



ENDLESS HOLOCAUSTS

MASS DEATH IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES EMPIRE

DAVID MICHAEL SMITH

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United States Empire

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MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS

New York

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
available from the publisher.

ISBN paper: 978-1-58367-9890
ISBN cloth: 978-1-58367-9906

Typeset in Minion Pro

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS, NEW YORK
monthlyreview.org

5 4 3 2 1

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for Rona

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to all the researchers who responded to my inquiries and shared their expertise while I was writing this book. Many thanks to Mikaela Morgane Adams, Jeffrey S. Adler, Fred Anderson, George Reid Andrews, Andy Baker, Francisco Balderrama, Douglas A. Blackmon, Peter K. Brecke, D. Brian Burghart, Donald S. Burke, Colin G. Calloway, E. Ann Carson, Stephen K. Cusick, James P. Daughton, James Downs, Douglas R. Egerton, James Fenske, Elsa Gelpi, Dina Gilia-Whitaker, Arline Geronimus, Erik Gilbert, Thavolia Glyph, Peter C. Gøtzsche, Sandra Elaine Greene, Gerald Horne, Robert Gudmestad, Joseph Hanlon, Jeffrey Hilgert, Joseph E. Inikori, Robin D. G. Kelley, Martin Klein, Bruce Lanphear, Patrick Manning, Emily Marquez, Stephen Majeski, Keith Meyers, Joseph Miller, Vicente Navarro, Jeffrey Ostler, Gary Potter, Robert Proctor, Daniel T. Reff, George Andrews Reid, Richard Reid, Rebecca Reindel, Andrés Reséndez, Javier Rodriguez, Nigel Rollins, Randolph Roth, Francisco A. Scarano, Michael Schroeder, Nancy Shoemaker, David Stark, David A. Swanson, Lauren MacIvor Thompson, Russell Thornton, Fred A. Wilcox, and Brian Glyn Williams.

It is worth emphasizing that none of these researchers is responsible for the analysis and conclusions in this book, and the responsibility for any errors is entirely mine. I also want to thank Greg Broyles,

Angelita Chapa, Patty Harlan, Folko Mueller, Paul Mullan, Tracy Orr, Pat Thompson, and Fred A. Wilcox for reading and providing feedback on various chapters. My greatest debt is to Rona E. Smith, my wife, who encouraged me to write this book, read earlier versions of the chapters, and shared important ideas for improving them. It is no exaggeration to say that this book would not have been written without Rona's steadfast support.

Introduction

For generations, capitalists, politicians, and pundits have promoted the doctrine of U.S. exceptionalism. Scores of millions of people in this country have embraced what Christian Appy has called “the central tenet of American national identity—the broad faith that the United States is a unique force for good in the world, superior not only in its military and economic power, but in the quality of its government and institutions, the character and morality of its people, and its way of life.”¹ To be sure, many Indigenous people, people of African descent, workers, and others have not accepted this “broad faith,” but its reach and endurance has been widely recognized. However, as Sidney Lens pointed out half a century ago, U.S. exceptionalism has always been “a myth of morality,” and “America the benevolent . . . does not exist and never has existed.”² In the 1960s and 1970s, mass movements against racism and the wars in Southeast Asia exposed this myth to tens of millions of people. In the decades that followed, the deteriorating conditions of workers, growing inequality, increasingly dysfunctional governance, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the persistence of police brutality, the opioid crisis, and climate change further undermined this dogma. More recently, the resurgence of white supremacy, the erosion of U.S. primacy in the

world, the transformation of the Republicans into a far-right party, the rise of Donald Trump, the hundreds of thousands of preventable COVID-19 deaths, and the fascist-led attack on Congress on January 6, 2021, have led many more people to abandon their illusions about this country.

That the United States is a colonialist and imperialist country—an empire—can hardly be questioned. The conquest and near-extermination of several hundred Indigenous nations by European and U.S. settlers provided the land on which the contiguous United States was built, and Native peoples continue to live in colonial conditions, deprived of sovereignty and self-determination. The United States also colonized Liberia, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the eastern Samoan Islands, the Philippines, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Panama, which Washington carved out of Colombia to build a transoceanic canal, and Cuba were U.S. protectorates for decades. The United States recognized the independence of Liberia in 1847 and the Philippines in 1946 and admitted Alaska and Hawaii as states in 1959 but refused to relinquish the Panama Canal Zone until 1999 and still occupies forty-five square miles of land and water at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Today the United States officially includes not only the fifty states and the District of Columbia but also 574 federally recognized Indigenous nations, the commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, the inhabited territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and nine uninhabited islands and atolls in the Pacific and the Caribbean.³ Residents of Washington, DC, the commonwealths, and the inhabited territories do not have full representation in Congress. Indeed, as the U.S. Department of the Interior has stated, the commonwealths and inhabited territories are areas “in which the United States Congress has determined that only selected parts of the United States Constitution apply.”⁴ The people of American Samoa are not even recognized as U.S. citizens. The “freely associated states” of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau are U.S. protectorates.⁵

In addition to its long history of conquest and colonization, the United States has always energetically exploited other peoples' resources, markets, and labor. The enslaved labor of people of African descent fueled early U.S. economic development and the Industrial Revolution. By the 1820s, U.S. merchants were shipping opium from Turkey to China so they could sustain imports of tea, spices, porcelain, and nankeen. As Greg Grandin has noted, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 "announced to European empires that Latin America fell under Washington's exclusive sphere of influence."⁶ In the mid-nineteenth century, the mounting need to export surplus products led the U.S. Empire to threaten and use violence against China, Japan, and Korea. In the last quarter of the century, intensifying industrial development and agricultural production contributed to unprecedented economic growth. By the 1890s, U.S. businesses were shipping steel, iron, oil, and agricultural machinery to foreign markets, and the export of capital had begun. During that decade, the United States replaced Britain as the world's largest economy. In 1895, Secretary of State Richard Olney, referring to South America, claimed that "the United States is sovereign on this continent."⁷ In stark contrast, after acquiring most of Spain's colonies in 1898, the United States demanded an "Open Door" for U.S. trade and investment in China and did not even consult its government.

The U.S. Empire's imperatives of expansion and accumulation have dramatically grown in the era of modern imperialism, and so has its exploitation of the resources, markets, and labor of people in other countries. As Grandin has explained, in the early decades of the twentieth century "American corporations and financial houses came to dominate the economies of Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, as well as large parts of South America."⁸ To protect its investments and promote its interests, the empire militarily intervened in the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and invaded and occupied Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

Industry, agriculture, and trade grew significantly when the United States funded and armed, and then joined the Entente Powers during the First World War. Afterward, the United States invaded Soviet

Russia, supported the Guomindang regime in China, and welcomed European fascism as a bulwark against communism—entering the Second World War only because the Axis powers threatened its own imperialist interests. By 1945, the United States had become the wealthiest and most powerful empire in the world. Since then, the imperium has vigorously sought to obtain the oil, strategic materials, and other resources it requires and to keep, in the words of Harry Magdoff, “as much as possible of the world open for trade and investment by the giant multinational corporations.”⁹

These imperatives led to unrelenting confrontation with the Soviet Union and other socialist states—at horrific human expense. The later collapse of most of these states, which occurred partly because of U.S. actions over the decades, made the world a more dangerous place as the empire found itself to be the sole superpower and moved to establish its presence in those and other lands. Since 1945, the United States has fought devastating large-scale wars in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Iraq (twice), and Afghanistan. It has launched proxy wars on four continents, routinely attacked countries, overthrown and installed governments, destroyed popular movements, assassinated foreign leaders, engaged in economic sabotage, and supported its allies’ violent domestic repression and acts of war against other nations. The only country to ever use atomic bombs, the United States has deployed nuclear weapons around the world, developed ominous plans “to win a nuclear war,” and brought humanity to the brink of nuclear holocaust on several occasions.¹⁰ Today, the empire has a network of client states encompassing about 40 percent of the world’s countries, about eight hundred foreign military bases, and more than 200,000 military personnel and contractors deployed in about 140 countries.¹¹ But the rise of China, the return of Russia, and the mounting economic, social, and political crises at home make clear that the United States’ “unipolar moment” is already fading.¹²

Although there have long been activists and writers willing to challenge the myth of U.S. exceptionalism, new scholarly work in recent decades has powerfully illuminated some of the ugliest dimensions of U.S. history and contemporary society. This research has significantly

contributed to the literature on settler colonialism and genocide against Indigenous people, white supremacy and the oppression of Black people, U.S. imperialism and its perpetual wars, the uniquely high level of violence in this country, and other grave threats to public health. However, a great deal more must be said about the almost unimaginable loss of life resulting from U.S. capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism over the centuries. Although there has been considerable debate over the size of the Indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere before 1492, an estimate of the total number of deaths caused by colonialism and genocide throughout the present-day United States has not yet been published. Writers have expressed different views on the overall loss of life caused by the transatlantic slave trade, but an assessment based on historical information about each stage of that dreadful saga has not yet been developed. The *Maafa*, or great disaster, was only the beginning of five centuries of brutality and injustice experienced by people of African descent.¹³

The scourge of fatal workplace injuries and occupational diseases that accompanied the Industrial Revolution and continues today has received only limited scholarly attention. But there is ample historical and contemporary evidence that vast numbers of workers perished from occupational injuries and diseases in the past century and a half.

Although there is now a remarkable literature on U.S. imperialism, the total number of deaths in U.S. wars, military interventions, and other hostile actions abroad is still not known. Similarly, the cumulative human costs of other forms of state and social violence, the profit-driven proliferation of dangerous drugs and other unsafe consumer products, the automobile-centered transportation system, the commodified and often dangerous health care system, and environmental pollution in this country have not been gauged. This author knows of no study that comprehensively surveys all these forms of mass deaths and demonstrates their centrality and significance in U.S. history and contemporary U.S. society.

This book aims to help fill these gaps in the critical, counter-hegemonic literature on the United States. I argue that the prehistory, formation, expansion, and global ascendancy of the U.S. Empire

have required endless holocausts at home and abroad. I also develop informed and reasonable, if rough or very rough, estimates of the loss of life in each one. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “holocaust” as “destruction or slaughter on a mass scale,” and an unrelenting, endless succession of such catastrophes lies at the heart of U.S. history and U.S. society today.¹⁴ Far from being occasional, unfortunate exceptions to an otherwise benevolent or benign historical record, different kinds of large-scale annihilation of human life have made this country what it is. Indeed, though most capitalists, politicians, and pundits will never admit it, these endless holocausts have been indispensable in the rise of the wealthiest and most powerful imperialism in the history of the world. Tragically, they have also resulted in the deaths of almost unimaginable numbers of people from the European colonial period to the present.

In this book, I examine diverse holocausts for which the U.S. Empire is responsible or shares responsibility. Some of these mass deaths have resulted and continue to result from large-scale violence, which is often viewed as “the intentional use of physical force or power.”¹⁵ The holocausts suffered by Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, and the victims of U.S. militarism worldwide have involved widespread carnage, to be sure. But even in these cases, many fatalities have occurred because of disease, starvation, and related causes. Other forms of mass deaths have not been engendered by violence as traditionally defined. Instead, they are large-scale instances of what Frederick Engels viewed as “social murder,” that is, deaths caused by deprivation of the “necessaries of life” and the imposition of conditions in which people cannot survive.¹⁶ These various kinds of social murder are not inevitable but are rooted in U.S. capitalism. In the following chapters, I explore mass deaths resulting from both far-reaching violence and social murders.

Chapter 1, “The Indigenous Peoples Holocaust,” analyzes the near-annihilation of Native peoples in the lands that became the United States, from the early sixteenth century to the present. Chapter 2, “The African American Holocaust,” assesses the catastrophic human costs of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and subsequent anti-Black

oppression in this country. Chapter 3, “The Workers Holocaust,” investigates the mass deaths from workplace injuries, occupational diseases, and anti-labor violence since the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 4, “From Colonial Wars to Global Holocausts,” examines the immense human toll of U.S. wars, military interventions, and support for repression and fascism abroad through the end of the Second World War. Chapter 5, “The Holocausts of Pax Americana I,” explores the enormous loss of life in other countries resulting from U.S. imperialism between 1945 and 1980. Chapter 6, “The Holocausts of Pax Americana II,” analyzes the extensive carnage in other countries brought about by U.S. imperialism since 1980. Chapter 7, “Other Holocausts at Home and Abroad,” investigates the stunning number of U.S. lives lost because of the U.S. Empire’s wars and other forms of violence as well as the mass deaths caused by dangerous drugs, tobacco, unsafe consumer products, automobiles, the health care system, and pollution.

Altogether, I estimate that the U.S. Empire is responsible or shares responsibility for close to 300 million deaths. The almost inconceivable loss of life in these endless holocausts arguably makes this country exceptional, though in a strikingly different way than its apologists intend. As this book makes clear, this succession of catastrophes will continue as long as the imperium exists. And as its primacy erodes, the U.S. ruling class may act like a “wounded beast” and commit heinous new crimes against the peoples of the world—including the people of this country—to maintain as much wealth and power as possible.¹⁷ Although this book focuses on manifold forms of mass deaths, it also points to an extraordinary history of resistance by Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, workers, people in other nations brutalized by U.S. imperialism, and democratic-minded people around the world. Everyone who supports the dismantling of the empire can draw inspiration from this history of resistance.

The Indigenous Peoples Holocaust

Let the white race perish. They seize your land; they corrupt your women; they trample on the ashes of your dead! Back, whence they came, upon a trail of blood, they must be driven. Back! Back, ay, into the great water whose accursed waves brought them to our shores!

—TECUMSEH, ADDRESS IN TUCKAUBATCHEE, 1811

David Stannard has used the expression “American Holocaust” to refer to the historically unprecedented number of deaths caused by European and U.S. settler colonialism in the Western Hemisphere. Stannard has argued that this was “the worst human holocaust the world had ever witnessed.”¹ It may also be viewed as the most horrific genocide in history.² Some contemporary scholars believe that the Indigenous population of the present-day United States and the hemisphere declined between 90 and 95 percent between 1492 and 1900.³ As Russell Thornton and other researchers have explained, wars, genocidal violence, enslavement, land expropriation, forced removals and relocations, diseases, destruction of food sources, dietary changes, malnutrition, elimination of traditional ways of life, erasure of identity, and reduced birth rates contributed

to this cataclysmic demographic collapse in what is today the United States.⁴ Although many Indigenous nations have survived and experienced a demographic recovery since 1900, various forms of violence, poor health conditions rooted in colonialism and racism, and related forms of oppression persist, and the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust continues today.⁵

THE AMERICAS BEFORE THE EUROPEANS

As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has emphasized, centuries before the arrival of Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus), the Indigenous nations of the Western Hemisphere had built “great civilizations” whose “governments, commerce, arts and sciences, agriculture, technologies, theologies, philosophies, and institutions were intricately developed.”⁶ These diverse societies ranged from the Maya of Central America, the Runa (Incas) of western South America, and the Mexicas (Aztecs) of Mexico, to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Tsalagi (Cherokees), Diné (Navajo) in the lands that became the United States. North America was a “continent of nations and federations of nations.”⁷ Most Native people lived in towns and successfully farmed, while others were nomadic hunters or hunter-gatherers.⁸ A sophisticated network of roadways connected different nations and facilitated trade.⁹ Although Indigenous peoples in the present-day United States did not have written languages, their laws, poetry, song, dance, and ceremonies articulated their history “in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe’s.”¹⁰ Howard Zinn has pointed out that in these lands “human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe.”¹¹

THE EUROPEAN QUEST FOR WEALTH AND THREAT TO INDIGENOUS CIVILIZATIONS

An important component of what Lens called “the myth of morality” is the fiction that the settlement of the English colonies that became the United States is largely a story of oppressed people seeking freedom

from religious and political persecution.¹² The historical reality is strikingly different. In the first place, as Gerald Horne has pointed out, “The United States is the inheritor of the munificent crimes of not only London but Madrid, too.”¹³ The Spaniards were the first Europeans to conquer, colonize, and plunder some of the lands that today constitute the U.S. Empire. Some people who settled in the English colonies of North America had indeed experienced repression at home, and many more had suffered extreme privation. Signally, though, their rulers—like those in Spain and the other European countries that laid claim to vast territories in the Western Hemisphere—were primarily interested in the accumulation of wealth and the expansion of state power. It was the quest for gold, silver, and a route to the Far East that could restore trade in silk and spices that led to the initial European invasion of what came to be known as the Americas.¹⁴

Karl Marx wrote in the first volume of *Capital*: “The discovery of gold and silver in America [and] the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the Indigenous population of that continent” were among the “chief moments of primitive accumulation” that gave rise to modern capitalism.¹⁵ After arriving in the Western Hemisphere, the Europeans invoked the “Doctrine of Discovery” to claim these lands. This doctrine was articulated in a series of late fifteenth-century papal decrees and used to justify the conquest and colonization of much of the planet in the centuries that followed.¹⁶ The Europeans’ aims brought them into direct, violent conflict with Indigenous peoples in the Americas, as they would in the Pacific islands, Asia, and Africa. But the expropriation of Indigenous lands and the near-extirmination of Indigenous peoples became the indispensable foundation for establishing and expanding European colonies and creating and expanding the U.S. Empire.

THE SIZE OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION

The island that the Taino (Arawak) people called Guanahani in the present-day Bahamas where Colón landed in 1492 was not heavily

populated. But when his expedition reached the Caribbean island they named Hispaniola, they found tens of thousands of people.¹⁷ In the next several decades, Spanish invaders encountered millions upon millions of Indigenous people in the lands that we know today as Mexico, Central America, and South America.¹⁸ Estimates of the pre-contact Indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere range from a low of 8.4 million made by Alfred Kroeber in 1939 to a high of 145 million made by Henry Dobyns in 1988.¹⁹ Stannard has estimated that approximately 100 million Native people lived in the Americas in 1492, and Ward Churchill has suggested that the number may have been about 125 million.²⁰ For decades, Russell Thornton estimated that the population in the hemisphere was about seventy-five million, but recently he indicated that the actual number might have been closer to sixty million.²¹ In 2019, scientists and geographers studying the ecological impact of the first century of European colonization also estimated that the pre-contact Native population was about sixty million.²² However, this assessment may be too low, and a rough estimate of sixty-five million for the hemisphere may be prudent.²³

The Indigenous population of North America north of present-day Mexico was significantly smaller than in lands to the south. However, as William Denevan has shown, even here the landscape was not “primarily pristine, virgin, a wilderness, nearly empty of people.”²⁴ Estimates for what became the coterminous United States range from a low of 720,000 made by Alfred Kroeber in 1939 to a high of fifteen million made by Dunbar-Ortiz in 2014.²⁵ Douglas Ubelaker has concluded that the pre-contact population in today’s contiguous United States was approximately two million.²⁶ Thornton’s view is that more than five million Indigenous people lived here.²⁷ Although some researchers agree with Ubelaker’s estimate, James Wilson has noted that Thornton’s estimate is probably “the nearest to a generally accepted figure.”²⁸ In addition, the combined Native populations of Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Hawai‘i likely numbered about eight hundred thousand, so the total Indigenous population of the present-day United States was probably close to six million.²⁹

CONQUEST, COLONIZATION, AND DISEASE

In the 1960s and 1970s, the renewal of Indigenous peoples' struggles for sovereignty and self-determination focused public attention on the catastrophe of settler colonialism. Some commentators sought to deny or minimize the colonizers' genocidal intentions by largely attributing the near annihilation of Native peoples to new diseases.³⁰ Stannard has criticized this line of argument:

It is true, in a plainly quantitative sense of body counting, that the barrage of disease unleashed by the Europeans . . . caused more deaths than any other single force of destruction. However, by focusing almost entirely on disease, by displacing responsibility for the mass killing onto an army of invading microbes, contemporary authors increasingly have created the impression that the eradication of those tens of millions of people was inadvertent—a sad, but both inevitable and “unintended consequence” of human migration and progress. . . . In fact, however, the near-total destruction of the Western Hemisphere's Native people was neither inadvertent nor inevitable.³¹

For Stannard, it was the terrible synergy of “microbial pestilence” and “purposeful genocide” that killed so many.

In recent decades, most researchers have acknowledged the impact of smallpox, measles, typhus, and other new diseases on Indigenous populations while emphasizing other aspects of colonialist devastation. Today many investigators reject Dobyns's conclusion that smallpox and other “virgin soil” epidemics swept across North America throughout the sixteenth century.³² Thornton's view that the early “medical conquest” of Native peoples generally “paved the way” for “military conquests and colonizations” in the present-day United States has also been challenged.³³ It increasingly appears that the widespread transmission of new diseases usually did not precede the invaders but accompanied them.³⁴ Moreover, David S. Jones explains, “It was the turbulence of colonization and not genetic liability that

created Indians' devastating susceptibility to imported pathogens."³⁵ Current documentary and archaeological evidence do not permit final conclusions on the early history of Native depopulation in these lands, the comparative lethality of disease and violence, or the complete dimensions of the demographic collapse. However, it is possible to outline the broad contours of the Indigenous Peoples' Holocaust in this country and develop an informed and reasonable, if rough, estimate of the total loss of life.

APOCALYPSE FROM THE CARIBBEAN TO SOUTH AMERICA

The apocalyptic consequences of the European invasion became clear soon after Colón's arrival on Hispaniola in late 1492.³⁶ The Spaniards began enslaving thousands of Taino people and forcing them to work in gold mines and on plantations.³⁷ Bartolomé de Las Casas, a conquistador turned priest, condemned the invaders' widespread murder and torture.³⁸ Fernández de Oviedo, a conquistador who became the official historian of Spain's Caribbean colonies, admitted that he and his compatriots were responsible for "innumerable cruel deaths . . . as uncountable as the stars."³⁹ Although some analysts have suggested that smallpox erupted on Hispaniola in 1507, there is little evidence of this.⁴⁰ However, violence, enslavement, exhaustion, famine, and disease reduced the island's population to about 250 people by 1540.⁴¹ Colón's lieutenant, Juan Ponce de León, established the Spanish colony on the island of Puerto Rico in 1508 and became its governor. Here, too, violence, slavery, and diseases were catastrophic. When the first recorded smallpox epidemic broke out in the Spanish colonies in 1518, its impact in Puerto Rico was significant. Between twenty to fifty thousand Tainos on the island had died by 1544, the first casualties of European colonialism in the lands that later became part of the U.S. Empire.⁴²

Hernán Cortés's invasion of the Mexicas in 1519–1521, Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid's subjugation of most of the Maya in the 1520s, and Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro's conquest of much of the Runa in the 1530s unleashed hell on a much larger scale. Warfare, genocidal violence, enslavement, and famine combined with

smallpox and other “firestorms of disease” to produce as many as forty million deaths in present-day Mexico, Central America, Peru, and Chile by the late 1560s.⁴³ Diseases brought by Europeans also killed sizeable numbers of Indigenous people in what are now Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Brazil.⁴⁴ In their 2019 study, the scientists and geographers assessing the environmental effects of European colonization estimated that approximately 56 million Native people died in the Western Hemisphere between 1492 and 1600.⁴⁵ These researchers found that this “Great Dying” led to the significant “regrowth of the natural habitat,” the removal of vast amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and the cooling of the global climate.⁴⁶

EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND VIOLENCE IN THE PRESENT-DAY UNITED STATES

During the sixteenth century, European invasion and settlement of the lands that became the United States were much more limited. However, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) explored present-day Newfoundland and Labrador, New England, and perhaps Long Island in 1497–98.⁴⁷ Hundreds of other European explorers, traders, and adventurers visited the Atlantic and Pacific coasts during the next hundred years and sometimes made contact with Indigenous peoples.⁴⁸ In 1501, the Portuguese adventurer Gaspar Corte-Real sailed along the coast of Newfoundland and Maine and kidnapped about fifty Native people.⁴⁹ In 1524, the Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazano sailed along Long Island and later met with a delegation of Wampanoag and Narragansett people. He also encountered the Indigenous peoples of present-day Rhode Island and either the Abnakis or Penobscots of present-day Maine.⁵⁰ The following year, the Portuguese explorer Estêvão Gomes visited what is now New England and New York, captured dozens of Native people, and took them to Spain.⁵¹ Verrazano and Gomes also met members of the Powhatan Confederacy when sailing along the coast of present-day North Carolina and Virginia.⁵² The Europeans who encountered various Indigenous peoples may well have left deadly pathogens behind.⁵³

In 1513, Ponce de León landed on the Atlantic coast of the land he called La Florida. He hoped to enslave Indigenous people and transport them to Caribbean plantations but met with resistance and fled. He returned with two hundred men and arrived near present-day Port Charlotte in July 1521, but the Calusa people repulsed their landing. About eighty Spaniards were killed or died of their wounds, including Ponce de León, and twice as many Calusas may have perished.⁵⁴ Smallpox epidemics did not erupt afterward, as some scholars have suggested, but the violence and disruption caused by the Spaniards probably left the Calusas more vulnerable to already existing diseases.⁵⁵ In 1526, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón and several hundred Spaniards, along with about a hundred enslaved African people, established a settlement called San Miguel de Gualdape, possibly at the mouth of the Savannah River near present-day Tybee Roads, Georgia. Vázquez de Ayllón died of illness soon afterward, and the settlement was threatened by inclement weather, food shortages, internal dissension, a revolt by the enslaved Africans, and disease—most likely malaria.⁵⁶ After the settlers took over a local Indigenous village and consumed its food supplies, its inhabitants fought back, resulting in the collapse of the settlement and the flight of 150 Spanish survivors.⁵⁷

In May 1528, Pánfilo de Narváez, the Spanish governor of Cuba, landed with about three hundred armed men near present-day Tampa Bay, Florida, searching for gold and other riches. Their ships were destroyed by a hurricane, and resistance by Indigenous peoples, starvation, and illness—perhaps malaria but possibly typhoid, dysentery, or other diseases—wiped out most of the Spaniards. After using rafts to return to the Gulf from the Florida interior, Narváez and many others were lost in a storm. Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and about eighty compatriots survived but were shipwrecked near Galveston Island in present-day Texas. New bouts of disease killed many of the survivors.⁵⁸ Soon afterward, Indigenous people in the area began to die, chiefly from a “dysentery-type disease” that could have been caused by the Spaniards “defecating and urinating in local drinking water or in aquatic areas where Indigenous peoples gathered clams or oysters.”⁵⁹ The first known epidemic in present-day Texas,

probably cholera, struck the Karankawa people in 1528.⁶⁰ During the next six years, only Cabeza de Vaca and three others survived near-starvation and enslavement by Coahuiltecan people as they wandered through present-day Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona on their long trek toward Spanish settlements in what is now Mexico.⁶¹

SPANISH INVASIONS OF THE SOUTHEAST AND THE SOUTHWEST

In May 1539, Hernando de Soto brought about six hundred soldiers, enslaved Indigenous and African people, two hundred horses, and three hundred pigs to present-day Tampa Bay. For the next four years, de Soto's expedition traveled through what is now Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana while looking for gold.⁶² As the Spaniards proceeded, they invaded Native villages, stole their food, and enslaved more people.⁶³ They also left a trail of Indigenous bodies in their wake, beginning with about forty Timucas killed in the battle of Two Lakes in Florida in September 1539.⁶⁴ In October 1540, de Soto's forces killed as many as three thousand Mobile warriors led by Tascalusa in a battle at Mabila in present-day Alabama.⁶⁵ Fighting in what is today Mississippi and other areas in 1541–42 resulted in hundreds more Native deaths.⁶⁶ De Soto became ill and died in May 1542. Less than half of his expedition survived and reached Spanish settlements in present-day Mexico in September 1543.⁶⁷ The expedition did not introduce smallpox or measles, but it resulted in widespread destruction and destabilization, increased local susceptibility to existing diseases, and likely spread malaria throughout the region.⁶⁸ These developments marked the beginning of a significant decline of the Native population in the Southeast during the following century and a half.⁶⁹

In July 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado arrived in what is today New Mexico with about 350 soldiers and about 1,300 Indigenous allies. They entered the lands of the Pueblo peoples searching for gold and proceeded to destroy thirteen villages and kill several hundred inhabitants within a year.⁷⁰ Coronado then led his expedition into what are now Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Kansas but never found

gold and returned to present-day Mexico in 1542. There is no evidence that Coronado's forces brought European diseases with them, but the Spaniards' devastation and disruption, along with the spread of existing diseases, reduced the Pueblo population from about fifty thousand in 1540 to forty thousand during the next six decades.⁷¹ In May 1598, Juan de Oñate brought four hundred Spaniards into the area to establish a permanent settlement and begin the process of colonization. In January 1599, after inhabitants of Acoma resisted, the Spaniards sacked the town, killed about eight hundred people, and enslaved many others.⁷² In the winter of 1601, the Spaniards burned three Tompiro towns and killed about nine hundred people.⁷³ With the onset of colonization, smallpox, measles, and other European diseases also began to appear and soon proved to be devastating.⁷⁴

THE FIRST PERMANENT SPANISH AND ENGLISH SETTLEMENTS

Shortly after French colonizers founded Fort Caroline, near present-day Jacksonville, Florida, in 1564, they began suffering from diseases. As Paul Keaton has remarked, by this time "malaria had likely become endemic in Florida from previous European invasions."⁷⁵ The following year, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés led about eight hundred Spaniards in destroying Fort Caroline and establishing St. Augustine as the first permanent European settlement in what is today the continental United States. The Timucuas fought against the Spanish conquest of their lands, and their armed resistance to occupation continued for years. After Menéndez and his forces left a garrison and mission in southwestern Florida, a brief *détente* with the Calusas ended, and more warfare ensued.⁷⁶ Violence, forced tribute and enslavement, destabilization, hunger, and trauma proved to be deeply destructive to Native communities. Soon after St. Augustine was founded, many Indigenous people began dying from a mysterious disease that may have been typhus. Malaria and other existing diseases took a toll as well.⁷⁷ Smallpox had also arrived, but what Paul Kelton has called "the limited extent of Spanish colonialism" precluded major outbreaks at the time.⁷⁸ Much worse was to come in the next century.

The English established a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of what is today North Carolina in 1585, but it did not survive for long. Inadequate food supplies, conflict with local Indigenous people, and disease contributed to this failure and the disappearance of more than a hundred colonizers after 1587.⁷⁹ Francis Drake's relief expedition to Roanoke Island the previous year may well have brought typhus, but limited contact with Native inhabitants there likely precluded a catastrophic epidemic.⁸⁰ When English settlers founded Jamestown in present-day Virginia in 1607, they encountered the Powhatan Confederacy of perhaps 15,000 people.⁸¹ Another ten thousand or more Indigenous people also lived in the area.⁸² Whether Native nations here had suffered massive depopulation from European epidemics in the preceding century is a subject of debate among researchers.⁸³ But the historical record of death and destruction at the hands of English settlers after 1607 is not in dispute. Ill-supplied and unable to provide for themselves amid terrible drought and bitter winters, the Jamestown colonizers soon faced starvation.⁸⁴ Members of the confederacy led by Wahunsonacock (Powhatan) saved the colony by providing food to the settlers. However, the colonizers soon began stealing their corn and attacking their villages.⁸⁵

EARLY WARS, ENSLAVEMENT, AND DISEASE IN THE SOUTHEAST

The Powhatans ended trade with the settlers and laid siege to Jamestown, which resulted in 160 deaths from hunger and disease in the winter of 1609–10. Scores of other settlers and Powhatan people were killed in battle before hostilities ended in 1614.⁸⁶ An epidemic, possibly related to malnutrition, erupted in 1617 and resulted in many more deaths among Native people than settlers.⁸⁷ War broke out again in 1622. Now led by Opechancanough, the confederacy's attacks on several English settlements along the James River left about 350 people dead.⁸⁸ The colonizers, in turn, poisoned about two hundred Indigenous people at what was announced as a peace conference in 1624.⁸⁹ The following year, the settlers killed about one thousand Pamunkey members of the confederacy and destroyed their town.⁹⁰ A

treaty in 1632 ended the fighting but not for long. In 1644, as the colonizers expanded their domain, Opechancanough's forces attacked them and killed between four hundred and five hundred people.⁹¹ The settlers, now numbering about eight thousand, struck back forcefully, killing Opechancanough and destroying the Powhatan resistance.⁹²

The subsequent growth of English settlements in Virginia and Maryland was disastrous for local Indigenous nations. Continuing violence, trauma, starvation, and disease led to many more Native deaths.⁹³ Conflict with Susquehannock (Conestoga) people and the rebellion against colonial authorities led by Nathaniel Bacon resulted in about three hundred deaths in Virginia in 1676–77.⁹⁴ By this time, English settlers had been trading guns and manufactured goods for deerskins and people captured by Native allies for more than two decades.⁹⁵ The relentless demand for labor in the Europeans' Atlantic colonies led to the growth of this slave trade.⁹⁶ As Kelton has noted, by 1698 "a thriving exchange network linked British colonies and Native communities from the James to the Savannah and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi."⁹⁷ The slave trade significantly changed "the social landscape" and the enormously increased "volume of human traffic" provided a new conduit for spreading acute infectious disease.⁹⁸ What Kelton calls the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic of 1696 killed tens of thousands of Native people throughout the region by 1700.⁹⁹ By the turn of the century, only about two thousand Powhatans and other Indigenous people remained alive in Virginia.¹⁰⁰ The combined horrors of colonialism likely caused more than a hundred thousand Native deaths in the Southeast between 1685 and 1715.¹⁰¹

EARLY WARS, ENSLAVEMENT, AND DISEASE IN THE NORTHEAST

In 1608, the French explorer Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec. For almost a century, French traders exchanged "guns, metal and glass goods, brandy, and foodstuffs" for moose hides and, more recently, pelts with the Mi'kmaq nation of what is today Nova Scotia.¹⁰² Dietary change, malnutrition, excessive alcohol consumption, and increased susceptibility to disease had killed thousands—more likely, tens

of thousands—of Mi'kmaq by the early 1610s.¹⁰³ The subsequent expansion of the French fur trade with the Wendat (Huron) in present-day Ontario led to the spread of disease and the arming of these Native allies for attacks on the Haudenosaunee confederacy, some of whom lived in what is today New York State. In the 1630s, smallpox killed as many as ten thousand Wendats, and hundreds of others died in battles.¹⁰⁴ About ten thousand Haudenosaunee people also perished from smallpox in the same decade.¹⁰⁵ The Wendats eventually lost their ancestral homelands, and many of them migrated to other lands, including the present-day United States.¹⁰⁶ After the Inoca (Illinois) Confederacy began trading goods and captives with the French, they lost between 7,500 and 17,500 people to calamitous epidemics and war with the Haudenosaunees and Mesquakies (Fox).¹⁰⁷ Many members of these nations also died in wars with the French and their Native allies.¹⁰⁸

In 1620, English settlers founded Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts. Four years before their arrival, an acute epidemic had killed thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of Wampanoag, Pawtucket, Abnaki, and Massachuset people along the coast.¹⁰⁹ In 1624, the Dutch established a settlement at New Amsterdam in what is now Manhattan. In 1630, the English founded Massachusetts Bay Colony near present-day Boston. Three years later, a smallpox epidemic devastated the Indigenous nations in the areas near the English settlements and the Pequots and Mohegans in what became Connecticut and the Haudenosaunees in present-day New York State. Tens of thousands of Native people died, as did a much smaller number of settlers.¹¹⁰ Other diseases followed, as did violent conflicts. After Pequots killed an English trader during a commercial dispute with the Dutch in 1634, Massachusetts Bay Colony leaders refused to accept restitution and exploited the crisis to seize additional Pequot lands. The colonizers launched what Dunbar-Ortiz has called “a hideous war of annihilation.”¹¹¹ The Pequot War of 1636–37 resulted in 1,500 to 1,800 Native deaths.¹¹²

Between 1643 and 1645, Dutch settlers sought to exterminate Lenapes (Delawares) and other Indigenous peoples who resisted

encroachments on their land and refused to pay tribute. Along with English and Mohawk allies, the Dutch killed more than 1,600 Lenapes.¹¹³ In 1675, the Wampanoag chief Metacom led his nation, the Narragansetts, and the Nipmucks in a sustained assault on the English colonies in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.¹¹⁴ During what became known as King Philip's War, the settlers recruited Native allies and formed the first ranger forces to engage in "wilderness warfare" against their Indigenous enemies.¹¹⁵ Colonial officials began paying bounties for the scalps of Native men, women, and children.¹¹⁶ Metacom's forces threatened the survival of these colonies but were eventually defeated. About six thousand Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Nipmuck people were killed, and about three thousand settlers died before the war finally ended.¹¹⁷ The historic defeat suffered by these Indigenous peoples opened the door to the expansion of the New England colonies during the next half-century.¹¹⁸ The ensuing loss of Native peoples' "land base . . . hunting grounds, and fisheries" led to more poverty, malnutrition, and vulnerability to disease.¹¹⁹ By the end of the century, New England's Indigenous population had declined from at least 70,000 in 1600 to about 12,000.¹²⁰

THE DESTRUCTION OF NATIVE PEOPLES IN NUEVO MÉXICO AND LA FLORIDA

Five years after King Philip's War began, the Pueblo peoples in Santa Fe de Nuevo México revolted against the Spanish colonizers. For eight decades, these invaders had subjected the Pueblo to violence and abuse, required tribute or labor from them, promoted the slave trade, and benefited from their impoverishment.¹²¹ During this time, smallpox, typhus, and other diseases had greatly diminished the Native population.¹²² When the Pueblo rose up in 1680, they lost about three hundred people but killed about four hundred Spaniards and forced the surviving settlers to flee to El Paso.¹²³ Nine years later, soldiers led by the Spanish governor attempted to reconquer the region. They destroyed the main village, Tsiya (Zia), and killed about six hundred inhabitants but were not strong enough to reconquer the other towns

and had to withdraw.¹²⁴ However, in 1692, a new Spanish governor returned with three hundred troops, attacked the town of Jemez, and killed eighty-four people.¹²⁵ The Spaniards violently repressed other Indigenous resistance and reestablished control of the region by 1696.¹²⁶ Only about 15,000 Pueblo people remained alive at the end of the seventeenth century.¹²⁷

In Spanish Florida, the growth of missions and trade proved to be deadly for Indigenous communities in the seventeenth century.¹²⁸ The Spaniards did far more than proselytize the many Timucuas, Apalachees, and Guales they reached. As in the Southwest, the Spaniards required tribute and labor by Natives, which, combined with dietary changes, malnutrition, and poor health, reduced their resistance to diseases.¹²⁹ At the same time, Spanish colonialism also “removed buffer zones that had previously separated the Timucuas, the Apalachees, and the Guales” and these communities “became links in a chain of supplies traveling to and from St. Augustine,” and from other countries and other colonies.¹³⁰ This transformation of the “social landscape” in Florida fostered the transmission of European pathogens to Indigenous communities, and the results were devastating.¹³¹ Beginning in 1617, smallpox and other epidemics struck Natives repeatedly, killing perhaps scores of thousands.¹³² Decades later, slave raids by English settlers from the Carolina colony and their Indigenous allies struck new blows against the Natives of Florida.¹³³ By the mid-eighteenth century, the Timucuas, Apalachees, Guales, and other original inhabitants of Florida had been virtually wiped out.¹³⁴

FROM KING WILLIAM’S WAR TO THE YAMASEE WAR

Many Indigenous people died during the four colonial wars fought by England (Britain after the Act of Union in 1707), France, and Spain for control of North America between 1689 and 1763. During King William’s War of 1689–97, the first colonial war between the English and the French, between two thousand and six thousand members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy perished when French and allied

Native forces destroyed their villages during the conflict.¹³⁵ Hundreds of other Indigenous peoples allied with France also died.¹³⁶ By the time that representatives of forty Indigenous nations met in Montreal in 1701 to end long-standing hostilities among themselves and with the French, war and diseases had already substantially reduced their numbers.¹³⁷

During Queen Anne's War of 1702–1713, which pitted the English against the Spaniards and the French, Native peoples “suffered the greatest.”¹³⁸ In 1703–1704, English settlers and Muscogee (Creek) allies killed more than 1,100 Apalachee people in Spanish missions in Florida and enslaved several thousand others.¹³⁹ As Gary Clayton Anderson has pointed out, the war “left virtually all of Spanish Florida in ruins and the lands of the Indians nearly vacated.”¹⁴⁰ In 1712, a contingent of French troops and several hundred Ottawa and Potawatomi fighters near Detroit killed about one thousand Mesquakies and Mascoutens, whom they viewed as potential British allies.¹⁴¹ By then, the Tuscaroras in North Carolina had begun to fight back against the British settlers who were seizing more of their lands and spreading deadly diseases.

During the Tuscarora War of 1711–13, more than 220 settlers and soldiers and thirty-five Yamasee allies perished.¹⁴² About 1,400 Tuscaroras and allied Corees died, and another thousand were enslaved.¹⁴³ Most Tuscarora survivors migrated to New York and became part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.¹⁴⁴ The Yamasees, who had already lost many people to smallpox and other epidemics, soon learned that their alliance with the colonizers provided little benefit.¹⁴⁵ After settlers and speculators began taking control of their lands in South Carolina and colonial traders' fraud and brutality mounted, the Yamasees acted to defend themselves. During the Yamasee War of 1715–18, they joined with Muscogees, Catawbas, Apalachees, and other Indigenous peoples to attack colonial settlements. Together, the Indigenous forces killed about four hundred settlers, but about three hundred Yamasees died or were enslaved.¹⁴⁶ Yamasee survivors fled to what is now Georgia and Florida. The massive Indigenous depopulation in the Southeast largely ended the

British trade in captured Natives and led them to increasingly rely on the labor of enslaved Africans.¹⁴⁷

NEW FRENCH AGGRESSION FROM THE GREAT LAKES TO MISSISSIPPI

A decade after the Yamasee War, French colonizers and their allies struck new blows against Indigenous people in present-day Wisconsin, Illinois, and Mississippi. Although the Mesquakies had made peace with the French in 1716, the colonizers refused to free enslaved members of their nation or abandon the lucrative slave trade.¹⁴⁸ In turn, the Mesquakies renewed their interference with the French fur trade in the Mississippi Valley and areas to the West.¹⁴⁹ In 1727, the French encouraged their Inoca, Anishinaabe (Ojibway), and Ottawa allies to launch new slave raids against these old enemies, and a new war began.¹⁵⁰ In 1730, French troops and Native fighters massacred about five hundred Mesquakies in what is now Illinois.¹⁵¹ The following year, another three hundred died at the hands of France's Indigenous allies.¹⁵² In sum, several thousand Mesquakies had died by the early 1730s.¹⁵³ The few survivors joined the Sauk people, and both nations then migrated to the land that became Iowa.¹⁵⁴ In present-day Mississippi, war erupted in 1729 when the Natchez people refused the French Louisiana commander's order to abandon their main village so he could expand his plantation. Natchez fighters burned a French fort and killed more than 230 settlers, but the French soon counterattacked with the help of artillery and Choctaw allies. By early 1730, several hundred Natchez people had died, and the survivors were defeated and forced to leave their lands.¹⁵⁵

NEW EPIDEMICS AND EUROPEAN CONFLICTS OVER NATIVE LANDS

British settlers established the colony of Georgia in 1732. The Spaniards considered this an illegal occupation of their land, and tensions mounted. Before long, both groups of colonizers were appealing to the Tsalagis in Georgia for support. Governor James Oglethorpe's

soldiers and their Indigenous allies began attacking Spanish plantations in northern Florida and killing Native people and escaped enslaved people.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, new waves of disease were decimating Indigenous communities across the continent. In 1731–32, a new smallpox epidemic killed many Haudenosaunees and forced others to migrate and settle near Massachusetts and New Hampshire.¹⁵⁷ In the mid-1730s, smallpox struck the Great Lakes region, killing about two thousand Anishinaabes and about 75 percent of the Arikaras.¹⁵⁸ Smallpox reportedly killed several thousand Tsalagis in the Carolinas in 1738–39.¹⁵⁹ A series of smallpox epidemics also erupted in what is now California and Texas and caused many deaths in the 1730s and the following decades.¹⁶⁰

KING GEORGE'S WAR AND THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

The War of Jenkins's Ear between Britain and Spain erupted in 1739 and was the prelude to King George's War between Britain and France, 1744–48.¹⁶¹ These two conflicts were bloody and Indigenous people were not "unscathed in body or goods," though the total number of their deaths in this conflict remains unknown.¹⁶² The French and Indian War of 1754–63, part of the Seven Years' War and the final colonial war between Britain and France, proved disastrous for Indigenous people. Abenakis, Mi'kmaq, Anishinaabes, Ottawas, Lenapes, Shawnees, Miamis, Wyandots, and other Native nations supported the French, though some of these nations withdrew from the conflict in 1758. Although divided over the war, most Haudenosaunees joined the Catawbas and other Indigenous peoples to back the British.¹⁶³ Tsalagis initially fought alongside the British but turned against them after repeated attacks by their ostensible allies.¹⁶⁴ The offering of bounties for scalps in some British colonies encouraged frontiersmen to join local militias and ranger groups and kill as many Native people as possible.¹⁶⁵

Hundreds of Tsalagis died violently, and many more perished from disease and starvation during the Anglo-Cherokee War of 1760–61, "a distinct conflict within the Seven Years' War."¹⁶⁶ By the

mid-1760s, the Tsalagi population had declined by about two thousand during the previous two decades.¹⁶⁷ How many Anishinaabes, Menominees, Potawatomis, and Ho-Chunks (Winnebagos) died in combat is unknown, but more than 750 Catawbias and three hundred Menominees died from the smallpox epidemic, which the French and Indian War helped to spread.¹⁶⁸ The total number of Indigenous deaths from violence or disease during the war likely exceeded three thousand.¹⁶⁹ Britain's victory made it the predominant power in the eastern part of North America. But in the aftermath of the French defeat, the Ottawa chief Obwandiyag (Pontiac) launched a formidable rebellion to prevent British expansion in the Great Lakes region. Potawatomies, Wyandots, Anishinaabes, Kickapoos, Miamis, Senecas, and other local Native nations joined the Ottawas in what was called Pontiac's War.¹⁷⁰ The conflict lasted from 1763 to 1765 and resulted in the deaths of perhaps 2,500 British settlers and soldiers and untold numbers of Native people.¹⁷¹ Unable to defeat Obwandiyag and his allies, the British negotiated a peace treaty and issued the Proclamation of 1763, which pledged to prohibit colonial settlement west of a line drawn along the Appalachian Mountains.¹⁷²

THE COLONIZATION OF CALIFORNIA, THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, AND HAWAII

When the Spaniards established their first mission in San Diego in 1769, the Indigenous population of California was approximately 310,000.¹⁷³ This population declined to about 245,000 during the next six decades because of enslavement and violence by the missions, reduction of food supplies, diseases, and physical and social disruptions.¹⁷⁴ The Native population of the Pacific Northwest was approximately 180,000 in the mid-1770s when smallpox appeared, perhaps conveyed by Spanish expeditions landing along the coast.¹⁷⁵ About 25,000 Indigenous people in the area likely died from the disease in the next several years.¹⁷⁶ In the mid-1770s and early 1780s, smallpox also killed an estimated 13,000 Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras

in the Great Lakes region, approximately 10,000 Native people on the Plains, about 9,000 Pueblo and Nermernuh (Comanche) people in New Mexico, and thousands of other Indigenous people in present-day Texas and Arizona.¹⁷⁷ Thousands of miles away, the arrival of British explorer James Cook in Hawai'i in 1778 unleashed diseases that reduced the population of about 683,000 by almost 485,000 in a little more than four decades.¹⁷⁸

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

During the War of Independence from 1775 to 1783, both the insurgents and the British Crown sought support from Native peoples. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy was divided. Most Mohawks, Cayugas, Senecas, and Onondagas joined British and Loyalist troops while Oneidas and Tuscaroras aligned with the insurgents. The Tsalagis were also split, with some backing the Crown and others seeking peace with the rebels. Shawnees, Wyandots, Miamis, Chickasaws, and Choctaws supported the British, but Stockbridge Mohegans and Potawamis fought with the pro-independence forces.¹⁷⁹ Like the previous European colonial wars, the War of Independence was devastating for several Indigenous nations. In 1776–77, colonial militias destroyed dozens of Tsalagi towns and killed hundreds of their people in Tennessee.¹⁸⁰ One hundred or more Haudenosaunee warriors died in a battle against U.S. soldiers in Oriskany, New York, in 1777.¹⁸¹

The new U.S. government signed a peace treaty with the Lenapes to obtain their support during the conflict but did not honor it for long, setting an ominous precedent.¹⁸² In 1778, Major General John Sullivan's troops burned dozens of Haudenosaunee towns in New York and killed between 473 and 580 people.¹⁸³ The loss of their homes and food supplies led to thousands of other Haudenosaunee deaths.¹⁸⁴ In March 1782, a Pennsylvania militia massacred almost one hundred Lenape people in Gnadenhütten, Ohio, and the colonizers committed other massacres elsewhere.¹⁸⁵ Close to six thousand Indigenous people died because of the War of Independence.¹⁸⁶

U.S. EXPANSIONISM AND WAR IN THE OLD NORTHWEST,
KENTUCKY, AND TENNESSEE

The 1783 Treaty of Paris ended the war and recognized the independence of the United States. But as Dunbar-Ortiz has emphasized, this “did not end military actions against Indigenous peoples but rather was a prelude to unrestrained violent colonization of the continent.”¹⁸⁷ Although Russia established a settlement in Alaska in 1784 and Spain still claimed much of North America, it was the United States, “the first new nation” to free itself from European rule, that successfully built a new empire in the following decades.¹⁸⁸

The newly independent U.S. government immediately demanded land cessions from the Haudenosaunees and Indigenous nations in the Ohio River Valley. In the mid- and late-1780s, large numbers of U.S. settlers moved into the western frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania, the Old Northwest Territory ceded by Britain, the part of Virginia now known as Kentucky, and other areas inhabited by Native peoples.¹⁸⁹ In response to the demands for land cessions and the influx of settlers, about a dozen Indigenous nations formed an alliance to defend themselves and their homes.¹⁹⁰ Although a small number of Native leaders signed concessionary treaties with the U.S. government, most did not, and some began attacking settlers.¹⁹¹ In 1786–87, U.S. soldiers and militias burned several Indigenous towns and killed hundreds of their people in Ohio country.¹⁹²

By 1789, Miami, Shawnee, and other Native fighters had killed approximately 1,500 settlers in the region.¹⁹³ President George Washington ordered a massive military campaign that led to a conflict known as Little Turtle’s War, or the Northwest Indian War of 1790–95. In two battles in Indiana Territory in late 1790, the Miamis led by Little Turtle and the Shawnees led by Blue Jacket defeated U.S. forces sent to subdue them, killing more than 180.¹⁹⁴ The following year, a large Native army killed more than six hundred soldiers and militia and about two hundred camp followers at the U.S. post at the Wabash River in Ohio.¹⁹⁵ Indigenous warriors usually prevailed in intermittent

skirmishes during the next two years. But in 1794, General “Mad Anthony” Wayne’s troops destroyed Shawnee villages and fields and killed noncombatants along the way.¹⁹⁶ The U.S. forces defeated their adversaries at the Battle of Fallen Timbers near present-day Toledo.¹⁹⁷ All told, the United States lost more than one thousand lives during the conflict, and the Indigenous peoples lost more than three hundred.¹⁹⁸ Most vanquished nations agreed to peace terms in 1795 and sold much of their land to the United States, but Native resistance in the region was not extinguished.¹⁹⁹ Many more Indigenous people had died fighting the settlers in Kentucky and Tennessee from 1787 to 1795.²⁰⁰

GROWING THREATS TO NATIVE PEOPLES IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Indigenous population of the coterminous United States had declined to about 600,000.²⁰¹ War and disease took an additional huge toll in the first few decades of the new century. A new smallpox epidemic in 1801–1802 ravaged much of the central part of the continent, killing many Omahas, Poncas, Otos, Arikaras, Hidatsas, Mandans, Crows, and other Natives. The epidemic spread to the Pacific Northwest, New Mexico, and Texas as well, and thousands of Indigenous people died in these areas in the next several years.²⁰² By this time, as Dunbar-Ortiz explains, land speculators aiming to profit from “sales of occupied Indigenous lands,” slave owners requiring “vast swaths of land for cash crops,” and settlers seeking new lands fueled a new era of relentless U.S. expansionism.²⁰³ During his two terms as president, Thomas Jefferson threatened violence, authorized bribes, and exploited mounting Native problems with debt and alcohol to obtain about 200,000 square miles of Indigenous lands through thirty-two treaties.²⁰⁴ Moreover, after purchasing the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, Jefferson began to support the removal of Native peoples from the southeastern United States to areas west of the Mississippi River.²⁰⁵

THE WARS OF 1812

As in the War of Independence, Indigenous people fought on both sides of the War of 1812. More fought alongside British soldiers than with U.S. troops, largely because Washington's unrelenting drive to expel Natives from their lands led to "two parallel wars" between 1810 and 1815—one in the Old Northwest, and one in the Southeast.²⁰⁶ In the Ohio Country, the Shawnee chief Tecumseh led an alliance that included Miamis, Sauks, Mesquakies, Potawomis, Wyandots, Ho-Chunks, and other Indigenous peoples.²⁰⁷ Determined to defend their lands, this alliance began to attack U.S. settlements and military forces. In November 1811, soldiers and militia members defeated Tecumseh's forces at Tippecanoe Creek in present-day Indiana. Almost 120 combatants died in the battle.²⁰⁸ Indigenous fighters killed more settlers in the first half of 1812, but some Native nations were afraid to join his alliance. After the War of 1812 began, Tecumseh aligned with the British. His forces seized Fort Dearborn near present-day Chicago, helped the British capture Detroit, and killed a total of about five hundred U.S. soldiers, militia members, and settlers.²⁰⁹ But Tecumseh died in the Battle of the Thames in Ontario in October 1813. Thousands of other Indigenous warriors and noncombatants perished in the coming year, while others returned to their homes afterward, concluding that the much larger and better armed U.S. forces could not be defeated.²¹⁰

THE CREEK WAR AND THE INVASION OF FLORIDA

The Creek War of 1813–14 in the Southeast was also a ferocious conflict. Militant Muscogees, called Red Sticks because of their red war clubs, began attacking settlers in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee in 1812. They also attacked Muscogee accommodationists aligned with the U.S. government.²¹¹ The Red Sticks found considerable support among the Seminoles and communities of African Americans who had escaped slavery in northern Florida.²¹² In August 1813, the Red Sticks destroyed Fort Mims in present-day Alabama, killing as many as three hundred soldiers and settlers while losing as many as two

hundred fighters.²¹³ Three months later, soldiers and militia members killed about five hundred militant Muscogeans in two battles. Between late November 1813 and late January 1814, U.S. forces and Muscogean allies killed another five hundred Red Sticks.²¹⁴ In March 1814, General Andrew Jackson's forces killed more than eight hundred Muscogean fighters, women, and children at Tohopeka, or Horseshoe Bend, on the Tallapoosa River in Alabama.²¹⁵ Jackson's approval of the murder of noncombatants and mutilation of Native bodies made clear that he was indeed "a genocidal sociopath."²¹⁶ Altogether, around two thousand Red Sticks died in combat, and many others died from starvation and disease during the war, while about seven hundred U.S. soldiers and settlers perished.²¹⁷ Between 7,500 and 11,000 Native people died because of disease, combat, and related causes in the Wars of 1812.²¹⁸ The subsequent peace treaty required the Muscogeans—including those allied with the United States—to cede approximately 36,000 square miles in Georgia and Alabama.²¹⁹

As Jeffrey Ostler has noted, the defeat of the Indigenous peoples in the Old Northwest and the Southeast "accelerated the process of western settlement and encouraged ever more aggressive designs on the territory of Native nations."²²⁰ The U.S. government soon turned its attention to the Seminoles, African Americans, and Red Stick refugees in northern Florida. Officials in Washington were determined to crush Indigenous resistance, re-enslave the Black people, and replace the Spanish as the dominant power in Florida.²²¹ In July 1816, soldiers and sailors and Muscogean allies attacked Negro Fort, a fortress inhabited largely by African Americans and some Seminoles. The destruction of Negro Fort was the opening battle in the First Seminole War of 1816–18 and resulted in more than 270 African American and Seminole deaths.²²² In November 1817, after a few other small but deadly confrontations, the Seminoles killed forty-six soldiers and family members on a boat on the Apalachicola River.²²³ In the spring of 1818, Jackson's troops and allies destroyed several Seminole towns, killed about forty Indigenous people in a Red Stick village on the Econfinna River, and seized two Spanish forts.²²⁴ Spain ceded Florida to the United States the following year.

THE FORCED REMOVAL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FROM THE
EASTERN UNITED STATES

Although Russia had established Fort Ross north of San Francisco in 1812 and begun to exploit Native peoples' labor, its reach was quite limited, and it withdrew from the area in 1841.²²⁵ In 1821, the people of Mexico won their independence from Spain, yet this hardly entailed liberation for the Indigenous peoples there.²²⁶ However, the most significant threat to the Native population on the continent continued to come from the expanding U.S. Empire. Dunbar-Ortiz has explained:

Between 1814 and 1824, three-fourths of present-day Alabama and Florida, a third of Tennessee, a fifth of Georgia and Mississippi, and parts of Kentucky and North Carolina became the private property of white settlers.²²⁷

Support for the relocation of all Indigenous peoples west of the Mississippi River grew in this country. Southern political leaders wanted Native lands to “build the slave labor empire” and “use enslaved people to produce cotton for global markets.”²²⁸ Northern political leaders supported the removal of Indigenous peoples from their region because their “free labor empire” required new lands for “speculators, canal developers, miners, and farmers”—and for “discontented urban workers.”²²⁹

Jackson became president in 1829 and was committed to the expulsion of Natives from their remaining lands in the East. After Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, approximately 64,000 Choctaws, Muscogees, Seminoles, Tsalagis, and Chickasaws were forcibly relocated from their remaining lands in the Southeast to the Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory.²³⁰ About 24,000 Wyandots, Ottawas, Ohio Senecas, Potawatomis, Miamis, Sauks, Mesquakies, Ho-Chunks, Shawnees, Anishinaabes, Kickapoos, and other Indigenous peoples were compulsorily removed from their homelands in the North and resettled in various locations west of

the Mississippi River.²³¹ Although about 85 percent of the Native people in the Southeast were forcibly relocated, only about 50 percent in the North suffered the same fate.²³² Slaveholders believed they needed to deport all Indigenous people from the South, but capitalists, speculators, and farmers in the North could tolerate some Native communities.²³³ The forced relocations proved calamitous for virtually all the affected Indigenous peoples.

TRAILS OF TEARS AND DEATH

One Choctaw chief described the removal of his people from Mississippi to present-day Oklahoma in 1831–33 as a “trail of tears and death.”²³⁴ Approximately 2,500 Choctaws died from exposure, malnutrition, and disease while being deported or soon afterward.²³⁵ In 1832, a group of Sauks, Mesquakies, and allies led by the Sauk leader Black Hawk fought against their forced relocation from Illinois and Wisconsin. The Black Hawk War lasted several months and resulted in the deaths of as many as six hundred Indigenous people and about seventy U.S. fighters but did not prevent the Natives’ removal.²³⁶ The deportation of most Muscogees from Alabama occurred between 1834 and 1836, and Washington relied on state militia members and volunteers to capture or kill those who had fled to southern Alabama and western Florida. Approximately 4,500 Muscogees died during the removal process.²³⁷ In Florida, the Seminoles’ resistance to forced removal led to the Second Seminole War between 1835 and 1842. About two thousand soldiers, militia members, and noncombatants died.²³⁸ But the much larger U.S. forces killed about seven hundred Seminoles, deported sizeable groups amid the hostilities, and finally prevailed.²³⁹ As many as 1,300 Seminoles died while being removed from their homeland.²⁴⁰

The U.S. government began relocating Tsalagi people from their remaining lands in Georgia and Alabama in 1834, but most of the removal occurred in 1838–39. About two thousand died in internment camps awaiting deportation, and others perished on the trip to what is today northeast Oklahoma.²⁴¹ Members of this nation later

named the journey *Nunna daul Tsunyi*, which means “The trail where we cried.”²⁴² Approximately five thousand Tsalagis died during the removal or shortly after arrival.²⁴³ The deportation of the Chickasaws in 1838 occurred during a smallpox epidemic and led to as many as six hundred fatalities.²⁴⁴ Altogether, the removal of the Native nations in the South resulted in more than 14,000 deaths.²⁴⁵ The forced relocation of the Native nations in the North, which involved considerably smaller numbers of people and took place over two decades, produced about three thousand fatalities.²⁴⁶ Many more deaths followed the removals. By 1860, the relocated southern Native nations had lost another ten thousand people, and the relocated northern Native nations had lost another nine thousand people.²⁴⁷ In addition, about three thousand Omahas, Oto-Missourias, Osages, Ioways, and Kansas (Kaws) who already lived in what Ostler has called “zones of removal” perished between the 1840s and 1860.²⁴⁸

DISEASE, WAR, AND GENOCIDE: THE GREAT PLAINS, TEXAS, AND CALIFORNIA

War and disease brought by the colonizers were also laying waste to Indigenous nations in other parts of the continent. By the 1830s, the Nermernuh population had already declined by approximately twenty thousand in the previous several decades, primarily because of disease.²⁴⁹ In the early 1830s, as many as ten thousand Pawnees died in an epidemic.²⁵⁰ Then a massive outbreak of smallpox occurred along the Missouri River between 1836 and 1840 and spread to other regions.²⁵¹ The Mandans were almost entirely wiped out, and losses were suffered by Piegans, Blackfeet, Bloods, Akiraras, Hidatsas, Pawnees, Osages, Crows, Assiniboines, Kiowas, Ho-Chunks, and the Sioux peoples.²⁵² Farther south, the epidemic also killed many Apaches, Nermernuhs, and Cayuses, and reached New Mexico and Texas.²⁵³ Altogether, at least 17,000 Indigenous people, and possibly thousands more, died from smallpox in the central part of the continent between 1836 and 1840.²⁵⁴ In the 1830s, an outbreak of malaria killed perhaps 18,000 Chinooks and Kalapuyas in present-day Oregon.²⁵⁵

The Indigenous population of present-day Texas may have numbered in the hundreds of thousands before the European invasion but was reduced to between forty and fifty thousand by 1830.²⁵⁶ The spread of new diseases; wars with Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. settlers; malnutrition; and starvation had contributed to much of the depopulation.²⁵⁷ Some Native nations had become extinct or migrated by this time, but others had arrived in the area.²⁵⁸ In the 1820s and 1830s, hostile settlers forced the Karankawas and Tonkawas out of the lower Brazos and Colorado River valleys, killing about a hundred in the process.²⁵⁹ In 1836, the rebellion against Mexico by settlers and enslavers from the United States succeeded, and the Republic of Texas was created. Two years later, Texas president Mirabeau Lamar announced a campaign to exterminate or expel Indigenous peoples.²⁶⁰ The Texas Army and the newly formed Texas Rangers defeated and expelled the Kickapoos in 1838 and the Tsalagis and their allies in 1839. Several hundred Natives died during the fighting and subsequent flight.²⁶¹ Caddos and Wichitas were also forced to leave their homelands. In 1839–40, Texas forces attacked the Nermernuhs, Kiowas, and Apaches, killing hundreds and leaving even larger numbers to die from exposure or starvation.²⁶² Aggression against Natives continued after Texas became part of the United States in 1845.

In California, malaria and smallpox killed about 60,000 Indigenous people in the 1830s and early 1840s.²⁶³ What Sherburne Cook called “endemic disease, armed conflict, and destruction of food supply” caused another 40,000 deaths by the mid-1840s.²⁶⁴ The gravely reduced Native population of about 145,000 suffered even more catastrophe after the U.S. government, pursuing its putative “manifest destiny,” wrested control of California from Mexico during the War of 1846–48.²⁶⁵ The discovery of gold in 1848 brought about 80,000 new settlers to the territory before it became a state two years later.²⁶⁶ By 1860, more than 362,000 people lived in California, but the Indigenous population was rapidly declining.²⁶⁷ As Benjamin Madley has documented, between 1846 and 1873, soldiers, militia members, vigilantes, and individuals killed between 9,492 and 16,094 Native people “and probably many more.”²⁶⁸ Madley has rightly described

these intentional killings as “an American genocide.”²⁶⁹ This horrific violence, the destruction of villages and food supplies, forced relocations, enslavement, and diseases resulted in approximately 115,000 Indigenous deaths during this period. The Achumawi, Atsugewi, Klamath, Ataxum (Luiseño), Maidu, Modoc, Nongatl, Paiute, Pomo, Shasta, Tolowa, Wintu, Wiyot, Yana, Yuki, Yurok, and other peoples sustained grave losses. By 1873, only about 30,000 Native people remained alive in California.²⁷⁰

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN THE SOUTHWEST AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

In the decade and a half before the Civil War, other Native peoples languished because of conquest and colonization. When U.S. soldiers and settlers arrived in the New Mexico Territory in 1846, Pueblo and Diné people opposed them. U.S. troops and artillery quickly crushed the new Pueblo Revolt in Taos, killing about two hundred Indigenous people.²⁷¹ Hundreds more died when smallpox struck the area again in 1852.²⁷² Diné fighters in present-day Arizona and New Mexico engaged U.S. forces in small-scale combat between 1846 and 1860, and hundreds on both sides were killed.²⁷³ In present-day Oregon and Washington, the influx of settlers led to massacres and mounting violence in the late 1840s and the early 1850s.²⁷⁴ Measles, smallpox, and other diseases further decimated the Indigenous population there in the 1850s.²⁷⁵ During the Rogue River War of 1855–56, Takelmas, Tutunis, and their allies fought the invaders in southern Oregon but were defeated. About 250 Indigenous people and about a hundred settlers and soldiers died in the conflict.²⁷⁶ In the mid- and late-1850s, U.S. troops also fought Lakotas (Sioux) in present-day Wyoming; Nermernuhs and Kiowas in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas; and the remaining Seminoles in Florida. Hundreds more died in these confrontations.²⁷⁷

THE CIVIL WAR AND NEW WARS AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

During the Civil War of 1861–65, the U.S. government fought against

not only southern secessionists but also western Indigenous peoples who impeded the consolidation of its continental empire.²⁷⁸ Washington's wars against the Apaches and Yavapais in Arizona and New Mexico began in 1861 and continued for the next twenty-five years. In the first decade alone, more than 1,750 Apaches, Yavapais, and allies were killed, and more than 450 U.S. soldiers and settlers lost their lives.²⁷⁹ In Minnesota in 1862, Dakota (Sioux) warriors led by Taoyetaduta (Little Crow) began attacking the settlers taking their farmland, forcing them onto small reservations, and condemning them to hunger.²⁸⁰ The Dakotas killed an estimated eight hundred settlers and soldiers in just a few months while losing perhaps 150 of their own people.²⁸¹ A large U.S. military force soon suppressed the uprising, and President Abraham Lincoln authorized the hanging of thirty-eight Dakotas in December 1862, the largest mass execution in U.S. history.²⁸² Several hundred others died of starvation and disease while being relocated from Minnesota to the Dakota Territory in 1863.²⁸³ During the next two years, when U.S. troops pursued and engaged Dakota and Lakota combatants, as many as seven hundred Indigenous people and 110 soldiers and settlers died.²⁸⁴

By the fall of 1862, Shoshones, Paiutes, and Bannocks had been attacking settlers along the Oregon and California Trails for a decade, and the U.S. government acted to defend its westward expansion.²⁸⁵ In January 1863, a California militia massacred approximately 350 Shoshones in their village on the Bear River in Idaho, and hostilities ended later that year.²⁸⁶ But the larger, deadlier Snake War began several months later, and the Paiutes, Shoshones, and Bannocks fought U.S. forces in southwestern Idaho, central and southeastern Oregon, northwestern Nevada, and northeastern California.²⁸⁷ Approximately a thousand Indigenous people and two hundred settlers and soldiers were killed before the war ended five years later.²⁸⁸ By the late 1860s, more than two thousand people had died because of conflicts in Oregon in the previous two decades.²⁸⁹ In 1863–64, a regiment led by Kit Carson finally ended the resistance of the Diné people in Arizona and New Mexico. U.S. soldiers killed about three hundred fighters, burned their crops, and killed their livestock.²⁹⁰ With many people

“freezing and starving,” the majority of Diné surrendered.²⁹¹ More than eight thousand Diné people were forced to march three hundred miles to the Bosque Redondo reservation in eastern New Mexico. About two hundred people died during the relocation, and approximately three thousand died at Bosque Redondo, mainly from disease and malnutrition.²⁹² Those who survived were allowed to return to their ancestral lands in 1868.

After silver was discovered in traditional Indigenous hunting grounds in Colorado, the state government acted to forcibly remove local nations. In 1864, the Colorado Cavalry massacred at least 137 Tsetchestahase (Cheyenne) people and twenty-six Arapahos at Sand Creek, Colorado, which began the Cheyenne War.²⁹³ The Sand Creek Massacre led to a large mobilization of Lakota, Tsetchestahase, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Nermernuh warriors against U.S. and Confederate forces across the plains from the Dakota Territory to Texas.²⁹⁴ From 1866 to 1868, Lakota Chief Mahpíya Lúta (Red Cloud) led the resistance against the construction of U.S. forts in Wyoming. The fighting resulted in the deaths of more than 240 U.S. people and more than 125 Natives.²⁹⁵ The U.S. government subsequently abandoned the forts, which the Lakotas and Tsetchestahases then burned. In November 1868, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and soldiers under his command massacred more than one hundred Tsetchestahases living on a reservation near the Washita River in what is now Oklahoma.²⁹⁶ More than 1,100 Native people, soldiers, and settlers had perished during the Cheyenne War by the end of the decade.²⁹⁷

FROM THE PIEGAN WAR TO THE SIOUX WAR

In the summer and fall of 1869, Piegans killed fifty-six white miners in the Montana Territory, and the U.S. Army quickly took revenge.²⁹⁸ In January 1870, soldiers massacred 173 Piegans in a village near the Marias River.²⁹⁹ In April 1871, U.S. and Mexican civilians and Indigenous allies massacred 144 Apaches at Aravaipa in the Arizona Territory.³⁰⁰ Renewed resistance by the Apaches and Yavapais in present-day Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico led to the

deaths of more than two hundred Indigenous people and more than five hundred U.S. and Mexican soldiers and settlers during the next several years.³⁰¹ The Red River War of 1874–75 erupted in response to U.S. settlers slaughtering buffalo herds on the southern Plains. Tsetchestahase, Kiowa, and Nermernuh fighters conducted raids in western Kansas, north Texas, and New Mexico before being defeated by the U.S. Army and Texas Rangers. More than eighty Indigenous fighters and dozens of noncombatants were killed, and about two hundred settlers, soldiers, and Texas Rangers died.³⁰² As Micheal Clodfelter noted, “The Red River War effectively ended frontier warfare on the southern Plains.”³⁰³ A quarter-century later, the U.S. Census listed only 470 Native people in Texas.³⁰⁴

In 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills of present-day South Dakota, and an influx of settlers and miners ensued. When the Lakota people refused to sell their sacred hunting grounds to the federal government, soldiers launched “preemptive strikes” to seize control of those lands.³⁰⁵ Thus began the Sioux War of 1876–77. When the Lakota people and their Tsetchestahase allies left their reservations to defend these lands, U.S. troops confronted them, and a series of violent encounters ensued. Dozens of Indigenous and U.S. combatants died in the first skirmishes.³⁰⁶ In June 1876, Tatanka Yotanka (Sitting Bull) and Tasunke Witco (Crazy Horse) led Lakota warriors, along with Tsetchestahase and Arapaho fighters, in a massive assault on Custer’s troops near the Little Bighorn River in southeastern Montana Territory. More than 260 soldiers, including Custer, and as many as one hundred Indigenous fighters perished.³⁰⁷ However, U.S. soldiers prevailed in the smaller battles that followed, and scores more Native people died.³⁰⁸ The Indigenous peoples’ resistance was overcome and the United States took possession of the Black Hills. Tatanka Yotanka and some Lakotas fled to Canada. Tasunke Witco surrendered in May 1877 and was killed in detention a few months later.³⁰⁹

FROM THE NEZ PERCE WAR TO THE LAST APACHE WAR

That same year, many Nimi’ipuu (Nez Perce) people in Oregon refused

the U.S. demand to move to a reservation in the Idaho Territory. Chief Joseph led several hundred warriors, women, and children on a 1,700-mile journey to Canada, where they hoped to find refuge.³¹⁰ They fought soldiers and settlers intermittently as they traversed Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. Approximately two hundred soldiers and settlers died, and more than two hundred Nimi'ipuu people perished along the way before they surrendered and were deported.³¹¹ In 1878, seventy-eight Bannocks and Paiutes and about forty soldiers and settlers died in battles in Oregon and Idaho.³¹² By the end of the century, only 35,000 to 40,000 Indigenous people remained alive in the Pacific Northwest, a decline of at least 140,000 since the mid-1770s.³¹³ U.S. military actions against the Tsetchestahase people in Kansas and Nebraska in 1878–79 and against the Nuu-ci (Ute) people in northwestern Colorado in 1879 led to scores of additional deaths.³¹⁴ Between 1881 and 1886, Nana and Goyaale (Geronimo) led Apache warriors into combat against U.S. and Mexican troops in Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. An estimated 630 fighters and noncombatants perished in the conflict.³¹⁵ After the destruction of buffalo by U.S. forces, approximately six hundred Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) people starved in the northern Plains during the winter of 1883–84.³¹⁶

THE GHOST DANCE MOVEMENT AND THE MASSACRE AT WOUNDED KNEE

By the late 1880s, Indigenous peoples in the United States had almost been annihilated. Largely confined to reservations, surviving Natives continued to suffer because of poverty, disease, the destruction of traditional ways of life, and the erasure of identity. Increasingly, white people forcibly took Indigenous children from their families and sent them to boarding schools that aimed to “kill the Indian and save the man.”³¹⁷ Amid such misery and hopelessness, Natives on dozens of reservations participated in a religious resistance movement known as the Ghost Dance. Initiated by a Paiute mystic named Wovoka in Nevada, this movement urged them to perform the Ghost

Dance, which, as Dunbar-Ortiz observed, “promised to restore the Indigenous world as it was before colonialism, making the invaders disappear and the buffalo return.”³¹⁸ Many Lakota and Dakota people embraced the Ghost Dance, and Tatanka Yotanka, who had returned from Canada five years after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, strongly supported it.³¹⁹

U.S. government officials feared that the Ghost Dance movement might lead to the renewal of armed resistance by Indigenous peoples.³²⁰ As a result, U.S. and allied forces moved against Tatanka Yotanka and against Natives still living outside reservations, who were derided as “fomenters of disturbance.”³²¹ Following government orders, Lakota police at the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota attempted to arrest Tatanka Yotanka in December 1890 and fatally shot him when his supporters resisted.³²² Seven Ghost Dancers and six police also died in this incident.³²³ Numerous Lakotas fled their reservations, and soldiers were dispatched to force their return. On December 29, 1891, U.S. troops massacred as many as three hundred Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee.³²⁴ This infamous atrocity marked the end of major Indigenous opposition to conquest and colonization. However, some limited but deadly skirmishes occurred during the next three decades.

THE END OF ARMED INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

In 1898, Anishinaabes on the Leech Lake reservation in Minnesota killed six soldiers and a Native police officer who were protecting loggers cutting pine logs on their land.³²⁵ In 1907, a dispute over the dipping of sheep turned into a confrontation near Fort Defiance, Arizona, which left three Diné dead and a dozen others sent to military prison.³²⁶ Two years later, allegations of theft of a wagon of smoked meat in Hickory Ground, Oklahoma, led to local deputies killing several Muscogees and their African American neighbors. Two deputies also died in the conflict.³²⁷ In 1911, a group of Paiutes left their reservation in Nevada and killed four settlers. A posse tracked down the Paiutes and killed nine of them, suffering one fatality.³²⁸

In 1914–15, Paiute and Nuu-ci people fought briefly against settlers and Diné policemen in Utah and Colorado before surrendering to soldiers. A total of six people died.³²⁹ In 1918, a band of Yaquis briefly fought U.S. forces in Bear Valley, Arizona, resulting in the death of the Yaqui leader.³³⁰ In 1923, Chief Posey led a small number of Paiute and Nuu-ci people in another conflict with settlers in Utah. The Native fighters were defeated, and Chief Posey later died from wounds suffered in battle.³³¹

THE NADIR OF THE NATIVE POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC RECOVERY

The Indigenous population in this country reached its nadir during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Census Bureau reported that the number of Native people in the coterminous United States was approximately 237,000 in 1900.³³² The Apalachee, Calusa, Erie, Guale, Karankawa, Massachuset, Mobile, Susquehannock, Timucua, Tompiro, Wappinger, Yahi Yana, Yamasee, Yazoo, and other Indigenous nations had been driven to extinction.³³³ By 1900, only about 28,000 Indigenous people remained in Alaska, and by 1920 just under 24,000 Native people were alive in Hawai'i.³³⁴ As noted earlier in this chapter, the Tainos of Puerto Rico had been all but wiped out by the mid-sixteenth century. Thus, in the lands that became the United States, the Native population of about six million in 1492 was reduced to less than 300,000 at the dawn of the twentieth century.³³⁵

Finally, the Native population in this country and the hemisphere began to grow again in the early twentieth century.³³⁶ In 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau identified almost 6.8 million people as American Indians and Alaska Natives.³³⁷ There are also more than 560,000 Native Hawaiians living in this country.³³⁸ As Thornton has pointed out, the demographic recovery of the Native population in the United States has been significant, but “much of the increase in the number of American Indians” in recent decades “was a result of changing racial definitions from one census to another.”³³⁹ Today, at least 54 million Indigenous people live throughout the Western Hemisphere.³⁴⁰

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HOLOCAUST CONTINUES

Although the “Indian Wars” have ended, the Indigenous Holocaust has not.³⁴¹ Various forms of violence have continued to destroy Native lives. Thousands of Indigenous men served in the U.S. armed forces during the twentieth century, and many lost their lives in the empire’s wars abroad. At least 360 Native Americans and possibly hundreds more died in action in the First World War. Approximately 550 perished in the Second World War. About 104 died in the Korean War, and about 226 were killed in the Vietnam War. At least three died in the Persian Gulf War, approximately thirty perished in the Afghanistan War, and about forty-three died in the Iraq War.³⁴²

Between 1900 and 2006, there were fifty-eight executions of Indigenous persons, bringing the official total since 1639 to 464.³⁴³ In the 1920s, white racists murdered scores of Osage people in Oklahoma in a far-reaching criminal conspiracy after the discovery of oil on their reservation earned them scores of millions of dollars.³⁴⁴ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, renewed Native resistance led to the occupation of Alcatraz Island and Wounded Knee and efforts to defend Lakota people against corrupt tribal leaders supported by the federal government.³⁴⁵ Washington and its allies were responsible for the deaths of more than sixty Indigenous activists fighting for sovereignty and self-determination during this period.³⁴⁶

Today police kill about twenty Indigenous people each year, a per capita rate that exceeds that of African Americans.³⁴⁷ Native people are now incarcerated at four times the rate of non-Hispanic whites, and scores die each year in jails and prisons.³⁴⁸ Homicide rates are about four times higher for Indigenous peoples than for non-Hispanic white people.³⁴⁹ Untold thousands of Indigenous women have gone missing in the past several decades, many of whom were murdered.³⁵⁰ And Native people have the highest suicide rate in the United States.³⁵¹

Vastly larger numbers of Indigenous people have perished since 1900 as a result of diseases, deprivation, and other perils inherent in the “colonial condition” and institutionalized racism.³⁵² At the beginning of the twentieth century, the mortality rate among Native peoples in the

coterminous United States was about 58 percent higher than that of the white population.³⁵³ The forced enrollment of scores of thousands of Native children in assimilationist boarding schools continued well into the twentieth century, and as many as 40,000 died from inadequate food and clothing, disease, and abuse, exposure after escaping, and related causes.³⁵⁴ In 1916, approximately 60 percent of all Indigenous children died within the first five years of life.³⁵⁵ At least eight thousand Indigenous people died from the Spanish flu in the continental United States in 1918–19.³⁵⁶ In 1924, a new federal law recognized Indigenous people as citizens but did not guarantee their right to vote or significantly improve their lives.³⁵⁷ Hundreds of Diné men who mined uranium in the western United States between the 1940s and the 1980s died from radiation exposure.³⁵⁸ Native fatalities caused by residing near abandoned uranium mines, toxic dumps, and other environmental dangers have not been counted but are likely considerable.³⁵⁹

In 1957, data on five leading causes of death among Natives indicated that their excess mortality rate was more than 60 percent.³⁶⁰ Although the creation of the Indian Health Service led to some improvements in the 1960s and 1970s, limited funding for medical services has contributed to deteriorating conditions for Indigenous peoples since then.³⁶¹ In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the mortality rate among Indigenous peoples in the continental United States is about 46 percent higher than that of non-Hispanic whites, and the mortality rate among Native Hawaiians is more than 40 percent higher than that of whites.³⁶² Indigenous infants are twice as likely to die in their first year as white infants.³⁶³ Native children between the ages of one and four years die at almost three times the rate of other children.³⁶⁴ Indigenous people die from diabetes, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, and accidents at least three times the national rate, and their rate of deaths from heart disease, influenza and pneumonia, and tuberculosis exceeds that of the general population.³⁶⁵

MEASURING SOCIAL MURDERS SINCE THE 1930s

The vast numbers of Native deaths that occur each year because of

disease, deprivation, and related conditions should be understood as social murders. As Engels wrote in 1845:

When society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet; when it deprives thousands of the necessaries of life, places them under conditions in which they cannot live—forces them, through the strong arm of the law, to remain in such conditions until that death ensues which is the inevitable consequence—knows that these thousands of victims must perish, and yet permits these conditions to remain, its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual.³⁶⁶

The federal government did not collect mortality statistics for the entire United States until 1933, Indigenous deaths have not always been recorded, and many Native decedents have been misidentified as members of another racial or ethnic group.³⁶⁷ Nonetheless, available information on mortality rates and estimates of the total number of Native deaths since the 1930s makes it possible to estimate the minimum number of excess deaths during this period.

The concept of “excess” deaths refers to the difference between the actual number of Native deaths and the number of deaths that would have occurred if Natives experienced the same death rate as whites.³⁶⁸ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have estimated that approximately 329,000 Native deaths occurred in the continental United States and Alaska between 1999 and 2019.³⁶⁹ About 46 percent of this total, more than 151,300, were excess deaths. If the same excess death rate is applied to the approximately 362,000 Indigenous people who were alive in the coterminous United States and Alaska in 1930 but, with rare exceptions, died before 1999, it appears that there were over 166,500 excess deaths in this cohort.³⁷⁰ In sum, at least 317,000 excess Indigenous deaths have occurred in the continental United States since 1930. This estimate is quite conservative because it uses the more recent 46 percent excess mortality rate and does not include

the excess deaths of Native Hawaiians during this period. Uncounted thousands of additional excess deaths must have occurred in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

THE DANGER OF CULTURAL GENOCIDE

As late as the mid-1970s, about 25 percent of Native children were routinely taken away from their parents and placed in foster or adoptive homes or boarding schools.³⁷¹ As in previous generations, white authorities sought to promote assimilation, not the welfare of the children.³⁷² Between 1970 and 1976, physicians sterilized about 25 percent of Indigenous women of childbearing age.³⁷³ As Brianna Theobald has remarked, “Some of these procedures were performed under pressure or duress, or without the women’s knowledge or understanding.”³⁷⁴ About sixty of the 175 Native languages still in use in 1998 disappeared in the next two decades.³⁷⁵ More recently, state and federal officials have violated the lands and traditional ways of life of the Lakota people to build the Dakota Access Pipeline in South Dakota and done the same to the Carrizo/Comecrudo nation to build sections of Trump’s border wall in South Texas.³⁷⁶ Racist stereotypes of Native peoples continue to permeate the media, and some professional and college sports teams continue to use racist names and mascots.³⁷⁷

However, there is growing public awareness of the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust. Thousands of people from diverse backgrounds joined the water protectors at Standing Rock in 2016–17.³⁷⁸ And by 2019, seven states and more than 130 cities were honoring Indigenous Peoples’ Day instead of Columbus Day.³⁷⁹ One poll indicated that 79 percent of college students support this change.³⁸⁰ Ironically, these positive developments come amid mounting evidence of the assimilation of Native peoples into the society that almost exterminated them. The 2010 census revealed that 44 percent of those labeled American Indians and Alaska Natives reported multiracial ancestry.³⁸¹ Approximately 62 percent of those identifying as Native Hawaiian also claim mixed heritage.³⁸² In addition, almost 60 percent

of Indigenous people in this country are marrying people from different national, racial, and ethnic groups.³⁸³ More than 70 percent now live in metropolitan areas.³⁸⁴ As Thornton has warned, “If these trends continue, both the genetic and tribal distinctiveness of the total Native American population will be greatly lessened.”³⁸⁵

COUNTING THE DEAD

How many people have perished in the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust in the present-day United States during the past five centuries? The total number of Native people who died in these lands because of invasion, conquest, colonialism, and related forms of oppression will never be known. Nonetheless, an informed and reasonable estimate can be advanced. If the Native population in what later became the coterminous United States was more than five million in 1492 and declined to about 237,000 in 1900, the loss of Indigenous lives in this country would initially appear to be around five million people. However, as Thornton has emphasized,

Such a population decline implies not only that some 5 million American Indians died during the 400 years but also that, in fact, many times the approximate figure of 5 million died, as new but ever numerically smaller generations of American Indians were born, lived, and died.³⁸⁶

In his books and articles, Thornton has not estimated the total number of Native deaths in this country, but he has recently suggested that perhaps twelve million Indigenous deaths occurred in the present-day coterminous United States between 1492 and 1900.³⁸⁷

To this staggering number must be added almost 800,000 deaths in Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawai'i by 1900 and well over 300,000 excess deaths in the continental United States since the 1930s.³⁸⁸ In sum, the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust in what is now the United States may be estimated to have taken more than thirteen million lives, and it continues today. This horrific toll is only a small portion

of the number of Native deaths throughout the Western Hemisphere since 1492. In addition to the approximately fifty-six million who died throughout the Americas by 1600, millions more died in “new but ever numerically smaller generations” during the next three centuries.³⁸⁹ Still others have perished because of state violence or social murders since 1900. It may be roughly estimated that between seventy million and eighty million Indigenous people have died because of colonialism, racism, and capitalism in the Western Hemisphere.³⁹⁰ Tragically, the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust in this country was only the first of the endless holocausts that have made the U.S. Empire what it is today.

The African American Holocaust

What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity.

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS,
ADDRESS IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, 1852

In the early sixteenth century, the massive decline of the Indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere forced the European colonizers to begin importing captive people from Africa to labor for them.¹ Marx observed in *Capital* that, like the oppression of Indigenous people in the Americas, “the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black-skins” was one of the “chief moments of primitive accumulation” that made capitalist production possible.² For 350 years, the wealth produced by enslaved Black people enriched Europe and its colonies, including the lands that became the United States. This wealth helped fuel the Industrial Revolution, fostered the global ascendancy of these regions, and contributed to the “Great Divergence” between wealthy and poor nations.³

As David Brion Davis has emphasized, the transatlantic slave trade “ranks as one of history’s greatest crimes against humanity.”⁴ The *Maafa* resulted in a catastrophic loss of life in Africa, the Americas, and the present-day United States.⁵ Vast numbers of Black people born in this country and other parts of the Western Hemisphere died because of the brutality and harshness of life under slavery.⁶ Many more have perished in the United States since the end of slavery because of various forms of white supremacist violence, poor health conditions rooted in racism, convict labor, mass incarceration, criminal homicides, participation in imperialist wars, and related forms of oppression.⁷ Despite some important social and political progress in the twentieth century, the African American Holocaust continues today.

AFRICA BEFORE THE EUROPEANS

In 1500, Africa was home to a population of perhaps one hundred million people who lived in many different kingdoms, states, and tribes.⁸ Significant achievements in science, mathematics, engineering, and architecture occurred in ancient Egypt long before the rise of Greece and Rome.⁹ Other large, highly developed African societies arose later: Kush, Axum, Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kongo among them.¹⁰ As Henry Louis Gates Jr. has pointed out, “The first iron technology in the world was developed in Africa.”¹¹ Like many Indigenous peoples in North America, African farmers were skilled and productive.¹² The continent was well endowed in natural resources, its diverse regions were traversed by trade routes, and commerce fostered by sub-Saharan and Arab merchants was significant.¹³ Gold exports from West Africa, Ghana, Mali, and Songhay helped promote economic development in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁴ Although many African peoples did not have written languages, their distinctive oral communications and histories were highly effective.¹⁵ Other African peoples had been using written languages for thousands of years.¹⁶ By the fourteenth century, the Islamic madrasa, known as the University of Sankore in Timbuktu, was a prominent center of learning that housed an extraordinary library.¹⁷

Slavery was traditional and widespread in Africa. Alexander Ives Bortolot has explained that “private land ownership was largely absent from precolonial African societies, and slaves were one of the few forms of wealth-producing property an individual could possess.”¹⁸ Ruling elites and tribal groups generally fought to extend their control over people and resources, and enslavement through war and raids was a long-standing characteristic of African life.¹⁹

As various researchers have remarked, enslaved people in Africa were traditionally given some rights, and their treatment generally was not as heinous as that suffered by those who were forcibly transported to other lands.²⁰ Nonetheless, it was still bondage.²¹ The Arab slave trade, which began in the seventh century and lasted 1,200 years, forcibly transported between nine million and twelve million Africans to Muslim North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, islands in the Indian Ocean, and the Indian subcontinent.²²

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Portuguese traders began shipping African captives to Europe in 1444, chiefly for use as domestic servants.²³ By the end of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese were transporting Black people to the Atlantic islands off the western coast of Africa.²⁴ Shortly after papal decrees articulated the “Doctrine of Discovery,” new Vatican edicts and a treaty between Spain and Portugal gave Spain the exclusive right to explore and trade with the “new world”—except for present-day Brazil—and gave Portugal the exclusive right to explore and trade with Africa and other non-Christian regions of the “old world.”²⁵ These two countries would dominate the transatlantic slave trade for the next century and a half.²⁶ Spain began sending enslaved Africans from Europe to Hispaniola in 1501.²⁷ As the large-scale depopulation of Indigenous peoples in the Americas unfolded and the colonizers’ need for enslaved labor grew, Madrid contracted with Lisbon to deliver Africans to the Caribbean.²⁸ In 1526, the Portuguese transported enslaved people from Africa directly to the Caribbean for the first time.²⁹ In the years that followed, Portugal transported millions

of Black people to various colonies in the Western Hemisphere.³⁰ Many died in Africa during Portuguese military interventions to establish colonies and dominate local states.³¹ In the following centuries, a much larger number perished as the Netherlands, Britain, France, Denmark, Sweden, Brandenburg (Prussia), the United States, and Brazil joined in the transatlantic slave trade.³² While traditional African slavery and the Arab slave trade continued, the transatlantic trade fostered the transformation of slavery into a mode of production on much of the continent.³³ Martin Klein observed: “Slave trading and slave production became the most important economic activities for many African states.”³⁴

A Dutch ship’s delivery of about twenty Africans to the English colony of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 is widely but incorrectly regarded as the origin of slavery in what is today the United States. More than a century earlier, in 1512, the Spaniards had begun transporting enslaved Africans from Europe to Puerto Rico.³⁵ Vázquez de Ayllón brought about a hundred of the enslaved to his ill-fated settlement in present-day Georgia in 1526, and their revolt helped to bring about its collapse.³⁶ In 1528, an enslaved African named Estevanico survived Narváez’s doomed voyage to present-day Tampa Bay and accompanied Cabeza de Vaca and two other survivors on their arduous six-year journey to Spanish settlements in what is now Mexico.³⁷ In May 1539, Black people held in bondage accompanied de Soto’s expedition in what is today the southeastern United States.³⁸ After the first permanent Spanish city was founded in St. Augustine in 1565, slave labor played a major role in the economic development of Spanish Florida.³⁹ British colonists initially treated Black people like indentured servants, but race-based slavery developed within a few decades.⁴⁰ The Dutch began importing African captives to New Amsterdam (New York City) in 1626.⁴¹ As labor shortages grew and the limits of indentured European servants became clearer, the British began transporting larger numbers of Africans to their colonies in the Caribbean and on the North American mainland.⁴² The French began importing African captives to the Louisiana Territory in 1710.⁴³ Paul Lovejoy has noted, “In the Americas, the primary purpose of slave

labor was the production of staple commodities—sugar, coffee, tobacco, rice, cotton, gold, and silver—for sale on world markets.”⁴⁴

THE NUMBER OF AFRICANS FORCIBLY TRANSPORTED
TO THE AMERICAS

Various researchers have estimated that between fifteen and twenty million Africans were forcibly deported to the Western Hemisphere between 1501 and 1867.⁴⁵ However, in *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, a seminal work published in 1969, Philip Curtin critically interrogated these appraisals and developed a significantly lower estimate. Curtin calculated that approximately 9.5 million Africans had been imported to the Western Hemisphere and acknowledged that this assessment was only “within a range of possibility” and subject to revision.⁴⁶ Curtin also said that perhaps 12 to 15 percent of those transported from Africa had died during the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean.⁴⁷ This meant that about eleven million Africans had originally been deported from their continent.⁴⁸ Many scholars have praised Curtin for rejecting previous larger estimates based on speculation and developing estimates based on concrete historical information such as shipping records, supply records, and port and colony documents.⁴⁹ However, debate and controversy over the number of enslaved and transported Africans did not subside. Ibrahima Baba Kake has criticized “revisionists” like Curtin, who, when writing about the transatlantic slave trade, “minimize both its scale and its consequences.”⁵⁰ The Guyanese scholar and activist Walter Rodney famously argued:

Any figure of Africans imported into the Americas which is narrowly based on surviving records is bound to be low because there were so many people at the time who had a vested interest in smuggling slaves (and withholding data).⁵¹

In addition, Joseph E. Inikori has challenged Curtin’s data and methodology, pointing out that the records Curtin studied did not

include information on all slave ship voyages and suggested that the number of people forcibly removed from Africa could be much higher than he estimated.⁵² In the decades following the publication of Curtin's book, new information about previously unknown slave ship voyages was discovered, and a great deal of new research has been conducted on the transatlantic slave trade.

More recently, David Eltis and David Richardson, working with a database that includes information on about 35,000 known transatlantic slave voyages, have estimated that about 12.5 million Africans were forcibly transported to the Western Hemisphere between 1500 and 1867.⁵³ Eltis and Richardson have found that approximately 1.8 million died during the Middle Passage, and about 10.7 million arrived alive.⁵⁴ The deaths on the voyage were largely the result of disease, malnutrition, dehydration, violence, physical abuse, despair, and suicide.⁵⁵ As many as 100,000 died in revolts aboard slave ships or on African coasts.⁵⁶ Other deaths occurred when slave ships sank.⁵⁷ Some researchers consider the work by Eltis and Richardson to be the gold standard on the transatlantic slave trade.⁵⁸

In contrast, Inikori, Yves Benot, and Nelly Schmidt have offered estimates of total deportations ranging from fifteen to eighteen million.⁵⁹ These writers may prove to be right in the future. As Lovejoy wrote about Curtin's allowance for adjustments to his own estimate, "The cautious historian expects that upward revision is more probable than downward."⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the Eltis-Richardson estimate of 12.5 million provides a helpful, if conservative, starting point for assessing the horrific loss of life associated with the transatlantic slave trade.

Over the centuries, most Black captives were transported to Brazil and the Caribbean.⁶¹ Eltis and Richardson have estimated the number directly transported from Africa to mainland North America over the centuries to be only around 391,000.⁶² In addition, approximately 72,000 Africans were brought to mainland North America from the Caribbean, especially Jamaica and Barbados, between 1619 and 1807.⁶³ About fifty thousand Black people were also transported to Puerto Rico.⁶⁴ In sum, more than half a million Africans arrived in the

present-day United States.⁶⁵ They represented a little over 5 percent of the total number brought to the Western Hemisphere and were primarily disembarked in the Carolinas-Georgia area, the Chesapeake, the northern United States, and the Mississippi-Florida area.⁶⁶

ESTIMATES OF DEATHS IN THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The death toll from the transatlantic slave trade in Africa, the Western Hemisphere, and the lands that became the United States was nothing less than a holocaust. Curtin has pointed out:

The cost of the slave trade in human life was many times the number of slaves landed in the Americas. For every slave landed alive, other people died in warfare, along the bush paths leading to the coast, awaiting shipment, or in the crowded and unsanitary conditions of the Middle Passage. Once in the New World, still others died on entering a new disease environment.⁶⁷

Rodney has also contended that the overall mortality figure would be many times the millions landed alive outside of Africa.⁶⁸ As Johannes Postma has remarked, Black people caught up in the slave trade “found death at every stage of their ordeal and, on the average, must have had a very short life expectancy.”⁶⁹

A century ago, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote that approximately fifty million Africans died in their native lands or “on the high seas” during the transatlantic slave trade.⁷⁰ Woodrow Borah has estimated that thirty million died in Africa or during the Middle Passage.⁷¹ Stannard has concluded that the total number of Africans who died in all stages of the transatlantic slave trade was between thirty million and sixty million.⁷² In contrast, other researchers have acknowledged the significant loss of life during the Middle Passage but eschewed efforts to estimate the total number of deaths resulting from this extraordinary crime against humanity. Curtin, for example, believed that “most of these losses are not measurable.”⁷³ Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman insisted that because scholars do not have the same kinds

of records for other stages of the slave trade as they do for the Middle Passage, “we cannot answer questions about the overall mortality in the transatlantic slave trade.”⁷⁴ Indeed, Klein has criticized “some recent scholars” for their “quite extraordinary figures” on the total number of African deaths.⁷⁵

These conclusions by Curtin, Klein, and Engerman are unconvincing. The 1.8 million deaths that occurred during the Middle Passage are clearly the best-documented fatalities of the transatlantic slave trade, and, indeed, comparable records do not exist for the much larger numbers of deaths that occurred in the other stages of the *Maafa*. Nonetheless, there is considerable historical information and contemporary research on the African wars and raids that produced most captives for the slave trade, the forced marches of captives from the interior to the coast, their imprisonment in barracoons while waiting to be forced onto slave ships, the period between their arrival in the Western Hemisphere and their transfer to slaveholders, their so-called seasoning in the Americas, and their subsequent experience of servitude. If one begins with the well-documented number of people forcibly taken out of Africa, works back through the prior stages of their captivity, and then considers the Middle Passage and subsequent stages of captivity and enslavement in the Western Hemisphere, it is possible to develop informed and reasonable estimates of the total loss of African lives associated with the transatlantic slave trade.

DEATHS ON MARCHES TO SLAVE FORTS AND IN BARRACOONS

The approximately 12.5 million people transported from Africa were the survivors of a much larger group that suffered grievous losses while marching from the point of capture to the slave forts on the West African coast and while awaiting transportation to the Americas. The distance traveled in many marches was often hundreds of miles and, in some cases, over a thousand miles. The time required to complete these marches ranged from weeks to months.⁷⁶ The captives were generally barefoot and chained together, and they were often required

to carry heavy loads as they marched.⁷⁷ The rigor of these forced marches, exposure to new disease environments and epidemics, dietary change, and the psychological impact of enslavement combined to produce many deaths.⁷⁸ Often captives who fell ill were killed or left to die along the way. Human skeletons were frequently found along the routes by those who followed.⁷⁹ When captured Africans arrived at the slave forts on the coast, they faced new dangers from diseases brought by the Europeans, the harshness of imprisonment in barracoons for months or even a year, and inadequate food and water. Captives who were not accepted by the European slave traders were sometimes executed or left to die.⁸⁰

Patrick Manning's estimate that four million captives died while still in Africa is far too low.⁸¹ The British abolitionist Thomas Fowell Buxton estimated in 1839 that approximately half of all captured Africans died before leaving the continent.⁸² Some contemporary researchers have reached similar conclusions. Charles Johnson, Patricia Smith, and colleagues also concluded that about half of those captured "never even made it to the slave ships."⁸³ Joseph C. Miller has estimated that about 50 percent of the Africans captured in the continent's interior died during the long march to the Angolan coast or while imprisoned in barracoons.⁸⁴ Jan Hogendorn has estimated that about 50 percent of those captured in Central Sudan perished on the journey to coastal West Africa.⁸⁵ If, as Eltis and Richardson have maintained, about 12.5 million Africans were deported from their homeland, and if this number represented only about half of those enslaved, then it may be estimated that approximately 25 million Africans were originally captured, and 12.5 million of them died between capture and embarkation.⁸⁶

DEATHS IN WARS AND RAIDS

Many other deaths resulted from the wars and raids that captured people who were later sold to European, U.S., and Brazilian slave traders.⁸⁷ Some armed conflicts were undoubtedly motivated more by political considerations than the drive to obtain and sell slaves.⁸⁸

But the development of the transatlantic slave trade fueled the proliferation of wars and raids, and they became endemic in much of West and Central Africa.⁸⁹ With the spread of firearms acquired from slave traders, the attacks also became more lethal.⁹⁰ Many died while resisting capture, and many who fled the fighting later died from disease or starvation because their crops, livestock, and homes had been destroyed.⁹¹ In addition, many enslavers died from armed resistance or diseases that spread through troop concentrations.⁹² Lovejoy has noted: “Deaths at the point of enslavement had a significant impact on the demography of the trade, but there is little information on the scale of such deaths.”⁹³

Although some prominent researchers have expressed the view that it is not possible to estimate the total number of these deaths,⁹⁴ there is sufficient historical information to develop a rough appraisal of this loss of life.⁹⁵ The British abolitionist Thomas Cooper estimated in 1787 that “for one slave procured, ten at least are slaughtered.”⁹⁶ Such a large ratio of captures to deaths surely did not occur everywhere in West and Central Africa for the duration of the transatlantic slave trade. The prominent eighteenth-century slave trader John Newton wrote: “Though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe the captives reserved for sale are fewer than the slain.”⁹⁷ In 1839, Buxton estimated that at least one to two Africans were killed for each one captured and enslaved.⁹⁸ The nineteenth-century German explorer Gustav Nachtigal found that Bornu raiders lost three or four people to deaths and escapes for each captive taken.⁹⁹ More recent research by Dennis D. Cordell has indicated that deaths at the point of capture in Central Africa ranged from 10 to 60 percent.¹⁰⁰ Miller has estimated that “overall loss rates in raids or wars” approximated 50 percent in Angola during most of the transatlantic slave trade but dramatically declined “late in the history of the trade” as enslavement through judicial and commercial processes became more typical.¹⁰¹ Adu Boahen, Jacob F. Ade Ajayi, and Michael Tody emphasize that “as many people were killed as were caught” in these wars and raids, and Michaela Alfred-Kamara has reached the same conclusion.¹⁰²

TOTAL DEATHS IN AFRICA AND ON THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

If about 80 percent of the twenty-five million Africans captured during more than three and a half centuries were seized in wars and raids, and if at least one African died for each one captured in this way, the number of deaths in wars and raids was approximately twenty million. This may well be a conservative estimate of those killed at the point of capture, and it does not include the deaths from disease or starvation suffered by survivors or the deaths among the aggressors.¹⁰³ When these twenty million fatalities are added to the estimated 12.5 million who died between capture and transport to the Western Hemisphere, it appears that a total of at least 32.5 million people perished in Africa because of the transatlantic slave trade. When the 1.8 million deaths during the Middle Passage are added to the deaths in Africa, the total number is 34.3 million, which is close to Borah's estimate of thirty million Africans lost in their homeland and on slave ships.

DEATHS AFTER ARRIVAL AND DURING SEASONING

More death awaited the approximately 10.7 million captured Africans who survived the Middle Passage. After reaching the Americas, slave ships often remained in harbors for weeks before the captives were sold to local slaveholders. About 5 percent of the Black people who arrived alive perished from diseases or other causes before they left the ships.¹⁰⁴ What Lorena S. Walsh has described as "the only extant North American quantitative study" found that 5.4 percent of Africans brought to Virginia between 1710 and 1718 perished before being sold.¹⁰⁵ The loss of 5 percent of African captives shortly after arrival in the Western Hemisphere amounted to approximately 535,000 additional deaths and left about 10,165,000 Africans alive.

Significantly more perished during "seasoning," the period of one to three years in which newly enslaved people began arduous physical labor and tried to become acclimated to their new environment. Slaveholders' violence and abuse, exposure to new diseases, overwork, harsh labor conditions, and suicide resulted in a mortality rate that has

been estimated at between 33 percent and 50 percent during seasoning.¹⁰⁶ In the study reviewed by Walsh, almost one-third of the Black people enslaved by one Virginia planter between 1733 and 1742 died within three years.¹⁰⁷ If about one-third of newly enslaved people died during the seasoning process, that amounts to more than 3.35 million deaths, leaving approximately 6.8 million alive.

SUBSEQUENT PREMATURE DEATHS OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE

Many of the enslaved who survived seasoning later died prematurely as a result of their enslavement. Many enslaved people who worked on Caribbean sugar plantations perished within eight to ten years, and most who labored in Brazil's gold mines died within ten to twelve years.¹⁰⁸ Death rates among the enslaved in the Caribbean and Brazil were higher than in the present-day United States, primarily because of poorer diets and the more rapid spread of disease in tropical environments.¹⁰⁹ But as Walsh has remarked, "Here 'lower' is indeed a relative term, one that describes something less than complete demographic catastrophe, but that tends to obscure exceedingly foreshortened life chances throughout much of coastal North America."¹¹⁰ Walsh has pointed out that the death rates in rice-growing districts in the Carolinas may have resembled those in sugar-producing areas in the Caribbean.¹¹¹ In Walsh's review "less than half" of the enslaved people in her study were alive after a decade.¹¹² For Walsh, records of slaveholdings with "proportionally few survivors . . . in the older age groups" suggest "dismally limited life chances" for most enslaved Africans.¹¹³ Individuals in their early fifties were often described as "very old," and those in their sixties "were rare indeed."¹¹⁴ Of the approximately 6.8 million enslaved people who remained alive after seasoning, it can be estimated that about 50 percent of them—3.4 million people—perished as the result of bondage within ten to fifteen years of arrival in the Western Hemisphere.

THE HUMAN TOLL OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

When the deaths during the Middle Passage, the interval between

arrival and sale to slaveholders, the seasoning process, and the following decade are added together, the total is more than nine million. Thus, an estimate of the total loss of life in the transatlantic slave trade can be advanced. When the more than nine million deaths in the Middle Passage and the Americas are added to the approximately 32.5 million deaths in Africa, it appears that a total of more than 41.5 million people lost their lives as a direct result of the slave trade. For every person who arrived alive in the Western Hemisphere, more than three had perished in Africa, and almost 70 percent of those who survived the Middle Passage were no longer alive a decade and a half later. This estimate of more than 41.5 million African deaths falls below the estimate of fifty million by Du Bois but exceeds the low-end estimate of 30 million deaths by Stannard. Future research may well disclose an even larger human toll. As only a little more than 5 percent of all captive Africans were sent to the present-day United States, it can be said that this part of the slave trade was associated with the deaths of more than two million people.¹¹⁵

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The *Maafa* was only the beginning of the African American Holocaust. The number of Black people forcibly transported to the lands that later became the United States remained small during most of the seventeenth century but grew to about 28,000 by 1700.¹¹⁶ In 1730, the African American population was more than 91,000, and by 1750, it had increased to about 236,000.¹¹⁷ By 1770, there were about 460,000 people of African descent in these lands, about two-thirds native-born.¹¹⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century, more than one million Black people were in the newly independent United States. About 80 percent had been born there, and almost 90 percent were enslaved.¹¹⁹ What demographers call “natural reproduction” distinguished the enslaved population in the present-day United States from its counterparts in the Caribbean and Brazil.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, extremely high mortality rates persisted among people transported from Africa, and

slavery exacted a grave toll among native-born Black people throughout the eighteenth century.

THE MURDER, TORTURE, AND ABUSE OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Untold numbers of enslaved people were killed outright or died from physical abuse by slaveholders or overseers. Tom Costa has noted, in Virginia in 1705, “A sweeping new law allowed planters to discipline enslaved people to death or, in some cases, to kill runaways without penalty.”¹²¹ This law also permitted the dismemberment of enslaved people who were deemed “incorrigible.”¹²² Some other British colonies passed similar laws.¹²³ Johnson, Smith, and colleagues have pointed out,

It was not uncommon to see a man’s, woman’s, or child’s back crisscrossed with raw scars, not uncommon to see Africans hobble about with missing feet, to see a ragged stump where a hand should be. It was not uncommon to see their eyes swollen shut, their hands bound in rusty iron contraptions, their bones broken. It was not uncommon to hear that someone alive was now dead, someone who had dared to stand tall before his master and say, in his own language, *No. No more.*¹²⁴

Moreover, as Derek N. Kerr has observed: “Countless fugitive slaves were killed in pursuit with no written records of their deaths occurring,” and others likely died from exposure, starvation, or disease during their flight from bondage.¹²⁵

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RESISTANCE AND REBELLIONS BY ENSLAVED PEOPLE

The horrors of slavery led to numerous acts of resistance, efforts to organize rebellions, and—occasionally—major uprisings in the colonies that later became the United States.¹²⁶ The first uprisings against

the British in Virginia occurred in 1663 and 1687. They were suppressed and their leaders were put to death.¹²⁷ An uprising in Newton, Long Island, in 1708 resulted in the deaths of seven whites and the subsequent execution of four Africans.¹²⁸ A rebellion in New York City in 1712 led to the deaths of at least nine whites and the execution of twenty-one enslaved people.¹²⁹ A planned uprising in Charleston in 1720 was discovered before it occurred, and at least several Black people were hanged or burned alive.¹³⁰ A large planned rebellion in Norfolk and Princess Anne counties in Virginia in 1730 was similarly crushed before it broke out, and four Africans were put to death.¹³¹ The discovery of imminent uprisings in New Orleans in 1730 and 1732 led to the execution of more than a dozen insurgents by the French colonial authorities.¹³² The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 resulted in the deaths of twenty-five settlers and fifty enslaved people.¹³³ Rumors of a “Great Negro Plot” in New York City in 1741 led to the execution of about thirty-four people, including four white abolitionists.¹³⁴ In 1767 in Alexandria, Virginia, enslaved Africans poisoned their overseers, and several rebels were executed.¹³⁵ In 1774 in St. Andre’s Parish, Georgia, several people held in bondage killed four colonists. At least two of the insurgents were burned alive afterward.¹³⁶

FLIGHT FROM BONDAGE DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

During the British colonists’ War of Independence between 1775 and 1783, some nine thousand to ten thousand African Americans—free and enslaved—served in the revolutionary army, navy, state militias, or non-combat capacities.¹³⁷ How many of these lives were lost during the war is unknown because surviving records did not identify U.S. casualties by race.¹³⁸ Signally, after Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation in late 1775 promising freedom to enslaved people who would support British forces, as many as 60,000 fled to the British army lines.¹³⁹ As Gary B. Nash has pointed out, this was the largest rebellion by Black people up to this point in North American history.¹⁴⁰ Thousands of the enslaved fought with the British forces or performed labor for them.¹⁴¹ Perhaps 25,000

who had sought British protection died of smallpox and other diseases during the war.¹⁴² Others were recaptured by U.S. slaveholders. When the fighting ended, 15,000 or more Blacks left North America with the British.¹⁴³ However, many remained enslaved by departing Loyalists, and thousands who relocated to the British Caribbean islands died because of yellow fever and hurricanes in the late 1780s.¹⁴⁴

THE SUPPRESSION OF SLAVE RESISTANCE AND REBELLIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

In 1786, militia members and Catawba allies destroyed a maroon community with a population of about a hundred in Bell Isle, Georgia. The escapees had taken food from local plantations, defended themselves with arms, and sparked fears of a large uprising among slaveholders. The assault on the community killed up to a dozen people, and one of its leaders was subsequently executed.¹⁴⁵ In 1792, six enslaved African Americans attacked a member of a slave patrol in Northampton County, Virginia. Three of the assailants were quickly apprehended and executed.¹⁴⁶ The next year, three Blacks were executed in Albany, New York, for setting fire to several buildings.¹⁴⁷ In 1795, dozens of enslaved people revolted in Point Coupee Parish in then-Spanish Louisiana. About twenty-five died in the uprising, and about twenty-five more were captured and executed.¹⁴⁸ That same year, escapees killed an overseer near Wilmington, North Carolina. Slave patrols subsequently killed five escapees; four more were captured and executed.¹⁴⁹ As many as twenty-two Blacks and whites died in armed conflicts in Prince William County and Southampton County, Virginia, in 1797 and 1799.¹⁵⁰ In addition to 621 executions for various reasons during the eighteenth century, hundreds of African Americans died in acts of resistance, efforts to organize uprisings, and rebellions against slavery.¹⁵¹

SOCIAL MURDERS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Africans transported to the present-day United States as well as their

descendants perished in vast numbers in the eighteenth century. The descendants of enslaved people generally experienced childhoods with inadequate nutrition, decades of hard labor, various forms of abuse and neglect, the frequent loss of family and friends, stress caused by unrelenting racism, and poor health conditions.¹⁵² Despite the paucity of records, it is possible to estimate the minimum number of social murders of native-born enslaved African Americans.¹⁵³ About half of those born into slavery in the nineteenth century died before the age of five—twice the mortality rate of the white population—and it is likely that this excess death rate was approximately the same in the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁴ For each of the 720,000 native-born enslaved African Americans alive at the end of the eighteenth century, about the same number died in their first five years. If enslaved children had experienced the same mortality rate as white children at this time, their death toll would have been about 360,000. This rough estimate of a minimum of 360,000 excess deaths is likely conservative because it does not account for excess deaths of enslaved African American adults and because the life prospects of free African Americans were not necessarily better.¹⁵⁵

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century witnessed significant growth of the African American population. By 1860, more than 4.4 million Black people lived in the United States. Almost all were native-born, and almost 90 percent were enslaved.¹⁵⁶ The African American population increased to almost nine million by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁷ Between 1774 and 1804, all the northern states moved to abolish slavery, though it did not entirely disappear there until around 1840.¹⁵⁸ After the War of Independence, the United States joined the ranks of slave-trading countries. Eric Foner has emphasized:

In the run-up to [the War of Independence], Congress banned the importation of slaves as part of a broader non-importation

policy. . . . Inspired by the ideals of the Revolution, most of the newly independent American states banned the slave trade. But importation resumed to South Carolina and Georgia, which had been occupied by the British during the war and lost the largest number of slaves.¹⁵⁹

Although the transatlantic slave trade was increasingly recognized as a crime against humanity and even some southern states passed legislation banning participation, South Carolina and Georgia imported approximately a hundred thousand African captives between 1783 and 1807.¹⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the outlawing of the slave trade that began in 1808, approximately fifty thousand Black people were brought to this country in the decades that followed.¹⁶¹ The *Clotilda*, the last slave ship to reach the United States, arrived in 1860 in Mobile Bay, Alabama.¹⁶²

U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE ILLEGAL SLAVE TRADE WITH CUBA AND BRAZIL

Some U.S. capitalists, slaveholders, and politicians were deeply involved in the illegal trafficking of Africans to Cuba and Brazil.¹⁶³ Between 1790 and 1867, more than 780,000 African captives arrived in Cuba.¹⁶⁴ Between 1800 and 1850, approximately 2.1 million arrived in Brazil.¹⁶⁵ Dale T. Graden has explained: “The transatlantic slave trade of the first half of the nineteenth century flourished partially due to the involvement of U.S. merchants and the capital of U.S. investors.”¹⁶⁶ From 1815 to 1860, as many as a thousand U.S.-built ships, sold or leased to “known slave traders,” carried more than one million Black people to Cuba and Brazil.¹⁶⁷ Dry foods, alcohol, muskets, gunpowder, and other vital provisions made in the United States and Europe were sold to slave depots on the west coast of Africa. U.S. consuls and naval officers provided diplomatic cover for the illegal trafficking and helped slave ships evade capture by British naval patrols.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the United States was partly responsible for roughly 3.7 million

deaths in Africa, Cuba, and Brazil during the illegal transatlantic slave trade.¹⁶⁹ As Stephen Chambers has noted, complicity in the suffering and servitude of Africans forcibly transported to Cuba and Brazil enriched many U.S. capitalists and slaveholders and contributed to the expansion of the U.S. Empire.¹⁷⁰

THE SECOND MIDDLE PASSAGE

During the first half of the nineteenth century, about one million Blacks were forcibly relocated from the Upper South—Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky—to the Deep South—Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.¹⁷¹ The number of enslaved people involved in this “second Middle Passage” far exceeded the number of captives originally brought from Africa to mainland North America.¹⁷² As Ira Berlin has pointed out, this process was driven by “a seemingly insatiable demand for cotton and an expanding market for sugar.”¹⁷³ Edward E. Baptist has explained that cotton “was the key raw material during the first century of the industrial revolution” and “the returns from the cotton monopoly powered the modernization of the rest of the American economy.”¹⁷⁴ During the first two decades of the century, slaveholders moving west and south brought most of the people they had enslaved with them.¹⁷⁵ Over time, a massive slave trade developed as enslavers in the Upper South contracted with “a new group of merchants whose sole business became the trade in human beings.”¹⁷⁶ About two-thirds of those deported to the Deep South were victims of this new internal slave trade.¹⁷⁷ Many enslaved people were transported by flatboats, steamboats, and trains, and many were forcibly marched.¹⁷⁸ The longest part of this “Slave Trail of Tears” stretched for a thousand miles, and coffles, men in chains, often walked for ten hours a day or more, marshaled by slave drivers with guns and whips.¹⁷⁹ Berlin has emphasized that this “second Middle Passage” continued until the Civil War began and was “traumatic and often deadly.”¹⁸⁰ Uncounted thousands died from violence, exhaustion, exposure, and diseases.¹⁸¹

MURDER, TORTURE, AND ABUSE OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

Although slaveholders often claimed that economic self-interest precluded the abuse of enslaved people, the writings of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Solomon Northup, Harriet Jacobs, and others have eloquently attested to the horrors of bondage.¹⁸² The American Anti-Slavery Society reported in 1839 that the enslaved were

frequently flogged with terrible severity, have red pepper rubbed into their lacerated flesh, and hot brine, spirits of turpentine, etc. poured over the gashes to increase the torture . . . they are often stripped naked, their backs and limbs cut with knives, bruised and mangled by scores and hundreds of blows with the paddle, and terribly torn by the claws of cats . . . they are often hunted with blood hounds and shot down like beasts, or torn in pieces by dogs . . . they are often suspended by the arms and whipped and beaten till they faint, and when revived by restoratives, beaten again till they faint, and sometimes till they die . . . their ears are often cut off, their eyes knocked out, their bones broken, their flesh branded with red hot irons . . . they are maimed, mutilated, and burned to death over slow fires.¹⁸³

The number of enslaved people murdered outright or who died because of beatings, floggings, or torture during the nineteenth century is unknown but was undoubtedly substantial.¹⁸⁴ Another kind of grotesque abuse occurred when gynecology pioneer J. Marion Sims and other white surgeons performed experimental surgery on enslaved Black women and infants without consent or anesthesia.¹⁸⁵

FLIGHT FROM BONDAGE BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

From 1830 until 1860, between thirty thousand and 150,000 people of African descent escaped from servitude.¹⁸⁶ Sometimes they were

aided by the Underground Railroad, which Foner has described as “an interlocking series of local networks.”¹⁸⁷ Many eventually found freedom in the Northeast or in Canada. But many others were captured and either killed or harshly punished and returned to bondage. Still others perished from exposure, disease, starvation, or racist violence.¹⁸⁸ Beginning in the 1820s, the American Colonization Society, supported by slaveholders, other white supremacists, and the U.S. government, transported between 12,000 and 13,000 African Americans to its new colony in Liberia.¹⁸⁹ About 4,500 had been born free, and the rest had been “emancipated from slavery on the condition that they leave the country.”¹⁹⁰ Approximately two thousand died on the way to Liberia or shortly after arrival, primarily because of disease.¹⁹¹

NINETEENTH-CENTURY RESISTANCE AND REBELLIONS BY ENSLAVED PEOPLE

More than a thousand African Americans perished during the nineteenth century because they participated in acts of resistance, efforts to organize uprisings or rebellions against slavery, or because they formed maroon communities.¹⁹² Hundreds of enslaved people planned to join Gabriel’s Rebellion near Richmond, Virginia, in 1800, but they were betrayed, and the uprising was crushed before it began. Gabriel Prosser and approximately thirty-four others were executed.¹⁹³ Other substantial revolts were suppressed in rural Virginia and North Carolina in 1802, and at least fifty-two Black people were put to death afterward.¹⁹⁴ Inspired by the successful Haitian Revolution of 1804, more than five hundred enslaved people participated in a highly organized rebellion in the German Coast region near New Orleans in present-day Louisiana in 1811. U.S. soldiers and slaveholders’ militia drowned the rebellion in blood, killing or executing sixty-six insurgents at the site of the battle.¹⁹⁵ Other participants in the uprising were tried and executed later, and the total number of African American deaths was likely about one hundred.¹⁹⁶ After the War of 1812 began, about four thousand Black people escaped bondage in Virginia and Maryland and sought refuge with the British forces,

who promised them freedom and resettlement. Some of the newly emancipated African Americans joined the British Colonial Marines, fought against the U.S. Army, and participated in the burning of the White House.¹⁹⁷

In 1816, a plot to burn slaveowners' homes and launch an uprising near Camden, South Carolina, was betrayed and thwarted. Six leaders of the planned rebellion were executed.¹⁹⁸ Around the same time, state militia destroyed two maroon communities in that state, killing or capturing all their members.¹⁹⁹ The destruction of Negro Fort in northern Florida by U.S. forces in 1816 resulted in more than 270 African American and Seminole deaths.²⁰⁰ Three years later, a conspiracy to set fire to buildings in Augusta, Georgia, and ignite a rebellion was disclosed to local authorities and suppressed. Afterward, several insurgents were put to death.²⁰¹ In 1822, Denmark Vesey, who was born into bondage but had purchased his freedom, planned a rebellion in Charleston, South Carolina. Hundreds of enslaved African Americans joined him, but a few participants betrayed them. Vesey and thirty-six enslaved people were subsequently condemned and executed.²⁰² The following year, militias destroyed maroon communities in Norfolk County, Virginia, and near Pineville, South Carolina, killing some Black people at the time and executing others afterward.²⁰³ In 1826, seventy-seven African Americans transported down the Ohio River by enslavers for sale in the Deep South escaped confinement, killed five white men on the boat, and fled to Indiana. All of them were later captured, and five were executed.²⁰⁴

In 1829 and 1830, fires thought to be set by enslaved people destroyed or partly destroyed buildings in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Maryland.²⁰⁵ An 1829 rebellion in a coffer being brought south from Maryland resulted in two enslavers' deaths in Virginia and six African Americans' subsequent capture and execution.²⁰⁶ An 1830 assault by North Carolina militia killed as many as sixty Blacks who had escaped slavery and were reportedly planning an uprising.²⁰⁷

In 1831, scores of enslaved people and a few free African Americans supported Nat Turner's Rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia.

The insurgents killed fifty-seven slaveholders and their family members before the uprising was crushed.²⁰⁸ Virginia militia and racist mobs responded by killing more than a hundred Black people, many of whom were not involved in the rebellion.²⁰⁹ In addition, Turner and about nineteen other insurgents were executed.²¹⁰ In 1837, after plans for a rebellion near Alexandria, Louisiana, were betrayed, nine enslaved people and three free African Americans were executed, and seven other enslaved people were killed by vigilantes.²¹¹ In 1848, seventy-five armed enslaved people fled Fayette County, Kentucky, intending to reach freedom. However, battles with white pursuers resulted in two deaths, and three leaders of the escape were hanged.²¹²

As mounting tensions over slavery moved the country closer to civil war, enslaved people's resistance and efforts to organize rebellions continued, and panic among slaveholders and other white people mounted.²¹³ In 1856, the discovery of a planned uprising in Colorado County, Texas, led to the severe whipping of two hundred African Americans, the subsequent death of two from their wounds, and the execution of three reported leaders.²¹⁴ That same year, Tennessee authorities discovered that enslaved ironworkers were preparing for a rebellion, hanged nine at the Cumberland River Iron Works, and executed nineteen more in Dover.²¹⁵ In 1858, near Coffeeville, Mississippi, an armed slave revolt on the plantation owned by the widow of former President James K. Polk was violently suppressed.²¹⁶ In 1859, five African Americans joined John Brown, two of his sons, and other white abolitionists in the historic raid on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). Ten of the participants were killed or died from injuries, and several others, including Brown, were executed.²¹⁷ Brown was prescient when he wrote, "The crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away, but with blood."²¹⁸ The following year, Alabama officials killed at least twenty-five African Americans and four whites suspected of planning an uprising in four towns.²¹⁹ Between mid-1861 and mid-1863, pro-slavery forces in Mississippi executed as many as two hundred African Americans whom they viewed as subversive.²²⁰

MILITARY SERVICE AND FLIGHT FROM BONDAGE
DURING THE CIVIL WAR

During the Civil War between 1861 and 1865, approximately half a million enslaved people escaped to freedom and sought protection behind U.S. military lines.²²¹ This was undoubtedly the largest slave rebellion in the history of the United States. Although President Abraham Lincoln initially opposed military service by African Americans, high Union casualties and the need for more troops led him to reverse his position by late 1862. Subsequently, more than 200,000 Black men, most of them escaped enslaved people, served in the U.S. Army and Navy during the conflict.²²² As Lincoln later said, “Without the military help of the Black freedmen, the war against the South could not have been won.”²²³ But they paid a heavy price for their service. About ten thousand died in combat or from injuries, another thirty thousand died from infections and diseases, and almost thirty thousand more were reported as missing.²²⁴ Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest’s troops massacred almost three hundred Black troops after they surrendered at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, in 1864.²²⁵ That same year, Confederate soldiers executed scores of African American prisoners of war at Saltville, Virginia.²²⁶ Other Black people also suffered greatly during the Civil War and its aftermath. In New York City in 1863, racist whites outraged by the draft, wealthy men’s evasion of military service, and competition for jobs with African Americans rioted for several days. Although official records listed about a hundred fatalities, approximately five hundred people—mainly African Americans—died.²²⁷ Racist riots in Boston and Detroit resulted in more Black deaths.²²⁸

As James Downs has pointed out, the Civil War also brought about “the largest biological crisis of the nineteenth century.”²²⁹ Many more Union and Confederate soldiers died from diseases than from combat, and the half-million African Americans who had fled slavery suffered more than anyone. Downs has explained:

Disease and sickness had a more devastating and fatal effect

on emancipated slaves than on soldiers since ex-slaves often lacked the basic necessities to survive. Emancipation liberated bondpeople from slavery, but they often lacked clean clothing, adequate shelter, proper food, and access to medicine in their escape toward Union lines.²³⁰

Many died while traveling to U.S. military camps, and many others died after arriving.²³¹ Smallpox, dysentery, pneumonia, and other diseases claimed the lives of 150,000 or more formerly enslaved people during the Civil War.²³² Approximately 350,000 other African Americans perished from disease in the years following the Confederate surrender at Appomattox in 1865.²³³

THE RACIST REIGN OF TERROR AGAINST RECONSTRUCTION

The postwar project of reconstructing a more egalitarian social order in the South initially achieved a great deal. Between 1865 and 1870, new amendments to the U.S. Constitution outlawed slavery, promised all persons due process and equal protection of the laws, and extended voting rights to African American men.²³⁴ Black men and white allies were elected to local, state, and federal offices. The southern Republicans promoted integration, public education, and tax reform.²³⁵ However, as Douglas R. Egerton has emphasized, “White Democrats, an electoral minority in every southern state after the war, engaged in racial terrorism to restore the prewar social order.”²³⁶ In 1866, racist mobs killed forty-six Blacks and two whites in Memphis and thirty-seven Blacks and three white allies in New Orleans.²³⁷ In 1868, white supremacists murdered about two hundred African Americans in Opelousas, Louisiana.²³⁸ Throughout the South, many more died in smaller local attacks by mobs, small groups of vigilantes, and individuals, including racist police and deputies.²³⁹ In 1871, the Southern States Convention of Colored Men held in Columbia, South Carolina, reported that twenty thousand Blacks and white allies had been killed since the beginning of Reconstruction.²⁴⁰ In 1873, a white militia killed as many as 150 African Americans in Colfax,

Louisiana.²⁴¹ The following year, racists killed sixteen Black men in Trenton, Tennessee.²⁴²

In 1883, white supremacists overthrew the biracial local government in Danville, Virginia, and killed several African Americans.²⁴³ In 1886, an attack at the courthouse in Carroll County, Mississippi, left twenty-three Blacks dead.²⁴⁴ The next year, the state militia and white vigilantes murdered more than a hundred striking African American sugar workers and supporters in Thibodaux, Louisiana.²⁴⁵ In 1892, racists attacked three Black co-owners of the People's Grocery in Memphis. When the victims of the assault fought back, they were arrested, jailed, and then lynched.²⁴⁶ In 1895, hundreds of unionized white dockworkers in New Orleans were laid off and replaced by non-unionized African Americans. The white workers launched an armed assault against the Black dockworkers and killed at least six of them.²⁴⁷ In 1898, a mob of about two thousand committed to restoring white supremacist rule in Wilmington, North Carolina, violently overthrew the biracial local government and murdered about sixty African Americans.²⁴⁸ Three decades after Appomattox, Robert Smalls, who escaped slavery, became a Union war hero, and served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, reported that 53,000 African Americans had been murdered.²⁴⁹ Egerton has noted that Smalls's estimate is "entirely plausible."²⁵⁰ This number of victims dwarfs the 2,600 people of African descent who were legally executed during the nineteenth century.²⁵¹

MASS INCARCERATION AND CONVICT LABOR

What Douglas A. Blackmon has called "slavery by another name" deprived many African American men of their freedom—and even their lives—for several decades after the end of the Civil War.²⁵² Between the 1870s and the late 1920s, several hundred thousand Black men were unjustly imprisoned after being convicted of charges such as "illegal voting," changing jobs without the permission of a white employer, vagrancy, bigamy, and sexual relations with white women.²⁵³ Blackmon has emphasized,

Repeatedly, the timing and scale of surges in arrests appeared more attuned to rises and dips in the need for cheap labor than any demonstrable acts of crime. Hundreds of forced labor camps came to exist, scattered throughout the South—operated by state and county governments, large corporations, small-time entrepreneurs, and provincial farmers. . . . Where mob violence or the Ku Klux Klan terrorized black citizens periodically, the return of forced labor as a fixture in Black life ground pervasively into the daily lives of far more African Americans.²⁵⁴

The proliferation of convict labor on public projects and the leasing of Black prisoners to privately owned factories, mines, plantations, lumber camps, and other businesses led to many fatalities. Some of these deaths resulted from industrial accidents, overwork, poor nutrition, and inadequate medical care, while others were murdered by overseers or other incarcerated men.²⁵⁵ Blackmon has cautioned that more research must be done before the total number of fatalities can be reliably estimated.²⁵⁶ But the number of deaths likely ran into the tens of thousands over six decades.²⁵⁷

THE RESTORATION OF WHITE SUPREMACIST RULE IN THE SOUTH

Egerton has observed that by the end of the nineteenth century “unremitting clandestine violence” had ended “the first progressive era in the nation’s history,” and the restoration of white supremacist rule in the South largely had been achieved.²⁵⁸ Lynchings and other racially motivated murders, which often occurred “in the presence of or with the complicity of law enforcement,” had become a heinous way to terrorize and subjugate African Americans.²⁵⁹

The combination of widespread convict labor and the super-exploitation inherent in sharecropping and tenant farming meant that the vast majority of Blacks in the South would live in conditions of “involuntary de facto servitude” for generations to come.²⁶⁰ New state laws, state constitutions, and local government measures deprived most Black men of the right to vote, hold public office, and

serve on juries. African Americans were generally denied due process and equal protection of the laws, and a rigid new system of racial segregation was developed.²⁶¹ Real freedom remained an aspiration but not a reality for almost nine million people.

SOCIAL MURDERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Although the African American population significantly expanded during the nineteenth century, so did the excess deaths attributable to poor nutrition, hard labor, abuse and neglect, the loss of family and friends, stress caused by racism, and poor health. As with the previous century, it is possible to estimate the minimum number of excess deaths suffered by native-born enslaved African Americans in the nineteenth century. For each of the approximately 3.9 million enslaved people alive in 1860, about the same number died in their first five years. If enslaved children had experienced the same mortality rate as white children during this time, their death toll would have been about 1.95 million. Like the appraisal of excess deaths among native-born enslaved African Americans for the previous century, this is likely a conservative estimate because it does not account for excess deaths of enslaved Black adults and because the life prospects of free Blacks were not necessarily better than those of enslaved people.²⁶²

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION SINCE 1900

During the twentieth century, the African American population dramatically expanded. It grew from just under nine million in 1900 to more than fifteen million in 1950.²⁶³ It was more than 26.6 million in 1980 and about 36.5 million in 2000.²⁶⁴ By 2019, the population had reached more than 48 million.²⁶⁵ Black people have achieved some important social and political progress during the past 120 years but continue to suffer in many ways from systemic, institutionalized racism.²⁶⁶ Various forms of white supremacist violence and abuse, a new wave of mass incarceration, the disproportionate impact of criminal homicides, participation in U.S. wars abroad, excess mortality

rates, and related forms of oppression have taken a terrible toll on Blacks in the United States since 1900. Ironically, even larger numbers have perished because of white supremacy than in previous centuries.

MURDERS BY MOBS, VIGILANTES, AND POLICE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The routinized murder of African Americans by white mobs, vigilantes, and police continued apace during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1900, a confrontation between white police officers and a Black man in New Orleans led to the deaths of at least a dozen African Americans and seven whites.²⁶⁷ In 1906, racist crowds in Atlanta killed two dozen Black people; several whites also died.²⁶⁸ In 1908, hate-filled whites in Springfield, Illinois, murdered seven African Americans.²⁶⁹ In 1910, whites killed as many as two hundred Black people in the Slocum Massacre in East Texas.²⁷⁰ In 1917, white mobs in East St. Louis, Missouri, attacked African Americans who were migrating from southern states in search of jobs. As many as 250 Blacks died.²⁷¹ The same year, African American soldiers at Fort Logan in Houston participated in an armed uprising after enduring abuse from local police officers and other white people. Sixteen white police officers and civilians, along with four insurgents, were killed during the uprising, and nineteen Black soldiers were executed afterward.²⁷²

In 1918, racist whites rioted in Philadelphia after an African American moved into a largely white neighborhood. One Black and three whites died.²⁷³ The worst racist violence of the period occurred between April and November 1919, which James Weldon Johnson called the “Red Summer” because of the bloodshed throughout the country.²⁷⁴ In April, the death of two white police officers in a shootout in Carswell Grove, Georgia, led to lynching and attacks that took the lives of several Black people.²⁷⁵ In July, white mobs began attacking African Americans in Washington, DC, after police released a Black man accused of harassing a white woman. About forty people died in the conflict.²⁷⁶ A week later in Chicago, the death of a young African

American man at a segregated beach led to armed conflict and the deaths of twenty-three Blacks and fifteen whites.²⁷⁷ In August, thirty to forty people died in Knoxville, Tennessee, when whites attacked an African American neighborhood after failing to find and lynch a biracial man accused of murdering a white woman.²⁷⁸ In September in Elaine, Arkansas, whites massacred 237 African Americans who were trying to organize a union for sharecroppers.²⁷⁹ Altogether, the “Red Summer” of 1919 resulted in several hundred deaths in dozens of cities and towns.²⁸⁰ But as Jesse J. Holland has explained, “Red Summer also marked a new era of Black resistance to white injustice, with African Americans standing up in unprecedented numbers and killing some of their tormentors.”²⁸¹

In 1920, in Ocoee, Florida, Ku Klux Klan members and supporters killed as many as sixty African Americans to prevent them from voting and drive them off their land.²⁸² The following year in Tulsa, after a young Black man was charged with assaulting a young white woman, about seventy-five armed African Americans marched to the local courthouse to prevent a lynching. A crowd of about fifteen hundred whites confronted them, shots were fired, and several people were killed. Thousands of whites then went on a rampage, burned and looted Black businesses and homes, and killed as many as three hundred African Americans.²⁸³ In 1922, three Black men in Kirven, Texas, were burned alive, and as many as twenty-seven other Black people were killed following the murder of a young white woman.²⁸⁴ In 1923, racist mobs burned down the African American town of Rosewood, Florida. At least eight people, Black and white, died during the violence.²⁸⁵ In 1925, an independent Detroit newspaper reported that police shot fifty-five Blacks, some of whom died, in the first half of the year alone.²⁸⁶

In 1935 and 1943, African Americans participated in what James Boskin has called “protest riots” in Harlem, damaging property and looting stores in reaction to injustice.²⁸⁷ The first occurred after false rumors spread that a young Black shoplifter had been brutally beaten; three people died. The second erupted after a police officer shot and wounded a young Black soldier; at least five people died.²⁸⁸ More

traditional anti-Black riots led to thirty-four deaths in Detroit and three deaths in Beaumont, Texas, in 1943.²⁸⁹ In 1946, dozens of white supremacists shot to death George W. Dorsey, his pregnant wife, Mae Murray Dorsey, Roger Malcom, and his wife, Dorothy Malcom, in rural Walton County, Georgia.²⁹⁰ In 1948, several white men killed Isaiah Nixon, a Black veteran, after he defied threats and voted in a local primary election in Georgia.²⁹¹ By 1950, the number of African Americans lynched since the turn of the century had grown to almost two thousand.²⁹²

VIGILANTE AND STATE VIOLENCE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although large-scale massacres such as in Slocum, East St. Louis, Elaine, and Tulsa declined after the midcentury, significant racist violence persisted. White supremacist vigilantes continued to murder Black people, and as public pressure mounted on the federal government and state governments to rein in mob violence, racist policing played an increasingly important role in their subjugation.²⁹³ Repression mounted in the 1950s and 1960s as African Americans organized to end segregation and obtain voting rights in the South. Approximately 125 civil rights activists and supporters perished at the hands of racists during these decades.²⁹⁴ These activists included voting rights organizers Henry and Henriette Moore, who died when their home in Florida was bombed on Christmas night, 1951, and Reverend George Lee, killed in Mississippi in 1955.²⁹⁵ The murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955 horrified much of the nation.²⁹⁶ The killing of truck driver Willie Edwards Jr. by Ku Klux Klan members in Alabama in 1957 was similarly tragic but less widely noticed.²⁹⁷ Herbert Lee, who was helping Black people register to vote, was killed in Mississippi in 1961.²⁹⁸ Medgar Evers, the state leader of the NAACP, was assassinated in the same state in 1963.²⁹⁹ Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley, all young Black girls, died when racists bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham the same year.³⁰⁰ Ku Klux

Klan members, including local deputies, murdered civil rights activists James Chaney, an African American, and Jewish New Yorkers Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, in Mississippi in 1964.³⁰¹

Even as vigilante and police murders continued in the South, the murder and mistreatment of Black people by police in other parts of the country sparked protest riots and uprisings during much of the 1960s. In Harlem in 1964, a white off-duty officer's killing of a fifteen-year-old young Black man resulted in demonstrations, street disturbances, and the death of a second Black man.³⁰² Soon afterward, in Rochester, New York, outrage over police officers' use of dogs during an arrest of an African American led to a riot in which four people died.³⁰³ In Alabama in 1965, state troopers beat and shot to death Jimmie Lee Jackson while he was protecting a civil rights march in Marion, and neo-Nazis murdered Willie Brewster in Anniston.³⁰⁴ Also, in 1965, Malcolm X was killed in Harlem by individuals who may have had ties to the FBI and the New York Police Department.³⁰⁵ The same year, in the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles, an altercation following a traffic stop by the California Highway Patrol sparked a six-day uprising that claimed thirty-four, almost entirely Black, lives.³⁰⁶

The African American freedom movement forced Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The following decades witnessed the dismantling of *de jure* segregation, significant Black enfranchisement in the South, and the election of thousands of African Americans to government offices. However, white supremacist violence did not cease. In 1966, a racist gas station owner killed student civil rights activist Samuel Leamon Younge Jr. in Tuskegee, Alabama.³⁰⁷ In 1967, reports that Newark, New Jersey, police had beaten a Black cab driver led to unrest and the deaths of twenty-six people, mostly African Americans.³⁰⁸ Two weeks later, in Detroit, a police raid on an after-hours bar in the Black community ignited an uprising in which forty-three people died.³⁰⁹ In February 1968, state police killed three young Black men at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg during a protest against segregation.³¹⁰ Two months later, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated

in Memphis. More than forty people died in the subsequent riots in over one hundred cities.³¹¹ Whether the alleged shooter who was convicted and imprisoned acted alone or was part of a conspiracy involving the FBI, Memphis police, and white supremacists who publicly called for King's death remains unknown today.³¹² The FBI and local police killed at least thirty-four members of the Black Panther party by the early 1970s.³¹³ By 1971, at least 228 people had died in more than 750 riots in the previous seven years.³¹⁴

The suppression of the prisoners' uprising at Attica, New York, in 1971 resulted in thirty-nine deaths.³¹⁵ The same year, two people died during protests against racism in Wilmington, North Carolina.³¹⁶ In 1972, a sheriff's deputy killed two Black students at a protest at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.³¹⁷ In 1979, neo-Nazis and Klan members killed five Black, Latino, and white communists at a demonstration in Greensboro, North Carolina.³¹⁸ After a jury acquitted four police officers in the beating death of Arthur McDuffie in 1980, riots erupted in Miami, and eighteen people died.³¹⁹ Ku Klux Klan members lynched Michael Donald in Mobile, Alabama, in 1981.³²⁰ The Philadelphia police killed eleven people when they bombed the home of the African American MOVE group in 1985.³²¹ Three years later, neo-Nazis killed Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant, in Portland, Oregon.³²² In 1992, after a jury acquitted four police officers in the beating of Rodney King, an uprising in Los Angeles resulted in more than fifty deaths.³²³ A police killing sparked a riot in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1996.³²⁴ Virulent white supremacists killed James Byrd near Jasper, Texas, in 1998.³²⁵ Major protests occurred after the police killed Amadou Diallo in New York City in 1999.³²⁶

RACIST EXECUTIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

More than four thousand African Americans were convicted of capital crimes and executed during the twentieth century.³²⁷ Not only was the death penalty disproportionately meted out to Black people, but many of these convictions and executions were patently unjust, and

the ultimate punishment continued to be what Noel A. Cazenave has called “a lethal form of racial terrorism and control.”³²⁸ Thomas Griffin, Meeks Griffin, and two other Black men were executed for the murder of a white man in South Carolina in 1915 after being framed by another suspect.³²⁹ Fortune Ferguson was thirteen years old when he was executed for rape in Florida in 1927.³³⁰ George Tinney Jr. was fourteen years old when he was executed for murder in South Carolina in 1944.³³¹ Lena Baker was executed in Georgia in 1945 because she killed a white man in self-defense after he kidnapped and assaulted her.³³² Tommy Lee Walker was executed for rape and murder in Texas in 1954 based on a coerced confession.³³³ William Tines was put to death for rape in Tennessee in 1960 after being convicted by a tainted jury without substantial evidence of guilt.³³⁴ Willie Darden was executed for murder in Florida in 1988 despite credible alibi evidence emerging after his trial.³³⁵ Despite overwhelming evidence of mental illness, Ricky Ray Rector was executed for murder in Arkansas in 1992 after Governor Bill Clinton refused to grant clemency.³³⁶ Brian Baldwin was executed for murder in Alabama in 1999 after being convicted solely because of a confession obtained through beatings and torture.³³⁷

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS ON AFRICAN AMERICANS

Racist medical experiments also destroyed other African American lives in the twentieth century. From 1932 until 1972, the U.S. government was responsible for the infamous Tuskegee experiment, in which four hundred Black male patients diagnosed with syphilis were left untreated. At least 128 men died from the disease or related complications.³³⁸ In the early 1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Army conducted experiments that deliberately exposed African Americans in Florida to swarms of mosquitoes carrying yellow fever and other diseases.³³⁹ In the 1950s and 1960s, Black prisoners in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Louisiana were used as research subjects to test pharmaceuticals and personal hygiene products.³⁴⁰ Between 1960

and 1972, a University of Cincinnati radiologist exposed two hundred cancer patients, three-fourths of them African Americans, to previously discredited total body radiation. Dozens of patients died of radiation poisoning.³⁴¹ Two decades later, Columbia University researchers injected young Black people with Fenfluramine, which Harriet A. Washington has identified as “half of the deadly, discontinued weight loss drug Fen-Phen,” to test the hypothesis about the genetic origins of violence.³⁴²

RACIST VIOLENCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Although capital punishment has become less common in recent years, Black people are still put to death disproportionately.³⁴³ Strikingly, Shaka Sankofa (Gary Graham), executed in Texas in 2000, and Troy Davis, executed in Georgia in 2011, were not guilty of the crimes for which they were condemned.³⁴⁴ Today, Black people are about three times more likely to be killed by law enforcement officers than white people.³⁴⁵ Even a short list of high-profile police killings of African Americans since 2000 is not that short. The dead include Timothy Thomas in Cincinnati in 2001; Corey Ward in Atlanta in 2002; Kendra James in Portland, Oregon, and Michael Pleasence in Chicago in 2003; Timothy Stansbury in New York City in 2004; James Brissette, Roland Madison, and Henry Glover in New Orleans in 2005; Sean Bell in New York City in 2006; David Willis in Savannah in 2007; Aaren Gwenn in North Chicago in 2008; Oscar Grant in Oakland in 2009; Aiyana Mo’Nay Stanley-Jones in Detroit in 2010; Kenneth Chamberlain Sr. in White Plains, New York, in 2011; Alan Blueford in Oakland and Ramarley Graham in the Bronx in 2012; Deon Williams in Little Rock in 2013; Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Ezell Ford in Los Angeles, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, and Akai Gurley and Eric Garner in New York City in 2014; Freddie Gray in Baltimore and Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015; Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2016; Aaron Bailey in Indianapolis and Jordan Edwards in Balch Springs, Texas, in

2017; Stephon Clark in Sacramento and Botham Jean in Dallas in 2018; Elijah McClain in Aurora, Colorado, and Atatiana Johnson in Fort Worth in 2019; Breonna Taylor in Louisville, George Floyd in Minneapolis, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, and Jonathan Price in Wolfe City, Texas, in 2020; and David Lee Tovar in San Jose, Jamal Sutherland in North Charleston, South Carolina, and Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, in 2021.³⁴⁶

Law enforcement officers shot to death approximately 244 African Americans in 2020.³⁴⁷ Other Black people died that year because they were restrained, beaten, or tasered by police or fatally injured by police vehicles.³⁴⁸ Many of those killed were not armed with guns, and some of those who were armed were not threatening anyone when they died at the hands of police.³⁴⁹ Most Black deaths caused by law enforcement officers over the decades are far from reasonable.³⁵⁰ Although police records in the United States have always been incomplete and unreliable, it is likely that the total number of unnecessary and preventable killings of African Americans by police since the mid-nineteenth century runs into the tens of thousands.³⁵¹

Brazen white supremacist vigilantes have also continued to murder African Americans during the past twenty years. The dead include Garry Lee near Pittsburgh in 2000; Eric Taylor in Massilon, Ohio, in 2002; as many as four people in New Orleans in 2005; Stephen Johns in Washington, D.C., and Selma Goncalves and Arlindo DePina Goncalves in Boston in 2009; Reginald Clark in Eureka, California, in 2010; James Craig Anderson in Jackson, Mississippi, in 2011; Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, and Jordan David in Jacksonville, Florida, in 2012; nine parishioners at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015; Larnell Bruce Jr. in Portland, Oregon, in 2016; Richard Collins III in College Park, Maryland, and Timothy Coughman in New York City in 2017; MeShon Cooper in Shawnee, Kansas, and Vickie Lee Jones and Maurice Stallard in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2018; Quentin Hicks in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 2019; Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia, in 2020; and Henry Tapia in Belmont, Massachusetts, in 2021.³⁵²

A NEW WAVE OF MASS INCARCERATION

A new wave of mass incarceration began in the mid-1970s, and the prisoner population dramatically expanded from around 300,000 to more than two million thirty years later.³⁵³ President Richard Nixon's desire to target African Americans and white hippies inspired his call for a "war on drugs" and his demand to get "tough on crime."³⁵⁴ The number of prisoners doubled during the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.³⁵⁵ For decades, both Republican and Democratic politicians supported extremely long sentences for drug-related offenses and other crimes.³⁵⁶ Black people have been disproportionately arrested, convicted, and incarcerated in what Michelle Alexander has called the "New Jim Crow."³⁵⁷

Alexander has persuasively argued that this mass incarceration is a racial caste system; other researchers have contended that the government's class-based targeting of poor people explains the hugely disproportionate impact on African Americans.³⁵⁸ Today the United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population but almost 25 percent of its prisoners.³⁵⁹ Mass incarceration has proved deadly for many Blacks. Between 1981 and 2018, several thousand African American inmates died from suicide, homicide, accidents, and other non-natural causes in U.S. prisons and jails.³⁶⁰ Many other Black prisoners have died because of inadequate medical care.³⁶¹

ROUTINE CRIMINAL HOMICIDES

Vast numbers of African Americans have been the victims of routine criminal homicides. As Randolph Roth has pointed out, homicide rates in the rural South soared in the late 1880s and 1890s. In those years, the South surpassed the Southwest as the most homicidal region in the United States. In addition, homicide rates among Blacks surpassed those among whites in both the North and the South. They remain higher to this day.³⁶²

Between 1900 and 2019, more than 1.5 million homicides occurred in this country, and Black people have suffered disproportionately from this enduring epidemic of social violence.³⁶³

Between 1980 and 2013 alone, there were approximately 262,000 homicides of African American men and hundreds of thousands of others occurred in the first eight decades of the twentieth century.³⁶⁴ Several thousand Black men, women, and children continue to be murdered each year, and homicide is the leading cause of death among young Black men.³⁶⁵

AFRICAN AMERICAN DEATHS IN IMPERIALIST WARS

Participation in U.S. wars abroad has taken a smaller but still tragic toll among African American soldiers, Marines, sailors, and Air Force personnel. In the First World War two hundred Black troops served in the racially segregated U.S. Allied Expeditionary Force, primarily in supply and labor units. Almost eight hundred died in combat, and more died from wounds, diseases, and related causes.³⁶⁶ About 500,000 African Americans served overseas in the still-segregated armed forces in the Second World War. More than seven hundred died in combat, and more died from other causes.³⁶⁷ The first racially integrated military units in U.S. history appeared during the Korean War, and between 3,200 and 5,000 Black service members died during this conflict.³⁶⁸ More than 7,200 African Americans died in the Vietnam War.³⁶⁹ More than 640 African Americans lost their lives in the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War.³⁷⁰ Black armed forces members have perished in other U.S. wars and military interventions. The number of Black veterans who have died from suicide, alcoholism, or drug abuse after their experiences in war has never been counted but is likely substantial.

SOCIAL MURDERS SINCE 1900

By far, the most significant human toll for African Americans since 1900 has been the staggering number of excess deaths, or social murders, caused by poor health conditions rooted in racism.³⁷¹ Despite some important improvements in health and health care, Blacks continue to suffer from massive racial disparities. Today African

American infants are more than twice as likely to die as white infants.³⁷² As Linda Villarosa has noted, this is “a racial disparity that is actually wider than in 1850.”³⁷³ The maternal mortality rate for Black women is three to four times higher than the rate for white women.³⁷⁴ African American death rates from cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, trauma, HIV, and COVID-19 also are higher than the rates for white people.³⁷⁵ The much higher levels of hunger, poverty, unemployment, low-wage work, inadequate housing, residential segregation, community disinvestment, neighborhood violence, and exposure to environmental pollution experienced by Black people contribute to poorer health and more precarious life prospects.³⁷⁶ Unequal access to health care and unequal treatment by doctors and other medical personnel also have profoundly harmful effects on many African Americans.³⁷⁷

What Mary R. Jackman and Kimberlee A. Shauman have called “the chronic, everyday injuries of racial discrimination and economic inequality” experienced by Black people are integrally linked to many serious health problems and vast numbers of premature deaths.³⁷⁸

Javier M. Rodriguez, Arline T. Geronimus, John Bound, and Danny Dorling have explained:

Racialization and its subsequent environmental, material, and health care constraints shape exposure to everyday challenges and coping options. Repeated and high-effort coping with social disadvantage and the contingencies of stereotyped social identity are now thought to contribute to a cumulative physiological toll across the life-course, or weathering. . . . Weathering reflects stress-mediated physiological damage and dysregulation across body systems. These can result in a relatively steeper age-gradient increase in high allostatic load, adverse health outcomes including early onset of hypertension, diabetes, and disability, and excess death from young through middle adulthood.³⁷⁹

In recent decades, researchers have been able to use the increasing amount of available related data to estimate the total number of excess

deaths among African Americans. Robert S. Levine and his colleagues have concluded that approximately four million excess Black deaths occurred between 1940 and 2000.³⁸⁰ Rodriguez, Geronimus, Bound, and Dorling have estimated 2.7 million excess deaths among Blacks between 1970 and 2004.³⁸¹ More recently, Jackman and Shauman estimated almost 7.7 million excess deaths among African Americans in the twentieth century.³⁸² They also reported that well over one million such deaths happened between 2000 and 2014.³⁸³ In addition, almost 400,000 excess deaths likely occurred between 2015 and 2020.³⁸⁴ In sum, it appears that there have been more than nine million social murders among African Americans since 1900.

COUNTING THE DEAD

How many people of African descent have perished during the prehistory, formation, expansion, and global ascendancy of the U.S. Empire? As with the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust, the exact numbers will never be known. Again, the available historical information provides the basis for an informed and reasonable, if rough, estimate. The importation of African captives to the lands that became the United States, participation in the illegal transatlantic slave trade, various forms of white supremacist violence, poor health conditions rooted in racism, convict labor, mass incarceration, criminal homicides, participation in imperialist wars, and related forms of oppression have resulted in considerably more than 18 million Black deaths during the past five centuries. Moreover, this staggering number was only part of the broader holocaust that befell people of African descent who perished because of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and various forms of post-slavery oppression in the Western Hemisphere. It may well be that the total loss of Black lives in Africa and the Americas was comparable to the total loss of Indigenous lives—approximately seventy to eighty million—over the centuries.³⁸⁵ Like the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust in the present-day United States, the African American Holocaust continues today.

The Workers Holocaust

Never has [the worker] been speeded up to the present pitch, nor thrown upon the industrial scrap heap so early as too old and exhausted for further use. Never has industry crippled and killed so many of those seeking to earn a livelihood on the land and with the machinery which others possess.

—SOLON DE LEON,
THE AMERICAN LABOR YEAR BOOK, 1929

Indigenous peoples and people of African descent have suffered the most brutal forms of subjugation in the lands that became the United States. Vast numbers of other laborers from diverse national backgrounds have experienced less horrific but nonetheless harsh and sometimes deadly forms of exploitation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the lives of indentured servants were often “nasty, brutish, and short.”¹ In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution profoundly transformed U.S. society but at an enormous human cost. The development of steamboats and railroads, the growth of manufacturing and mining, and the rise of giant factories contributed to unprecedented economic expansion.² By 1870, most of the laboring population had become workers, selling their labor

power to employers in exchange for wages.³ While the exploitation of workers has generated unprecedented wealth for the capitalist class and made possible the global ascendancy of the U.S. Empire, it has also produced a veritable holocaust. Workplace injuries and occupational diseases—new kinds of social murder—have claimed staggering numbers of lives for more than a century and a half.⁴ In addition, workers in the United States have endured the “bloodiest and most violent labor history of any industrial nation in the world.”⁵ U.S. capitalists and government officials have been responsible for the deaths of many workers in other countries as well.⁶ Notwithstanding some significant labor reforms in the twentieth century, the Workers Holocaust continues today.

INDENTURED SERVITUDE IN THE ENGLISH COLONIES

The English companies and settlers that colonized North America soon recognized the need for more labor, and indentured servitude originated as a solution to this problem.⁷ Destitute people in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany who hoped for better lives in the colonies signed contracts agreeing to perform unpaid labor, usually for four to seven years, in exchange for passage.⁸ England also deported tens of thousands of prisoners, who performed the first form of convict labor in these lands.⁹ Between 1630 and 1680, 50,000 of the 75,000 European immigrants to the Chesapeake Bay colonies were indentured servants.¹⁰ About half of the approximately 450,000 Europeans who voluntarily came to the English (later British) colonies before the War of Independence were indentured.¹¹ Overwork, inadequate nutrition, and disease killed many of them, and suicides were not uncommon.¹² Steven Mintz and Sara McNeil noted: “Half of all white servants in the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland died within five years of their arrival.”¹³ Occasionally, indentured servants who rebelled against their employers or fled servitude were put to death. More frequently, those who displeased their employers were whipped or beaten.¹⁴ After the beginning of the eighteenth century, the predominance of indentured servants diminished, and labor by

enslaved people of African descent became more common, but the practice continued for another hundred years.¹⁵

DEATHS ON CANALS, STEAMBOATS, AND TRAINS, 1820s–1860s

As the Industrial Revolution unfolded in the first half of the nineteenth century, early economic development projects undertaken by state governments and private companies took an awful human toll. In the 1820s, as many as a thousand workers, mainly Irish immigrants, perished from malaria, other diseases, and construction accidents while building the Erie Canal in New York State.¹⁶ In the mid-1830s, as many as eight thousand Irish immigrant workers died because of harsh labor conditions and a yellow fever epidemic during the construction of the Pontchartrain Canal in New Orleans.¹⁷ Hundreds of other workers, chiefly immigrants, died from cholera, other diseases, and workplace accidents during the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal from Washington, DC, to Cumberland, Maryland, between 1828 and 1850.¹⁸ Hundreds died from cholera while building the Wabash and Erie Canal in Indiana in 1849–50.¹⁹ About two hundred died from the same disease while working on the St. Mary's Canal in Michigan in 1854.²⁰ In addition, steamboat tragedies caused by boiler explosions occurred regularly. The *Helen McGregor* exploded at the New Orleans dock and killed more than forty workers and other people in 1830.²¹ The *Pulaski* blew up off the coast of North Carolina in 1838, resulting in about a hundred deaths.²² The *Lucy Walker* exploded on the Ohio River near New Albany, Indiana, and killed at least fifty people in 1844.²³ The worst steamboat tragedy occurred in 1865 when approximately 1,800 people died when the boilers on the *Sultana* exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis.²⁴

As Mark Aldrich has emphasized, “Death rode the rails,” too.²⁵ Aldrich has pointed out that “the slaughter of railroad employees began almost as soon as the first lines were built,” and the same can be said for passengers.²⁶ The first railroad fatality occurred in 1832 when one of four people thrown from a train car near Quincy,

Massachusetts, died.²⁷ A derailment on the Boston and Worcester train in 1847 killed six passengers.²⁸ About 913 workers, passengers, and other people died in New York railroad accidents between 1850 and 1852.²⁹ The frequency of fatal train disasters soon increased.³⁰ In 1853, 11 major collisions and derailments resulted in 121 deaths, and smaller accidents were “far more numerous.”³¹ In 1855, twenty-three people died when a train derailed near Burlington, New Jersey.³² About sixty-six people died in a head-on train accident at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1856.³³ The mounting number of fatalities among railroad workers, passengers, and others led to the new “accidents, railroad” category in the 1860 census, which listed 599 deaths for the preceding year.³⁴ Work and travel on railroads was significantly more dangerous in the United States than Britain.³⁵ When a U.S. company undertook the construction of the Panama Railroad in Colombia, between six thousand and twelve thousand workers from Colombia, Jamaica, China, Ireland, and other countries died between 1850 and 1855.³⁶

THE PERILS OF MANUFACTURING AND MINING, 1820s-1860s

In the early nineteenth century, textile mills became one of the first major industries in this country, “producing ready-made clothing from slave-harvested cotton.”³⁷ M. T. Anderson has described the early mills as “the beating heart of America’s mass-production infancy.”³⁸ Initially centered in New England, these mills primarily employed young women, who were paid low wages for long hours of difficult work. Textile workers were particularly susceptible to byssinosis, or brown lung disease, caused by exposure to cotton dust in poorly ventilated workplaces. They were also vulnerable to tuberculosis, other respiratory disorders, and accidental dismemberment.³⁹ Although many employees recognized these workplace hazards, their principal demand during strikes in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1835 and in Pittsburgh in 1845 was the reduction of the twelve-hour workday.⁴⁰ In 1845, women textile workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, forced the state legislature to hold hearings on the issue of weekly work hours,

but the proceedings yielded no immediate benefits.⁴¹ Textile workers' deaths caused by occupational diseases and fatal accidents were not investigated until much later. However, in 1860 the country's attention turned to Lawrence, Massachusetts, when the Pemberton textile mill collapsed and killed 145 workers.⁴²

The production of iron began during the colonial period and grew during the first half of the nineteenth century in Pennsylvania, New York, and northern New Jersey. The nation's increasing need for power for "steam engines, furnaces, and forges" fostered the expansion of coal mining—and its dangers—in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴³ Between 1839 and 1859, eight mine explosions in Virginia and Pennsylvania led to about 176 deaths.⁴⁴ By the 1850s and 1860s, doctors in coal mining areas had begun to recognize the deadly effects of "miner's consumption" or "miner's asthma" among patients who labored in the earth.⁴⁵ An 1858 study indicated that the average chance of a Pennsylvania miner surviving for a dozen years was less than 50 percent.⁴⁶

Other major industrial accidents began to occur in the United States before the Civil War. In 1850, the boiler in a hat manufacturing plant in New York City exploded and killed sixty-three workers.⁴⁷ The following year, scores of workers died in a fire at a factory in Philadelphia.⁴⁸ In 1854, seventeen workers perished in an explosion at an ammunition manufacturing plant in New York City.⁴⁹ Another kind of danger emerged when police killed two tailors during a strike of three hundred workers in New York City in 1850 and police killed two railroad workers during a strike in Portage, New York, in 1851.⁵⁰

THE TRANSPORTATION OF CHINESE LABORERS TO THE AMERICAS

As the illegal transatlantic slave trade declined in the mid-nineteenth century, labor shortages worsened in the Americas. The need for many new workers was also pressing in some parts of Southeast Asia and Africa. Between the mid-1840s and the mid-1870s, the United States joined Britain, Spain, Peru, Portugal, and France in transporting approximately 750,000 impoverished Chinese laborers to work in

different countries.⁵¹ U.S. ships brought as many as 350,000 Chinese men to work on tobacco, coffee, and sugar plantations in Cuba, on cotton and sugar plantations and in guano pits of Peru, and on plantations in other nations.⁵² Robert J. Schwendinger has explained that these workers were procured “through deception, widespread kidnappings, and under the pretext of legitimate labor contracts.”⁵³ Often they were crowded into barracoons in Chinese cities while awaiting transportation and whipped if they tried to escape.⁵⁴ Once aboard the ships, they suffered from inadequate nutrition, virtually nonexistent sanitary facilities, and violence by crew members.⁵⁵

Between 1847 and 1859, more than 7,500 Chinese workers died on U.S. ships traveling to Cuba, and uncounted others perished on U.S. ships going to Peru and other countries.⁵⁶ After arrival in the Caribbean and South America, the workers transported by U.S. and European vessels often labored under extremely harsh conditions and were treated as if they were enslaved. More than two-thirds of the 100,000 to 150,000 Chinese workers who arrived in Peru died there, and many of the 150,000 who arrived in Cuba lost their lives as well.⁵⁷ U.S. capitalists shared responsibility for the deaths of scores of thousands.⁵⁸ In 1862, Congress outlawed U.S. participation in the sordid trade, but it continued illegally for more than another decade.⁵⁹

INDUSTRIAL ADVANCES IN THE 1860s

The military exigencies of the Civil War required increased industrial development in the Union. As Benjamin T. Arrington has pointed out, “The Northern railroad companies boomed during the conflict.”⁶⁰ Other Northern industries such as weapons manufacturing, iron production, leather goods, and textiles “grew and improved as the war progressed.”⁶¹ The growing use of reapers, threshing machines, and horse-drawn planters boosted Northern agricultural production.⁶² The Union’s industrial strength played a key role in its victory over the Confederacy.⁶³ The loss of life during the Civil War and its aftermath was horrific, and rapid industrialization in the following decades led to an unprecedented number of deaths and grievous injuries in

workplaces.⁶⁴ In 1867, a train derailment near Angola, New York, killed forty-two employees and passengers.⁶⁵ The same year, a boiler explosion in Philadelphia killed twenty-eight people.⁶⁶ “Hundreds, perhaps thousands” of Chinese immigrant workers perished while building the final segment of the Transcontinental Railroad between Omaha and Sacramento before it was completed in 1869.⁶⁷ That same year, about 179 miners died in an explosion at the Avondale coal mine in Pennsylvania, and forty-five workers died in a flash fire at the Yellow Jacket silver mine in Nevada.⁶⁸ Reflecting the growing death toll in workplaces, new categories of “mining accidents,” “injuries by machinery,” and accidents from “falling bodies” were added to the 1870 census.⁶⁹

“AN INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT CRISIS OF WORLD-HISTORICAL
PROPORTIONS,” 1870–1900

In the decades after the Civil War, the expansion of railroads, mining, textile mills, ironworks, steel mills, factories, and mechanized production dramatically changed the United States. The wealth created by industrial workers, largely appropriated by the capitalist class, helped the country become an increasingly important economic power in the world.⁷⁰ But by the 1870s and 1880s, the United States was experiencing what John Fabian Witt has called “an industrial accident crisis of world-historical proportions.”⁷¹ In the twenty-five years before the First World War, more than 75,000 railroad workers were killed on the job.⁷²

Almost 43,000 miners lost their lives while working between 1884 and 1912.⁷³ Some seven thousand workers died in boiler explosions in various industries between 1883 and 1907.⁷⁴ Thousands perished in the timber industry over the decades.⁷⁵ Thousands of Chinese American workers died from overwork, disease, and exposure while performing various kinds of labor in the western United States.⁷⁶ Growing numbers of workers in other industries died as well. In 1878, a dust explosion at the Washburn flour mill in Minneapolis killed eighteen workers.⁷⁷ In the following decade, fatal accidents in steel

mills and other industrial workplaces accounted for about 20 percent of all male deaths in Pittsburgh.⁷⁸ In Costa Rica, about five thousand workers employed by a U.S. company perished while building a major railroad in the mid-1880s.⁷⁹

As the number of fatal occupational injuries soared and pressure on government by labor advocates grew, some state agencies began to investigate the dangers in workplaces. Reports by the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1881 and 1883 starkly depicted the grim reality, summarized more than a century later by the U.S. Department of Labor:

A boiler in a steam engine running a threshing machine exploded, killing three men and scalding a young boy. One man was thrown 80 feet through the air to his death; another had his head blown off, which landed grotesquely in a basket. A buzz-saw operator got caught in his machine and lost an arm and a leg. A year earlier he had lost his right arm in the same manner. An engineer trying to oil machinery while it was in motion was killed when his head was caught against a post by a heavy fly wheel, "grinding out his brains." A boy in a printing house working at a press tried to straighten out an improperly placed sheet of paper and had several fingers crushed when he did not get his hand out of the way in time.⁸⁰

The Minnesota Bureau of Labor Statistics reported similar tragedies in 1892.⁸¹

By the 1880s, the mounting wave of workplace deaths and injuries had aroused the grief and outrage of many people throughout the country.⁸² In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison told Congress that railroad workers faced "a peril of life and limb as great as that of a soldier in time of war."⁸³ In 1891, the New Jersey Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industry reported that "the destruction of human life is much greater in the peaceful pursuits of industry than in war, and if it were possible to enumerate them, it will be found far greater than during the four years of destruction in the late Civil War."⁸⁴ The rate of

fatal occupational injuries in the United States in the nineteenth century was significantly higher than in Britain, Germany, and France.⁸⁵ However, the federal government did not issue comprehensive national statistical reports on workplace deaths for another century, and state agencies did not provide accurate, reliable estimates of industrial accident rates.⁸⁶ Uncounted hundreds of thousands likely died in workplace accidents between 1850 and 1880. Eric Foner has estimated that approximately 35,000 workers died on the job annually between 1880 and 1900—a total of 700,000 for these two decades alone.⁸⁷

THE GROWTH OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES, 1870–1900

Occupational diseases also increasingly endangered workers. As textile mills spread across the country, so did brown lung disease and other respiratory diseases.⁸⁸ “Miner’s consumption” was gradually acknowledged as the most common cause of death among older miners.⁸⁹ Workers who breathed tiny particles of mineral ore, rock, or sand—what David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz have called “deadly dust”—often developed silicosis.⁹⁰ This disease resulted in the deaths of not only miners but also quarry workers, foundry workers, nail manufacturing plant employees, granite cutters, brick workers, ceramic workers, glass workers, sandblasters, and other laborers.⁹¹ In addition, many coal miners developed coal workers’ pneumoconiosis, better known as black lung disease.⁹² Silicosis and black lung disease would cut short the lives of hundreds of thousands of coal miners during the next century.⁹³ Lead poisoning also became a grave problem. As many as thirty thousand cases of lead poisoning may have occurred among miners and other workers in the lead deposits in Utah between 1870 and 1900.⁹⁴ Workers in lead smelters, white lead factories, battery manufacturing plants, and other factories, along with painters, often became ill or died from lead poisoning.⁹⁵ Many men and women also contracted tuberculosis in garment sweatshops and other workplaces.⁹⁶ As Christopher C. Sellers has noted, “The explosion of industrial policyholders between the late 1870s and

1900—from 11,000 to 3.5 million—partly reflected worker anxieties about the financial impact of occupational diseases on themselves and their families.⁹⁷ Reliable statistics on deaths from occupational diseases in the late nineteenth century do not exist, but this loss of life was likely also enormous.⁹⁸

ANTI-LABOR VIOLENCE, 1870–1900

By the late nineteenth century, workers also faced potential death or serious injury when they engaged in collective action to obtain a shorter work week, higher wages, and safer working conditions. During this period, the repression of workers by police officers, soldiers, company security agents, and private militias was often deadly. More than a hundred people died during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877.⁹⁹ Twenty Irish American miners—the famous “Molly Maguires”—were hanged in Pennsylvania between 1877 and 1879 on charges of murdering mine superintendents and foremen.¹⁰⁰ In early May 1886, amid a national strike and other labor actions demanding the eight-hour day, police killed several workers at the McCormick Harvester Works in Chicago. The next evening, as local workers protested in Haymarket Square, a bomb was thrown into the police ranks, killing several officers. Four anarchists were wrongfully executed for the bombing, and a fifth condemned prisoner committed suicide.¹⁰¹ May First later became an international workers holiday.¹⁰² In 1886, nine people died in the Southwest Railroad Strike.¹⁰³ The following year the state militia and vigilantes massacred more than a hundred striking African American sugar workers and supporters in Thibodaux, Louisiana.¹⁰⁴ Nine workers and seven Pinkerton agents died in the Homestead Steel Strike in Pittsburgh in 1892.¹⁰⁵ During the national Pullman Strike of 1894, about thirty people were killed.¹⁰⁶

“THE INDUSTRIAL SLAUGHTERHOUSE,” 1900–1930

In the early years of the twentieth century, “The United States was in the fifth decade of an accident crisis like none the world had ever

seen and like none any Western nation has seen since.”¹⁰⁷ U.S. capitalists’ drive for what the contemporary observer C. H. Mark called “international industrial supremacy” and domination of global markets produced a “stupendous loss” of life.¹⁰⁸ As a series of massive workplace disasters occurred, the *Cleveland Citizen* lamented that the United States had become an “industrial slaughterhouse.”¹⁰⁹ In 1900, a coal mine explosion in Scoville, Utah, killed at least two hundred workers.¹¹⁰ In 1902, 112 miners died in a gas and dust explosion at the Rolling Mill mine in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.¹¹¹ Another coal mine explosion in Fraterville, Tennessee, killed 216 workers the same year.¹¹² In 1903, 169 workers died in a mine explosion in Hanna, Wyoming.¹¹³ In 1905, a boiler explosion at the Grover Shoe Factory in Brockton, Massachusetts, killed fifty-eight people.¹¹⁴ Between mid-1906 and mid-1907, 546 workers died in industrial accidents in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, alone.¹¹⁵ In 1907, 362 workers died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia.¹¹⁶ The same year, 239 workers died in the Darr Mine disaster in Rostraver, Pennsylvania.¹¹⁷ Forty-three workers died between 1908 and 1913 while building the Los Angeles Aqueduct.¹¹⁸ In 1909, sixty-seven workers died because of a fire during the construction of a water intake tunnel for the City of Chicago.¹¹⁹

In 1910, coal mine explosions in Mulga and Palos, Alabama, took 124 lives.¹²⁰ Also in 1910, 259 miners died in the Cherry Mine coal fire in Illinois, and a fire in a textile factory in Newark, New Jersey, killed 26 workers.¹²¹ In 1911, 146 young women workers died in a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City.¹²² That same year, 128 miners—primarily African American convict laborers—died in a mine explosion in Littleton, Alabama.¹²³ A different kind of tragedy occurred on Christmas Eve in 1913, when seventy-three people, mostly children of striking copper miners, died in a stampede at the Italian Hall in Calumet, Michigan, after a strikebreaker yelled “Fire!”¹²⁴ In 1917, 168 miners died in an explosion at the Speculator mine in Butte, Montana.¹²⁵ The following year, an explosion at a munitions depot near Sayreville, New Jersey, resulted in about one hundred deaths.¹²⁶ In 1919, twenty-one people died when a giant

molasses tank in Boston burst.¹²⁷ In 1924, an explosion at a mine in Castle Gate, Utah, killed 172 workers, and an ammonium nitrate explosion at a nitration plant near New Brunswick, New Jersey, killed 20 workers.¹²⁸ The United States continued to have far more major industrial accidents than any other country until well into the twenty-first century.¹²⁹

The deaths resulting from these major calamities were only a small portion of the horrific loss of life in U.S. workplaces. In 1907 alone, almost 12,000 workers, passengers, and others died in railroad accidents.¹³⁰ That year, more than 3,200 coal miners died on the job.¹³¹ Witt has emphasized:

Indeed, accidents were the leading cause of death among workers in hazardous industries as diverse as railroads, mining, metalwork, rubber work, shipping and canals, quarries, telegraph and telephones, electric lighting, brick- and tile-making, and terra-cotta work.¹³²

By this time, untold thousands of workers had also died on the job in logging, woodworking, paper mills, meatpacking, painting, glass working, construction, oil, and other industries.¹³³ I. M. Rubinow, a leading contemporary advocate for social insurance and health care for workers, described the scale of industrial deaths in the early twentieth century as “vastly greater” in the United States “than in any European country.”¹³⁴ Labor leaders on both sides of the Atlantic condemned the much higher numbers of fatal occupational injuries here.¹³⁵

Many more non-fatal industrial accidents also occurred each year. Arthur Reeves estimated in 1907 that there were about 500,000 workplace injuries each year.¹³⁶ The following year, William H. Tolman estimated that approximately five million injuries had occurred in industrial and other accidents between 1897 and 1907.¹³⁷ Today, some analysts believe that the annual number of serious industrial accidents in the early twentieth century may have been 700,000 or more.¹³⁸ Although most injuries sustained in these accidents were not

fatal, they contributed to the widespread recognition that the United States had become what one historian called the “land of disasters.”¹³⁹ Workplace deaths and other industrial accidents became one of the most important social and political issues in the country, and awareness of the dangers of occupational diseases gradually increased.¹⁴⁰ Responding to workers’ agitation and public outrage, President Theodore Roosevelt advocated the creation of workers’ compensation programs in 1907, and most states established some version of these during the next decade.¹⁴¹ More than a hundred years later, however, these programs remain shamefully inadequate.¹⁴²

WORKERS’ DEATHS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, 1900–1930

U.S. capitalists’ pursuit of profits also resulted in the deaths of many workers in other countries. In 1904, a year after Roosevelt engineered the creation of the new country of Panama and secured its independence from Colombia, his administration began construction on the Panama Canal. More than 5,600 workers, mainly men of color, died while building the canal before it was completed in 1914.¹⁴³ Between 1907 and 1912, approximately six thousand workers from several nations died while building the Madeira-Mamore railroad in Brazil for a U.S. company.¹⁴⁴ Around the same time, as many as thirty thousand enslaved Indigenous laborers in the then-Peruvian Amazon died from exhaustion, exposure, disease, starvation, and violence while producing rubber for export to New York and London.¹⁴⁵ Thousands of miles away, Thomas Fortune Ryan, Daniel Guggenheim and other U.S. financiers invested in mining, rubber, and agricultural interests in Congo in 1906, providing half the capital for the major Belgian mining corporation Forminière.¹⁴⁶ They were not involved in the enslavement, exploitation, and violence that killed approximately ten million Congolese in King Leopold’s so-called Free State.¹⁴⁷ But they were deeply complicit in the deaths of countless thousands of workers from brutal work conditions, physical abuse, forced relocations, disease, and political repression in the following decades.¹⁴⁸ Beginning in 1917, U.S. capital and technical expertise significantly contributed

to the industrial development of South Africa, the ruthless white exploitation of Black labor, and the deaths of thousands of miners and other workers.¹⁴⁹

ESTIMATES OF WORKPLACE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES,
1900–1930

Marc Linder has remarked, “No one in the early twentieth century knew how many industrial soldiers were being mortally wounded each year in the United States.”¹⁵⁰ At the time, the federal government’s limited collection of mortality data and state agencies’ reliance on employer self-reporting made it difficult to accurately assess the enormous loss of life.¹⁵¹ But as the carnage on railroads and in mines, mills, factories, and other workplaces mounted, so did public pressure to count the number of workers who died each year on the job. When industry analysts, government officials, academics, labor advocates, and journalists began estimating the annual human toll, they developed widely divergent estimates. In 1908, Frederick L. Hoffman of the Prudential Life Insurance company estimated that as many as 17,500 deaths that year resulted from “dangerous industries or trades.”¹⁵² The same year, a journalist estimated annual occupational fatalities to be about 35,000.¹⁵³ In 1910, Columbia University professor Henry Rogers Seager estimated that industrial accidents caused approximately 30,000 deaths each year.¹⁵⁴ The new National Safety Council, dominated by business interests, found that between 18,000 and 21,000 fatal occupational injuries occurred in 1912.¹⁵⁵ Workers’ compensation expert E. H. Downey estimated about 35,000 annual workplace deaths that year.¹⁵⁶

Hoffman estimated that approximately 25,000 lives were lost in the workplace in 1913.¹⁵⁷ In 1914, Carl M. Hansen of the Workmen’s Compensation Service Bureau in New York reported that between 40,000 and 45,000 workers were dying on the job each year.¹⁵⁸ In 1915, the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations informed Congress that about 35,000 industrial deaths had occurred the previous year.¹⁵⁹ In 1924, Carl Hookstadt of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated

that more than 21,000 fatal job accidents were occurring annually.¹⁶⁰ Also in 1924, Downey estimated that the annual loss of life was approximately 25,000.¹⁶¹ The National Safety Council estimated that about 20,000 workers lost their lives on the job in 1929.¹⁶² In contrast, the *American Labor Year Book 1929* estimated that about 35,000 workers had died in workplaces that year.¹⁶³ The precise numbers of fatal occupational injuries in the United States between 1900 and 1930 will never be known, but the largest contemporary appraisals were almost certainly closer to the truth than other assessments. It may be estimated that approximately 35,000 workplace deaths occurred each year during the first two decades of the twentieth century, and approximately 30,000 occurred annually during the 1920s. In sum, a total of about one million workers likely died on the job between 1900 and 1930.

DEATHS FROM OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES, 1900–1930

Brown lung disease, silicosis, black lung disease, and lead poisoning among workers increased between 1900 and 1930.¹⁶⁴ Tuberculosis contracted in workplaces also continued to produce many fatalities, though the rate of fatal infections eventually decreased.¹⁶⁵ In addition, miners and workers in shipbuilding, manufacturing, construction, and the oil industry exposed to asbestos often developed and perished from asbestosis, better known as white lung disease, or from lung cancer or mesothelioma.¹⁶⁶ Stonecutters often became ill and died from respiratory diseases.¹⁶⁷ Workers involved in manufacturing or processing tin, rubber, leather, explosives, and paints were increasingly exposed to benzene and often developed and died from aplastic anemia.¹⁶⁸ Hatmakers became ill from mercury poisoning and sometimes died as a result.¹⁶⁹ Furriers lost their health and sometimes their lives from mercury poisoning, other harmful chemicals, and dust.¹⁷⁰ The proliferation of chemicals endangered workers in other industries as well.¹⁷¹ Watchmakers died from radium poisoning.¹⁷² Cigar and tobacco workers suffered and sometimes perished from heart and lung diseases caused by workplace conditions.¹⁷³

Gerald N. Grob has argued that “it is virtually impossible to generalize about the role of industrial disease as a factor in total mortality at the turn of the century.”¹⁷⁴ However, the first National Conference on Industrial Diseases, held in Chicago in 1910, acknowledged the growing significance of occupational illnesses while lamenting the lack of reliable statistics on related mortality and morbidity.¹⁷⁵ At the time, it was difficult to quantify the number of deaths from occupational diseases, partly because the causes listed on death certificates were not always accurate and partly because less than 60 percent of the states reported annual deaths from all causes to the Census Bureau.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the available historical information suffices for developing estimates of annual deaths caused by occupational illnesses. In 1913, Emery R. Hayhurst described tuberculosis as “the principal terminal occupational disease” and found it to be the “leading cause of death in 110 of the 140 groups of occupations surveyed.”¹⁷⁷ Hayhurst estimated that almost 37,000 workers in these occupations perished in 1909 alone.¹⁷⁸ To this number must be added the deaths from tuberculosis contracted in workplaces in the remainder of the country and deaths from brown lung disease, silicosis, black lung disease, and lead poisoning. A conservative estimate is that the annual death toll from work-related diseases in 1900 was approximately 50,000 and that this number gradually increased over the decades to the better documented but still conservative estimate of 100,000 annual deaths in 1970.¹⁷⁹ Approximately 1.8 million workers likely perished from work-related diseases in the first three decades of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁰

ANTI-LABOR VIOLENCE, 1900–1940

The violent repression of strikes and other labor actions also continued to exact a dreadful human toll between the turn of the century and the Second World War. Forty-two people died during a strike for the eight-hour day in Colorado in 1903–1904.¹⁸¹ At least twenty-one people died in the Teamsters strike in Chicago in 1905.¹⁸² In 1906, a contingent of Arizona Rangers helped Mexican police

brutally suppress a strike by workers at a U.S.-owned copper mine at Cananea in Sonora.¹⁸³ About thirty-six people lost their lives during the violence.¹⁸⁴ Thirty-one people died during a streetcar strike in San Francisco in 1907, and at least twelve workers died in a strike against a railroad car manufacturer in McKees Rock, Pennsylvania, in 1909.¹⁸⁵ Two men trying to organize cigar workers were lynched in Tampa in 1910, and police shot to death one worker during the strike at the steel mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the same year.¹⁸⁶ Approximately fifty people died in the coal miners' strike in the Paint Creek-Cabin's Creek area in West Virginia in 1912–13.¹⁸⁷ Two workers died during the Lawrence Textile Strike in Massachusetts in 1912.¹⁸⁸ In 1914 in Ludlow, Colorado, National Guard troops killed sixty-six men, women, and children at a tent camp housing more than a thousand striking coal miners and family members who had been evicted from their company-owned homes.¹⁸⁹ Several other people also died during the strike.¹⁹⁰

By the time of the Ludlow Massacre, as many as eight hundred workers had died during labor actions in the previous four decades.¹⁹¹ Several hundred more perished in the quarter-century after Ludlow. In 1915, private security guards killed six striking workers at an oil plant in Bayonne, New Jersey, and Joe Hill, an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, was framed for murder and executed in Utah.¹⁹² In 1916, three steelworkers died during a strike in Youngstown, Ohio, and a miner was killed during a strike on the Mesabi iron ore range in Minnesota.¹⁹³ The same year, five IWW members were shot to death, and at least six others drowned when they came by boat to Everett, Washington, to support a strike by shingle-makers.¹⁹⁴ In 1917, IWW organizer Frank Little was lynched in Butte, Montana.¹⁹⁵ In 1919, five people died during a strike by streetcar conductors and motormen in Charlotte, North Carolina and four organizers for the International Timber Workers Union were murdered in their office in Bogalusa, Louisiana.¹⁹⁶ Racist whites killed 237 African Americans trying to organize a union for sharecroppers in Elaine, Arkansas, that year.¹⁹⁷ At least twenty-two workers died in the Great Steel Strike of 1919.¹⁹⁸ In contrast, no one died in the Seattle General Strike the same year.¹⁹⁹

In 1920, state troopers killed about sixteen black and white coal miners during a strike in Walker County, Alabama, strikebreakers killed seven people during a streetcar strike in Denver, and five long-shoremen died during a strike in Philadelphia.²⁰⁰ The United Mine Workers' efforts to organize coal miners in West Virginia in 1920–22 met with fierce resistance, which led to the Matewan Massacre, the assassination of a pro-union sheriff, an intermittent guerrilla war, and ten thousand armed miners fighting state police and deputies in the Battle of Blair Mountain. As many as 150 workers died during those two years.²⁰¹ In 1922, three coal miners died in Herrin, Illinois, during the national strike called by the UMW, and their comrades killed twenty company guards and strikebreakers.²⁰² In 1924, fourteen sugar plantation workers and three police officers died during a strike in Hanapepe, Kauai Hawai'i.²⁰³ Three years later, Colorado state police fatally shot six coal miners during a strike at the Columbine Mine in Serene.²⁰⁴ In 1928, when a massive strike crippled United Fruit Company operations in Colombia, company pressure and U.S. government threats resulted in the Colombian army crushing the labor action, and approximately one thousand workers died.²⁰⁵

As the Great Depression ravaged the United States, there was a historical upsurge of labor activism. Sixteen people were killed during the miners' strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, in 1931–32.²⁰⁶ Police murdered six Black Alabama Sharecroppers Union members during the same period.²⁰⁷ Several unionists and others died during the San Francisco General Strike and broader West Coast Waterfront Strike of 1934.²⁰⁸ Also in 1934, two workers died in a strike against an auto parts plant in Toledo, Ohio, four people were killed during a Teamsters' strike in Minneapolis, and seven textile workers died in Honea Path, South Carolina, during a national strike.²⁰⁹ During the Pacific Northwest Lumber strike the following year, police and armed strikebreakers killed three workers in Humboldt County, California.²¹⁰ More than a hundred workers were killed during labor actions across the country between 1933 and 1936.²¹¹ Approximately thirty steelworkers and others died in Chicago and Youngstown during the Little Steel Strike in 1937.²¹² Twenty-eight members of

the National Maritime Union lost their lives during strikes in Texas, Louisiana, and other states between 1936 and 1938.²¹³ In the decades that followed, company and state violence against workers in labor actions significantly declined but did not disappear.²¹⁴

WORKPLACE DEATHS AND DEATHS FROM OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES, 1930–1970

The frequency of major industrial disasters and the annual number of fatal occupational injuries slowly declined after 1930, but the significant loss of life from workplace accidents and occupational diseases remained a central feature of U.S. capitalism. As many as 1,500 workers who helped construct the Hawk's Nest Tunnel to carry the New River through Gauley Mountain in West Virginia in 1930–31 died of acute silicosis in what has been called this country's "worst industrial disaster."²¹⁵ More than a hundred workers died building the Hoover Dam in Colorado between 1931 and 1936.²¹⁶ About eighty died during the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington between 1933 and 1942.²¹⁷ An oil well explosion in St. George, Utah, killed ten workers in 1935.²¹⁸ As the Second World War raged, there were numerous industrial casualties on the home front. In 1944, a munitions explosion at the Naval Ammunition Depot at Port Chicago, California, killed 320 workers.²¹⁹ That same year, a natural gas tank explosion and fire in Cleveland left 131 people dead.²²⁰ From 1942 until 1945, the U.S. government paid the Brazilian government to transport workers to the Amazon to tap rubber for wartime production under perilous conditions. Twenty-five thousand workers died from disease, lack of medical care, and attacks by wild animals.²²¹ By the end of 1945, almost 85,000 coal miners had been killed in accidents since the new century began.²²²

The number of Congolese workers who died from exposure to radiation after mining uranium for export to the United States between 1942 and 1960 may never be known.²²³ At least two thousand workers who mined uranium in the western United States between the 1940s and the 1980s, including many Diné people, perished from

radiation-related causes.²²⁴ More than 33,000 U.S. nuclear weapons plants employees have died from exposure to radiation since 1945.²²⁵ In 1947, at least 581 workers and local residents died in Texas City, Texas, when an explosion occurred as ammonium nitrate was being loaded onto a ship.²²⁶ Measured in terms of immediate deaths, this was the worst industrial accident in U.S. history.²²⁷ That same year, 111 workers died in an explosion at a coal mine in Centralia, Illinois.²²⁸ In 1950, thirty-one dockworkers and others lost their lives when munitions detonated on barges and trains at the Raritan River Port in South Amboy, New Jersey.²²⁹ The following year, 119 workers died in an explosion at a coal mine near West Frankfort, Illinois.²³⁰ In 1956, a fire at a refinery near Sunray, Texas, led to the deaths of nineteen firefighters.²³¹ In 1959, a flood in a coal mine in Jenkins Township, Pennsylvania, killed twelve workers, and eight people died when an oil tanker exploded and burned in the Houston ship channel.²³²

In 1960, a chemical plant explosion in Kingsport, Tennessee, killed sixteen workers.²³³ In 1965, a gas explosion in a missile silo at an Air Force base near Searcy, Arkansas, killed fifty-three people.²³⁴ In 1968, seventy-eight workers died in a mine explosion in Farmington, West Virginia.²³⁵ Amid the political upheavals of the late 1960s, labor activists demanded legislative reforms to reduce fatal occupational injuries and deaths from occupational diseases. Under intense public pressure, President Richard Nixon signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. This law established an agency of the same name within the U.S. Department of Labor “to assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance.”²³⁶ Strikingly, the Act did not establish a mechanism for accurately counting the annual number of work-related deaths.²³⁷ In 1972, *The President’s Report on Occupational Safety and Health* estimated that 14,000 workers were dying on the job each year, and about 2.2 million disabling accidents were occurring annually.²³⁸ *The President’s Report* also estimated that as many as 100,000 people were dying each year from occupational diseases, and 390,000 new cases were developing annually.²³⁹ National Safety Council statistics

published since then have indicated that more than 620,000 fatal occupational injuries occurred between 1930 and 1970, and this estimate almost certainly did not include all workplace deaths.²⁴⁰ Between 1930 and 1970, more than 3.3 million people likely died from work-related diseases.²⁴¹

“THE CONTINUING DEATH ROLL OF INDUSTRY,” 1970–1990

Since 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Act and other new legislation promoting mine safety and worker protections have helped reduce fatal occupational injuries in the United States. However, as David Rosner has pointed out, “There is a continuing ‘death roll of industry.’”²⁴² The same year OSHA became law, an explosion at a coal mine in Hyden, Kentucky, killed thirty-eight workers.²⁴³ In 1971, an explosion at a chemical plant in Camden County, Georgia, resulted in twenty-nine deaths.²⁴⁴ In 1972, a coal slurry impoundment dam in Logan County, West Virginia, burst and killed 125 people.²⁴⁵ Ninety-one silver miners died in a fire at the Sunshine Mine between the cities of Wallace and Kellogg in Idaho the same year.²⁴⁶ At least sixty workers died while building the World Trade Towers in lower Manhattan before they opened in 1973.²⁴⁷ Half a world away, the massive U.S. military presence in Thailand during the Vietnam War fostered the significant growth of prostitution and sex trafficking, which contributed to almost 600,000 deaths there from Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome between 1984 and 2008.²⁴⁸ In 1976, an explosion and fire at a grain elevator in Houston killed nine workers.²⁴⁹ In 1977, eighteen workers died in a flash fire at a grain elevator in Galveston.²⁵⁰ The collapse of a partially constructed cooling tower at a power plant in Willow Island, West Virginia, killed fifty-one workers in 1978.²⁵¹

In 1983, an explosion in an unlicensed fireworks factory killed eleven employees.²⁵² In 1984, seventeen workers died in an explosion at an oil refinery in Romeoville, Illinois.²⁵³ The same year, a gas leak at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, became the worst industrial disaster in world history.²⁵⁴ Exposure to methyl isocyanate, the toxic gas used to make the pesticides, killed about seven thousand

people in the first three days and about 25,000 people since the incident.²⁵⁵ In 1988 in Henderson, Nevada, a chemical plant explosion resulted in two deaths.²⁵⁶ Also in 1988, 167 workers lost their lives in a gas explosion on a U.S. company's oil platform in the North Sea, and seven oil workers died in a refinery explosion in Norco, Louisiana.²⁵⁷ In 1989, a gas explosion at a refinery in Pasadena, Texas, killed twenty-three workers, and an explosion on the battleship *USS Iowa* off the coast of Puerto Rico claimed the lives of forty-seven sailors.²⁵⁸ As of 1990, more than ten thousand workers were still dying on the job every year.²⁵⁹ National Safety Council data have indicated that more than 250,000 fatal occupational injuries occurred between 1970 and 1990, and this may well have been an undercount.²⁶⁰

Many more workers died from occupational diseases during these two decades. Some researchers have estimated that the annual number of deaths from work-related diseases declined to between fifty and seventy thousand between 1970 and 1990.²⁶¹ Other analysts and labor advocates have insisted that the loss of life each year remained approximately 100,000 during this period.²⁶² Milan Stone of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department testified in a Congressional hearing in 1985:

The exposed worker populations include . . . 3 million workers exposed to benzene with a risk of leukemia up to five times greater than normal; 2.5 million workers exposed to asbestos, many with a risk of lung cancer five times greater than normal; 1.5 million workers exposed to arsenic, many of whom have a risk of lung cancer two to five times greater than normal; 725,000 workers exposed to chromium and chromate pigments, some with a risk of cancer five to nine times greater than normal; 1.4 million workers exposed to nickel, some of a risk of cancer 5–10 times greater than normal. Examples of other noncarcinogenic but nevertheless dangerous workplace exposures include 89 agents of heart disease . . . 1 million workers exposed to silica dust at risk of lung disease; and 800,000 workers exposed to cotton dust at risk of brown lung disease. . . . Some 100,000 die

and another 1 million may be disabled each year from occupational disease.²⁶³

The higher estimate is surely more accurate yet still conservative.²⁶⁴ It is likely that at least two million workers died from occupational diseases between 1970 and 1990.

WORKPLACE DEATHS AND DEATHS FROM OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES, 1990–2020

Since 1990, the annual number of fatal occupational injuries has declined, but many workers continue to die on the job each year. In 1990, a chemical plant explosion in Channelview, Texas, killed seventeen workers.²⁶⁵ The next year, twenty-five workers perished in a fire at a food processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina.²⁶⁶ Also in 1991, an explosion at a nitro-paraffin plant in Sterlington, Louisiana, killed eight workers.²⁶⁷ In 1993, a fire at a Thai factory producing toys for U.S. companies killed 188 workers.²⁶⁸ In 1998, a series of explosions at a grain elevator and storage facility in Haysville, Kansas, killed seven people.²⁶⁹ In 1999, an explosion at a power plant in an automobile production complex in Dearborn, Michigan, resulted in six deaths.²⁷⁰ In 2005, fifteen workers died in an explosion at a refinery in Texas City, Texas.²⁷¹ In 2006, twelve workers died in a coal mine explosion at Sago, West Virginia, and three died in a gas explosion in a gear manufacturing plant in Milwaukee.²⁷² Later that year, an explosion at a coal mine in Holmes Mill, Kentucky, killed five workers.²⁷³ In 2007, two collapses at a mine in Crandall Canyon, Utah, resulted in nine deaths.²⁷⁴ The following year, an explosion at a sugar refinery in Port Wentworth, Georgia, killed fourteen people, and a crane collapse in New York City killed six workers and a tourist.²⁷⁵ From 2008 through 2017, 1,566 fatal occupational injuries reportedly occurred in the oil-and-gas drilling industry and related businesses.²⁷⁶

In 2010, a power plant explosion killed five workers in Middletown, Connecticut, and a coal mine explosion claimed twenty-nine lives in Montcoal, West Virginia.²⁷⁷ Eleven workers died when the Deepwater

Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico blew up the same year.²⁷⁸ In 2011, a grain elevator explosion killed six workers in Atchison, Kansas.²⁷⁹ In 2013, fifteen people died in an explosion at a fertilizer storage facility in West, Texas.²⁸⁰ In recent years, the transfer of production to low-wage countries has enabled the U.S. Empire to outsource large-scale workplace disasters.²⁸¹ In 2010, a fire at a textile factory supplying U.S. and other multinational corporations killed at least twenty-seven workers near Dhaka, Bangladesh.²⁸² Nine employees of Foxconn, the electronics manufacturer that supplies several U.S. companies, committed suicide in China because of harsh working conditions the same year.²⁸³ In 2012, a fire at a textile factory near Dhaka resulted in 112 deaths, and a fire in a clothing plant in Karachi, Pakistan, killed almost three hundred workers. Both businesses produced apparel for Walmart.²⁸⁴ In 2013, approximately 1,130 people died when the Rana Plaza building, which housed garment factories supplying global brands, collapsed near Dhaka.²⁸⁵ Later that year, an explosion at a factory in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, which produced candy for U.S. companies, killed seven workers.²⁸⁶ Today cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for U.S. and other companies leads to frequent accidental deaths and the risk of hard-metal lung disease.²⁸⁷

In 2019, about 5,333 workers died on the job in the United States.²⁸⁸ Statistics from the National Safety Council and the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that almost 170,000 fatal occupational injuries occurred between 1990 and 2018.²⁸⁹ Although 3.5 million new accidents and illnesses were officially reported in 2017, the AFL-CIO has contended that the annual number is actually between 7 million and 10.5 million.²⁹⁰ Since 1990, some analysts have reported that between fifty and sixty thousand people die each year from work-related diseases.²⁹¹ For years, the AFL-CIO included similar appraisals in its annual *Death on the Job* report while warning that many occupational diseases are undetected for years and are often “misdiagnosed and poorly tracked.”²⁹² Other investigators have concluded that the annual toll remains about 100,000, and still others have offered estimates of 200,000 to 300,000.²⁹³ In the most recent editions of *Death on the Job*,

the AFL-CIO has estimated the annual number of deaths from occupational diseases to be approximately 95,000, and this is arguably still a conservative appraisal.²⁹⁴ In sum, between 1990 and 2020, approximately three million people likely died from occupational diseases.

COUNTING THE DEAD

As with the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust and the African American Holocaust, the total number of people who have perished in the Workers Holocaust in the United States can only be estimated. The available historical information makes possible an informed and reasonable, if rough, estimate of the terrible loss of life. Since 1880, almost 13 million workers have suffered fatal occupational injuries or died from occupational diseases in this country.²⁹⁵ To this number must be added the deaths of indentured servants in the colonial period; Chinese workers transported by U.S. ships to Cuba, Peru, and other countries; U.S. railroad company employees in Central and South America; laborers hired by the United States to build the Panama Canal; rubber workers in the Amazon; miners in Congo; sex workers in Thailand; and other workers employed by U.S. companies or their suppliers in various countries. When these deaths are included, the total loss of life may be close to 13.5 million. Like the Indigenous Holocaust and the African American Holocaust, the Workers Holocaust continues today.

From Colonial Wars to Global Holocausts

I will not abandon my resistance until the . . . pirate invaders . . . assassins of weak peoples . . . are expelled from my country. . . . I will make them realize that their crimes will cost them dear. . . . There will be bloody combat. . . . Nicaragua shall not be the patrimony of imperialists. I will fight for my cause as long as my heart beats.

—AUGUSTO CÉSAR SANDINO,
MESSAGE TO MEXICO CITY, 1928

The United States did not become the most powerful empire on the planet until the end of the Second World War, but its long history of wars, military interventions, and other destructive actions had already taken a dreadful human toll. The European colonial wars had left Britain as the predominant power in eastern North America, but thirteen colonies subsequently waged a successful War of Independence and became the United States. This “first new nation” then fought against France, the Barbary states, and Britain to advance its economic interests.¹ The acquisition of Florida, the annexation of Texas, and the war against Mexico substantially expanded the continental U.S. Empire.² In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States threatened and used violence against China, Japan, and Korea to obtain markets and began to seize islands in the Pacific and

Caribbean.³ The Civil War preserved the Union and ended non-penal slavery but at horrific human expense. In the following decades, the United States took control of Alaska, Hawaii, and other Pacific islands and militarily intervened in more than a dozen countries.⁴ The empire fought the war of 1898 and the war against the Philippines to acquire new colonies, helped crush the Boxer Rebellion in China, engineered the creation of Panama, intervened in the Mexican Revolution, and occupied Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.⁵ Support for the Entente Powers during the First World War made the United States deeply complicit in this “imperial bloodbath.”⁶ Participation in the invasion of Soviet Russia and support for the Guomindang regime in China contributed to millions more deaths.⁷ And the United States’ extensive economic relations with fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and militarist Japan—along with its political accommodation and appeasement of these countries—made it partly responsible for the unprecedented carnage of the Second World War.⁸

THE COLONIAL WARS IN NORTH AMERICA

Four wars involving Britain, France, and Spain and their colonies occurred in and near North America between 1689 and 1763. These wars for empire were part of much broader conflagrations centered in Europe and resulted in many deaths. King William’s War of 1689–97 pitted the British against the French in North America and did not significantly alter the existing balance of power on the continent. Less than a thousand British and French colonists perished in the conflict, but hundreds of Native people allied with France and between two thousand and six thousand Haudenosaunees allied with Britain died.⁹ During Queen Anne’s War of 1702–13, Britain fought against Spain and France. The theater of war ranged from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the island of Guadaloupe in the Eastern Caribbean. As Micheal Clodfelter has observed, this conflict “was waged half-heartedly and was interrupted frequently by long lulls.”¹⁰ More than 1,800 European soldiers, sailors, and colonists perished from Canada to the Caribbean.¹¹ About two thousand Apalachees, Mesquakies,

and Macoutens also died.¹² The treaty that ended the war recognized British control of Acadia (Nova Scotia) and the Hudson Valley in New York.

Disputes over the new colony of Georgia and trade with South America led to the War of Jenkins's Ear between Britain and Spain in 1739.¹³ A much larger war involving these two empires and other nations erupted in Europe the next year. Fighting in Georgia and Florida was limited, but 8,500 British and colonial troops died in a disastrous attack on the Spanish port city of Cartagena, Colombia, in 1741.¹⁴ This conflict was the prelude to King George's War of 1744–48, which began when Britain and France fought over the boundaries of Acadia and northern New England. The battles there and in New York, like the hostilities in the U.S. Southeast, did not produce any major political changes. But in addition to an unknown number of deaths among Indigenous people, more than 14,000 British, French, and Spanish people died in and near North America.¹⁵

The French and Indian War of 1754–63 began when Britain and France sought to build a fort at the same location near present-day Pittsburgh. Different Indigenous nations fought alongside the two empires. Within two years, this conflict had become part of a war waged by several European countries on five continents. After some early French victories, the British and their Native allies seized Fort Duquesne near Pittsburgh and French strongholds in Nova Scotia and captured Quebec in 1759 and Montreal in 1760. Significant fighting occurred along the frontier as far south as South Carolina, and the related Anglo-Cherokee War of 1760–61 also took many lives.¹⁶ In 1763, the Treaty of Paris ceded Canada and Florida to Britain and Louisiana to Spain. More than forty thousand people, including more than three thousand Indigenous people, had died on or near the continent.¹⁷

THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

Britain's predominance in eastern North America was short-lived because subsequent actions by King George III and Parliament sparked

mounting dissatisfaction in the thirteen colonies. Although the ensuing War of Independence is often depicted as a heroic struggle for freedom and democracy, the historical reality is much less sanguine. The Proclamation of 1763 limiting expansion into Native lands west of the Appalachians, the levying of onerous new taxes to retire war debts and fund imperial protection, and concern about what appeared to be declining British support for slavery stoked the flames of rebellion among various segments of the colonial population.¹⁸ The capitalists and slaveholders who led the rebellion were chiefly interested in protecting and increasing their wealth and power. They looked down on the masses of small farmers and urban dwellers but were compelled to enlist their support for the revolutionary cause.¹⁹ Although some of the common people who came to support independence hoped for egalitarian and democratic reforms, others were more interested in claiming new lands in the West for themselves.²⁰ Armed struggle began in 1775 when colonial militia resisted British troops' efforts to confiscate munitions in the rebellious colony of Massachusetts. The following year, the Second Continental Congress declared the independence of the United States of America.

John Adams later estimated that one-third of the colonists supported independence, one-third were "averse to the revolution," and one-third were neutral.²¹ The Continental Army and colonial militias did most of the fighting for independence, but they and the British both relied on alliances with various Indigenous nations.²² Although nine to ten thousand African Americans served with the revolutionary forces, as many as sixty thousand enslaved people fled to the British lines after Lord Dunmore promised emancipation early in the war. Thousands took up arms for Britain, and others performed labor for its forces.²³ Auxiliary troops from several German states also fought with the British and Loyalist forces. In the first years of the conflict, revolutionary forces suffered serious defeats in Canada, New York, and New Jersey. The Continental Army went on to win important battles in Trenton and Princeton, and its decisive victory in Saratoga, New York, in late 1777 helped persuade France to enter into an alliance with the new United States.²⁴ Spain joined the war against

Britain in 1779, and Holland followed the next year. Although the conflict centered on British North America, the European belligerents also fought some battles in the Caribbean, Gibraltar, and India.²⁵ Only French and Spanish military intervention and economic assistance enabled U.S. forces to win the war.²⁶ More than 130,000 people died because of the conflict before the Treaty of Paris recognized the independence of the United States in 1783.²⁷

Progressive reforms sparked by the revolution were limited.²⁸ “Modest, but only modest, gains” were made in voting rights, which generally continued to be limited to white men who met property or taxpaying qualifications.²⁹ Pennsylvania and the New England states approved the abolition of slavery, but this was gradual in most cases.³⁰ Mounting domestic crises were soon frightening the ruling elites. The new national government could not tax or repay those who had loaned it money during the Revolution. Nor could the government regulate currency, maintain a standing army, or override state legislatures influenced by large crowds of common people. Popular opposition to creditors’ confiscation of indebted farmers’ lands, imprisonment for debt, and harsh economic conditions exploded, and Shays’s Rebellion in western Massachusetts raised the specter of armed rebellion against the national government.³¹ In response, in 1787, a small group of capitalists, slaveholders, and politicians promulgated a new constitution that created a stronger national government with the authority to tax, repay public debts, regulate currency and interstate commerce, maintain a standing army, and suppress “insurrections” and “domestic violence.”³² The new constitution dramatically strengthened protections for property and wealth and ensured they would be beyond the reach of popular majorities.³³ As Michael Parenti has explained, it was “a constitution for the few.”³⁴

ENVISIONING EMPIRE

Even before the Constitution of 1787 was ratified, U.S. political leaders began to anticipate the expansion of the United States. George Washington described the new nation as “our infant empire.”³⁵ For

Washington, "However unimportant America may be considered at present . . . there will assuredly come a day, when this country will have some weight in the scale of Empires."³⁶ Alexander Hamilton believed that the United States was "the embryo of a great empire."³⁷ He envisioned an imperium throughout the entire Western Hemisphere when he advocated "erecting one great American system, superior to the control of all transatlantic force or influence, and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new world."³⁸ Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South, is to be peopled."³⁹ He hoped that the Spanish Empire could hold on to its colonies "until our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them piece by piece."⁴⁰ John Jay argued that the United States should aspire to the power and prestige of the British Empire: "We have heard much of the fleets of Britain, and the time may come, if we are wise, when the fleets of America may engage attention."⁴¹ Niall Ferguson has pointed out that "there were no more self-confident imperialists than the Founding Fathers themselves."⁴²

WARS AGAINST FRANCE AND THE BARBARY STATES

Although France had been the new nation's closest ally during the War of Independence, tensions developed between the two countries within a decade. After the French Revolution began in 1789, most wealthy people in the United States were horrified by the social upheaval and challenges to property and inequality.⁴³ As Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton urged President Washington to pursue closer ties with Britain, the world's leading economic power.⁴⁴ When war broke out between France and Britain in 1793, the United States abrogated its treaty of alliance with Paris, proclaimed its neutrality, and continued to trade with both countries. In response, both Britain and France seized U.S. ships, and Britain impressed U.S. sailors.⁴⁵ In 1798, the new nation fought a brief undeclared naval war against France. The logic of empire, not French interference with shipping, led to the "Quasi War." U.S. officials viewed the maintenance of trade with

Britain as essential for economic development, and London quietly agreed to remove forts in the Old Northwest that impeded new U.S. settlements.⁴⁶ U.S. leaders also hoped that war with France might become “a vehicle for seizing Louisiana, the two Floridas, and parts of Latin America from Spain.”⁴⁷ The naval conflict with the French resulted in about 150 deaths and ended with a diplomatic agreement in 1800.⁴⁸

By this time, the nascent U.S. Empire was increasingly seeking opportunities for trade in far-flung parts of the world, and its merchant ships were traversing the Mediterranean. State-sponsored piracy was widespread in the area, and European countries paid an annual tribute to the Barbary States of Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco to guarantee the safety of their ships. The United States also paid tribute for fifteen years but fell behind in its payments; newly inaugurated President Jefferson wanted to end the practice.⁴⁹ After the ruler of Tripoli demanded larger payments and declared war on the United States, the First Barbary War of 1801 to 1805 ensued. U.S. leaders wanted to establish freedom of the seas as a recognized international principle and expand profitable commerce for their country.⁵⁰ After initial naval engagements failed to produce results, the United States assembled a substantial mercenary army and plotted to replace the government of Tripoli with a friendlier regime—both firsts in U.S. history.⁵¹ In 1805, the ruler in this city-state agreed to end attacks on U.S. ships and was allowed to remain in power, but the U.S. government still had to pay a ransom for the release of captured citizens.⁵² Approximately a thousand people, mainly North Africans, died in the conflict.⁵³

THE ACQUISITION OF THE LOUISIANA TERRITORY AND THE WAR OF 1812

Early in his presidency, Jefferson acquired the vitally important port city of New Orleans. Agricultural produce, pelts, and finished goods from the western part of the United States were often transported on the Mississippi River and stored in the city before being shipped to

markets.⁵⁴ Since 1763, Spain had controlled the Louisiana Territory, which “stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, and from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains.”⁵⁵ Spain had allowed U.S. vessels free passage and the right to store cargo in New Orleans, but this arrangement ended when Spain ceded the entire Louisiana Territory to France in 1802.⁵⁶ Concerned that Napoleon would deploy French troops to secure New Orleans and threaten U.S. commerce, Jefferson in 1803 sent representatives to Paris to negotiate the purchase of the city. At the time, French forces were desperately trying to crush the Haitian Revolution, and Napoleon urgently needed money for another war against Britain. U.S. diplomats were pleasantly surprised to learn that the First Consul of France was prepared to sell the entire Louisiana Territory, and they agreed to pay \$15 million for the 828,000 square miles.⁵⁷ The Louisiana Purchase nearly doubled the size of the United States.⁵⁸ Neither the Indigenous people nor the people of African descent who lived there were asked how they felt about this “real estate transaction.”⁵⁹ Jefferson dispatched troops to New Orleans to suppress local resistance to U.S. annexation, preserve slavery, assert authority over Indigenous people, and defend against foreign intervention.⁶⁰

The War of 1812 is often depicted as a “Second War of Independence,” but the conflict resulted from Washington’s quest for new markets and territory.⁶¹ The economic imperative of exporting surplus agricultural products had become clear.⁶² While the Napoleonic Wars raged in Europe, exports to British and French markets produced what Sidney Lens has called an unprecedented “economic bonanza” for the United States.⁶³ However, the belligerents’ economic warfare inevitably ensnared this country, as it had in the previous decade. Both France and Britain began seizing U.S. ships, the British continued to impress U.S. sailors, and occasional naval hostilities erupted.⁶⁴ In 1807, Congress passed the Embargo Act prohibiting trade with all foreign countries. The new law led to a severe economic depression, widespread public discontent, and growing sectional differences.⁶⁵ Congress replaced the Embargo Act with a more limited prohibition of trade with Britain and France in 1809, but concerns

about British naval power continued, and expansionist sentiment led to growing calls for the conquest of Canada and the Floridas.⁶⁶ In 1810, U.S. nationals who had settled in West Florida rebelled against the Spanish authorities there, and two years later, President James Madison dispatched troops to seize portions of Spanish East Florida.⁶⁷ The persistence of disputes with Britain and mounting land hunger led to war in 1812.⁶⁸ The conflict was a “total and monumental failure” for the United States.⁶⁹ Not only did British forces capture and burn the White House, but when the fighting ended in 1815, the United States had won no new territory and no guarantee of an end to British naval interference.⁷⁰ Control of much of East Florida reverted to Spain.⁷¹ The war had claimed close to forty thousand U.S., British, and Indigenous lives.⁷²

CONTINENTAL EXPANSION AND OVERSEAS INTERVENTIONS, 1815–1830

In the decades that followed, the United States continued to expand its continental empire and increasingly pursued markets and resources around the world. A large naval force deployed by Madison in 1815 killed scores of people in the brief Second Barbary War, which finally ended interference with U.S. ships by North African states.⁷³ In 1818, Jackson invaded East Florida, defeated the Spanish, and battled local Indigenous people in the First Seminole War. Spain ceded the Florida Territory to the United States the next year.⁷⁴ By the early 1820s, trade with China was bolstering the U.S. economy despite the absence of any bilateral treaty. U.S. merchants were shipping furs, Spanish silver dollars, sandalwood, and ginseng to the Middle Kingdom—along with opium from Turkey.⁷⁵ Although the British dominated the odious trade, the United States accounted for 20 to 30 percent of opium imports to China.⁷⁶ In late 1821, U.S. colonists began arriving in present-day Texas with the approval of the newly independent Mexican government. While authorities there hoped this arrangement would deter U.S. expansionism, many of the settlers looked forward to annexation by Washington at some point.⁷⁷ That same year,

the American Colonization Society established the colony of Liberia for formerly enslaved African Americans.⁷⁸ In 1823, President James Monroe declared, “The American continents . . . are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”⁷⁹ As Paul L. Atwood has noted, the Monroe Doctrine unambiguously signaled that the U.S. Empire would do “what it insisted Europeans could not.”⁸⁰

Between 1822 and 1825, U.S. naval vessels repeatedly engaged pirates in or near Cuba. The pirates’ chief offense was raiding Spanish slave ships and selling Black captives at prices much lower than those charged by wealthy U.S. citizens in Cuba.⁸¹ In 1824, two hundred Marines attacked the town of Fajardo in Puerto Rico for sheltering pirates and insulting U.S. officers.⁸² In 1827, the U.S. Navy attacked Greek pirate vessels that had interfered with merchant ships.⁸³ In 1831–32, it used force to free three seal-hunting ships seized by an Argentinian official for unauthorized intrusion on the Malvinas Islands.⁸⁴ Hundreds of people died because of U.S. actions in these four countries.⁸⁵ In 1832, after pirates plundered a merchant ship and killed three crew members near Kuala Batu in Sumatra, a U.S. naval vessel killed about 150 pirates in the area and then burned the town, killing more than 300 civilians.⁸⁶ This was the first U.S. military attack in Asia. Washington also sent armed forces to Argentina in 1833 and Peru in 1835–36, ostensibly to protect U.S. lives and property during unrest.⁸⁷ Subsequent attacks on Kuala Batu and Mukki in Sumatra and in Fiji, Samoa, and Drummond’s Island killed scores, if not hundreds, of people.⁸⁸ Some U.S. actions followed aggression by local pirates or opposition to U.S. merchants or explorers. But implicit in this pattern of military intervention, as Lens has observed, was “the notion that strong powers have the right to violate the sovereignty of weak powers when they feel that the interests of their nationals are affected.”⁸⁹

THE ACQUISITION OF HALF OF MEXICO AND THE OPENING OF CHINA

Presidents John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson tried to purchase

the area now known as Texas from Mexico in the 1820s and early 1830s but were unsuccessful.⁹⁰ Yet mounting tensions between U.S. colonists and the Mexican government foreshadowed crisis and conflict. Many settlers had come from the southern United States and had brought enslaved people with them. When the Mexican government enforced its prohibition of slavery in Coahuila y Tejas and outlawed further immigration from the United States in 1830, most settlers were outraged.⁹¹ The rise of the new centralist government under President Antonio López de Santa Anna further infuriated them. In 1835, the colonists launched an armed rebellion against their adopted country. Although they proclaimed their love of freedom and opposition to tyranny, their insurgency was largely motivated by the government's actions on slavery and new immigration.⁹² The rebellion lasted six months and led to more than 2,200 deaths and the creation of the Republic of Texas, an independent country that officially enshrined white supremacy and slavery in its new constitution.⁹³ Although many citizens of the new country hoped to become part of the United States, sectional differences over the expansion of slavery and fear of a potential war with Mexico delayed the U.S. annexation of Texas for nine years.

When Britain fought China in the First Opium War in 1839–42, the United States did not join the conflict. But U.S. merchants temporarily took over much of the opium trade until the end of the war.⁹⁴ Britain's victory led to a treaty recognizing its right to continue the opium trade, providing access to five port cities, and granting other concessions. The United States was determined to obtain a treaty with the same rights and concessions, and President John Tyler's administration named U.S. Representative Caleb Cushing as envoy to China.⁹⁵ Cushing informed Washington that "fleets and armies" would be required to compel acquiescence, and he arrived with four warships in China in 1844.⁹⁶ Although Emperor Mianning had already contemplated the advantages of treaties affording other countries the same privileges as Britain, he did not appoint an imperial ambassador to meet with Cushing for months.⁹⁷ Cushing told a local Chinese official that refusal to receive a foreign ambassador could

be considered grounds for war by some nations, and a U.S. warship's twenty-one-gun salute near Canton was likely viewed as "a less-than-subtle suggestion of gunboat diplomacy."⁹⁸ It was "under the shadow of their guns and Cushing's threats of a second war" that the Chinese government agreed to a treaty with the United States.⁹⁹

The United States annexed Texas as its twenty-eighth state in 1845. The following year, President James Polk negotiated a treaty in which Britain ceded much of the Oregon Territory. The eleventh president launched a war against Mexico after its government refused to sell California to the United States. Frederick Douglass, U.S. Representative Abraham Lincoln, and many others in the United States opposed the conflict.¹⁰⁰ But Polk's war was supported by southern politicians and planters who desired the expansion of slavery and by northern and western interests, which shared John O'Sullivan's view that it was "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."¹⁰¹ By early 1848, the United States had won the war. As many as 64,000 people, primarily Mexicans, died during the conflict.¹⁰² Mexico was forced to give up its claims to Texas and cede territory that later became the states of California, Nevada, and Utah, along with large parts of present-day Arizona and New Mexico and smaller parts of what are now Colorado and Wyoming.¹⁰³ The Mexican Cession of 1848 cost Mexico 55 percent of its national territory.¹⁰⁴ The U.S. Empire now reached "from sea to shining sea."¹⁰⁵

OVERSEAS INTERVENTIONS AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN, 1850–1860

Although the Americo-Liberians declared their country's independence in 1847, Washington did not grant them diplomatic recognition for another fifteen years. In the decades that followed, the United States did not develop close economic ties with Liberia, but its frequent military interventions kept the Americo-Liberian elite in power and effectively made the country a protectorate.¹⁰⁶ By the middle of the nineteenth century, U.S. whalers and missionaries had

come to play an important role in Hawai'i, and some were already calling for annexation by Washington.¹⁰⁷ Some U.S. officials, slaveholders, and capitalists wanted to annex Spanish Cuba, and Polk was willing to pay up to \$100 million for the island.¹⁰⁸ After Madrid refused to part with its colony, southern slaveholders financed two filibuster expeditions led by former Spanish military officer Narciso López to foment revolution and seize power. His invasions of Cuba in 1850 and 1851 were a total failure and resulted in the deaths of several hundred people.¹⁰⁹ Spanish forces apprehended and executed López in Havana in 1851.¹¹⁰ That same year, the USS *Dale* arrived at Johanna Island off the coast of Africa and demanded the release of a U.S. whaling ship captain imprisoned for an unauthorized supply stop there the previous year. After the *Dale* bombarded the island's main fort, the captain was freed, and the local authorities signed a commercial treaty with the United States.¹¹¹ Three years later, the residents of Greytown, Nicaragua, tried to arrest a commercial U.S. ship captain and the U.S. ambassador after the captain murdered a local fishing boat owner. In response, a U.S. naval vessel bombarded and destroyed Greytown, though no loss of life was reported.¹¹²

In the 1850s, the U.S. objective of obtaining guano for fertilizer led to the acquisition of Howland Island, Baker Island, Jarvis Island, and Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean and Navassa Island in the Caribbean.¹¹³ Over time, Washington claimed more than one hundred islands under the Guano Islands Act, though it eventually abandoned most of these claims.¹¹⁴ Keenly aware of the growing need for new markets and resources, Commodore Matthew Perry wrote in 1852 that "our people must naturally be drawn into the contest for empire."¹¹⁵ Several years earlier, Japan had rejected a U.S. effort to obtain a commercial treaty. For Perry, both "the honor of our nation" and "the interest of our commerce" required that the Land of the Rising Sun open itself to trade and business relations with the U.S. Empire.¹¹⁶ In 1853, Perry arrived in Japan with four warships and a letter from President Millard Fillmore demanding the establishment of economic relations. However, the Japanese politely declined. The next year, Perry returned with nine warships, and Japanese officials

felt compelled to allow the United States to open a diplomatic office and access two ports where its ships could be refueled with coal. However, Japan did not open its markets to this country until complete diplomatic relations were established and a formal commercial treaty was signed four years later.¹¹⁷

Despite the continued British presence in Nicaragua, U.S. interest in the country remained strong. After the acquisition of California and the discovery of gold there, the commercial value of a canal across Central America greatly increased; Nicaragua was one possible site for this project. Some influential U.S. leaders even supported the annexation of the country.¹¹⁸ In 1855, a California business owner whose mining interests in Nicaragua were imperiled by local unrest hired an adventurer named William Walker to intervene in the conflict and protect his investments. After arriving with several dozen men in Nicaragua, Walker seized power, made himself dictator, reestablished slavery, and persuaded President Franklin Pierce to recognize his government.¹¹⁹ Walker was strongly backed by some capitalists and was viewed as a hero by Southern slaveowners, but his confiscation of Cornelius Vanderbilt's property in Nicaragua led the railroad and shipping magnate to financially support armies from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras committed to ousting Walker.¹²⁰ These armies defeated the adventurer's forces, and he was forced to flee Nicaragua in 1857. Walker tried unsuccessfully to return to Nicaragua later that year and in 1858 and 1860. In his last attempt, he was captured in Honduras and executed. Walker's invasions had resulted in the deaths of approximately ten thousand people.¹²¹

In 1854, the United States sent warships to China, ostensibly to protect its interests during the Taiping Rebellion, a civil war between 1850 and 1864 that killed between twenty and forty million people.¹²² When Chinese government forces occupied the Westerners' racetrack in Shanghai, U.S. and British troops attacked them. Approximately three hundred Chinese soldiers died in the assault, and two U.S. military personnel were killed.¹²³ Britain and the United States became angry over mounting Chinese opposition to the existing treaties, and both empires sought even larger concessions.¹²⁴ After Britain

launched the Second Opium War on a flimsy pretext in 1856, U.S. sailors and Marines landed in Canton and destroyed five ports on the Pearl River, killing as many as five hundred Chinese defenders.¹²⁵ France joined Britain in the prosecution of the war, but the United States soon pledged to remain neutral. However, in 1859 U.S. naval forces assisted British vessels engaged in an unsuccessful attack on forts at Taku, leaving 450 British and French military personnel dead or wounded.¹²⁶ After the Chinese surrendered in 1860, the United States benefitted from “hitchhiking imperialism” again when it won expanded commercial rights in the Middle Kingdom.¹²⁷ In the decades that followed, trade did not increase as much as some U.S. merchants expected. U.S. imports of opium declined, but Christian missionaries continued to arrive. Washington would maintain a military presence in China until the People’s Republic was founded in 1949.¹²⁸

THE CIVIL WAR IN THE UNITED STATES

By 1860, the mounting sectional economic and political tensions over slavery had become irreconcilable. The wealth produced by enslaved Black people was the primary means of primitive accumulation facilitating the rise of industrial capitalism in the lands that became the United States.¹²⁹ For generations, the entire U.S. economy had been deeply implicated in this ongoing crime against humanity. But the growing incompatibility of Northern capitalists’ need for “free labor” and Southern slaveholders’ need to expand the “peculiar institution” westward arguably made the Civil War inevitable.¹³⁰ Founded in 1854, the Republican Party embraced the former and opposed the latter, and its candidate, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president in November 1860.¹³¹ Soon afterward, the Southern states began to secede and formed the Confederate States of America, which was committed to preserving slavery and white supremacy. In April 1861, the Confederacy began the Civil War by attacking and defeating federal forces at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The federal government’s original objective was preserving national unity, not the immediate or near-term abolition of slavery.¹³² But within two years, the growing

casualties, the unpopularity of the conflict and military conscription, and the need to enlist African American troops transformed the Union's war efforts into a crusade "to make men free."¹³³

In May 1865, the last major Confederate army unit surrendered, and the Civil War ended. A Confederate sympathizer had assassinated Lincoln the previous month, and the human costs of the war were enormous: the Superintendent of the 1870 Census estimated that at least 850,000 men had died during the conflict.¹³⁴ But the destruction of records made it difficult to assess the extent of Confederate losses, and after 1900 the loss of life in the war was widely estimated to be about 620,000.¹³⁵ In 2011, the demographer J. David Hacker announced that new microdata samples from censuses between 1850 and 1880 indicated that as many as 850,000 people died because of the war.¹³⁶ In 2012, historian Jim Downs pointed out that Hacker's new computations did not include the deaths of enslaved people killed by soldiers or the much larger number of African American deaths from disease in the Union camps to which half a million had fled.¹³⁷ As Downs emphasized, "If former slaves were included in this figure, the Civil War death toll would likely be over a million casualties."¹³⁸

THE ACQUISITION OF ALASKA AND OVERSEAS INTERVENTIONS, 1860–1880

At the same time the U.S. government was fighting against the Confederacy, it continued to wage war on Indigenous peoples at home and to intervene in other countries. After the Emperor of Japan ordered an end to trade with the West and the expulsion of foreigners in 1863, the United States joined Britain, France, and the Netherlands to force Japan to allow foreign shipping in the Straits of Shimonoseki. The USS *Wyoming* sank two Japanese vessels, killing at least forty Japanese sailors and losing five military personnel in the process.¹³⁹ The next year, the *Wyoming* was part of a larger Western fleet that decisively defeated Japanese resistance and resulted in additional deaths.¹⁴⁰ In 1865, Washington sent troops to the Department of Panama in Colombia, putatively to protect U.S. property and lives

during civil strife.¹⁴¹ In the decade and a half that followed, the U.S. Empire acquired more territory, pursued new foreign markets and resources, and increasingly sent its armed forces to intervene in other countries around the world.

In 1866, the *General Sherman*, a heavily armed merchant ship, attempted to compel Korea to trade with the United States. The crew defied Korean orders to leave, kidnapped a local official, and killed a dozen people before being wiped out.¹⁴² In 1867, Washington purchased Alaska and the Aleutian Islands from Russia and took formal possession of Midway Island in the Pacific. During the last half of the decade, U.S. military forces also intervened in China, Mexico, Nicaragua, Japan, Uruguay, and Colombia on the pretext of defending national interests.¹⁴³ In 1869, President Ulysses Grant and many members of Congress wanted to annex Santo Domingo to acquire naval ports, project military power, and defend a possible future canal across Nicaragua. But the treaty of annexation failed to secure a two-thirds majority in the Senate. As Robert Kagan has acknowledged, some political leaders could not countenance “adding the darker-skinned population of Dominicans to the already large population of African-Americans.”¹⁴⁴ Like Polk, Grant also wanted to purchase Cuba from Spain, but this never happened, partly because other officials did not think the island’s population could be assimilated and partly for other political reasons.¹⁴⁵ The Grant administration deployed troops to Mexico and Colombia on multiple occasions, ostensibly to protect U.S. property and citizens.¹⁴⁶

Rapidly intensifying industrial development and agricultural production in the post-Civil War years contributed to what Fareed Zakaria has called “a truly stunning pace” of U.S. economic growth.¹⁴⁷ Leading capitalists, politicians, and military leaders increasingly recognized the dependence of the U.S. economy on the unceasing acquisition of new foreign markets and resources.¹⁴⁸ They viewed the “bottomless markets of Asia” as indispensable for the future of the empire, even as they sought to expand their reach in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.¹⁴⁹ In 1871, five U.S. warships sailed to Korea to exact revenge for the *General Sherman* incident and force the Hermit Kingdom to accept commercial relations. U.S.

forces killed about 350 people but failed to secure an agreement with the Korean government.¹⁵⁰ A commercial treaty with Korea was not signed for more than a decade.¹⁵¹ By 1874, U.S. capitalists had come to dominate economics and politics in Hawai'i, and troops were deployed to suppress protests against the election of a new king friendly to U.S. business interests.¹⁵² In 1877, the United States acquired Pago Pago in Samoa and later used its port as a coaling station and naval base.¹⁵³

OVERSEAS INTERVENTIONS, 1880–1890

In 1879, a nationalist rebellion erupted in Egypt. Many Egyptians opposed the British and French colonial presence and a local government that accepted European control of the Suez Canal. In 1882, after about fifty Europeans were killed in rioting, British warships and gunboats bombarded Alexandria, and British troops attacked Egyptian positions. More than 2,100 Egyptians were killed, as were more than one hundred British soldiers.¹⁵⁴ About 150 U.S. sailors and Marines were deployed early in the conflict and they became the first foreign troops to enter the center of Alexandria. The number of Egyptians killed by U.S. forces is unknown but was likely substantial.¹⁵⁵ In 1885, amid civil war in Colombia, Marines guarded the assets of the U.S.-owned Panama Railroad and helped armed men organized by a French canal company to apprehend and execute at least fifty-eight people accused of looting.¹⁵⁶ Washington sent six hundred Marines and sailors to reopen the railroad and secretly instructed the naval commander to identify possible sites for naval bases.¹⁵⁷ One New York journalist embedded with U.S. forces described the Colombians as “savages” and reported that “almost every night, the American pickets shoot a few of the outlaws.”¹⁵⁸

In 1887, a group composed primarily of U.S. businessmen and politicians who supported the annexation of Hawai'i forced King Kalākaua to relinquish most of his power and accept voting reforms that ended the dominance of the Native majority.¹⁵⁹ Members of a militia aligned with the annexationists compelled the king's acceptance of the “Bayonet Constitution” at gunpoint.¹⁶⁰ Two years later,

U.S. troops landed in Hawai'i to help suppress a popular rebellion that sought to rescind this constitution, bring Princess Lili'uokalani to the throne, and restore Indigenous rule.¹⁶¹ Several insurgents died, chiefly at the hands of the pro-U.S. militia.¹⁶² In 1888, six years after a commercial treaty had been signed with Korea, troops landed there to safeguard U.S. citizens during political unrest.¹⁶³ U.S. capitalists hoped to exploit the Hermit Kingdom's gold mines and other mineral wealth and were eventually able to do so for decades.¹⁶⁴ Germany tried to gain control of all the Samoan islands by installing an ally as king in 1887. However, Samoans successfully repulsed the German forces that landed the following year. A powerful typhoon destroyed some of the German, U.S., and British warships on the scene in 1889. Fifty-one U.S. military personnel and three times that number of Germans died in the storm.¹⁶⁵ Soon afterward, the three empires reached an agreement to divide control of the islands among them.¹⁶⁶

In 1888, as an insurgency challenged a new government in Haiti, the United States demanded a naval base and authority to diplomatically represent the country in Europe. After the Haitian government rejected this demand, Washington provided arms, ammunition, transportation, and naval support to the rebels.¹⁶⁷ When the Haitian government seized a U.S. merchant ship that was supporting the insurgents, the Secretary of State sent warships to secure the captured vessel's return.¹⁶⁸ With Washington's significant assistance, the insurgency was victorious, and its leader became the new president of Haiti. The number of Haitian deaths during this rebellion remains unclear even today, but U.S. officials were deeply complicit in this tragedy. Ironically, under pressure from the Haitian people, the new government also refused U.S. entreaties for a naval base, even after Washington sent its most powerful ships to Port-au-Prince.¹⁶⁹

THE ACQUISITION OF HAWAI'I AND OVERSEAS INTERVENTIONS, 1890–1898

During the 1880s and 1890s, the size and strength of the U.S. economy reached new heights. The United States surpassed Britain in

manufacturing in 1885 and became the largest steel producer in the world.¹⁷⁰ By 1890, this country consumed more energy than Britain.¹⁷¹ Within a few years, the United States replaced Britain as the world's largest economy.¹⁷² In addition to their ongoing agricultural exports, U.S. businesses had begun to ship steel, iron, oil, and agricultural machinery to foreign markets.¹⁷³ The export of capital had begun as well.¹⁷⁴ In the 1890s, many political and business leaders followed Frederick Jackson Turner in believing that the end of the frontier in North America required new forms of expansionism abroad.¹⁷⁵ As Washington pursued predominance in the Western Hemisphere and a significant role in Asia and the Pacific, support grew for developing a large modern navy to facilitate its increasingly global commerce.¹⁷⁶ This entailed the increased need for far-flung coaling and naval stations, so by the end of the decade, the empire would acquire vital new territories in the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific.

U.S. military forces were sent to Argentina to protect business interests in 1890 and uphold claims to Navassa Island in the Caribbean in 1891.¹⁷⁷ U.S. and British naval forces boarded and expelled dozens of merchant ships suspected of seal poaching near the Aleutian Islands in 1891.¹⁷⁸ When civil war broke out in Chile the same year, Washington did not send troops to fight for the pro-U.S. government, but dispatched warships to prevent the delivery of arms to the insurgents. U.S. forces also cut the rebels' international telegraph line, shared information on their troop movements with the regime, and provided asylum to government officials after the insurgents won the war.¹⁷⁹ The United States was partly responsible for the loss of more than six thousand lives in this conflict.¹⁸⁰ After the civil war ended, deep resentment of Washington's intervention and a deadly bar fight between U.S. sailors and Chileans in Valparaiso almost led to war between the two countries.¹⁸¹

In 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani, who had ascended to the Hawaiian throne after her brother's death, moved to restore Native power and concentrate authority in her hands. U.S. business owners and politicians quickly overthrew her with the approval and support of the U.S. ambassador. At the ambassador's request, 160 Marines landed to

assist the insurgents and protect the new government.¹⁸² The settlers named Sanford Dole as president and requested annexation by the United States. President Benjamin Harrison wanted Hawai'i because of its strategic location, the importance of the military base established at Pearl Harbor, and the islands' sugar and rice.¹⁸³ However, political opposition at home prevented the ratification of an annexation treaty.¹⁸⁴ The next president, Grover Cleveland, bluntly admitted that the new government in Hawai'i "owes its existence to an armed invasion by the United States. By an act of war . . . a substantial wrong has been done."¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, five years after the coup, President William McKinley won congressional approval for the islands' annexation despite strong opposition from most Native Hawaiians.¹⁸⁶

Although the overthrow of the Queen of Hawai'i was virtually bloodless, Washington's intervention in the Brazilian Civil War of 1893–95 was not. In defense of a friendly regime and growing commercial interests in the country, the United States sent warships to break the insurgents' blockade of Rio de Janeiro, threatened to fire on rebel vessels, and provided vital supplies to the government.¹⁸⁷ Washington's support for the regime was decisive in defeating the insurgency and contributed to the deaths of between ten and twelve thousand people.¹⁸⁸ The United States also sent troops to Nicaragua four times in the 1890s.¹⁸⁹ Washington was committed to protecting a "projected isthmian canal route," defending the U.S. banana export business there, and replacing the British as the dominant imperialist power in the country.¹⁹⁰ The number of Nicaraguans who died during these interventions was never recorded.

In 1895, the U.S. government successfully demanded that Britain submit to arbitration in its dispute with Venezuela over the boundaries of British Guiana. Britain's claims were almost completely affirmed later, but Secretary of State Richard Olney declared: "Today the United States is sovereign on this continent and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition."¹⁹¹ That same year, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge boasted, "We have a record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion unequaled by any people in the nineteenth century."¹⁹² And the century had not ended yet.

THE WAR OF 1898 AND THE WAR AGAINST THE PHILIPPINES

After the Cuban War of Independence began in 1895, reports of Spanish atrocities and Cuban deaths aroused sympathy among many people in the United States. However, U.S. investors were generally more concerned with protecting their business interests in Cuba and restraining revolutionary forces that included many poor and Black people.¹⁹³ Some business owners and policymakers clamored for a war against Madrid that would deliver Cuba and the Philippines and other Spanish colonies into U.S. hands.¹⁹⁴ The United States had been an empire since its birth, but its emergence in 1898 as the world's leading economic power led to a brutal new chapter in its history. As a *Washington Post* editorial proclaimed early that year:

A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of Strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength. . . . Ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face-to-face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle.¹⁹⁵

In contrast, many socialists, workers, and progressive intellectuals opposed war against Spain and imperialism in general.¹⁹⁶

When Spain proved unable to end the rebellion in Cuba, the United States moved closer to war. McKinley dispatched the U.S. battleship *Maine* to Havana, sending a clear message of disapproval of Spanish actions on the island. In February 1898, a mysterious explosion sank the ship and killed 260 members of its crew.¹⁹⁷ A hastily called investigation in the United States suggested the explosion had been caused by a mine, though the explosion likely resulted from internal causes.¹⁹⁸ Two months later, Congress declared war on Spain. The United States struck Spanish forces in the Philippines in late April and in Cuba in May, took possession of Guam and Wake Island in June, and invaded Puerto Rico in July. Spain was quickly defeated, an

armistice was signed in August, and a peace treaty was approved in December.¹⁹⁹ U.S. victory over Spain did not lead to sovereignty and self-determination for Madrid's former possessions. Instead, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines became U.S. colonies, and Cuba became a U.S. protectorate.²⁰⁰ Washington also annexed Wake Island. The War of 1898 substantially enlarged the U.S. Empire, and Secretary of State John Hay called the conflict "a splendid little war."²⁰¹ However, the conflict resulted in more than 22,000 deaths.²⁰²

The resistance to U.S. authority was limited in Cuba and Puerto Rico, but the people of the Philippines continued to fight for independence. Washington sent more than 126,000 troops to impose control, but the conquest of the Philippines required a much longer and bloodier war than the one just concluded.²⁰³ U.S. soldiers soon became notorious for killing Filipino freedom fighters in combat, torturing and executing prisoners, murdering vast numbers of civilians of all ages, and engaging in rape.²⁰⁴ Cholera and other diseases took a great many lives, as did hunger and privation in concentration camps into which many Filipinos were herded.²⁰⁵ U.S. troops' war crimes, crimes against humanity, virulent racism, and complete disregard for human life led one analyst to describe the war against the Philippines as "America's first Vietnam."²⁰⁶ Other analysts have pointed out that the United States was doing to the Filipinos on a larger scale exactly what it had done to Indigenous peoples at home.²⁰⁷ Although the main revolutionary army led by Emilio Aguinaldo was defeated in 1902, other Filipino forces continued to fight the United States, and the Moro resistance in the southern part of the country was not defeated until 1913.²⁰⁸ The first large-scale U.S. imperialist war in Asia exacted a catastrophic human toll. As many as one million Filipinos perished from war, genocidal violence, disease, and famine.²⁰⁹

THE ACQUISITION OF EASTERN SAMOA AND SUPPRESSION OF REBELLION IN CHINA

At the same time the U.S. Empire was laying waste to the Philippines, it was engaging in other military interventions in Asia and the

Americas. In 1899, the decade-old tripartite protectorate in Samoa disintegrated as different chieftains fought to control the islands. U.S. and British forces intervened and killed scores of Samoans.²¹⁰ Washington assumed control of the eastern islands and annexed American Samoa the following year.²¹¹ Also in 1899, popular opposition to foreign domination of China erupted. Although Washington had insisted on a “Closed Door” policy in Latin America for three-quarters of a century, it had demanded an “Open Door” and equal access to Chinese markets and was part of the International Settlement at Shanghai.²¹² The insurgents known in the West as the Boxers killed about thirty thousand Chinese Christians and several hundred missionaries and other foreign nationals.²¹³ Widespread support for the rebellion led Empress Cixi to embrace their cause, but the imperialists refused to let the Chinese people determine their own future. U.S. troops joined armed contingents from seven other countries in crushing the uprising in 1900–1901.²¹⁴ U.S. forces also participated in the pillaging of Beijing and the extraction of humiliating new commercial concessions from the Chinese government.²¹⁵ Hundreds of soldiers from the imperialist countries and local allies died fighting the Boxers and Chinese government forces.²¹⁶ Tens of thousands of insurgents, Chinese government forces, and Chinese civilians died at the hands of U.S. and other foreign troops.²¹⁷

INTERVENTION IN COLOMBIA AND THE CREATION OF PANAMA

Between 1899 and 1902, U.S. troops repeatedly intervened on behalf of Colombia’s conservative government during the civil war known as the War of a Thousand Days.²¹⁸ Washington was increasingly anxious to obtain a treaty allowing the construction of a canal in the Department of Panama, where much of the conflict was being fought. When liberal insurgents were on the verge of seizing the important city of Colón, the government sought U.S. assistance to keep the Panama Railroad open. The commander of the nearby U.S. gunboat *Iowa* subsequently threatened the insurgents with the deployment of Marines, preventing an insurgent victory there at the time.²¹⁹ When

the rebels later gained control of most of Panama, the government requested Washington's intervention again, and U.S. Marines prevented the rebels from capturing Colón and Panama City. The United States deployed troops on railroad cars and a U.S. naval commander informed the insurgents that only U.S. troops could occupy or use the railroad.²²⁰ These actions were decisive in defeating the insurgency, and the rebels were forced to sign a peace treaty aboard the USS *Wisconsin*.²²¹ About 120,000 people had perished in the civil war, and although the Colombian belligerents bore primary responsibility for most of these deaths, Washington had also contributed to this massive loss of life.²²²

Shortly after the civil war in Colombia ended, the U.S. government began to press Bogotá for a canal treaty. The conservative-dominated Colombian Senate appreciated Washington's support during the recent conflict but found the terms of the proposed treaty inadequate and unanimously rejected it.²²³ President Theodore Roosevelt's administration openly castigated the Colombian government for its decision, and U.S. newspapers called for secession or revolution in Panama.²²⁴ As Howard Zinn has explained, in late 1903, Roosevelt "engineered a revolution against Colombia and created the 'independent' state of Panama to build and control the Canal."²²⁵ U.S. troops prohibited Colombian soldiers from using the railroad to reach Panama City, and U.S. warships on both sides of the isthmus prevented the Colombian armed forces from suppressing the revolution.²²⁶ Washington quickly recognized the new nation and soon had a treaty establishing U.S. control of a ten-mile-wide Panama Canal Zone and allowing U.S. intervention to protect the canal.²²⁷ As Lars Schoultz has emphasized, "The United States had seized control over the single most valuable piece of Latin America's territory."²²⁸ Roosevelt later reportedly boasted that "I took the Canal Zone."²²⁹ The Panama Canal was built between 1904 and 1914 at great human expense. The new nation remained a U.S. protectorate until 1939, and U.S. control of the Canal Zone was not relinquished until 1999.²³⁰

NEW INTERVENTIONS AND OCCUPATIONS IN
THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

In a presidential address in 1904, Roosevelt announced that the U.S. government had the authority to exercise “an international police power” in countries in the Western Hemisphere that were guilty of “chronic wrongdoing or impotence.”²³¹ The United States had been intervening in the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and South America for almost a century, and the so-called Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine sought to legitimize future imperialist actions.²³² Privately, Roosevelt wrote that he eschewed “the desire for aggrandizement” but insisted, “It is our duty, when it becomes absolutely inevitable, to police these countries in the interest of order and civilization.”²³³ Roosevelt soon decided that Caribbean and Central American countries’ inability to repay foreign loans justified U.S. intervention. The United States took control of finances in the Dominican Republic in 1904.²³⁴ In 1908, the U.S. Navy provided vital assistance to a coup in Venezuela led by Vice President Juan Vicente Gómez. For the next twenty-seven years, Gómez and his supporters butchered many people but maintained Washington’s support by granting massive concessions to Standard Oil of New Jersey, Gulf Oil Company, Royal Dutch Shell, and other Western oil companies.²³⁵ In 1910, Marines landed in Nicaragua to help insurgents overthrow the government. The new regime immediately allowed U.S. banks to take control of the country’s national bank, customs collections, and railroads.²³⁶ The empire was moving to consolidate its domination of the Americas.²³⁷

After taking control of Cuba, the U.S. government required the island’s new constitution to recognize its authority to militarily intervene on the island as necessary and to acquire territory for a naval base. Most U.S. troops withdrew in 1902, and the following year Washington leased forty-five square miles of land and water for a naval base at Guantánamo Bay.²³⁸ In the first two decades of the new

century, the United States deployed troops to Cuba three times to maintain friendly regimes and suppress popular opposition. One of those interventions occurred in 1912 when U.S. soldiers helped crush an uprising by Cuban sugar workers of African descent. Between three thousand and six thousand lives were lost during the rebellion.²³⁹ That same year, U.S. armed forces intervened in Panama and Honduras and invaded Nicaragua to support the weak new conservative government it had previously helped bring to power.²⁴⁰ The occupation of Nicaragua continued until 1933. More than two thousand people died during the initial invasion, and many more died in subsequent years.²⁴¹ After Washington repeatedly demanded that Haiti surrender control of its customs collection, Marines landed there in 1914, took half a million dollars out of the national bank, and delivered it to the National City Bank in New York.²⁴² The United States invaded Haiti the next year and occupied that country until 1934. Approximately 15,000 Haitians died, many in combat against U.S. troops and the Haitian *Garde* they established, and many others in forced labor camps built by the occupiers.²⁴³

The United States invaded the Dominican Republic in 1916 amid insurgency and financial instability and occupied that country until 1924. More than eleven hundred Dominicans died at the hands of U.S. forces.²⁴⁴ Eventually, widespread resistance and armed struggle forced the invaders to leave Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.²⁴⁵ At the same time the United States was invading and occupying these three countries it was assuming broad powers over Liberia's finances and military force as well, reinforcing its status as "a virtual colony."²⁴⁶ Still deeply impoverished a decade later, Liberia agreed to lease up to one million acres to Firestone Rubber Company for ninety-nine years.²⁴⁷ In 1917, Washington purchased what became known as the U.S. Virgin Islands from Denmark.

INTERVENTION IN THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

When the people of Mexico rose up against the thirty-four-year-old dictatorship of José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori in 1910, U.S.

capitalists and government officials reacted with trepidation. U.S. banks and businesses owned vast amounts of Mexico's land and controlled most of its oil, minerals, and railroads.²⁴⁸ The previous year, President William Howard Taft had met with Díaz in El Paso and had subsequently written, "It is inevitable in case of a revolution or internecine strife that we should interfere."²⁴⁹ When Francisco Ignacio Madero González led the uprising against Díaz and forced him into exile, the Taft administration and leading business interests feared that the revolution could jeopardize these investments.²⁵⁰ Madero, who was elected president in 1911, came from a wealthy family and was no radical. He aimed to develop a liberal democratic state and reconcile the interests of the old and new sections of the capitalist class.²⁵¹ However, Madero's government was unable to pacify the former supporters of the Díaz dictatorship or suppress the popular struggle for agrarian and social transformation led by the forces of Emiliano Zapata Salazar and Francisco "Pancho" Villa.²⁵² As a result, Washington repeatedly intervened in Mexico during the next decade to support friendly forces, limit the changes brought about by the revolution, and safeguard U.S. economic interests.

Taft's ambassador to Mexico helped former Díaz supporters and other conspirators organize the overthrow of Madero and his replacement by General Victoriana Huerta in 1913.²⁵³ This putsch led to the execution of Madero and many other deaths and sparked a new wave of armed resistance among liberal bourgeois reformists and more revolutionary-minded urban workers and rural laborers.²⁵⁴ When it became clear that Huerta favored British, not U.S., oil interests, President Woodrow Wilson turned against him. After initially embracing Villa, Wilson began supporting the reformists led by José Venustiano Carranza de la Garza.²⁵⁵ In 1914, U.S. warships prevented the delivery of arms shipments to Huerta's forces at Veracruz and Tampico. The warships shelled Veracruz, killed hundreds of people, occupied the city for seven months, and enabled the reformists to reach Mexico City before Zapata's forces could.²⁵⁶ General Smedley Butler later acknowledged that he had "helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests."²⁵⁷ Huerta was ousted,

and Carranza's growing military campaign against the armies of Zapata and Villa earned him U.S. withdrawal from Veracruz, diplomatic recognition, arms and ammunition, and renegotiation of debts in 1915.²⁵⁸ As Niall Ferguson has explained: "The Carranza regime was nothing if not a product of American policy."²⁵⁹ After Washington stopped shipping arms to Villa, he attacked Columbus, New Mexico. General John J. Pershing invaded Mexico with six thousand soldiers in 1916. Villa was never captured, but a year of intermittent conflict significantly weakened his forces.

By 1917, Carranza's support for reforms in the new Mexican constitution and the deepening split between urban and rural laborers produced what James Cockcroft has called "a triumph for the liberal wing of bourgeois democracy."²⁶⁰ The two most prominent leaders of the movement for revolutionary social change were assassinated in the years that followed. Carranza's agents killed Zapata on the way to what was supposed to be a peace conference in 1919. Both the Mexican government headed by Alvaro Obregón, Carranza's successor, and the U.S. government were involved in the murder of Villa in 1923.²⁶¹ The elimination of Villa appears to be one of the conditions Washington demanded in exchange for recognition of the Obregón regime.²⁶² Between 1910 and 1920, almost two million people died during the Mexican Revolution, and the United States was deeply complicit in this carnage.²⁶³ Moreover, policymakers were willing to take other military actions to safeguard capitalist interests in Mexico. In 1919–20, U.S. military analysts developed "Special Plan Green," which called for an invasion of Mexico to "protect" its oil fields or confront problems along the border. The plan envisioned the eventual replacement of occupying troops by a "native Mexican constabulary."²⁶⁴ Signally, "Special Plan Green" remained on the shelf until 1942, when Mexico entered the Second World War on the Allies' side.²⁶⁵

THE U.S. ROLE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The U.S. Empire also shared responsibility for the unprecedented global holocaust that contemporaries called the Great War. Oliver

Stone and Peter Kuznick explained that “Europe was awash in imperial rivalries” as the new century unfolded.²⁶⁶ Germany’s growing industrial, financial, and military strength posed a significant challenge to Britain, and the rising continental power sought to acquire new colonies in Africa to rival those of London and Paris. All three countries wanted to obtain new lands and oil in West Asia from the declining Ottoman Empire, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire competed for power in the Balkans.²⁶⁷ The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo in July 1914 led to the outbreak of hostilities. But it was not the cause of the war between the Central Powers—Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Turkey—and the Entente Powers—Britain, France, Italy, Russia, and Japan. As Vladimir Lenin wrote, this was an imperialist war, “an annexationist, predatory war of plunder on the part of both sides; it was a war for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of colonies and spheres of influence of finance capital.”²⁶⁸ Wilson told his ambassador to Britain that the cause of the war was “England’s having the earth and Germany’s wanting it.”²⁶⁹ Wilson “carefully omitted the fact that the corporate and political elites of the United States wanted it too.”²⁷⁰ Years later, the president publicly admitted that this had been “a commercial and industrial war.”²⁷¹

In August 1914, soon after the war began, Wilson issued a proclamation of neutrality. He declared that the United States would remain “impartial in thought as well as in action.”²⁷² Two years later, his reelection campaign emphasized the slogan: “He kept us out of war.”²⁷³ Yet as Atwood explained, “Wilson merely pretended neutrality while his policies were carrying the country inexorably into the war.”²⁷⁴ In fact, the United States strongly supported the Entente during most of the conflict. Five months after the war began, J. P. Morgan and Company became the sole authorized financial agent for Britain and France in the United States. Over time, Morgan arranged about \$3 billion in contracts with exporters.²⁷⁵ Lens observed that “the United States became the Allied source for food; raw materials such as copper, iron ore, zinc, cotton, lumber, wool, oil; as well as munitions.”²⁷⁶ The value

of annual U.S. munitions exports rose from \$6 million in 1914 to \$1.7 billion between January 1916 and March 1917, and the E. I. du Pont de Nemours company provided the Entente with 40 percent of their ammunition during the war.²⁷⁷ The United States also provided essential financial assistance. Morgan loaned Britain and France \$500 million in 1915 alone, and U.S. bank loans to the Entente eventually totaled \$2.5 billion.²⁷⁸ While death and destruction swept across Europe and parts of Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, the U.S. economy dramatically recovered from the deep recession of 1913–14, and its industry, agriculture, and trade expanded in a historically unprecedented manner.²⁷⁹

By early 1917, the Entente faced a gravely deteriorating military and economic situation, mutinies among French troops, and mounting demands in Russia for an end to the war.²⁸⁰ German submarines were increasingly successful at sinking military and merchant ships near Britain and the Entente's dwindling collateral and gold progressively limited its ability to make vital purchases in the United States.²⁸¹ In March 1917, U.S. Ambassador to Britain Walter Hines Page warned the State Department that the dramatic reduction of Entente orders and transatlantic trade would produce an economic panic in this country.²⁸² U.S. officials and capitalists feared that the loss of access to war materials and other goods would lead to the Entente's defeat, the inability of Britain and France to repay their loans, catastrophic financial losses for Morgan and other U.S. banks and businesses, and the weakening of the entire economy.²⁸³ Hines advised, "It is not improbable that the only way of maintaining our preeminent trade position and averting a panic is by declaring war on Germany."²⁸⁴ Other officials warned that a victorious, dominant Germany might close European markets to U.S. products and threaten growing U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.²⁸⁵ In addition, Wilson now wanted a major role in shaping the postwar international order to ensure that it promoted U.S. interests and contained the threat of workers' revolutions in other countries.²⁸⁶

In April 1917, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war and obtained it. Germany's renewed attacks on U.S. ships delivering

supplies to the Entente and German aspirations for an alliance with Mexico merely provided a pretext for Wilson's action.²⁸⁷ As he later told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the United States would have entered the war even "if Germany had committed no act of injustice against our citizens."²⁸⁸ Nor did the United States go to war because "the world must be made safe for democracy."²⁸⁹ None of the belligerents were very democratic, and Wilson's racism, anti-worker politics, and military interventions in the Americas made clear he was no advocate of democracy.²⁹⁰ Ferguson has remarked that after the United States officially entered the war, "it was Morgan as much as Britain which was bailed out."²⁹¹ Washington directly loaned the Entente Powers vast sums. U.S. banks and businesses made even greater profits, and the U.S. economy grew faster.²⁹² The arrival of U.S. forces in Europe helped to turn the tide of battle, and an armistice was signed in November 1918.²⁹³ Unlike the other warring countries, the United States emerged from the conflagration much richer and stronger than before. It had become a creditor nation, and New York City had replaced London as the world's financial center.²⁹⁴ After taking over British, German, and other investments, Washington had become "the unchallenged monarch of the Western hemisphere."²⁹⁵ Indeed, the U.S. Empire was now a major imperialist power. Approximately thirty million people had died in this "imperial bloodbath."²⁹⁶

THE INVASION OF SOVIET RUSSIA

Many workers around the world welcomed the October Revolution in Russia in 1917.²⁹⁷ But the ruling classes of the leading capitalist countries shared Winston Churchill's determination to "strangle the Bolshevik infant in its cradle."²⁹⁸ U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote that the communists' commitment "to make the ignorant and incapable mass of humanity dominant on the earth" threatened the "existing social order and all countries."²⁹⁹ In August 1918, the United States and thirteen other nations invaded Soviet Russia. About twelve thousand U.S. soldiers were deployed to

Vladivostok and Archangel, where they killed Bolsheviks and their allies and supported counterrevolutionary White Russian forces and other foreign troops.³⁰⁰ Washington shipped rifles, machine guns, and other military supplies worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the White armies. The United States also sent them food, clothing, and other so-called humanitarian aid, while workers and peasants starved in large numbers.³⁰¹ The masses of Russian workers and peasants rallied to the Bolshevik cause, and by 1919, the White armies had suffered devastating losses and were entirely dependent on foreign aid.³⁰² Washington withdrew the last of its troops in 1920 but provided substantial aid to the Polish militarists' invasion of Soviet Russia that same year.³⁰³ The counterrevolution was defeated by late 1922. About nine million people died during the civil war and related famine, and the United States significantly contributed to this ghastly loss of life.³⁰⁴

WASHINGTON WELCOMES FASCISM IN ITALY

Workers' uprisings inspired by the October Revolution erupted in Germany, Hungary, Finland, and other European countries but were violently suppressed. In Italy, during the Biennio Rosso of 1919–20, Italian workers seized factories, poor farmers occupied rural estates, mass strikes and demonstrations grew, and armed struggle between militant workers and fascists began.³⁰⁵ In the two years that followed, fascist fighters backed by industrialists and large landowners killed several thousand communists, socialists, anarchists, and others.³⁰⁶ Officials in Washington bemoaned the Italian government's inability to crush the workers' movement and generally welcomed the fascist leader Benito Mussolini's rise to power in 1922.³⁰⁷ Many of these officials agreed with the boast of Italy's ambassador to Washington that his was "the first nation to have the courage to conquer Bolshevism."³⁰⁸ Prominent political leaders, major business interests, the Catholic Church, the American Legion, and a considerable number of citizens in the United States soon came to support fascism in Italy.³⁰⁹ By 1930, Washington had favorably resolved Italy's war

debt, and U.S. companies had loaned Italy more than \$460 million and invested another \$400 million in the country.³¹⁰ U.S. arms and military supplies flowed to the fascist dictatorship despite its violent domestic repression and killing hundreds of thousands of people in colonized Libya.³¹¹ *Time* and *Fortune* were “unabashed supporters of Mussolini.”³¹² The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other major U.S. publications praised Mussolini for rescuing Italy from revolution and chaos.³¹³

SUPPORTING DICTATORSHIP AND PREVENTING REVOLUTION IN THE AMERICAS

Between 1927 and 1933, U.S. occupation forces killed about five thousand Nicaraguans during the rebellion led by Augusto Sandino.³¹⁴ Before withdrawing its troops, the United States created the Nicaraguan National Guard and appointed Anastasio Samoza García as its leader. Four years later, Washington supported Samoza’s seizure of power, which ushered in four decades of dynastic rule that killed approximately fifteen thousand people.³¹⁵ U.S. officials did not bring Rafael Trujillo to power in the Dominican Republic in 1930 but soon began sending weapons and money to his military dictatorship. Support for Trujillo continued during the next three decades while as many as sixty thousand Dominicans and Haitians died at the hands of the regime.³¹⁶ In 1932, the U.S.-backed military dictator in El Salvador, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, oversaw *La Matanza*, the massacre of thirty thousand Pipil people and communists.³¹⁷ In 1934, even as U.S. troops withdrew from Haiti, officials in Washington pressured Colonel Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar to overthrow the new president of Cuba, Ramón Grau San Martín, who had criticized U.S. colonialism and promised “Cuba for the Cubans.”³¹⁸ Batista ruled for several years through puppet presidents, spent some time away from politics, and then returned to power. By the time the Cuban Revolution triumphed twenty-five years later, well over twenty thousand people had died at the hands of Batista and his henchmen.³¹⁹

BACKING THE GUOMINDANG REGIME IN CHINA

The U.S. government recognized Jiang Jieshi's new Guomindang regime in China in 1928. During the next decade, Washington provided significant support to the dictatorship despite its harsh repression and campaign to exterminate the Chinese Communist Party forces vying for control of the country.³²⁰ U.S. companies developed the country's civilian aviation, electrical industry, and telephone system. Washington provided a substantial loan to purchase wheat and cotton and purchased a massive quantity of Chinese silver to help stabilize its currency.³²¹ Although U.S. officials wanted to expand investments and influence in the Middle Kingdom, most wanted to avoid provoking Japan. Washington enjoyed a much larger commercial relationship with Tokyo, had long recognized its substantial interests in China, and wanted to accommodate Japanese expansion in mainland Asia. This posture continued after Japanese troops seized Manchuria in 1931, attacked Shanghai in 1932, and took control of much of northern China.³²² Like fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the United States was more interested in helping the Guomindang consolidate power and kill communists than assisting with the ouster of Japanese forces. U.S. companies sold Jiang airplanes, tanks, guns, munitions, and other military equipment, and U.S. nationals trained Chinese air force pilots who bombed communist-held areas.³²³ The civil war was suspended in 1937, when dissent among the nationalists forced Jiang to accept the communists' proposal for a united front against Japan. About two million people had died in what turned out to be only the first part of the Chinese Civil War.³²⁴

THE U.S. WELCOME OF NAZISM IN GERMANY

A sizeable number of U.S. government officials and capitalists welcomed Adolf Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in Germany in 1933. David F. Schmitz has noted that the State Department never praised Hitler "in the same manner as it did Mussolini," partly because of Germany's "greater military potential" and concern about possible

Nazi aggression, and partly because of the Nazis' virulent anti-Semitism.³²⁵ But U.S. ambassador to Germany Frederic Sackett spoke for many when he stated, "From the standpoint of stable political conditions, it is perhaps well that Hitler is now in a position to wield unprecedented power."³²⁶ Sackett and others feared that the failure of the Nazi regime would "open the door to communism in Germany."³²⁷ George Gordon, the U.S. *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin, viewed Hitler as the leader of a "moderate" section of the Nazi Party, "which appeal[s] to all civilized and reasonable people."³²⁸ U.S. ambassador to Italy Breckinridge Long urged President Franklin Roosevelt to meet Nazi demands for resources and territorial expansion to prevent war.³²⁹ Long argued that while German domination of Europe would be "hard and cruel," it would be preferable to the "westward progress of Russia."³³⁰ The Roosevelt administration shared this perspective, viewing the Nazi Reich as another right-wing dictatorship that could serve as a bulwark against communism while maintaining normal economic relations with other major imperialist powers.³³¹ During the next several years, the Roosevelt administration sought to accommodate and appease the Nazis and refused to publicly criticize them when they imprisoned communists and socialists, banned labor unions, murdered hundreds of German Jews in the *Kristallnacht*, annexed Austria, and invaded part of Czechoslovakia.³³²

Many U.S. companies had made large investments in Germany and entered business partnerships with German firms in the 1920s, and continued to do business there after the Nazis came to power.³³³ Jacques R. Pauwels remarked, "The German dictator and his fascist ideas were particularly liked and admired by the owners, managers, and shareholders of those American enterprises."³³⁴ U.S. business investments in Germany totaled about \$475 million by late 1941.³³⁵ Major U.S. investors included DuPont, General Motors, Ford, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Texas Oil Company, General Electric, International Business Machines, International Telephone and Telegraph, Union Carbide, Westinghouse, Goodrich, Singer, Eastman Kodak, and Coca-Cola.³³⁶ Brown Brothers Harriman, Union Banking Corporation, Chase National Bank, National City Bank of New York,

J. P. Morgan, and Dillon, Read and Company provided banking services for the Reich.³³⁷ As Bradley W. Hart has pointed out, “It was not just profit motives and business opportunities that drove American corporate bosses into the arms of the Nazis.”³³⁸ Henry Ford, William Randolph Hearst, Irénée DuPont, Alfred Sloan, Torkild Rieber, Sosthenes Behn, and other major capitalists were “motivated by genuine affinities for Nazism.”³³⁹ Many people in the United States opposed Hitler, but Charles Lindbergh, Father Charles Coughlin, the German American Bund, and the Silver Legion mobilized support for the Nazis.³⁴⁰ Some U.S. newspapers criticized Hitler’s mounting repression at home and aggression abroad, but Hearst newspapers, the Associated Press, the *National Geographic*, and other publications presented positive appraisals of Hitler’s regime.³⁴¹

THE INVASION OF ETHIOPIA AND THE FASCIST COUP IN GREECE

After Mussolini’s forces invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Washington condemned the aggression and ended arms sales to Italy but rejected British and French calls for an oil embargo.³⁴² Instead, U.S. companies significantly increased their exports of oil, copper, iron, and other materials to Italy, which were necessary for its conquest of Ethiopia.³⁴³ Some policymakers justified this direct economic support for the Italian invasion as necessary to avoid alienating Mussolini and preventing Il Duce from launching a broader war in Europe.³⁴⁴ The lives of Ethiopians did not matter much more in Washington than they did in Rome. More than 760,000 people died in this colonialist war and occupation, and vital economic support for Italy made the United States partly responsible for this massive loss of life.³⁴⁵ When the fascist general Ioannis Metaxas overthrew the republic and assumed dictatorial powers in Greece in 1936, U.S. officials welcomed this development as another blow against communism.³⁴⁶ The next year, a State Department report presented a class-based analysis of fascism:

When there is suffering, the dissatisfied masses, with the example of the Russian revolution before them, swing to the Left. The

rich and middle classes, in self-defense, turn to Fascism. . . . It must succeed or the masses, this time reinforced by the disillusioned middle classes, will again turn to the Left.³⁴⁷

Policymakers' fear of a "turn to the Left" drove many U.S. business and political leaders to help ensure that fascism succeeded in European countries.³⁴⁸

SUPPORT FOR THE FASCIST INSURGENCY IN SPAIN

When Spaniards abolished the monarchy and established a republic in 1931, U.S. policymakers voiced concern that this was the first step toward radical social change.³⁴⁹ After five years of political turbulence and a new election that significantly strengthened republicans and leftists, General Francisco Franco and the Spanish army launched a fascist insurgency. State Department officials, business owners, and U.S. Catholic Church leaders who had opposed the republic's progressive reforms voiced support for the uprising.³⁵⁰ Deep political divisions among anti-fascist forces hampered the struggle against the insurgents, and Italy and Germany sent more than eighty thousand military personnel along with airplanes, tanks, and other military aid to Franco's forces.³⁵¹ The Soviet Union provided military and economic aid to the Spanish government, and the International Brigades of volunteers from other countries fought alongside republican forces. Many people in the United States supported the Spanish government but the Roosevelt administration, citing the Neutrality Acts, refused to send weapons to Madrid.³⁵²

However, as in Ethiopia, the United States was hardly neutral. General Motors, Ford, and Studebaker sold the fascists twelve thousand trucks, almost three times the number provided by Italy and Germany, and Firestone sold them tires.³⁵³ The Texas Oil Company ended its relationship with the Spanish government and shipped oil instead to Franco's forces, largely on credit. This company, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Shell, and other U.S. firms provided three-quarters of the oil, gasoline, and aviation fuel required by the fascists.³⁵⁴

DuPont sold Germany forty thousand bombs to use in Spain.³⁵⁵ Washington's denial of arms to Madrid and U.S. companies' economic support helped Franco's forces to prevail in 1939.³⁵⁶ As one official in the fascist regime later explained, "Without American petroleum and American trucks and American credit, we could never have won the Civil War."³⁵⁷ Roosevelt later expressed regret for his position on Spain, but his change of heart came too late.³⁵⁸ Approximately half a million people died in the civil war and its aftermath, and the fascist victory in Spain paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe.³⁵⁹

U.S. IMPERIALISM AND THE ORIGINS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

For the past seventy-five years, the Second World War has been routinely depicted as the "Good War."³⁶⁰ Most people in the United States have been taught to believe that Washington entered this war to defend freedom and democracy against the aggression of the Axis Powers. But this is a myth, as Zinn, Atwood, Pauwels, and other researchers have emphasized. The Second World War was just as deeply rooted in imperialist rivalries as the First World War, although Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union made the defense of the world's first socialist state a genuinely progressive, anti-imperialist struggle.³⁶¹ The United States' significant economic relations with fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and militarist Japan and its political accommodation and appeasement of these countries—even after they invaded other countries and killed vast numbers of people—made the U.S. Empire deeply complicit in the destruction wrought.³⁶² Only when the Japanese Empire and the Nazi Reich threatened U.S. economic interests in Asia and Europe did Washington move toward war. Atwood points out that the United States entered the war "to preserve the mainstay of American foreign policy—the Open Door to the resources, markets, and labor power of the territories that were threatened with closure."³⁶³ People worldwide welcomed every new blow struck against the Axis Powers, but the U.S. Empire fought to advance its own interests and subjugate competing empires.³⁶⁴

Although U.S. officials accepted Japan's conquest of vast stretches of China in the early 1930s, they gradually became concerned by Tokyo's unmistakable intention to take control of Asian resources and markets dominated by the Western empires.³⁶⁵ Still, U.S. policymakers and capitalists valued the lucrative commercial relations with Japan. The sale of aircraft, trucks, machine tools, oil, steel, scrap iron, and other products generated substantial profits for U.S. businesses but also decisively contributed to the growing power of Tokyo's war machine. Indeed, what David Bradley has called Japan's "Western-style military-industrial complex" was built with oil and steel largely imported from the United States.³⁶⁶ V. G. Kiernan has pointed out that Japan's devastating invasion of China in 1937, which marked the beginning of the Second World War in Asia, relied "very largely on oil and steel bought from America."³⁶⁷ As many as 800,000 Chinese people died at the hands of Japanese troops by the end of that year.³⁶⁸ Washington condemned the invasion, and some policymakers began to develop contingencies for a future war against Tokyo.³⁶⁹ Nonetheless, U.S. firms continued to do business with Japan while its Imperial Army killed millions more in China during the next few years. U.S. companies sent Japan more than 57 percent of its imported war materials in 1938 and provided about 80 percent of its oil until mid-1941.³⁷⁰

However, Japan's plans for further expansion and the development of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" were increasingly problematic for the U.S. Empire. In the mid-1930s, more than half of all raw materials imported into the United States came from Asia.³⁷¹ Washington would not allow Tokyo to interfere with the Open Door policy.³⁷² In 1939, the United States ended its commercial treaty with Japan, moved its Pacific fleet from San Diego to the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawai'i, and strengthened its air and naval forces in the Philippines.³⁷³ Roosevelt knew he was forcing Japan to choose between permanent subordination to the United States and Britain or go to war.

After the Pacific Fleet commander warned that Tokyo would view recent U.S. military actions in the Pacific as a dangerous provocation,

Roosevelt said, "Sooner or later, the Japanese would commit an overt act against the United States, and the nation would be willing to enter the war."³⁷⁴ In the summer of 1941, after Japan invaded the resource-rich French colony of Indochina, the United States froze its assets there and cut off shipments of oil, scrap iron, and technology.³⁷⁵ In late November 1941, the U.S. government gave Japan an ultimatum to withdraw its troops from China and Indochina, knowing its rulers would not comply.³⁷⁶ Less than two weeks later, Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, killing more than 2,400 military personnel and civilians. As Atwood has explained, this was the "spark" but "not the cause" of the U.S. entry into the Second World War.³⁷⁷

U.S. capitalists also played a crucial role in Germany's rearmament and its subsequent wars of aggression and crimes against humanity. Brown Brothers Harriman and the Union Banking Corporation bought and shipped gold, steel, coal, fuel, and U.S. treasury bonds to Hitler's regime.³⁷⁸ General Motors and Ford manufactured many of the tanks, motor vehicles, and airplanes without which the *blitzkriegs* could not have occurred.³⁷⁹ Standard Oil and Texaco sold the Germans oil and airplane fuel, which were indispensable for the war effort.³⁸⁰ ITT sold the Nazis not only telephones, switchboards, radio equipment, field communication sets, and radar equipment but also "fuses for artillery shells" and "ingredients for the rocket bombs that fell on London."³⁸¹ Charles Higham has noted: "Without this supply of crucial materials, it would have been impossible for the German Air Force to kill American and British troops, for the German army to fight the Allies, for England to have been bombed, or for Allied ships to have been attacked at sea."³⁸² IBM sold the Nazis punch-card technology, which was used to identify, track, imprison, and execute Jews and other enemies of the Reich.³⁸³ As Edwin Black has pointed out, "The infamous Auschwitz tattoo began as an IBM number."³⁸⁴ Some U.S. businesses continued to meet German military needs even after war between the two countries began.³⁸⁵

Although existing U.S. investments in Germany were increasingly profitable, overall trade between the two countries declined, and Berlin ended its most favored nation agreement with Washington.³⁸⁶

U.S. officials gradually began to fear potential German domination of Europe, the part of the world where the U.S. Empire was most heavily invested. Continental autarky would deny the United States access to essential markets, resources, and labor and facilitate the production of low-cost goods by the Reich and its vassal states. This was unacceptable to U.S. ruling circles, as were prospects for expanded German influence in oil-rich West Asia and South America.³⁸⁷ After the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939 and Britain and France declared war, Roosevelt announced that the United States would not enter the conflict. But he quickly persuaded Congress to revise the Neutrality Acts so the United States could provide weapons and financial assistance to Britain.³⁸⁸ In 1940, Congress instituted the first peacetime military conscription in U.S. history, began constructing military aircraft and ships on a massive scale, and adopted the Lend-Lease Act. In 1941, U.S. naval forces began assisting British warships and engaging German vessels in the North Atlantic.³⁸⁹ After Congress declared war on Japan in December 1941, Germany issued its own declaration of war on the United States, and Congress quickly reciprocated.

HOW THE U.S. EMPIRE FOUGHT “THE GOOD WAR”

Notwithstanding its lofty proclamations, the Roosevelt administration joined the war against the Axis Powers to promote the interests of the U.S. Empire. Gabriel Kolko has explained, “The American economic war aim was to save capitalism at home and abroad.”³⁹⁰ U.S. political and business leaders aimed to defeat the economic threat posed by Japan and Germany, emerge as the preeminent empire on the planet, “Americanize” the global economic system, ensure greater access to foreign resources and markets, and contain the threats of socialism and decolonization.³⁹¹ Barely one month after the United States entered the war, the director of the Council on Foreign Relations wrote that U.S. forces must secure areas “strategically necessary for world control” after victory.³⁹² In May 1942, the Council’s Security Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy,

which was working closely with the State Department, emphasized the need to develop “a mental view toward world settlement after this war which will enable us to impose our own terms, amounting perhaps to a Pax Americana.”³⁹³

Although Washington found itself in an alliance with the Soviets, its long-standing willingness to work with fascists and opposition to communists shaped its conduct during the war. After U.S. troops defeated the Vichy French forces in North Africa in 1942, they installed the fascist collaborator Admiral Francois Darlan as ruler.³⁹⁴ In 1943, after U.S. and British troops invaded Sicily and the Fascist Grand Council deposed Mussolini, Washington approved the retention of power by the fascist collaborators King Victor Emmanuel and Marshal Pietro Badoglio.³⁹⁵

Signally, the Soviet Union did most of the fighting against the Nazis.³⁹⁶ Despite repeated promises to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, Roosevelt joined British prime minister Winston Churchill in refusing to open a second front against the Germans in Western Europe until June 1944. It was not military constraints but the willingness to let the communist-led country bear the brunt of the war against Germany that explained the two-and-a-half year delay in launching this front.³⁹⁷ This delay contributed to the loss of millions of Soviet soldiers and civilians.³⁹⁸ The United States and Britain finally decided to invade Normandy in June 1944 because the Red Army was inexorably advancing toward victory over the Nazis, and neither Washington nor London could countenance the communists becoming the sole liberators of Western Europe.³⁹⁹

After communist-led resistance forces drove German occupation forces out of Greece in 1944, Churchill installed a new provisional regime and demanded that the prewar fascist collaborator King George II be returned to the throne.⁴⁰⁰ In December 1944 and January 1945, British troops and local allies crushed a popular uprising against the new government and the prospective return of the monarch, resulting in thousands of deaths.⁴⁰¹ Despite initial misgivings, Roosevelt largely supported Churchill's actions and shared his objective of containing the communists in Greece.⁴⁰² The U.S.

government backed bourgeois opposition forces instead of popular resistance forces led by communists in several other occupied countries.⁴⁰³ To ensure its economic predominance in the postwar world, Washington engineered the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944, which established a new global monetary system centered on the U.S. dollar and created the institutions that became the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund and World Bank.⁴⁰⁴

The Roosevelt administration's claim that it was fighting for freedom and democracy was belied by its actions at home. Although people of color and women played an important role in the war effort, white supremacy and male domination remained firmly entrenched. African Americans still suffered from racist oppression and remained unable to vote throughout the South. U.S. military forces were rigidly segregated during the war.⁴⁰⁵ The Red Cross even separated the blood donations of Blacks and whites.⁴⁰⁶ Some Mexican American service members killed abroad could not be buried in white cemeteries at home.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 authorized the imprisonment of 120,000 U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese descent.⁴⁰⁸ Racist war propaganda promoted a "profound hatred" toward all people in Japan, depicting them as "vermin, cockroaches, rattlesnakes, and rats."⁴⁰⁹ Washington's long-standing refusal to accept Jewish refugees continued throughout most of the war. Only about 21,000 were admitted to the United States and some members of the House of Representatives "spewed anti-Semitic vitriol" in opposing proposals to allow more to enter the country. Socialists who opposed participation in the war were imprisoned, and other dissenters were sometimes beaten, tortured, or killed by mobs.⁴¹⁰ The United States was certainly not a fascist dictatorship, but it shared, to a degree, some of the vile features of the Axis Powers it fought against.

Washington and London were willing to kill an extraordinary number of civilians during the conduct of the war. The "strategic" bombing of Japanese and German cities between 1943 and 1945 resulted in approximately one million civilian deaths.⁴¹¹ In April 1945, Hitler committed suicide as the Soviets entered Berlin, and German

armies began surrendering. The following month, while the Allied Powers celebrated the end of the war in Europe, French forces killed about forty-five thousand Algerians and seven thousand Tunisians demanding independence.⁴¹² Washington shared responsibility for these atrocities because it had “saved the North African possessions for France and had re-established French domination over them,” and had provided the weapons, equipment, and training used by the French forces.⁴¹³

In August 1945, U.S. airplanes dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As many as 210,000 civilians died immediately or in the following months.⁴¹⁴ Scores of thousands more died from radiation poisoning in later years.⁴¹⁵ The atomic bombings were not needed to end the war in the Pacific; the Japanese government was already moving toward surrender. Instead, the new U.S. president, Harry Truman, wanted to intimidate the Soviet Union and demonstrate his willingness to use this new weapon to advance U.S. interests in the postwar world.⁴¹⁶ In mid-August, the U.S. government announced the partition of Korea and moved to occupy South Korea to prevent a popular communist movement from coming to power.⁴¹⁷ Truman also demanded that Japanese forces in Asia and the Pacific surrender to “politically acceptable military forces,” not “local leftist-led Resistance movements.”⁴¹⁸

THE UNITED STATES BECOMES THE MOST POWERFUL EMPIRE IN THE WORLD

On September 2, 1945, Japan’s formal surrender ended the Second World War. Eighty million people had died in the global holocaust, and much of Europe and Asia was devastated.⁴¹⁹ However, the United States had achieved its objective of becoming the most powerful empire in the world.⁴²⁰ The challenges to the prewar international order by Japan, Germany, and Italy had been defeated. The British and French empires were economically crippled, and though they would recover, they would lose most of their colonies and never regain their former power.⁴²¹ The Soviet Union, which

had liberated much of Europe from the Nazi Reich, had suffered the greatest loss of life and widespread devastation. In stark contrast, the United States sustained fewer casualties and far less damage than the other belligerents. It had also become the wealthiest country in the world.⁴²² War production had finally brought the Great Depression to an end and generated extraordinary profits and capital accumulation.⁴²³

Industrial production had increased about 15 percent annually during the war, and exports more than doubled.⁴²⁴ By the end of the war, the United States produced 50 percent of the world's goods and services and held 75 percent of the world's invested capital and 67 percent of global gold reserves.⁴²⁵ A member of Britain's House of Lords observed that the United States "has been left by the war rich beyond her dreams."⁴²⁶ In addition, Washington now dominated an "Americanized" global economic system and was also the only country with atomic weapons. Walter Lippmann wrote: "What Rome was to the ancient world, America is to be to the world of tomorrow."⁴²⁷ He showed no awareness of the bloodshed and brutality that had been required to maintain Pax Romana—or would be necessary to maintain Pax Americana.

COUNTING THE DEAD

U.S. wars, military interventions, and other destructive actions between 1775 and 1898 resulted in almost 1.3 million deaths, most of which occurred in the Civil War. The global expansion and gradual ascendancy of the U.S. Empire between 1898 and 1945 led to an extraordinary escalation of carnage and destruction. The war against the Philippines, the intervention in the Mexican Revolution, and the invasion of Soviet Russia implicated Washington in approximately 12 million deaths. U.S. support for the Guomindang regime in China, fascist Italy's colonization of Libya and war against Ethiopia, and the fascist insurgency in Spain contributed to about 3.5 million fatalities. The United States also shared responsibility for 110 million lives lost in the First and Second World Wars. Altogether, the U.S. Empire

was responsible or shared responsibility for approximately 127 million deaths between 1775 and 1945. Tragically, many would die at the hands of the United States, its client states, and allied forces in the decades that followed the Second World War.

The Holocausts of Pax Americana I

We were waging a people's war—à la manière Vietnamienne. America's sophisticated arms, electronic devices, and all the rest were to no avail in the end. In war there are the two factors—human beings and weapons. Ultimately, though, human beings are the decisive factor. Human beings! Human beings!

—GENERAL VÕ NGUYỄN GIÁP,
INTERVIEW WITH STANLEY KARNOW, 1990

Although the United States emerged from the Second World War as the world's preeminent empire, its plans for a Pax Americana faced formidable challenges. The Soviet Union would recover from its wartime devastation, communist-led revolutions were beginning in other countries, and scores of colonized nations were demanding independence. U.S. officials and capitalists worried that these developments could jeopardize their access to markets and resources and undermine economic and political stability at home.¹ During the next thirty-five years, the U.S. Empire expanded its economic penetration of other countries, developed a large system of client states, and established a vast network of military bases worldwide.² Supporters have long claimed that the postwar

liberal international order generally preserved peace and promoted prosperity. But Sidney Lens was right to note that Pax Americana is “global imperialism [that] unfolded from the inner logic of America’s new status,” and its consequences have been catastrophic for most of the globe.³ Since 1945 the United States has fought several major wars, launched proxy wars, routinely attacked countries, overthrown and installed governments, destroyed popular movements, assassinated foreign leaders, engaged in economic sabotage, and supported its allies’ violent domestic repression and acts of war against other nations.⁴ The only country to use atomic bombs, the United States deployed nuclear weapons around the world, developed ominous plans “to win a nuclear war,” and brought humanity to the brink of a nuclear holocaust on several occasions.⁵ By 1980, the holocausts of Pax Americana resembled the global horrors that a reasonable observer might have expected from a fascist victory in the Second World War.⁶

U.S. DOMINATION OF THE NEW UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

The United States dominated the new United Nations organization from its founding in 1945, as it did the global economic institutions created at Bretton Woods.⁷ Even before the war ended, U.S. policymakers planned to use the UN to help implement the new Pax Americana.⁸ As Phyllis Bennis explained, although U.S. diplomats talked about “peace and justice and internationalism,” in fact, “Washington’s agenda was power.”⁹ Only fifty-one nations signed the UN Charter, and thirty-five of them were aligned with the United States.¹⁰ The vast majority of nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—still colonized or dependent—were not represented in the Security Council or the General Assembly.¹¹ U.S. policymakers ensured that the five permanent members of the Security Council—the United States, Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union—would have veto power and control the organization.¹² China would be represented by the Guomindang, which resumed its war against the communists, and Washington expected Jiang to support its positions and initiatives.¹³ With four out

of five votes among the Security Council's permanent members, U.S. officials hoped to limit any challenge by the Soviet Union. The United States also took control of the islands of Micronesia, which were formerly held by Japan and now considered the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.¹⁴ Decades later, the Northern Mariana Islands became a U.S. commonwealth. The "freely associated states" of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau became U.S. protectorates.

INTERVENTION IN THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR

In the weeks following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, U.S. generals left armed Japanese troops in control of parts of China to help prevent the communists from taking power there. Sixty thousand U.S. troops were already in the country, and Washington deployed fifty thousand more to stop the People's Liberation Army from seizing Beijing, secure the coastal cities, and safeguard strategic sites.¹⁵ U.S. forces engaged the communists in combat and transported half a million nationalist soldiers to fight them.¹⁶ After efforts to broker a peace agreement failed, Washington withdrew some troops but continued to support Jiang's forces. The United States equipped and trained thirty-nine Guomintang army divisions, providing about \$3 billion in cash, arms, ammunition, and military equipment.¹⁷ U.S. officials knew that Jiang's forces were irredeemably corrupt, lacked popular support, and would likely be defeated, but backed them until shortly before the communist victory in 1949.¹⁸ As Mao Zedong proclaimed on September 21, "The Chinese people have stood up!"¹⁹ But more than six million combatants and civilians died in this second phase of the Chinese Civil War.²⁰ After Jiang and his troops fled to Taiwan, the Truman administration supported their strikes against the mainland city of Sungmen, which resulted in as many as 2,500 deaths in 1950.²¹ During the next decade, the CIA organized and financed numerous assaults on the People's Republic by Guomintang troops resettled in northern Burma. Tens of thousands of people died in these attacks.²²

MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND RIGHT-WING DICTATORSHIP IN SOUTH KOREA

Communists had led the main resistance to the Japanese occupation in Korea and were the most popular political force in the country.²³ But in September 1945, a month after partitioning the nation, the United States sent more than 75,000 troops to establish a military government in the south.²⁴ They destroyed the fledgling Korean People's Republic being formed by "people's committees," protected the land-owning elite's wealth and power, and allowed right-wing Koreans to mobilize for "a kind of home-grown fascism."²⁵ In contrast, the Soviet military administration in North Korea helped local communists create a new socialist-oriented state committed to ending colonialism, landlordism, and class exploitation.²⁶ In 1948, Washington installed Syngman Rhee, an anti-communist U.S. resident for almost forty years, as leader of the Republic of Korea. Kim Il Sung, who had fought with Chinese communist forces against the Japanese, became the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North.²⁷ Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings have pointed out that from 1945 to 1950, "mass popular resistance" culminating in "armed guerilla resistance" challenged the U.S. military government and the new Rhee dictatorship.²⁸ At least 100,000 people died in this struggle, a harbinger of what was to come in Korea.²⁹

SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN VIETNAM AND INDONESIA

When the people of Vietnam proclaimed their independence after the Japanese surrender in September 1945, they cited portions of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. They appealed to Truman to recognize their new government.³⁰ Instead, Washington financially and militarily supported France's efforts to reconquer its former colony. The United States provided \$2.6 billion in aid to Paris between 1950 and 1954 alone, eventually subsidizing about 80 percent of the costs of the war.³¹ U.S. military assistance included airplanes, tanks, and hundreds of thousands of rifles and machine guns.³² U.S. personnel also

built airfields, ports, and highways for the French, and the CIA's Civil Air Transport transported French troops and supplies.³³ When French troops were facing their final defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower even offered Paris two atomic bombs to use.³⁴ The French government declined this offer and recognized that its colonial war against the people of Vietnam was ending. Approximately 850,000 people, primarily Vietnamese, died during this war.³⁵

Although officials in Washington said they endorsed an eventual transition to self-rule in the Dutch East Indies, they did not recognize Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945. Instead, the United States supported the Netherlands during most of its intermittent war to reconquer Indonesia during the next four years.³⁶ Theodore Friend has pointed out that the Dutch were U.S. allies, and "anticommunism in Europe was more important to the States than anticolonialism in Asia."³⁷ The Truman administration had what Bradley R. Simpson has called "the same ambivalence about the fitness of Indonesians for self-government as it did for Vietnam."³⁸ Washington provided more than \$1 billion in aid to The Hague between 1945 and 1949. The Dutch used almost half of that amount to maintain its armed forces in Indonesia and fight the independence movement.³⁹ It was not until late 1948, after the Dutch violated a second cease-fire and the Indonesian government crushed a communist uprising, that the United States decided to accept Indonesian independence.⁴⁰ A year later, the Netherlands formally recognized the new nation's sovereignty. As many as 200,000 people died in the war.⁴¹

SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN MADAGASCAR AND MALAYA

When the Magalasy people's struggle for independence from France erupted in Madagascar in 1947, U.S. officials supported its violent suppression. Washington feared communist influence in this colony and the postwar government in Paris.⁴² After prime minister Paul Ramadier fired the communists in his cabinet for criticizing French repression in Madagascar, the United States sent massive

new shipments of grain to France, and the World Bank approved a new \$500 million loan for the country.⁴³ As Douglas Little has noted, even after reports of widespread French massacres, executions, and torture reached Washington, officials “appear to have been relieved that France was on the road to a quick victory in Madagascar.”⁴⁴ The United States sent France an additional \$150 million while the details of economic reconstruction aid were still being worked out.⁴⁵ By the spring of 1948, most of the independence fighters had been defeated. As Little has emphasized, “The Ramadier regime may have provided the firepower to crush the revolt, but the Truman administration provided the economic and moral support without which such victory would have been neither quick nor cheap.”⁴⁶ Approximately 90,000 Magalasy people perished in the struggle.⁴⁷

When communist-led guerrillas launched a war of independence in the British colony of Malaya in 1948, London resolved to crush the uprising as quickly as possible. Britain deployed scores of thousands of troops and local security forces to defend its colony, yet fighting continued for about a decade. Some accounts of the “Malayan Emergency” have emphasized that the United States did not become involved in this war, and, indeed, Washington did not dispatch soldiers to join the conflict.⁴⁸ However, the Second World War had left Britain almost bankrupt, and only massive U.S. loans made its counterinsurgency in Malaya possible.⁴⁹ Although Washington initially hesitated to provide arms to the British troops and their local allies, as Phillip Deery has acknowledged, within a few years, “U.S.-made weaponry” was being effectively used against the insurgents.⁵⁰ A decade later, the war was effectively over. Britain had prevailed, partly because of financial and military assistance from the United States and partly because London agreed to independence for its colony. More than eleven thousand people, mainly insurgents and their supporters, had been killed.⁵¹

POSTWAR CRISES IN IRAN AND THE PHILIPPINES

During the Second World War, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied

Iran, with the approval of the United States, to prevent the country and its oil from being captured by Germany. The three countries had agreed to share oil concessions as repayment after the war, but Washington later reneged and rejected Soviet economic claims. In 1946, when Soviet troops remained in northern Iran pending resolution of the dispute, Truman threatened to drop atomic bombs on its wartime ally. The Soviets withdrew and catastrophe was averted, but the United States had set an ominous precedent.⁵² That same year, Washington finally granted independence to the Philippines on the condition that U.S. businesses and citizens would have “equal rights” to develop Filipino natural resources and operate Filipino public utilities.⁵³ The United States also obtained a ninety-nine-year lease for twenty-three military bases.⁵⁴ Manuel Roxas, who had collaborated with the Japanese, was installed as the first president of the Philippines.⁵⁵ The communist-led guerrilla movement Hukbalahap, which had fought against the Japanese, now demanded land reform, industrialization, and social change. Ten Huks were elected to Congress but were denied their seats, and vicious state repression followed.⁵⁶ After the Huks launched an armed struggle against the government in 1948, Washington sold Manila more than \$200 million of military equipment and supplies and trained its troops.⁵⁷ CIA officials ran the successful campaign of presidential candidate Ramon Magsaysay in 1953.⁵⁸ By the time the insurgency ended in 1954, more than twelve thousand had lost their lives.⁵⁹

INTERVENTION IN THE GREEK CIVIL WAR

Even before a fraudulent plebiscite approved the return of King George II to Greece in 1946, the right-wing regime and its allies had unleashed an unrelenting wave of violence against communists and “all democratic, liberal, and republican elements.”⁶⁰ A few months after Greek anti-fascists resumed armed struggle, London informed Washington that it could no longer afford a significant military presence in Greece or substantial aid to the embattled regime. The United States responded by announcing the deceptive and dangerous Truman Doctrine,

pledging assistance to “free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressure.”⁶¹ Washington spent hundreds of millions of dollars to provide combat aircraft, naval patrol vessels, artillery, napalm bombs, rifles, communications equipment, and other supplies to the Greek government.⁶² Hundreds of U.S. military personnel developed battle plans for the Greek army, trained its soldiers and sailors, and embedded with regime units.⁶³ As Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick have reported, U.S. advisers used the conflict to “test tactics, some new and some old,” such as napalm attacks on villages, mass executions, torture, mass imprisonment of combatants’ family members, the destruction of unions, and press censorship.⁶⁴ Washington’s intervention was decisive in bringing about the insurgents’ surrender in 1949.⁶⁵ A total of about 158,000 Greeks died in the civil war.⁶⁶

SAFEGUARDING CAPITALISM IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

In 1948, the United States began spending billions of dollars through the Marshall Plan to help rebuild Western European countries and ensure that they remained capitalist societies and became U.S. client states.⁶⁷ That same year, the CIA paid millions of dollars to conservative politicians and conducted a massive covert propaganda campaign to prevent communists from winning national elections in Italy.⁶⁸ Such interference in Italian elections continued for the next twenty-five years.⁶⁹ Also in 1948, the murder of a prominent liberal leader in Colombia and the government’s brutal suppression of the ensuing popular uprising led to almost two decades of bloody civil war known as *La Violencia*. The United States provided extensive financial and military support for the government, including the sale of combat aircraft and infantry training.⁷⁰ Two hundred thousand Colombians lost their lives in the conflict in the next two decades.⁷¹ Before 1948 ended, Washington backed the overthrow of a progressive government in Costa Rica, which resulted in two thousand deaths, and supported a military coup against the first democratically elected president of Venezuela, which produced a dictatorship that went on to kill hundreds of people.⁷²

THE CREATION OF A ZIONIST STATE IN PALESTINE

Amid escalating terrorist attacks by Jewish settlers against British colonial authorities and indigenous Palestinians, the United States government supported the United Nations' creation of a Zionist state in Palestine in 1947.⁷³ Although the world was learning more about the scope of the *Shoah*, officials in Washington remained opposed to large-scale Jewish immigration to the United States.⁷⁴ There were differences of opinion in Washington about the creation of Israel. Still, prominent policymakers and military leaders recognized the advantage of a European colonial settler state with a pro-Western orientation and an ability to help defend U.S. access to Arab oil and U.S. bases in the region.⁷⁵ In 1948, Washington recognized Israel after its unilateral declaration of independence. This proclamation of statehood and the subsequent seizure of additional Palestinian land sparked massive resistance and led to a brief but bloody war with several Arab countries. Twenty-one thousand people, chiefly Palestinians and other Arabs, died during the war, and roughly 800,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their ancestral homeland.⁷⁶ The *Nakba*, or catastrophe, was followed by more than seven decades of occupation, wars, brutality, immiseration, and betrayals by ostensible allies. More than 120,000 Palestinians, other Arabs, and Israelis have died in the wars and conflicts involving the Zionist state since its creation.⁷⁷ Other Palestinian refugees have died from malnutrition or preventable disease in various countries since 1948, but their numbers have never been counted. A year after the first Arab-Israeli war, the CIA helped right-wing Syrian soldiers overthrow the democratically elected government.⁷⁸

THE CREATION OF THE FRG AND NATO

In 1949, U.S. officials oversaw the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, preferring a pro-capitalist regime in the wealthier western part of the country to a unified but non-aligned nation that might elect a leftist government.⁷⁹ The German Democratic Republic came

into being soon afterward with the support of the Soviet Union. Former Nazis played a prominent role in the new FRG during the next few decades. One chancellor, one president, and twenty-five cabinet ministers had been members of Nazi organizations.⁸⁰ Ex-Nazis also assumed important positions in the new state's Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry, and police and intelligence agencies.⁸¹ In contrast, the GDR underwent a far-reaching "de-Nazification" process.⁸²

Also in 1949, Washington and its European allies formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States' first peacetime military alliance. Notwithstanding its rhetoric about a commitment to peace and democracy, NATO's purpose from the outset was to confront the Soviet Union and the new socialist-oriented governments of Central and Eastern Europe and "contain" the spread of communism on the continent.⁸³ U.S. officials also viewed the new alliance as a way to institutionalize military cooperation among its client states in Europe.⁸⁴ By this time, Washington was organizing covert armed actions by right-wing émigrés against Albania and Ukraine, which resulted in hundreds of deaths.⁸⁵

WAR IN KOREA

When war broke out in Korea in June 1950, U.S. political leaders and journalists depicted it as communist aggression. In fact, this was a "civil and revolutionary war," as Halliday and Cumings have emphasized, largely caused by Washington's partition of the peninsula, its installation of a right-wing regime in Seoul, widespread violence against communists in the South, and the Rhee government's increasing attacks on the North.⁸⁶ Soon after the war began, North Korean troops captured Seoul, and U.S. generals began considering the use of atomic bombs.⁸⁷ Washington obtained UN approval for war while the Soviets were boycotting the Security Council over its exclusion of the new revolutionary government in China, but the United States provided most of the soldiers, military equipment, and funding.⁸⁸ U.S. troops drove the North Koreans back across the Thirty-eighth Parallel and helped South Korean forces kill vast

numbers of communist guerrillas and civilians.⁸⁹ After Pyongyang fell and U.S. soldiers moved toward the Yalu River, China entered the war, helped the North Koreans recapture their capital, and forced U.S. troops to retreat.⁹⁰ In late 1950, Truman publicly threatened to drop atomic bombs on the North but by mid-1951, the war had become a stalemate.⁹¹ By the time an armistice based on the prewar division of the country was signed in 1953, approximately five million people had died.⁹²

THE CIA COUP IN IRAN

After Iran's prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh won parliamentary approval for the nationalization of the British-controlled oil industry in 1951, the United States began planning to overthrow him. The young Shah, a constitutional monarch, was forced to leave the country after the government discovered he was collaborating with the coup plotters.⁹³ In 1953, the CIA, with British support, used mercenaries, mobs, religious extremists, and other Iranians on its payroll to oust Mossadegh.⁹⁴ Hundreds of the supporters of the democratically elected Iranian government were killed during the putsch.⁹⁵ The Shah returned to Iran and assumed dictatorial powers. As Stone and Kuznick have noted, "Five U.S. oil companies now received 40 percent ownership of the new consortium established to develop Iranian oil."⁹⁶ During the next quarter-century, Washington provided airplanes, weapons, ammunition, other military equipment, as well as extensive financial aid, to the Shah's regime. At least ten thousand Iranians died at the hands of his soldiers and dreaded secret police before he was overthrown in 1979.⁹⁷

SUPPORT FOR FASCISM IN SPAIN AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

The same year as the Iranian coup, the United States signed the Pact of Madrid with fascist Spain, which promised significant military and economic aid in exchange for the establishment of U.S. Air Force and

naval bases.⁹⁸ Washington provided more than \$1 billion in military assistance to Franco's dictatorship during the following decade.⁹⁹ The Spanish government's harsh repression of political opponents continued during these years but did not deter the United States from maintaining close ties.¹⁰⁰ Also in the early 1950s, Washington had come to depend on apartheid South Africa's uranium, chromium, and other resources, as well as its fierce anti-communism and ability to help safeguard the important commercial sea shipping lane off the Cape of Good Hope.¹⁰¹ Washington sold weapons and military equipment to Pretoria, trained some of its soldiers, and loaned it money to modernize its railroads, roads, and harbors.¹⁰² IBM sold South Africa the technology that made possible the infamous "Pass Laws," used to regulate the movement of Blacks and facilitate the forced resettlement of more than three million individuals.¹⁰³ Ford and General Motors sold Pretoria vehicles and replacement parts used by military and police forces to keep the Black majority subjugated.¹⁰⁴

BACKING FEUDAL REPRESSION IN ETHIOPIA

During the early 1950s, Washington began to develop a close relationship with Emperor Haile Selassie's repressive feudal regime in Ethiopia. In exchange for allowing the United States to operate a major communications center at Kagnew Station in Asmara, access other ports, and use the country's airspace, the Ethiopian government received substantial economic and military assistance.¹⁰⁵ Washington armed, equipped, and trained Selassie's soldiers and police with some help from other countries, provided counterinsurgency advisers, and deployed several thousand military personnel to Ethiopia.¹⁰⁶ Over time, Washington assumed what V. G. Kiernan has called "a big part in the running of things" in Ethiopia.¹⁰⁷ U.S. policymakers viewed the country as a geopolitically and strategically important asset in the Cold War and were generally unconcerned with the widespread exploitation, poverty, and despair.¹⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, many Ethiopians came to resent and oppose not only the Selassie regime but also the United States.¹⁰⁹

THE CIA COUP IN GUATEMALA

In 1954, the United States overthrew the democratically elected government of Guatemala.¹¹⁰ With broad popular and legislative support, President Jacobo Arbenz announced the nationalization of 40 percent of United Fruit Company's property.¹¹¹ Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, CIA Director Allen Dulles, and other officials had close personal business ties to United Fruit and began recruiting right-wing Guatemalan army officers for a coup.¹¹² After discovering the plot, Arbenz denounced imperialism and purchased weapons from Czechoslovakia, which led to dire U.S. warnings about communism and Soviet domination of the Central American country.¹¹³ U.S. pilots then bombed the nation's largest military base and the government radio station while the CIA led 150 right-wing Guatemalan soldiers, exiles, and mercenaries from various countries in an invasion from Honduras and Nicaragua.¹¹⁴ Arbenz was forced from power, and as many as nine thousand people were arrested, many of them tortured and killed.¹¹⁵ Washington installed Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas as the new president. During the next six decades, the United States provided vital economic support for a succession of right-wing regimes and armed, trained, and advised troops who killed approximately 250,000 Guatemalans.¹¹⁶

U.S. IMPERIALISM REPLACES FRENCH COLONIALISM IN VIETNAM

After a historic defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, France sought a face-saving way to leave Vietnam. Led by Ho Chi Minh and the communists, the Viet Minh enjoyed widespread support, controlled most of the country, and were widely expected to come to power.¹¹⁷ In Geneva, diplomats from several countries agreed on a plan for a transition to independence. Vietnam would be temporarily divided, the Viet Minh would withdraw to the North, the French would withdraw to the South, and national elections would be held in two years. However, the United States and the French puppet Bao Dai refused to sign the Geneva Accords.¹¹⁸ The following year, the Eisenhower

administration installed Ngo Dinh Diem as the new ruler in the South and supported him as his forces murdered thousands of Viet Minh militants.¹¹⁹ In 1956, Washington and Saigon canceled the scheduled national elections after Eisenhower was informed that 80 percent of the country's population would vote for Ho Chi Minh.¹²⁰ Washington's support for a regime that its chief CIA agent on the ground described as "fascistic" and its refusal to allow the most popular political force to govern the country led to the renewal of insurgency in South Vietnam.¹²¹

SUPPORT FOR FRENCH COLONIALISM IN ALGERIA

The United States backed France during the Algerian War of Independence that began in 1954. Washington advocated steps toward limited self-rule for the colony and occasionally criticized France's handling of the insurrection.¹²² But as Miloud Barkaoui has argued, U.S. officials chiefly sought to "manage the colonial status quo," backing France's bloody counterinsurgency "as long as it did not threaten Western interests in the region and did not open the way for Soviet penetration of North Africa."¹²³ In NATO meetings, U.S. diplomats approved the French deployment of hundreds of thousands of troops to Algeria.¹²⁴ Washington armed the French troops and equipped them with airplanes, helicopters, heavy trucks, and other equipment.¹²⁵ As Kiernan has observed, helping the French obtain large loans meant that "America was in fact helping it to carry on this colonial war too."¹²⁶ The United States also opposed or abstained from UN resolutions recognizing Algeria's right to self-determination.¹²⁷ The strength of the Algerian insurgents, mounting opposition at home, and growing international pressure eventually forced France to end the war. Algeria gained its independence in 1962, but as many as 1.5 million people had died in the conflict.¹²⁸

THE INVASION OF EGYPT AND INTERVENTION IN HUNGARY

After Egyptian President Gamal Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal

in 1956, Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt to regain Western control and oust the nationalist leader. Global opposition and the prospect of Soviet intervention led the White House to oppose the invasion, but the U.S. military commander of NATO threatened to use nuclear weapons against Moscow if the Soviets attacked the invaders.¹²⁹ Washington's allies were forced to withdraw, and Egypt retained control of the canal, but as many as 3,250 people died in the conflict.¹³⁰ That same year, the United States supported an armed insurrection against the socialist government in Hungary.¹³¹ Washington's Radio Free Europe urged Hungarians to fight, offered tactical advice to the anti-communist forces, and led listeners to believe that U.S. military assistance was imminent.¹³² The United States could not risk a major war with the Warsaw Pact nations in Hungary, but the CIA dispatched agents to help organize the insurgency.¹³³ Soviet troops ended the rebellion and helped bring a new Hungarian communist-led government to power, but approximately 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviets died in the fighting.¹³⁴

WASHINGTON'S SECRET WAR IN TIBET

In the last half of the 1950s, the United States launched a secret war in Tibet. When the People's Republic of China extended its control to Tibet in 1951, it did not immediately overthrow the traditional feudal order there but began to slowly implement progressive social reforms.¹³⁵ Even gradual changes were unacceptable to the ruling elite, however, which had long relied on slavery, serfdom, and savage repression to maintain its wealth and power.¹³⁶ In 1956, the CIA began airlifting anti-communist Tibetans it had trained and equipped to attack the People's Liberation Army in the region.¹³⁷ Intermittent but deadly conflict followed during the next few years. In 1959, U.S.-backed Tibetan rebels launched a major uprising in the capital of Lhasa. Most Tibetans did not join or support the rebels.¹³⁸ China quickly suppressed the rebellion, consolidated its control over Tibet, and outlawed slavery and serfdom in the years that followed.¹³⁹ More than 130,000 Tibetans and Chinese had died during the conflict by

1959.¹⁴⁰ U.S. support for clandestine armed operations in the region continued until 1973.¹⁴¹

SUSTAINING FRIENDLY REGIMES IN HAITI AND LEBANON

By 1958, Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier had become a brutal dictator in Haiti. Nonetheless, Washington trained his soldiers and secret police, sent troops to crush an insurgency, and generally tolerated his excesses because of his strident anti-communism.¹⁴² When he died thirteen years later, the U.S. government approved the succession of his son Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” and dispatched naval vessels to “assure order and discourage exile infiltration.”¹⁴³ As many as sixty thousand Haitians died under the Duvaliers.¹⁴⁴ Washington was also deeply complicit in the deaths that occurred during the civil war in Lebanon in 1958. The United States had replaced France as the main imperialist power there, and the CIA had funded the election of a pro-Western Christian president and allied parliamentary deputies who opposed the anti-imperialist politics of the growing Muslim population.¹⁴⁵ The 1958 civil war occurred because of widespread opposition to the president’s desire to seek an unconstitutional second term and his close ties to Washington.¹⁴⁶ Eisenhower’s deployment of 14,000 troops and dozens of naval vessels to Lebanon ended the conflict, but four thousand people had already died.¹⁴⁷ A new president was elected, but U.S. influence and intervention contributed to a more devastating civil war fifteen years later.¹⁴⁸

U.S. SUBVERSION FROM IRAQ TO CONGO

Reformist military officers overthrew the pro-Western monarchy in Iraq in 1958. Only the threat of a Soviet military response prevented the United States and Turkey from invading the new republic.¹⁴⁹ The CIA subsequently tried but failed to assassinate the new Iraqi prime minister Abd al-Karim Qasim.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, the Eisenhower administration attempted to oust the non-aligned government in Indonesia headed by the popular former independence movement

leader, Sukarno.¹⁵¹ The CIA organized and armed thousands of dissident troops and mercenaries and provided B-26 bombers, fighters, and transport airplanes for air support.¹⁵² The coup was defeated, but several hundred people died in the process.¹⁵³ Washington may not have “fomented” or “guided” the military overthrow of the government in Turkey in 1960, but as Ömer Aslan has explained, it “underwrote the coup financially, politically and militarily.”¹⁵⁴

That same year, U.S. troops stationed in Ethiopia helped defeat a coup against the Selassie dictatorship.¹⁵⁵ As many as two thousand Ethiopians died or were wounded in the uprising.¹⁵⁶ In the autumn of 1960, the United States and Belgium organized and financed a military coup that ousted Patrice Lumumba, the newly independent Congo’s prime minister, and brought army officer Joseph-Désiré Mobutu and allied politicians to power. Washington and Brussels were also deeply implicated in the subsequent execution of Lumumba in early 1961.¹⁵⁷ During the next four years, Washington sent CIA operatives, soldiers, military trainers, and airplane pilots to help Mobutu and his soldiers wipe out progressive Congolese forces.¹⁵⁸ More than 100,000 were killed during this period.¹⁵⁹ Also in 1961, Washington organized, financed, and armed the dissidents who assassinated its longtime but increasingly erratic and unpopular ally, Trujillo, in the Dominican Republic.¹⁶⁰

ACTS OF WAR AGAINST CUBA

In 1959, revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro ousted the Batista dictatorship in Cuba. Six decades of U.S. domination and financial and military support for right-wing rule had ended, but five thousand people had died in the armed struggle.¹⁶¹ In early 1960, the Eisenhower administration began bombing sugarcane fields and factories in Cuba.¹⁶² In March 1960, the CIA was involved in bombing the French ship *La Coubre*, which was transporting arms and ammunition to Havana. More than a hundred people died in the attack.¹⁶³ During the next several decades, more than 3,400 Cubans perished in acts of state terrorism organized or supported by Washington.¹⁶⁴

In the autumn of 1960, Eisenhower launched an embargo against the new government of Cuba, which continues to the present day. During the past six decades, Washington's harsh restrictions on food and medicine imports, along with other punishing strictures, have contributed to the deaths of thousands of Cubans.¹⁶⁵ In April 1961, President John Kennedy authorized the invasion of Cuba by a small army of right-wing émigrés organized, armed, and trained by the CIA.¹⁶⁶ U.S. military airplanes destroyed or disabled half of the small Cuban air force. Three days later, after the invaders landed at Playa Giron, the Bay of Pigs, revolutionary forces rallied to defeat them. Approximately 300 people, including 114 invaders and 4 U.S. pilots, were killed, and the defeat was a public humiliation for the Kennedy administration.¹⁶⁷

SUPPORT FOR PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM IN AFRICA

When Angolan guerrillas began fighting for independence from Portugal in 1961, the Kennedy administration announced its support for decolonization and self-determination. But such a dramatic change in long-standing U.S. foreign policy was largely rhetorical.¹⁶⁸ Washington prioritized the Portuguese dictatorship's participation in NATO and the U.S. military base in the Azores islands over Angolan independence and national sovereignty. As the national liberation struggle grew in Angola and similar struggles began in Guinea and Mozambique, the United States supported Portugal.¹⁶⁹ U.S. business investments significantly increased in these colonies, particularly in resource-rich Angola.¹⁷⁰ U.S. military support for Portugal was indispensable for these colonialist wars. As Kiernan has noted, Portugal fought "largely with American or NATO weapons during the next thirteen years."¹⁷¹ Washington also provided aircraft and helicopters to the Portuguese for its counterinsurgency and trained its officers in the United States.¹⁷² More than 135,000 people, overwhelmingly Africans, died during these wars for independence.¹⁷³ At the same time, U.S. officials searched for Angolan fighters with whom they could do business in the future.¹⁷⁴

NEW INTERVENTIONS IN VIETNAM, BRITISH GUIANA, AND CUBA

By 1961, the insurgency led by the National Liberation Front threatened to topple the U.S.-backed regime in South Vietnam. Kennedy increased the number of U.S. military advisers there from 800 to 16,000 and authorized U.S. pilots to fly combat missions against the insurgents.¹⁷⁵ Between 1962 and 1964, the CIA financed and organized strikes, protests, and other actions to oust Prime Minister Cheddi Jaggan in British Guiana (now Guyana) because of his demand for independence and socialist politics.¹⁷⁶ Hundreds of people died in the violence, and a party supported by the CIA defeated Jaggan's party in the next election.¹⁷⁷ In October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted. After Washington discovered that the Soviet Union was deploying nuclear missiles on the island, it launched a naval blockade and threatened Moscow. The crisis brought the world to the edge of nuclear war, but the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles in exchange for the United States removing its missiles from Turkey and pledging not to attack Cuba again.¹⁷⁸ However, a few weeks later, a team of émigrés dispatched by Washington blew up a Cuban industrial plant and killed four hundred workers.¹⁷⁹

SUPPORT FOR APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A CIA agent helped the South African government capture African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in 1962, which led to his imprisonment for twenty-seven years and undermined the liberation struggle in that country.¹⁸⁰ In 1963, two years after the South African police massacred sixty-nine Black protesters in Sharpeville, the Kennedy administration announced an embargo on the sale of weapons and military equipment that could be used for internal repression. However, the U.S. government continued to sell helicopters, missiles, submarines, and torpedoes to the racist regime.¹⁸¹ Washington also continued its nuclear collaboration and sharing of military intelligence with Pretoria.¹⁸² U.S. business investments in South Africa and trade between the two countries remained

substantial.¹⁸³ At the end of the 1960s, the CIA provided “advice and assistance” in the creation of Pretoria’s infamous Bureau of State Security.¹⁸⁴ Thus, despite its rhetorical condemnation of white supremacist rule and limited military embargo, Washington continued to support the apartheid government despite its ongoing repression of the Black majority and its murder of hundreds of people during this decade.¹⁸⁵

BACKING COUPS IN ECUADOR, IRAQ, AND VIETNAM

In a commencement address at American University in June 1963, President Kennedy denied that the United States was presiding over “a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war.”¹⁸⁶ But just four months earlier, the CIA had helped Baath Party and other anti-communist military officers in Iraq overthrow the Qasim regime. Qasim had begun limiting U.S. and European oil concessions, played a leading role in the creation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and had grown closer to the Iraqi left.¹⁸⁷ The young Saddam Hussein, an important contributor to the putsch, was already on the U.S. payroll.¹⁸⁸ Qasim was executed and the CIA provided the names of Iraqi communists and labor militants to the new government, which then murdered as many of them as possible.¹⁸⁹ More than eight thousand died in the aftermath of the coup, and moves toward the nationalization of Iraqi oil ended.¹⁹⁰ In July 1963, a month after Kennedy’s commencement address, the CIA supported a military coup that overthrew the president of Ecuador, who was viewed as too friendly toward communism.¹⁹¹ The coup resulted in several deaths. Another hundred people later perished in a successful struggle to oust the junta that had taken power.¹⁹² In November 1963, as the NLF extended its control and land reform in parts of South Vietnam, Kennedy approved the overthrow of the despised Diem regime, and U.S. officials worked with South Vietnamese generals to plan the coup.¹⁹³ Diem and his brother were executed during the putsch. Ironically, Kennedy himself was assassinated a few weeks later.

SUPPORT FOR REPRESSION IN PANAMA, URUGUAY, AND BRAZIL

In early 1964, protests erupted in Panama over popular demands to fly the nation's flag inside the U.S. Canal Zone. U.S. troops violently suppressed the protests, leading to the deaths of twenty-two students.¹⁹⁴ The crisis eventually led to negotiations in which Washington agreed to relinquish control of the Canal Zone at the end of the century.¹⁹⁵ That same year in Uruguay, CIA and other U.S. operatives began to help security forces fight, capture, torture, and kill Tupamaro communist insurgents. At least 350 guerrillas, soldiers, police, and civilians died in the conflict during the next eight years.¹⁹⁶ Also in 1964, the United States helped right-wing military officers overthrow the democratically elected reformist government of João Goulart in Brazil. The CIA had secretly funded his opponents in local elections, financed street demonstrations, launched a mass anti-government propaganda campaign, encouraged the putschists, and promised U.S. military support if needed.¹⁹⁷ The dictatorship that followed the ouster of Goulart killed more than four hundred Brazilians during the next two decades.¹⁹⁸

THE U.S. WAR AGAINST VIETNAM

By 1964, 23,000 U.S. military advisers were deeply involved in planning and executing attacks on the NLF in South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.¹⁹⁹ In August of that year, President Lyndon Johnson falsely accused the DRV of unprovoked attacks on U.S. naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, and then won congressional approval for the expanded use of military force in the country.²⁰⁰ Washington began bombing North Vietnam and deployed thousands of Marines to South Vietnam in March 1965. By the end of that year, 185,000 U.S. military personnel had been sent to crush the communist-led insurgency.²⁰¹ By 1968, more than half a million U.S. troops were on the ground in Vietnam.²⁰² Amid peace talks in Vietnam and a tightening race for president at home, Republican candidate Richard Nixon secretly promised more concessions to South

Vietnamese officials if he won the election. Those officials withdrew from the negotiations, Nixon became president, and the carnage continued.²⁰³ However, the U.S. invasion, the relentless bombing, and the threats of nuclear attacks could not defeat the NLF and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.²⁰⁴ The indefatigability of the Vietnamese liberation fighters, intense public opposition to the war at home, and mounting rebellion within the U.S. armed forces led to the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam in 1973.²⁰⁵ Two years later, the country was reunited and became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. More than 5.3 million Vietnamese people had died because of the U.S. war.²⁰⁶

THE U.S. WAR AGAINST LAOS

Washington's savage opposition to communism also resulted in the ghastly loss of life in countries adjacent to Vietnam. By 1964, the United States had organized three coups in Laos to defend the Royal Lao government and prevent the communist-led Pathet Lao from coming to power.²⁰⁷ The CIA had also fielded a "Secret Army" of Hmong Laotians, Thais, South Vietnamese, other Asians, and U.S. Special Forces to fight against the intermittent insurgency.²⁰⁸ After right-wing politicians backed by the CIA replaced the neutralist government in April 1964, the Pathet Lao's armed struggle grew in strength and became quite formidable. Because its "Secret Army" could not defeat the communists and their allies, Washington escalated its ostensibly "Secret War" to massive sustained bombing of Laos in 1965.²⁰⁹ The large-scale carnage continued for eight years, but the Pathet Lao won the war and seized state power in 1975. About one million people in Laos had died by then.²¹⁰

THE U.S. WAR AGAINST CAMBODIA

As the wars in Vietnam and Laos expanded after 1964, Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia sought to maintain his country's neutrality. During the previous decade, Sihanouk had rebuffed U.S. pressures to

join its anti-communist crusade and defeated U.S. plots to overthrow him.²¹¹ Although he opposed the use of Cambodian territory by the NLF and the DRV, he also opposed incursions by the United States and its allies. In 1969, President Richard Nixon authorized the secret bombing of Cambodia to destroy or cripple Vietnamese liberation forces based there.²¹² The next year, U.S. military personnel helped right-wing Cambodian politicians overthrow Sihanouk and install a pro-U.S. government.²¹³ In May 1970, Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia. The widespread devastation and death resulting from the U.S. bombing and invasion led many Cambodians to support the Khmer Rouge's fight against the invaders.²¹⁴ DRV troops helped to free parts of Cambodia, and the exiled Sihanouk's backing for the Khmer Rouge increased its popularity. Approximately 800,000 people had died in the U.S. war in Cambodia by 1975 when the Khmer Rouge came to power.²¹⁵ And Washington shared responsibility with the new rulers for the approximately 1.7 million deaths from starvation, disease, and executions that followed.²¹⁶

U.S. BASES AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THAILAND

The conservative authoritarian regime in Thailand became a U.S. client state around 1950 and enthusiastically cooperated with Washington's anti-communist project in Southeast Asia.²¹⁷ By 1964, the United States was turning Thailand into a virtual military base for its war in Vietnam, and about fifty thousand troops were eventually deployed there.²¹⁸ A small communist insurgency began in 1965 and demanded U.S. withdrawal and a new government in Thailand.

William Blum has pointed out that Washington "financed, armed, equipped, and trained police and military units in counterinsurgency, significantly increasing their numbers."²¹⁹ U.S. military personnel also transported Thai government forces to battlefields and participated in combat operations against the guerrillas.²²⁰ During the insurgency, perhaps ten thousand guerrillas, regime soldiers, and civilians died.²²¹ The Thai government survived, and the communists did not come to power as they did in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. But the massive

U.S. military presence in Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s led to the huge growth of prostitution and sex trafficking, which contributed to almost 600,000 AIDS-related deaths in the decades that followed.²²²

INVASION OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND SUPPORT FOR DICTATORSHIP IN ZAIRE

In April 1965, more than forty thousand U.S. soldiers invaded the Dominican Republic to prevent the return of Juan Bosch to power. Military officers had ousted the reform-minded president two years before, and a massive popular movement subsequently sought to restore him to office.²²³ Four thousand Dominicans died during the invasion, and more than three thousand others died at the hands of the U.S.-backed regime during the next decade.²²⁴ Also in 1965, Mobutu cast aside allied politicians and established a dictatorship in Congo. Mobutu's ascendancy signaled the United States' replacement of Belgium as the preeminent imperialist power in the country he renamed Zaire.²²⁵ Mobutu stole billions of dollars in government revenues and killed uncounted thousands of political opponents during his thirty-two-year dictatorship.²²⁶ But he was an ally against African socialism. Although he nationalized mining industries, he sold some Zairean minerals to the United States and kept all of them "out of Soviet hands."²²⁷ Washington provided massive economic and military aid to the Mobutu dictatorship, trained its troops, and helped crush rebellions in the late 1970s.²²⁸ President George H. W. Bush later praised Mobutu as "our best friend in Africa."²²⁹

THE MASSACRE OF COMMUNISTS IN INDONESIA

Beginning in October 1965, the U.S. government supported a year-long reign of terror against communists and their allies in Indonesia. Despite the failure of its attempted coup seven years earlier, Washington had not abandoned its aim of overthrowing Prime Minister Sukarno. Indeed, the United States had subsequently played

a larger role in financing, arming, and training Indonesian military forces and increasingly urged its leaders to oust Sukarno and prevent one of the largest communist parties in the world from coming to power.²³⁰ U.S. officials worked to promote a confrontation between the army and the communists, and these efforts eventually succeeded.²³¹ In October 1965, a group of junior officers sympathetic to the communists detained several anti-communist generals, who were subsequently killed. More than five decades later, this episode remains a mystery. It may have been a botched action approved by the communist leader Dipa Nusantara Aidit, who aimed to expose an army plot against his party and Sukarno. If so, it was undertaken without the knowledge of his party's central committee. Alternatively, the incident may have been a subterfuge planned by anti-communist military leaders to obtain a pretext for the destruction of the communists and the overthrow of Sukarno.²³²

With Washington's enthusiastic backing, the right-wing generals moved to wipe out the communists and limit Sukarno's authority before deposing him. With the assistance of anti-communist militias and mobs, the Indonesian army proceeded to kill as many as one million communists, allies, and other people during the next twelve months.²³³ The United States provided weapons, communications equipment, clothing, food, money, and supplies to the army during its extermination campaign.²³⁴ U.S. officials also gave the army the names of about five thousand communists and checked them off as reports of their deaths were received.²³⁵ Howard Federspiel of the State Department admitted: "No one cared, as long as they were communists, that they were butchered. No one was getting very worked up about it."²³⁶ Washington was thus deeply involved in what the *New York Times* called "one of the most savage mass slaughters of modern political history."²³⁷ Sukarno was formally removed from office in March 1967, and General Suharto, who had collaborated with the Japanese occupiers during the Second World War, came to power.²³⁸ The Suharto dictatorship murdered thousands more Indonesians in the decades that followed.²³⁹

THE COUP IN GHANA AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN PERU,
BOLIVIA, AND COLOMBIA

In 1965–66, CIA operatives and military advisers trained, organized, and directed a counterinsurgency operation in Peru that resulted in the deaths of more than one hundred Marxist guerrillas.²⁴⁰ In 1966, the CIA played a decisive role in the military coup in Ghana that overthrew President Kwame Nkrumah, a powerful critic of Western neo-colonialism.²⁴¹ Twenty-seven people died during the coup.²⁴² Two years earlier, Washington had backed a military coup in Bolivia and the new regime's violent suppression of militant tin miners. The United States provided more weapons and more training for the Bolivian army and took over a large part of Bolivian intelligence services after a communist insurgency began.²⁴³ Between 1964 and 1968, several hundred Bolivians died at the hands of the government.²⁴⁴ In 1967, CIA agents were directly involved in the capture and execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia.²⁴⁵ In Colombia, after new communist guerrilla groups emerged in the mid-1960s, the United States increased its financial and military assistance to the army and police. Washington spared no expense to maintain friendly Colombian governments in power and facilitate the killing of as many insurgents as possible.²⁴⁶ More than 250,000 people died in the conflict during the next five decades.²⁴⁷

BACKING THE COUP IN GREECE

In April 1967, one month before national elections, a group of right-wing military officers overthrew the Greek government and formed a military junta. U.S. intelligence and military personnel stationed in Greece had met repeatedly with the plotters and encouraged them to prevent the re-election of George Papandreu, the former reformist prime minister, or take drastic action if he was elected.²⁴⁸ Papandreu had been critical of U.S. domination of his country, and CIA agents had helped bribe Greek politicians to oust him two years before.²⁴⁹ He was expected to win back his office in May 1967, but the new junta canceled the elections. The leader of the junta, George Papadopoulos,

was “an avowed fascist and admirer of Adolf Hitler” who had collaborated with the Nazi occupation during the Second World War and been on the CIA payroll for fifteen years.²⁵⁰ The United States quickly recognized the new regime and, after a brief cessation of arms sales, increased its military and financial assistance to Greece.²⁵¹ The dictatorship imprisoned and tortured thousands of people and killed scores of others during the next seven years.²⁵² The junta’s support for a Greek Cypriot extremist coup on the island in 1974 sparked a Turkish invasion of the island and a brief war that killed 7,400 people and led to a permanent partition of the island.²⁵³

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN THE SIX-DAY WAR

In late May 1967, President Johnson gave Israel the green light for its 1967 war of aggression against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.²⁵⁴ The Zionist forces benefited from the significant economic and military assistance they had previously received from Washington.²⁵⁵ Tel Aviv’s victory over its Arab neighbors in the Six-Day War resulted in 19,000 deaths, the considerable expansion of its borders, and much greater oppression of the Palestinians.²⁵⁶ More than 5,500 people, mainly Egyptian soldiers and civilians, perished because of Israeli air strikes, artillery shelling, and commando raids in the subsequent “War of Attrition” in 1969–70.²⁵⁷ Washington substantially increased its shipment of weapons and other military equipment to Israel in the years that followed.²⁵⁸ At the same time, the Palestine Liberation Organization, a broad national front of resistance organizations, was gaining popular support in occupied Palestine and the diaspora.²⁵⁹ Fifteen hundred miles away, U.S. advisers and soldiers provided critical support for the Ethiopian regime’s violent suppression of Eritrean insurgents between 1967 and 1970, which resulted in approximately two thousand deaths.²⁶⁰

U.S. COMPLICITY IN THE BIAFRAN WAR

After protracted ethnic conflict, two coups, and the massacre of thirty

thousand people, the Igbo of eastern Nigeria announced the independence of Biafra in 1967.²⁶¹ The federal government, dominated by Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba people, refused to recognize Biafra, where almost two-thirds of Nigeria's oil was produced.²⁶² Although the former British colony was in London's "sphere of influence," Gulf Oil became Nigeria's second-largest oil producer, and other U.S. businesses invested heavily in the country.²⁶³ When the civil war broke out, the U.S. government announced that it would not sell weapons to either side, but its declaration of neutrality was a self-interested lie.²⁶⁴ Washington continued to endorse a unified Nigeria and train federal troops in the United States.²⁶⁵ While pretending to support an arms embargo, U.S. officials quietly backed the shipment of British weapons and military equipment to Lagos.²⁶⁶ Washington ended economic aid programs in Biafra but continued them elsewhere in Nigeria, and U.S. oil companies significantly expanded their investments in federally controlled areas.²⁶⁷ At home, increasing public awareness of the holocaust in Biafra sparked major humanitarian relief efforts, but Washington downplayed the Nigerian regime's responsibility for most of the deaths.²⁶⁸ In 1970, the Biafra independence movement was defeated. Between one million and three million people, chiefly Igbo, had died.²⁶⁹ In the years to come, the United States replaced Britain as the dominant imperialist power in Nigeria.²⁷⁰

ANOTHER COUP IN IRAQ AND NEW COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THE PHILIPPINES

In 1968, the CIA was deeply involved in organizing another coup in Iraq, which enabled the Baath Party to oust its coalition partners.²⁷¹ Although the putsch itself was bloodless, the new regime executed scores of political opponents in the following months and killed hundreds more during the next decade.²⁷² Saddam Hussein soon became the second most powerful person in the new regime.²⁷³ In 1969, Washington backed President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines with money and weapons when he launched major military campaigns against the communist New People's Army, the successor to the Huks,

and the Moro Muslim insurgency in the southern part of the country.²⁷⁴ U.S. support continued despite Marcos's declaration of martial law in 1972, and by the mid-1980s, his regime had received more than one billion dollars in military aid.²⁷⁵ After the assassination of the reformist politician Benigno Aquino in 1983, popular opposition to Marcos mounted, and he was forced to flee the Philippines in 1986. His regime had murdered more than three thousand political opponents and critics, not including armed guerillas.²⁷⁶ Significant U.S. financial and military assistance has continued to flow to Manilla, making the U.S. Empire deeply complicit in the deaths of close to 200,000 communist and Muslim insurgents in the past half-century.²⁷⁷

WASHINGTON'S ROLE IN BLACK SEPTEMBER

In September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, an organization belonging to the PLO, hijacked three planes in its continuing struggle against the Zionist occupation of their homeland. At the same time, the PFLP and other Palestinian militants in Jordan began calling for the overthrow of King Hussein, who nervously sought support from Washington.²⁷⁸ Still mired in war in Southeast Asia and facing political and logistical constraints in West Asia, the United States could not dispatch combat troops to save Hussein.²⁷⁹ But Nixon persuaded the king to unleash his army against the Palestinians, assured him of Washington's support, publicly threatened U.S.-Israeli military intervention, and sent the entire Sixth Fleet and two additional naval vessels to within one hundred miles of the coast of Lebanon.²⁸⁰ After Syrian troops came to defend the Palestinian fighters from the Jordanian army's onslaught, Nixon persuaded Israel to help save Hussein, but this turned out to be unnecessary.²⁸¹ Syria decided against providing air support for its troops or the Palestinians. While Hussein met with growing derision in the Arab world, President Nasser of Egypt brokered a cease-fire between the king and the PLO.²⁸² Approximately 3,500 Palestinians and other Arabs died during what came to be known as Black September, and Hussein expelled the PLO a year later.²⁸³

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN YEMEN AND COUPS IN
TURKEY AND BOLIVIA

By 1971, Washington was sending economic assistance and military advisers to the Yemen Arab Republic to help suppress a leftist insurgency and overthrow the neighboring People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.²⁸⁴ The following year, a brief war between the two countries claimed at least two hundred lives.²⁸⁵ In Turkey, amid mounting communist and worker militancy—and a ferocious right-wing backlash—the CIA played a central role in planning and executing a military coup in 1971.²⁸⁶ This putsch has been called a “coup d'état by communiqué” because it was accomplished by a memorandum from military leaders to the prime minister demanding a new civilian government, not the typical deployment of tanks and troops in the streets that had become part of modern Turkish history.²⁸⁷ With eleven different prime ministers in the decade that followed, economic and political instability increased. Thousands died in continuing clashes between the left and right in Turkey.²⁸⁸ The United States continued to provide arms and military equipment to Ankara except for a ban between 1975 and 1978 following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.²⁸⁹ Washington also provided extensive financial, military, and logistical support to General Hugo Banzer Suárez's overthrow of a ten-month-old progressive regime in Bolivia in 1971.²⁹⁰ More than a hundred people died in the coup, and the new Banzer dictatorship killed thousands of leftists, workers, and peasants during the next seven years.²⁹¹

SUSTAINING DICTATORSHIP IN UGANDA

After Britain and Israel helped Idi Amin seize power in Uganda in 1971, U.S. officials quickly recognized the new government. London, Tel Aviv, and Washington had opposed the previous president's plans to nationalize 60 percent of Uganda's largest industries, businesses, and banks.²⁹² Amin's foreign patrons were encouraged by his declaration of commitment to private enterprise and his denationalization of several British companies.²⁹³ But Amin soon turned against

Britain and Israel after they refused to sell him advanced jet fighters and other sophisticated military equipment. He expelled Israelis and Asians from Uganda, obtained combat aircraft from Libya, embraced the Palestinians, and routinely murdered people because of ethnic, religious, and political differences.²⁹⁴ Washington periodically condemned some of Amin's actions and placed restrictions on economic and military assistance but continued to back his regime. The CIA and other U.S. agencies provided Amin with bombs, weapons, and military equipment; trained his troops and police; and participated in some military operations on his behalf against rebels in Uganda.²⁹⁵ Approximately 300,000 people died at the hands of Amin's forces before he was deposed in 1979.²⁹⁶

SUPPORT FOR PAKISTAN IN THE BANGLADESH WAR

Pakistan became a U.S. client state several years after it gained its independence from Britain.²⁹⁷ West Pakistan was separated from East Pakistan by more than a thousand miles of Indian territory and harshly exploited this part of the country.²⁹⁸ But Pakistan's anti-communism led Washington to view it as an outpost of "Western defense."²⁹⁹ In the country's first national elections in March 1971, a party supporting autonomy won the most votes in East Pakistan, but the military rulers in Islamabad delayed the convening of the new national assembly and declared martial law.³⁰⁰ Troops from West Pakistan and local allies began massacring Bengalis in the East, and a civil war broke out.³⁰¹ Pakistani soldiers and their supporters killed indiscriminately for the next nine months, often with U.S. weapons.³⁰² Washington energetically backed Islamabad and sent more weapons, ammunition, military equipment, and economic assistance.³⁰³ After ten million Bengalis fled to India, New Delhi entered the war in December 1971. Nixon sent the Seventh Fleet's Task Force 74 to the Bay of Bengal and threatened to land troops, but Soviet naval vessels arrived to defend India.³⁰⁴ A global war was averted, Pakistan was defeated, and the new nation of Bangladesh was born. Although estimates vary widely, it appears that at least one million people died in the war.³⁰⁵

BACKING THE RACIST REGIME IN RHODESIA

In 1971, Nixon signed a new law restoring the importation of chromium ore from Rhodesia. These imports had ended four years before after the Johnson administration implemented UN sanctions against Ian Smith's white-minority government.³⁰⁶ Although many people in the United States supported sanctions and other measures to isolate the racist regime, some capitalists and politicians still backed Rhodesia, highlighting the profitability of business investments there and warning of the threat of African socialism.³⁰⁷ In addition, some U.S. companies provided economic aid to Salisbury, the CIA provided intelligence to the Rhodesian army, and U.S. mercenaries fought alongside its soldiers.³⁰⁸ U.S. support prolonged the life of the racist regime and increased the number of casualties in the country.³⁰⁹ But the strength of the armed liberation struggle and the political constraints on U.S. support forged by domestic and global opposition led to the final defeat of white minority rule in 1980. Approximately fifty thousand people perished in the struggle for freedom in the land now known as Zimbabwe.³¹⁰

COMPLICITY IN REPRESSION IN BURUNDI AND URUGUAY

After a rebellion failed in Burundi in 1972, the predominantly Tutsi army began killing large numbers of the Hutu majority.³¹¹ U.S. officials criticized the slaughter and called on other African countries to intervene. However, Washington refused to consider an embargo on Burundi's coffee exports, 80 percent of which went to the United States.³¹² Within four months, between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutus died.³¹³ In 1973, military officers took control of the government in Uruguay. U.S. diplomats expressed concerns about the new junta's closure of the national legislature and other repressive measures, but nonetheless U.S. military aid and training for the new regime continued for another three years.³¹⁴ Even after Congress ended direct military support, it agreed to let the regime purchase weapons in the United States.³¹⁵ About 180 people died at the hands of

the dictatorship, and many more were tortured during the next decade.³¹⁶

OVERTHROW OF THE POPULAR UNITY GOVERNMENT IN CHILE

In September 1973, Chilean military leaders recruited, financed, and supported by the United States overthrew the democratically elected Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende Gossens.³¹⁷ For a decade, Washington had funded and organized political opposition and propaganda to prevent socialist advances in Chile.³¹⁸ In 1970, the Nixon administration provided weapons and money to right-wing military officers to prevent Allende's election. The conspirators assassinated General René Schneider Chereau, the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, but failed to launch a coup.³¹⁹ After Allende became president in November 1970, his coalition promoted progressive social reforms as part of a democratic road to socialism.³²⁰ In 1971, the Chilean National Congress nationalized U.S. copper companies and took control of ITT.³²¹ At the same time, the U.S. government worked with business interests and international financial institutions to "make the economy scream" and undermine popular support for Allende.³²² The CIA instructed its agents in Chile to "induce as much of the military as possible, if not all, to take over and displace the Allende government."³²³ The Chilean president and scores of others died in the September 1973 coup. More than four thousand people were murdered or disappeared during the US.-backed dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in the fifteen years that followed.³²⁴

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

When Egypt, Syria, and other Arab countries attacked Israel in October 1973, the Zionist state fought back with many weapons, artillery, tanks, and airplanes provided by the United States.³²⁵ After Tel Aviv suffered early losses, Washington immediately sent more weapons and military equipment and expanded its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean.³²⁶ The Soviet Union provided military

supplies and technicians to the Egyptians and Syrians and deployed ships to the region.³²⁷ After the direction of the war changed, the Soviets persuaded the United States to help arrange a cease-fire, but the Israelis violated the agreement and continued to batter Egyptian forces.³²⁸ When Washington declined Moscow's proposal for a joint peacekeeping force, Soviet airborne divisions prepared for possible deployment to West Asia, and the Nixon administration placed U.S. nuclear forces on high alert.³²⁹ But Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told a news conference that the present conflict did not "justify the unparalleled catastrophe that a nuclear war would represent."³³⁰ A nuclear holocaust was avoided, and the Yom Kippur War ended. More than 21,000 soldiers and civilians died during this conflict.³³¹

THE CONQUEST OF EAST TIMOR AND THE PROXY WAR IN ANGOLA

After the historic defeat of the U.S. Empire in Southeast Asia, domestic opposition to militarism limited its ability to launch large-scale invasions during the next decade and a half. Despite the "Vietnam Syndrome," Washington continued to organize proxy wars, overthrow governments, support client states' wars, and conduct smaller invasions. In 1975, President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger met with Suharto in Jakarta and approved his plans to invade East Timor and make it part of Indonesia.³³² The Indonesian invasion began the day after Ford and Kissinger left Jakarta.³³³ Two hundred thousand East Timorese people died in the war.³³⁴ Also in 1975, a year after a leftist soldiers' rebellion toppled the dictatorship in Portugal, Angola and Mozambique became independent nations. The Ford administration provided weapons and training for pro-Western rebels fighting the leftist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) for control of the country. The United States also paid mercenaries to join the rebels and supported South African troops' attacks on the MPLA.³³⁵ After the MPLA won, Congress prohibited further intervention in Angola, but the CIA illegally shipped weapons to South Africa, which were almost certainly used in Angola.³³⁶ Scores of thousands died there during the next several years.³³⁷

INTERVENTION IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

In 1975, a calamitous civil war broke out in Lebanon. The right-wing Maronite Christians, who had long dominated the government with Washington's backing, opposed the "democratic redistribution of power" to the growing Muslim majority and their allies.³³⁸ A coalition of Muslims, Druze, nationalists, and leftists known as the Lebanese National Movement demanded significant political and social change, including an end to collaboration with the U.S. Empire.³³⁹ After the armed conflict began, PLO fighters who had taken refuge in Lebanon after their expulsion from Jordan supported this coalition.³⁴⁰ Afraid that a new government in Lebanon would oppose U.S. interests in the region, Washington quietly provided military and financial support to the Maronites and their Phalangist militia.³⁴¹ As the civil war continued over the next fifteen years, the United States supported attacks, invasions, and occupations by the Syrians and Israelis to limit change in Lebanon and drive the PLO out of the country.³⁴² U.S. troops also deployed to Beirut, briefly and disastrously.³⁴³ Washington eventually acceded to some important if limited reforms in Lebanon, but the PLO was forced to leave the country. The total loss of life during the Lebanese civil war exceeded 168,000.³⁴⁴

THE COUP IN ARGENTINA AND OPERATION CONDOR

In 1976, right-wing generals in Argentina overthrew the government led by Isabel Martínez de Perón and began murdering leftists and other political opponents. Some U.S. politicians condemned the junta's repression, but Kissinger personally assured leaders that he approved their actions and urged them to end the problem of "terrorism" as quickly as possible.³⁴⁵ After Jimmy Carter became president in 1977, he often invoked human rights rhetoric, but U.S. foreign policy did not significantly change. U.S. military and economic assistance to the Argentine junta continued until late 1978.³⁴⁶ When the junta was ousted seven years later, it had killed approximately thirty thousand people.³⁴⁷ In the last half of the 1970s, 75 percent of Latin America's

peoples lived under military dictatorships backed by Washington.³⁴⁸ The right-wing regimes of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay participated in Operation Condor, which involved the coordinated murder of dissidents and critics abroad. J. Patrice McSherry has pointed out that U.S. officials “aided and facilitated Condor operations as a matter of secret but routine policy.”³⁴⁹ More than 13,000 people were assassinated in foreign countries where they had sought refuge, including the United States.³⁵⁰

SUBVERSION AND VIOLENCE IN JAMAICA

In the last half of the 1970s, Washington also conducted a campaign of sabotage and violence that led to the electoral defeat of Michael Manley, the social democratic prime minister of Jamaica.³⁵¹ Manley wanted to buy out majority ownership in U.S. and other multinational corporations mining Jamaican bauxite. He also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba and supported the new Angolan government.³⁵² The United States ended economic aid to Jamaica and shipped weapons to opposition forces. The CIA helped organize assassinations, bombings, and arson by Manley’s opponents; financially supported the main opposition party; acquired paid operatives within the armed forces and police; recruited middle-class Jamaicans into anti-government organizations; coordinated strikes by workers; and supported an unrelenting propaganda campaign by the island’s major newspaper.³⁵³ Some aluminum companies left Jamaica or reduced production, the tourist industry was devastated, and political violence soared. Manley lost his bid for re-election in 1980. More than eight hundred people perished because of political violence that year.³⁵⁴ Another thousand died at the hands of the police in the new U.S.-supported regime of Edward Seaga during the next several years.³⁵⁵

DEFENDING DICTATORSHIP IN NICARAGUA

By 1977, the Sandinista National Liberation Front was leading a popular revolution against the regime of Anastasio Somoza Debayle

in Nicaragua. Washington had supported the Somoza family dictatorship for decades, but the Nicaraguan masses wanted to end the repression, corruption, and poverty fostered by the regime.³⁵⁶ As the Sandinista forces gained growing public support for the armed struggle against the government, the United States supplied weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment to Somoza's army and police.³⁵⁷ U.S. officials also unsuccessfully sought to have the Organization of American States intervene in the conflict.³⁵⁸ The revolution succeeded in driving Somoza from power in 1979, but between forty and fifty thousand people died during the struggle.³⁵⁹ After the Sandinistas were in power, Carter authorized the CIA to fund and organize political opposition to their new government.³⁶⁰

DEFENDING DICTATORSHIP IN IRAN

Jimmy Carter celebrated New Year's Eve 1977 with the murderous Shah of Iran in Tehran. The president praised the Shah's regime as "an island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world."³⁶¹ Neither Carter nor the CIA recognized the depth of popular opposition to the Shah or the strength of the developing insurgency.³⁶² Thirteen months later, a mass uprising forced the Shah to flee the country, and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was greeted by millions when he returned from exile.³⁶³ Soon afterward, Iranians voted to establish an Islamic Republic, and later that year, they voted to approve a constitution for the new government.³⁶⁴ After the Shah went to the United States for medical treatment, Iranians demanded that he be returned to face trial for his crimes. Washington's refusal to meet this demand led to Iranian students' detention of U.S. Embassy staff in Tehran for more than a year and the continued deterioration of relations between the two countries. The United States launched an embargo of Iranian oil and seized Iranian financial assets in this country.³⁶⁵

A NEW CLIENT STATE IN SOMALIA

In mid-1977, President Mohammed Siad Barre of Somalia ordered

the invasion of the ethnic Somali Ogaden region of Ethiopia. The invasion failed within several months, in part because the Soviets disavowed their former ally and supported the new leftist government in Ethiopia.³⁶⁶ After the Somali forces were defeated, Barre forged a new alliance with Washington. U.S. forces were granted permission to use Somali military bases, and his regime would serve as a counterweight to the new Ethiopian government.³⁶⁷ In exchange, the United States provided hundreds of millions of dollars of economic and military assistance to Somalia.³⁶⁸ Saudi Arabia, Italy, and other U.S. allies also sent large amounts of arms, military equipment, and money to the Barre regime.³⁶⁹ At the same time, Washington pushed IMF demands for privatization of state enterprises, ending agricultural price controls, and reduced government spending, which crippled the Somali economy.³⁷⁰ U.S. officials remained silent when Barre's forces killed thousands of opponents and exacerbated clan rivalries in the years that followed.³⁷¹ Officials in Washington and capitalists on Wall Street undoubtedly appreciated the Somali government's agreement that Conoco, Amoco, Chevron, and Phillips could explore and exploit oil and natural gas in two-thirds of the country's territory.³⁷²

WASHINGTON'S PROXY WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

After a pro-socialist party overthrew the government of Afghanistan in 1978, the United States sought to destroy the new regime. Although the new rulers were deeply divided and faced substantial opposition, they abolished usury, eliminated peasant debts, began land reform, and built hundreds of schools and medical clinics.³⁷³ They outlawed child marriage and marriages arranged "in exchange for money or commodities" and began teaching women to read.³⁷⁴ The Carter administration responded by working closely with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other countries to field an army of "holy warriors" to overthrow the new government. During the next decade, Washington spent about \$3 billion and provided extensive CIA support for its new proxy army, which included the Al-Qaida fighters led by the Saudi religious extremist Osama bin Laden.³⁷⁵ The National

Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski later boasted of the administration's success in forcing the Soviets to intervene in 1979.³⁷⁶ The counterrevolutionary war backed by the United States and its allies was decisive in weakening the regime in Kabul, and the presence of Soviet troops galvanized opposition among the extremists. The pro-socialist government fell in 1992, and the Taliban came to power four years later. Between 1.5 million and 1.8 million people died during the war.³⁷⁷ Washington experienced catastrophic blowback when Al-Qaida operatives attacked U.S. targets on September 11, 2001.³⁷⁸

BACKING REPRESSION IN YEMEN, TURKEY, AND SOUTH KOREA

By 1979, U.S. weapons, military equipment, and military advisers were playing an increasingly important role in the Yemen Arab Republic's continuing efforts to end a leftist insurgency and overthrow the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.³⁷⁹ Another brief war between the two countries broke out that year and left at least five hundred dead.³⁸⁰ Washington continued to train and arm paramilitary forces that destroyed bridges, committed other acts of sabotage, and killed people of Yemen during the next several years.³⁸¹ In 1980, Washington supported yet another military coup in Turkey, resulting in scores of executions and hundreds more deaths over the next three years.³⁸² Also in 1980, when workers and students rose against the South Korean dictatorship in Kwangju, the U.S.-led military command released Korean troops to violently suppress the rebellion. Between two thousand and three thousand people died during the uprising.³⁸³

A NEW CLIENT STATE IN LIBERIA

By the late 1970s, Washington was alarmed by the Liberian government's friendly relations with socialist countries, and the CIA began to support political opposition groups in its former colony and longtime protectorate. In 1980, U.S. policymakers welcomed a military coup in Liberia led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe.³⁸⁴ Washington helped

the staunchly anti-communist Doe form a new governing junta and deployed U.S. troops already in the country to help maintain order.³⁸⁵ U.S. advisers were assigned to several government ministries, and the regime agreed to make major financial decisions only with their approval.³⁸⁶ Doe also granted permission for the United States to use its airports and naval ports and pledged his support for Washington's foreign policy. In return, Washington provided about \$500 million in military and economic aid during the next five years. U.S. officials accepted Doe filling most offices with members of his minority Krahn ethnolinguistic group, rigging national elections, and murdering thousands of Gios, Manos, and other people.³⁸⁷ Over time, however, Doe's growing equivocation on arrangements with the U.S. government and long-standing privileges for Firestone led to growing disapproval and declining support from Washington.³⁸⁸

THE NEW PERSIAN GULF DOCTRINE

In the aftermath of the revolutions in Afghanistan and Iran, the U.S. Empire moved to reassert its dominance in West Asia. Carter announced in his State of the Union address in 1980 that any attempt by an outside power to gain control of the Persian Gulf or impede the flow of oil would be viewed as an assault on the vital interests of the United States.³⁸⁹ Carter made clear that Washington would defend these interests "by any means necessary, including military force."³⁹⁰ As in the case of the Monroe Doctrine, the prohibition against foreign intervention in the region did not apply to the United States. The so-called Carter Doctrine, which has been reaffirmed by presidents from Reagan to Obama, set the stage for dramatically expanded and much more destructive U.S. intervention in West Asia and beyond.³⁹¹

COUNTING THE DEAD

Between 1945 and 1980, major U.S. wars in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia killed twelve million people. Washington also shared responsibility for the 1.7 million people who died during the rule of

the Khmer Rouge, and the U.S. proxy war in Afghanistan led to the deaths of at least 1.5 million. U.S. support for the Guomindang in the second phase of the Chinese civil war, for the French campaign to reconquer Vietnam, for the anti-communist exterminations in Indonesia, for the Nigerian government during the Biafran War, and for the Pakistani government during the Bangladesh War implicated Washington in the deaths of almost 11 million people. Other U.S. military actions and support for repression abroad caused or contributed to millions of additional fatalities. Altogether, the U.S. Empire was responsible or shared responsibility for approximately 29 million deaths during the first thirty-five years of Pax Americana. Both major parties and virtually all politicians in the United States consistently supported Washington's leadership in the liberal international order throughout this period. But scores of millions worldwide continued to oppose U.S. imperialism and its endless holocausts.

The Holocausts of Pax Americana II

Some may have believed that the rise of the empire to the status of the sole superpower, with a military and technological might with no balancing pole anywhere in the world, would frighten or dishearten the Cuban people. Yet today they have no choice but to watch in amazement the enhanced courage of this valiant people. We . . . are prepared to defend our homeland and our Revolution with ideas and with weapons to our last drop of blood.

—FIDEL CASTRO, ADDRESS IN HAVANA, 2003

By 1980, the U.S. Empire was exploiting the resources, markets, and labor of much of the planet. The empire had acquired more than fifty client states, established several hundred military bases in other countries, and deployed hundreds of thousands of soldiers, Marines, sailors, and air force personnel in scores of nations.¹ The vast wealth, extraordinary military power, and far-reaching political domination of the United States had made it the most formidable imperium in history.² Although the empire had suffered a historic defeat in Vietnam, Ronald Reagan's inauguration as president in January 1981 signaled "the restoration of America's global military power" and "resurgent American expansionism."³ In the four decades that followed, the United States was responsible or

shared responsibility for a staggering loss of life in new wars, proxy wars, military interventions, and other destructive actions abroad.⁴ U.S. complicity in the collapse of most socialist states also produced an enormous human toll.⁵ In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, however, neither neoconservatives' efforts to create a "New American Century" nor neoliberals' endeavors to shore up Pax Americana were able to stop the erosion of U.S. primacy in an increasingly multipolar world.⁶ The election of Donald Trump on a virulently racist and authoritarian "America First" platform in 2016 both reflected and contributed to mounting crises at home and the diminution of hegemony abroad.⁷ Trump's brazen national chauvinism, repudiation of the postwar liberal international order, mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic, encouragement of far-right forces, and incitement of an unprecedented insurrection marked a historic inflection point in the decline of the U.S. Empire. So, too, did Washington's defeat and humiliation in Afghanistan.

THE U.S. ROLE IN THE WAR BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN

During his 1980 campaign, Reagan criticized the Carter administration for its inability to free the U.S. Embassy staff held in Tehran.⁸ However, both presidential candidates found it expedient to offer some support to the Islamic Republic. The Carter administration publicly offered to deliver \$300 million to \$500 million in weapons previously purchased by the Shah's regime in exchange for releasing the hostages.⁹ To prevent an "October surprise" that could help Carter win re-election, Reagan campaign officials secretly met with Iranian representatives in Madrid. As Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick explained, "The details are murky and impossible to confirm," but it appears that the campaign officials offered to allow Israel to send U.S. weapons to Iran in exchange for holding the hostages until after the election.¹⁰ Tehran accepted Reagan's proposal, the hostage crisis continued to undermine Carter's popularity, and Reagan won the election. Kai Bird has noted, "The hostages were inexplicably released minutes after Reagan was sworn in as president."¹¹ Soon afterward,

the new administration approved Israel's shipment of U.S. arms and spare parts to the Islamic Republic, and this arrangement continued for several years.¹²

Two months before the U.S. election, Iraq invaded Iran. Now led by Saddam Hussein, Iraq initially achieved important battlefield victories, but the flow of U.S. weapons helped Iran "turn the tide."¹³ However, when Iranian troops began moving toward Basra in mid-1982, the Reagan administration secretly abandoned its public commitment to neutrality and resolved to prevent Iraq from losing the war.¹⁴ Although arms continued to be sent to Iran, U.S. officials were determined to cripple the regime and prevent it from threatening client states Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan.¹⁵ Baghdad had ended diplomatic relations with Washington during the Six-Day War in 1967, and the Nixon administration had deplored Baghdad's nationalization of its oil in 1972. But now, intense hostility toward the Islamic Republic led the United States to favor Iraq in the war while preventing either country from becoming strong enough to dominate the Persian Gulf.¹⁶

In 1982, Reagan authorized the sale of aircraft, helicopters, weapons, and other military equipment to Iraq through third countries.¹⁷ The CIA also began to provide essential military intelligence to Hussein's regime and continued to do so throughout most of the war.¹⁸ The administration authorized U.S. companies to sell anthrax, other biological agents, and ingredients for chemical weapons to Baghdad.¹⁹ A CIA-front organization in Chile sold Iraq cluster bombs.²⁰ Nonetheless, in 1983 the Reagan administration provided the Islamic Republic the names of Soviet agents and collaborators in the country, which led to the execution of two hundred people.²¹ In 1985, Reagan secretly authorized the sale of anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Tehran to continue financing his proxy war in Nicaragua.²² The United States also provided battlefield intelligence to Tehran.²³ Between 1986 and 1988, the U.S. government increased its military operations in the Persian Gulf, began flagging and escorting Kuwaiti oil tankers through the Gulf, and then launched a brief "undeclared yet bloody naval and air war" against the Islamic

Republic.²⁴ In April 1988, after a Navy ship hit an Iranian mine in the Persian Gulf, the United States crippled six Iranian vessels and destroyed two Iranian oil rigs, killing more than fifty people.²⁵ In July 1988, the USS *Vincennes* shot down an Iranian civilian airplane in Iranian airspace, killing all 290 passengers and crew members.²⁶ The next month, Tehran accepted a UN peace resolution, and the war with Baghdad ended. The U.S. Empire had assisted both sides in the carnage, however unequally, and significantly contributed to the loss of about one million lives.²⁷

SUPPORT FOR RIGHT-WING REGIMES AND COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES IN LATIN AMERICA

After becoming president, Reagan increased U.S. support for the dictatorships in Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, and other Latin American countries.²⁸ During Reagan's first two years in office, the Guatemalan regime killed 100,000 peasants with weapons and ammunition provided by the United States.²⁹ Washington also expanded assistance to the government of Peru, which was fighting the Shining Path and Túpac Amaru insurgencies.³⁰ Determined to roll back socialist-oriented regimes, Reagan pressured international financial institutions to withhold loans from the new Sandinista government in Nicaragua and organized a proxy army of counterrevolutionary émigrés to sabotage and strike as much of the country as possible.³¹ The Contras destroyed schools and hospitals, tortured and murdered supporters of the new regime, and ravaged the economy.³² After Congress cut off funds for this unpopular war, Reagan's second secret arms deal with the Iranians provided new funds for the Contras.³³ This illegal arrangement was exposed, scandal ensued, and Washington abandoned its proxy army. But years of bloodshed and economic dislocations led to the Sandinistas' electoral defeat in 1990.³⁴ As many as 50,000 people died in the conflict.³⁵

The United States used Honduras as a staging ground for attacks by the Contras, and the people of that country suffered greatly. Honduran soldiers armed, equipped, trained, and advised by Washington,

killed hundreds of suspected leftists and other innocent people during the 1980s.³⁶ The CIA trained the infamous Battalion 316 in torture techniques and provided Honduran troops with the necessary tools.³⁷ At the same time, the Reagan administration's massive military and economic support enabled the right-wing regime in El Salvador to escape defeat at the hands of a popular insurgency led by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.³⁸ The United States spent more than \$4 billion on weapons, military equipment, and other assistance for the government and trained thousands of its troops at Fort Benning in Georgia and in Panama.³⁹ Raymond Bonner reported that the Reagan administration also sent advisers "to help the Salvadoran military fight its dirty war."⁴⁰ Three U.S. soldiers died after guerrillas shot down their helicopter, which was running arms to government troops.⁴¹ Eventually, the perseverance of the revolutionary forces, a military stalemate, and the decline of U.S. aid for the Salvadoran government led to peace talks and an end to the conflict in 1992. Approximately 90,000 Salvadorans had perished by then.⁴²

INTERVENTION IN CHAD AND LEBANON

Soon after Reagan became president, the CIA developed a long-term plan to overthrow Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya.⁴³ In 1982, Washington sought to weaken him by overthrowing an allied government in neighboring Chad. The CIA organized, financed, and provided weapons and technical support to an insurgency led by Hissen Habré. The insurgency ousted the Chadian regime, and Habré established a dictatorship that killed approximately 40,000 people during the eight years that followed.⁴⁴ Also in 1982, the Reagan administration financially and militarily supported Israel's invasion of Lebanon during that country's devastating civil war.⁴⁵ U.S. and Israeli intervention in the conflict on behalf of right-wing Lebanese forces contributed to the devastating human toll. The Israeli invasion alone led to 21,000 deaths over three years.⁴⁶ In 1983, after 1,800 Marines were deployed to support the Lebanese government, the bombing of a barracks killed 241 U.S. troops, and Reagan withdrew the remainder soon afterward.⁴⁷

THE INVASION OF GRENADA AND SUPPORT FOR
REACTION IN SRI LANKA

In 1983, the United States invaded the tiny island nation of Grenada and overthrew the left-leaning government shortly after its leader, Maurice Bishop, died in an internal power struggle. Scores of Grenadians, Cubans, and U.S. troops died during the invasion.⁴⁸ During much of the civil war that raged in Sri Lanka between 1983 and 2009, the United States joined India and other countries to support the Sinhalese-led government, whose historic mistreatment of the Tamil minority was well known. Washington trained Colombo's troops, gave the government a naval command and control system, provided a used Coast Guard ship and tactical support, and shared military intelligence with the regime.⁴⁹ More than 100,000 people died before the Tamil insurgency was finally crushed.⁵⁰ More than a decade after the end of the civil war, Sri Lanka continues to be ravaged by ethnic oppression and authoritarian rule.⁵¹

OPPOSITION TO LIBERATION IN ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE, NAMIBIA,
AND SOUTH AFRICA

By the early 1980s, the African National Congress's armed struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa was growing, as was the global condemnation of white minority rule. However, U.S. investment and trade with South Africa had increased dramatically during the previous decade and Reagan praised Pretoria as a strategic ally that could not be abandoned.⁵² The CIA provided covert support to the South Africans, mercenaries, and allied forces fighting to overthrow the new socialist-oriented government in Angola and defeat the armed struggle for the liberation of Namibia.⁵³ Congress renewed direct military aid to pro-Western rebels in Angola, and the devastating war there took many more lives.⁵⁴ In Mozambique, the insurgency sponsored by South Africa and right-wing organizations in the United States killed many people. It was so widely condemned that the Reagan administration could not

directly support it.⁵⁵ So Washington wielded powerful economic weapons against Maputo instead. Amid widespread starvation and malnutrition, the U.S. government eliminated food shipments to Mozambique for a few years. It then used the renewal of food aid, economic assistance, and IMF structural adjustments to destroy the new government's socialist aspirations.⁵⁶

Under mounting pressure from African Americans, civil rights advocates, students, and workers, Congress approved comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa over Reagan's veto in 1986.⁵⁷ UN sanctions followed, and the armed struggles in South Africa and Namibia continued. International pressure grew on Pretoria to withdraw its soldiers from Namibia and negotiate a transition to Black majority rule at home. In 1990, Namibia became independent, and Nelson Mandela was released from prison in South Africa. Four years later, the first democratic election in South African history brought Mandela and the African National Congress to power. By then, the wars in Angola and Mozambique had ended, but Washington had been deeply complicit in the enormous loss of life in these countries. Approximately 21,000 people died at the hands of the apartheid regime in South Africa.⁵⁸ At least 25,000 died during the struggle for the liberation of Namibia.⁵⁹ More than one million died in Angola, and between one and two million died in Mozambique.⁶⁰

OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT IN ETHIOPIA

During the early 1980s, Washington reduced and then eliminated food aid to Ethiopia during a terrible famine.⁶¹ The devastation was compounded by the Tigrayan, Eritrean, and other armed rebellions against the Ethiopian government and problems with the regime's agricultural policy.⁶² Approximately one million people died because of the famine.⁶³ As citizens in the United States became aware of this tragedy, they pressured the Reagan administration to join international relief efforts.⁶⁴ New global and U.S. assistance undoubtedly saved a great many lives.⁶⁵ However, much of the money ended up in the hands of insurgents.⁶⁶ In addition, Washington had begun

providing anti-communist groups opposed to the Ethiopian government with CIA advisers and financial assistance since 1981.⁶⁷

U.S. officials also launched an Amharic-language Voice of America radio program, which contributed to undermining the government.⁶⁸ It soon became clear that the Tigrayan and Eritrean forces were the most formidable opponents of the regime, but the Reagan administration did not want to back them because they were led by Marxists.⁶⁹ However, as the global crisis of socialism deepened and these insurgents began to abandon their ideological roots, the United States provided them with tactical support, military intelligence, and other assistance.⁷⁰ When the government collapsed in the spring of 1991, Washington assumed a “de facto advisory role” for the victorious rebels. The United States now had the power to shape the country’s destiny.⁷¹ In 1991, Tigrayan, Eritrean, and other insurgents succeeded in ousting the regime, and the new government looked to Washington for guidance and support.⁷² More than 350,000 people died during the civil war.⁷³

NUCLEAR ESCALATION IN EUROPE AND AGGRESSION AGAINST LIBYA

In 1983, Washington’s bellicose drive to maintain military superiority over Moscow led to the phased deployment of new intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe, despite global opposition. The deployment made the world a more dangerous place, and stagnation in the Soviet economy would make it hard to match the U.S. escalation, much less undertake desperately needed economic and political reforms at home.⁷⁴ In March 1986, U.S. jets destroyed three or four Libyan ships and attacked two of the country’s anti-aircraft sites.⁷⁵ The following month, after accusing Libyan agents of bombing a Berlin nightclub frequented by U.S. soldiers, Washington bombed Tripoli and Benghazi in an attempt to assassinate Qaddafi and terrorize his people.⁷⁶ Scores of people, almost entirely civilians, died in the attacks and the victims included a young daughter of Qaddafi.⁷⁷ The UN General Assembly subsequently condemned the U.S. bombing.⁷⁸

In 1989, U.S. naval airplanes shot down two Libyan jet fighters flying over the Mediterranean Sea.⁷⁹ Washington also supported Israel's violent suppression of the first Palestinian intifada between late 1987 and 1993, in which more than two thousand people died.⁸⁰

BACKING REPRESSION IN SOMALIA, LIBERIA, AND SIERRA LEONE

In Somalia, the U.S.-backed Barre regime murdered approximately 200,000 members of the Isaaq clan between 1987 and 1989.⁸¹ Civil war broke out in 1989, and 50,000 Somalis, mainly civilians, had died by early 1990.⁸² Barre was overthrown in 1991, but a new government could not be established amid the continuing armed struggle among various warlords and clans.⁸³ This violence and anarchy was, in part, the legacy of U.S. involvement and exacerbated the human toll of the drought and famine that ravaged Somalia in 1992.⁸⁴ Approximately 350,000 additional deaths occurred by late 1992.⁸⁵ In Liberia, the U.S. government and the Firestone rubber company supported a rebellion that began in 1989 and led to the ouster and execution of President Doe the next year.⁸⁶ U.S. intelligence agencies had long-standing ties with insurgent leader Charles Taylor, whose forces eventually won the ensuing civil war in Liberia and invaded Sierra Leone to take control of its diamond reserves.⁸⁷ Taylor became president of Liberia in 1997, but Washington eventually turned against him. After six years, he was forced out of office and was subsequently convicted in The Hague of war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁸⁸ But by then, Taylor and his U.S. patrons shared responsibility for about 250,000 deaths in Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁸⁹

THE INVASION OF PANAMA

In 1989, President George H. W. Bush ordered the invasion of Panama to capture the military ruler Manuel Noriega and bring him to the United States to face charges of drug trafficking. Noriega had been on the CIA payroll for most of the previous two decades, and his long history of drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption,

and political murders had generally been tolerated.⁹⁰ He also allowed U.S. bases in Panama to support Washington's wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua and train Contras there.⁹¹ But the Bush administration decided that his future usefulness as an asset was limited and deployed 15,000 troops to join the 12,000 already in Panama to overthrow him.⁹² Bush's insistence that this action was necessary to save U.S. lives in Panama was widely rejected, and the Organization of American States condemned the invasion.⁹³ Between three and four thousand Panamanians died while defending their country.⁹⁴ Noriega spent most of the rest of his life in prison in the United States and France.

THE FIRST U.S. WAR AGAINST IRAQ

In 1990, Kuwait's extraction of millions of barrels of oil from the disputed Rumaila field on the border with Iraq led to mounting tensions.⁹⁵ After U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie told Hussein that Washington had "no opinion" on the issue, Iraqi troops invaded and occupied Kuwait in August 1990.⁹⁶ Unalterably opposed to Iraq now controlling 20 percent of the world's oil, the Bush administration launched a war against the Hussein regime, deploying more than half a million troops to the region. The United States also conducted a massive bombing campaign against Iraqi forces in Kuwait and military sites and civilian infrastructure in Iraq.⁹⁷ Bush's objectives were to punish the impudent former U.S. ally, restore the Al Sabah monarchy in Kuwait, safeguard the royal family in Saudi Arabia, establish a permanent military presence in the region, and ensure continued Western access to oil in the region.⁹⁸ With the Soviet Union collapsing and unable to take effective countermeasures, the U.S. Empire's war plans won UN approval and garnered support from more than two dozen countries.⁹⁹ Most of the U.S.-led ground operations and bombardment occurred in January and February 1991, forcing Hussein's troops to return to Iraq and producing widespread carnage and destruction. More than 3,400 Kuwaitis died during Hussein's invasion, and the loss of Iraqi lives was far greater.¹⁰⁰ More than 200,000

Iraqis, half of them women and children, died because of the war.¹⁰¹ Subsequent economic sanctions against Iraq resulted in more than half a million deaths, primarily of children and women, by 1995.¹⁰²

THE 1991 COUP IN HAITI

In 1991, five years after popular opposition ousted “Baby Doc” Duvalier, Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first democratically elected president in the history of Haiti. Washington had backed a more conservative candidate and opposed the new president’s proposals for a minimum wage increase, a social security program, and land reform.¹⁰³ The Haitian army and police, still funded and supported by the United States, overthrew Aristide after only nine months in office. Some coup leaders were on the CIA payroll, and U.S. intelligence officers were in the Haitian military headquarters during the coup.¹⁰⁴ The Bush administration formally denounced Aristide’s ouster but quietly backed the new Haitian regime, which murdered between four and five thousand Aristide supporters and other people during the next three years.¹⁰⁵ In 1994, after the massive refugee crisis fueled by this violence became an international issue, the UN authorized a U.S.-led intervention to restore Aristide to power. However, U.S. officials limited Aristide’s term in office, forced him to forgo major reforms, and insisted that supporters of the dictatorship must be viewed as the legitimate opposition in Haiti.¹⁰⁶

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN TURKEY AND PERU

By the early 1990s, Washington had been providing Turkey with aircraft, helicopters, tanks, weapons, and other military equipment used against the continuing Kurdish insurgency for a decade.¹⁰⁷ The United States sold approximately \$15 billion in weapons to Ankara between 1980 and 1999.¹⁰⁸ Almost forty thousand Kurds and Turks had perished by 1999, and more would die in the decades that followed.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1990s, under the pretext of combating drug trafficking, the Bush administration began training Peruvian soldiers and police,

which had a long history of human rights abuses, to fight the resilient Shining Path and Túpac Amaru guerrillas.¹¹⁰ Public U.S. assistance was briefly suspended after Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori assumed dictatorial powers in 1992, but covert aid was uninterrupted, and the CIA helped capture the Shining Path leader later that year.¹¹¹ The armed struggle against the government has greatly diminished in the past two decades but continues intermittently to this day, as does U.S. counterinsurgency assistance.¹¹² Peru's total number of related deaths has been conservatively estimated at more than 69,000.¹¹³

U.S. COMPLICITY IN THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Profound domestic economic and political problems played a central role in the abandonment of socialism by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the subsequent collapse of the world's first socialist state in 1991. So, too, did the unwinnable arms race, unrelenting military threats, sabotage, subversion, and propaganda for which the U.S. Empire was largely responsible.¹¹⁴ Thus anti-communist leaders in both Washington and Moscow shared the responsibility for approximately 150,000 deaths in the nationalist wars and uprisings in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, and other former Soviet republics after 1991.¹¹⁵ Many U.S. officials, advisers, and capitalists energetically promoted what came to be known as "shock therapy"—the rapid privatization of state and collective enterprises, the creation of a new capitalist class, and the elimination of social protections and state services.

The results were catastrophic for most people in Russia, the former Soviet republics, and the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹⁶ Seumas Milne has emphasized that "far from opening the way to emancipation, these changes led to beggary for most citizens, ushering in the most cataclysmic peacetime economic collapse of an industrial country in history."¹¹⁷ Milne explained:

Under the banner of reform and the guidance of American-prescribed shock therapy, perestroika became catastroika.

Capitalist restoration brought in its wake mass pauperization and unemployment; wild extremes of inequality; rampant crime; virulent antisemitism and ethnic violence; combined with legalized gangsterism on a heroic scale and precipitous looting of public assets.¹¹⁸

Life expectancy in Russia dropped precipitously.¹¹⁹ By 2001, as many as three million excess deaths had occurred.¹²⁰ Eight years later, the number of excess deaths had risen to almost seven million.¹²¹ Similar but smaller-scale tragedies occurred in some other nations that experienced “shock therapy.”¹²² Not surprisingly, most people in Russia and former Soviet states continue to tell pollsters that they regret the destruction of socialism and the breakup of the Soviet Union.¹²³ The end of food aid that accompanied the collapse of Soviet socialism also contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives during a terrible famine in North Korea between 1995 and 2000.¹²⁴

INTERVENTION IN SOMALIA

In late 1992, after the massive loss of life in Somalia brought on by drought, famine, and civil war had begun to abate, the U.S. government began deploying 28,000 troops as part of a UN mission to safeguard international food shipments and other humanitarian assistance. Both the outgoing Bush administration and the incoming administration of Bill Clinton were chiefly concerned with helping create a central government in Somalia that could honor the country’s contracts with Conoco, Amoco, Chevron, and Phillips for the exploration and exploitation of oil and natural gas.¹²⁵ Although some Somalis appreciated foreign assistance in food deliveries, many others resented the United States because of its previous backing of the Barre regime.¹²⁶ When U.S. soldiers began attacking various Somali clans to support a pro-Western warlord’s claim to power, significant combat and massive casualties ensued. In 1993, Somali fighters shot down two Black Hawk helicopters, killed eighteen U.S. soldiers, and dragged some of their bodies through the streets of Mogadishu.

Clinton withdrew U.S. forces early in 1994, but by then several thousand Somalis had died because of the military intervention and the country was more unstable than ever.¹²⁷

WARS AGAINST SERBIA

The United States had long sought to restore capitalism in the multinational socialist state of Yugoslavia.¹²⁸ Significant borrowing from international financial institutions in the 1980s led to the IMF's imposition of structural adjustments, and economic problems in Yugoslavia had mounted by the early 1990s.¹²⁹ Deteriorating social conditions and intense pressure by the United States and its NATO allies fueled the rise of nationalism in the six republics and led to the disintegration of the country and a series of wars.¹³⁰ Substantial direct intervention by U.S. military forces, the CIA, and NATO helped Croats and Bosnian Muslims defeat the Serbs in the Bosnia-Herzegovina War of 1992–95, which resulted in as many as 150,000 deaths.¹³¹ U.S. forces subsequently began secretly training and supplying the Kosovo Liberation Army of Albanian Kosovars, which killed 1,500 Serbs in its struggle for independence in 1998 alone.¹³² The following year, the United States led the NATO bombing of Serbia on the pretext of defending the Kosovars from genocide.¹³³ Twenty-five hundred Serbs and Kosovars died as a result.¹³⁴ Washington then deployed several thousand troops to Kosovo as part of a UN peacekeeping force and later supported its declaration of independence from Serbia.¹³⁵

GROWING U.S. INTERVENTION IN AFRICA

Notwithstanding the global crisis of socialism and President Bush's proclamation of "a New World Order" in 1990, the U.S. Empire continued to face substantial challenges.¹³⁶ The imperative to obtain vital resources, new markets, and cheap labor remained relentless.¹³⁷ And the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, which left six people dead, reflected what Helen C. Epstein has called "the growth of anti-Western sentiments" in West Asia and East Africa.¹³⁸ Africa became

increasingly important to U.S. policymakers for both reasons, and Washington found new allies in President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and his chief of military intelligence, the Rwandan-born Tutsi exile Paul Kagame.¹³⁹ Although Museveni's forces had killed scores of thousands of Ugandans to seize and maintain power, Washington began providing significant military and economic aid to his regime.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, the U.S. government disapproved of the Hutu-majority government in Rwanda, which had ousted the Tutsi-minority monarchy and brought considerable progress for many Rwandans.¹⁴¹ By 1990, Washington had succeeded in pressuring President Juvénal Habyarimana to privatize state enterprises, reduce government spending, and implement other IMF structural agreements.¹⁴² And U.S. officials were demanding that Rwanda accept the return of Tutsi exiles from Uganda, where they had lived for decades.¹⁴³

SUPPORT FOR THE INVASION OF RWANDA

While Washington was loudly condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, it was quietly supporting Uganda's invasion of Rwanda. The invaders were mainly Tutsi exiles who had been part of Museveni's army, and some had been trained in the United States.¹⁴⁴ U.S. officials wanted a new, friendlier Rwandan government to help the Ugandan regime unlock Central Africa's mineral resources for Western capitalist exploitation.¹⁴⁵ But Belgian, French, and Zairean troops helped the Rwandans fend off the invaders, now rebranded as the Rwandan Patriotic Front, who retreated and began a guerrilla war.¹⁴⁶ Edward Herman and David Peterson noted: "Paul Kagame and the RPF were creatures of U.S. power from their origins in Uganda in the 1980s."¹⁴⁷ Kagame left a U.S. Army training course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to assume command of the invaders.¹⁴⁸ During the next three and a half years, Washington nearly doubled its aid to Uganda.¹⁴⁹ In 1991, Washington sold Kampala ten times more weapons than in the previous four decades, knowing that many would be transferred to the RPF.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, U.S. officials demanded that Habyarimana add RPF leaders to his government and army, though they knew the

invaders aimed to restore Tutsi minority rule in Rwanda.¹⁵¹ More than ten thousand Rwandans died in the conflict, but the signing of the Arusha Accords in 1993 appeared to signal the arrival of peace.¹⁵²

THE GENOCIDAL CIVIL WAR IN RWANDA

Keenly aware that upcoming elections would not restore Tutsi minority control of Rwanda, Kagame ordered the assassination of the nation's president. Both Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryimira, the Hutu president of Burundi, died when the Rwandan leader's airplane was shot down in April 1994.¹⁵³ Within one to two hours of the plane going down, the RPF launched a new military offensive against the Rwandan government.¹⁵⁴ In response to the assassinations and the associated RPF assault, extremist Hutus began killing Tutsis and mobilizing the population to participate in the slaughter.¹⁵⁵ The RPF also engaged in widespread slaughter, primarily of Hutus but also of Tutsis.¹⁵⁶ Rwandan officials pleaded for help from the United Nations, but the Clinton administration insisted on the withdrawal of most peacekeepers already in the country.¹⁵⁷ Backed by the United States and Uganda, the RPF captured the capital of Kigali in July 1994. Soon afterward, Washington extended diplomatic recognition to Kagame's new Tutsi minority regime, sent economic aid, and deployed troops to train the newly renamed Rwandan Patriotic Army.¹⁵⁸ Years later, Clinton apologized for his "inaction" during the Rwandan holocaust, but this was as dishonest as his policy had been.¹⁵⁹ Washington had helped bring Kagame to power in Rwanda and was deeply complicit in the horrific loss of lives among both Hutus and Tutsis. Former UN general secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali believed that "the genocide in Rwanda was one hundred percent the responsibility of the Americans."¹⁶⁰

Most Western accounts of the Rwandan holocaust have focused exclusively on the 500,000 to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus who died at the hands of the Hutu extremists between April 1994 and July 1994.¹⁶¹ However, the Tutsi forces led by Kagame killed the same number of Hutus and moderate Tutsis during these four months.¹⁶²

More than a million Hutus, most of whom had not been involved in the killings, sought refuge in eastern Zaire.¹⁶³ The new Tutsi minority regime in Rwanda continued to kill thousands of Hutus during the last half of 1994 and throughout 1995.¹⁶⁴ Some of the Hutu mass murderers who had fled to Zaire launched attacks on the RPA across the border and organized to overthrow the Tutsi regime in their homeland. But most Hutu exiles, predominantly women and children, were concerned with survival, not insurgency.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, in October 1996, units of Kagame's RPA, equipped by the Pentagon and trained by U.S. Special Forces, attacked Hutu refugee camps in Zaire, forced hundreds of thousands to return to Rwanda, and killed as many as 260,000 people.¹⁶⁶

THE INVASION OF ZAIRE

In November 1996, Museveni's Ugandan army joined the RPA in a full-scale invasion of Zaire supported by the United States. After the end of the Cold War, the long-standing World Bank and IMF economic support for the Mobutu regime ended amid growing domestic opposition.¹⁶⁷ Washington now wanted far greater access to the country's cobalt, copper, gold, diamonds, coltan, and other resources.¹⁶⁸ U.S. officials were also concerned about Mobutu's ties with Sudan and the prospect of unfriendly nations obtaining Zairean resources.¹⁶⁹ The Clinton administration began demanding Mobutu's resignation a year before the invasion but was repeatedly rebuffed.¹⁷⁰ When Museveni's and Kagame's troops invaded Zaire, they served as proxy armies for the U.S. Empire. Washington had trained both armies, provided the Ugandans with arms, and sent the Rwandans weapons and military equipment through Uganda and other countries.¹⁷¹ The U.S. government and U.S. companies provided vital military intelligence to the invaders, and a small contingent of U.S. Special Forces fought alongside the invaders in Zaire.¹⁷²

Although Washington and its allies depicted the invasion as a civil war, the Ugandans and Rwandans created Laurent Désiré Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire

and did much of the fighting on its behalf.¹⁷³ The giant U.S. company Bechtel “became first in line to win contracts” after providing Kabila with satellite intelligence during the rebellion.¹⁷⁴ A month before ousting Mobutu, Kabila approved a \$1 billion mining contract with American Mineral Fields, a multinational corporation headquartered in Clinton’s hometown, Hope, Arkansas.¹⁷⁵ In May 1997, Mobutu was forced to flee the country, and Kabila came to power in what became known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the years to come, the new ruler would open up as much of the country’s mineral wealth as possible to U.S. and other Western exploitation.¹⁷⁶

PLUNDER AND GENOCIDE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

In 1998, Kabila became estranged from his Ugandan and Rwandan allies and ordered their troops to leave his country. Museveni and Kagame refused and instead launched a new invasion of the DRC and began working with about a dozen Congolese opposition groups with the shared aim of toppling Kabila.¹⁷⁷ Washington continued to train Kagame’s troops until shortly before the invasion and dispatched a military and diplomatic team to the Rwanda-Congo border when it began. The U.S. government had lost hope in Kabila and did not waver in its support of its Ugandan and Rwandan proxies.¹⁷⁸ Once again, Washington deployed a small number of troops into Congo.¹⁷⁹ However, Angola, Zimbabwe, and other African countries intervened to defend the new regime in Kinshasa.¹⁸⁰ Although Kabila maintained power in the capital and some other regions, the invaders and allied militias took control of vast stretches of eastern Congo. During the next five years, Ugandan and Rwandan forces and their local partners transported billions of dollars in gold, diamonds, coltan, timber, elephant tusks, and other resources out of Congo.¹⁸¹ A UN report in 2002 identified eighty-five U.S., Canadian, and European corporations that were profiting from the looting of the country by Kabila, the Ugandans, the Rwandans, and their allies.¹⁸²

In 2001, Kabila was assassinated, and his son Joseph came to power

in Kinshasa. In 2003, a peace treaty between the DRC government and its major adversaries was signed, and Ugandan and Rwandan troops withdrew. Although the level of violence has significantly declined since then, intermittent armed struggle between the regime and Congolese militias allied with Kampala or Kigali has turned the country into what reporter Jeff Gettleman has called “a never-ending nightmare.”¹⁸³ The plunder of Congo has continued, albeit on a smaller scale than before, and in recent years Western domination of its mining industry has declined.¹⁸⁴ In 2018, Kabila agreed to leave office, but the subsequent presidential election was widely regarded as fraudulent.¹⁸⁵ Today the masses in the DRC remain impoverished and unable to benefit from their country’s extraordinary resources, while U.S. policy has handsomely rewarded those who have invaded and pillaged their land. More than 5.4 million people died because of war, disease, and starvation in the DRC between 1998 and 2008, and many thousands more have died since then.¹⁸⁶ As an independent Ugandan newspaper concluded, “The U.S. and the West bear responsibility for the deaths of the Congolese people.”¹⁸⁷ Glen Ford has explained that “the United States has financed and given overall direction to the worst genocide since World War Two in the Democratic Republic of Congo.”¹⁸⁸

BACKING THE REGIME—AND REBELS—IN SUDAN

After a second civil war began in Sudan in 1983, Washington provided significant military assistance to support the government against southern insurgents.¹⁸⁹ But U.S. policy changed after a new regime came to power in 1989 and then supported Iraq during the Gulf War and allowed bin Laden to seek refuge there.¹⁹⁰ Soon afterward, the U.S. government began paying Uganda to provide military training and equipment to the insurgents fighting against Khartoum.¹⁹¹ In 1996, the Clinton administration began sending communications equipment and other ostensibly non-lethal military equipment to the rebels through Uganda, Ethiopia, and newly independent Eritrea.¹⁹² Museveni’s soldiers also fought alongside the insurgents in Sudan and against Ugandan rebels based there.¹⁹³ Small contingents of U.S. troops

were reported to be fighting for the rebels in Sudan as well.¹⁹⁴ After Al-Qaida attacked U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, killing 224 people, Clinton ordered strikes against a purported chemical weapons plant in Sudan and military training camps in Afghanistan, where bin Laden had moved two years before.¹⁹⁵ In fact, the Al-Shifa facility in Sudan, a pharmaceutical plant with no ties to Al-Qaida or chemical weapons, was destroyed by U.S. cruise missiles.¹⁹⁶ Only one person died in the strike, but thousands of Sudanese likely perished in the following years because the plant was never rebuilt, and they were unable to obtain life-saving medications.¹⁹⁷

NEW RULERS AND NEW VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA AND ETHIOPIA

Just as the U.S. Empire ousted Mobutu in Zaire when he had outlived his usefulness, it drove General Suharto from power in Indonesia in 1998.¹⁹⁸ Suharto had resisted structural adjustments demanded by the IMF and was slowly losing control of his country. U.S. officials made clear to Indonesian military leaders that it was time for Suharto to go.¹⁹⁹ After students and workers began to demand democratic reforms, the army unleashed a wave of violence against them and against the country's Chinese minority.²⁰⁰ Twelve hundred people died, and Suharto, who was out of the country, was persuaded to resign.²⁰¹ The following year, Washington backed the new Indonesian regime's killing of as many as five thousand people demanding independence in East Timor.²⁰² In 1998–2000, border skirmishes between the new Ethiopian government dominated by the Tigrayans and its former ally Eritrea erupted into a ferocious war. Although the United States did not actively intervene in this conflict, both sides used military equipment that Washington had provided in past years.²⁰³ About 100,000 people died in the war.²⁰⁴

THE BOMBING OF IRAQ AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN COLOMBIA

In 1998–2000, the Clinton administration bombed Iraq after Hussein's forces contested the no-fly zones established over northern and

southern Iraq after the Gulf War. The bombing led to as many as 2,300 fatalities.²⁰⁵ Although U.S. officials claimed they wanted to undermine Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programs, their actual motive was destabilization of the Iraqi regime.²⁰⁶ In 1999, congressional approval of Plan Colombia ostensibly signaled that the rationale for supporting the government there had evolved from traditional anti-communism to a war on drugs. However, most of the substantially increased U.S. assistance was destined for Colombian troops fighting the continuing insurgency led by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army.²⁰⁷ In the years that followed, large numbers of people continued to die in what had become the longest civil war in Latin American history.

REPRESSION IN PALESTINE AND THE EXPANSION OF NATO

In 2000, Al-Qaida forces attacked the USS *Cole* off the coast of Yemen, killing seventeen sailors.²⁰⁸ Curiously, the U.S. government did not retaliate by striking at bin Laden, then based in Afghanistan. Years later, Clinton said he could not have approved a military action that might have killed hundreds of noncombatants, but his foreign policy record in Africa and Asia made this explanation unconvincing.²⁰⁹ When the second Palestinian *intifada* erupted in 2000, Washington once again energetically backed Israel.²¹⁰ More than four thousand people, primarily Palestinians, died during the next five years.²¹¹ Despite prior U.S. commitments made by Reagan and Bush, Clinton energetically promoted the eastward expansion of NATO, beginning with the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.²¹² In the years that followed, the U.S. Empire's growing encirclement of post-Soviet Russia led to deepening tensions and the outbreak of a new kind of Cold War.²¹³

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AND THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

Scores of millions in the United States considered George W. Bush's inauguration in January 2001 as illegitimate because of the aborted vote recount in Florida and the U.S. Supreme Court intervention that

made him president.²¹⁴ Yet he wasted no time pursuing an even more belligerent foreign policy than Clinton. Neoconservatives associated with the Project for a New American Century openly proclaimed that the United States should dominate as much of the planet as possible in the twenty-first century and prevent the emergence of any significant rival power.²¹⁵ PNAC also brazenly endorsed preemptive war against nations that challenge the United States.²¹⁶ The Bush administration began planning for a potential war against Hussein's regime and taking control of Iraq's vast oil resources shortly after taking office early in 2001.²¹⁷ In the summer of 2001, U.S. diplomats offered Afghanistan's Taliban "a carpet of gold" if they would surrender bin Laden and allow an oil and natural gas pipeline to be built in their country—and threatened "a carpet of bombs" if they refused.²¹⁸ Al-Qaida's subsequent attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, which resulted in 2,977 deaths, may well have been sparked by Washington's threats.²¹⁹

The subsequent invasion of Afghanistan toppled the Taliban government, but in more than nineteen years of war, U.S. and allied forces could not defeat the ensuing insurgency. Responding to intense pressure from Washington, the government of Pakistan fought some Taliban combatants who sought refuge there and some allied domestic militants. But it is no secret that Pakistani intelligence and military officials traditionally supported the Taliban and favored its inclusion in a new Afghan government.²²⁰ A decade after Al-Qaida's strikes against the United States, Special Forces dispatched by Obama assassinated bin Laden in Pakistan. Although relatively few people in the world mourned the death of the Al-Qaida leader, more than 220,000 people died in Afghanistan, and more than 80,000 people died in Pakistan during Washington's so-called War on Terror in these countries by 2013.²²¹

THE FAILED COUP IN VENEZUELA AND NEW INTERVENTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

In April 2002, conservative military officers and business leaders

in Venezuela launched an ill-fated coup against the democratically elected, anti-imperialist president Hugo Chávez. U.S. officials denied that his ouster was a coup, endorsed the “change of government,” and extended diplomatic recognition to the wealthy capitalist who declared himself the new president.²²² Although Washington denied complicity in the putsch, officials had met repeatedly with some of the plotters and sent money to them.²²³ The State Department’s Inspector General later admitted that “U.S. assistance programs provided training, institution building, and other support to individuals and organizations understood to be actively involved in the brief ouster of the Chávez government.”²²⁴ U.S. naval vessels off the coast of Venezuela assisted the coup participants with signals intelligence and communications jamming.²²⁵ More than a hundred people died during the coup, but the masses rallied around Chávez and returned him to power within two days.²²⁶ Also in 2002, a decade after requiring the withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel, the government of the Philippines allowed one thousand troops to return to help fight the “war on terror” against a Muslim insurgency. The following year, Washington sent another two thousand soldiers to fight a different Muslim force.²²⁷ Some of these ostensible enemies were not connected to Al-Qaida or had only loose ties with bin Laden’s network, but the deployments were the first step toward a renewed U.S. military presence in its former colony.²²⁸

THE SECOND U.S. WAR AGAINST IRAQ

In 2002–2003, the Bush administration subjected the U.S. public to an intense propaganda campaign to legitimize a new war against Iraq.²²⁹ U.S. officials wanted to bring Iraqi oil back into international markets, create a new client state, weaken regional opposition to Israel, and expand U.S. power in West Asia.²³⁰ Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, and other officials falsely claimed that Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction and had close ties to Al-Qaida.²³¹ As the U.S. Empire prepared for war, people across the planet forged the largest antiwar movement in history. Twelve million participated in global protests on February 15, 2003.²³² The invasion of Iraq ordered

by Bush the following month blatantly violated the UN Charter prohibiting wars of aggression but drew support from both major political parties and, briefly, the U.S. public.²³³ U.S. and allied troops quickly overthrew Hussein and placed a U.S. viceroy in charge of the country. Washington later installed a pro-Western regime that executed Hussein and other former Iraqi leaders and invited foreign oil corporations to invest in Iraq.²³⁴ However, the invasion and occupation resulted in catastrophic destruction, greatly exacerbated religious sectarianism, and sparked armed resistance from various sections of Iraqi society. In 2008, Bush had to accede to the new government's demand that U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq within three years.²³⁵ By 2011, more than a million people had died because of the war.²³⁶

THE "WAR ON TERROR" IN YEMEN AND SOMALIA

The Bush administration began authorizing drone attacks in Yemen and Somalia, as well as in Pakistan, in 2002. Close to five hundred people died in these attacks during Bush's two terms in office.²³⁷ U.S. officials claimed that these were precision strikes directed at known terrorists, but many of those who perished had not been involved in attacks on the United States or were noncombatants.²³⁸ Bush did not repeat his father's deadly mistake of sending tens of thousands of troops to Somalia, but the United States and Ethiopia deployed small numbers of commandos and hired local warlords to capture or assassinate Al-Qaida members and other individuals suspected of being terrorists.²³⁹ These actions exacerbated many Somalis' hatred for the United States and Ethiopia and significantly strengthened the extremist factions in the Union of Islamic Courts movement, a broad coalition that many Somalis increasingly viewed as preferable to the warlords who had been pillaging the country for more than a decade.²⁴⁰

THE 2004 COUP IN HAITI AND FURTHER EXPANSION OF NATO

In 2004, after Aristide had been elected to a second term as president

of Haiti, disbanded the army, and demanded massive reparations from France for colonialism and slavery, the Bush administration supported an armed rebellion that forced him to resign and leave the country.²⁴¹ Bush sent U.S. Marines to Haiti, ostensibly to maintain order until UN peacekeepers could arrive.²⁴² In the two years that followed, the police, former soldiers, and paramilitary forces murdered approximately four thousand Aristide supporters and other people in the greater Port-au-Prince area.²⁴³ During this period, another four thousand people died at the hands of criminals in the same area.²⁴⁴ Thousands of miles away, Washington continued to encircle and escalate tensions with post-Soviet Russia by bringing Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into NATO. Croatia and Albania followed a few years later.²⁴⁵ And in 2004, U.S. government agencies and political organizations spent tens of millions of dollars to help elect a pro-Western candidate as president of Ukraine.²⁴⁶

THE U.S. ROLE IN THE CREATION OF SOUTH SUDAN

Although the Sudanese government led by Omar al-Bashir disavowed Al-Qaida and international terrorism after the September 2001 attacks on the United States, Washington increased its financial assistance to the rebels fighting Khartoum and made clear that it supported self-determination for the southern part of the country.²⁴⁷ Two decades of war and intermittent famine had devastated much of Sudan, and U.S. and UN sanctions against the regime were punishing. Washington worked to mobilize international public opinion against Khartoum, especially after a new insurgency erupted in Darfur in 2003, leading to more deaths.²⁴⁸ In 2005, the Sudanese government signed a peace agreement with the main rebel army that promised autonomy and a referendum on independence for southern Sudan. Although some fighting continued, the United States sent vast amounts of humanitarian aid to the country during the next several years.²⁴⁹ In 2011, South Sudan became an independent country. As Mark Landler observed, the new nation was “in many ways an American creation, carved out

of war-torn Sudan in a referendum largely orchestrated by the United States, and its fragile institution nurtured with billions of dollars in American aid.”²⁵⁰ More than two million people had died in the civil war since 1983.²⁵¹ Significant U.S. aid to the government before 1990 and to the rebels afterward had made Washington deeply complicit in this ghastly human toll.

THE U.S. PROXY WAR AGAINST SOMALIA

In 2006, the Union of Islamic Courts defeated an alliance of Somali warlords backed and financed by the United States, gained control of Mogadishu, and quickly expanded its authority to much of central and southern Somalia.²⁵² The warlord alliance, which previously hoped to become the country’s permanent government, was not interested in working with the UIC, which they falsely depicted as made up entirely of terrorists.²⁵³ In December 2006, the U.S. government approved and sponsored Ethiopia’s invasion of Somalia and the overthrow of the first relatively stable and popular government that the nation had known in decades. As Jeremy Scahill has pointed out, this was “a classic [U.S.] proxy war.”²⁵⁴ Since coming to power in Addis Ababa and remaining in office with Washington’s help, Meles Zenawi’s pro-Western regime had killed hundreds of domestic opponents, and it did not hesitate to attack Somalia on behalf of its patron.²⁵⁵

U.S. military airplanes bombed suspected terrorist targets and a U.S. naval vessel fired Tomahawk missiles that killed at least one fighter identified as a member of Al-Qaida.²⁵⁶ A small group of U.S. soldiers was already in Somalia before the invasion. More U.S. troops entered the country with the Ethiopians and established a permanent military presence there.²⁵⁷ Washington provided satellite and other intelligence to both the Ethiopian soldiers and the Kenyan troops guarding their border with Somalia, and CIA agents worked closely with both allies.²⁵⁸ U.S.-trained Ugandan troops and other African Union Mission forces also entered the country.²⁵⁹ The invasion succeeded in ousting and fragmenting the UIC, but approximately twenty thousand died before the Ethiopian occupation ended in early

2009.²⁶⁰ This ostensibly counterterrorist war significantly fueled the growth of Al-Shabab and other extremists and paved the way for more violent conflicts, humanitarian crises, and deaths in Somalia.²⁶¹

SUPPORT FOR REPRESSION FROM MEXICO TO PALESTINE

Bush was concerned about the “pink tide” of socialist-oriented and social democratic governments elected in several Latin American countries throughout his tenure as president.²⁶² In 2008, Washington tried but failed to bring about a coup against Evo Morales in Bolivia.²⁶³ That same year, the U.S. government launched the Mérida Initiative in Mexico, a putative crime-fighting program modeled on Plan Colombia that dramatically increased support for military and police forces long known to be guilty of murder, torture, and corruption.²⁶⁴ Since then, about 300,000 people have been murdered or have disappeared in Mexico, many of them at the hands of those recipients of U.S. aid.²⁶⁵ Also in 2008, the Bush administration tried to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO but was blocked by Germany and France.²⁶⁶ Washington’s provision of weapons, military equipment, military training and related aid to Georgia encouraged its August 2008 attack on largely Russian South Ossetia, which resulted in about six hundred deaths.²⁶⁷ The U.S. government also supported Israel’s brief but bloody war against Gaza in 2008–2009, which killed more than 1,400 people.²⁶⁸

EXPANSION OF THE “WAR ON TERROR”

Repudiation of the Iraq War and Bush’s militarism by a majority of people in the United States contributed to the election of Barack Obama as president in November 2008.²⁶⁹ Major sections of the capitalist class supported Obama, viewing him as the candidate who would be most able to repair Washington’s global image and advance the interests of the U.S. Empire in an increasingly multipolar world.²⁷⁰ Obama vowed to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also pledged to vigorously prosecute the “War on Terror” and back U.S. allies across the

planet. Soon after his inauguration in January 2009, Obama began authorizing new drone strikes against reputed terrorists in Pakistan, but civilians were among the first casualties.²⁷¹ During the next eight years, there were ten times as many drone strikes as there had been during the Bush years.²⁷² Approximately 3,800 people, many of whom were not combatants, died in such attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.²⁷³ Obama eventually boasted to his aides that he had become “really good at killing people.”²⁷⁴ One famous victim was the U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, an important propagandist for Al-Qaida who was never charged with a terrorism-related crime.²⁷⁵ He was killed in a drone strike in Yemen in 2011, and his sixteen-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter died in subsequent U.S. attacks.²⁷⁶

Notwithstanding his campaign promises, Obama increased the number of U.S. soldiers deployed in Afghanistan from 50,000 to 100,000 in 2009, even as other NATO countries withdrew or reduced their presence.²⁷⁷ However, fierce if intermittent combat continued throughout much of the country. Tens of thousands of people continued to die directly or indirectly because of the war, just as they had during the Bush administration.²⁷⁸ Although relatively few Al-Qaida militants remained in Afghanistan, the Taliban fought U.S. and allied troops to a virtual stalemate and gradually regained control over wide sections of the country.²⁷⁹ By the end of his second term, Obama had reduced the number of U.S. soldiers there to less than ten thousand but had not been able to bring the war to a successful conclusion. By 2015, Washington was compelled to support peace talks between the Afghan regime and the Taliban, though these efforts failed to end the fighting.²⁸⁰

THE PUTSCH IN HONDURAS AND THE FAILED PUTSCH IN ECUADOR

In 2009, right-wing military officers overthrew the reformist government of Jose Manuel Zelaya in Honduras. The Obama administration may not have approved the coup in advance, but U.S. military advisers in Honduras almost certainly encouraged it.²⁸¹ Most of the top

generals involved in the putsch had trained in the United States, and the U.S. Embassy's defense attaché met with the coup leader the night before his forces ousted Zelaya.²⁸² As Dana Frank has emphasized, "It is unlikely they would have perpetrated a coup without U.S. approval."²⁸³ The Obama administration refused to endorse Zelaya's return and instead supported the new government.²⁸⁴ Since 2009, the repressive regime and allied vigilantes in that country have killed thousands of political opponents and other people.²⁸⁵ In 2010, police officials with a long history of working with U.S. intelligence agencies tried but failed to overthrow President Rafael Correa in Ecuador. There is no evidence of Washington's involvement in this attempted coup, but the plotters were undoubtedly encouraged by U.S. support for the Honduran putsch the previous year.²⁸⁶

CIVIL WAR, DROUGHT, AND FAMINE IN SOMALIA

The U.S.-Ethiopian invasion of Somalia ended in early 2009, but armed conflict continued between the weak pro-Western Somali government and allied warlords and Al-Shabab and other forces radicalized by decades of foreign intervention.²⁸⁷ Only a few months into his presidency, Obama shipped forty tons of weapons and ammunition to the Somali regime despite its widespread unpopularity and the desertion of most of its troops.²⁸⁸ Madeline Bunting has pointed out that Somalia being "sucked into the war on terror" by Washington led to another calamity.²⁸⁹ A terrible drought and famine in 2010–12, exacerbated by the civil war, led to almost 260,000 deaths, yet another tragedy in Somalia for which the U.S. government shared responsibility.²⁹⁰ A new pro-Western government was formed in 2012, and U.S. troops, mercenaries, and African Union Mission soldiers continued to conduct ground operations against Al-Shabab while U.S. drones continued to kill both insurgents and civilians.²⁹¹

THE WAR AGAINST LIBYA

In 2011, the United States, Britain, France, and other countries

launched a war against Libya, where armed rebels were trying to overthrow Qaddafi's regime.²⁹² After Washington and its allies falsely claimed the Libyan ruler was about to commit genocide, the United Nations authorized military action to protect civilians.²⁹³ However, the Obama administration's actual objective was regime change. It was the Western war against Libya that led to the massive loss of life there.²⁹⁴ The Obama administration authorized bombing Libyan military installations and troops to support the rebels and provided at least \$1 billion in weapons and cash—and CIA assistance—to the insurgents.²⁹⁵ U.S. naval vessels shot down missiles that the regime fired at the insurgents, and U.S. Airborne Warning and Control planes provided much of the battle management for the war.²⁹⁶ After the regime fell and the insurgents killed Qaddafi, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton boasted: "We came, we saw, he died."²⁹⁷ Nick Turse, Henrik Moltke, and Alice Speri reported in the years that followed: "Libya collapsed into chaos and militia-fueled insecurity, allowing terrorist groups to flourish and the so-called Islamic State to take over the Mediterranean coastal city of Sirte."²⁹⁸ Fighting between armed political groups backed by different countries continues today, and U.S. drone strikes alone have killed more than a thousand combatants and several hundred civilians.²⁹⁹ Washington bears substantial responsibility for the war-related deaths of more than 43,000 in Libya since 2011.³⁰⁰ In addition, amid widespread chaos and corruption, Libya has become the "dominant transit point" for refugees and migrants trying to reach Europe from Africa. More than 20,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea since 2014.³⁰¹

THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

As the deadline for the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq approached in 2011, Obama increasingly worried about the instability of the country and the growing influence of Iran. Notwithstanding his vow to end the U.S. presence in Iraq, he proposed leaving thousands of soldiers there, but most Iraqis wanted the occupation to end, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki rejected the request.³⁰² As U.S. combat

forces left the country, Obama declared that the war had been a “success” and that Washington was leaving behind “a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq.”³⁰³ At the same time, a group that called itself Al-Qaida in Iraq was gaining strength and recruiting fighters embittered by the U.S. invasion.³⁰⁴ Members of this group launched the organization that came to be known as the Islamic State. During the next three years, this new movement savagely but skillfully exploited the weakness of the Iraqi regime and challenged the Assad government in Syria. By 2014, the Islamic State had gained control of vast stretches of Iraq and Syria and proclaimed a caliphate. Later that year, Baghdad allowed Washington to deploy 1,500 troops to help train Iraqi forces to fight them.³⁰⁵ The United States also began to bomb Islamic State positions in Iraq.³⁰⁶ Although the Obama administration had not hesitated to work with other religious extremists in the region, it could not countenance a caliphate opposed to the U.S. Empire and attacking sites in the United States and Europe. In confronting the Islamic State, Washington was engaging an enemy that its own actions had helped create.³⁰⁷

THE WAR AGAINST SYRIA

In the spring of 2011, while peaceful demonstrations in Syria called for political reforms, armed rebels killed dozens of soldiers and bombed a Baath Party building in Daraa.³⁰⁸ The government of Bashar al-Assad harshly repressed the protests and fought back against the insurgency.³⁰⁹ Washington had long supported the ouster of the Syrian regime and, in August 2011, imposed economic sanctions on the country and demanded that Assad give up power.³¹⁰ From the outset, the armed insurgency was led by Sunni religious extremists committed to overthrowing the secular Alawite regime.³¹¹ Thousands of fighters from other countries soon came to Syria, mostly through Turkey, and joined the growing war to topple Assad and establish a new Islamist government.³¹² Al-Qaida supporters in Syria launched their first bombing campaign against the regime in late 2011 and founded the Jabhat Al-Nusra Front several weeks later.³¹³ By then, the

United States, with British help, was transporting Libyan small arms from Benghazi depots to the anti-Assad forces, with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar paying for the shipments.³¹⁴ Washington later helped these countries obtain weapons for the Syrian insurgents from Central Europe.³¹⁵

In August 2012, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that Al-Qaida and its allies were “the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria.”³¹⁶ The DIA approvingly anticipated the prospect of a “Salafist principality in eastern Syria and an Al-Qaida-controlled Islamic state in Syria and Iraq.”³¹⁷ A few months later, U.S. military personnel began secretly training Syrian insurgents to use anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons they were receiving from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.³¹⁸ Washington claimed that it was helping the so-called Free Syrian Army, a group of secular and moderate rebels. But as Aron Lund has explained, this was “a sprawling leaderless resistance of local fighters who shared only some common goals and an assemblage of FSA-inspired symbols.”³¹⁹ Al-Nusra and other religious extremists initially declared that they belonged to the same resistance, and rare FSA military advances were followed by the imposition of Sharia and widespread human rights abuses.³²⁰ Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar initially provided financial and military support for several anti-Assad militias.³²¹ But as Al-Nusra and allied groups proved to be the most organized and capable fighters and eclipsed other insurgents in 2012–13, these governments increasingly favored them.³²²

In 2013, the United States began directly arming FSA fighters and other insurgents that the CIA described as “relatively moderate” Islamists.³²³ But these groups were defeated by the regime or by al-Nusra and its allies or chose to unite with Al-Qaida’s increasingly powerful Syrian affiliate. Vast amounts of weapons and military equipment provided by the United States ended up in the hands of the forces that Washington was ostensibly fighting in the global “war on terror.”³²⁴ Also in 2013, many members of Al-Nusra left to join the Islamic State, which split from Al-Qaida.³²⁵ Now there were two strong international jihadi groups seeking to overthrow the Syrian government. Obama considered airstrikes against the regime after

alleging it had used chemical weapons, but he eventually agreed to a Russian plan in which Assad gave up his stockpiles.³²⁶ Later that year, Washington sold approximately \$1 billion in anti-tank weapons to Saudi Arabia for use by the Syrian insurgents. Most of these weapons were delivered to various extremists in 2013–14.³²⁷ But the growing strength of the Islamic State led the U.S. government to begin bombing its positions in Syria in 2014.³²⁸ The Obama administration sent hundreds of troops to train and assist the secular Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces fighting the Islamic State in 2015.³²⁹

By this time, more than 20,000 foreign fighters, their Syrian counterparts, and the weapons and other assistance provided by the United States and its allies had begun to threaten the survival of the Assad regime.³³⁰ Responding to Assad's request for support, Russia deployed aircraft, troops, and other military assets to Syria in September 2015.³³¹ Along with the Russians, Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces helped the Syrian government gradually defeat most insurgents, recapture a great deal of territory, and stabilize much of the country during the next three years.³³² Although the Obama administration continued to call for Assad to relinquish power, the threat posed by the Islamic State forced U.S. officials to prioritize the bombing of caliphate targets and the deployment of hundreds of additional soldiers to help the SDF in 2016.³³³ The campaign to destroy the caliphate in Iraq and Syria would end, and the broader war against Syria would wind down after Obama left office. But massive military and financial support for extremists and other insurgents in Syria made the United States deeply complicit in the deaths of approximately 600,000 people during the conflict.³³⁴

A NEW ATTACK ON GAZA AND THE COUP IN EGYPT

In 2012, another U.S.-backed Israeli attack on Gaza claimed more than 150 lives.³³⁵ Also in 2012, a year after mass demonstrations ousted Egypt's authoritarian ruler Hosni Mubarak, Mohamed Morsi became the first democratically elected president in the country's history, and the Muslim Brotherhood won a plurality of seats in

parliament.³³⁶ In 2013, massive demonstrations against the new president erupted throughout Egypt, drawing Mubarak supporters, critics of the Brotherhood's "political dominance," and young people angry about the declining economy.³³⁷ U.S. officials pressured Morsi to bring opposition leaders into the government, leaving him president "at least in name, if not in power."³³⁸ When Morsi refused, Washington backed a military coup by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and his troops. As one of the deposed and imprisoned president's advisers remarked, "Nobody who knows Egypt is going to believe a coup could go forward without a green light from the Americans."³³⁹

The Obama administration issued public statements expressing concern about the ouster of Morsi but pointedly refused to recognize it as a coup. Under U.S. law, such a recognition would have required an end to all military assistance to Egypt.³⁴⁰ Washington withheld planned shipments of aircraft, missiles, and tanks to Cairo for eighteen months but gradually normalized relations with the new Sisi regime and resumed the sale of weapons and the training of Egyptian troops.³⁴¹ Sisi's restoration of the old authoritarian political system led to the worst violence in modern Egyptian history and fueled the growth of the Islamic State and other anti-government forces. In the eight months following the coup, the regime's forces killed more than 2,500 Egyptians, and another six hundred died at the hands of extremists.³⁴² During the next five years, the armed conflict and government political repression resulted in approximately five thousand additional deaths.³⁴³

THE CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN

In 2013, two years after Washington had "helped midwife the birth of this new nation," South Sudan erupted into civil war.³⁴⁴ President Salva Kiir, a Dinka, had fired Vice President Riek Machar, a Nuer. Kiir then canceled upcoming elections after Machar announced he would seek the presidency, and government troops loyal to Kiir began massacring the Nuers.³⁴⁵ Similar violence against Dinkas by Machar's supporters followed, and soon much of the country was experiencing

vicious ethnic cleansing, the killing of noncombatants, and huge numbers of people fleeing their homes.³⁴⁶ UN experts noted that Kiir's forces have been "the main belligerent" during this war, but the United States continued to support them during the next five years.³⁴⁷ The Obama administration ended direct military assistance to Juba but blocked an international arms embargo for years while quietly endorsing Uganda's deployment of troops and provision of weapons, airplanes, and helicopters to assist the Kiir regime.³⁴⁸ Although Exxon Mobil ended its exploration plans in South Sudan in 2014 because of the violence, Washington hoped the restoration of peace would enable U.S. companies to gain some access to South Sudan's immense oil resources, which are currently dominated by China.³⁴⁹ Five years after the civil war began, Washington finally agreed to support a UN arms embargo and issued sanctions against the oil companies doing business in South Sudan.³⁵⁰ By that time, more than 380,000 people had died because of the conflict, and significant violence continued despite a new peace accord.³⁵¹

THE COUP IN UKRAINE

In February 2014, State Department officials and CIA agents helped right-wing Ukrainians in parliament and neo-Nazis in the streets overthrow the democratically elected president, Viktor Yanukovich. Anxious to bring this culturally and politically divided country into the European Community and NATO, Washington played a central role in transforming protests against Yanukovich into political violence and ousting him from office in violation of Ukraine's constitution.³⁵² At least one hundred people died during the protests and coup, and open fascists assumed some prominent leadership positions in the new government while their compatriots began attacking pro-Russian Ukrainians in the south and east of the country.³⁵³ Armed resistance against the new far-right regime began almost immediately in those areas. Moscow sent troops to back the resistance and reclaimed the historically Russian territory of Crimea with the support of most of its inhabitants.³⁵⁴ During the next eight years, the

simmering low-intensity conflict in eastern Ukraine led to fourteen thousand deaths. After the United States rejected its demand to end NATO's eastward expansion, Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths within three months.³⁵⁵

SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI AGGRESSION, SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN AND VENEZUELA

In July 2014, Israel attacked Gaza again and killed more than 2,200 people, mainly noncombatants.³⁵⁶ As Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies have pointed out, the continuing provision of massive financial and military assistance makes the United States “complicit in the atrocities Israel commits.”³⁵⁷ Although the Obama administration occasionally criticized Israeli policies, it pledged in 2016 that Washington would provide about \$38 billion in aid during the next decade.³⁵⁸ In stark contrast, the United States and other nations imposed draconian economic sanctions against Iran for several years.³⁵⁹ Although these punitive measures ostensibly aimed at preventing the Islamic Republic from developing nuclear weapons, the CIA and other intelligence agencies informed Congress that there was no current evidence of such a program.³⁶⁰ The sanctions crippled the Iranian economy; restrictions on exports of civilian airplane parts and licensing for medicine exports have been linked to reports of deaths there.³⁶¹ The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear energy program was eventually signed in 2015, and some sanctions were lifted. But U.S. officials insisted that “the military option” would still be “on the table” if the agreement broke down.³⁶² That same year, Obama declared that left-leaning Venezuela was a significant threat to U.S. national security and imposed economic sanctions on several of its leaders.³⁶³

THE WAR AGAINST YEMEN

A popular insurgency led by Houthi rebels, largely Shias, began in Yemen in 2014 and overthrew the pro-U.S., pro-Saudi regime in

early 2015. Soon afterward, Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states launched a war against the Houthis and their allies. The Saudi-led coalition has waged an unrelenting bombing campaign, maintained an air and naval blockade, and deployed ground troops to Yemen.³⁶⁴ The United States became deeply involved in the war from the outset by selling military aircraft, jet fuel, bombs, weapons, and other military equipment to the Saudis; by helping them choose targets to strike in Yemen; by refueling their aircraft; and by sending an advisory mission to their operational headquarters.³⁶⁵ In late 2016, as casualties mounted and the scope of the catastrophe in Yemen became increasingly clear, Obama decided to forgo the planned sale of some precision munitions guidance systems and reduce some intelligence-sharing operations with the Saudis. But other significant U.S. military support for the Saudi war continued.³⁶⁶

OBAMA'S NEOLIBERAL LEGACY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As Cornel West has emphasized, Obama proved to be a neoliberal politician who was just as committed to the defense and expansion of the U.S. Empire as his predecessors had been.³⁶⁷ Obama's actions in Iraq and Afghanistan; his military strikes against ostensible enemies in Pakistan and Somalia; his undeclared wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen; his backing of Israeli attacks against Gaza; his support for coups in Honduras, Egypt, and Ukraine; his aid to the regime in South Sudan; and his approval of sanctions against Iran and Venezuela contributed to an enormous number of deaths. Obama also dramatically increased the U.S. military footprint in Africa, establishing dozens of bases and outposts and developing close military ties with several governments.³⁶⁸ Moreover, although Washington and Moscow signed a New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Obama reduced the U.S. nuclear stockpile by more than twelve hundred weapons, he refused to commit the United States to "No First Use" of weapons of mass destruction.³⁶⁹ He also approved plans for a comprehensive modernization of U.S. nuclear weapons and delivery systems that would violate existing international arms treaties and cost about \$1 trillion

during the next thirty years.³⁷⁰ As Glen Ford has suggested, “Barack Obama may go down in history as the most effective—and deceptive—imperialist of them all.”³⁷¹

TRUMP’S “AMERICA FIRST” IMPERIALISM

Thomas Meaney and Stephen Wertheim have observed that Donald Trump’s “America First” approach to foreign relations was a “radical American imperialism” that “does not so much break with tradition as bring forward some of its most retrograde but persistent elements.”³⁷² Every president since the end of the Second World War has recognized the importance of maintaining close relations with Western client states and invoking the rhetoric of freedom, democracy, and human rights while prioritizing the interests of the U.S. Empire and presiding over imperialist wars, military interventions, and other hostile actions abroad.³⁷³ In stark contrast, Trump repudiated the postwar liberal international order by promoting brazen national chauvinism, endorsing unilateralism, equivocating on NATO’s doctrine of collective defense, scorning other global institutions and treaties, and enthusiastically embracing authoritarian rulers.³⁷⁴ Ironically, although his foreign policy decisions led to numerous deaths in other countries and potentially could have led to catastrophic regional wars or global nuclear conflagrations, the human toll during his tenure turned out to be considerably less than that of his two immediate predecessors.

TRUMP AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS: “PRETTY DAMN SCARY”

As a candidate, Trump repeatedly asked a foreign policy expert why the United States cannot use its nuclear weapons and refused to rule out their use in West Asia or Europe.³⁷⁵ After Trump entered the White House, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper warned that his access to the nuclear codes was “pretty damn scary.”³⁷⁶ The refusal of the United States and eight other nuclear powers to sign the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July 2017 was unfortunate but hardly surprising.³⁷⁷ As president, Trump

initially wanted a “tenfold increase in the nuclear arsenal,” but his advisers helped him understand this was politically impossible.³⁷⁸ Nonetheless, he became the first president in decades to abandon the objective of reducing weapons of mass destruction, and he authorized the development and deployment of new kinds of nuclear warheads and missiles.³⁷⁹ After withdrawing the United States from the nuclear agreement with Iran, Trump withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty. He refused to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.³⁸⁰ Insisting that “the United States must have dominance in space,” he launched a new branch of the armed forces, the U.S. Space Force.³⁸¹ Trump’s actions to maintain U.S. military superiority sparked a new arms race with Russia and China and heightened the danger of nuclear proliferation and nuclear war.³⁸²

NORTH KOREA: FROM “FIRE AND FURY” TO “FALLING IN LOVE”

Perhaps because of prior business ties and Kremlin support for his election, Trump was substantially less aggressive toward Russia than his predecessors.³⁸³ However, during his first year in office, he took a belligerent and dangerous posture toward North Korea. In August 2017, Trump threatened to unleash “fire and fury” against Pyongyang.³⁸⁴ In a speech to the UN General Assembly, he threatened to “totally destroy” the nation of 25 million people.³⁸⁵ Soon afterward, Senator Bob Corker warned that Trump’s reckless threats against other countries could place the United States “on the path to World War III.”³⁸⁶ Indeed, these actions brought the world much closer to the possibility of nuclear war in 2017 and early 2018 than the U.S. public generally realizes.³⁸⁷ After Kim Jong Un was satisfied that recent advances in his country’s nuclear weapons program would deter a U.S. attack, he embraced a diplomatic resolution of the crisis. Kim and Trump met three times, and the U.S. president said they “fell in love.”³⁸⁸ Negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington did not produce agreements on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula or a treaty

finally ending the Korean War. After Trump refused to lift existing sanctions against his country, Kim rejected a proposal for additional meetings. But at least the peril of nuclear war had abated. Strikingly, some Democratic politicians and pundits who castigated Trump for his reckless threats against North Korea later criticized him for negotiating with Kim without preconditions or prior concessions.³⁸⁹

MOUNTING TENSIONS WITH CHINA

China's growing economic strength, military power, and diplomatic reach had stoked U.S. fears of diminishing hegemony during the Obama administration. During the 2016 campaign, Trump accused China of "raping" the United States by engaging in unfair trade practices, intellectual property theft, and currency manipulation.³⁹⁰ After becoming president, he initially appeared to welcome a diplomatic resolution of issues with President Xi Jinping. But Trump soon assumed a much more aggressive posture. He imposed major tariffs on Chinese products, ordered substantial restrictions on access to U.S. technology, and authorized other measures against Chinese businesses.³⁹¹ These actions did not improve the trade balance or bring jobs back to the United States, but they angered and alienated the Chinese government.³⁹² Even more alarming, the Trump administration repeatedly deployed warships and other naval vessels to parts of the South China Sea that China has claimed as its territory, resulting in several potentially dangerous confrontations.³⁹³ Washington also developed closer ties with Taiwan and sold weapons to its government on at least eleven different occasions in recent years, infuriating PRC leaders.³⁹⁴ Since 2018, the risk of a major military confrontation over the South China Sea or Taiwan has significantly increased. The prospect of a cataclysmic, even nuclear, war between the two countries is no longer unthinkable.³⁹⁵ Trump's racist characterization of COVID-19 as "the China virus" and "Kung-flu," his attempts to scapegoat the People's Republic for virus deaths in the United States, and his issuance of sanctions

against Chinese leaders because of events in Hong Kong have further poisoned relations between the two countries.³⁹⁶

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE “WAR ON TERROR”

After assuming office, Trump authorized only a handful of drone strikes against Pakistan but significantly increased the number of these attacks in Yemen and Somalia.³⁹⁷ More than twelve hundred people died in U.S. aerial attacks there during the first three years of Trump’s presidency.³⁹⁸ At least several hundred others perished in Somalia because of U.S. and allied ground operations against Al-Shabab forces.³⁹⁹ Trump also approved troop deployments and military assistance to other African nations he has derided as “shithole countries.”⁴⁰⁰ In Nigeria, insurgencies by Boko Haram and a group called the Islamic State in West Africa Province posed a serious challenge to the federal government. Dismissing long-standing concerns about the brutality and corruption of the Nigerian army, the Trump administration sold combat aircraft, weapons, and military equipment to Abuja and deployed U.S. military personnel to train its soldiers.⁴⁰¹ By 2019, approximately 350,000 people, primarily children, had died in the conflict, mainly because of starvation and disease.⁴⁰² Although the religious extremists have killed indiscriminately, the Nigerian army and allied militias are responsible for more than half of the violent deaths, and many of their victims have been civilians, too.⁴⁰³ The United States also sent troops to join in putative counterterrorism operations in Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Uganda, Niger, and Tunisia despite grave problems with regime, ethnic, or gender violence in these countries.⁴⁰⁴ Like his predecessors, Trump was not concerned that U.S. intervention often fuels the growth of extremist forces.⁴⁰⁵ His administration’s pledge to increase investment in Africa, which aimed to counter China’s presence on the continent, was never fulfilled. He eventually planned to reduce or end military deployments there.⁴⁰⁶ In December 2020, Trump ordered the withdrawal of most U.S. forces from Somalia. Although about a hundred U.S. military personnel remained to support the government, Al-Shabab was “at its strongest in years.”⁴⁰⁷

CONTINUING THE WAR AGAINST YEMEN

In May 2017, Trump chose Saudi Arabia, one of the world's most repressive countries but a longtime U.S. ally, as his first foreign destination after becoming president. He later boasted that the Saudis had committed to purchasing hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. weapons and military equipment, but this claim turned out to be greatly exaggerated.⁴⁰⁸ However, the visit signaled closer relations with Riyadh and stronger support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. The Trump administration resumed the sale of precision guidance munitions systems to the Saudis and the sharing of military intelligence related to the conflict.⁴⁰⁹ Washington deployed commandos to Yemen to help locate and destroy rebel missile caches and launch sites.⁴¹⁰ The United States also launched air and ground strikes against al-Qaida fighters who emerged in Yemen because of the carnage caused by the war.⁴¹¹ However, the U.S.-backed coalition sometimes recruited or "cut deals" with these fighters, effectively placing Washington "on the same side" with them.⁴¹² Not even the murder and dismemberment of the U.S. resident and journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents in Istanbul in 2018 could weaken Trump's embrace of the House of Saud.⁴¹³ In April 2019, Congress passed a historic resolution that invoked the War Powers Act and called for an end to U.S. involvement in the conflict.⁴¹⁴ However, Trump vetoed the resolution, falsely claiming it violated his constitutional authority as commander in chief.⁴¹⁵ By December 2020, approximately 233,000 people had died because of the war in Yemen.⁴¹⁶ After his inauguration as president, Joseph Biden promised to help end this conflict, but his administration continued to sell weapons and military equipment to the Saudis, and the carnage in Yemen continued.⁴¹⁷

THE END OF THE U.S. WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Although Trump had criticized the US wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria during his presidential campaign, he deployed thousands of additional troops to these countries during his first year in office.⁴¹⁸

Trump also significantly increased aerial bombardment—and civilian casualties—in Afghanistan.⁴¹⁹ At a July 2017 meeting, Trump told his advisers that the United States should demand a share of Afghanistan's enormous mineral wealth as compensation for backing his regime.⁴²⁰ Afghan President Ashraf Ghani later agreed to work with U.S. companies to explore and extract minerals.⁴²¹ In October 2018, the Afghan government signed contracts with the U.S.-based Centar company to develop two sites with copper and gold deposits.⁴²² The U.S. Geological Survey also signed a letter of intent to assist with resource development and marketing.⁴²³ The deteriorating military situation soon jeopardized these arrangements, however. The Afghan government was widely reviled as corrupt, the Taliban controlled much of the country, and Trump was no more successful than his predecessors in changing these realities.⁴²⁴ In late 2018, U.S. officials began negotiating directly with the Taliban without the participation of the Kabul regime. The Trump administration and the insurgents signed a peace agreement in February 2020. In exchange for the Taliban's promise to prohibit Al-Qaida operations in areas they control and to seek a peaceful accommodation with the Afghan government, Washington committed to withdrawing its troops from the country.⁴²⁵ Most U.S. military personnel had departed by November 2020, and Trump announced a further reduction at that time.⁴²⁶ In the summer of 2021, Biden withdrew the remaining U.S. military personnel from Afghanistan, and the Taliban came to power within days. More than 100,000 Afghans have died as a result of the war since 2013.⁴²⁷

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CALIPHATE IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

Trump embraced Obama's commitment to defeating the Islamic State, continued bombing its positions in Iraq and Syria, and expanded U.S. ground operations in Syria.⁴²⁸ Like Obama, Trump showed little concern for the resulting casualties in these countries. The airstrikes and other military actions against the Islamic State authorized by the two presidents killed not only scores of thousands of their fighters but also

tens of thousands of noncombatants.⁴²⁹ In other respects, Trump's "radical American imperialism" in Iraq and Syria differed from his predecessors. On two occasions in 2017, Trump told Iraq's then-prime minister Haider al-Abadi that Washington should be compensated with oil for supporting his government.⁴³⁰ Al-Abadi pointed out that U.S. companies had already obtained significant interests in Iraq's oil industry.⁴³¹ Trump finally gave up on the idea, but when he made a surprise visit to U.S. troops in Iraq in December 2018, he did not meet with the new Iraqi leader, Adil Abdul-Mahdi.⁴³² In Syria, Trump authorized the bombing of government military bases in 2017 and 2018 after Assad's forces allegedly used chemical agents.⁴³³ U.S. troops also killed about one hundred Russian military contractors fighting for the Syrian government after they reportedly entered protective zones for the SDF in early 2018.⁴³⁴ However, Trump abandoned the long-standing U.S. objective of ousting the Assad regime and stopped training and arming anti-Assad insurgents.⁴³⁵

In Iraq, most ground operations against Islamic State forces were conducted by Popular Mobilization forces—militias largely trained, equipped, and led by Iran—and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters.⁴³⁶ In Syria, most of the fighting on land was done by the Assad government and its Russian, Iranian, and Lebanese allies, though the SDF also played an important role.⁴³⁷ By December 2017, Islamic State forces had been defeated in Iraq. More than 120,000 people, predominantly noncombatants, had died in the continuing conflicts in Iraq since 2012.⁴³⁸ In December 2018, with only one small area of Syria still under Islamic State control, Trump proclaimed victory.⁴³⁹ However, his announcement that he would withdraw the two thousand U.S. troops in Syria met with blistering bipartisan opposition, and he agreed to maintain a smaller force in the country.⁴⁴⁰ In February 2019, Trump's declaration that he wanted to keep troops in Iraq "to watch Iran" sparked widespread outrage and demands for U.S. withdrawal.⁴⁴¹ Eight months later, he betrayed the SDF forces when he allowed Turkish troops to enter northern Syria, kill hundreds of fighters and civilians, and drive them out of the region.⁴⁴²

By mid-2020, U.S. and SDF forces had reconciled and were extracting oil in northeastern Syria and transporting it by trucks to Iraq.⁴⁴³ When Trump announced his intention to withdraw some troops from Iraq in November 2020, members of Congress from both parties demanded that Washington maintain a robust military presence there and in Syria.⁴⁴⁴

AGGRESSION AGAINST IRAN

Trump was not the first U.S. official to claim that Iran is “the leading state sponsor of terror,” a spurious accusation belied by the long history of U.S. imperialism, Israeli settler colonialism, and Saudi support for Al-Qaida and other religious extremists.⁴⁴⁵ But Trump took a much more aggressive posture toward the Islamic Republic than Obama throughout his term as president. In May 2018, Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s nuclear energy program and reinstated punishing economic sanctions against Tehran.⁴⁴⁶ By effectively limiting the importation of medical supplies and humanitarian goods, those sanctions have contributed to the deaths of thousands of people in Iran.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, Trump backed Israeli military attacks on Iranian forces in Syria and encouraged Jerusalem and Riyadh to ally against Tehran.⁴⁴⁸ His National Security Advisor in 2018–19, John Bolton, had long called for bombing Iran and bringing about regime change.⁴⁴⁹ In June 2018, Trump threatened to make Iran “suffer consequences the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before,” and in May 2019, he threatened to bring about “the official end of Iran.”⁴⁵⁰

In January 2020, a U.S. drone killed Iranian General Qassim Suleimani and several Iraqi militia leaders in Baghdad, an action condemned throughout much of West Asia and beyond.⁴⁵¹ Trump asked senior advisers in mid-November 2020 for options on military strikes against Iran’s main nuclear site at Natanz.⁴⁵² Although he was dissuaded by advisers’ warnings on the risk of a regional war, he likely gave a “go-ahead” for the Israeli assassination of Iran’s top nuclear scientist later that month.⁴⁵³

THE ENTHUSIASTIC EMBRACE OF AUTHORITARIAN RULERS

Trump's curious affinity for Vladimir Putin has been widely noted, but the Russian leader was not the only autocrat to whom the U.S. president was drawn. Military, financial, and political support for right-wing regimes and movements has long been a central feature of U.S. foreign policy. Trump, however, was distinctive among modern presidents in his open, enthusiastic embrace of authoritarian rulers in client states. He backed Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte's "War on Drugs," which has led to approximately 30,000 extrajudicial murders.⁴⁵⁴ Trump called Egyptian President Sisi "my favorite dictator" and continued the flow of weapons and cash that has enabled his regime to kill thousands of people in the past several years.⁴⁵⁵ Trump described himself as "a big fan" of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan despite Ankara's deadly intervention in Syria and the mass imprisonment of Kurds and other political opponents at home.⁴⁵⁶ Trump endorsed the reelection of pro-U.S. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández in November 2017 despite electoral fraud and the murder of dozens of people protesting against it.⁴⁵⁷ The United States has also continued to fund and arm the right-wing Colombian government, whose supporters have been responsible for killing more than 850 former guerrillas and social justice activists between 2016 and 2019.⁴⁵⁸

BACKING COUPS IN VENEZUELA AND BOLIVIA

In stark contrast, the Trump administration sought to oust the Venezuelan government of Nicolás Maduro by imposing new, harsher economic sanctions and a de facto embargo on Venezuelan oil. During the Trump years, U.S. officials also financially supported right-wing opposition groups, deployed CIA agents to encourage a military coup, officially recognized a right-wing opposition legislator as president, and placed Venezuelan financial assets in the United States under his control.⁴⁵⁹ In addition, Trump repeatedly declared that U.S. military intervention in Venezuela remains "an option."⁴⁶⁰ The Maduro

government survived the coup effort because many Venezuelans and the armed forces continued to support the Bolivarian Revolution.⁴⁶¹ But U.S. sanctions caused more than 40,000 deaths in Venezuela in 2017–18, and armed conflict between the U.S.-backed opposition and the government led to at least two hundred deaths.⁴⁶²

In Bolivia in November 2019, the military and police forced the newly reelected leftist President Evo Morales to leave office. The Trump administration quickly recognized the new regime installed by the putschists. Claiming that the election had been marred by fraud, Washington renewed long-suspended financial aid to Bolivia, and the CIA and State Department provided political advice to the new government while it killed scores of people protesting against the coup.⁴⁶³ Those fraud claims were soon disproved, and new elections in October 2020 returned Morales's Movement Toward Socialism to power.⁴⁶⁴

COUNTING THE DEAD

Between 1980 and 2020, two U.S. wars and sanctions in Iraq and the U.S. war in Afghanistan killed more than two million people. Washington's proxy wars in Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria resulted in roughly nine million deaths. U.S. military intervention, support for client states and rebels, and related famines in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria cost the lives of another five million people. The U.S. Empire's role in the collapse of most socialist regimes made it partly responsible for well over seven million deaths. Other U.S. military interventions and hostile actions abroad caused or contributed to millions of additional fatalities. Altogether, the empire was responsible or shared responsibility for the deaths of more than 25 million people during the past forty years of Pax Americana. This total is in addition to the massive ongoing loss of life in the Indigenous Peoples Holocaust, the African American Holocaust, the Workers Holocaust, and the other holocausts at home and abroad to be examined in chapter 7. Today the Biden administration hopes to revitalize the liberal

international order, rebuild relationships with its client states, impede the rise of China, and thwart the return of Russia. But the erosion of U.S. primacy will continue, and the possibility that the ruling class will act like a “wounded beast” and commit heinous new crimes means that the entire planet may be entering the most dangerous chapter in its history.

Other Holocausts at Home and Abroad

Violence continues to sustain the U.S. Empire in never-ending wars that have killed and displaced millions this century. Part of the consequences of this permanent state of violence is seen most recently in El Paso, Dayton, and Gilroy. . . . The high rates of murder and the increasing number of mass shootings in the United States are indicative of a society engulfed in fears fueled by racism, xenophobia, misogyny, militarism, and growing inequalities in income, wealth, and power.

—HOWIE HAWKINS, “THE U.S. CULTURE OF VIOLENCE IS REAPING WHAT IT HAS SOWN,” 2019

Consider the companies that knowingly market unsafe products, everything from cars to medications to toys; consider the multinational firms that knowingly sell addictive and injurious tobacco products here and abroad . . . that kill hundreds of thousands every year in the United States alone. Many more people sustain injury, loss, and death from the doings of corporate America than from street crime. There is no social formation more profoundly immoral than a big capitalist corporation.

—MICHAEL PARENTI, *AMERICA BESIEGED*, 2001

In addition to the holocausts inflicted on Indigenous people, people of African descent, workers, and the victims of U.S. wars, military interventions, and hostile actions in other countries, the U.S. Empire has been responsible for other kinds of mass death at home and abroad. This country's long history of armed conflicts has resulted in an enormous number of U.S. military and civilian fatalities.¹ White mob and vigilante violence, police murders, political repression, incarceration, and government actions against migrants have taken a terrible human toll.² Along with these forms of carnage, widespread homicides and suicides have made the United States the world's most violent advanced capitalist society.³ Far-right and other extremist violence have proved deadly for many people, as well.⁴ Various forms of large-scale social murder continue to occur today, claiming far greater numbers of lives. The profit-driven proliferation of dangerous drugs, tobacco, automobiles, and other unsafe consumer products has led to horrific human costs in this country and other nations.⁵ Unconscionable medical experimentation, the failure to address public health crises, limited access to quality health care, and often dangerous medical treatments have produced mass death as well.⁶ Moreover, the U.S. Empire's sordid record of environmental pollution has killed vast multitudes of people and now threatens the future of the planet.⁷

U.S. DEATHS IN THE EMPIRE'S WARS

The main victims of the empire's wars have generally been people in other lands, but U.S. military personnel and noncombatants have also paid a heavy price. Twenty-six thousand members of the Continental Army and state militias died fighting for the new United States during the War of Independence.⁸ Twenty thousand U.S. soldiers died during the War of 1812.⁹ Just under 14,000 U.S. troops perished during the Mexican War, and more died later from diseases contracted during the war.¹⁰ The total number of deaths in the Civil War likely exceeded one million.¹¹ In 1894, the Census Bureau estimated that 19,000 white people had died in the wars that nearly annihilated Indigenous

peoples, and this was probably an underestimate.¹² Approximately 6,000 U.S. troops died during the War of 1898, almost entirely because of disease in the war zone and in training camps at home.¹³ Another 4,200 soldiers died during the bloody war against the people of the Philippines between 1899 and 1913.¹⁴ Although Washington did not officially enter the First World War until April 1917, more than 120,000 U.S. troops lost their lives in this “imperial bloodbath.”¹⁵

More than 400,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and other military personnel died in the Second World War.¹⁶ Almost 37,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces died in the Korean War.¹⁷ More than 58,000 perished in the Vietnam War, but the total number of U.S. deaths caused by this conflict was far larger.¹⁸ A roughly equivalent number of Vietnam veterans died later from the effects of exposure to Agent Orange, the deadly herbicide widely used by the United States during the war.¹⁹ And a similar number of Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since returning home.²⁰ About 380 U.S. military personnel died in the Gulf War of 1990–91.²¹ More than 2,400 U.S. troops lost their lives in the Afghanistan War.²² Over 4,500 died in the Iraq War.²³ Uncounted hundreds of U.S. nationals working as mercenaries and military contractors have also died in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁴ U.S. combatants and other U.S. nationals have also died in smaller-scale military operations from the “Quasi War” fought primarily off the East Coast and in the Caribbean between 1798 and 1800 to the current military interventions in Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and other countries. Altogether, well over 1.8 million people of the United States have perished in this country’s wars since 1775.

OTHER WHITE MOB AND VIGILANTE VIOLENCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The most horrific examples of white mob and vigilante violence in the nineteenth century may have been the genocide against Indigenous people in midcentury California and the mass terror against people of African descent in the South after the Civil War. Such violence has been primarily used against Native and Black people, but it has also

been directed against other people of color, immigrants, religious minorities, dissidents, and radicals. Bigots killed seventeen Mormons in Missouri in 1837 and murdered Mormon leader Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in Illinois in 1844.²⁵ A pro-slavery mob fatally shot the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy in 1837 in Illinois.²⁶ Anti-Catholic violence claimed more than forty-five people in Philadelphia in 1844 and in St. Louis a decade later.²⁷ About thirty people died in violence initiated by the nativist Know Nothing Party in Baltimore in 1856.²⁸ More than fifty people died in the conflict between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces in “Bleeding Kansas” between 1855 and 1860.²⁹

In the second half of the century, white mobs and vigilantes murdered several hundred Mexican Americans in Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming, Nebraska, and other states.³⁰ Racists killed as many as three hundred Chinese immigrants in California, Washington, Colorado, and Wyoming between the 1850s and the 1880s.³¹ More than sixty Catholics and Protestants perished in the Orange Riots in New York City in 1870–1871.³² Bigots killed several Mormons in Georgia, Tennessee, and Utah in the 1880s.³³ Mobs hanged and shot to death eleven Italian Americans in New Orleans in 1891 and murdered several others in Louisiana in the following years.³⁴ Anti-Semitic vigilantes lynched Leo Frank in Atlanta in 1913.³⁵

POLICE MURDERS AND POLITICAL REPRESSION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first police departments were created in Boston in 1838, New York City in 1845, and Chicago in 1851 and were intended to protect capitalist property and maintain social control over the rapidly growing immigrant population.³⁶ The police departments that emerged in Southern cities evolved from the slave patrols created to apprehend escapees, punish those who violated plantation rules, and to deter or respond to resistance.³⁷ Gary Potter has explained: “Early American police departments shared two primary characteristics: they were notoriously corrupt and flagrantly brutal.”³⁸ Police officers in some

cities injured and even killed people by “clubbing” them with batons or nightsticks, and the growing use of handguns led to more deaths.³⁹ Reports of wrongful killings began to emerge soon after the establishment of police departments. As previously noted, police killed two tailors during a strike in New York City in 1850 and two railroad workers during a strike in Portage, New York, in 1851.⁴⁰ Cincinnati police killed a protester in 1853, and a New York City police officer fatally shot an unarmed man fleeing arrest in the back in 1858.⁴¹ Public complaints about the police mounted, and the phrase “police brutality” first appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1872.⁴² The exact number of routine police homicides in the United States in the nineteenth century will probably never be known. But law enforcement officers were responsible for some of the more than 50,000 deaths of African Americans in the South in the three decades after the Civil War.⁴³ Police were prominently involved in many of the murders of Mexican Americans in the second half of the century.⁴⁴ And they were responsible for many of the hundreds of deaths of workers engaged in strikes and other labor actions between 1870 and 1900.⁴⁵

POLICE MURDERS AND POLITICAL REPRESSION, 1900–1950

Strikingly, the federal government failed to maintain comprehensive national records of police homicides throughout the twentieth century.⁴⁶ In the early part of the century, most local law enforcement agencies did not maintain reliable records on these deaths, either.⁴⁷ Jeffrey S. Adler has pointed out that police in Chicago and New Orleans appear to have counted the number of people they killed. Chicago police reportedly killed 248 people between 1900 and 1920 and another eighty-nine in 1926–27.⁴⁸ New Orleans police reportedly killed fifty-nine people in fourteen years between 1925 and 1945.⁴⁹ Whether the records in these two cities are truly comprehensive is far from clear, and much less is known about police homicides in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore, and most other cities and towns across the country. More is known about law enforcement agents’ involvement in infamous episodes of racist violence and

political repression during this period. During the First Red Scare that began in 1919, the federal government arrested about ten thousand leftists, imprisoned more than four hundred, and deported more than five hundred, yet few deaths occurred in the process.⁵⁰

In contrast, law enforcement officers and vigilantes killed between two and three thousand Mexican Americans in South Texas in 1915–16 after a small armed rebellion had led to the deaths of about fifty white people.⁵¹ In 1918, Texas Rangers, soldiers, and white cattlemen shot to death fifteen men and boys of Mexican descent at Porvenir in West Texas.⁵² In addition, police were complicit in many of the several hundred African American deaths during the “Red Summer” of 1919 and in many of the lynchings and other racist murders that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵³ Law enforcement officers were also responsible for many of the several hundred workers’ deaths during strikes and other labor actions between 1900 and the late 1930s.⁵⁴

In 1931, a federal commission issued the *Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement*, which criticized “physical brutality” but failed to adequately assess the scope and significance of police murders.⁵⁵ Law enforcement officers throughout the country continued to kill workers of all backgrounds while disproportionately targeting African Americans and other people of color.⁵⁶ Police also continued to act against dissidents and radicals, though deaths brought about by political repression paled in comparison with routine police homicides. In 1927, the state of Massachusetts executed Italian immigrants and anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti for a murder they did not commit.⁵⁷ Police killed three people at a communist-led protest against the eviction of a family in Chicago in 1931.⁵⁸ Police in Dearborn, Michigan, killed four people at a communist-led protest by unemployed workers in 1932.⁵⁹ That same year, police in Washington, DC, killed two individuals who were part of the Bonus Army, a group of more than 20,000 unemployed veterans demanding immediate payment of promised bonuses for serving in the First World War.⁶⁰ Between 1935 and 1937, police violence against Puerto Rican nationalists resulted in twenty-eight deaths.⁶¹ Although data on routine

police killings between 1900 and 1949 are fragmentary, it may be conservatively estimated that the annual number of police homicides in the first half of the twentieth century was around two hundred. This indicates a total of about ten thousand such deaths between 1900 and 1949, to which must be added more than three thousand deaths of Blacks, Mexican Americans, and workers in the special episodes of repression during this period.

POLICE MURDERS AND POLITICAL REPRESSION, 1950–2000

The Census Bureau and other federal agencies finally began to collect data on police killings in 1949, but their estimates omitted about 50 percent of the fatalities.⁶² Close to five hundred people were dying each year at the hands of law enforcement officers in the 1950s.⁶³ And the annual number of police homicides significantly increased in the following decades. By the first half of the 1970s, police were killing more than seven hundred people each year and the human toll continued to climb, but government statistics still excluded half the deaths.⁶⁴ Black people bore the brunt of state and vigilante violence during the 1950s and 1960s. Police and vigilantes murdered about 125 civil rights activists and supporters, and the police and FBI killed at least thirty-four Black Panthers.⁶⁵ More than two hundred people—primarily African Americans—lost their lives during the “protest riots” of the 1960s.⁶⁶ Law enforcement agents killed other people as well. Police, FBI agents, and National Guard troops killed dozens of people in the nationalist rebellion in Puerto Rico in 1950.⁶⁷ After the Second Red Scare began in 1947, ten or twelve thousand people lost their jobs, a few hundred Marxist-Leninists were imprisoned, and the Communist Party was almost destroyed.⁶⁸ The execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 for espionage smeared communists as Soviet spies, but they were not the only fatalities. More than ten leftists and progressives committed suicide as life under McCarthyism grew more repressive; at least three died from “the stress of the investigations and blacklists,” and a few were murdered.⁶⁹

National Guard troops killed Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra

Scheuer, and William Knox during antiwar protests at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970.⁷⁰ That same year, police killed journalist Ruben Salazar and two other people during the Chicano Anti-War Moratorium in Los Angeles.⁷¹ Government agents and allied tribal forces killed more than sixty Indigenous activists in the 1970s.⁷² In 1974, after exposing radioactive contamination at a Kerr-McGee nuclear fuel plant in Oklahoma, Karen Silkwood died in a mysterious car accident on her way to meet a reporter.⁷³ In 1976, a CIA agent working with the Pinochet dictatorship organized the assassination of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier and his colleague Ronni Moffitt in Washington, DC.⁷⁴ The FBI and local police were complicit in the murders of five communists by Klan members and neo-Nazis in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979.⁷⁵ Puerto Rican independence activist Angel Rodríguez-Cristóbal was mysteriously murdered in his federal prison cell in Florida in 1979.⁷⁶ Philadelphia police killed eleven people when they bombed the home of the African American MOVE group in 1985.⁷⁷ In 1993, when federal agents tried to search the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, and arrest its leader David Koresh on firearms charges, the ensuing gun battle killed four agents and six cult members. After unsuccessfully seeking the surrender of Koresh and his followers for fifty-one days, the FBI used tear gas to try to force them out of the compound. Fires broke out on the property, and Koresh and seventy-five other Branch Davidians died.⁷⁸

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, police continued to kill African Americans, Indigenous people, Latinos, Asian Americans, and people of European descent with alarming regularity. Thousands upon thousands died, and by the end of the 1990s, the police were killing close to nine hundred people each year.⁷⁹ Some of the most prominent African American victims during this period are listed in chapter 2. Some of the most prominent non-Black victims were Santos Rodriguez in Dallas in 1973; Joe Campos Torres in Houston in 1977; Luis Baez in New York in 1979; Jeff Cordova and Juan Luis Garcia in Longmont, Colorado, in 1980; Leonard Zuchel in Denver in 1985; Manuel Diaz in Los Angeles in 1987; Carmen Coria in

Perth Amboy, New Jersey, in 1988; Anthony Baez, Anthony Rosario, and Hilton Vega in New York in 1994; Kuanchung Kao in Sonoma County, California, in 1997; and Abelino Montoya in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1998.⁸⁰ Data from the Census Bureau and other federal agencies indicate a total of just under 13,000 police homicides between 1949 and 1992, and extrapolations for 1993–99 indicate the official total between 1949 and 1999 was just under 15,000 deaths.⁸¹ Because government estimates included only half the officer-involved killings in the 1950s, it may be estimated that approximately 30,000 police homicides occurred in the second half of the twentieth century, to which must be added hundreds more in the special episodes of repression during this period.

POLICE MURDERS AND POLITICAL REPRESSION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the absence of sustained mass movements for social justice, violent political repression in the United States has been more limited during the past four decades. However, some high-profile killings have occurred. FBI agents shot to death Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a fighter for Puerto Rican independence, in 2005.⁸² Police killed anti-fascist activist Willem van Spronsen after he threw incendiary devices at ICE vehicles and buildings at a detention center in Tacoma, Washington, in 2019.⁸³ U.S. Marshals assassinated anti-fascist activist Michael Reinoehl, who was suspected of killing a right-wing activist, near Olympia, Washington, in 2020.⁸⁴ As always, vastly larger numbers have died because of routine police violence. And although law enforcement officers have continued to kill African Americans at a much higher rate than other demographic groups, thousands upon thousands of others have also perished at their hands in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Some of the most prominent non-Black victims during this period were Bich Cau Thi Tran in San Jose in 2003; Rigoberto Alpizar in Miami in 2005; Alvin Faitasi Itula in Salt Lake City in 2006; Michael Cho in La Habra, California, in 2007;

Steven Paul Crowels in Tulsa in 2009; Brian Claunch in Houston in 2012; Alex Nieto in San Francisco in 2014; Brandon Stanley in East Bernstadt, Kentucky, in 2016; Dennis Tuttle and Rhogena Nicholas in Houston; Li Xi Wang in Chico, California, in 2019; Erik Salgado in Oakland, California, in 2020; and Joseph Johnson in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in 2021.⁸⁵

Amid the widespread demonstrations sparked by the police killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice in 2014, the public learned that the federal government still did not have comprehensive national statistics on police homicides.⁸⁶ By this time, the Mapping Police Violence project and the Fatal Encounters project had begun tracking officer-involved deaths.⁸⁷ In 2015, the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian* also started counting the number of people who died at the hands of police each year.⁸⁸ These investigations soon confirmed that half of the people killed in interactions with police were not included in federal government databases in 2013–15.⁸⁹ Under growing public pressure, the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that approximately twelve hundred people had been killed by law enforcement officers between June 2015 and May 2016.⁹⁰ The federal government's commitment to tracking annual police killings soon faltered, but other researchers continued their work. The *Washington Post* found that officers shot to death almost one thousand people annually between 2015 and 2018.⁹¹ This estimate does not include individuals police have killed with Tasers, batons, their hands or knees, or police vehicles. The Mapping Police Violence project has reported that almost eleven hundred people die each year because of police actions.⁹² The Fatal Encounters database has indicated an average annual number of well over fourteen hundred deaths and a total of more than 31,000 deaths since 2000.⁹³

U.S. law enforcement officers kill many more people each year than their counterparts in other advanced capitalist countries.⁹⁴ The vast majority of these deaths are unnecessary and preventable.⁹⁵ Researchers with Mapping Police Violence have emphasized that the majority of all police killings in 2020 could have been avoided.⁹⁶ As the editors of the *Houston Chronicle* have pointed out, "Even for the

ones killed while armed, the mere presence of a gun can't be considered the sole justification for the use of government-sponsored lethal force.⁹⁷ Despite the paucity, incompleteness, and unreliability of official records, it can be roughly estimated that law enforcement officers have killed a minimum of nearly eighty thousand people—and possibly many more—since the mid-nineteenth century.

INCARCERATION DEATHS

Approximately sixteen thousand people have been officially executed since the beginning of the British colonial period, and it is widely recognized today that many of them were innocent.⁹⁸ However, many more people have died because of various kinds of incarceration in the United States. About two thousand Tsalagis perished in internment camps awaiting deportation to Oklahoma in 1838, and approximately three thousand Diné died while interned at Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico in 1864–67.⁹⁹ Tens of thousands of men, primarily African Americans, likely died while performing convict labor in harsh and dangerous conditions in southern states between the 1870s and the late 1920s.¹⁰⁰ During the Second World War, the U.S. government's internment of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese descent exacted a substantial human toll. Military guards killed at least seven and possibly more internees accused of trying to escape.¹⁰¹ More than eighteen hundred died from diseases in the camps, and many of these deaths were at least partly attributable to harsh conditions and inadequate health care.¹⁰² The impact of physical deprivation and psychological trauma on internees lasted for decades after the camps closed. Survey information developed by one researcher indicated that former internees had more than twice the risk of cardiovascular disease, cardiovascular mortality, and premature death than other people.¹⁰³ The number of premature deaths among Japanese Americans, at least partly caused by the internment experience, may have run into the thousands in the decades following the end of the Second World War.¹⁰⁴

The new wave of mass incarceration that began in the mid-1970s

increased the U.S. prisoner population from about 300,000 to more than two million.¹⁰⁵ With less than 5 percent of the world's population, this country holds almost 25 percent of its prisoners.¹⁰⁶ The disproportionate impact of mass incarceration on Blacks and Latinos is widely recognized today, but far less attention has been paid to the many deaths of prisoners. More than 10,000 prisoners died from suicide, homicide, "accidents," and other non-natural causes in U.S. prisons and jails between 1981 and 2000.¹⁰⁷ More than 12,000 died of non-natural causes between 2000 and 2018.¹⁰⁸ Local jail and state and federal prison authorities are responsible for these deaths and many of the thousands of fatalities resulting from diseases.¹⁰⁹ A 2017 study concluded that many prisoners' deaths could be prevented if adequate medical care were provided in their institutions.¹¹⁰

GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AGAINST MIGRANTS

From its first years, the U.S. government encouraged immigration so there would be enough people to settle the lands forcibly taken from Indigenous people and perform the labor required for capitalist economic development. However, historically racist federal immigration law largely excluded people of color from migrating to the United States until the mid-1960s.¹¹¹ Repressive government actions against migrants have taken a considerable human toll over time. During the first half of the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of people arriving at Ellis Island were detained, sometimes for months, and more than 120,000 of them were deported to their home countries.¹¹² During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the government deported about one million people of Mexican descent.¹¹³ About 60 percent of them were U.S. citizens.¹¹⁴ Hundreds of people died while being deported.¹¹⁵ In 1939, the United States turned away a ship carrying about nine hundred Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. More than 250 of them later perished in the *Shoah*.¹¹⁶ Also in 1939, Congress rejected a bill allowing 20,000 German Jewish children to come to this country. Many of these children almost certainly perished in the years that followed.¹¹⁷ Between the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s, the U.S.

government deported approximately one million Mexican migrants who were not part of the Bracero temporary worker program.¹¹⁸ This second mass deportation led to hundreds of deaths.¹¹⁹ Since 1994, the militarization of the southern border has contributed to as many as ten thousand migrant deaths.¹²⁰ Since 2004, almost 200 migrants have died after being detained, and more than 130 more have died after being deported.¹²¹

HOMICIDES

The status of the United States as the most violent advanced capitalist society in the world is well deserved, but unsurprising given its history of settler colonialism, slavery, white supremacy, class exploitation, imperialist wars, and misogyny. Strikingly, routine homicides and suicides have taken a much greater human toll than state, mob, and vigilante violence for more than a century. The historical and contemporary legitimization of violence and broad access to firearms contribute to current homicide rates far higher than those in Canada, Western Europe, and Japan.¹²² Hundreds of mass shootings, not motivated by racism or political extremism, occur each year at restaurants, theaters, schools, workplaces, and other venues, and they have become an ugly but prominent feature of life in this society.¹²³ Twenty-two people died at a McDonald's restaurant in San Ysidro, California, in 1984.¹²⁴ Twenty-four died at a Luby's restaurant in Killeen, Texas, in 1991.¹²⁵ Thirty-two people lost their lives at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia, in 2007.¹²⁶ Twenty children and six adults perished at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012.¹²⁷ Sixty people died at a country music fair in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2017.¹²⁸ Twenty-six were shot to death at a church in Sutherland Spring, Texas, the same year.¹²⁹ Mass shootings involving fewer fatalities occur almost every day.¹³⁰

However, deaths resulting from mass shootings account for only a small percentage of gun murders each year.¹³¹ In 2020, approximately 19,400 homicides occurred, mostly through firearms violence.¹³² Blacks suffer disproportionately from this public health crisis.¹³³

Although the large annual number of homicides is clearly a major public health problem, federal legislation effectively precluded using federal funds for the scientific study of this issue between 1996 and 2019.¹³⁴ The number of routine homicides in the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century may have run into the hundreds of thousands, not including the killing of Indigenous people, enslaved Black people, the deaths during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the murders of Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans.¹³⁵ Available if incomplete records indicate that well over 1.5 million homicides occurred in this country between 1900 and 2020.¹³⁶

SUICIDES

Although suicides are not as widely publicized as homicides, they have been even more common during the past 120 years. The suicide rate in the United States is higher than in any other advanced capitalist country and has significantly increased in recent decades;¹³⁷ 44,834 people took their own lives in 2020.¹³⁸ About half of all annual suicides involve the use of a firearm.¹³⁹ The suicide rate is most pronounced among Indigenous people and veterans of the U.S. armed forces.¹⁴⁰ Yet during the past twenty years, suicide rates have substantially increased among middle-aged rural white residents with a high school education or less.¹⁴¹ As Anne Case and Angus Deaton have argued, these suicides have been fueled by long-term declines in economic opportunities, wages, and social support systems and are an important portion of the “deaths of despair” that have raised the overall mortality rate in this country.¹⁴² At the same time, youth suicide rates have grown dramatically since 2007, and over 6,800 people between the ages of ten and twenty-four killed themselves in 2018.¹⁴³ Well over 2.6 million people have died by their own hands since 1900.¹⁴⁴

OTHER RACIST AND FAR-RIGHT VIOLENCE SINCE 1970

In addition to the continuing murders of African Americans, far-right extremists and other racists have claimed many other victims

since 1970. Amid mounting protests for inclusion and equality at the University of Colorado in Boulder, six Chicano activists were killed by car bombs in 1974. The assassins have never been identified.¹⁴⁵ In 1982, two white racists in Michigan beat Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, to death.¹⁴⁶ In 1984, members of The Order, a neo-Nazi organization, assassinated Jewish radio host Alan Berg in Denver.¹⁴⁷ During the 1980s, a right-wing émigré group killed eleven journalists, publishers, and activists who advocated U.S. recognition of the communist-led government of Vietnam.¹⁴⁸ In 1992, white supremacist Randy Weaver killed a deputy marshal while resisting arrest for firearms violations in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Weaver's wife and son were also killed.¹⁴⁹ In 1993–94, anti-choice activists murdered two doctors and a bodyguard at abortion clinics in Pensacola, Florida.¹⁵⁰ Neo-Nazis Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols killed 168 men, women, and children when they bombed a federal office building in Oklahoma City in 1995.¹⁵¹ Far-right extremist Eric Rudolph killed one person when he bombed the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta in 1996 and two people at an abortion clinic in Birmingham in 1998.¹⁵² A self-described “sovereign citizen” killed two state troopers, a judge, and a local newspaper editor in Colebrook, New Hampshire, in 1997.¹⁵³ The next year, homophobes murdered Matthew Shepard near Laramie, Wyoming.¹⁵⁴ Also in 1998, neo-Nazis killed two antiracist activists in Las Vegas.¹⁵⁵

Shortly after Al-Qaida attacked U.S. targets in September 2001, a member of a white supremacist organization seeking vengeance murdered a Pakistani American and an Indian American in Texas.¹⁵⁶ In 2003, “sovereign citizens” killed two police officers in South Carolina, and in 2004 individuals angry over the seventy-six deaths resulting from the federal government's siege against the Branch Davidian religious community in Waco, Texas, killed a bank guard in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹⁵⁷ A white supremacist killed a police officer in Arkansas in 2006, and anti-government extremists murdered two other officers in Woodburn, Oregon, in 2008.¹⁵⁸ Also in 2008, a white supremacist killed two members of a Unitarian congregation in Knoxville, Tennessee.¹⁵⁹ During the first half of 2009, an

anti-immigrant activist murdered two immigrants in Pima County, Arizona, an anti-choice extremist killed a doctor who performed abortions while he was at church in Wichita, Kansas, and a white supremacist killed a security guard at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.¹⁶⁰ In 2010, an anti-tax protester killed himself and another person when he flew a small plane into a building that housed Internal Revenue Service offices in Austin, Texas.¹⁶¹ That same year, two white supremacists killed four people in Washington, Oregon, and California.¹⁶²

In 2012, a racist skinhead murdered six Sikhs at a temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and a group of “sovereign citizens” killed two sheriff’s deputies in LaPlace, Louisiana.¹⁶³ The same year, an anti-government extremist killed a Transportation Security Administration worker at the Los Angeles International Airport.¹⁶⁴ In 2014, a neo-Nazi murdered three people outside a Jewish community center and retirement home in Overland Park, Kansas, and a right-wing extremist married couple killed two police officers and a third person before being shot dead in Las Vegas, Nevada.¹⁶⁵ In 2015, a white supremacist killed two people at a movie theater in Lafayette, Louisiana, and then himself.¹⁶⁶ Later that year, an anti-abortion extremist killed three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado.¹⁶⁷ After armed “sovereign citizens” and militia members seized a national wildlife refuge in Harney County, Oregon, in 2016, one of them was shot dead by state police officers.¹⁶⁸ Later that year, a white supremacist murdered an Arab American man in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹⁶⁹

Donald J. Trump’s virulently racist campaign and presidency contributed to a significant increase in hate crimes, and some of them were deadly.¹⁷⁰ In February 2017, a white man making anti-immigrant remarks killed an Indian engineer at a bar in Olathe, Kansas.¹⁷¹ In May 2017, a neo-Nazi who had converted to Islam murdered two fascist roommates in Tampa, Florida, and a white supremacist killed two men on a train in Portland, Oregon, after they objected to his harassment of two Muslim women.¹⁷² In August 2017, a neo-Nazi attending the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, killed Heather

Heyer when he drove his car into a crowd of anti-fascist counter-demonstrators.¹⁷³ In December 2017, a neo-Nazi murdered his girlfriend's mother and father in Reston, Virginia.¹⁷⁴ In January 2018, another neo-Nazi stabbed to death a young gay Jewish man in Orange County, California.¹⁷⁵ In February 2018, a former student known for his white supremacist views murdered seventeen people at a high school in Parkland, Florida.¹⁷⁶ The same month, a "sovereign citizen" killed a police officer in Henry County, Georgia.¹⁷⁷ In April 2018, a "sovereign citizen" killed four people at a restaurant in Nashville.¹⁷⁸ In October 2018, a virulent anti-Semite murdered eleven people during services at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in October.¹⁷⁹ In November 2018, a misogynist, racist extremist shot dead two people at a yoga studio in Tallahassee in November.¹⁸⁰

In March 2019, a QAnon follower killed a reputed mob boss in New York.¹⁸¹ In April 2019, a neo-Nazi and his wife murdered an elderly man in Tucson and stole hundreds of his firearms.¹⁸² That month, after setting a fire at a mosque in another town, a white supremacist killed a woman at a synagogue in Poway, California.¹⁸³ In July 2019, a young white supremacist and misogynist killed three people at a garlic festival in Gilroy, California.¹⁸⁴ In August 2019, a racist who parroted Trump's language about an immigrant "invasion" of the United States murdered twenty-three people at a Walmart in predominantly Latino El Paso, Texas.¹⁸⁵ In February 2020, a white supremacist fatally shot a police officer in Kimberly, Alabama.¹⁸⁶ In March, an anti-government extremist killed a police officer north of Ely, Nevada.¹⁸⁷ In May 2020, two far-right Boogaloo adherents gunned down a federal security officer at a court in Oakland, California.¹⁸⁸ In July 2020, a misogynist attacked the home of a federal judge and killed her son.¹⁸⁹

That same month, a right-wing U.S. Army sergeant killed an anti-fascist demonstrator in Austin, Texas.¹⁹⁰ In August 2020, a racist white teenager shot two people to death at a protest against police brutality in Kenosha, Wisconsin.¹⁹¹ In January 2021, the fascists and other Trump supporters who attacked Congress in an attempt to stop the certification of Biden's electoral victory were responsible for the deaths of one police officer and four of their own people.¹⁹² Four other

officers committed suicide in the aftermath of the failed insurrection.¹⁹³ In March 2021, a white man killed six Asian American women and two other people at Atlanta area spas.¹⁹⁴ The following month, a white man who had browsed white supremacist websites killed four Sikhs and four others at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis.¹⁹⁵ Despite denials by Trump and most other Republicans, it has become clear that white supremacists and other far-right individuals constitute the most dangerous terrorist threat in the United States today.¹⁹⁶ Between 1990 and 2020, right-wing extremists and other racists killed about seven hundred people in this country.¹⁹⁷

OTHER EXTREMIST VIOLENCE

During the past three decades, mounting opposition to the U.S. Empire, its client states, its wars in Muslim countries, and its support for Israel have led to unprecedented attacks on the United States by religious extremists and other people. Al-Qaida forces led by bin Laden turned against its former ally and benefactor after the United States stationed troops in Saudi Arabia, the “land of the two holiest sites,” in 1990.¹⁹⁸ In 1993, the first bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City by men with ties to Al-Qaida resulted in six deaths.¹⁹⁹ The same year, a Pakistani man angry about U.S. policy toward Palestine shot to death two CIA employees at the agency’s Langley, Virginia, headquarters.²⁰⁰ In 1995, disciples of bin Laden killed five U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia.²⁰¹ A year later, Al-Qaida declared war on the United States.²⁰² In 1998, its attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killed 240 people, including twelve U.S. nationals.²⁰³ In 2000, bin Laden’s forces killed seventeen U.S. sailors when they bombed the USS *Cole* in the port of Aden in Yemen.²⁰⁴ After Afghanistan’s Taliban refused to surrender bin Laden and Washington threatened them with “a carpet of bombs” in the summer of 2001, Al-Qaida operatives flew hijacked airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.²⁰⁵ Another hijacked airplane crashed in rural Pennsylvania after passengers fought back. Altogether, 2,977 people died on September 11, 2001.²⁰⁶

Although far-right and other racist attacks have claimed more victims since then, religious extremists have also killed many people. In 2006, a Pakistani American opposed to the U.S. role in West Asia killed a woman at the Jewish Federation Center in Seattle.²⁰⁷ In 2009, an Al-Qaida supporter killed a soldier at a military recruiting office in Little Rock, Arkansas. A U.S. Army captain shot thirteen soldiers at Fort Killeen in Texas because he opposed “illegal and immoral aggression against Muslims” in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁰⁸ In 2013, two Chechen immigrants opposed to these U.S. wars set off bombs at the Boston Marathon that killed two people and then shot to death a local police officer.²⁰⁹ An Islamic State adherent killed four people in New Jersey and Washington in 2014.²¹⁰ A Kuwaiti American murdered four Marines and one sailor at a military recruiting office in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 2015.²¹¹ That same year, a married couple with ties to the Islamic State killed fourteen co-workers in San Bernardino, California.²¹² In 2016, an Islamic State supporter murdered forty-nine people at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.²¹³ In 2017 another Islamic State adherent killed eight people when he drove his truck into a crowded bicycle lane in New York City.²¹⁴ In 2019, a Saudi Air Force cadet inspired by Al-Qaida killed three people while training with the U.S. military in Pensacola, Florida.²¹⁵ In the past two decades, religious extremists have been responsible for approximately 141 deaths.²¹⁶

THE PROFIT-DRIVEN PROLIFERATION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS

During the past two centuries, the profit-driven proliferation of dangerous drugs has led to an immense number of deaths at home and abroad. By the 1830s, the United States accounted for 20 to 30 percent of opium imports to China and took over much of this trade during the First Opium War in 1839–42.²¹⁷ Although U.S. imports of opium to China declined after the Second Opium War of 1856–60, the United States shared significant responsibility for the drug trade and its catastrophic results.²¹⁸ Tens of millions of Chinese people became addicted to opium in the nineteenth century, and related deaths likely numbered in the millions.²¹⁹ In the United States, widespread

use of “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup,” which contained morphine and alcohol, killed thousands of children in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.²²⁰ During the Civil War, injured or ill soldiers in both armies consumed “massive amounts” of opium and, more rarely, morphine, and many became addicted.²²¹ Decades after the war ended, doctors massively overprescribed morphine and other opiates for pain relief to veterans and affluent women.²²² Smoking opium also increased, particularly among Chinese immigrants and poor white urban men.²²³ Approximately 300,000 people were addicted to these drugs by the late nineteenth century, and thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, died because of their addiction between the 1870s and the 1920s.²²⁴

By the beginning of the twentieth century, cocaine and heroin were viewed as important new medicines and legally sold without prescription. But as public understanding of the addictiveness and other harms of these drugs grew, pressure mounted on the government to address the problem. New laws outlawed heroin and prohibited the non-medical use of opium, morphine, and cocaine.²²⁵ However, during the Prohibition era of 1920–33, the federal government ordered the poisoning of industrial alcohols to deter theft by bootleggers, which resulted in as many as ten thousand deaths.²²⁶ In 1937, at least 107 people died after using an antibiotic known as Elixir Sulfanilamide, a calamity that led Congress to create the Food and Drug Administration.²²⁷ In the 1950s, pharmaceutical companies and doctors promoted amphetamines for weight control, depression, and anxiety, and barbiturates for insomnia, anxiety, and anesthesia.²²⁸ The abuse of these drugs led to many thousands of fatalities in the following decades.²²⁹ A massive underground industry trafficking illegal drugs also arose. The resurgence of heroin and cocaine in the 1960s and 1970s, and the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s, resulted in more than 150,000 deaths.²³⁰ During the Cold War, U.S. support for drug-dealing syndicates and armies in Europe, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean contributed to countless other deaths.²³¹ More recently, an epidemic of drug overdose deaths resulting from prescribed opioids, illegally manufactured fentanyl

and methamphetamine, and heroin has fueled what Mike Stobbe has described as “the most widespread and deadly drug crisis in the nation’s history.”²³² During the year ending in April 2021, more than 100,000 people perished from overdoses, bringing the total number of deaths since 1999 to close to one million.²³³ The rate of overdose fatalities in the United States is much higher than in other advanced capitalist societies.²³⁴ These, too, are an important part of what Case and Deaton call “deaths of despair,” which contribute to increasing mortality in this country.²³⁵

TOBACCO: THE GOLDEN HOLOCAUST

In the twentieth century, the extraordinary expansion of the tobacco industry, cigarette smoking, and nicotine addiction led to an unimaginable loss of life in the United States and other countries. Even after doctors and scientists began warning of the grave health hazards associated with smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke in the 1950s, the drive for profits led tobacco companies to deny that their products were life-threatening, and consumption continued to grow.²³⁶ The result has been what Robert N. Proctor has called the “Golden Holocaust.”²³⁷ It may be roughly estimated that close to 28 million have died because of smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke in the United States, and another 480,000 people perish because of tobacco each year.²³⁸ Another five to ten million people have perished in other countries because of U.S. tobacco products, and millions more have died abroad because of tobacco products developed by multinational corporations in which U.S. companies were involved.²³⁹ Although U.S. companies now have a smaller share of the global tobacco market than they did in the past, they contribute annually to many of the approximately eight million tobacco-related deaths around the world.²⁴⁰

THE HUMAN COSTS OF AUTOMOBILES

For more than a century, the automobile and oil industries, their

lobbyists, and their political allies have promoted the production and marketing of automobiles at the expense of public transportation systems.²⁴¹ As a result, today public transit is relatively limited in this country, and people are much more dependent on cars, sport utility vehicles, and trucks than in other advanced capitalist societies.²⁴² Over time, this automobile-centered transportation system has contributed to economic and racial discrimination, social isolation, obesity, and air pollution.²⁴³ This dependence on automobiles has also led to innumerable accidents. Early on, cars were not designed with many safety features in mind, and while public pressure forced manufacturers to make important improvements, some vehicles continued to be, in Ralph Nader's words, "unsafe at any speed."²⁴⁴ Major design flaws, shoddy manufacturing, defective parts, and industry cover-ups proved fatal for more than four thousand drivers and passengers in Chevrolet's Corsair and Cobalt; Ford's Pinto, Explorer, and Bronco; various General Motors pickup trucks; Daimler-Chrysler Jeeps, Suzuki Samurai, and other vehicles since the 1960s.²⁴⁵ However, most automobile deaths have occurred because drivers have exceeded speed limits, been exhausted or intoxicated, or failed to use seatbelts, car seats, or booster seats.²⁴⁶ The rate of automobile fatalities is much greater here than in other advanced capitalist societies. Close to forty thousand people perish each year on U.S. highways, streets, and roads.²⁴⁷ Between 1899 and 2019, more than 3.8 million died because of vehicular accidents in this country.²⁴⁸

OTHER UNSAFE CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Since the 1970s, the aggressive marketing of infant formula to women in low- and middle-income countries has resulted in the deaths of millions upon millions of babies. Many of these deaths have occurred because women did not have access to clean water to mix with infant formula. Other deaths have happened because women could not afford the product and diluted it.²⁴⁹ Although the Swiss multinational corporation Nestlé and other foreign companies bear much responsibility for this staggering loss of life, so do Abbott Laboratories, Kraft Heinz, and

Mead Johnson of the United States.²⁵⁰ Defective and dangerous consumer products also result in an enormous loss of life here each year. These products include furniture, all-terrain vehicles, lawn mowers, generators, heaters, televisions, kitchen appliances, dryers, lamps, power tools, pools, hot tubs, clothes, toys, strollers, infant bibs, and household cleaning products.²⁵¹ Unsafe consumer products are implicated in the deaths of more than 25,000 people each year.²⁵² Although significant progress has been made in ensuring food safety during the past century, three thousand people continue to die annually because of foodborne diseases.²⁵³ In addition, processed foods “loaded up with salt, sugar, fat, strange additives, and refined grains and bereft of naturally occurring nutrients and antioxidants” contribute to about 310,000 deaths each year from heart disease, strokes, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and other largely preventable medical conditions.²⁵⁴

UNCONSCIONABLE MEDICAL EXPERIMENTATION

Unconscionable medical experimentation in the twentieth century killed close to two hundred African Americans and many other people at home and abroad.²⁵⁵ In 1905–1906, U.S. occupation forces in the Philippines killed at least seventeen prisoners by inducing beri-beri or injecting them with cholera. In the following decades, various medical experiments by doctors led to additional deaths.²⁵⁶ Two years after the Second World War ended, U.S. scientists infected thousands of Guatemalan sex workers, soldiers, psychiatric patients, and prisoners with syphilis, gonorrhea, and chancroid in experiments testing the efficacy of penicillin.²⁵⁷ The resulting deaths have never been definitively counted, but at least seventy-one infected psychiatric patients died during the experiments.²⁵⁸ The U.S. government also sponsored radiation experiments on several thousand hospital patients, disabled children, pregnant women, prisoners, and Alaska Natives between 1944 and 1974.²⁵⁹ The number of people who perished because of these experiments remains unknown today.

Between 1946 and 1962, the U.S. government deployed as many as 400,000 soldiers and sailors near atmospheric nuclear tests in the

Marshall Islands and Nevada.²⁶⁰ Clyde Haberman explained that these service members were used as “guinea pigs in studies of how combat troops might stand up in a war fought with nuclear arms.”²⁶¹ Many of them later developed cancer and other diseases, and in 1988 the federal government began providing special benefits to “atomic veterans” suffering from different kinds of cancer “presumptively” caused by exposure to radiation.²⁶² In 1995, President Clinton publicly apologized for these reprehensible experiments.²⁶³ By 2019, more than 4,600 veterans had been approved for benefits, but more than 3,500 other applications had been denied.²⁶⁴ Scientific research on the effects of nuclear testing on soldiers and sailors has been limited and has produced mixed results. But exposure to radiation likely contributed to thousands of premature deaths among veterans.²⁶⁵

THE FAILURE TO ADDRESS PUBLIC HEALTH CRISES

The scourge of gun violence and the opioid epidemic are not the only public health crises that the U.S. government has failed to adequately address. More than a hundred thousand women lost their lives in this country because they did not have the right to safe, legal abortions until the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973.²⁶⁶ In the 1980s, the Reagan administration embraced a “concerted policy of non-action” on the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome epidemic, and the subsequent Bush administration was still largely passive on HIV/AIDS.²⁶⁷ By 1995, more than 300,000 people had died from AIDS.²⁶⁸ Although the Clinton administration took action to address this epidemic at home, it joined pharmaceutical companies and other Western governments in blocking access to inexpensive medication to treat AIDS in African and Caribbean countries. Under intense public pressure, Clinton eventually changed course, but years of U.S. obstruction contributed to the deaths of untold millions of people.²⁶⁹

After the September 2001 attack in lower Manhattan, scientists warned that local residents faced significant air hazards, but authorities insisted that the area was safe.²⁷⁰ More than two thousand people

later died from exposure to toxins, more than fifty thousand New Yorkers are now ill with related diseases, and thousands of additional deaths are expected in the future.²⁷¹ Many of the approximately 1,800 Hurricane Katrina deaths in New Orleans in 2005 occurred because of the Bush administration's indifference to poor and Black residents.²⁷² Many of the roughly 4,600 Hurricane Maria deaths in Puerto Rico in 2017 resulted from the Trump administration's indifference to poor and Latino residents.²⁷³ Until recently, the federal government has been doing "next to nothing" to combat the ongoing opioid epidemic.²⁷⁴ Between February 2020 and May 2022, one million people perished from COVID-19 in the United States, considerably more than the loss of lives during the 1918–20 influenza pandemic.²⁷⁵ A substantial portion of these deaths occurred because Trump refused to acknowledge the scope of the crisis and take effective action based on science, and many of his supporters refused to get vaccinated or wear masks.²⁷⁶ Homelessness is an ongoing public health crisis in the United States. About half a million people lack permanent shelter, and approximately 13,000 die on the streets each year.²⁷⁷

LIMITED ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

Because private insurance remains the dominant form of coverage in the United States, health care generally remains a commodity, a product made to be sold for profit.²⁷⁸ As a result, health care continues to be unavailable or unaffordable for millions. As Roosa Tikkanen and Melinda K. Abrams have emphasized, "The U.S. has worse access to primary care, prevention, and chronic disease management compared to peer nations."²⁷⁹ Indigenous people and Blacks disproportionately suffer from inadequate access to quality health care, but many others face the same problem. Today approximately 37 million people do not have health insurance, and 68,000 die each year because they do not receive the medical care they need.²⁸⁰ Another 41 million do not have adequate access to health care and have to forgo doctor visits, medical treatment, and prescription drugs because of costs not covered by their insurance.²⁸¹ About 25 percent of adults have reported that

they or a family member have postponed care for a serious medical condition because of cost.²⁸² In one 2019 poll, 13 percent—about 34 million people—reported that a family member or friend died in the past five years due to being unable to afford treatment for a condition.²⁸³ Although the per capita expenses of the health care system in the United States far exceed those in any other advanced capitalist country, public health there is significantly poorer than in most of those other nations.²⁸⁴ The United States has higher maternal mortality rates, higher infant mortality, higher rates of deaths from preventable diseases, higher rates of chronic diseases, and lower longevity rates.²⁸⁵ The disparities based on race and class are striking, and it is well known today that individuals' prospects for good health and long life vary drastically by zip code.²⁸⁶

MEDICAL ERRORS, IATROGENIC INFECTIONS,
AND "DEADLY MEDICINES"

The actual delivery of health care in this country is often dysfunctional and even dangerous. Various kinds of grave medical errors not infrequently lead to death.²⁸⁷ These mistakes include failure to review the medical record, failure to order appropriate tests and address abnormal results, failure to diagnose diseases, delayed diagnosis, incorrect diagnosis, unnecessary surgeries, "wrong site/wrong procedure" surgeries, injuries caused by surgeries, errors related to anesthesia, inadequate follow-up after treatment, communication errors, and other mistakes.²⁸⁸ Medical error rates are significantly higher in the United States than in other advanced capitalist countries.²⁸⁹ In addition, iatrogenic infections, that is, infections resulting from hospital or outpatient treatment, often prove to be fatal, too.²⁹⁰ Peter C. Gøtzsche has argued that the pharmaceutical industry's "morally repugnant disregard for human lives," corporate domination of the Food and Drug Administration, and the incompetence or complicity of many physicians have sustained a "hugely lethal" epidemic of "deadly medicines."²⁹¹

In the late 1980s, anti-arrhythmic drugs produced by Upjohn and

other companies killed fifty thousand people each year.²⁹² In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Pfizer's hypertension drugs led to approximately forty thousand deaths from heart failure.²⁹³ Between 1999 and 2004, Merck's Vioxx, which was prescribed for arthritis and chronic pain, doubled the risk of heart attacks and caused as many as 120,000 deaths.²⁹⁴ Eli Lilly's anti-psychotic Zyprexa had killed 200,000 people worldwide by 2007 and is still on the market today.²⁹⁵ Pfizer's Celebrex, which has been prescribed for arthritis and chronic pain, contributed to approximately 75,000 deaths worldwide by 2004 and remains on the market.²⁹⁶ Perdue Pharma, other pharmacological companies, the FDA, and many doctors share responsibility for the aggressive marketing, poor regulation, and over-prescription of highly addictive opioids, which have claimed almost one million lives since 1999.²⁹⁷

During the past two decades, doctors, scientists, and other analysts have sought to measure the loss of life caused by medical errors, iatrogenic infections, and "deadly medicines." This endeavor has produced widely varying assessments of annual fatalities, considerable controversy, and more than a little vitriol. Researchers' estimates range from 22,000 to more than 780,000 avoidable deaths each year.²⁹⁸ Some studies have focused on patients' deaths in hospitals, while others have included deaths from outpatient treatment. There are also significantly different views on the loss of life caused by using prescription drugs as directed by doctors. Gøtzsche has estimated that the annual toll from "deadly medicines" exceeds 200,000, and other analysts have reached similar conclusions.²⁹⁹ Based on current research findings, it may be conservatively estimated that 400,000 people die each year from iatrogenic causes.³⁰⁰ Adverse reactions to U.S. medicines have also resulted in vast numbers of deaths in poorer countries during the past several decades.³⁰¹

POLLUTION DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES

Between the 1830s and the 1870s, cholera, a disease that is primarily spread by contaminated water, killed between two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand people.³⁰² Tens of thousands continued

to die of cholera and typhoid, another water-borne disease, each year in the early twentieth century.³⁰³ Between 1870 and 1910, as growing numbers of urban workers were forced to live in tenements and work in crowded factories with poor sanitation and limited light, tuberculosis claimed three to four million lives.³⁰⁴ The construction of water treatment facilities, new medicines, and other public health improvements dramatically reduced deaths from infectious diseases.³⁰⁵ However, during the first half of the twentieth century, tens of thousands of children died from exposure to lead paint.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the “smoke of great cities” produced by coal power plants and coal-powered factories and the air pollution resulting from the use of other fossil fuels in power plants, factories, and automobiles led to widespread and often lethal air pollution.³⁰⁷

Toxic air inversions resulted in at least twenty deaths in Donora, Pennsylvania, in 1948 and more than seven hundred deaths in New York City between 1953 and 1966.³⁰⁸ Radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing in Nevada between 1951 and 1963 spread across much of the country, resulting in at least 145,000 fatalities and possibly many more.³⁰⁹ Hundreds of Diné men who mined uranium between the 1940s and the 1980s perished from radiation exposure, and other Indigenous people have died because they lived near abandoned uranium mines, toxic dumps, and similar environmentally dangerous sites.³¹⁰ Although important new laws passed by Congress in the 1960s and 1970s reduced some atmospheric contaminants, enormous numbers of people continued to die from long-term exposure to air pollution in the years that followed. Devra Davis has estimated that more than one million people perished needlessly from air pollution in the last two decades of the twentieth century, but this appraisal is far too low.³¹¹ Despite the progress achieved, at least 200,000 people die from air pollution each year.³¹² Thus, the total number of deaths since 1980 may be close to eight million.

By 1980, there were more than 400,000 toxic waste sites and 500,000 abandoned mines across the nation.³¹³ Only a tiny fraction of these hazardous areas were designated as Superfund cleanup sites under new federal legislation passed that year. Although these

sites have been linked to increased cancer risk, most of them still await remediation today.³¹⁴ In recent years, lead contamination of water in Flint, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey, has been widely publicized.³¹⁵ Less well known is that 400,000 people die each year because of various kinds of exposure to lead in water, soil, and air.³¹⁶ Carcinogenic hexavalent chromium is found in the tap water supplied to more than 200 million residents, and as many as 110 million drink water containing perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substances, which are also carcinogenic.³¹⁷ Arsenic, radioactive elements, and other toxic substances also contaminate water supplies and soil in the United States.³¹⁸ Most analysts have refrained from estimating the number of deaths caused by water and soil pollution, but at least half of the annual lead-related deaths result from exposure to toxic water or soil.³¹⁹ So even in the absence of reliable data about the loss of life caused by other poisons, it may be conservatively estimated that at least eight million people died from water and soil pollution between 1980 and 2020.³²⁰

Grave new dangers have emerged with the proliferation of chemicals in foods, consumer goods, and other commodities; the mass production of plastics; and the expanded use of pesticides.³²¹ Most of the hundred thousand chemicals used commercially today have not been adequately tested for toxicity and long-term harm.³²² It is increasingly clear that there is a causal, if complex, connection between some chemicals and the unprecedented “epidemic of cancer” and skyrocketing cancer deaths that has been developing in the United States since 1940.³²³ Scientists have found that chemicals used in some food dyes, baking ingredients, preservatives, and other food additives are carcinogenic.³²⁴ Vinyl chloride, used to make plastics for construction and hundreds of consumer products, is also carcinogenic.³²⁵ So are at least two phthalates found in detergents, adhesives, shower curtains, and personal care products.³²⁶ It is not yet known how many of the 600,000 cancer deaths each year are caused or partly caused by chemicals, but approximately 100,000 annual deaths are likely caused by exposure to phthalates.³²⁷ As Davis has lamented, “It seems that cancer has become the price of modern life.”³²⁸

POLLUTION DEATHS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The U.S. Empire is also responsible for a substantial, if difficult to quantify, portion of the estimated nine million environmental contamination deaths in other countries each year.³²⁹ Air and water pollution generated in the United States crosses national boundaries, often with deleterious effects on people in distant lands.³³⁰ In addition, as Vandana Shiva has emphasized, the “outsourcing of manufacturing” by U.S. and other corporations to low-wage, low-regulation countries “is also outsourcing of pollution.”³³¹ Because U.S. companies have relocated a significant amount of production to China, they are complicit in some of the approximately one million annual pollution deaths there.³³² Massive U.S. exports of petroleum coke, a dirty fuel waste product, to India contribute to the atmospheric contamination that claims more than one million lives each year.³³³ Exxon Mobil and Chevron share responsibility for the massive oil spills in Nigeria, which poison water and soil and lead to the deaths of approximately sixteen thousand infants each year.³³⁴ U.S. exports of hazardous pesticides contribute to more than 200,000 annual deaths in other countries.³³⁵ No one knows how many people in other countries perish each year because of exposure to lead paint, asbestos products, plastics, other toxic commodities, and hazardous waste exported from the United States, but the number is almost certainly large.³³⁶

GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Justin Gillis and Nadja Popovich point out that the United States has been the “biggest carbon polluter in history” and bears more responsibility than any other country for the “excess carbon dioxide that is heating the planet.”³³⁷ During the past two decades, global warming and the unprecedented climate change it is producing have led to higher temperatures, increasingly severe heat waves, wildfires, droughts, storms, and floods in parts of the world.³³⁸ These developments have resulted in the spread of malaria, dengue fever, and other communicable diseases, along with increasing hunger, malnutrition,

and diarrhea, mainly in poorer countries.³³⁹ It has been conservatively estimated that between three and four hundred thousand people are already dying each year because of climate change, and the future appears even more ominous.³⁴⁰ As David Wallace-Wells has warned, global warming and climate change threaten to make parts of the planet “close to uninhabitable” and other parts “horribly inhospitable” in the coming decades.³⁴¹ Higher temperatures, more dangerous and frequent heat waves, the spread of deserts and loss of soil, growing scarcity of clean water, widespread famine and diseases, the destruction of cities by rising sea levels, worsening pollution, economic and social collapse, mass migrations, and wars arising from these catastrophic developments could endanger the lives of billions of people in the coming decades.³⁴²

COUNTING THE DEAD

The various kinds of state and social violence surveyed in this chapter have exacted terrible human costs, yet different forms of social murder have taken a significantly higher toll. The total number of U.S. deaths caused by wars; mob, vigilante, police, and extremist violence; incarceration; and homicides and suicides is considerably more than six million.³⁴³ The total number of U.S. deaths resulting from drug overdoses, tobacco use, the automobile-centered transportation system, other dangerous consumer products, medical experimentation, government failures to address public health crises, limited access to health care, iatrogenic causes, and environmental pollution is close to sixty million.³⁴⁴ The empire is also responsible for more than five million fatalities from U.S. tobacco products in other countries and shares responsibility for at least three million deaths resulting from climate change since 2010.³⁴⁵

In sum, it may be that these holocausts at home and abroad have taken the lives of more than 74 million people. Moreover, this appraisal is conservative because it does not include the uncounted millions who perished because of nineteenth-century U.S. imports of opium into China, twentieth-century tobacco products made by

multinational tobacco companies with U.S. investors, U.S. exports of infant formula and “deadly medicines” to poor countries, the U.S. refusal to allow inexpensive AIDS drugs to be manufactured in Africa in the 1990s, and U.S. contributions to global air pollution. When the mass deaths surveyed in this chapter are considered along with those of Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, workers, and the peoples of other lands, it becomes inescapably clear that as long as it exists, the U.S. Empire will continue to produce endless holocausts.

Notes

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 13. Gerald Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018), 8.
 14. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 42–44; and Zinn, *People’s History*, 2–3, 11–12.
 15. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1990), 915.
 16. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 3, 198–99.
 17. Some of the Spanish invaders mistakenly thought that millions lived on this island. A contemporary estimate of no more than 300,000 inhabitants is found in Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 16. However, recent DNA analysis indicates that the pre-contact population numbered in the low tens of thousands. See David Reich and Orlando Patterson, “Ancient DNA Is Changing the Way We Think About the Caribbean,” *New York Times*, December 23, 2020.
 18. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 85–87; and Linda A. Newson, “The Demographic Collapse of Native Peoples of the Americas, 1492–1650,” *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 81 (1993): 253–54.
 19. Alfred L. Kroeber, “Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America,” *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnography* 38 (1939): 166, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*; 22–

- 24; Henry F. Dobyns, “Reassessing New World Populations at the Time of Contact,” paper presented at Institute for Early Contact Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, April 1988, cited in Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 342n23. Although Kroeber was a pioneer in U.S. anthropology, his collection of Indigenous peoples’ remains and funerary objects from their graves without family or other consent, his mistreatment of a Native genocide survivor he employed, and other objectionable research practices led to the removal of his name from the anthropology building at the University of California at Berkeley in January 2021. See Melissa Gomez, “UC Berkeley Removes Kroeber Hall Name, Citing Namesake’s ‘Immoral’ Work with Native Americans,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2021.
20. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 11, 151, 267–68; and Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 1.
 21. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 25, 42, and “Native North Americans,” 11; Russell Thornton, email to author, April 2, 2020.
 22. Alexander Koch, Chris Brierly, Mark M. Maslin, and Simon L. Lewis, “Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas After 1492,” *Quaternary Science Reviews* 207 (March 1, 2019): 13–36.
 23. Koch et al. demonstrate that massive Indigenous depopulation between 1492 and 1600 changed the atmosphere and temperature of the planet, but they likely underestimated the number of people living north of Mexico and in some other locations before the arrival of the Europeans. Interestingly, they provided an alternative statistical computation of the total pre-contact population which yields an estimate of more than 64 million. See “Earth System Impacts.”
 24. William Denevan, “The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82/3 (1992): 369–85.
 25. Kroeber, “Cultural and Natural Areas,” 166, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 26; and Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 10.
 26. Douglas H. Ubelaker, “North American Indian Population Size, AD 1500–1985,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 77/ 3 (November 1988): 289–94.
 27. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 31–32, 43.
 28. James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 20; and Jeffrey Ostler, email to author, April 13, 2020. Wilson referred here to Thornton’s estimate of more than five million Native people in the present-day coterminous United States and more than two million in what is now Canada, Alaska, and Greenland.

29. James Mooney estimated the Indigenous population of Alaska to be 72,600 before European contact. See “The Aboriginal Population of America North of Mexico,” in *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 80, ed. John R. Swanton (1928): 1–40, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 241. Thornton noted that this estimate may be low. Maria DaSilva-Gordon has estimated that the pre-contact Indigenous population of Puerto Rico was twenty to fifty thousand. See *Puerto Rico: Past and Present* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2011), 16. The size of the Indigenous population of Hawai‘i in 1492 is not known, but it was approximately 683,000 in 1778, when the British explorer James Cook made first contact. See David A. Swanson, “A New Estimate of the Hawaiian Population for 1778, the Year of First European Contact,” paper presented at University of Hawai‘i, February 2015, cited in Sara Kehaulani Goo, “After 200 Years, Native Hawaiians Make a Comeback,” Pew Research Center, Fact Tank, April 6, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/06/native-hawaiian-population/>.
30. See, for example, Marvin Harris “Depopulation and Cultural Evolution: A Cultural Materialist Perspective,” in *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 3: *The Spanish Borderlands in Pan-American Perspective*, ed. David Hurst Thomas, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 584, cited in Stannard, *American Holocaust*, xii and 286nn7, 8. See also Gunter Lowy, “Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?” *Commentary*, September 1, 2004, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/were-american-indians-the-victims-of-genocide/>; and Michael Medved, *The 10 Big Lies About America: Combatting Destructive Distortions About Our Nation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 11–45.
31. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, xii.
32. Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 15–24, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 45; Douglas H. Ubelaker, “Patterns of Demographic Change in the Americas,” *Human Biology* 64/3 (June 1992): 372; Jones, “Death, Uncertainty, and Rhetoric,” 26–29; and George R. Milner, “Population Decline and Culture Change in the American Midcontinent: Bridging the Prehistoric and Historic Divide,” in *Beyond Germs*, 63–65.
33. This language comes from Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 47. Different perspectives are found in Kelton, Swedlund, and Cameron, 6–8; and Jones, “Death, Uncertainty, and Rhetoric,” 16–28.
34. Jones, “Death, Uncertainty, and Rhetoric,” 28; and Jeffrey Ostler, “Genocide and American Indian History,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History* (March 2015), <https://oxfordre.com/americanhis->

- tory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199232975-e-3.
35. Jones, “Death, Uncertainty, and Rhetoric,” 16. The same point is made in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 47; and Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 3–5, 79–80.
 36. See, for example, Zinn, *People’s History*, 1–8; Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 42–44. The description of the European invasion as “apocalyptic” is found in Horne, *Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism*.
 37. Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, chap. 1.
 38. Bartolomé de Las Casas provided an account of the Spaniards’ actions in *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (1542) and other works. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 155–61.
 39. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, (1535), cited in Sale, 158.
 40. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 63–64; and Ethne Barnes, *Diseases and Human Evolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 229.
 41. Reich and Patterson, “Ancient DNA.”
 42. DaSilva-Gordon, *Puerto Rico*, 16.
 43. This phrase appears in Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 85. The estimate of forty million deaths was made by Las Casas in 1560 and is cited in Denevan, “The Pristine Myth,” 370. Stannard also concluded that about forty million Indigenous people had died in these regions by the late 1560s. See *American Holocaust*, 81–87.
 44. Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 78–79.
 45. Koch et al., “Earth System Impacts,” 13–36. The authors have noted that this sixteenth-century apocalypse was centered in the lands south of the present-day United States.
 46. *Ibid.*; and Simon Lewis, Alexander Koch, Mark Maslin, and Chris Brierly, “Colonization of Americas Led to So Much Death It Caused a Period of Global Cooling,” *Newsweek*, January 31, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/americas-colonization-christopher-columbus-native-indigenous-death-global-1313097>.
 47. Douglas Hunter, “John Cabot,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, May 19, 2017, <https://encycopediecanadienne.com/article/john-cabot>.
 48. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 14, 50, 61–62; Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 23–24; Wilson, *Earth Shall Weep*, 72; Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 134–35; and Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 26.

49. Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 49.
50. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 61; Rosemary Enright and Sue Maden, “JHS 100 Years: Narragansett Bay before the Europeans,” *Jamestown Press*, January 12, 2012; and Eryn Dion, “What You Learned About the ‘First Thanksgiving’ Isn’t True. Here’s the Real Story,” *Cape Cod Times*, November 23, 2021.
51. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 61, 68.
52. *Ibid.*, 68.
53. *Ibid.*, 62, 76; and Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 96–99.
54. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 14, 61; Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Encyclopedia of Casualty and Other Figures, 1494–2007*, 3rd ed. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2008), 32; and T. Frederick Davis, *History of Juan Ponce De Leon’s Voyages to Florida: Source Records* (1935), Wisconsin Historical Society, Digital Library and Archives, American Journeys Collection, Document No. AJ-095, (2003), 61.
55. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 254, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 63n3 and 64; Ostler, “Genocide and American Indian History”; and Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492–1715* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 51–52.
56. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 55–56; and Gillian Brockell, “Before There Was 1619, There Was 1526: The Mystery of the First Enslaved Africans in What Became the United States,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 2019.
57. See Douglas T. Peck, “Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón’s Doomed Colony of San Miguel de Guadalupe,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85/2 (Summer 2001): 183–98.
58. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 58–59.
59. *Ibid.*, 59; and Lawrence E. Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 55, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 76.
60. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 129.
61. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32; and Donald E. Chipman, “Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, December 4, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fca06>.
62. Mann, *1491*, 110–13; Wilson, *Earth Shall Weep*, 134–37; and Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 59–60.
63. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 64.
64. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32.

65. Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 13. Estimates of 2,500 Native deaths are found in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32; and in Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 66.
66. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32; and Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 66.
67. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32.
68. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 59–66; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 13.
69. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 13–14.
70. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32; Carroll L. Riley, *Rio del Norte: People of the Upper Rio Grande from Earliest Times to the Pueblo Revolt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 155, 180; and Gary Clayton Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian: The Crime That Should Haunt America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 33–34.
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72. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 32; and Riley, *Rio del Norte*, 251.
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74. *Ibid.*, 250, 266; and Daniel T. Reff, email to author, March 24, 2020.
75. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 74.
76. William W. Dewhurst, *The History of St. Augustine, Florida* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 53–67, 75–78; and Blake Beattie, “The Founding of St. Augustine, 1565: Interpretative Essay,” in *What Happened? An Encyclopedia of Events That Changed America Forever*, vol. 1: *Through the Seventeenth Century*, ed. John E. Findling and Frank W. Thackeray (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 86–89.
77. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 75–76.
78. *Ibid.*, 48, 82.
79. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 66–68; and Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 77–78.
80. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 67; and Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 80–82.
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82. James Mooney, “The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present,” *American Anthropologist* 9 (1907): 142, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 68.
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 86. Wolfe, "First Anglo-Powhattan War."
 87. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 15.
 88. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 60–61; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 65.
 89. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 65.
 90. Ibid.
 91. Ibid.; and Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 69.
 92. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 65.
 93. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 69–70; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 15.
 94. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 68.
 95. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 101–3.
 96. Ibid., 103.
 97. Ibid., 102.
 98. Ibid., 101–2.
 99. Ibid., chap. 3; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 16.
 100. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 70.
 101. Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685–1790," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 38–39, cited in Catherine M. Cameron, "The Effects of Warfare and Captive-Taking on Indigenous Mortality in Post-Contact North America," in *Beyond Germs*, 181.
 102. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 17.
 103. Ibid.
 104. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 72–75; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 18–19.
 105. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 18.
 106. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 74–75; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 19.
 107. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 26.
 108. Ibid., 22.
 109. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 71; Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 21–32; Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 27; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 18. Some researchers have concluded that smallpox or other European diseases struck Native peoples in Maine and New Hampshire as early as 1584–86. See Ronda Roberts, "Maine," in Daniel S. Murphee, Editor, *Native America: A State-by-State Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 472–474; Peter C. Holloran, *Historical*

- Dictionary of New England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), xv; and Fletcher Haulley, *Primary Source History of the Colony of New Hampshire* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2006), 10. Other investigators believe the first important epidemic was the one that erupted in 1616. See, for example, Dean R. Snow and Kim M. Lanphear, “European Contact and Indian Depopulation in the Northeast: The Timing of the First Epidemics,” *Ethnohistory* 35/1 (Winter 1988): 20–25. This view has also been expressed by Ostler in email to author.
110. Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 31–32; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 18.
 111. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 62.
 112. *Ibid.*, 63. See also Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1996), 69.
 113. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 30; Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 20; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 66.
 114. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 67.
 115. The phrase “wilderness warfare” came from Benjamin Church, the commander of the Plymouth militia. See Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 64.
 116. David Sharp, “Penobscots Don’t Want Ancestors’ Scalping to Be Whitewashed,” AP News, December 4, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/penobscots-indigenous-history-scalping-colonial-america-adf590d261599302207b8c377b711169>.
 117. Anthony Brandt, “Blood and Betrayal: King Philip’s War,” *HistoryNet.com*, October 30, 2014, <http://www.history.net.com/blood-and-betrayal-king-philips-war.htm>. See also Clodfelter, 67.
 118. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 21.
 119. *Ibid.*, 22.
 120. Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 32.
 121. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 37–38, and chap. 18.
 122. Riley, *Rio del Norte*, 266; Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 95–96; and Reff, email to author.
 123. Riley, *Rio del Norte*, 268; Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 48; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 68.
 124. Rick Hendricks, “Domingo Jironza Pétriz de Cruzate,” New Mexico Office of the State Historian, *New Mexico History.com*, http://newmexico-history.org/people/domingo-jironza-petritz-de-cruzate#_edn10.
 125. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 68.
 126. *Ibid.*
 127. Riley, *Rio del Norte*, 266.
 128. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 82–87.
 129. *Ibid.*, 85–86.

130. Ibid., 83, 85.
131. Ibid., 82–87, 99.
132. Ibid., 83–86; Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 91–92; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 14.
133. Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 222–29.
134. Ibid., 230–31.
135. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 22. Lower estimates of Haudenosaunee losses are found in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 69; and in Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars: 1689–1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 53. Peckham's occasional depiction of Indigenous peoples as "savages" is racist and regrettable.
136. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 68–69.
137. Mann, *1491*, 126.
138. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125.
139. Ibid.; Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe*, 224–25; and Mark Frederick Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1951), 13.
140. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 61.
141. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125; and Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America: From the Earliest Migrations to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 270.
142. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 180–82.
146. Jennings, *Founders of America*, 277–79; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 126; and Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680–1730* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), cited in Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 218.
147. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 220.
148. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 28.
149. Jennings, *Founders of America*, 271.
150. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 28.
151. Ibid.; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125.
152. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125; and Jenkins, *Founders of America*, 271–72.
153. Brett Rushforth, "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63/1 (2006): 76, cited in Cameron, "The Effects of Warfare and Captive-Taking," 183–84.
154. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 28.
155. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 126.

156. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 66.
157. E. Wagner Stearn and Allen E. Stearn, *The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the Amerindian* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1945), 38, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 78.
158. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 81; and Donald J. Lehmer and David T. Jones, *Akira Archeology: The Bad River Phase*, Smithsonian Institution, River Basin Surveys, Publications in Salvage Archeology, no. 7 (1968), cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 81.
159. Robert Thornton, *The Cherokees: A Population History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 29–31.
160. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 79–80.
161. Louis P. Towles, “Jenkins’ Ear, War of,” *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, NCPedia, January 1, 2006, <https://www.ncpedia.org/jenkins-ear-war>.
162. This phrase appears in Jennings, *Founders of America*, 233. An estimate of fatalities in the conflict is found in Peckham, *Colonial Wars*, 117. However, it does not include Native deaths.
163. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 29–35; and David G. Moore, “Catawba Indians,” *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, ed. William S. Powell, NCPedia, (2006), <https://www.ncpedia.org/catawba-indians>.
164. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 31–35.
165. *Ibid.*, 31.
166. This phrase appears in Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 34. Tsalagi deaths during the war(s) are discussed in Clodfelter, 130; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 32–34.
167. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 34.
168. *Ibid.*; William B. Kessel and Robert Wooster, *Encyclopedia of Native American Wars and Warfare* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2005), 139; Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 75–77; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 127–30; and *South Carolina Gazette*, quoted in John Duffy, “Smallpox and the Indians in the American Colonies,” *Bulletin on the History of Medicine* 25 (1951): 338, cited in Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 79.
169. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 139; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 129–30; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 31–35.
170. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 36.
171. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 131; and Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 253. During the war, General Jeffrey Amherst approved efforts to spread smallpox among Native peoples fighting the British. As Ostler makes clear, another British military leader and a trader gave two Delaware emissaries blankets and a handkerchief infected with smallpox, but it is “impossible to say” if this led to new infections among Indigenous combatants. Still, the heinous intent is indisputable. See Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 36–37.

172. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 41–42.
173. Madley, *American Genocide*, 3, 36. An estimate of 300,000 is found in Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 1. Both Madley and Hurtado drew on a similar estimate by Sherburne Cook in *The Population of the California Indians, 1769–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 43–44, 59, 65.
174. Madley, *American Genocide*, chap. 1. The 1830 population estimate is found on page 36.
175. Ostler, “Genocide and American History.” Different views on the possible transmission of European diseases to Northwest Pacific Native peoples are discussed in Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 21–39.
176. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775–82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 273–74.
177. Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 274; Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 79–81; and Mann, 1491, 123.
178. Swanson, “Hawaiian Population.”
179. Collin G. Calloway, “American Indians and the American Revolution,” *The American Revolution: Stories from the Revolution*, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, December 4, 2008, https://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/american_indians.html.
180. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 90; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 56–57.
181. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 96.
182. Dennis Zotigh, “A Brief Balance of Power—The 1778 Treaty with the Delaware Nation,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2018/05/22/1778-delaware-treaty/>; and Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 142.
183. Rhiannon Koehler, “Hostile Nations: Quantifying the Destruction of the Sullivan-Clinton Genocide of 1779,” *American Indian Quarterly* 42/4 (Fall 2018): 444. This estimate is based on a review of “never-before-examined unofficial accounts found in historical newspapers, military records, journal entries, and speeches to quantify the property, land, and lives lost in the campaign.” See Koehler, “Hostile Nations,” 428. An estimate of only two hundred violent deaths is found in Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 76.
184. Koehler, “Hostile Nations,” 445–46; and Ron Soodalter, “Massacre and Retribution: The 1779–80 Sullivan Expedition,” *HistoryNet.com*, <http://www.historynet.com/massacre-retribution-the-1779-80-sullivan-expedition.htm>.

185. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 67, 76.
186. An estimate of more than 4,500 Haudenosaunee deaths is found in Koehler, “Hostile Nations,” 446. Ostler’s estimate of no more than 1,500 Haudenosaunee fatalities in the war is much too low. However, he has estimated that at least one thousand Tsalagis died during the conflict, although the total number of deaths among the Lenapes, Shawnees, Wyandots, and Miamis is unknown. See Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 76–77. All told, an estimate of at least six thousand Indigenous deaths in the War of Independence appears prudent.
187. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 78.
188. This phrase comes from Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 2.
189. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 85–90.
190. *Ibid.*, 91–92.
191. *Ibid.*, 91, 95.
192. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 100.
193. Kristopher Maulden, “A Show of Force: The Northwest Indian War and the Early American State,” *Ohio Valley History* 16/4 (2016): 20.
194. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 145.
195. *Ibid.*
196. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 83.
197. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 145.
198. *Ibid.*; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 119.
199. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 145; and Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 83.
200. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 119.
201. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 43.
202. *Ibid.*, 91–94; and Boyd, *Spirit of Pestilence*, 22, 39–45.
203. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 93.
204. *Ibid.*, 132–46.
205. Spain had secretly returned the Louisiana Territory to France in 1801 after being defeated by Napoleon’s forces in the War of the Pyrenees. On Jefferson’s support for the forcible relocation of Indigenous people to areas west of the Mississippi River, see Zinn, *People’s History*, 126; and Paul L. Atwood, *War and Empire: The American Way of Life* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 63.
206. The “two parallel wars” are noted in Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 93. The expression “Wars of 1812” is found in Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, chap. 5.
207. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 145–46.
208. *Ibid.*, 157.

209. Ibid., 160–64.
210. Ibid., 162–64.
211. Ibid., 164–65.
212. Ibid., 165–66. The Seminoles were people who migrated in the previous century from Muscogee towns in southern Georgia to the lands in northern Florida formerly occupied by Apalachees and Timucuas.
213. Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Red Stick War of 1813–1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 96–102, 110–15, 127–35, 190–93; and Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1981), 25–26, 30–32, 35–39; both cited in Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 167.
214. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 169–70.
215. Ibid., 171.
216. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 94.
217. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 173–74; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 283.
218. An estimate of 7,500 Indigenous deaths is found in Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Bicentennial Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 306. An estimate of as many as 11,000 Native deaths appears in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 263.
219. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 174.
220. Ibid., 179.
221. Ibid., 274; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 283; and Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 102.
222. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 283.
223. Ibid.
224. Ibid.; Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 102; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 274.
225. Madley, *American Genocide*, 36–37.
226. Mexican forces killed hundreds of Indigenous people in California in the 1820s, 1830s, and early 1840s. See Madley, *American Genocide*, 39–40.
227. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 102.
228. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 248.
229. Ibid., 289.
230. Ibid., chap. 8, and 361. These two territories were combined to create the state of Oklahoma in 1907.
231. Ibid., chap. 9, and 361.
232. Ibid., 361. About eleven thousand Native people remained in the Southeast, but twenty-four thousand remained in the North.
233. Ibid.

234. History.com Editors, “Trail of Tears,” *History*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>.
235. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 256. An estimate of 2,500 Choctaw deaths is also found in Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 157.
236. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 275–76.
237. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 263.
238. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 284.
239. Ibid.
240. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 286
241. Ibid., 273.
242. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 114.
243. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 273–74. See also Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 284.
244. Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 256.
245. Ibid., 256, 263, 273, 286, 361.
246. Ibid., 361–62.
247. Ibid., 363.
248. Ibid.
249. Ibid., 328; and Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 94.
250. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 94.
251. Ibid., 94–99; and Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 104–5.
252. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 94–95; and Alchon, *Pest in the Land*, 104–5.
253. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 95.
254. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, the Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina, CA: University of Regina Press, 2013), 67.
255. Ostler, “Genocide and American Indian History”; and Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 194–95.
256. Indigenous peoples in this area included Caddoans, Coahuiltecas, Karankawas, Tonkawas, Apaches, Nermernuhs, Wichitas, Tsalagis, Alabamas, Coughattas, Kickapoos, and scores of other peoples. David La Vere has estimated that in 1500, “Anywhere from 50,000 to several hundred thousand to maybe a million” lived here. See *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 28. In the centuries that followed, many Natives died or left Texas, and smaller numbers fleeing European and U.S. colonizers migrated there. For estimates for the Indigenous population in Texas in the 1830s, see Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 126; and Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820–1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 4.
257. John C. Ewers, “The Influence of Epidemics on the Indian Populations and Cultures of Texas,” *Plains Anthropologist* 18 (1973): 107, cited in

- Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 128–31. Ewers estimated the Native population in present-day Texas to be about fifty thousand in 1690, but it was likely significantly higher.
258. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 128, 131.
259. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 275.
260. *Ibid.*, 176.
261. *Ibid.*
262. *Ibid.*
263. Sherburne Cook, “Historical Demography,” in *Handbook of North American Indians* 8, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 92–93, cited in Madley, *American Genocide*, 39.
264. Cook, “Historical Demography,” 92–93.
265. This phrase comes from John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (New York, 1845): 5–6, 9–10, cited in Zinn, *People’s History*, 151. Zinn’s discussion of “manifest destiny” is found in chap. 8.
266. Madley, *American Genocide*, 100.
267. *Ibid.*, 300.
268. *Ibid.*, 351.
269. *Ibid.*, esp. 346–59.
270. *Ibid.*, 3, 346.
271. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 286.
272. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 99.
273. *Ibid.*, 285.
274. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 276.
275. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 99; Boyd, *Spirit of Pestilence*, 4; and Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 219–20.
276. E. A. Schwartz, “Rogue River War of 1855–1856,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia* (February 19, 2019), https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/rogue_river_war_of_1855-1856/#.XpSWgEBFybh.
277. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 276, 286–87. Most of these deaths occurred in the campaigns against the Nermenuh and Kiowa.
278. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 237; and Ostler, “Genocide and American Indian History.”
279. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 287–88. These estimates do not include what Clodfelter described as “untold” Mexican civilian lives lost south of the U.S. border.
280. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 298.
281. *Ibid.*, and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 277–78.
282. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 278.
283. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 243.
284. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 279.

285. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 294; and Clodfelter, 278.
286. This estimate appears in Dana Hedgpeth, “This Was the Worst Slaughter of Native Americans in U.S. History— Few Remember It,” *Washington Post*, September 26, 2021. See also Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 244; and Michael F. Dove, “Shoshone War,” in *The Encyclopedia of North American Indian Wars, 1607–1890: A Political, Social, and Military History*, vol. 2, ed. Spencer C. Tucker (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 730–31.
287. Gregory Michno, *The Deadliest Indian War in the West: The Snake Conflict, 1864–1868* (Caldwell: Caxton Press, 2007), 5.
288. Michno, *Deadliest Indian War*, 345.
289. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 276.
290. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 225.
291. *Ibid.*
292. *Ibid.*; Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 286; and Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 240.
293. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 80; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 289.
294. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 289.
295. *Ibid.*, 279.
296. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 145–46.
297. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 289–90.
298. *Ibid.*, 280.
299. *Ibid.*
300. *Ibid.*, 288.
301. *Ibid.*
302. *Ibid.*, 291.
303. *Ibid.*
304. Robert Plocheck, “American Indians in Texas,” *Texas Almanac* (1998–99), Texas State Historical Association, <https://texasalmanac.com/topics/culture/american-indian/american-indian>. As noted above, the Indigenous population in the area was approximately forty to fifty thousand in 1830. An estimate that perhaps four thousand Natives died in Texas between 1823 and 1875 is found in Anderson, *Conquest of Texas*, 11. However, the total number of violent deaths during this period was likely much higher. In addition, many Indigenous people perished from diseases, loss of food supplies, forced relocations, and other deadly features of colonialism. The Indigenous death toll in Texas in the nineteenth century probably runs into the tens of thousands, and similar numbers were undoubtedly driven out.
305. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 299.
306. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 280.
307. *Ibid.*

308. Ibid., 280–81.
309. Ibid., 281.
310. Ibid.
311. Ibid.; and “Today in History—October 5: Chief Joseph Surrenders,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/october-05/>.
312. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 281.
313. Boyd, *Spirit of Pestilence*, 3.
314. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 291.
315. Ibid., 288–89.
316. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 46.
317. This slogan originated with U.S. Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who established the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania in 1879. See Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 151, 153, 211–14.
318. Ibid., 153.
319. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 300.
320. Ibid., 145.
321. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 154.
322. Kessel and Wooster, *Native American Wars*, 145–46, 300; and Clodfelter, 281–82.
323. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 282.
324. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 155; Wounded Knee Museum Website/For Educators, <http://www.woundedkneemuseum.org/>; and Dana Lone Hill, “Wounded Knee Should Be a National Monument, Not a Profit Center,” *Guardian*, May 1, 2013. Anderson has acknowledged that this incident was a massacre but estimated that about 150 Lakotas died. See *Ethnic Cleansing*, 336. Clodfelter has erroneously claimed that the Lakotas “resisted an attempt to disarm them” and provided an estimate of 153 Indigenous deaths while noting that 20 to 30 others may have also died. See Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 282.
325. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 282.
326. U.S. Army Development and Readiness Command (DARCOM), *History of Fort Wingate Depot, Forts Fauntleroy, Lyon*, 29, https://www.ftwingate.org/docs/pub/History_FortWingate.pdf.
327. Mel H. Bolster, “The Smoked Meat Rebellion,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 31 (1953): 37–55; and Daniel F. Littlefield and Lonnie E. Underhill, “The ‘Crazy Snake Uprising’ of 1909: A Red, Black, or White Affair?” *Journal of the Southwest* 20/4 (Winter 1978): 307–24.
328. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 282.
329. Mychel Matthews, “Hidden History: Bluff Indian War of 1915,” *Magic Valley Times-News*, July 21, 2016.

330. H. B. Wharfield, "A Fight with the Yaquis at Bear Valley, 1918," *Arizona* 4/3 (Fall 1963): 1–8.
331. Jerry Spangler, "Last Indian War Not So Long Ago or Far Away: Paiute Remembered as Hero, Martyr," *Deseret News*, August 7, 1989.
332. U.S. Census Bureau, *Indian Population of the United States and Alaska, 1910* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915), 10, cited in Thornton, "Population of Native North Americans," 32.
333. Carl Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 3rd ed. (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 19, 46, 73, 93–94, 127–28, 154, 168, 287, 291, 313, 321, 323, 327; Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 113; Milanich, *Florida Indians*, 230–35; and Stuart James Baldwin, "Tompiro Culture, Subsistence, and Trade" (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 1988), iii.
334. Mooney, "Aboriginal Population," 32; and Swanson, "Hawaiian Population."
335. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 42; and Newson, "Demographic Collapse," 277.
336. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, xvi–xviii, chaps. 7–8, and "Native North Americans," 31–41; and Nancy Shoemaker, *American Indian Population Recovery in the Twentieth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), esp. chap. 1.
337. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features: American Indian and Alaska Heritage Month: November 2018," (October 25, 2018), <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2018/aian.html>.
338. Goo, "Native Hawaiians."
339. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, xvi–xviii, chaps. 7 and 8, and "Native North Americans," 31–41, at 32.
340. An estimate of about 45 million Indigenous people in Latin America in 2010 is found in Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations, "Indigenous Peoples in Latin America" (September 22, 2014), <https://www.cepal.org/en/infografias/los-pueblos-indigenas-en-america-latina>. When the more than seven million Indigenous people in the present-day United States and almost two million more in Canada are added, the total is approximately 54 million. Even this appraisal is almost certainly too low because some countries' governments do not include all people of Indigenous descent in their estimates. On the Native population in Canada, see Government of Canada/Gouvernement du Canada, "Indigenous Peoples and Communities," June 11, 2021, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>.
341. Acknowledgment that some twentieth-century U.S. practices toward Indigenous peoples are genocidal is found in Ostler, "Genocide and American Indian History."

342. See Thomas A. Britten, “Native American Soldiers in World War I,” in *The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History: From 1865 to the Present*, ed. Antonio S. Thompson and Christos G. Frentzos (New York: Routledge, 2013), 88; Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 61; and David A. Blum and Nese F. DeBruyne, Congressional Research Service, “American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics,” CRS Report, July 29, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>.
343. David V. Baker, “American Indian Executions in Historical Context,” *Criminal Justice Studies: A Critical Journal of Crime, Law, and Society* 20/4 (December 2007): 315–73; and “Registry of Known American Indian Executions, 1639–2006,” in Death Penalty Information Center, “Native Americans,” <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/stories/registry-of-known-american-indian-executions-1639-2006>.
344. See David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2017).
345. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 183–86.
346. Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 127.
347. Teran Powell, “Most Likely to Die”; Elise Hansen, “The Forgotten Minority in Police Shootings,” CNN, November 13, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/10/us/native-lives-matter/index.html>; and Stephanie Woodard, “The Police Killings No One Is Talking About,” *In These Times*, October 17, 2016, http://inthesetimes.com/features/native_american_police_killings_native_lives_matter.html. Hansen noted that police killed about twenty-two Indigenous people in 2016.
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- glect. Many Indigenous people who die in prison are not identified as such, so the annual number of fatalities is considerably higher than the scores reported each year.
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- recognized by the U.S. government. Mikaela Morgane Adams, email to author, January 23, 2021. An estimate of at least 1,312 Native deaths in Alaska is found in Svenn-Erik Mamelund, Lisa Sattenspiel, and Jessica Dimka, "Influenza-Associated Mortality During the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic in Alaska and Labrador: A Comparison," *Social Science History* 37/2 (Summer 2013): 204, 210. Compelling evidence that the total number of Indigenous deaths surpassed eight thousand is found in the dramatic decline of the population between 1910 and 1920. Shoemaker has noted that the Census Bureau reported more than 21,000 fewer Native people in 1920 than in 1910, though she attributes part of the decrease to budget constraints that limited the agency's ability to identify Indigenous people. See Shoemaker, *Population Recovery*, 4.
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365. D. E. Shalala, M. H. Trujillo, G. J. Hartz, and A. J. D'Angelo, *Regional Differences in Indian Health: 1998–1999* (Rockville: Indian Health Service, 1999), cited in Sarche and Spicer, “Health Disparities.”
366. Engels, *Working Class in England*, 95.
367. See Shoemaker, *Population Recovery*, 8; Espey et al., “All-Cause Mortality”; and James A. Weed, “Vital Statistics in the United States: Preparing for the Next Century,” *Population Index* 61/4 (Winter 1995): 527–39.
368. The concept of excess deaths was prominently used in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Black and Minority Health*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985), 3, 62–85. Estimates of excess death rates of 25 percent for Native people under seventy and 43 percent for Native people under forty-five in 1979–81 are found on pages 79–80 of the *Report*.
369. The estimate of deaths for 1999–2019 is found in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, “Underlying Cause of Death 1999–2019,” on CDC WONDER Online Database, 2020. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999–2019, as compiled from data provided by the fifty-seven vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program, <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>.
370. The 1930 population estimate is found in Thornton, “Native North Americans,” 32. At the time, the average life expectancy of Indigenous peoples in the United States was fifty-two years, so most of this cohort was dead before 1999, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began tracking Indigenous deaths. On life expectancy at the time, see C. Matthew Snipp, “The Size and Distribution of the American Indian Population: Fertility, Mortality, Migration, and Residence,” in *Changing Numbers, Changing Needs: American Indian Demography and Public Health*, ed. Gary D. Sandefur, Ronald R. Rindfuss, and Barney Cohen (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996), 19. This estimate of excess deaths between 1930 and 1999 is likely quite conservative because it uses the more recent 46 percent excess mortality rate and does not include the excess deaths of Native Hawaiians.
371. *Indian Child Welfare Program: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Indian Affairs, 93rd Congress 1-3* (April 8–9, 1974), Opening Statement of Hon. James Abourezk, U.S. Senator from the State of South Dakota.
372. *Ibid.*
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 385. Russell Thornton, “Tribal Membership Requirements and the Demography of ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Native Americans,” in *Changing Numbers, Changing Needs*, 14, cited in “Native North Americans,” 41.
 386. Thornton, *Indian Holocaust*, 43.
 387. This is a multiplier of 2.4. Russell Thornton, email to author, December 4, 2015.
 388. Twenty thousand to fifty thousand Tainos were wiped out in Puerto Rico within decades of the European invasion. Mooney estimated

that the population loss in Alaska was at least 44,300 between 1492 and 1900. See “Aboriginal Population of America North of Mexico,” 32. The application of Thornton’s multiplier suggests that more than 106,000 Indigenous people in Alaska perished by the beginning of the twentieth century. The Native population of Hawai‘i declined by about 659,000 between 1778 and 1920. It may not be possible to calculate the total number of lives lost or cut short in Hawai‘i since 1778. David A. Swanson, email to author, March 27, 2016. However, it appears that the population losses in Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawai‘i added up to a minimum of 785,000 by 1900 to 1920.

389. Koch et al., “Earth System Impacts,” 13–36. The massive depopulation south of the present-day United States by 1600 must have significantly reduced the size of these new generations during the following centuries, rendering Thornton’s multiplier for Native inapplicable to the Americas as a whole. Still, the additional deaths between 1600 and 1900 surely numbered in the millions.
390. On deaths in Mexico, Central America, and South America resulting from state violence and poor health conditions since 1900, see, for example, Stannard, *American Holocaust*, xiii–xiv; Alexander L. Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* (University of California Press, 2002), 57; Duncan Green and Sue Bradford, *Faces of Latin America*, 4th ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013), 164; Vanessa Barbara, “The Genocide of Brazil’s Indians,” *New York Times*, May 29, 2017; “Mexican Paramilitary Group That Killed 120 Indigenous People Reappears,” *teleSUR*, December 28, 2015, <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Mexican-Paramilitary-Group-that-Killed-120-Indigenous-Reappears-20151228-0011.html>; and Bianca Jagger, “Stop the Murder of Environmental Defenders in Latin America,” *Huffington Post*, September 11, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/stop-the-murder-of-environmental-defenders-in-latin-america_us_591345c4e4b0e3bb894d5caf. For an earlier attempt to calculate the hemispheric loss of Indigenous lives since 1492, see David Michael Smith, “Counting the Dead: Estimating the Loss of Life in the Indigenous Holocaust, 1492–Present,” *Representations and Realities: Proceedings of the Twelfth Native American Symposium*, ed. Mark B. Spencer (Durant: Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 2018), 7–17.

2. The African American Holocaust

1. Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 19–20; and Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade*, rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 63–66.
2. Marx, *Capital*, 915.

3. Sven Beckert, “How the West Got Rich and Modern Capitalism Was Born,” PBS News Hour, February 13, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/west-got-rich-modern-capitalism-born/>; Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), xxi–xxiii, 322–23, 352–53, 359, 412–13; and Joseph R. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The expression “Great Divergence” was first used by Samuel P. Huntington in *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), but his analysis differs significantly from that of Beckert, Baptist, and Inikori.
4. David Brion Davis, Foreword, in David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), xvii. The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 also recognized slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity. See Nelly Schmidt, *Struggles Against Slavery: The International Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and Its Abolition* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization, 2004), 61.
5. Varying estimates of the total loss of life are found in Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 151, 317–18n9; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 93; Woodrow Borah, “America as Model: The Demographic Impact of European Expansion Upon the Non-European World,” *Actas y Memorias del XXXV Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, México, 1962*, vol. 3 (Mexico City, 1964, 379–87; and other works.
6. See, for example, Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, ed. John R. McKivigan IV, Peter P. Hinks, and Heather L. Kaufman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké, and Sarah Grimké, Introduction, in *American Slavery as It Is: The Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, ed. Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké, and Sarah Grimké (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 50th anniv. ed. (New York: International Publishers, 2013); W. Michael Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, *An American Health Dilemma: A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race, Beginnings to 1900* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Charles Johnson, Patricia Smith, and the WGBH Series Research Team, *Africans in America: America’s Journey through Slavery* (New York: Harcourt International, 1998).

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- lor, *If We Must Die*, 17–19; and Thomas Fowell Buxton, *Abridgment of Sir T. Fowell Buxton's Work Entitled The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1840, repr. Lexington: Leopold Classic Library, 2016), 14–15. As Taylor has noted, captives in certain locations were sometimes transported by boats part of the way to the West African coast.
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 87. The role of wars and raids in enslaving "the vast majority of Africans" is emphasized by John K. Thornton in *Warfare in Atlantic Africa*, 128–39. See also Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, chap. 4; and Adu Boahen with Jacob F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Tidy, *Topics in West African History*, new ed. (London: Longman Group, 1986), 108–9.
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 101. Miller, *Way of Death*, 381, 440–41. The growth of enslavement for crime and debt in some parts of Africa has also been noted in John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, 1995), 132–33. Other people were captured through kidnapping and trickery. Elsewhere on the continent, however, wars and raids tied to the transatlantic slave trade escalated during the eighteenth century. See John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 305–13.
102. Boahen, Ajayi, and Tidy, *West African History*, 109; and Alfred-Kamara, *Recovered Histories*, 17.
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 104. Milton Meltzer, *Slavery: A World History*, updated ed. (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1993), Part II, 50. Meltzer estimated that 4 or 5 percent died at this stage. Miller estimated that 4 to 10 percent of slaves arriving in Brazil died before they were sold, and an additional 10 to 15 percent who had to “continue on to other markets in the interior before final sale” also died. See also Miller, *Way of Death*, 438.
 105. Lorena S. Walsh, “The African American Population of the Colonial United States,” in *Population History*, 206.
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 107. Walsh, “African American Population,” 206–7.
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 111. *Ibid.* Bergad makes the same point about slaves working in “southern tropical lowland regions” in the present-day United States in *Comparative Histories*, 101.
 112. Walsh, “African American Population,” 206–7.
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 124. Johnson et al., *Africans in America*, 48.
 125. Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 23; and Derek N. Kerr, "Petty Felony, Slave Defiance, and Frontier Villainy: Crime and Criminal Justice in Spanish Louisiana, 1770–1803" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1983), cited in Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 409.
 126. Aptheker's classic work identified approximately 250 planned or actual revolts and demolished the long-standing racist depiction of enslaved people as docile. Subsequent scholarship has acknowledged the significance of their resistance and efforts to organize uprisings while noting various "flaws and exaggerations" in Aptheker's seminal research and emphasizing the limited number of large-scale rebellions. See Douglas R. Egerton, "Slave Resistance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 446–64. This chapter draws from Aptheker's work because it documents extensive resistance to enslavement by people of African descent, even though the number of major uprisings was limited.
 127. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 164–66.
 128. Ibid., 169.
 129. Ibid., 172–73.
 130. Ibid., 174–75.
 131. Ibid., 179–80.
 132. Ibid., 181–82.

133. *Ibid.*, 188–89.
134. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 125; and Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 29–30. Foner notes that the “contours” of this ostensible conspiracy “remain a matter of dispute among historians.”
135. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 198–99.
136. *Ibid.*, 201.
137. Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*, chap. 1, and “The African Americans’ Revolution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Edward G. Gray and Jane Kamensky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 254, 268–69n20.
138. See Howard H. Peckham, *The Toll of Independence: Engagements and Battle Casualties of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), ix.
139. An estimate of about 60,000 African Americans who escaped slavery is found in Ray Raphael, *People’s History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 330–31, 482n220. An estimate of no more than 40,000 is found in Nash, “African Americans’ Revolution,” 254, 260–61, 268–69n20.
140. Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*, 23.
141. Nash, “African Americans’ Revolution,” 261–62.
142. Raphael, *People’s History of the American Revolution*, 482n220.
143. *Ibid.*
144. Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*, 42–45.
145. Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 190–206; and Walter J. Fraser, *Savannah in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 145.
146. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 213.
147. *Ibid.*, 215.
148. *Ibid.*, 215–16.
149. *Ibid.*, 217.
150. *Ibid.*, 218–19.
151. “The ESPY List: U.S. Executions from 1608–2002,” based on data compiled by M. Watt Espy Jr. and John Ortiz Smykla, Britannica ProCon.org, <https://deathpenalty.procon.org/us-executions/#III>.
152. Douglass, *Life*; Weld, Grimké, and Grimké, *American Slavery*; Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*; Byrd and Clayton, *American Health Dilemma*; and Johnson et al., *Africans in America*.
153. Walsh was right to note that reliable data from the eighteenth century is limited, but the “absence of reliable age-specific measures of life

- chances” need not prevent the development of informed and reasonable estimates of the minimum number of excess deaths among native-born enslaved people in the eighteenth century. See Walsh, “African American Population,” 208–9.
154. This estimate for the nineteenth century is found in Richard H. Steckel, “The African American Population of the United States, 1790–1920,” in *Population History*, 449, 453, and “Demography and Slavery,” in *Handbook of Slavery*, 654. Steckel contrasted the mortality rate of enslaved people with that of the “entire free population,” which was overwhelmingly white. Discussion of the poor health of both enslaved and free African Americans is found in Byrd and Clayton, *American Health Dilemma* 287, 346–47. Walsh has explained, “There is no reason to suppose that mortality levels were significantly lower in the colonial period.” See “African American Population,” 209.
 155. Byrd and Clayton, *American Health Dilemma*, 287, 346–47.
 156. U.S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860: Eighth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), cited in Steckel, “African American Population, 1790–1920,” 435.
 157. U.S. Census Bureau, *Population 1920: Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing office, 1921), cited in Steckel, “African American Population, 1790–1920,” 435.
 158. History.com Editors, “Slavery in America,” *History*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>; and “How Did Slavery Disappear in the North?,” The Abolition Seminar. Library Company of Philadelphia, <https://www.abolitionseminar.org/how-did-northern-states-gradually-abolish-slavery/>.
 159. Eric Foner, “Forgotten Step Toward Freedom,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2007.
 160. Sylvia R. Frey, “Slavery and Anti-Slavery,” in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 411.
 161. An estimate of about 50,000 illegal importations between 1808 and 1865, mainly to Texas and Louisiana, is found in Randy Sparks, *Africans in the Old South: Mapping Exceptional Lives Across the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 80. An estimate of 46,000 between 1808 and 1860 is found in David Eltis, “The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644–1867: An Assessment,” *Civil War History* 54/4 (December 2008): 353.
 162. Allison Keyes, “The ‘Clotilda,’ the Last Known Slave Ship to Arrive in US, Is Found,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 22, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/clotilda-last-known-slave-ship-arrive-us-found-180972177/>.

163. Dale T. Graden, *Disease, Resistance, and Lies: The Demise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Brazil and Cuba* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2014), 9, 12–39. See also Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2015). The slave trade remained legal in Cuba and Brazil, but new federal legislation in the first decade of the nineteenth century prohibited U.S. citizens from participating in the trafficking of human beings.
164. Laird Bergad, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38–39, 51, cited in Chambers, *No God but Gain*, 176n2.
165. Sidney Chalhoub, *A Força da Escravidão: Ilegalidade e Costume no Brasil Oitocentista* (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012), 35, cited in Graden, *Disease, Resistance, and Lies*, 3, 235n16.
166. Graden, *Disease, Resistance, and Lies*, 38.
167. *Ibid.*, 39.
168. *Ibid.*, 20–23, 26–31, 36–39; and Chambers, *No God but Gain*, chaps. 3 and 8.
169. This assessment is based on the approach to calculating the total number of deaths in the entire transatlantic slave trade. For each of the more than one million people forcibly transported on U.S.-built ships to Cuba and Brazil in the first half of the nineteenth century, more than three people died in Africa, and close to 70 percent of those who arrived alive died within a decade and a half. The estimate of 3.7 million deaths in this illegal slave trade is conservative. The toll may well have been higher because of the harsher labor and climate conditions in Cuba and Brazil.
170. Chambers, *No God but Gain*, 159–170.
171. Berlin, *Making of African America*, 100; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 5; and Edward Ball, “Retracing Slavery’s Trail of Tears,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2015, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/slavery-trail-of-tears-180956968/>.
172. Berlin, *Making of African America*, 100.
173. *Ibid.*
174. Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told*, xxi, xxiii, 322–23, 352–53, 359, 412–13.
175. Berlin, *Making of African America*, 101.
176. *Ibid.*, 101–2.
177. *Ibid.*; and Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 5–6.
178. Berlin, *Making of African America*, 111–116.
179. *Ibid.*, 111–16; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 49–50, 60–62; and Ball, “Slavery’s Trail of Tears.”

180. Berlin, *Making of African America*, 111.
181. Berlin did not offer estimates of the lives lost but found that though “the mortality rate for the internal slave trade never approached that of the transatlantic transfer, it surpassed that of those who remained in the seaboard states.” He also noted that “the slave mortality rate began increasing in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century.” See *Making of African America*, 113. If even 1 percent of the African Americans forcibly transported during the “second Middle Passage” died in the process, this amounts to about 10,000 fatalities.
182. See Douglass, *Life*; Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Penguin, 2003); and Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Mineola: Dover 2003). See also Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Penguin, 1998); Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (New York: Penguin, 2012); and Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001).
183. Weld, Grimké, and Grimké, *American Slavery*, 9.
184. The firsthand reports in *American Slavery* made clear that large numbers of enslaved people died at the hands of slaveowners and overseers.
185. Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), esp. chap. 2.
186. Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 4.
187. *Ibid.*, 15.
188. Even a conservative estimate of 10 percent fatalities, applied to the minimum estimate of 30,000 Black people escaping slavery between 1830 and 1860, suggests a rough estimate of 3,000 deaths. The actual loss of life may have been considerably higher.
189. Mary H. Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2.
190. *Ibid.*
191. Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 89.
192. This estimate is based on the fatalities described in this section and other deaths reported in Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*.
193. *Ibid.*, 222. A lower estimate of twenty-six executions is found in Egerton, “Slave Resistance,” 451.
194. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 230–31.
195. *Ibid.*, 250–51.
196. *Ibid.*; and Baptiste, *Half Has Never Been Told*, 63.
197. PBS, “The War of 1812: Blacks in the War,” <https://www.pbs.org/video/>

- the-war-of-1812-blacks-in-the-war/; and Oscar H. Blayton, “When Freed Africans Burned the White House,” *Carolina Panorama*, June 14, 2018, https://www.carolinapanorama.com/opinion/editorials/when-freed-africans-burned-the-white-house/article_420fefee-6f80-11e8-956a-176d94e9a729.html.
198. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 257–58.
 199. *Ibid.*, 258–59.
 200. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 283.
 201. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 263.
 202. *Ibid.*, 271.
 203. *Ibid.*, 276–77.
 204. *Ibid.*, 277–78.
 205. *Ibid.*, 281–82.
 206. *Ibid.*, 287.
 207. *Ibid.*, 289–90.
 208. *Ibid.*, 293–303.
 209. *Ibid.*, 301. Egerton has estimated that roughly thirty to forty slaves were killed without trial, in “Slave Resistance,” 452.
 210. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 302. An estimate of seventeen executions is found in Egerton, “Slave Resistance,” 452.
 211. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 330; and Junius P. Rodriguez, “Complicity and Deceit: Lewis Cheney’s Plot and Its Bloody Consequences,” in *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, ed. Michael A. Bellesiles (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 143–44.
 212. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 338.
 213. *Ibid.*, 340–41, 348.
 214. *Ibid.*, 346.
 215. Anita S. Goldstein, “Slavery,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, March 1, 2018, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/slavery/>. An argument that there was more white panic than actual conspiracy by enslaved African Americans is found in Charles B. Dew, “Black Ironworkers and the Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856,” *Journal of Southern History* 41/3 (August 1975): 321–38.
 216. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 351.
 217. DeNeen L. Brown, “‘Unflinching’: The Day John Brown Was Hanged for His Raid on Harpers Ferry,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2017; and Fergus Bordewich, “John Brown’s Day of Reckoning,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2009, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/john-browns-day-of-reckoning-139165084/>.
 218. Brown, “Unflinching.”
 219. Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 357. Sixteen African Americans were executed in one of these towns, Pife Level. See “The Negro Plot in Alabama: Trial

- and Execution of Sixteen Negroes by a Committee at Pife Level, From the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1861.
220. Kathleen Jenkins, “No More Silence at Second Creek,” *Natchez Democrat*, September 23, 2011.
221. Zinn, *People’s History*, 193; and Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 21.
222. Zinn, *People’s History*, 194; and Paul D. Escott, “African Americans in the Civil War,” History Net.com, <http://www.historynet.com/african-americans-in-the-civil-war>.
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224. Zinn, *People’s History*, 194; Escott, “African Americans in the Civil War”; and Steven Mintz, “Historical Context: Black Soldiers in the Civil War,” Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teaching-resource/historical-context-black-soldiers-civil-war>.
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228. Brett M. Palfreyman, “The Boston Draft Riots,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2013; and Adam Rozen-Wheeler, “Detroit Race Riot (1813),” *BlackPast.org*, January 8, 2018, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/detroit-race-riot-1863/>.
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253. *Ibid.*, 7, 99, and Blackmon, email to author, April 8, 2018.
254. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 7.
255. *Ibid.*, 57, 73, 98, 109, 288–89, 320, 326–31, 334–335.
256. Blackmon, email to author.
257. Blackmon, in email to author, has estimated that at least six thousand prisoners perished in Alabama between the 1890s and the early 1920s and indicated that the total from the 1870s to almost 1930 would be even higher. He has also noted that Georgia and Florida had large prisoner populations and may have had substantial numbers of fatalities as well.
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259. Muhammad, “History of Lynching.” See also Jamiles Lartney and Sam Morris, “How White Americans Used Lynchings to Terrorize and Control Black People,” *Guardian*, April 26, 2018; and Cazenave, *Killing African Americans*, chap. 3.
260. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 7, 358–59, and email to author.
261. Foner, *Second Founding*, 158–67; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); and Michele Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the*

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385. This rough estimate for the Western Hemisphere includes the total number of deaths associated with the transatlantic slave trade, the deaths of people of African descent born in the present-day United States examined in this chapter, and the countless violent deaths and social murders of people of African descent born in Brazil, the Caribbean, and other lands in the Americas. South of the United States, perhaps the most lethal mistreatment of Black people over time has occurred in Brazil. See, for example, Vinícius Lisboa, "Forum Reports Black Genocide in Brazil to UN," AgênciaBrasil, March 12, 2017, <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/direitos-humanos/noticia/2017-12/forum-reports-black-genocide-brazil-un>; Manuella Libardi, "Racial Cleansing in Brazil: A Twenty-first Century Genocide?," Open Democracy, September 27, 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/limpieza-racial-en-brasil-genocidio-versión-siglo-xxi-en/>; and "How Many Acts of Genocide Will It Take to Call the Extermination of Black Brazilians a Genocide?," RioOnWatch.org, October 31, 2019, <https://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=56561>. On the grave discrimination and disparities in health and access to health care still experienced by Blacks in Latin America and the Caribbean, see Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *People of African Descent in Latin America and the Caribbean: Developing Indicators to Measure and Counter Inequalities*, LC/TS.2019/62, February 2020, <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45202-people-african-descent-latin-america-and-caribbean-developing-indicators-measure>. What this report calls "the persistent statistical invisibility of people of African descent" in Latin America and the Caribbean explains the traditional paucity of data on the violent deaths and social murders they have suffered in this region. See ECLAC and OHCHR, 5.

3. The Workers Holocaust

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 97. Cohen, *America’s Response*, 11; and Yoni Wilkenfeld, “The First U.S.-China Trade Deal,” *JSTOR Daily*, (October 23, 2019), <https://daily.jstor.org/the-first-us-china-trade-deal/>.
 98. Wilkenfeld, “The First U.S.-China Trade Deal.”
 99. Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 155–56. In view of Cushing’s actions in China, the suggestion that the treaty was achieved “without firing a shot and without issuing a threat” is unpersuasive. See Cohen, *America’s Response*, 11.
 100. Zinn, *People’s History*, chap. 8.
 101. O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” 5–6, 9–10.
 102. Estimates of approximately fifty thousand Mexican deaths are found in Atwood, *War and Empire*, 74; Weeks, *Continental Empire*, 135; and Cockcroft, *Mexico’s Hope*, 68. Timothy J. Henderson has reported almost fourteen thousand U.S. deaths and estimates of Mexican deaths ranging from 25,000 to 50,000. See *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 179.
 103. In 1853, Washington engineered the Gadsden Purchase and obtained additional Mexican lands which later became parts of Arizona and New Mexico. See Weeks, *Continental Empire*, 162.
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- the Beautiful,” music composed by Samuel A. Ward in 1883 and lyrics written by Katharine Lee Bates.
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 118. Weeks, *Continental Empire*, 154–56.
 119. *Ibid.*, 158–59.
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300. Parenti, *Sword and the Dollar*, 136, 139; Zinn, *People's History*, 408–9; Fogelson, *America's Secret War*, 5–6, chaps. 6 and 7; and Sayers and Kahn, *Great Conspiracy*, chap. 6.
301. Parenti, *Sword and the Dollar*, 139; and Fogelson, *America's Secret War*, 69–75.
302. Parenti, *Sword and the Dollar*, 138–39; Sayers and Kahn, *Great Conspiracy*, 107; Marcel Liebman, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1970), 336–40; and Evan Mawdsley, “International Responses to the Russian Civil War (Russian Empire),” in *1914–1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill

- Nasson, Free University, Berlin, October 8, 2014, DOI:10.15555463/ie1418.10489.
303. Parenti, *Sword and the Dollar*, 139.
 304. Ibid., 136–39; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 369.
 305. Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28–29.
 306. Ibid., 9.
 307. Pauwels, *Myth of the Good War*, 30–31; and Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 30–45.
 308. The Italian Ambassador's language is quoted in Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 37.
 309. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 30–45; Pauwels, *Good War*, 30–31; and Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 52.
 310. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 43–44.
 311. On political repression in fascist Italy, see Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*. On U.S. arms sales to Mussolini's regime, see Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History*, vol. 2: *Since 1895*, 7th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2009), 136. An estimate of half a million deaths during the Italian conquest and colonization of Libya is found in Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance*, 2nd ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 1, 155. Some of these deaths occurred in the decade before Mussolini came to power, but many of them occurred during his rule.
 312. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 52.
 313. Michael Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 10.
 314. See Michael Schroeder, "The Sandino Rebellion Revisited: Civil War, Imperialism, Popular Nationalism, and State Formation Muddled Up Together in the Segovias of Nicaragua, 1926–1934," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 208–68. Schroeder has estimated that between 3,600 and six thousand died in Las Segovias in northern Nicaragua between 1927 and 1934, with possibly as many wounded or injured; email to author, July 28, 2016. The loss of five thousand lives during this period would bring the total number of Nicaraguan fatalities during the U.S. occupation to seven thousand. A lower total estimate of five thousand deaths appears in Alan McPherson, *Invaded*, 16.
 315. International Commission of Jurists, *Human Rights in Nicaragua: Yes-*

- terday and Today* (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 1981), 5. See also Richard Grossman, “Nicaragua: A Tortured Nation,” *Torture, American Style, Historians Against the War*, https://www.historiansagainstwar.org/resources/torture/grossman.html#N_1.
316. “A Century of U.S. Intervention in the Dominican Republic,” *teleSur*, September 25, 2016, <https://www.telesurenglish.net/analysis/A-Century-of-U.S.-Intervention-in-the-Dominican-Republic-20160921-0034.html>. An estimate of more than 50,000 deaths is in Randal C. Archibold, “A Museum of Repression Aims to Shock the Conscience,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2011. This estimate includes about 17,000 Haitians killed by the Trujillo regime in 1937. The U.S. government stopped supporting Trujillo only after he tried to assassinate the president of Venezuela in 1960. A year later, the CIA was complicit in Trujillo’s assassination. See Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 73; and Nicholas M. Horrocks, “CIA Is Reported to Have Helped in Trujillo Death,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1975.
317. Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 133.
318. Schmitz, *Right-wing Dictatorships*, 78–82.
319. Elio Delgado Legon, “Massacres During Batista’s Dictatorship,” *Havana Times*, January 26, 2017. This estimate is for the number of deaths during Batista’s rule between 1952 and 1958, so the total loss of life is certainly higher.
320. Cohen, *America’s Response*, 110–12; Bradley, *China Mirage*, 109–10, 127–30, 156–57, 163–64; Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 385–86; and Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*, 290–91.
321. Cohen, *America’s Response*, 112; Bradley, *China Mirage*, 127–30, 156–57; and Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 385.
322. On Japanese expansionism, see Zinn, *People’s History*, 410–11; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 288–89, 303–4. On U.S. accommodation in the early 1930s, see Cohen, *America’s Response*, 115–37; Bradley, *China Mirage*, 117–26; James C. Thomson Jr., *When China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 22–27; and Kiernan, *New Imperialism*, 246.
323. Bradley, *China Mirage*, 127–30; Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 385–86; and Guangqiu Xu, “Americans and Chinese Nationalist Military Aviation,” *Journal of Asian History* 31/2 (1997): 155–80.
324. An estimate of more than one million combat deaths and one million civilian deaths is found in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 390.
325. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 90.
326. Frederic Sackett, quoted in Bernard V. Burke, *Ambassador Frederic Sackett and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic, 1900–1933* (Stanford,

- CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), cited in Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 90.
327. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 90. The language is Schmitz's.
328. George Gordon, "The Counselor of Embassy in Germany (Gordon) to the Secretary of State," March 23, 1933, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1933, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East and Africa*, vol. 2, cited in Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 91.
329. Breckinridge Long, quoted in Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 92.
330. Ibid..
331. Zinn, *People's History*, 409–10; Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, chap. 3; and Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps. 2–3.
332. Zinn, *People's History*, 409–10; Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, chap. 3; Pauwels, *Good War*, chap. 3; Arnold A. Offner, "Appeasement Revisited: The United States, Great Britain, and Germany, 1933–1940," *The Journal of American History* 64/2 (September 1977), 373–93; Frederick W. Marks III, "Six Between Roosevelt and Hitler: America's Role in the Appeasement of Nazi Germany," *Historical Journal* 38/ 4 (December 1985): 969–82; and Rafael Medoff, "Why FDR Wouldn't Condemn Hitler," History News Network, April 28, 2019, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/171833>. These researchers have divergent views on the origins of the Second World War but acknowledge the importance of U.S. accommodation and appeasement of the Nazi Reich.
333. Pauwels, *Good War*, 32.
334. Ibid.
335. Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*, xvi, cited in Pauwels, *Good War*, 35.
336. Pauwels, *Good War*, 32–36; Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*; Black, *Nazi Nexus*; and Hart, *Hitler's American Friends*, chap. 5.
337. Pauwels, *Good War*, 32–36; Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*, chap. 2; and Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 81–82.
338. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends*, 123.
339. Ibid. See also Pauwels, *Good War*, 36–41, 46–48.
340. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends*, chaps 1, 2, 3, and 7; Pauwels, *Good War*, 37–39.
341. Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 11; Philip Olterman, "Revealed: How Associated Press Cooperated with the Nazis," *Guardian*, March 30, 2016; and Nina Storchlic, "The Nazi Who Infiltrated *National Geographic*," *National Geographic*, April 27, 2017, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/lost-found-douglas-chandler-nazi/?user.testname=lazyloading:1>.
342. Schmitz, *Right-wing Dictatorships*, 95–97.

343. Zinn, *People's History*, 409; G. Bruce Strang, "The Worst of All Worlds: Oil Sanctions and Italy's Invasion of Abyssinia, 1935–1936," in *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19/2 (2008): 210–35, and William D. Baker, "Neutrality Debates," in *Encyclopedia of the United States Congress*, ed. Robert E. Dewhirst and John David Kausch (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 378.
344. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 96–97.
345. Spencer C. Tucker, "Second Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935–1936," in *Encyclopedia of African Colonial Conflicts*, vol. 2, ed. Timothy J. Stapleton (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 375. An Ethiopian government memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference of 1946 estimated that 760,300 lives had been lost in the Italian invasion and occupation. A similar estimate is found in Brian R. Sullivan, "More than Meets the Eye: The Ethiopian War and the Origins of the Second World War," in *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: A. J. P. Taylor and the Historians*, 2nd ed., ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 1999), 188. A much lower estimate of 275,000 deaths is given in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 382. However, this estimate includes only the number of Ethiopians killed in action in 1935–36 and omits the much larger number who perished during the subsequent occupation. See A. J. Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: A History of the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–1936* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 316.
346. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 102–13.
347. U.S. State Department, "Memorandum for the Honorable Norman H. Davis; A Contribution to a Peace Settlement," February 16, 1937, Box 24, Davis Papers, Library of Congress, cited in Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 91–92.
348. Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps. 2 and 3.
349. Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 98–101.
350. *Ibid.*; and Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84–85.
351. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84; and Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 362–63.
352. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84; and Zinn, *People's History*, 409–10. The Neutrality Acts enacted by Congress in 1935–37 were largely in response to widespread public condemnation of war profiteering in the First World War. Ironically, a great deal of war profiteering occurred when U.S. companies aided and abetted Franco's insurgency.
353. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84; John Hubbard, "How Franco Financed His War," *Journal of Modern History* 25/4 (December 1953): 404, cited in Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 138; and Adam Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939*

- (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 173.
354. Hubbard, “How Franco Financed His War,” 404; and Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts*, chap. 10.
 355. Beevor, *Battle for Spain*, 138; and Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts*, 281–82.
 356. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84–85; Zinn, *People’s History*, 409–10; Pauwels, *Good War*, 36; Robert Whealey, “How Franco Financed His War—Reconsidered,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 12/1 (January 1977): 145–46; Vicente Navarro, “They Worked for Franco,” *CounterPunch*, October 30, 2004; <https://www.counterpunch.org/2004/10/30/they-worked-for-franco/>; and Adam Hochschild, “How Texaco Helped Franco Win the Spanish Civil War,” *Mother Jones*, March 29, 2016, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/03/texaco-franco-spanish-civil-war-riever/>.
 357. Charles Foltz, *The Masquerade in Spain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 46–48, cited in Beevor, *Battle for Spain*, 138.
 358. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 84–85.
 359. This estimate is found in Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, rev. ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1989), xviii, 900–901.
 360. The widespread use of this expression has been noted by Pauwels, *Good War*, 7–17; and by Studs Terkel, “*The Good War*”: *An Oral History of World War II* (New York: New Press, 1984).
 361. On the imperialist nature of the war, see Zinn, *People’s History*, 407–25; Atwood, *War and Empire*, chap. 8; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, chaps 14–16; and Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps 1–6. On the Soviet view of what soon came to be known as the Great Patriotic War, see Joseph Stalin, Radio Broadcast, July 3, 1941, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/07/03.htm>.
 362. Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps 2–4; Schmitz, *Right-Wing Dictatorships*, 30–45; Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*; Black, *Nazi Nexus*; Hart, *Hitler’s American Friends*, chap. 5; Bradley, *China Mirage*, 123; Smethurst, “Road to World War II”; and Kiernan, *New Imperialism*, 246.
 363. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 125.
 364. Zinn, *People’s History*, 407–25; Atwood, chap. 8; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, chaps. 14–16; and Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps. 1–6.
 365. Zinn, *People’s History*, 410–11; Atwood, *War and Empire*, 127–28, 136, 139; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 289–90, 303–4; 321–322; and Pauwels, *Good War*, 80–82.
 366. Bradley, *China Mirage*, 123. See also Smethurst, “Road to World War II.”
 367. Kiernan, *New Imperialism*, 246.
 368. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 392.
 369. Pauwels, *Good War*, 80–82.

370. Smethurst, “Road to World War II”; and Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, 839.
371. Zinn, *People’s History*, 411; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 290.
372. Zinn, *People’s History*, 410–11; Atwood, *War and Empire*, 127–28, 136, 139; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 289–90, 303–4; 321–22; and Pauwels, *Good War*, 80–82.
373. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 128; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 311–12.
374. James O. Richardson, *On the Treadmill to Pearl Harbor: The Memoirs of Admiral James O. Richardson, USN* (Washington, DC: Naval History Division, Department of the Navy, 1973), 427. See Atwood, *War and Empire* 126–30; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 321–22; and Pauwels, *Good War*, 82–83.
375. Smethurst, “Road to World War II”; and Zinn, *People’s History*, 410.
376. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 126–27, 130.
377. *Ibid.* Chapter 8 in Atwood’s book is titled “Pearl Harbor: The Spark But Not the Cause.” The estimate of U.S. deaths at Pearl Harbor is found in Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 531.
378. Pauwels, *Good War*, 35; Ben Aris and Duncan Campbell, “How Bush’s Grandfather Helped Hitler’s Rise to Power,” *Guardian*, September 25, 2004.
379. Pauwels, *Good War*, 33, 40, 227–29; and Black, *Nazi Nexus*, chap. 4.
380. *Ibid.*, 40, 78–79, 226–227; and Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*, chap. 3.
381. Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*, 99, cited in Pauwels, *Good War*, 227.
382. *Ibid.*
383. Pauwels, *Good War*, 226, 233–34; and Black, *Nazi Nexus*, chap. 5.
384. Black, *Nazi Nexus*, 143.
385. Pauwels, *Good War*, chap. 20; Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 81–83; Higham, *Trading with the Enemy*; Black, *Nazi Nexus*; and Michael Dobbs, “Ford and GM Scrutinized for Alleged Nazi Collaboration,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1998.
386. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 140.
387. *Ibid.*, 135–42, 149; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 313–14. See also Pauwels, *Good War*, 59–62. Pauwels has recognized growing U.S. concerns about the prospects for Nazi autarky and the end of the Open Door in Europe but has not acknowledged Roosevelt’s eventual willingness to go to war with the Reich because it threatened the U.S. Empire.
388. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 136–37; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 313–15.
389. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 136–37, 141–42; and Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 317–21.

390. Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943–1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 252, cited in Zinn, *People's History*, 413.
391. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 134–36, 142–43, 149–50; Zinn, *People's History*, 412–15; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 327–28; and Kolko, *Politics of War*, 245–77, 607–10.
392. Isaiah Bowen, Memorandum T-A21, January 16, 1942, Council on Foreign Relations, *War-Peace Studies*, Baldwin Papers, Yale University Library, cited in Kaku and Axelrod, *Nuclear War*, 64.
393. Minutes S-3 of the Security Subcommittee, Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy, May 6, 1942, Notter File, Box 77, R.G. 59, cited in Kaku and Axelrod, *Nuclear War*, 64.
394. Pauwels, *Good War*, 127; and Donny Gluckstein, *A People's History of the Second World War* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 93.
395. Pauwels, *Good War*, 119; and Gluckstein, *People's History of the Second World War*, 143–44.
396. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 152–53; Pauwels, *Good War*, 16, 70–74; and Matthew Lenoe, “Why It’s Time to Give the Soviet Union Its Due for World War II,” *Washington Post*, December 5, 2018.
397. Pauwels, *Good War*, chaps. 8 and 11; and William Z. Foster, *The Second Front Now: For Speedy Victory* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1943), 1, 6–8. See also Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 102–11; and Oleg A. Rzheshevsky, “D-Day/60 Years Later: For Russia, Opening of a Second Front in Europe Came Far Too Late,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2004.
398. Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, June 24, 1943, cited in Rzheshevsky, “D-Day/60 Years Later.”
399. Pauwels, *Good War*, 103, 123–24; and Alan Woods, “D-Day and the Truth About the Second World War,” *In Defense of Marxism*, July 21, 2004, <https://www.marxist.com/wwii-anniversary-one210704.htm>.
400. King George II had supported and collaborated with the fascist dictator Metaxas before the war but fled the country after Italian forces invaded in 1941.
401. Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 330–31.
402. Lawrence S. Wittner, “American Policy Toward Greece During World War II,” *Diplomatic History* 3/2 (Spring 1979): 129–49. U.S. officials eventually persuaded the British government that King George II should not return until a plebiscite on the monarchy could be held.
403. See, for example, Pauwels, *Good War*, 127–31; Gluckstein, *People's History of the Second World War*, chaps. 2, 6; and Kolko, *Politics of War*, 131–37, 345, 414–20.
404. Pauwels, *Good War*, 197–98; Atwood, *War and Empire*, 161; and San-

- dra Kollen Ghizoni, “Creation of the Bretton Woods System,” Federal Reserve History, July 22, 2013, https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/bretton_woods_created.
405. Zinn, *People’s History*, 415, 419.
406. Ibid.
407. See, for example, V. Carl Allsup, “Felix Longoria Affair,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, February 21, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vef01>.
408. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 152–57; and Zinn, *People’s History*, 416.
409. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 150.
410. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 144–45; Daniel A. Gross, “The U.S. Government Turned Away thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing They Were Nazi Spies,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 18, 2015, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/us-government-turned-away-thousands-jewish-refugees-fearing-they-were-nazi-spies-180957324/>; Zinn, *People’s History*, 420; and Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 255, 279.
411. Hermann Knell, *To Destroy a City: Strategic Bombing and Its Human Consequences in World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 1, 334. Estimates of 600,000 civilian deaths in Germany and almost 350,000 civilian deaths in Japan are found in John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 432–33, 576. A postwar German government estimate of 593,000 civilian deaths in Japan appears in J. A. S. Grenville, *A History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1994), 280. A much lower estimate of about 630,000 civilian deaths from these bombing campaigns, including the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is found in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys* (Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, AL: Air University Press, 1987), 6, 92, cited in John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America’s Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.
412. Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 331; and Reuters, “Algerians Remember Massacres of 1945,” *Washington Post*, May 9, 2005.
413. This point was made by the head of the League of Arab States to U.S. Envoy Somerville Pinkney Tuck in Egypt. The language is Tuck’s. See Somerville Pinkney Tuck, “The Minister in Egypt (Tuck) to the Secretary of State,” June 21, 1945, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, The Near East and Africa*, vol. 3, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d14>; and Marcel Vi-

- gneras, *United States Army in World War II, Special Studies, Rearming the French*, U.S. Army Center of Military History (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1957), 1.
414. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 559–60; Alex Wallerstein, “Counting the Dead at Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August 4, 2020, <https://thebulletin.org/2020/08/counting-the-dead-at-hiroshima-and-nagasaki/>; and BBC News, “Hiroshima Bomb: Japan Marks 75 Years Since Nuclear attack,” August 6, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-533660059>.
415. Clodfelter, *Warfare*, 560; and Erin O’Hara Slavick, “Hiroshima: A Visual Record,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 7/30 (July 27, 2009), <https://apjff.org/-elin-o'Hara-slavick/3196/article.html>.
416. The U.S. government’s own experts concluded less than a year later that “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.” See *Strategic Bombing Surveys*, 107. On the Truman administration’s actual rationale for the atomic bombings, see Pauwels, *Good War*, chap. 18; Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, chap. 4; Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); and Gar Alperowitz and Martin J. Sherwin, “U.S. Leaders Knew We Didn’t Have to Drop Atomic Bombs on Japan to End the War. We Did It Anyway,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 2020.
417. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 178–81.
418. Kolko, *Politics of War*, 601.
419. The destruction of much of Europe and Asia is discussed in Margaret MacMillan, “Rebuilding the World after the Second World War,” *Guardian*, September 11, 2009. Estimates of 80 million deaths are found in Alan Taylor, “World War II: After the War,” *The Atlantic*, October 30, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/10/world-war-ii-after-the-war/100180/>; Ben Wattenberg, “The First Measured Century: World War II, the Home Front,” PBS, December 2000, <https://www.pbs.org/fmc/segments/progseg8.htm>; and Greg Dobbs, “The Parallels and Differences Between Pearl Harbor and 9/11,” *Denver Post*, December 6, 2016. This includes tens of millions who died from famine and disease during the war. Estimates of 70 million deaths during the war are found in Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 182; and Mary Kaldor, “Restructuring Global Security for the Twenty-first Century,” in *The Quest for Security: Protection Without Protectionism and the Challenge of Global Governance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 120. The human toll of the Second World War included at least 27 million Soviet deaths and possibly more; at least 20 million

Chinese deaths and possibly many more; millions of additional deaths in Asia, the Pacific, and Europe; six million deaths in the Shoah; and many other fatalities. See “Russia’s Losses in World War II Estimated at Some 27 Million—Paper,” May 6, 2010, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20100506158896419/>; Kyle Mizokami, “These Are the Five Wars That Changed History (and Killed Millions) Forever,” *National Interest*, May 31, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/these-are-the-5-wars-changed-history-killed-millions-forever-20926>; Jeremy Bender, “This Chart Shows the Astounding Devastation of World War II,” *Business Insider*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/percentage-of-countries-who-died-during-wwii-2014-5>; and “Holocaust Facts: Where Does the Figure of 6 Million Victims Come From?,” *Haaretz*, August 11, 2013.

420. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 149–50; Zinn, *People’s History*, 425; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 336–40.
421. Atwood, *War and Empire*, 163; and MacMillan, “Rebuilding the World.”
422. Kolko, *Politics of War*, 618; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 336–37; Atwood, *War and Empire*, 148–51; and Pauwels, *Good War*, 268–69.
423. Seymour Melman, *The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism in Decline* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), 15–17; Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 182; Pauwels, *Good War*, 268–69; Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 336–37 and Zinn, *People’s History*, 425.
424. Stone and Kuznick, *Untold History*, 182.
425. *Ibid.*
426. Frederick James Marquis, First Earl of Woolton, quoted in Lens, *Forging the American Empire*, 337.
427. Walter Lippmann, quoted in Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, 876.

5. The Holocausts of Pax Americana I

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84. Sylvan and Majeski, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 90–91.

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86. Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, chaps. 1 and 2. This description of the war appears on page 74. See also Atwood, *War and Empire*, 178–88.
87. Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 88–90; and Atwood, *War and Empire*, 182–83.
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89. *Ibid.*, 84–88; and Atwood, *War and Empire*, 182–83.
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344. This includes well over one million drug overdose deaths since the mid-twentieth century, almost 28 million tobacco-related deaths since 1965, almost four million automobile deaths since 1899, more than one million deaths related to defective or dangerous consumer products in the United States since 1968, thousands from medical experimentation, close to one million deaths from government failures to address public health crises, more than one million deaths resulting from limited access to medical care since 2000, eight million deaths from all iatrogenic causes since 2000, eight million deaths from air pollution since 1980, and eight million deaths from water and soil pollution since 1980. Deaths from cholera and tuberculosis are not included here. Nor are deaths partly caused by the consumption of processed foods.
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