

Nygaard Notes

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The \$15 Minimum Wage: Worries, and Facts, in the Media

On Sunday May 22nd my local paper the Star Tribune of Minneapolis ran a lengthy Opinion piece from a group called “Politifact,” under the headline “Facts Few, Worries Plentiful on \$15 Minimum Wage.” Not only are facts not “few” in regard to this issue, but 63 percent of respondents to a recent poll support raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2020, which doesn’t indicate that a majority are “worried” about this proposed policy change. This Politifact piece, authored by Louis Jacobson, bears a closer look.

The Jacobson piece that the Star Trib published had originally been put out by Politifact on May 9th under the headline “Fact-checking a \$15 Minimum Wage.” It’s a timely article, for reasons that were neatly summarized in a December 21st article from the National Employment Law Project (NELP). Here’s how they put it:

“It’s been a banner year for the Fight for \$15. The movement, led by fast-food, retail and other low-wage workers, grew markedly in size and influence. Fourteen cities, counties and states approved a \$15 minimum wage through local laws, executive orders and other means in 2015. Dozens more ballot or legislative proposals were introduced around the country, 16 of which will carry over into 2016. And at least 23 notable employers voluntarily increased their minimum pay to \$15 or higher in 2015, either through company policy or collective bargaining agreements. On New Year’s Day, workers in five jurisdictions will see the first of several increases toward a \$15 minimum wage.” (For an update on ongoing campaigns, look here: www.raisetheminimumwage.com/pages/campaigns/)

I think the Star Tribune reprinted the Politifact article because Minneapolis may be voting to increase its minimum wage to \$15.00 in this coming fall’s elections. (Full disclosure: I have been volunteering with a local coalition that’s trying to put the issue on the ballot here in Minneapolis this fall.)

The folks at Politifact describe themselves like this: “PolitiFact is a fact-checking website that rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials and others who speak up in American politics.” It’s a project of the Tampa Bay Times, which is an unusually independent journalistic organization, for reasons which I won’t go into here (you can read a brief summary of its structure on its website: www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/blog/2011/oct/06/who-pays-for-politifact/) I’ve found them to be generally reliable, but there were a few important points in this article that need to be challenged.

40 Percent Higher, 33 Percent Lower

After noting that presidential candidate Bernie Sanders is proposing that the federal minimum wage be raised to \$15 per hour, Jacobson states, “That’s more than double the present level—which has been steady at \$7.25 since 2009—and it’s 40 percent higher than the all-time highest inflation-adjusted minimum wage level, \$10.69 in February 1968.”

That’s true. But it’s also true that, due to inflation, today’s \$7.25 federal minimum is about 33 percent lower than it was 46 years ago. And, as a recent academic study notes, “This long-term deterioration in the real value of the minimum wage is even more dramatic after we recognize that average labor productivity has risen by roughly 135 percent since 1968. This means that, if the federal minimum wage had risen in step with both inflation and average labor productivity since 1968, the federal minimum today would be \$25.50 an hour.” (In the economic sense, “productivity” is how much a worker can produce in a given amount of time. A ditch-digger with a backhoe, for example, is more productive than a ditch-digger with only a shovel.)

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Greetings,

Well, the new routine for Nygaard Notes seems to be less frequent, but longer, issues. I don't know why, but this issue is another issue that is two-and-a-half times as long as what I have long considered a "normal-sized" issue. If you prefer the shorter, more frequent version, just let me know. I personally can't decide which is better.

Although I think that the last issue, #596, was generally a good "re-entry" after my surgery-induced 2-month layoff, I did notice that the "Quote" of the Week in Notes #596 was the same exact "Quote" of the Week that appeared in #595. I wish I could blame it on the pain-killing drugs, but I was long off of them by the time #596 came out. My apologies.

This week I offer a couple of pieces about the minimum wage. A coalition of groups is petitioning the city of Minneapolis to put a phased-in \$15 minimum wage on the ballot this fall. There are similar efforts underway all over the country. Of course, there is much resistance to the idea. I hope my piece helps you to think about the issue a bit more clearly. Please consider donating or otherwise supporting the initiative in your area. If there isn't an campaign for a \$15 minimum wage in your area, maybe you can start one! I offer resources in this issue to help you learn what you can do to help the lowest-paid workers in this wealthy nation to climb a little higher on the grossly-unfair economic ladder. Please do what you can.

The other lengthy pair of essays this week have to do with Obama's recent visit to Hiroshima, Japan last month. It was a ceremonial visit, full of pageantry and symbolism. And, thus, full of propaganda, both conscious and unconscious. I offer a perspective on the visit that you didn't likely see in the mainstream coverage.

All for now. The catalpa trees are in full bloom in Minneapolis, which means that summer is here. Yippee!

Warmly yours,
Nygaard

\$15 *from page 1*

I'm not sure why Jacobson chose to emphasize the magnitude of the proposed increase but not the magnitude of the deterioration of the existing levels. But by neglecting to consider the decades-long failure to reward workers for increased productivity, the Politifact writer obscures the social justice impact of the current initiatives.

Even more troubling is a point that was made in the headline of the version of this article that appeared in the Star Tribune: "Facts few, worries plentiful on \$15 minimum wage." Underlining the "facts few" theme, a sub-head that appeared halfway through the piece read, "A Shortage of Academic Research." Jacobson noted that much of the discussion about increasing the federal minimum wage occurred during the midterm election cycle in 2014, after the President had proposed an increase to \$10.10 an hour. In that context Jacobson said, "But it appears that academic studies of the impact

of a \$15 minimum wage—both its benefits and its drawbacks—are all but nonexistent."

After approximately 17 seconds of Internet research, Nygaard Notes was able to uncover an academic study from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst that responds to one of the most commonly-cited arguments against the \$15 minimum wage, which is that an increase in the minimum wage will result in a loss of jobs as businesses become unable to afford their minimum-wage workers.

Published in January of 2015, the study is called "A \$15 U.S. Minimum Wage: How the Fast-food Industry Could Adjust Without Shedding Jobs." It's offered in the form of a "Working Paper" from the Political Economy Research Institute, a group I've cited more than once in these very pages. It's a 33-page study, so I'll just offer a few highlights here:

1. The authors say that "we show how the



→→ federal minimum wage in the U.S. could be raised within four years to \$15 an hour without generating employment losses in the fast-food industry.” (Almost half of all minimum-wage workers work in the fast-food industry.)

2. “We also show how this adjustment to a \$15 minimum wage could be accomplished without fast-food business firms having to face a decline in profitability.”

3. “The key point that our scenario emphasizes ... is that business firms do have other options available to them besides cutting their workforce. These other options, moreover, are likely to be more desirable under most circumstances, especially for firms that aspire to compete successfully and grow.”

4. “In terms of policy implications, our results offer a straightforward conclusion... that *the intended consequence* of the \$15 minimum wage—to improve the living standards of low-wage workers in the U.S. and their families—can certainly prevail over the *unintended consequence* that low-wage workers and their families would suffer from widespread employment losses.” [Emphasis in the original]

Another academic study that doesn’t appear to be nonexistent (having been published in March of 2015) comes from the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at the University of California, Berkeley. Their study was produced for the Los Angeles City Council and was entitled “The Proposed Minimum wage Law for Los Angeles: Economic Impacts and Policy Options.” (You can tell this is an academic study because there are 15 pages of citations and footnotes!)

It includes statements like, “We find that the benefits of

the proposed minimum wage law will largely outweigh the costs in Los Angeles City, and when the larger region is considered, the net impact of the law will be positive.” Importantly, they also find that “The proposed minimum wage increase will disproportionately benefit workers of color, who represent over 80 percent” of workers who will be affected by the higher wage.

As always, the meaning of nearly any social justice struggle becomes more clear when we consider race. The National Employment Law Project underlines the racial justice aspect of the campaign for a \$15 minimum wage, saying “More than half of African-American workers and close to 60 percent of Latino workers make less than \$15.”

Speaking of The National Employment Law Project, their paper “The Growing Movement for \$15” is worth a look. It just came out in November, and it’s loaded with facts. (Forget that bit about “Facts few” in the Star Tribune headline.) Facts like...

- The overwhelming majority—96 percent—of fastfood workers make less than \$15 an hour.
- Women and people of color are overrepresented in jobs paying less than a \$15 wage.
- About half (46.4 percent) of workers making less than \$15 per hour are ages 35 and older.

As the Fight for \$15 continues and gains momentum, we’ll be hearing more and more from the “job creators” who want to pay their workers as little as possible without interference from the government, or a union, or anybody else. If you want to know more about this issue, or lend your support to the cause in your area, check out the resources in the following article. ♦

Learn More About the Fight for \$15

During the madness that we are calling an election campaign, we’ll hear lots of arguments against increasing the minimum wage. The main one is that it will cost jobs, as businesses will supposedly lay people off rather than paying them. Libertarians will tell you that “The problem is that a higher legal minimum wage is at odds with the prevailing supply of and demand for labor.” (Were you, like me, taught that “supply and demand” was a “law”?)

Since we’ll all be hearing these and related arguments, here are a few places to go for some facts and well-informed advocacy.

The National Employment Law Project has created a special website called “Raise the Minimum Wage” that’s well

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More about \$15 *from page 3*

worth your time: www.raisetheminimumwage.com/
This is the best place to find out what is happening in your area. Click on the “Campaigns” button.

Several groups have special sections of their websites devoted to the minimum wage.

The Political Economy Research Institute has lots of fact sheets, studies, etc:
www.irl.berkeley.edu/research/minimumwage/

The Economic Policy Institute has fact sheets, blog entries, and more. Check out the “Minimum Wage

Tracker”: www.epi.org/research/minimum-wage/

The “15 Now!” organization started in Seattle and now has 22 chapters in 19 states. Check them out here:
<http://15now.org/about/>

The “Fight for \$15” started in NY City and now says that it’s “an international movement in over 300 cities on six continents of fast-food workers, home health aides, child care teachers, airport workers, adjunct professors, retail employees – and underpaid workers everywhere. <http://fightfor15.org/>

For the business side of the story, try looking at Forbes Magazine, or the Wall Street Journal, or Fox News. ♦

Obama in Hiroshima: Whose Narrative?

President Obama traveled to Japan at the end of May, and included in his itinerary was a visit to Hiroshima. The U.S. media was filled with reports on the visit, which was the first visit to the city by a sitting U.S. president since the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on that city and the city of Nagasaki in 1945. Much discussion was heard about the possibility of Obama offering an apology for the dropping of the atomic bombs on those cities, which caused well over 200,000 deaths.

The New York Times ran an article about the President’s historic visit on May 28th. Headlined “In Hiroshima, Summoning Better Angels,” the article focused on the President’s laying of a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, and his shaking the hands of some survivors of the attack. The online headline read “At Hiroshima Memorial, Obama Says Nuclear Arms Require ‘Moral Revolution’.”

Early in the article the Times remarked that “Many survivors long for an apology for an event that destroyed just about everyone and everything they knew, and there were small demonstrations near the ceremony on Friday by protesters demanding an apology. But Mr. Obama said before his trip that he would not apologize for the attack.”

Back in 2009, then-new President Obama declared “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” Seven years later, reporting from Hiroshima, the Times reports “In a striking example of the gap between Mr. Obama’s vision

of a nuclear weapons-free world and the realities of purging them, a new Pentagon census of the American nuclear arsenal shows his administration has reduced the stockpile less than any other post-Cold War presidency.”

Good point, but that’s not all they could have said. Back in August, Elliott Negin of the Union of Concerned Scientists reported that “the Obama administration wants the U.S. government to spend as much as \$1 trillion over the next three decades on a new generation of nuclear warheads, bombers, submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).”

The Times itself had reported on this trillion-dollar project a year earlier (“U.S. Ramping Up Major Renewal in Nuclear Arms,” Sept 14, 2014), noting that the “nationwide wave of atomic revitalization ... comes under a president who campaigned for ‘a nuclear-free world’ and made disarmament a main goal of American defense policy.” Adds the Times, “Supporters of arms control, as well as some of President Obama’s closest advisers, say their hopes for the president’s vision have turned to baffled disappointment as the modernization of nuclear capabilities has become an end unto itself.”

It’s not really baffling if we look at it from a systems perspective, which says that the desires of individuals—even presidents!—are less important than the demands of the systems of which they are a part. And when the system in question is the global imperial war machine that we know as the United States, the



→→ desires of any given president, while important on many levels, cannot be expected to be powerful enough to force the ship of state to undergo any significant change of course. Not without a strong pro-peace, anti-imperialist movement, that is.

Let's assume for the moment that Mr. Obama really does harbor a "vision of a nuclear weapons-free world." The Times sweeps that aside, saying that "because of political deals and geopolitical crises, the Obama administration is engaging in extensive atomic rebuilding..."

To explain the apparent contradiction between the President's actions and his words, the Times called upon Sam Nunn, "the former senator whose writings on nuclear disarmament deeply influenced Mr. Obama." Nunn said that "A lot of it is hard to explain. The president's vision was a significant change in direction. But the process has preserved the status quo." That's another way of saying that the institutional forces at work—the "system" if you will—is bigger than any individual, even a president.

The Times itself seems baffled that anyone would expect an apology for the unleashing of the world's most deadly weapon on a city whose residents were mostly non-combatants. Indeed, the Times devotes considerable space for what appears to be an effort to justify the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, regurgitating the familiar semi-official narrative, as follows:

"Many historians believe the bombings on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, which together took the lives of more than 200,000 people, saved lives on balance, since an invasion of the islands would have led to far greater bloodshed. But the 30-acre Peace Memorial Park that Mr. Obama visited reflects none of that background. The park offers a victim's narrative, illustrating in gut-wrenching detail how more than 100,000 people in the city perished and thousands more were injured. It provides few of the historical reasons for the bombing, such as descriptions of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the savagery of Japan's occupation of China, or the extraordinary death toll of soldiers and civilians in the invasion of Okinawa. A short inscription on the park's memorial arch reads, in part, 'We shall not repeat the evil.' Which evil—the bombing or the conflict itself—and who is to blame are left unsaid."

The Times here neatly summarizes what might be called

the "perpetrator's narrative." It has three main points: 1. The Japanese were aggressors and not victims; 2. There were "historical reasons" for the dropping of the atomic bombs, and; 3. To hasten the end of the war in 1945 the U.S. had only two choices: a bloody invasion or an atomic bomb. OK, let's take those one at a time.

1. Certainly the Japanese government was an aggressor in the war. But the bombs fell on large cities—Hiroshima about the size of Minneapolis, Nagasaki the size of St. Paul—and over 95 per cent of the combined casualties were civilians. But the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not attack Pearl Harbor, nor did they occupy China, nor were they responsible for the deaths in Okinawa, 800 miles away. So, when the Times tells us that the Peace Memorial Park offers a "victim's narrative," it implies that this is somehow inappropriate, or dishonest. But those hundreds of thousands of people were, indeed, victims, in the most horrific and literal sense. Perhaps the Times would prefer that the Park offer a perpetrator's narrative?

2. It's always good to consider history when trying to understand the conditions that led up to an event. But to suggest that the crimes of the Japanese government and military provide "historical reasons" for the decision to incinerate hundreds of thousands of innocents is a very chilling argument, indeed. The only way that this argument may make any moral sense would be if one believes that the dropping of the A-Bombs somehow shortened the war, thus preventing further crimes and killing from happening. And, sure enough, that is the third point made by the Times.

3. Is it true that, in August of 1945, the only way the U.S. could bring an end to the war with Japan was to demonstrate the awesome power of the atomic bomb by attacking two major cities? In the seventy years since the end of World War II much evidence has been provided indicating that, at the time of the atomic attacks, *Japan was already defeated*.

The three parts of this perpetrator's narrative, then, are:

1. They deserved it; 2. There are reasons why they deserved it, and; 3. We had no (or little) choice. A broad acceptance of this basic narrative in regard to the use of the atomic bomb is crucial to the maintenance of the mythology of the United States as an "exceptional" nation, one that uses its enormous power only for the greater good. The next article offers a challenge to the conventional wisdom about the atomic bombings of 1945. ♦

Hiroshima 1945: “Dropping the Bomb Was Completely Unnecessary”

Reporting on an April 2015 survey of US Americans and Japanese, the Gallup organization said that “In 1945, a Gallup poll immediately after the [atomic] bombing found that 85% of Americans approved of using the new atomic weapon on Japanese cities. In 1991, according to a Detroit Free Press survey conducted in both Japan and the U.S., 63% of Americans voiced the view that the atomic bomb attacks on Japan were a justified means of ending the war; only 29% thought the action was unjustified... In the current Pew Research Center survey, 56% of Americans still believe the use of nuclear weapons was justified; 34% say it was not.”

It’s good to see a decline in the number of US Americans who believe that the use of atomic weapons against populated cities was “justified” as a “means of ending the war” in 1945. But since a majority still thinks that the bombings were justified, it’s worth noting the thoughts of a few prominent participants in that conflict who, at the time or shortly thereafter, challenged the basis for that justification. The following six items—there could easily be many, many more—are drawn from a variety of sources.

1. The Canadian Centre for Research on Globalization, in a recently-published article, says:

“The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey group, assigned by President Truman to study the air attacks on Japan, produced a report in July of 1946 that concluded ‘Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey’s opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945 and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.’” [November 1 was the date on which the U.S. was planning what would have been a terribly bloody invasion of Japan.] https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/documents/pdfs/65.pdf

2. General (and later president) Dwight Eisenhower later recalled a conversation that he had in July of 1945, in which he said that he had “grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our

country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives.” (From his 1963 memoir *Mandate for Change*.)

3. General Douglas MacArthur agreed. In his book *The Pathology of Power* Norman Cousins recalls that “When I asked General MacArthur about the decision to drop the bomb, I was surprised to learn he had not even been consulted. What, I asked, would his advice have been? He replied that he saw no military justification for the dropping of the bomb. The war might have ended weeks earlier, he said, if the United States had agreed, as it later did anyway, to the retention of the institution of the emperor.” (From Cousins’ book *The Pathology of Power*)

4. James Reston, in his 1991 memoir *Deadline*, quoted John McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War during World War II, saying “I believe we missed the opportunity of effecting a Japanese surrender, completely satisfactory to us, without the necessity of dropping the bombs.”

5. Under Secretary of the Navy Ralph Bard told US News and World Report in 1960, “In my opinion, the Japanese war was really won before we ever used the atom bomb. Thus, it wouldn’t have been necessary for us to disclose our nuclear position and stimulate the Russians to develop the same thing much more rapidly than they would have if we had not dropped the bomb.”

6. On September 20, 1945 the commander of the Twenty-First Bomber Command, Major General Curtis E. LeMay said flatly at one press conference that the atomic bomb “had nothing to do with the end of the war.”

Why, Then?

The “real” reason that the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki will likely never be known for certain. In fact it’s unlikely that there was a single reason, since it’s always true that major decisions and events arise in complex environments and are influenced by innumerable factors. But it’s likely true that one major factor was that it was an opening shot in what would come to be known as the Cold War. That is, it was a “shock-and-awe” demonstration aimed at ↗↗↗

→→ telling Russia that the United States was going to be The World's Only Superpower after the war.

Another factor was that the United States wanted to know more about the effects on humans of an atomic bomb. Actually, there were two different atomic bombs, with different fuels triggered by different mechanisms. The “gun-type” Hiroshima bomb was fueled by uranium, while the “implosion-type” Nagasaki bomb was fueled by plutonium. Historians have speculated that the U.S. used the two cities as experimental subjects to learn about the weapons’ effects on humans.

John LaForge, Co-director of Nukewatch, has quoted Hitoshi Motoshima, mayor of Nagasaki from 1979 to 1995, as saying, “The reason for Nagasaki was to experiment with the plutonium bomb.”

Racism was likely another factor in the decision to attack densely-populated Japanese cities. Writing in *The Nation* in 2011, journalist Greg Mitchell quotes the novelist Kurt Vonnegut Jr., who said, “The most racist, nastiest act by this country, after human slavery, was the bombing of Nagasaki. Not of Hiroshima, which might have had some military significance. But Nagasaki was purely blowing away yellow men, women, and children.” Would the U.S. have used nuclear weapons in Europe if Germany had not surrendered three months earlier? We’ll never know.

Scholar Anthony V. Navarro of Michigan State University in 2007, said, “The spiteful sentiment [toward the Japanese] felt throughout the war among many Americans seemed to stem from much more than simply vengeance for the December 7th attack. It reflected an already existing racism prompted by Pearl Harbor. The ‘yellow’ color race code was the branding of choice when referring to the Japanese. They were the ‘yellow peril,’ and ‘yellow monkeys.’ Even *Time* magazine in a report on Pearl Harbor used the phrase, ‘the yellow bastards!’ The *New York Times* contributed with their own anti-Japanese rhetoric explaining how the Japanese ‘have kept their savage tradition ‘unbroken through ages eternal,’ from the fabulous age of their savage gods to the present day.”

When General Eisenhower said that “dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary,” he was speaking as if the justification were a military one and that the people who decided to drop the bombs had simply been mistaken. And this illustrates the limits of public debate in this country. The mainstream argument is that the U.S. stands for peace and justice. Therefore, the dropping of

the atomic bombs on densely-populated cities *must have* been motivated by a desire to end the war and prevent unnecessary deaths.

The accepted dissenting argument is the one articulated by Eisenhower: War is hell, a tragic mistake, etc.

Such thinking likely makes sense to most people who have been educated in the USA. But if we think of the U.S. as an imperial power like any other imperial power—that is, as a power that will stop at nothing in its quest for domination of the largest area possible—then alternative explanations for the atomic bombings, such as the ones above, can be entertained. That is, we may be able to imagine that the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not dropped in order to shorten the war, and in fact the decision to deploy this weapon really had little to do with World War 2 at all.

Many people in the larger world, if not here at home, see the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as an instance of the most powerful nation in the world using its power to kill hundreds of thousands of mostly-innocent Japanese for the purpose of sending a message to other would-be empires. And such a massive abuse of imperial power is why “many survivors long for an apology,” as the *Times* put it. Such an apology could be a first step in the “moral revolution” that the President called for when he visited Hiroshima. The world waits for that step to be taken.

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Addendum for Further Reading

Here are three short but compelling essays that delve into some alternative explanations for the use of the atomic bomb in August of 1945.

1. Philosopher Robert Quinn offers a number of interesting details in support of his idea that the bombs were dropped “to make a political statement” to the Soviet Union. His essay is on the website *Nuclear-News*: <https://nuclear-news.net/2013/08/14/a-political-advantage-the-reason-why-usa-bombed-japanese-cities/>

2. In his essay, “Hiroshima, My Father, and the Lie of U.S. Innocence,” Jerry Delaney looks back at the Tokyo war crimes trial and what he calls a U.S. “culture of war” in which “Innocence gives rise to righteousness,

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Unnecessary bombs *from page 7*

and righteousness gives rise to arrogance, and arrogance to ruthlessness.” <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/09/the-japanese-war-crime-trials-and-the-lie-of-u-s-innocence-hiroshima-bombing/>

3. In 2010 the Asia-Pacific Journal published “The Great Tokyo Air Raid and the Bombing of Civilians in World War II.” This very brief article gives a hint of why “The grotesque thinking that gave rise to strategic bombing has yet to become obsolete.” <http://apjif.org/-The-Asahi-Shimbun-Culture-Research-Center-/3320/article.html> ♦

American Exceptionalism in the News

The headline on the front page of the May 4th New York Times read: “As Hospitals Take Fire, U.N. Says Enough”. The article told of the practice of military targeting of medical facilities, noting that “on today’s battlefields, attacks on hospitals and ambulances, surgeons, nurses and midwives have become common.” Such targeting has long been considered a war crime. But notice how the Times introduced the issue. Here is the lead paragraph:

*“Warplanes level a hospital in the rebel-held half of Aleppo, Syria, killing one of the city’s last pediatricians.
A Saudi-led military coalition bombs a hospital in Yemen.
In Afghanistan, American aircraft pummel a hospital mistaken for a Taliban redoubt.”*

In the first two cases, the event is simply noted. In the third case, which features U.S. actions, the official excuse for the attack—which killed over 40 people—is presented, and presented as fact. The Pentagon does indeed *claim* that the attack was an accident, but the only investigation of the attack by the U.S. military was conducted by... the U.S. military. I’m sure there are, or will be, similar reports by the Syrian military and the Saudi military that find their attacks to be tragic mistakes, or which otherwise absolve them of any criminal culpability. The United States is hardly unique in this regard. But the way the Times reports it makes it appear as if the United States *is* unique. Another small way that the idea of “American Exceptionalism” creeps into the news, and thus creeps into our heads. ♦

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