these three lists. Washington may be the most overrated president ever, merely a caretaker famous largely for being first.

## What Can and Should Be Done?

### The Presidency If Lives Matter More Than Ideology

For any true humanitarian, any true believer in human rights and civil rights, any true believer in the equality of all peoples, any true believers in the principles of Christ and Buddha, Mohammed and Moses, true admirers of Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez, of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Archbishop Oscar Romero, Fathers Bartolome De Las Casas and Antonio de Montesinos, Deganawidah and Vine Deloria. Susan B. Anthony and Betty Friedan, Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, Willy Brandt and Mikhail Gorbachev and Vlacav Havel, Elie Wiesel and Raoul Wallenberg and Oskar Schindler and Paul Rusesabagina and Rigoberta Menchu..

If that is you, why be a partisan party follower? Why makes excuses for wrongs done by those you once voted for? Why devote yourself to any political party, except to hold its feet to the fire and live up to higher principle? Why would any such person of good heart and intentions focus on fluff and ephemera like “leadership qualities” and supposed statesmanship? Why focus on anything but whether people will live or die because of wars threatened or prolonged or avoided or ended, or policies or politics that inflict or relieve human suffering? Why care about anything but these concerns?

That is the challenge. Get yourself or others to turn away from any abstract principle except what enables humanity to live, and live longer and better. Choose your president and any other leaders, elected or not, based solely on humanitarianism. Throw partisanship and ideology on the garbage heap, and set fire to it.

For there are too many admirers of abstract principles taken to their extreme with an utter disregard for humanity and basic decency, a lack of principles disguised as intellect. There are too many admirers of Lenin and Mao, Reagan and Nixon, Bismark and Kissinger, too many Crusaders, Communists, Libertarians, fascists, neo conservatives, and fundamentalists of many faiths. Such men are dangerous and not to be trusted, and their followers are variously to be feared, pitied for their

gullibility, and hopefully guided away from amoral near insanity.

Some actions of what is to be done are obvious. Drop any blind allegiances to any party or platform, as already said. Avoid the candidate who tries to make you feel good. The better their skill at it, the more they are to be distrusted. Avoid thinking of their appearance, charisma, likability, or lack of. Forget about ideology, unless it is constrained by something deeper. The only principles worth focusing on are spiritual, ethical, or moral. (Obviously an atheist can be every bit as moral as someone of faith, and rationality can be made to serve either high morality or amorality.) Instead focus on the most important issues, first, last, and only.

That first most important issue must be war and peace. What will they do about wars? Are they likely to start them? Are they claiming to appear to end them, but really will keep them going? This is what Kerry would have done had he been elected, kept fighting both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is also what Obama would have done had he not been forced out by Afghan, Iraqi, and to a lesser extent American opposition. Many antiwar Democrats keep getting badly used by the party leadership and get nothing for it. Most Republican leaders may be warmongers, but at least they are not hypocritical warmongers as many Democratic leaders are.

There have been far too many wars in American history. **The only just wars the US has ever fought have been just two, the Civil War and World War II.** All other US wars were unjust. America should never have gone into these wars. In most cases, aggression and invasions were begun by US elites, often using deception or force against the will of much of the public. In some cases, like World War I and the Korean War, both sides were equally villainous and the US and world would have been better off had the US stayed out. In some cases, like the US-Vietnam War and US-sponsored state terrorism and atrocities in Central America, these wars were not even fought over what elites claimed to be fighting for.

**Almost all presidents have not opposed wars unless forced to by the public.** Of more than forty presidents, Carter is the only one in all of US history that can be described as truly antiwar, and

that fact explains much of why some despise him. JFK? A hardline anti-Communist who started the Cuban Missile Crisis when he didn't need to. Wilson? His claim of being antiwar fell apart as soon as the flimsy claim of possible war with Mexico threatened his deeply ingrained white supremacy. Then he turned to persecuting those who were antiwar.

Even the presidents who were the greatest wartime leaders, Lincoln and FDR, were reluctantly going to war, pushed into it by the attacks of irredeemably evil enemies, the Confederacy and the Axis. One could make a good case for military service making it less likely a president will resort to war. Career military officers like Grant, Eisenhower, and Carter tried to end or avoid wars, though Washington was heavy handed in his use of the army. (Jackson was a militia commander, part time except during war.)

The worst of all presidents on war and peace tend to be those who have marginal military experience, and thus kid themselves they understand war. The most obvious example was dilettante Teddy Roosevelt, who bragged endlessly about a few hours on a charge up a lightly defended hill. Nixon was a liquor officer spending World War II playing poker. Reagan spent World War II in Hollywood, shooting training films. GW Bush spent the US-Vietnam War in an Air National Guard "champagne unit," one set up to keep wealthy men's sons out of war.

Americans of good conscience should reject any candidate for president who is any way inclined towards war. Too often those on the left, the center, and even the libertarian minded or pragmatic conservatives have fallen for fear mongering, false absurd claims such as imagining a nation in the Mideast or Latin America can actually be a threat to the US. **Remember, the US is essentially unconquerable.** Al Qaeda at its worst could only destroy several buildings and planes in America and the people within. The oceans, vast territory, powerful economy and resources, and an absurdly oversized military make the US a fortress beyond the dreams of any emperor or dictator.

Keep in mind the US spends almost as much on its military as the next top fourteen nations, almost as much as the entire rest of the world. Even were the US to cut that spending in half, it would

still be a bloated military budget obviously meant for aggression, not “defense.” Were the obvious lies put out about nations like Iran and Venezuela true, **there is still little real threat to the American nation, only to American empire, US corporations, and egos who worship at the altar of power.** Even genuine fanatics like North Korea's dictators are only a regional danger, not to the US.

Yet paradoxically, one must also choose presidents willing to intervene against atrocities. It is to the utter shame of FDR, Nixon, Ford, and Clinton that each of them failed to act when lives could have been saved, up to the hundreds of thousands fairly easily. The one example in recent years of a president acting as decisively and as quickly as needed was Bush Sr., rescuing Kurds at the end of the Gulf War. The reason why is obvious: the media was there. Public protests would not let him turn away. Again, it was not human rights interest which made him act, but political self interest. **US troops must only be sent to end the loss of human life, not to preserve profit nor US power nor impose US control posing as “democracy.”**

One of the oldest sayings is that the only two real issues in politics are always war or peace, and guns or butter. As political analysts have put the second question for several decades now, “It's the economy, stupid.” But that question misses the point. Most analysts miss the point because they are focused on who wins elections and not what is just, and because of that horse race mentality much of the public misses the point as well. Whether the economy is doing well is not a reason to vote for or against a president. No president can magically command the economy to do well. Not even a dictator has ever been able to do so.

The second question should instead be, what has a president done to make the lives of as many people as possible better and not worse? This includes the biggest issue of our time, inequality, for all other economic issues are part of it. Inequality and allowing poverty to continue are inherently immoral. Capitalism is a sin and an inherently irredeemably evil system, no less than Communism or fascism or feudalism or chattel slavery. Capitalism is un-Christian. Any moral person must not defend it and must work towards its end and replacement.

Margaret Thatcher, the worst British prime minister of the twentieth century, had the ludicrous slogan TINA, “There Is No Alternative” to capitalism. This is ideological blindness at its most extreme and idiotic. TINA must be answered with T triple A, “There Are Always Alternatives.” Claiming that capitalism or “free markets” are the natural state is what scholars refer to as the naturalizing tendency. Because capitalism is such a pervasive powerful system, some assume it must be natural and never ending. The same absurd argument was made about slavery only 150 years ago and about keeping women inferior only 50 years ago.

Actually capitalism is less than 400 years old, by some scholars' definition less than 250 years. Feudalism was around two to three times that long. In some parts of the US (on Indian reservations) capitalism is less than 80 years old. There are alternatives to capitalism in Scandinavia and Bolivarian nations in Latin America, mixed economies. There are even alternatives here in the US, those same Indian reservation economies that turn capitalism into something quite different. On reservations, citizens turn all their shares over to tribal government, which in turn provides all to their citizens as needed or possible. It is far from perfect, but most of its imperfections come from the infection of capitalism and Natives learning outsiders' greed. But it is a system no Wall Street broker would live by. Neither would they care for the circular, mesh, or sharing economy movements, still in their infancy.

If the moral argument will not persuade you, perhaps simple practicality, self interest, and even survival will change your mind. Inequality caused both the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Great Recession of 2007-12. Inequality caused both crises for obvious reasons. When an economy depends on wealthy elites buying and consuming, it is much more vulnerable than depending on the general public buying and consuming. Not only that, the nature of market trading has become more untenable, and international markets are little understood even by economists, bankers, and brokers, in their more honest moments. The image of the trader on the floor of the stock exchange is less and less true all the time. Now most exchanges are done online faster than any human could, at times *millions of trades per second*. This is inherently unstable and dangerous. Much like the nuclear arms race was

and like environmental crises still are, financial crises are Frankensteins. The crises of capitalism have the power to outright destroy their creators. The second great issue of American politics is thus not guns versus butter, but trying to keep butter from being spoiled by those who sell both.

Not only is capitalism immoral and dangerous, it is run by sociopaths and psychopaths. This is not hyperbole, but science. One study found CEOs as the most psychopathic profession, followed by lawyers, media personalities, and salesmen. (It may be of interest that teachers and artists have among the fewest psychopaths, alongside doctors and nurses.) The documentary *The Corporation* took a look at the personalities of corporations. If one truly regards corporations as people, their personalities are clinically sociopathic. Capitalism, its leaders, and advocates have no empathy for others. To succeed in capitalism one must be amoral and often destructive.

Folded within that second great issue of inequality is every attempt to soften the brutality of capitalism, the everyday abuses anyone not of the elites must face. These include issues like the minimum wage, union rights, anti poverty, public relief/welfare, unemployment, and that badly misused bait and switch issue, taxes. For most Americans who are not part of the elite, the tax issue is simple: Make the elites pay theirs and quit shifting the burden onto everyone else. Why do most Americans pay more Social Security tax than income tax, and the wealthy almost no SS tax? Why are most Americans paying high sales taxes but Wall Street brokers do not pay any taxes on stock trading? In most other nations, they do. In a just nation, a stock market trade would be taxed the same or more than your groceries.

Almost every issue beyond these two main issues, beyond the huge exception of individual freedoms (e.g. anti discrimination or censorship), is trivial. Many of these supposed issues exist only as Weapons of Mass Distraction. They are propaganda tools, designed to cause confusion, and most of them deserve as little attention from us as contrived controversies by pop stars to sell records.

Culture wars are probably the biggest set of issues that are a huge waste of time, aside from conspiracy theories. It is harder to think of an issue as petty or as overly and needlessly emotional than

posting the Ten Commandments on a courthouse or whether someone says Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays. Culture wars and conspiracy theories both serve the same purpose for elites. They distract people from doing things that might actually make a difference.

Combined with that, a fairly simple formula:

1. Focus on the big two issues.
2. Ignore the distractions of culture wars, conspiracy theories, and surface issues like a politician's charisma or likability. What else must be done?
3. Organize and work with others. The fiercely individualistic might not like to hear this, but relying entirely on one's self is isolating. Find others to work with. Often my students ask for advice on how to bring social change, and my standard advice is; find one issue, one you care passionately about; join those already working on it; push, push hard again, push harder yet again, as persistently and creatively as you can. Then be prepared for it to maybe take a long time. If change were easy, someone would have already done it. Susan B. Anthony fought for women's right to vote her whole life and did not live to see it. Yet we rightly honor her.

Of course, one must be informed. Choose your sources carefully. As a general rule of thumb, look for a university website first, or news analysis by professors. Professors can be fired for lying online or anywhere else, unlike every last commentator on news shows who often are rewarded for lying the most persistently, loudly, or outrageously. News corporations of any political bent cannot be trusted, not for their politics, but because their first aim is profit. Rely on nonprofit sources, those that often are licensed under creative commons, not copyrighted. Do not rely on or even listen to or watch any political ad, period. One of the most hopeful signs of the last election was that the public ignored ads. It was the most expensive political campaign in history. Yet the ads did not change people's minds. Opinions barely moved. Most people hit the mute button or clicked “skip ad.”

What about third parties? Some are among the worst possible choices for president, including the likes of racists like Buchanan and Larouche, the openly amoral like Ron Paul, conspiracy theorists

like Ross Perot and Cynthia McKinney, or celebrity stunt candidates like Roseanne Barr. Even if the candidates were better, the system is a two party monopoly, one they will never voluntarily give up. A third party may win city council or state congressman, or even Vermont senator. But historically, the only chance they have at president is when established candidates switched from the two main parties.

What if there are no good candidates? **There is nothing wrong with *not* voting.** If both are equally bad, do not waste your energy and time by endorsing either. Voting is literally the least you can do anyway, in both senses of the phrase. It is a minor thing at most, a start not an end, not a magic wand, and far from the most important thing. Far more important is using your voice to speak out, your volunteer efforts to organize, or simply being a good person who helps others. But at times one must vote for the least worst, if one is certain the other would be far more disastrous. (Of course such a judgment must be measured, based on facts, and not partisanship or hyperbolic claims.)

Part of what this book is about is not just choosing a president. It is also about not being overly reliant upon presidents for your salvation, or indeed any leader. This book has tried to show why such hero worship is almost always misplaced. Even the best presidents such as Lincoln and Carter made several huge humanitarian mistakes. It's also worth noting, both were elected as flukes, Lincoln because of electoral splits and Carter because of public disgust over recent scandals. Candidates for president are filtered out by wealthy elites long before any of us get a chance to choose them, and we must be honest about the system we live under. **Regardless of who gets into office, they will not do what is right unless the public makes them.**

I hope this guide was of interest and use to you. I welcome your comments and input. I make no claim to being anything but as flawed as we all are, and correct any errors made.

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Appendix:

## The Best and Worst Ex Presidents

Most former presidents simply lived out the remainder of their lives quietly and retired, occasionally giving speeches, writing books, or going into other businesses. Since many were already elderly, this is quite natural, not controversial. It is not reasonable to expect men in their seventies or older to do more than enjoy their final years, especially since many already had a lifetime of public office.

Obviously some presidents never retired at all. Harrison, Lincoln, McKinley, Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, and Kennedy all died or were killed while in office. Reagan was already suffering from Alzheimer's his last two years in office and thus obviously should not be considered for either best or worst ex president. Some like Polk and Lyndon Johnson did not live long after leaving office, less than six months for Polk and under three years for LBJ. Ford had actually planned to retire from Congress when he was appointed vice president and then became president.

Judging an ex president by the same criteria as a president, who lived or died by their actions or had their lives greatly improved, leads to a slightly longer list of best presidents. Strictly by looking at lives lost there is a far shorter list of worst presidents, and so the ones listed here were mostly simply very unethical. Obviously the lack of access to the power of the presidency means they have far less power to harm others. They cannot go to war, dictate the enforcement of laws, or sign laws, though because of their former position they could still influence all three. The stature of having been president does mean they still have enormous power to do good should they choose to. For the younger (in their fifties and sixties) ex presidents the question then becomes, why did they choose to do nothing? Truman, for example did little while living almost two more decades.

The best ex presidents were or are:

1. Carter 2. Hoover 3. John Quincy Adams 4. Clinton 5. Teddy Roosevelt 6. Jefferson.

The worst ex presidents were or are:

1. Millard Fillmore 2. John Tyler 3. GW Bush 4. Richard Nixon 5. George Bush Sr.

**After leaving office, Carter became the greatest humanitarian ex president of all time, and one of the greatest humanitarians in US and world history.** He founded the Carter Center, dedicated to peacekeeping, mediation, human rights, and ending global hunger, poverty, and disease. The Carter Center has monitored 95 elections in 37 nations. Their fair monitoring and other mediation efforts likely prevented or helped to prevent thirteen coups or civil wars. Carter himself directly prevented two wars. In 1994 he negotiated an agreement in Haiti that led to the dictatorship stepping down, avoiding a US invasion under Clinton. In 2007 he helped prevent a war between the two Koreas.

The Carter Center has one of the greatest records of any organization in fighting diseases, including malaria, mumps, rubella, measles, and lymphatic filariasis. Even more dramatically, Guinea worm disease dropped from 3.5 million cases per year in 1986 to almost zero today thanks to the center. The center also worked to end malnutrition by helping over 8 million farmers in Ghana use better farming techniques, seeds, and fertilizers. Carter also founded Habitat for Humanity which has built 400,000 homes, helping over 4 million people in sixteen nations worldwide acquire, reconstruct, or preserve homes.

**Jimmy Carter has likely saved millions of lives.** Carter should be compared to figures like Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, or Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross. It is doubtful there are more than fifty other individuals in all of human history who saved a comparable number of lives as Carter. Probably no other non-scientist or non-doctor has a comparable record. One cannot argue with results, and those who despise Carter, again, are mostly those who confuse being a threatening bully with being a great nation.

Herbert Hoover dedicated much of his remaining life to feeding the hungry of Europe during and following World War II. This was a lifelong pattern. During and after World War I he led efforts that fed over 10 million European children. **During World War II Hoover founded and led relief efforts for the hungry of Finland and Poland. After World War II he led relief efforts that fed 3.5**

**million German children.**

Hoover also chaired a commission to improve government efficiency, wrote books, and strongly opposed both Communism and the Korean War. Along with Carter he was truly a dedicated passionate humanitarian. Scholars debate how responsible he was for the Great Depression, but he was clearly one of the greatest ex presidents.

After leaving the presidency, **John Quincy Adams became a congressman for the next seventeen years, the most vocal and persistent critic of slavery in all of Congress.** When pro slavery congressmen passed a gag order to stop all petitions against slavery, Adams defied them again and again and again. He took pride in being the strongest thorn in the side of slave owners for almost two decades.

Clinton, together with his wife, founded the Clinton Foundation devoted to both disease prevention and poverty relief. The Clinton Foundation has helped 750,000 AIDS patients get treated. The Clinton Global Initiative claims to have helped 400 million people worldwide. Some of those claims are greatly overstated. Many of the projects and pledges gathered by the CGI were already planned or would have happened anyway. But Clinton used his stature to get commitments and gather people together. **The CGI works to end global warming, helped over 3 million people get access to green energy, helped over 5 million children get medical equipment, and treated over 30 million people for diseases.**

Teddy Roosevelt went on to become a leading voice in progressive causes for the rest of his years. In 1912 he founded the Progressive or Bull Moose Party, the most successful third party since the Republican Party. Roosevelt actually got more votes than the Republican candidate Taft, but Democrat Woodrow Wilson won. Though the Progressives broke up by next election, many of their ideas became law, including recalls, referendums, primaries, income tax, direct election of senators, votes for women, and the eight hour workday. Teddy Roosevelt's Progressives were a big influence on the New Deal of his cousin, Franklin.

Jefferson spent his final years founding the University of Virginia. He designed the curriculum and even the buildings. UV was the first US school of higher learning with innovative academic specializations and the library at its center rather than a church. It had no chapel in its early years.

The worst ex presidents did not cause anyone's deaths during their time after office, but their actions as the worst presidents often did affect their ex presidencies. The list below also includes unethical and immoral men for other reasons.

**Millard Fillmore became the only ex president to prominently support terrorism.** He ran as the candidate for the American Party, better known as the Know Nothings, anti-Catholic bigots and anti immigrant nativists. (See Section Five.) The Know Nothings killed at least 50 Catholics and often attacked churches, schools, and monasteries. To put it in perspective, try to imagine an ex president today running for a third party founded by the Ku Klux Klan or Black Liberation Army.

**John Tyler holds the dubious distinction of being the only former president to ever outright commit treason.** That does not mean treason the way some conspiracy minded types use the word to mean “things I disagree with.” He collaborated with the enemy and betrayed his country. Tyler became part of the Confederate government after being elected to the Confederate Congress, though he died before he could take office. Jefferson Davis himself spoke at the memorial, and Tyler was given an elaborate funeral by the Confederacy.

Richard Nixon, far from the claim of supporters that he “suffered,” lived an extremely well off and enviable life since being forced out of office in disgrace, even getting paid \$7 million for the David Frost interviews. Nixon spent his remaining years trying to convince journalists and commentators of his foreign policy skill, and the less knowledgeable or perceptive fell for his claims. **Nixon accepted a full pardon from Ford and thus holds the dubious distinction of being the only US ex president to admit to thirteen criminal felonies.** For the far more serious crime he committed, illegally bombing Cambodia, de facto genocide, charges were dropped. (See Section One.) (There is a ludicrous claim

online that Clinton was pardoned for draft dodging. Clinton did avoid the draft, but he did so legally.)

GW Bush has done little since retirement but paint, give speeches, and hide out from war crimes charges. There are large parts of the world he cannot travel to. **Bush has the unenviable distinction of being the first ex US president to face criminal indictments**, one that Obama will likely share in 2017. Bush had to cancel trips to Switzerland and Canada for fear of being arrested. The Center for Constitutional Rights and European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights have briefs prepared to prosecute Bush for torture should he visit any of the 147 nations who signed the Convention Against Torture.

GW Bush has also spent some time devoted to his very surreal presidential library. Where Carter and Clinton devoted their centers to charity, and his father George Bush Sr. has a conventional presidential library, the Bush Center is yet one more conservative think tank that sponsors, along with fairly conventional conservative positions, a golf tournament. One truly has to be a highly sheltered member of the elite to imagine either conservatism or golf need ex-presidential help. Even more than Nixon, GW Bush holds the record for lying the most openly, blatantly, and consistently of all ex presidents. His lying has been far less successfully received than Nixon's.

George Bush Sr., after a lifetime as an oil businessman, congressman, ambassador, vice president, and president, went back to being a businessman. The manner in which he did it was clearly unethical but unfortunately is not yet illegal. He is the only ex president to take ever advantage of classified security and intelligence briefings to make money and aid his investments. Imagine the public outcry were any other ex-federal employee to use classified information to become even wealthier.

### ***Medicine Bags and Dog Tags:***

#### ***American Indian Veteran Traditions From Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War***

As far back as colonial times, Native individuals and communities fought alongside Europeans and Americans against common enemies. This is the story of Natives whose military service defended ancient homelands, perpetuated longstanding warrior traditions, and promoted tribal survival and sovereignty. Drawing on archival records and oral traditions, this work offers the most complete account of Native veterans to date and is the first to take an international approach, drawing comparisons with Native veteran traditions in Canada and Mexico. Debunking the “natural warrior” stereotype as well as the assumption that Natives join the military as a refuge against extreme poverty and as assimilation, the reasons for enlistment are connected to the relative strengths of tribal warrior traditions within communities. This is a look at how the American military influenced American Indians and how, in turn, Natives influenced US military tactics, symbolism, and basic training.

#### ***Survivors: Family Histories of Colonialism, Genocide, and War***

A collection of immigrant students and American Indian students recounting their family members' lives surviving colonialism, border wars, civil wars, genocide, and revolutions. These include accounts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Greece, Iran, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, Rwanda, South Africa, South Korea, and Vietnam, and three Native accounts, Navajo, Pawnee, and Quechua.

***Ira Hayes and the Monument at Iwo Jima:***

***The Meaning of His Life in Native Memory and White Stereotype***

Famed as the Native flag raiser at Iwo Jima, Ira Hayes' life has been the site of competing narratives for the meaning of his time in service, post service adjustment, and early death. This book examines his portrayal in media accounts, monuments, Hollywood films, and popular songs. Native honorings of Hayes include memorials, his image on Navajo Nation medals, the American Legion post on the reservation, a powwow, and Native artists' paintings. A look at both Anglo-American stereotypes and how Native representations either contest or ignore those same stereotypes.

***Confederate Tyranny:***

***The Fearful World of a Confederate Victory***

An alternate history novel. It is 1864. The Confederate Secret Service will win the Civil War the only way the Confederacy could hope to win...by terrorism! Almost 150 years before 9-11, Confederate agents carry out biological warfare on northern cities. For three generations, the Confederacy's ever tightening dictatorship uses terror and repression against Blacks, Natives, Mexicans, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Germans, Cajuns, and women to stay in power. But the day of reckoning is coming. The Confederate alliance with "our beloved brother Adolf" will bring disaster.

***A People's History of Texas***

A history from below; The Texas You Were Not Taught About, Arabs, Asians, Atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, and Pagans in Texas; The Long Indigenous History of Texas; The Texas Republic, the Alamo, and the Texas Rangers as Myth; The Unknown Radical History of Texas; The History of Sex in Texas; The Far Right in Texas; The Future of Texas, Ending Redneck Texas and the Cowboy Myth.