

Title: Manufacturing Consent for Extermination in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Palestine and Beyond: The Genocidal Logic of “Peace through Strength”

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Manufacturing Consent for Extermination in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Palestine and Be- yond: The Genocidal Logic of “Peace through Strength”

Tahrir Hamdi

In the Western (colonial) consciousness, it was necessary that Hiroshima and Nagasaki be atomically bombed, thus instantly killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese people (246,000, according to Adam Miyashiro (2024)), given, as Daniel McIntosh (2021) writes, summarizing Tom Lewis’s views, in his *Atomic Salvation: How the A Bomb Saved the Lives of 32 Million People*, that, “[t]he common presumption of the efficacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was offered as a final proof of how airpower—particularly against mass civilian populations—transformed the nature of war and justified the development of American strategic doctrine and the resources devoted to the construction of the nuclear stockpile and its associated delivery systems.”

Thus, we are immediately confronted by the question of who exactly is worthy of saving. According to this racialized thinking, nuclear power, then, should/must be concentrated in the hands of those who must always be saved (Western European countries and Israel, which, incidentally, does have nuclear weapons, but has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty)—the human, or, if you like, the more than human, those who are always morally justified in exterminating/annihilating hundreds of thousands of useless brown, black or yellow people—those who are not worth being saved, the obviously less than human, or, to use the phrase of the Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, the “human animals,” referring to the Palestinian population of Gaza and elsewhere inside and outside occupied Palestine. On the subject of which countries have a right to possess nuclear weapons, it is important to point out here that Iran, a non-nuclear power and a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), continues to be aggressively sanctioned by the US and Western Europe for not abiding by the strict measures imposed upon it by the racist, hegemonic Western regime.

It is indeed deeply ironic how the words “saving lives” can be used in the same phrase as the atom bomb or nuclear weapons—as Miyashiro points out, this phraseology only holds true if “Japanese and Korean lives are excluded from the calculation—if, in the logic of war, only American lives matter,” as we see in today’s Western legacy media coverage, where only Israeli lives matter.

Here we can say that we have established a direct link between the people of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Palestine—these are the less than human, or if they can be described as “human,” the descriptor “animals” must be added—these are those who can be disposed of, in order to enable the continuation of the more than human race/civilization, who populate the deservedly, and morally, nuclear armed-to-the-teeth Western, hegemonic, neo-colonial world, otherwise known as, the “free world.”

Within the historical context of occupied Palestine, this kind of complete dehumanization of the Indigenous population of Palestine has always been the case, even before the establishment of Israel in 1948. Chaim Weizmann, who became Israel’s first president, told Arthur Ruppin, the ‘head of the colonization department of the Jewish Agency’ about the Palestinians: “The British told us that there are some hundred thousand negroes [Kushim] and for those there is no value” (qtd. in Masalha 6).

In an interview with the American broadcaster ABC News in 2025, Benjamin Netanyahu pitched the “battle of good versus evil” argument to American audiences, to supposedly justify the mass extermination of whole civilian populations and maintain Western colonial planetary hegemony through genocide, including imposed starvation—that is, the intentional withholding of food and water from a civilian population—what is now being termed, euphemistically, “peace through strength,” or, the right to commit genocide (creating peace or pacifying?), through strength, or, highly destructive airpower with the capacity to instantly annihilate both people and buildings, above and beyond the destructive power used in the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In fact, speaking to Owen Jones in June 2025, the international affairs expert, Emeritus Professor Paul Rogers from the University of Bradford, had this to say about the total devastation of Gaza by Israel, using the most lethal assemblage of American weapons:

If you look at the total tonnage of weapons dropped, mainly bombs but missiles and tens of thousands of artillery shells, you get a total of something like 70,000 tonnes of explosives. Back in the Cold War days, we used to say a kilotonne is equivalent to a thousand tonnes of TNT. We are now using explosives that are much more powerful than TNT. But if we do use that figure—[70 kilotonnes of weapons dropped across Gaza](#)—Hiroshima was about 12 kilotonnes, so we are talking about the equivalent of six Hiroshimas... but because these bombs drop individually, they are spread much more, so you get an extraordinary level of devastation. It’s certainly more than Dresden, certainly more than the other 2,000 bomber raids in the Second World War.

And all of this serves to uphold the “peace through strength” equation of the colonial, racist so-called “free world,” led by the US, with the settler colony of Israel as its most prominent example. This Western hegemonic, racist, colonial mentality has given itself the moral right to deploy people-erasing bombs—tools of mass human destruction—against the Other. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of the dehumanized Palestinians, whose killing—by the hun-

dreds of thousands—is still being debated on Western television in terms of “proportionality” and the so-called “Israeli response.”

Perhaps, as an academic specialized in language, discourse analysis and literary and cultural studies, I tend to focus on the essential importance of how language and images are used in the media to manufacture consent, to use the words deployed by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988). One striking example is the term “hostage” to describe any, and all, Israelis who were taken by the Palestinian Resistance on October 7, 2023. These “hostages” could very well be, and many are, Israeli soldiers, who have already killed Palestinians by sniping at them across the border. On the other hand, Palestinians are “prisoners,” already guilty by mere naming—such a “prisoner” could be a 14-year-old boy who threw a stone at an Israeli tank, or Dr. Husam Abu Safiya, a paediatrician and neonatologist, the Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Gaza, who was arrested by Israeli forces in December, 2024, and detained without charge in Ofer Prison. Western media, and even some Arab media outlets, deploy these terms studiously and obediently, as prescribed by the Israeli genocidal regime. American and European legacy media outlets focus their attention on the pictures and names of these more than human Israeli “hostages.” On the CNN website a few days ago, all the reader had to do was tick on an Israeli “hostage” picture and read the whole life story of that Israeli “hostage,” his/her favorite food, book, love life, etc. . . . Meanwhile, the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians genocided by the Israeli killing machine remain nameless, unidentified corpses that have already been shredded into tens of pieces, but our minds have learned to accept this “fact”—the less than human do not deserve to be recognized or mourned. Our consent has been manufactured to the point of the total numbification of the human psyche.

In the above discussion, I touched upon the relationship between Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Palestine—but have yet to address the “beyond” in the title of this roundtable discussion. Can the beyond refer to the Global South? I believe it can, because populations in the Global South have long been treated as dispensable by the Western colonial hegemonic order—comprising the US, Western Europe, and Israel. These powers have already anointed themselves as the “free world,” a supposedly democratic realm in which this “free humanity” reserves the right to exterminate and annihilate those deemed less than human, at will. However, I will go one step further and say that the “beyond” can also mean all the people in this so-called “free world,” who oppose this hegemonic regime and have been awakened from their slumber (as a result of the Gaza genocide, perhaps, which has been live-streamed to the rest of the world on social media outlets) and discovered that the democracy in which they were numbed into believing is nothing more than a neo-colonial hegemonic genocidal order. In the spirit of “saving” the humanity that deserves saving, American congressmen, such as Randy Fine and Tim Walberg, Senator Lindsey Graham and Israeli Heritage Minister Amichay Eliyahu have all called for the nuking of Gaza (Miyashiro). According to Miyashiro, “[t]he frequency and flippancy with which politicians and pundits have entertained—and at times encouraged—the

nuclear destruction of Gaza has struck a nerve in Japan, where anti-war and pro-Palestine sentiment has surged.” Nuking Gaza in the spirit of A-bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for example, is presented within the context of saving Western civilization, a myth that has deeply penetrated the Western psyche with the help of various institutions (academic and otherwise) and Western legacy media.

The question remains: How can we counter/confront this Western, hegemonic, and racist mindset? How can we, as human beings, accept the notion of "saving" a supposedly superior civilization at the cost of annihilating another? How can we glorify the existence of weapons capable of eradicating entire populations in an instant? How can we justify the irrationality of permitting some countries, or entities, to possess nuclear weapons while denying others the same right? This racialized thinking must be exposed, unlearned, and unequivocally rejected. People across the globe must rise-up, boycott the Zionist entity, and protest this colonial, genocidal agenda. The Zionist state, which can only persist through the ongoing genocide and expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian people of historic Palestine, must be dismantled. Israel is not just a racist, apartheid state; it is a genocidal Zionist settler-colonial project that must be brought to an end.

In his article titled “Eighty Years after Hiroshima, calls to ‘Nuke Gaza’ shows how little we have learned,” Miyashiro does not see the rationality behind simply remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s victims without resisting this genocidal and racist way of thinking. He writes:

remembrance without resistance is hollow. To truly honour the victims of Hiroshima is to confront the political systems that treat some lives as disposable. It is to reject the dehumanisation and racial hierarchies that sustain violent military occupations—from the islands of the Pacific to Palestine.

The peoples of the world must resist—must remember and resist. The protest chant that has echoed across continents must continue to spread and grow like wildfire: **“In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinians.”**

Biography

Tahrir Hamdi is a professor of decolonial and resistance literature and theory, currently the Rector at Arab Open University in Jordan, and an associate editor at *Janus Unbound*. Her book, *Imagining Palestine: Cultures of Exile and National Identity*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2023, and her co-edited book, *Ghassan Kanafani: Selected Political Writings*, with Louis Brehony, by Pluto in 2024.

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Manufacturing Consent for Extermination

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