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The resort to fear by systems of power to discipline the domestic population has left a long and terrible trail of bloodshed and suffering which we ignore at our peril. Recent history provides many shocking illustrations.

The mid-twentieth century witnessed perhaps the most awful crimes since the Mongol invasions. The most savage were carried out where western civilisation had achieved its greatest splendours. Germany was a leading centre of the sciences, the arts and literature, humanistic scholarship, and other memorable achievements. Prior to World War I, before anti-German hysteria was fanned in the West, Germany had been regarded by American political scientists as a model democracy as well, to be emulated by the West. In the mid-1930s, Germany was driven within a few years to a level of barbarism that has few historical counterparts. That was true, most notably, among the most educated and civilised sectors of the population.

In his remarkable diaries of his life as a Jew under Nazism — escaping the gas chambers by a near miracle — Victor Klemperer writes these words about a German professor friend whom he had much admired, but who had finally joined the pack: "If one day the situation were reversed and

the fate of the vanquished lay in my hands, then I would let all the ordinary folk go and even some of the leaders, who might perhaps after all have had honourable intentions and not known what they were doing. But I would have all the intellectuals strung up, and the professors three feet higher than the rest; they would be left hanging from the lamp posts for as long as was compatible with hygiene."

Klemperer's reactions were merited, and generalised to a large part of recorded history.

Complex historical events always have many causes. One crucial factor in this case was skillful manipulation of fear. The "ordinary folk" were driven to fear of a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy to take over the world, placing the very survival of the people of Germany at risk. Extreme measures were therefore necessary, in "self-defence". Revered intellectuals went far beyond.

As the Nazi storm clouds settled over the country in 1935, Martin Heidegger depicted Germany as the "most endangered" nation in the world, gripped in the "great pincers" of an onslaught against civilisation itself, led in its crudest form by Russia and America. Not only was Germany the prime victim of this awesome and barbaric force, but it was also the responsibility of Germany, "the most metaphysical of nations," to lead the resistance to it. Germany stood "in the centre of the western world," and must protect the great heritage of classical Greece from "annihilation," relying on the "new spiritual energies unfolding historically from out of the centre". The "spiritual energies" continued to unfold in ways that were evident enough when he delivered that message, to which he and other leading intellectuals continued to adhere.

The paroxysm of slaughter and annihilation did not end with the use of weapons that may very well bring the species to a bitter end. We should also not forget that these species-terminating weapons were created by the most brilliant, humane, and highly educated figures of modern civilisation,

crimes of Jackson and Adams "proved but a prelude to a second war of extermination against (the Seminoles)," in which the remnants either fled to the West, to enjoy the same fate later, "or were killed or forced to take refuge in the dense swamps of Florida". Today, Weeks concludes, "the Seminoles survive in the national consciousness as the mascot of Florida State University" — a typical and instructive case…

…The rhetorical framework rests on three pillars (Weeks): "the assumption of the unique moral virtue of the United States, the assertion of its mission to redeem the world" by spreading its professed ideals and the 'American way of life,' and the faith in the nation's "divinely ordained destiny". The theological framework undercuts reasoned debate, and reduces policy issues to a choice between Good and Evil, thus reducing the threat of democracy. Critics can be dismissed as "anti-American," an interesting concept borrowed from the lexicon of totalitarianism. And the population must huddle under the umbrella of power, in fear that its way of life and destiny are under imminent threat…

working in isolation, and so entranced by the beauty of the work in which they were engaged that they apparently paid little attention to the consequences: significant scientific protests against nuclear weapons began in the labs in Chicago, after the termination of their role in creation of the bomb, not in Los Alamos, where the work went on until the grim end. Not quite the end.

The official US Air Force history relates that after the bombing of Nagasaki, when Japan's submission to unconditional surrender was certain, General Hap Arnold "wanted as big a finale as possible," a 1,000-plane daylight raid on defenceless Japanese cities. The last bomber returned to its base just as the agreement to unconditional surrender was formally received. The Air Force chief, General Carl Spaatz, had preferred that the grand finale be a third nuclear attack on Tokyo, but was dissuaded. Tokyo was a "poor target" having already been incinerated in the carefully-executed firestorm in March, leaving perhaps 100,000 charred corpses in one of history's worst crimes.

Such matters are excluded from war crimes tribunals, and largely expunged from history. By now they are hardly known beyond circles of activists and specialists. At the time they were publicly hailed as a legitimate exercise of self-defence against a vicious enemy that had reached the ultimate level of infamy by bombing US military bases in its Hawaiian and Philippine colonies.

It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that Japan's December 1941 bombings — "the date which will live in infamy," in FDR's (Franklin D. Roosevelt) ringing words — were more than justified under the doctrines of "anticipatory self-defence" that prevail among the leaders of today's self-designated "enlightened States," the US and its British client. Japanese leaders knew that B-17 Flying Fortresses were coming off the Boeing production lines, and were surely familiar with the public discussions in the US explaining how they could be used to incinerate Japan's

wooden cities in a war of extermination, flying from Hawaiian and Philippine bases — "to burn out the industrial heart of the Empire with fire-bombing attacks on the teeming bamboo ant heaps," as retired Air Force General Chennault recommended in 1940, a proposal that "simply delighted" President Roosevelt. Evidently, that is a far more powerful justification for bombing military bases in US colonies than anything conjured up by Bush-Blair and their associates in their execution of "pre-emptive war" — and accepted, with tactical reservations, throughout the mainstream of articulate opinion.

The comparison, however, is inappropriate. Those who dwell in teeming bamboo ant heaps are not entitled to such emotions as fear. Such feelings and concerns are the prerogatives only of the "rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations," in Churchill's rhetoric, the "satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had," and to whom, therefore, "the government of the world must be entrusted" if there is to be peace — a certain kind of peace, in which the rich men must be free from fear.

Just how secure the rich men must be from fear is revealed graphically by highly-regarded scholarship on the new doctrines of "anticipatory self-defence" crafted by the powerful. The most important contribution with some historical depth is by one of the leading contemporary historians, John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University. He traces the Bush doctrine to his intellectual hero, the grand strategist John Quincy Adams. In the paraphrase of The New York Times, Gaddis "suggests that Bush's framework for fighting terrorism has its roots in the lofty, idealistic tradition of John Quincy Adams and Woodrow Wilson".

We can put aside Wilson's shameful record, and keep to the origins of the lofty, idealistic tradition, which Adams established in a famous State paper justifying Andrew Jackson's conquest of Florida in the First Seminole War in 1818. The war was justified in self-defence, Adams argued. Gaddis agrees

that its motives were legitimate security concerns. In Gaddis's version, after Britain sacked Washington in 1814, US leaders recognised that "expansion is the path to security" and therefore conquered Florida, a doctrine now expanded to the whole world by Bush — properly, he argues.

Gaddis cites the right scholarly sources, primarily historian William Earl Weeks, but omits what they say. We learn a lot about the precedents for current doctrines, and the current consensus, by looking at what Gaddis omits. Weeks describes in lurid detail what Jackson was doing in the "exhibition of murder and plunder known as the First Seminole War," which was just another phase in his project of "removing or eliminating native Americans from the southeast," underway long before 1814. Florida was a problem both because it had not yet been incorporated in the expanding American empire and because it was a "haven for Indians and runaway slaves… fleeing the wrath of Jackson or slavery".

There was in fact an Indian attack, which Jackson and Adams used as a pretext: US forces drove a band of Seminoles off their lands, killing several of them and burning their village to the ground. The Seminoles retaliated by attacking a supply boat under military command. Seizing the opportunity, Jackson "embarked on a campaign of terror, devastation, and intimidation," destroying villages and "sources of food in a calculated effort to inflict starvation on the tribes, who sought refuge from his wrath in the swamps". So matters continued, leading to Adams' highly regarded State paper, which endorsed Jackson's unprovoked aggression to establish in Florida "the dominion of this republic upon the odious basis of violence and bloodshed".

These are the words of the Spanish ambassador, a "painfully precise description," Weeks writes. Adams "had consciously distorted, dissembled, and lied about the goals and conduct of American foreign policy to both Congress and the public," Weeks continues, grossly violating his proclaimed moral principles, "implicitly defending Indian removal, and slavery". The