Spring 2021

A Historiographical and Pedagogical Pursuit of the United States in the Atomic Era

Isabel Polletta
Bard College

A Historiographical and Pedagogical Pursuit of the United States in the Atomic Era

Isabel Polletta

25 May 2021

A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

the Master of Arts in Teaching Degree, MAT Program, Bard College

Table of Contents

Synthesis Essay

On July 16, 1945, the United States successfully detonated the world's first nuclear device at its Trinity site in New Mexico. Less than a month later, on August 6, the U.S. dropped the world's first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, the U.S dropped a second nuclear bomb on the Japanese military port of Nagasaki. Japan's official surrender came on September 2, 1945, marking the end of World War Two.

The Grand Alliance formed by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union was the key to victory over Axis powers including Germany, Japan, and Italy. However, the Grand Alliance between the "Big Three" was uneasy to begin with; differences in political aims and ways of warfare put a strain on the alliance before the war had even ended. Attempts at maintaining it, even as unprecedented concerns about national security emerged in the post-Hiroshima period, became impossible. The alliance between the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union frayed as the nuclear arms race was set into motion. The U.S., having successfully developed and detonated the world's first atomic device, and adopting a military strategy of "offensive preparedness" in the post-war era, continued to develop its own nuclear program. Fearful of being "left behind," the Soviet Union and Great Britain worked to develop their own programs. The atomic era emerged in the wake of World War Two as world superpowers competed to advance their nuclear testing programs. The nuclear arms race had begun.

Tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union continued to build until 1947, when the Cold War officially began after, "The U.S. aid provided under the Marshall Plan to western Europe...brought those countries under American influence and the Soviets…[and] installed

openly communist regimes in eastern Europe."[1] Although U.S. interference with Soviet-establish communist regimes in Europe strained the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, it was not until 1949 that tensions reached an all time high, and can be linked back to two major events; the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.) and the Soviet Union's successful detonation of an atomic device. N.A.T.O., established between the U.S. and its European allies, was part of an international attempt to resist the Soviet Union's growing presence in Europe. That same year, the Soviet Union detonated an atomic device, ending the U.S.' nuclear monopoly. Two competing world superpowers now had access to nuclear weapons. The threat of Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) soon became a grim possibility.

This paper, with the United States as the primary case study, will explore how scholars have researched and written about the atomic era. Six monographs will be used to assess how scholars' points of focus and interpretive lenses have changed over time. Each author focuses on a unique topic related to the U.S. atomic era, ranging from post-war American psyche and military strategy to U.S. imperialist behaviors to a shifting focus on those affected by nuclear testing. And yet it is through their varying points of interest that one is able to see how works about the atomic era change over time. While historians are most commonly authors of monographs, it is possible to see scholars and professionals from other fields to be authors of monographs as well (this paper includes three monographs written by non-historians, a trend that demands our attention).

Monographs about the U.S. nuclear testing program can be grouped into three categories. The first type of monograph, emerging during the Cold War, focuses on the collective American

[1] "Cold War: International Politics," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed January 29, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War.

psyche and its development in the early atomic era (1945 - 1950) (known as *atomic consciousness*). The second type of monograph is not categorized by date of publication, but rather by the thematic concept of the U.S. an empire. This type of monograph focuses on themes of national security and offensive preparedness.The third type of monograph, emerging in the early 2000s, is the postcolonial monograph. Marking the most distinct shift out of the three categories, the postcolonial nuclear narrative and its content stands in sharp contrast to more nationalist and imperialist content by posing a direct challenge to earlier narratives of national security.

The first monograph discussed in this paper, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*[2] (1985), represents the scholarship on the American psyche while monographs two and three, *Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing*[3] (1986) and *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945-1947*[4] (2001), are two versions of empire-focused studies. The third monograph trend - postcolonial content - is seen in works *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands During the Cold War*[5] (2016)*, Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy*[6] (2017), and *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests*[7] (2017). Although each monograph pulls from different archives, there is an overlap in

---

[2] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
[3] Richard L. Miller, *Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).
[4] Hal M. Friedman, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945-1947* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001).
[5] Martha Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands During the Cold War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016).
[6] Keith Parsons & Robert Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[7] Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests* (Australia: The Australian National University, 2017).

source bases both within and across historiography trends even as actors of interest and main focuses change along with the historiographical lens, ranging from the American public to the U.S. military to indigenous communities.

Although the intention of this paper is not to explain reasons for the historiographic shifts in how atomic-era content is written, but rather to put out that such shifts are occurring, it is important to acknowledge that critique against the U.S. across any trend of monograph only became possible with the end of the Cold War in 1991. Before this time critique of U.S. military or political ideology was culturally unacceptable. Named the Red Scare, this anti-communist cultural and political movement began with the start of the Cold War as fears of communism, an ideology directly associated with the enemy state the Soviet Union, began to emerge. It eventually culminated into the 1950s political frenzy known as McCarthyism, the name of the period of time in American history when, "U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin produce[d] a series of investigations and hearings...in an effort to expose supposed communist infiltration of various areas of the U.S. government."[8] The McCarthy hearings, though seen as a witch hunt, unveiled a deep-seated fear of communism and, by extension, the Soviet Union. Though the climate of fear and repression began to ease in the late 1950s, the Red Scare has since influenced political debate and cultural perceptions, perhaps explaining why there is trepidation when it comes to any critique of the U.S. in earlier monographs.

Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, falls into the first trend of monographs that poses no challenge to the then-dominant American-centered narrative. The text, originally published during the Cold War

[8] "McCarthyism: American History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed January 31, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/McCarthyism.

in 1985, is centered around American thought and culture in the early atomic era which was shaped by domestic and international obsession with the nuclear arms race. The story Boyer paints of the American postwar atomic era was influenced by his personal life and relationship to nuclear testing. Not only was Boyer's childhood home of Dayton, Ohio turned into an R&D (Research & Development) grid, but his "sensitized reaction" to WWII was, he argues, the result of his membership in the Brethren Church of Christ, a denomination of German Anabaptist tradition. Boyer's pacifist beliefs and his own proximity to the atom bomb provide an example of how an individual develops their own "nuclear consciousness." However, development of the American nuclear consciousness occurred at both an individual and collective level. *By the Bomb's Early Light* explores the American public's shifting cultural response to the atom bomb over time. Boyer makes two claims: 1.) The atom bomb would remain deeply embedded in the American psyche even as 2.) A cyclical pattern of attitude towards the atom bomb emerged.

The start of the atomic era was marked by the deployment of the bomb in Japan and a symbolic "cultural contamination" that spread across the United States. Within hours of the detonation over Hiroshima in 1945, the mainstream media had carried the news to the U.S.. Radio stations, including CBS and NBC, carried it into the homes of Americans. Newspapers across the country soon followed. Boyer points to the reach of American media as leading the creation of the American nuclear consciousness as it made content about the atom bomb inescapable.

As the American nuclear consciousness grew, its influence moved from media outlets and into consumer and pop culture. Only days after Hiroshima, "burlesque houses in Los Angeles

were advertising 'Atom Bomb Dancers."'[9] "Atomic" sales campaigns found their way into the commercial realm. And in 1946, French designer Jacques Heim released a two-piece bathing suit called "Atome" (atom) at the same time General Mills Corporation promoted a collectible "Atomic Bomb Ring" for a Kix cereal boxtop and 15 cents.[10] The atomic allure transcended both age and interest. With the U.S. deploying the bomb first, it reflected a militarily strong and secure nation who achieved unparalleled technological advancements. However, this initial response was complicated by a simultaneous feeling of "atomic anxiety." Americans began to process that, not only was such destructive power achievable, but that it could be created by other countries.

Boyer observed a cycle of nuclear attitude in three distinct phases: "an early phase of anxiety, running from 1945 to the mid-1950s; a relaxation of fear in the 1960s and 1970s,...and a widening fear of atomic catastrophe in the late 1970s and 1980s."[11] Boyer speculated that a phase of passivity would complete the cycle. He was able to reflect on his prediction in 1994, when a reissue of *By the Bomb's Early Light* was released. In it, Boyer illuminated the change and continuity in nuclear politics and culture since his 1985 publication. In the immediate "volatile destabilized post-Cold War world, [the] lethal [atomic] menace could lurk anywhere, and the popular culture reflected the resulting anxieties."[12] Eventually, however, his prediction about shifting attitudes held up, "with activism giving way to another interval during which nuclear concerns seemed passé and irrelevant."[13]

---

[9] Boyer, 11.
[10] Boyer, 11.
[11] Michael Kimmage, review of *The Atomic Bomb and American Society: New Perspectives* by Rosemary B. Mariner, G. Kurt Piehler. *Reviews in American History*, 38, no. 1 (March 2010): 146, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40589759.
[12] Boyer, 12.
[13] Boyer, xi.

One year after Boyer had published his monograph, Richard Miller published his 1986 text, *Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing.* Even though there was little time between Boyer and Miller's publication, Miller's work signifies a noticeable shift in how scholars were writing about the atomic era. However, the works' temporal proximity is reflected in the authors' use of archives. Both Boyer and Miller pull from the University of Wisconsin archives and documents from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists at the University of Chicago Library. And yet each author tackles different areas of focus. Like Boyer, Miller sought to explore the consequences of nuclear testing on the U.S.. His focus, however, was on the physiological consequences rather than the social and cultural implications. *Under the Cloud* centers around experiments performed at various American test sites established by President Harry S. Truman in 1950. The need for scientific research to simultaneously counter Boyer's "atomic anxiety" and strengthen national security resulted in a series of nuclear tests both within and outside of the contiguous U.S.. During the height of the U.S. testing program (1951 - 1963), the Atomic Energy Commission (A.E.C.) was averaging one detonation per week. The consequences of such active testing cannot be understated. Not only were members of the American public and military exposed to radiation but, "every person alive during the 1950s and early 1960s lived under the atomic cloud."[14]

Miller's thesis is based on the meandering patterns of radioactive clouds, products of nuclear detonations conducted at the Nevada Test Site. Still active today, the site is approximately 1,360 square miles and home to a total of 1,021 atmospheric and underground nuclear tests. Although communities directly downwind from the Nevada test site were exposed

[14] Miller, 9.

to the highest levels of radiation, the unpredictable path of meandering nuclear clouds resulted in widespread radioactive debris across the country. Weather charts from the U.S. weather bureau create one of four rich appendices, which map out the trajectory of radioactive material from above-ground nuclear detonations. Miller also references a plethora of scientific articles from various archives to emphasize a groundbreaking 1953 discovery; there was no level of "safe" exposure to radiation. It was up to the public to protect itself. According to an A.E.C. press release, "It [was] the responsibility of the heads of families and owners of property to protect the members of their families and their property from possible radioactive fallout."[15] Heads of household were burned with the impossible task of protecting their families from an unseen and unavoidable enemy.

Adhering to a strict structure of chronology and presentation of information, Miller categorizes each atomic test by: series name, test name, detonation information, military exercises performed, and the path of the radioactive material. His thesis lacks emotional adjectives that would otherwise reveal a more "biased" interpretation of his source material. *Under the Cloud* provides a perfect example of empiricist historiography, whose four tenets include: 1.) examination and knowledge of historical evidence, 2.) impartial research, devoid of *a priori* beliefs and prejudices, 3.) an inductive method of reasoning, 4.) coherence, typically expressed in narrative.[16] Although it is highly debated as to whether or not true impartial research is achievable, Miller's work clearly observes American nuclear testing through a different lens than Boyer's even as it upholds Boyer's "nuclear cycle" theory; Miller's work represents a new

[15] Miller, 389.
[16] Anna Green & Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 15.

phase of atomic attitude, a moment of intense anxiety and fear of atomic catastrophe. However, as an author of empiricist content, Miller does not directly challenge U.S. actions. Rather, he introduces two observations consistent with Boyer's predictions that perpetuated nuclear concern. It seems like Miller is able to accomplish this feat by simultaneously comparing the U.S. program to that of the Soviet Union's. And while he includes the Soviet Union's nuclear accomplishments, he spends more time on their failures, including the Kyshtym disaster. The emphasis on the Soviet Union's failure contrasts the narrative of U.S. technical and military superiority.

Another example of an empiricist monograph is Historian Hal M. Friedman's work, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945-1947.* By 2001, not only had the atomic era come to a close, but the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 had signified the end of the Cold War. Interrogating American imperial moves became possible only after the fall of the Soviet Union whereas beforehand, any criticism directed at the U.S. government could be interpreted as harboring communist sympathies. Unlike earlier monographs, Friedman's was published long after the Soviet Union dissolved, which was what allowed him to be able to both publicly analyze and critique the United States' Cold War tactics without fear of ostracization. Unlike Miller, whose thesis reads as a more "objective" assessment of nuclear development and its unintended consequences, Friedman poses a more obvious critique, aimed at U.S. imperial tactics. He dedicates his book to his father, "who taught [him] what the traumas of the Pacific War were really all about,"[17] setting a tone of harsh analysis that unfolds throughout the monograph.

[17] Friedman, vii.

Although Miller and Friedman's monographs differ geographically, Friedman's text, like Millers, focuses on the same timeframe and takes an empiricist approach; in addition it can be categorized as imperialism history because of the emphasis on U.S. domestic military strategy, supported by sources pulled primarily from military archives. Miller, focused on nuclear testing in the contiguous U.S., pulls from archives of the U.S. Nuclear Defense Agency. Friedman relies on the U.S. Navy Operational Archives and the U.S. Air Force Archives to assess U.S.' imperial tactics in the Pacific Ocean.

Discussions about U.S. imperialist tactics soon emerged. Although Friedman does not reference Boyer directly, he confirms Boyer's cycle of atomic attitude when he writes, "it is reasonable to assume that the 1930s and 1940s was a breeding ground for strategic thinking which stressed a constant state of peacetime readiness and instant retaliation against 'enemy'' nations."[18] The focus, though through a military lens, reflects the atomic anxiety introduced by Boyer. His analysis about American strategic action in the noncontiguous U.S. as a form of westward expansion is grounded in the claim that the U.S. performed imperialist actions during WWII. Furthermore, this claim supports an even larger assertion, introduced by Amy Kaplan, that the United States has always been an imperialist force.

Amy Kaplan was an academic who worked in the field of English and American Studies. Known for her research in the socio-political sphere, Kaplan helped spearhead a wave of historical work in American history that configured the U.S. as an empire. Her text, *The Anarchy*

[18] Friedman, 3.

of Empire in the Making of the U.S.,[19] explores the "permeation of US culture with imperialist logic in the century that spans from 1840 to 1940."[20] She reveals how:

> international struggles for domination abroad profoundly shape representations of American national identity and home, and how, in turn, cultural phenomena we think of as domestic or particularly national are forged in a crucible of foreign relations.[21]

The international struggle for domination abroad can be seen in the case study of The Federated States of Micronesia, formally Micronesia.

In 1944, Micronesia was seized from Japan by the U.S. at the cost of more than 10,000 lives.[22] Using this conflict as foundation for his argument, Friedman pieces together a history of American offensive preparedness and the conquest of the Pacific Basin controlled by the U.S. Navy. He introduces a military rationale for the conquest: "unfortified islands were considered to have military potential and therefore need to be occupied by the United States in order to be denied to other powers."[23] In the summer of 1946, as the American public was "basking in the glow of victory"[24] the military began to set up camp in Micronesia. Yet, the American postwar designs on the islands contradicted the trend of the times, which was, "to decolonize and 'open' previously controlled and exploited areas."[25] This contradiction lies at the heart of Friedman's

---

[19] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of the U.S.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).
[20] Dana D. Nelson, review of *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of the U.S.* by Amy Kaplan, *A Forum on Fiction,* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 270, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1346131.
[21] Kaplan, 1.
[22] Friedman, xi.
[23] Friedman, xxvii.
[24] Miller, 75.
[25] Friedman, xii.

study, to understand how the U.S. was able to engage in westward expansion without disrupting the international consensus that imperial conquest was a thing of the past.

On July 18, 1947, an official agreement between the United States and the United Nations turned Micronesia into a trust territory. Known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (T.T.P.I.), the trusteeship allowed the United States to govern about 3 million square miles of the western Pacific, including 2,000 islands comprised of the Mariana, the Caroline, and the Marshall Islands, totaling a population of 35,000. Micronesia was designated as a United States "strategic trust" area because of its military significance which enabled the U.S. control over the region.

Friedman's topic in chapter three, "illustrating the growing American perception of the Soviet Union as the primary strategic threat in the Pacific and east Asia"[26] and chapter 7, exploring "policymakers' and planner' ideas about "the imposition of American ideals and lifestyles as strategic security measures by which to ensure postwar stability in the Pacific Basin and foster a positive internal image for the United States in east Asia,"[27] serve as direct examples of what Kaplan defines as "imperial citizenship" and "manifest domesticity."[28] However, it is more than just Friedman's topics of interest that support the notion of the U.S. as an empire. His focus on U.S. military preparedness and postwar American strategic security, supported by American military archives, confirms his position as an empiricist author.

Imperial citizenship, defined as "the blurring of domestic space and empire-building,"[29] is exemplified through the actions of Admiral Louis Denfeld, "military governor at that time,

---

[26] Friedman, xxvii.
[27] Friedman, xxix.
[28] Kaplan.
[29] Nelson, 271.

[who] gave the order that local government municipalities were to be established through elections"[30] on the Marshall Islands. Not only does this serve as an example that uphold Kaplan's argument, but it provides insight into Friedman's approach. Pulled from military archives, Friedman's work is anchored in the accounts and documents of U.S. military members thus reinforcing the tenets of an empiricist monograph introduced in Miller.

Empirical monographs tend to overshadow "less empirical" types of primary sources. As a result, "an exclusive emphasis upon the core principles of empirical epistemology may…lead historians to reject understandings of the past based upon different types of historical sources,"[31] including oral tradition and material culture. By discrediting alternative sources, empiricists can render certain sources invisible or non-usable. As a result, certain histories are ultimately rejected from the hegemony's organization of a historical event thus empirical monographs often overlook the experiences of the colonized in order to focus on the historical narrative of the colonizer. This is easily observed in Friedman's case, whose work is centered on U.S. imperialism in the Pacific Ocean as a kind of "necessary evil" in order to provide postwar strategic security. He even writes that "American strategic control of the postwar Pacific also meant ensuring 'cultural' security' in the region,"[32] which led to the eventual Americanization of islanders as discussed in his chapter "Races Undesirable from a Military Point of View: U.S. Cultural Security and Economic Policy in the Pacific Islands."[33] Miller's monograph works in a similar way; by focusing primarily on the Atomic Energy Commission (A.E.C.) and the nuclear

[30] Friedman, xiii.
[31] Green & Troup, 17.
[32] Friedman, 117.
[33] Friedman, 117.

testing program in the contiguous U.S., other experiences and historical narratives are overshadowed.

During and in the years following the Cold War, content published about U.S. military strategy and the nuclear bomb focused on American imperial aims. But, in the monographs that follow, inhabitants of the Marshall Islands and other islands within the nuclear playground are the authors' chosen historical actors. Officially known as the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Marshall Islands are in the eastern part of Micronesia and are part of what historian Stewart Firth refers to as the Pacific Ocean's "nuclear playground"[34] which included the P.P.G. along with the nuclear test sites of other western powers.

Although the decades following World War Two are described as "the age of decolonization,"[35] it is clear to see how atomic-era content was steeped with Americentrist sentiment. Atomic-era history with a postcolonial lens has only appeared in recent years. Martha Smith-Norris, a historian with a focus in U.S. Cold War history, published *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands During the Cold War* in 2016. As the title suggests, Smith-Norris explores the domination and dislocation of the Marshall Islands by the U.S. in addition to forms of resistance practiced by the islanders both during and after the atomic era.

There is an eleven year gap between Smith-Norris' and Friedman's monographs and it is during that time that a shift occurs in the type of atomic-era content being published. The most noticeable difference is the shift from an Americentric perspective to a postcolonial focus on the Marshallese. Smith-Norris' text marks a historiographic turning point; the experience of those

---

[34] Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin), 1987.
[35] Green & Troup, 320.

living in Micronesia and who were directly affected by nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean become the focal point of atomic-era history.

Although the chronological and historiographic space between Smith-Norris and Friedman seems vast, it becomes less so when she pulls from *Creating an American Lake* to set up her own claim. Pulling directly from the text, she emphasizes one of Friedman's claims, that the "future security of the United States could only be guaranteed by the complete control of Micronesia."[36] She continues to outline U.S. military rationale for the conquest over Micronesia, using context-specific concepts introduced by Friedman including Micronesia as being a strategic area"[37] and the American need for "a closed and unilateral sphere of influence."[38] Though Smith-Norris begins her monograph by outlining Friedman's argument, she doesn't stay there for long. She soon broadens the focus of Friedman's argument to establish other key figures in the western-dominated narrative; the Marshallese.

By laying out the more common imperialist perspective of the atomic era, Smith-Norris' postcolonial focus on Micronesia's inhabitants stands in sharp contrast to empiricist monographs like Friedman's. Her exploration into the experiences of the Marshallese during the atomic era begins in 1946, when the U.S. detonated its first nuclear bomb before the formal establishment of the T.P.P.I. and Pacific Proving Grounds (P.P.G.) in 1947. This raised questions about how and why the U.S. began its nuclear testing program in the area a full year before.

After the Marshall Islands became occupied by the U.S. military with the establishment of the T.T.P.I. on July 18, 1947. A nuclear test site was established only six days later. The P.P.G.

---

[36] Smith-Norris, 4.
[37] Smith-Norris, 4.
[38] Smith-Norris, 4.

was home to a total of 105 atmospheric and underwater nuclear tests and was intended for nuclear devices deemed too large and/or dangerous to detonate in the continental U.S.. Its creation resulted in the forced relocation of Marshallese communities, a topic of interest for Smith-Norris as she explores "connections among the US nuclear and missile testing programs in the Marshalls, their human and environmental costs, and the islanders' pursuit of justice through various acts of resistance."[39]

By re-examining depictions of U.S. naval and air force occupations, Smith-Norris challenges the preexisting narrative regarding the Marshallese relocation, drawing heavily from archives including those found in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, the United Nations Archives, the University of Hawai'i Mānoa at Hawai'i Hamilton Library, and National Archives in D.C.. Friedman also references the National Archives in D.C. for his monograph, although most of his source material, as previously noted, comes from military archives and largely shapes his depiction of the atomic era. Drawing from both domestic and international archives allows Smith-Norris to free his work of an American-centered lens.

Empiricists Miller and Friedman center the relocation around the theme of progress and sacrifice for the greater good as justification for the U.S.' actions at Bikini Atoll. About the evacuation to Rongerik Atoll in 1946, Friedman writes that the U.S. evacuation team, led by Navy Commodore Ben Wyatt:

> unwittingly interrupted a Sunday morning, American-style Congregational church service. After the service, Commodore Wyatt went so far as to employ a biblical analogy to convince the islanders to leave, comparing them to the "children of

[39] Smith-Norris, 10.

> Israel" whom the United States was going to lead to the "land of salvation," much as God had for the Jews!"[40]

Miller picks up where Friedman ends, writing about what happened to the Bikinians post-evacuation. He writes:

> Shortly after the evacuation, Vice Admiral William Blandy...and other officials convened a meeting with the leader of the natives, King Juda: 'The President knows the sacrifice you have made and he is deeply grateful to you for that. You have made a true contribution to the progress of mankind all over the world, and the President of the United States extends to you, King Juda, his thanks for all you have done.[41]

Smith-Norris writes that, according to the US Navy's public statements, the "natives" of Bikini were "delighted" to be "moving from their ancestral lands and enthusiastic about the atom bomb, which has already brought them prosperity and a new promising future."[42] Both Miller's and Friedman's work uphold this notion and make it clear that the U.S. was responsible for the relocation of the Marshallese. However, the evacuation was depicted to be out of necessity, for the safety of the Marshallese and, more largely, the American public. Moreover, to resist was to oppose the U.S., prioritizing one community over a nation's safety.

Smith-Norris' account of the Marshallese's forced relocation, however, challenges the wide-eyed and reverent islander narrative. Miller and Friedman rely on the account of U.S. military members to depict the mood surrounding forced evacuation. Smith-Norris complicates

---

[40] Friedman,122.
[41] Miller, 76.
[42] Smith-Norris, 45.

this portrayal with an oral account by Marshall Islander Alab Lore Kessibuki. Soon after Wyatt's presentation, the Bikinians agreed to the Americans' request. However, according to Kessibuki:

> the people consented to leave their atoll because they were afraid of the United States and "didn't feel [they] had any other choice but to obey the Americans." During World War II, the Bikinians witnessed the power of the United States firsthand and were impressed by its decisive defeat of the Japanese, which included the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[43]

Ultimately, the Bikinians had no choice but to relocate; it was impossible to compete with such a superpower as great as the United States. By including this account, Smith-Norris shifts away from an atomic-era historiography based on empiricism and moves to a postcolonial perspective. Not only is her monograph explicitly about the Marshallese, but she attempts to stay true to their experiences by including archival content free from an Americentric perspective.

Though Smith-Norris was one of the first to author a postcolonial interpretation of the atomic-era, she was not the last. In 2017, about one year after *Domination and Resistance* was released, two other monographs appeared. Like Smith-Norris' work, the other two texts centered around the previously unacknowledged experiences of minorities under Western superpowers. The first of these monographs, *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy,* was written by Keith M. Parsons and Robert A. Zaballa. While it is not unheard of for monographs to be co-authored, what makes *Bombing the Marshall Islands* so unique is that neither author is a historian by profession. Parsons is a professor of philosophy while Zaballa is a nuclear physicist

[43] Smith-Norris, 44.

and physics professor. Together they tell the story of the P.P.G. with a specific focus on Castle Bravo, the largest nuclear test in the P.P.G., as well as the tragic consequences of testing, including irradiation and the permanent displacement of many Marshallese natives.

Operation Castle commenced in 1954 and included a series of high-yielding nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Castle Bravo was the first of such series detonated on March 1, 1954, nine years after World War Two had come to an end. In addition to being the most powerful device detonated by the U.S. at the time, it was also the first of a new type of thermonuclear weapon. Castle Bravo's explosion was 2.5 times its predicted yield,[44] and the new technology also exceeded radiation predictions. The Marshallese, experiencing a loss of land and community after being moved to previously-uninhabited Rongerik Atoll 125 miles away,[45] continued to suffer under the U.S. because of horrific living conditions. Rongerik Atoll was uninhabited for a reason; extremely limited natural resources made it impossible for the Marshallese to live on the island. However, after having been forcibly relocated to Rongerik Atoll, they were unable to do anything besides depending upon imports from the U.S. to survive.[46]

By exploring Operation Castle, as well as other series performed at the P.P.G. Parsons and Zaballa reveal the complexities of events "situated in their Cold War context and explained in terms of the prevailing hopes, fears, and beliefs of that age."[47] The problem that arises from this assessment is one of passivity. The authors assert:

---

[44] Parsons & Zaballa, ii.
[45] "Marshall Islands," Atomic Heritage Foundation, accessed January 7, 2021, https://www.atomicheritage.org/location/marshall-islands.
[46] "Marshall Islands."
[47] Parsons & Zaballa, i.

> We do not adopt either the role of advocates for the victims or of apologists for the testers. Rather, we attempt to give credit where we think credit is due and do justice to the arguments of both sides.[48]

Parsons and Zaballa attempt to make an unbiased appeal for both the U.S. and the Marshallese. However the oppressor and the oppressed exist in a constant state of tension which makes neutrality nearly impossible. Perhaps influenced by their own backgrounds and training, Parsons and Zaballa try to dance around making moral judgment.

While the authors make it clear that their intent is to produce a work that is part of scholarly popular history, there are clear flaws in execution. Though they pull from Boyer's work in an attempt to place their monograph in conversation with others, their attempt falters.

Although it was the authors' intention to conduct their own interviews with Marshallese survivors, "attempts to contact Marshallese officials, both in the Marshall Islands and in the United States, got no responses."[49] It should be noted that Smith-Norris experienced the same difficulties. However, while Smith-Norris, and frankly every other monograph mentioned in this paper, uses multiple archives to support their claim, Parsons and Zaballa only pull from one, the Lewis Strauss archives at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in Iowa. Assistant Professor of History Emily Hamilton recognizes similar challenges with the lack of archival work, noting:

> a mere six documents from two boxes in the [Lewis Strauss Archives] collection [were cited]. Not only is it implausible that the remainder of the collection contained nothing of import, but there are certainly collections relevant to AEC history at the National Archives. Much of the Nuclear Testing Archive in Las

[48] Parsons & Zaballa, 6.
[49] Parsons & Zaballa, ix.

> Vegas is accessible online. And, of course, a book that purports to be completing the story of the Marshallese experience would presumably draw from archives in or related to the South Pacific.[50]

Unlike Smith-Norris, who placed the Marshallese at the center of her work, Parsons and Zaballa include a "sweeping history ranging from top American officials to the average citizen"[51] in addition to trying to "add to the historiography of the lasting environmental and cultural impact on the South Pacific and the inhabitants."[52] Overly ambitious, the authors try to cover too much ground. As a result, it seems as though *Bombing the Marshall Islands* somewhat fails to meet the criteria of a postcolonial work, which "include[s] the perspectives of the colonized, revise[s] the understanding of their experiences, and place[s] them at the centre of the historical process."[53] Perhaps it is the text's passivity, which emerges because of a focus on larger questions related to context and the historical coordinates of time and space, rather than on a particular experience, that undermines the monograph as an effective postcolonial piece.

Even so, as much as this text can be critiqued it is important to remember that this text was not designed for the well-weathered historian. Perhaps what makes this monograph so perplexing is that it minimizes the nuance of a trained historian's argument and instead focuses on engaging the layman. However, what this text lacks in nuance it makes up for in accessibility. By focusing primarily on social and cultural analysis it expands access points into atomic-era literature even though its position as a postcolonial monograph remains somewhat ambiguous.

---

[50] Emily Hamilton, review of *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy* by Keith M. Parsons, Robert A. Zaballa. *Isis,* 110, no. 4 (December 2019): 857, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/706144.
[51] Hamilton, 857.
[52] Hamilton, 858.
[53] Troup & Green, 321.

Parsons and Zaballa were not the only non-historians to write about the power and influence of western superpowers. In the same year that *Bombing the Marshall Islands* was published, Pacific Islands journalist and researcher Nic Maclellan released *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests.* In a deviation from the previous five monographs, Maclellan's focus is not on the U.S. nuclear testing program but on Britain's. Britain's nuclear program did not come to fruition until years later in 1952, becoming the third country to develop and test nuclear weapons after the Soviet Union and the U.S.. Even though Britain was a few years behind in the nuclear race, it followed the U.S. lead to test its nuclear weapons in the Pacific. For fifty years, between 1946 and 1996, "the islands of the central and south Pacific and the deserts of Australia were used as a 'nuclear playground' to conduct [over] 315 atmospheric and underground nuclear tests,"[54] at ten different sites. The main focus of Maclellan's work is about the Grapple tests, part of a hydrogen bomb series. Although Maclellan does not reference any of the previous monographs, his work should feel familiar to Smith-Norris' text. The experience of the Marshallese was not unique, and reflected greater patterns of minority subjugation and imperialism by Western nations.

Following the same pattern of conquest performed by the U.S. in 1946 and 1947, British military personnel and scientific staff travelled to the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in the central Pacific in 1957 to begin the United Kingdom's nuclear program. In contrast to the U.S. territorial expansion following World War Two, the British Empire crumbled. Even so, there are striking similarities in the executions of the U.S. and U.K. nuclear testing program. Much like the relocation of Bikinians and other Marshallese communities mentioned in both

[54] Maclellan, 1.

Smith-Norris and Parsons and Zaballa's monographs, the local Gilbertese population was relocated for the testing program.[55] Not only does Maclellan's work confirm an imperialist agenda, identifiable in one of his main arguments, that the 50 years of nuclear testing in the Pacific "left economic and social legacies as well as environmental contamination,"[56] but his observation about how "successive British governments...downplayed concern about radioactive fallout from the [nuclear] tests"[57] underscores a larger theme of government secrecy surrounding testing. Furthermore, this "lack of concern", or perhaps inability to comprehend, the physiological complications associated with radioactive fallout is reminiscent of Miller's monograph about revealing the scale of physical and environmental damage caused by fallout.

Grappling with the Bomb, draws on multiple sources including secondary texts and archival documents. One such archive includes the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Kansas. This archive is also included in Friedman's and Smith-Norris' work. Interestingly, all postcolonial monographs in this text pull from this archive, with the exception *Under the Bomb.* Furthermore, In addition to preexisting material, Maclellan mentions how "new interviews and archival research were undertaken in Fiji, Australia, Japan, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati."[58] What separates Maclellan's monograph apart from others is his focus on oral history. He captures "personal testimonies that are not recorded in the British literature on Operation Grapple or in standard histories of New Zealand, Fiji and Kiribati."[59] Majority of Maclellan's evidence comes from first-hand interviews with survivors who witnessed the hydrogen bomb tests, which is

[55] Maclellan, 3.
[56] Maclellan, 7.
[57] Maclellan, 7.
[58] Maclellan, 343.
[59] Maclellan, 9.

significant because, "on a topic like nuclear strategy, the bureaucratic language of the written record tends to mute the reality of thermonuclear terror that is the essence of nuclear weaponry."[60]

Historian John Tosh explains that "oral evidence is treated as a primary source analogous to the documentary record, enjoying the same privileged status,"[61] a status beneficial to Maclellan's work because it provides credibility to minority members and their experiences otherwise overlooked by the hegemony in the process of creating a nation's "official" history. Maclellan accomplishes this feat through careful documentation of witness accounts from surviving Operation Grapple participants. Many of these participants identify themselves as survivors, scientists, veterans, and campaigners.[62] And even though "historical reality comprises more than the sum of individual experiences,"[63] it is through Maclellan's work that he is able to add to a complex relationship between the state, actors of the state, and those affected.

Another one of Maclellan's nods to postcolonial literature is his inclusion of women in his work. He writes:

> Most histories of the British H-bomb also ignore the contribution of women. Operation Grapple was a largely masculine affair, but the archives of the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) revealed letters and reports from Mary and Billie Burgess, the only two English women on Christmas Island in 1956–57, living amongst thousands of young servicemen.[64]

---

[60] Maclellan, 10-1.
[61] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 263.
[62] Maclellan, 344.
[63] Tosh, 270.
[64] Maclellan, 12.

The female perspective of Operation Grapple, though small, is significant because it allows Maclellan to incorporate both a gender and postcolonial analysis to his work. He notes how official histories obscure any nontraditional historical lens and how "the oral history gathered for this book is a small contribution to the growing body of personal testimony by nuclear survivors" [65] including women,[66] which suggests the intentional inclusion of a gendered element throughout the text.

Gender history "has usually been conceptualized within national boundaries,...often at the level of the community"[67] as seen in chapters 10 (The WVS Ladies) and 7 (The Mothers). However, it is not uncommon for gender and postcolonial content to intersect because "postcolonial history, like gender history, takes as its starting point the marginalization or dispossession of a large category of people in the past. But its scope is much wider...Postcolonial history is...intrinsically global"[68] in contrast to the more confined parameters of gender history.

The global component of postcolonial history is visible in the parallel experiences of those who experienced the U.S. and U.K. nuclear testing programs. The similarities in rationale, secrecy, and physiological and environmental impact have started to reveal the true damage of nuclear testing on both a community and national level. The purpose of this paper is not to compare and contrast the U.S. nuclear testing program to the U.K., but to point out a shift in the type of historiographic content about the atomic era. A narrative about the U.S.-as-empire during World War Two and the atomic-era has now shifted to a postcolonial history that complicates a western narrative of national security. The three "waves" of monographs include a cultural

---

[65] Maclellan, 13-4.
[66] Maclellan, 14.
[67] Tosh, 239.
[68] Tosh, 239.

analysis, a strictly empiricist interpretation based on imperialist tendencies, followed by a postcolonial analysis in direct response.

> Boyer writes that even in a post-Cold War era:
>
> nuclear reality seems destined to remain a protean force, raising new and troubling issues and stirring uneasily in memory. And so long as it does, it will continue to have not only political implications but cultural and intellectual ramifications as well.[69]

In the 21st century, his words hold true. Even though the last nuclear test performed by the U.S. was in 1992, nuclear reality remains at the forefront of the Western consciousness. As historiography has evolved, so has the narrative of the atomic era. Though it is impossible to predict the future; the reality of M.A.D. remains a legitimate fear, suggesting that the post-war atomic era will remain a fixation for the historian and layman alike.

[69] Boyer, xii.

Primary Documents

"10 More Marshalls Atolls Are Seized by U.S. Forces"

On April 4, 1944, New York Times journalist Robert Trumbull wrote that the United States had successfully seized 10 ***atolls*** *from Japan in an area of the Pacific Ocean now known as the Federated States of Micronesia. Even though World War Two would not end for another year, the U.S. capture of the atolls would prove valuable both during and after the war. In addition to the islands becoming a strategic U.S. military base, they would later serve as weapons testing sites. In 1946, one year after WWII ended, the United States military would use the islands as its base for a nuclear testing program in the Pacific Ocean.*

PEARL HARBOR, April 3 — Ten more atolls in the Marshall Islands have been occupied by United States forces, Pacific Fleet headquarters announced today. These and Wotho, whose seizure was announced on March 12, were taken after the capture of Kwajalein, Eniwetok and Majuro Atolls in February.

United States forces have established American sovereignty...where a small amphibious force, including Marines, were welcomed by natives with gifts.

"Most of the atolls," Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's announcement said, "were taken without resistance. Light opposition from others was quickly overcome. We took some prisoners." No further details were given.

United States forces now hold fourteen atolls in the Marshalls, with the Japanese still in possession of [others]...These atolls have been bombed almost daily for more than four months and are not considered to offer any serious threat to our holdings in the area.

Trumbell, Robert. "10 More Marshall Atolls Are Sized by U.S. Forces." *New York Times,* 4 April 1944, pp. 1, 10. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1944/04/04/96576142.html?pageNumber=1.

“The Strange People From Bikini; Primitive they are, but they love one another and the American visitors who took their home”

On March 31, 1946, Lt. E.J. Rooney of the United States Navy published an article in the New York Times. In the article, Rooney recalls his encounters with Bikini Atoll inhabitants. He also discusses the evacuation from Bikini Atoll to neighboring Rongerik Atoll. Bikini Atoll was home to multiple nuclear weapons tests, codenamed Operation Crossroads, which took place in July of 1946. Bikini and other atolls in the Marshall Islands became part of the United Nations Pacific Trust Territory, under the jurisdiction of the United States, in 1947. What soon becomes clear is that the U.S. began testing before it had legal jurisdiction over the island.

Bikini Island…is a crescent-shaped shelf of coral of about 1/20th the area of the Pentagon Building in Washington. Though covered with vegetation and life-sustaining trees, it is now, except for a strange tribe called “atom bomb people,” uninhabited. Juda, the magistrate of the island, his twelve elders and the other 150-odd residents have gone to neighboring Rongerik Atoll to await the results of atom (bomb) vs. atoll. From the Rongerik beach, about 109 miles away, they may be able to see the great ball of fire as it spirals up over Task Force 1. No one, not even the evacuees, doubts that it will ruin their island. But no mere atom bomb may be expected to change the way of life of these ancient people.

These people are less impressed by white magic than some of us might have expected and they have displayed little intention of becoming “bamboo Americans.” American love of efficiency and haste is a source of amusement rather than inspiration…

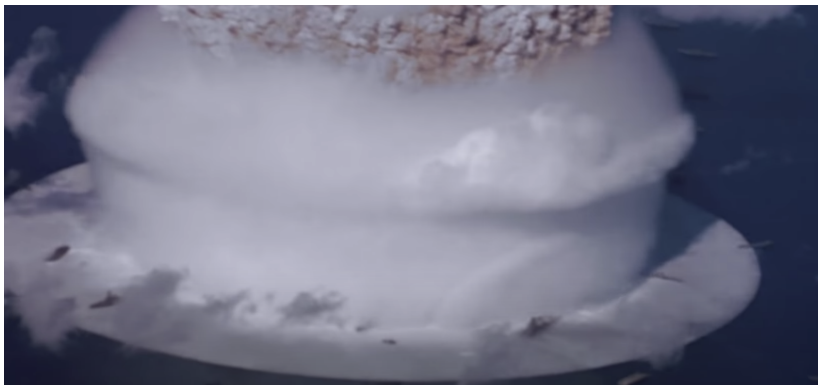
Aftermath: What of Bikini Atoll after Operation Crossroads? Task Force 1 leaders are confident that it will still be around after history’s greatest explosion, but they’re not altogether sure in what form - perhaps looking a bit like a post-invasion. As for Juda of Bikini and his people, now living on Rongerik atoll, they will probably be repatriated if they insist on it, though United States military authorities say they can’t see why they would want to: Bikini and Rongerik look as alike as two Idaho Potatoes.

Rooney, L.t. E.J. ““The Strange People From Bikini; Primitive they are, but they love one another and the American visitors who took their home.” *New York Times,* 31 March 1946, pp 100, 118. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/03/31/94051519.Html?PageNumber=118.

On March 17, 1946, The U.S. military forced inhabitants of Bikini Atoll to relocate to Rongerik Atoll, about 100 miles away. The move sparked nation-wide interest; an article with the following image was taken by photographer Carl Mydans and published in LIFE magazine on 25 March, 1946. The atoll, once inhabited, would serve as a test site for a set of nuclear tests in what is now known as Operation Crossroads. The relocation of the Bikinians would not be the last. Within two years, they were forced to move again after realizing that Rongerik Atoll could not sustain them.

Bikini Natives Leaving for Rongerik (1946)
National Museum of American History
Paper (overall material)
14 in x 11 in; 35.56 cm x 27.94 cm, 1946
Carl Mydans
Marshall Islands: Bikini & Kili, Bikini Atoll

The Baker shot was the second of two nuclear tests performed in Operation Crossroads. An underwater nuclear test, this detonation was one of the first publicly recorded nuclear detonations performed by the United States. Weapons testing in the Marshall Islands was often confidential, but "Atomic Tourism" (watching an atomic detonation from afar) was common at the Nevada Test site. Additionally, live military practices often accompanied the nuclear explosions in order to "prepare," both mentally and physically, soldiers who might be deployed in the wake of a nuclear detonation. The full video, which is about 7 minutes long, can be found on Youtube via the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy6-ZKWCoH0&ab_channel=atom central. The video is part of a larger feature-length film published by a group known as "Atom Central," directed/produced by Peter Kuran. Kuran traveled throughout the U.S. in order to locate footage (it is not clear what archives he accessed). Below are a selection of stills from the video that capture the scope of the explosion. Note the various naval ships in the path of the blast.




TRINITY AND BEYOND 70
70thanniversarytribute.vhx.tv


TRINITY AND BEYOND 70
70thanniversarytribute.vhx.tv

“Bikini Aftermath”
October 3, 1947, Page 24

This article, published in the New York Times on October 3, 1947, does not have an author. It does, however, document the various relocations of the Bikini natives from one atoll to another over the years. From Bikini to Rongerik to Ujelang, the article reveals the difficulties faced by the Binkians as they were repeatedly moved from one atoll to the next by the U.S. Navy.

That is not a pleasant story from Pearl Harbor about king Juda and the other 165 former residents of Bikini Atoll. Uprooted from their island home to make room for a test of the atom bomb that promises us either a new world or possibly none at all, they were resettled hurriedly on smaller, more barren Rongerik Atoll, where they have been living for more than a year and what an investigator calls defeat, frustration and poverty. Now they are to be moved to another atoll, Ujelang, even farther away from the original island group. The atom bomb brought the Bikini people no brighter tomorrow.

Admiral Denfield said that when he discovered last February that conditions were unsatisfactory he ordered that “something be done to aid them.” Some food was sent in to supplement their diet and an effort made to find them a more hospitable new home. But an unconsciously long time has been taken. They need land where they can grow their own breadfruit and other vegetables, and where they can fish and have chickens and pigs and live as they did on Bikini.

The Bikini people deserve a lot more than they have been given by the richest country in the world. The debt can never be fully paid. It apparently is not possible now, and it may never be possible, to return them to Bikini, where they undoubtedly would like to go. It is hoped that Ujelang will prove almost as good. If it doesn’t, then another effort should be made. And in the meantime our Navy will go out of its way to see that everything is done that can be done to make some comfortable. That apparently has not been the case during the last year. Perhaps the current publicity will make Navy officials more conscious of their responsibility.

“Bikini Aftermath.” *New York Times,* 3 October 1947, p. 24. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1947/10/03/87820235.html.

What follows is an excerpt from the1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The treaty, established in 1949, is an alliance between the United States and other countries that border the North Atlantic Ocean. The treaty was created in response to the perceived threat of communism emerging in the post WWII era, in particular, to provide security against the perceived threat of the Soviet Union. The full document can be found at https://www.nato.Int /cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

Article 5
The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security .

Article 6
For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack:

- on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France 2, on the territory of Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;
- on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer

---

American Foreign Policy 1950-1955
Basic Documents (Volume 1)
Department of State Publication 6446
General Foreign Policy Series 117
Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 195

The first Soviet nuclear bomb test took place on August 29, 1949 and was discovered with U.S. spy planes detected radioactivity. Shortly after, President Truman released a statement to the public about the Soviet Union having built and detonated a nuclear bomb. This was one of two major events in 1949 that increased tensions between the U.S. and The U.S.S.R. during the Cold War.

Statement by the President
Released to the press
by the White House
September 23

I believe the American people, to the fullest extent consistent with national security, are entitled to be informed of all developments in the field of atomic energy. That is my reason for making public the following information.

We have evidence that within recent weeks an atomic explosion occurred in the U.S.S.R.

Ever since atomic energy was first released by man, the eventual development of this new force by other nations was to be expected. This probability has always been taken into account by us.

Nearly four years ago I pointed out that "Scientific opinion appears to be practically unanimous that the essential theoretical knowledge upon which the discovery is based is already widely known. There is also substantial agreement that foreign research can come abreast of our present theoretical knowledge in time." And, in the Three-Nation Declaration of the President of the United States and the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and of Canada, dated November 15, 1945, it was emphasized that no single nation could in fact have a monopoly of atomic weapons.

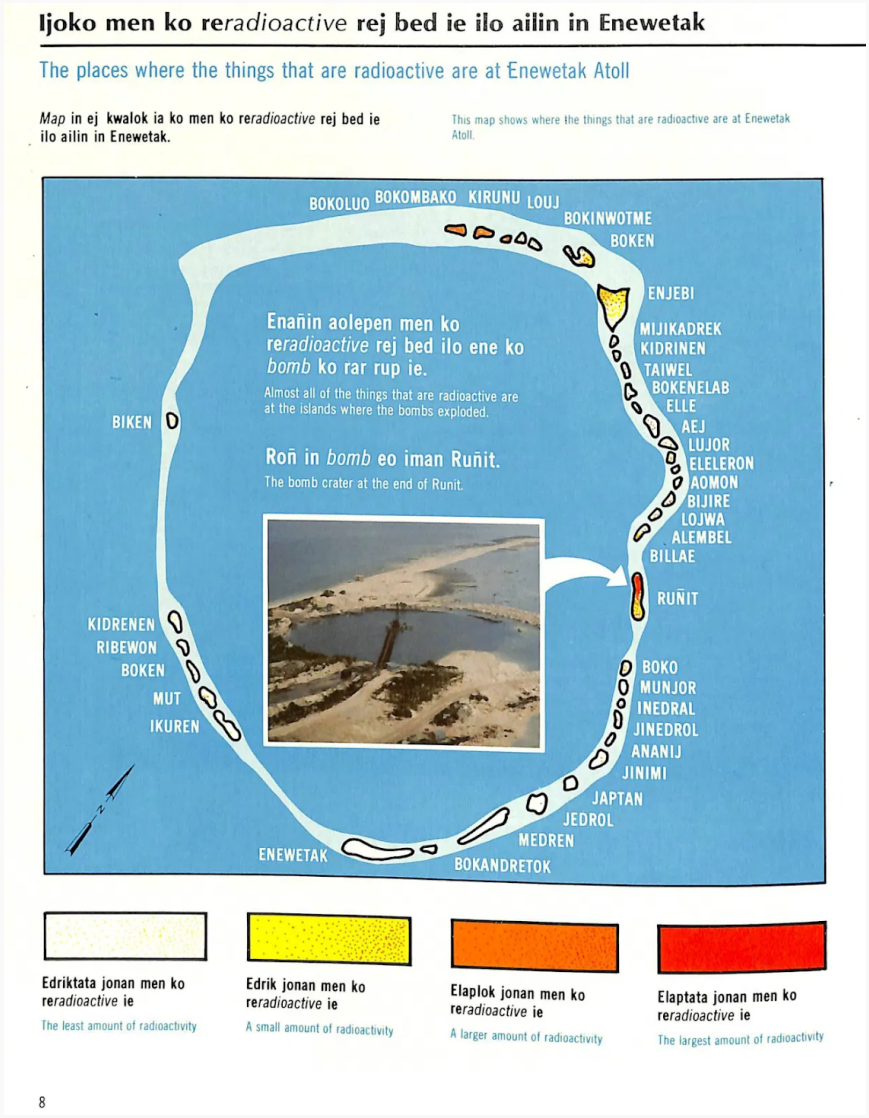
This recent development emphasizes once again, if indeed such emphasis were needed, the necessity for that truly effective enforceable international control of atomic energy which this Government and the large majority of the members of the United Nations support.

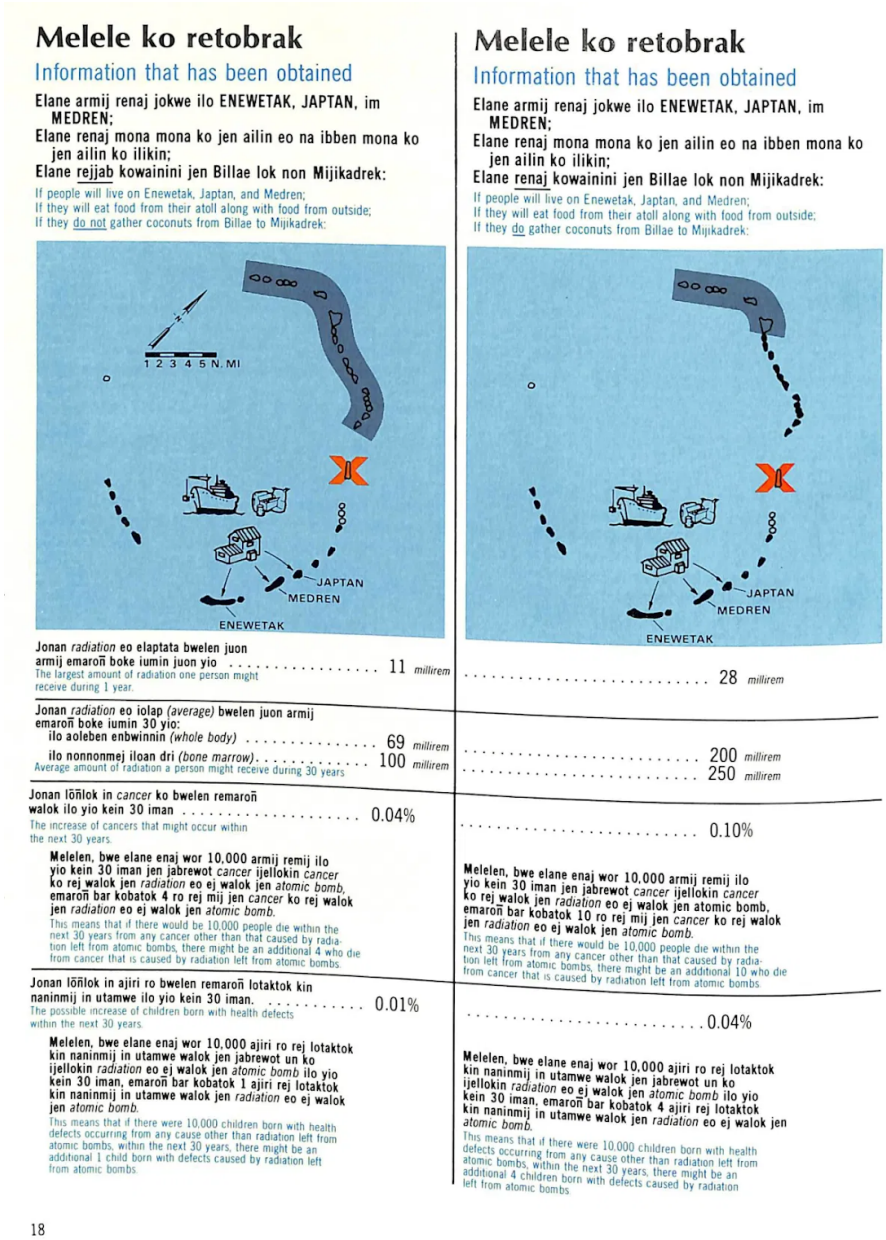
“Statement by President Truman in Response to First Soviet Nuclear Test,” September 23, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XXI, No. 533, October 3, 1949. http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134436.

This image was captured in 1951 during the viewing of an Operation Greenhouse atomic bomb test in the Marshall Islands. By 1951, it was common practice for select members of the U.S. military or political body to observe the detonation of atomic devices in the Marshall Islands. Based on this, it is plausible to assume that the people in the image are high-ranking military personnel or politicians who were invited to view the detonation of a bomb for one reason or another.

VIP observers are lit up by the light of an atomic bomb: Operation Greenhouse (1951)
https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/an-aging-army
659 x 463
Enewetak Atoll

The following documents are a selection of recently declassified material regarding Operation Enewetak (1977 - 1980). One folder of declassified material contained The Enewetak Atoll Today, a booklet published by the Department of Energy (D.O.E.) in September 1979. The booklet contains a plethora of information, written in both Ebon (the Marshallese language) and English, about the Marshall Islands including its chronology, photographs, maps, and drawings. Two pages from the booklet (8 and 18) feature radiation maps of Enewetak Atoll. The map on page 8 includes a photo of the Hartack I Cactus crater being repurposed as a radioactive debris/soil dump site. The map on page 18 depicts "best case" scenarios for radiation exposure for natives returning back to Enewetak Atoll.





Melele ko retobrak

Information that has been obtained

Elane armij renaj jokwe ilo ENEWETAK, JAPTAN, im MEDREN;
Elane renaj mona mona ko jen ailin eo na ibben mona ko jen ailin ko ilikin;
Elane rejjab kowainini jen Billae lok non Mijikadrek:

If people will live on Enewetak, Japtan, and Medren;
If they will eat food from their atoll along with food from outside;
If they do not gather coconuts from Billae to Mijikadrek:

1 2 3 4 5 N. MI

JAPTAN
MEDREN
ENEWETAK

Jonan *radiation* eo elaptata bwelen juon armij emaroñ boke iumin juon yio . . . . . 11 *millirem*
The largest amount of radiation one person might receive during 1 year.

Jonan *radiation* eo iolap *(average)* bwelen juon armij emaroñ boke iumin 30 yio:
ilo aoleben enbwinnin *(whole body)* . . . . . 69 *millirem*
ilo nonnonmej iloan dri *(bone marrow)* . . . . . 100 *millirem*
Average amount of radiation a person might receive during 30 years

Jonan lōñlok in *cancer* ko bwelen remaroñ walok ilo yio kein 30 iman 0.04%
The increase of cancers that might occur within the next 30 years.

Melelen, bwe elane enaj wor 10,000 armij remij ilo yio kein 30 iman jen jabrewot *cancer* ijellokin *cancer* ko rej walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb*, emaroñ bar kobatok 4 ro rej mij jen *cancer* ko rej walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb*.
This means that if there would be 10,000 people die within the next 30 years from any cancer other than that caused by radiation left from atomic bombs, there might be an additional 4 who die from cancer that is caused by radiation left from atomic bombs.

Jonan lōñlok in ajiri ro bwelen remaroñ lotaktok kin naninmij in utamwe ilo yio kein 30 iman. 0.01%
The possible increase of children born with health defects within the next 30 years.

Melelen, bwe elane enaj wor 10,000 ajiri ro rej lotaktok kin naninmij in utamwe walok jen jabrewot un ko ijellokin *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb* ilo yio kein 30 iman, emaroñ bar kobatok 1 ajiri rej lotaktok kin naninmij in utamwe walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb*.
This means that if there were 10,000 children born with health defects occurring from any cause other than radiation left from atomic bombs, within the next 30 years, there might be an additional 1 child born with defects caused by radiation left from atomic bombs.

Melele ko retobrak

Information that has been obtained

Elane armij renaj jokwe ilo ENEWETAK, JAPTAN, im MEDREN;
Elane renaj mona mona ko jen ailin eo na ibben mona ko jen ailin ko ilikin;
Elane renaj kowainini jen Billae lok non Mijikadrek:

If people will live on Enewetak, Japtan, and Medren;
If they will eat food from their atoll along with food from outside;
If they do gather coconuts from Billae to Mijikadrek:

JAPTAN
MEDREN
ENEWETAK

. . . . . 28 *millirem*

. . . . . 200 *millirem*
. . . . . 250 *millirem*

. . . . . 0.10%

Melelen, bwe elane enaj wor 10,000 armij remij ilo yio kein 30 iman jen jabrewot *cancer* ijellokin *cancer* ko rej walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen atomic bomb, emaroñ bar kobatok 10 ro rej mij jen *cancer* ko rej walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb*.
This means that if there would be 10,000 people die within the next 30 years from any cancer other than that caused by radiation left from atomic bombs, there might be an additional 10 who die from cancer that is caused by radiation left from atomic bombs.

. . . . . 0.04%

Melelen, bwe elane enaj wor 10,000 ajiri ro rej lotaktok kin naninmij in utamwe walok jen jabrewot un ko ijellokin *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb* ilo yio kein 30 iman, emaroñ bar kobatok 4 ajiri rej lotaktok kin naninmij in utamwe walok jen *radiation* eo ej walok jen *atomic bomb*.
This means that if there were 10,000 children born with health defects occurring from any cause other than radiation left from atomic bombs, within the next 30 years, there might be an additional 4 children born with defects caused by radiation left from atomic bombs.

18

The Enewetak Atoll Today. Department of Energy, September 1979, pp. 8, 18. National Declassified Center, https://declassification.blogs.archives.gov/2018/12/07/operation-enewetak/.

“Events on Rongelap”

There are very few oral histories recounting, firsthand, nuclear detonations in the Marshall Islands. For her 2000 doctoral dissertation Dr. Holly Barker interviewed, translated, and recorded stories of nuclear survivors. In 1994, and 1999, Dr. Barker interviewed Bobo, a Rongelapese who survived a nuclear detonation while on the atoll. In the interview, Bobo recounts episodes that occurred near the atoll in the 1940s.

I was living with my parents and some other family members on an islet across the reef from the main island where we had gone to make copra. On that March morning, my father woke me while it was still pitch dark to cross the reef with some of my friends to the main island to buy some coffee, flour and sugar.

There were four of us, three girls and one boy. Well, we were in the middle of the reef between the two islands when the whole of the western sky lit up. It seemed like it was afternoon, not 5 o'clock in the morning. The color went from bright white to deep red and then a mixture of both with some yellow. We jumped behind big rocks on the reef. We were too afraid to decide whether to run back to the small island or to run across the reef to the main island.

It was the boy who finally pushed us to run to the main island. Just as we reached the last sandbank, the air around us was split open by an awful noise. I cannot describe what it was like. It felt like thunder but the force from the noise was so strong that we could actually feel it. It was like the air was alive.

We ran the last bit to the island. Everything was crazy. There was a man standing outside the first hut staring at the burning sky. A couple of us threw ourselves onto his legs; the others ran into his hut where they threw themselves onto his wife who was trying to come outside to see what was happening.

That afternoon, I found my hair was covered with a white powder-like substance. It had no smell and no taste when I tried tasting it.

Nearly all the people on Rongelap became violently ill. Most had painful headaches and extreme nausea and diarrhea. By the time of our evacuation to Kwajalein, all the parts of my body that had been exposed that morning blistered and my hair began to fall out in clumps. I just had to run my fingers through it and they would come out full of dust.

Barket, Holly M (2000). *Collisions of History and Language: Nuclear Weapons Testing, Human Environmental Rights Abuses, and Cover-Up in the Republic of the Marshall Islands* (Publication No. 3035440.) [Doctoral Dissertation, American University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Textbook Critique

I researched the historiography of the United States' nuclear testing program during the Cold War Era. Historian and senior lecturer Martin F. Holly writes, "one of the central characteristics of the Cold War discourse has been the use of dichotomies. Such dichotomies included good/evil, capitalist/communist."[70] With this in mind, I am interested in how secondary school textbooks portray the United States as a nuclear superpower. For this section of the A.R.P. I will be analyzing a section of Vivian Berstein's 1997 *World History and You* textbook.

Chapter 17 of Bernstein's textbook, "Restructuring the Postwar World," introduces its readers to the Atomic Era in a section titled: "The Cold War and A Divided World: Nuclear Threat." The title alone enforces Holly's notion of the "Cold War dichotomy," which is perpetuated in the ensuing written material. The section begins by alluding to, but not explicitly mentioning, the Grand Alliance formed between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain during WWII. Additionally, it notes the tension and likely impossibility to maintain the alliances as a result of ideological and political conflict and the growing possibility of nuclear war as both the U.S. and the Soviet Union developed their nuclear arsenals.

The first paragraph of the textbook sets up the technological tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union by highlighting atomic bomb developments in both countries. It states, "The United States already had atomic bombs,"[71] but "as early as 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its own atomic weapon."[72] It is clear that the textbook aims to show how "the superpowers had both

---

[70] Martin H Folly, review of *Cold War Dichotomies* by James E. Cronin, Richard M. Fried, Michael J. Hogan, Joseph M. Siracusa. *Journal of American Studies,* 34, no. 3 (December 2000): 503, http://www.jstor.com/stable/ 27556862.
[71] Bernstein, Vivian. *World History and You: The Complete Edition*. (Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1997), 479.
[72] Bernstein, *World History and You*, 479.

become nuclear powers."[73] Given the focus on the back and forth, increasing developments and ensuing tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, it comes as a surprise that the term Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) is not explicitly mentioned. Although, M.A.D. is alluded to in the section title, "Nuclear Threat."

Mirroring the first paragraph's structure, the second paragraph focuses on the construction of the hydrogen bomb. The textbook provides context to the difference between an atom bomb versus a hydrogen bomb. A hydrogen bomb, "would be thousands of times more powerful than the [atom]-bomb."[74] Unlike the atom bomb, the hydrogen bomb's "power came from the fusion, or joining together, of atoms, rather than from the splitting of atoms, as in the A-bomb."[75] Keeping consistent in its presentation of the nuclear race, the textbook mentions how, in November 1952, "the United States successfully tested the first H-bomb. By August of the following year, the Soviets had exploded their own thermonuclear weapon."[76] While the textbook provides a surface level depiction of nuclear threat emerging during the Cold War, the constant oscillation between the U.S. and Soviet Union's nuclear innovations perpetuates a binary approach to understanding the Cold War. This leads me to my main critique, which is focussed solely on the U.S. nuclear testing program in an attempt to more accurately portray, and ultimately deconstruct, the moralistic lens of the United States' actions during the Atomic Era.

Although the two paragraphs provide a surface level overview of the different types of nuclear technology developed and tested by the U.S. during the Atomic Era, adding more information about *where* and *when* U.S. nuclear testing took place would create a more nuanced

---

[73] Bernstein, *World History and You*, 479.
[74] Bernstein, *World History and You*, 480.
[75] Bernstein, *World History and You*, 480.
[76] Bernstein, *World History and You*, 480.

understanding of the country's relationship to nuclear testing. It would benefit the reader to know where the U.S. tested its nuclear weapons, and how people everywhere were affected by nuclear fallout during the Atomic Era.

New Textbook Entry

In the wake of World War Two, The Grand Alliance between The United States, The Soviet Union, and Great Britain became strained. In particular, ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the United States, along with the production of nuclear weapons, fractured the relationship. This ultimately led to the Cold War. The Cold War officially began in 1947, when ideological and geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. came to a head. By then, the Soviet Union had built its own unclear testing program, and the threat of a nuclear war became more likely. As the U.S and Soviet Union raced to build and better their own nuclear devices, Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) became a very real possibility. M.A.D. occurs when opposing sides engage in nuclear warfare, resulting in a mutual and complete annihilation of one another.

The reality of M.A.D. became even more likely in November 1952, when the United States successfully detonated the world's first hydrogen bomb, or H-bomb. According to official counts, the H-bomb was one of around 1,054 nuclear tests conducted by the U.S. during the Atomic Era. The Atomic Era, also known as the Atomic Age, began in 1945, with the creation and detonation of an atom bomb, and continues into the present day.The bomb was part of a test performed by the U.S. at the New Mexico *Trinity* test site on July 16, 1945. The Atomic Era was marked by nuclear innovation, including not just the creation of the atom bomb but also of the hydrogen bomb.

Within 7 years of the *Trinity* test, the U.S. had created a nuclear bomb 1,000 more powerful than the atom bomb. This was because, unlike the atom bomb, the hydrogen bomb's power came from the fusion, or joining together, of atoms, rather than from the splitting of atoms. The hydrogen bomb was one of 105 nuclear devices detonated in the Pacific Proving Grounds.

The United States had two main nuclear test sites. The first, and more commonly known, test site is the Nevada Test Site (N.T.S.). The N.T.S. is located in Nevada, which is part of the contiguous U.S., meaning it is part of the 48 U.S. states in North America. The N.T.S. served as the primary nuclear testing site between 1951 - 1992. It's popularity can be seen in mainstream culture, including the 2008 film, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Over 900 nuclear tests were conducted there. However, larger (and often more dangerous) nuclear weapons tests were performed at the Pacific Proving Grounds (P.P.G.).

The P.P.G. is the second main nuclear test site in the U.S., and is located in the Pacific Ocean. It is around 140,000 square miles and includes parts of the Federated States of Micronesia, in particular, the Marshall Islands. Even though nuclear devices are no longer tested there, the P.P.G. is still active today. The islands were originally controlled by Japan, but were seized by the U.S. in 1944. Once WWII ended in 1945, the U.S. and the United Nations (U.N.) worked to place the Federated States of Micronesia, including the Marshall Islands, under U.S. jurisdiction. This was accomplished in 1947, when the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (T.T.P.I) was created, designated as a "strategic area" for the U.S because of its geographic proximity to Japan. This meant the U.S. had complete jurisdiction over the area including those who lived on the Marshall Islands. It is important to note that the U.S. began conducting nuclear

testing in the area in 1946, a year before it had the legal authority to do so. Though this may have provided the U.S. with the innovative edge during the Cold War, it was often at the expense of the local inhabitants. Many Marshallese did not know about the nuclear tests performed by the U.S., and were frequently relocated by the U.S. military to atolls far away. However, because of the number of tests and the unpredictability of nuclear fallout, relocation did not always work as intended.

When a nuclear detonation occurs, the residual radioactive material from the explosion is shot high into the air. It spreads out over a large area before eventually falling back down to earth. The residue, known as nuclear fallout, usually looks like dust or ash. It can also mix with rainwater and fall to earth during rainstorms. And while it has no taste or smell it is far from harmless. Exposure side effects can include radiation poisoning, miscarraige, cancer, even genetic mutations. As a result of nuclear testing at the P.P.G,. many Marshallese were unknowingly exposed to dangerously high level radioactive fallout. While the harsh circumstances of the Marshallese cannot be matched, it is interesting to note that given the number of nuclear tests performed both in and outside of the contiguous U.S., almost every person in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s was exposed to some amount of nuclear fallout.

Bibliography

Bernstein, Vivian. *World History and You: The Complete Edition.* Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1997. 479-480.

Boyer, Paul. *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Firth, Stewart. *Nuclear Playground*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

Folly, H. Martin. Review of *Cold War Dichotomies* by James E. Cronin, Richard M. Fried, Michael J. Hogan, Joseph M. Siracusa. *Journal of American Studies,* 34, no. 3 (December 2000): 503-508. http://www.jstor.com/stable/ 27556862.

Friedman, Hal M. *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945-1947.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Green, Anna & Kathleen Troup. *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory.* Manchester: Manchester Manchester University Press, 1999.

Hamilton, Emily. Review of *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy* by Keith M. Parsons, Robert A. Zaballa. *Isis,* 110, no. 4 (December 2019): 857-858. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/706144.

Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of the U.S.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Kimmage, Michael. Review of *The Atomic Bomb and American Society: New Perspectives* by Rosemary B. Mariner, G. Kurt Piehler. *Reviews in American History*, 38, no. 1 (March 2010): 145-152. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40589759.

Maclellan, Nic. *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests.* Australia: The Australian National University, 2017.

Nelson, Dana D. Review of *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of the U.S.* by Amy Kaplan. *A Forum on Fiction,* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 270-272. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1346131.

Miller, Richard. *Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing.* New York: The Free Press, 1986.

Parsons, Keith & Robert Zaballa. *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Smith-Norris, Martha. *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands During the Cold War.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016.

Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of History.* New York: Routledge, 2015.

Weisgall, Jonathan. *Operation Crossroads: The Atomic Tests at Bikini Atoll.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994.