Introduction
Attacking the People: Democracy, Populism, and Modern War

Before the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) carried out a campaign of bombings across England following a January 1939 demand for the total withdrawal of British forces from Ireland. Despite IRA claims to only target city infrastructure, a devastating attack rocked the Coventry city centre on 24 August while war with Germany was looming in continental Europe. In a personal diary, Coventry resident Mary Bloomfield called the IRA bombing 'a terrible crime', and added that 'the horror of it completely took people's minds off the coming war'.[1] The British people, but especially the citizens of Coventry, were obsessed with the IRA terrorist acts; newspaper clippings pepper diaries from 1939 as they followed the case. Ordinary urban citizens were horrified by the idea that an armed force could slaughter non-combatants like themselves to further its political and military goals. Newspapers decried terrorism's inhumanity, and broadsheets in Coventry carried the names of victims as they came to light.

It is incredible to think of the attention British society paid to the dead in Coventry before the Second World War, and the shock displayed at the treatment of ordinary people as targets. By the end of the war, the devastation meted out to Coventry's people was so terrible that Joseph Goebbels described the mass destruction of any British city as being 'Coventried' (*coventriert*). British citizens, in turn, supported reprisals in the form of targeting civilians in Germany, just as the Americans ruthlessly firebombed Japan.[2] The transition from moral outrage over civilian deaths to it being the 'new normal' took place more rapidly, and easily, than we would like to admit. In many cases, even the victims of aerial bombardment accepted the targeting of non-combatants, which would have included their relatives and neighbours, as a normal wartime practice. In his comparative study of bombing in Britain and Germany, Dietmar Süss analysed some remarkable correspondence between Germans in the heavily bombed city of Hamburg. One letter writer speculated that the Allied destruction of his home town was 'retaliation

for our treatment of the Jews', and that other 'bombed out' citizens were similarly worried that 'if we hadn't treated the Jews so badly we wouldn't have had to suffer so much from the terror attacks'.[3] Most people in wartime Europe and Asia, despite the proliferation of racial theory, accepted the fact that their enemies were human beings like themselves; thus, attacking the enemy's non-combatants necessarily meant that ordinary people at home would be attacked in retaliation – and this cycle could repeat itself over and over again. Following the firebombing of Takamatsu, Iriye Hisae reflected on how she was no longer able to feel the horror of war, which was, in itself, a new form of war horror:

The stench of burning corpses poured through the streets, but I was not afraid, and I unexpectedly became accustomed to the smell. These days [in the post-war] a person's death is terrible and disgusting no matter what, but back then I think people's hearts were numbed. In war, you're mentally abnormal. It's terrible to think that you can get used to evil.[4]

Hisae's statement shows us that Hannah Arendt's 'banality of evil' was hardly unique to Nazi Germany – in fact, it was a transnational wartime condition. As Hew Strachan argued, the nature of 'total war' was not simply mass mobilisation, but the transformation of civilians into legitimate targets.[5] Nevertheless, the experience of being bombed did not necessarily create a hatred of war, but a desire for more, and more inhumane, forms of it, which arguably culminated in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombing war thus made ordinary people willing perpetrators of ever-escalating brutality against other civilians, meaning, as Susan Neiman put it, for us today 'the sources of evil are not mysterious or profound but fully within our grasp'; in other words, by studying the accounts of civilians in the Second World War, we should be able to understand how such a destructive war was made possible by people very much like ourselves.[6]

The war was hardest on non-elites who lived in the city – the builders, doctors, machinists, housewives, students, and policemen – who simultaneously made peacetime urban life possible (even desirable) and supported the machinery necessary for waging total war. Take, for example, the case of Ōmura Seitarō, who was a 37-year-old owner of a cloth-dyeing workshop in Hakata, a city in the northernmost edge of Japan's large southern island, Kyūshū. Because Kyūshū was a significant launch pad for invasion forces heading to East Asia and the Pacific, and Hakata was a major port linking Kyūshū to the main island of Honshū, the city was bombed heavily by the Allies. When the attack began, Seitarō hurried his wife and children into a nearby bomb shelter, following exercises organised by local authorities. Despite his neighbours' calls for help to fight

fires, he wrote 'I couldn't let my workshop burn down', so he expended his energies there, albeit ultimately in vain; his business was lost. Meanwhile, his home was also swimming 'in a sea of fire'. Seeing the neighbourhood abandoned and the situation increasingly dire, he tossed away his fire-fighting bucket, fetched his family, and ran to a road that led into the countryside. 'Looking back at Hakata', he recalled, 'it was entirely engulfed in flames. Until then I was going on instinct alone, but I finally had a sense of relief having escaped'. He came upon a rural household, and from the road he could see nets that would keep swarms of summertime mosquitoes away from his children. 'We are refugees', he pleaded with the owners, 'let us rest here'. The owners graciously allowed his wife and children to sleep in peace, and he spoke of the raids while the evening was brightened by the fires consuming his hometown. After his rustic hosts fed the desperate city folk, Seitarō thanked them profusely, and then returned to the family home. It had burned to the ground. 'I wonder if the evacuation supplies that we had left behind are gone', he thought, but soon discovered that 'even the plants in the garden were burnt to cinders'. Then, a mysterious sensation took hold of him:

Strangely enough, just because the house and our evacuation supplies were gone didn't mean that I felt, in any way, it was a great loss or a terribly sad event. What I felt at that moment, I can still vividly remember now: it was like I was cleansed. I hadn't been conscripted, but at the very least I had given everything for the nation, so it felt like I was able to comfort myself by this sense of having shouldered my responsibilities.

Citizens of Britain and Japan felt that giving everything was their duty which, given how casually the state threw away their lives and livelihood, was a mysterious phenomenon indeed. After describing his 'cleansing', Seitarō laconically noted that his sacrifices were still not enough: 'That August, I was drafted into the Imperial Japanese Navy'.[7] Still, while it was easier to see a foreign government, and not one's own, as responsible for personal losses, supporting bombing and then being bombed were linked in the minds of many in Britain and Japan; before the 'blitzes' began on British cities, in late 1939, Liverpudlian Dorothy Hughes watched with some dismay as war fever gripped the country, writing that 'people in England do not realise what we are up against. They think that what has happened in Poland could never happen here, but I sometimes wonder'.[8] Before the war, some citizens realised that supporting the bombing war meant that it could be returned to them and their loved ones in kind. During the war, many no longer cared as long as their side achieved victory.

The terror suffered at home was simultaneously being meted out abroad by one's own, or allied, forces; the context in which the modern world came to embrace area bombing is almost unknown to citizens in Japan and Britain today, where it is considered dishonourable and immoral to attack non-combatants. For example, in critiques of political organisations such as Hezbollah, better-organised, formal armies such as the Israeli Defence Forces point out the 'cowardice' that their enemies display by hiding in civilian areas and using them as a 'human shield'. Further cowardice is revealed, and particularly enraging to observers in the West, when Hezbollah forces fire rockets into Israeli civilian areas, conducting campaigns of terror.[9] Hezbollah retorts that it is the IDF that is 'cowardly', as it wields all of the power of the state against defenceless Muslims. Reading such accusations in the Western mass media, it is easy for us to think that we were never capable of such brutality. Westerners lambast the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS or simply IS) as 'barbaric', 'medieval', and 'uncivilised', but it was only in the last century that Allied bombers irrevocably erased historic urban areas in Germany and Japan, including the use of an atomic weapon against Nagasaki, one of the most historically significant cities in the archipelago (including being the centre of Japanese Christianity from the sixteenth century). It was not so long ago, then, that we bombed non-combatants, launched terror campaigns, and destroyed irreplaceable historical sites in what we fervently believed to be a righteous conflict. Then again, the Allies did not start the war, so what else could we do?

The difficulty we have in confronting the inhumanity of our wartime past is exacerbated by the enduring power of remembrance narratives, particularly in former Allied countries. As we have seen in the recent conflicts over historical memory of the Second World War between China and Japan, embracing Manichean 'victim narratives' about the past is very tempting, and more appropriate for contemporary political struggles than understanding the war. Joshua Fogel pointed out that, as how the memory of the Shoah helped the Jewish diaspora find a common identity in the chaos of the post-war era, so too did righteous anger over the Nanjing Massacre promise to elide irreconcilable divisions between Chinese in America, Taiwan, Singapore, and the People's Republic.[10] In the United States and Britain, being part of a heroic anti-fascist force obfuscates our own history of racism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, and acts of mass violence. Consequently, self-serving heroic or victim narratives will always be unsatisfactory for anyone acquainted with the complexities of the wartime past. The Second World War, as a 'total war', put the ordinary person in the uncomfortable position of being an enforced

contributor to mobilisation and thereby a 'legitimate target' of enemy aggression, but it did not make civilians more sympathetic toward non-combatants elsewhere. As George Orwell put it in 1943:

... what impressed me [during the Spanish Civil War], and has impressed me ever since, is that atrocities are believed in or disbelieved in solely on grounds of political predilection. Everyone believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side, without ever bothering to examine the evidence.[11]

Consequently, British citizens chiefly remember the war as one in which they were subjected to enemy bombing campaigns, particularly in the cities; their former 'enemies', however, the Japanese, have come to articulate exactly the same collective memory of the Second World War. Is it possible for both Allied and Axis to be victims of aggression? After the figurative firestorm over David Irving's critique of Allied bombing as a war crime, a close critical examination by historians of the decision to area bomb city centres quickly followed. Frederick Taylor's illumination of Dresden as an actual military target mirrors the problematic way we look at cities such as Hiroshima, which was a major launching point for the invasion of Asia by Japanese forces, but was portrayed as an unwitting, passive recipient of Allied aggression in the film *Black Rain* (Kuroi Ame). During the Second World War, even so-called precision bombing of military targets was problematic: the forced mobilisation of teenagers into Japanese war factories meant that legitimate objects of aerial bombardment would include schoolgirls. In any case, as historians like Yoshimi Yoshiaki showed, the Japanese people were as supportive of the war effort as the British and Germans were, which makes facile victim/perpetrator narratives difficult to defend under sustained scrutiny.[12]

Within the grim cheering of citizens supporting the annihilation of the enemy, there were voices of concern and even dissent, but these remained, unfortunately, comparatively quiet. By 1941, official opposition to the war effort in Japan had been quashed following debates about the 1937 war in China. Military officers like Ishiwara Kanji and Matsuno Hironori, who opposed the escalating conflicts, were either exiled or sidelined in official discussions; in Britain, veterans and officers like Tom Wintringham and Philip S. Mumford did not shift the discourse away from support for total war in Britain. In Liverpool on 3 March 1941, Dorothy Hughes saw a piece of silk parachute, spattered with blood, inscribed with the following bit of anti-German bigotry: 'Another squarehead gone West'. Upon reflection, Dorothy wrote in her diary that she was convinced:

... the only way to stop this business was to cut out all nationalism. All speak one language, and have equal rights. No top dog. No doubt we have been guilty of this all along. Certain American opinion still thinks it serves us right.[13]

In due time, the United States would also enter the war and, as John Dower showed, its government deployed even worse examples of bigotry and racism against their Japanese enemies.[14] Dorothy had grasped an important aspect of the Second World War, however: the dehumanisation of the enemy abetted area bombing campaigns, and justified popular support for the mechanisms of total war. The people's embrace of war in Britain and Japan enabled the massacre of innocent people in enemy nations, but also legitimised the attacks on their loved ones back home. In our rush to support the war, we were killing ourselves. Contrary to wartime propaganda and patriotic post-war memory, this outcome was neither 'normal' nor inevitable in the long view of modern history.

Mirror, Mirror: The Heyday of British and Japanese Imperialism

Throughout the Second World War, Japanese and British propagandists insisted that East and West were irreconcilably different, but both entered into the era of total war from a shared history of capitalist growth, imperialist expansion, and international cooperation. The new world order that the Second World War created was one that no one could have imagined even a decade prior; after the war, the British and the Japanese empires would totally collapse, and both would share a 'special relationship' with the United States. After the war, Britain and Japan's convergence as peripheral economies, but crucial allies, vis-à-vis American power may seem to be a curious postscript to the Second World War, but in many respects it greatly resembled the mutual admiration the empires expressed for each other prior to the 1930s.

The transformation of Britain and Japan during the Second World War was so total that it left older citizens in a state of shock and disorientation. On the eve of the air war, and his 66th birthday, in September 1940, H. B. Monck reflected on how thorough home front mobilisation had deeply shaken countries like Britain and Japan, which had enjoyed decades of mostly uncritical populist support for imperial violence:

I cannot help thinking what a different world it is to when I was a boy. You could read as I did all about our wars in Egypt and Abyssinia and take a mild interest in them. Our totalitarianism had not yet been invented and yet it seems to be only just that everyone should be involved in such a serious thing as war. You can only

be astonished in actual fact what little control individuals have over events which are going to have a vital effect on their lives.[15]

Monck sensed that the city and its people had entered a significantly new historical epoch, and not necessarily a better one. For too long, Britain and Japan had successfully exported mass murder to their empires with little political consequence at home; in the new world, however, bombing wars brought this violence back to the home islands, and in the process remade cities across Britain and Japan (with help from zealous post-war city planners as well). Yokouchi Tomi, who was a factory foreman during the heavy Allied bombing of Kōfu, began his post-war memoir by remarking on how much his home town had changed:

I'm heading out from the south gate of the Kōfu Station, down Peace Street ... and there is a forest of tall buildings and structures that are impervious to fire. For one such as I, who was born in the Meiji Era [1868–1912] and knew Kōfu before the war, this is a sight that makes me feel like I'm from another world.[16]

Indeed, by the time Tomi was writing in the early 1970s, Japan had transformed from a wartime disaster zone to the second largest economy in the world, while Britain's trajectory seemed irrevocably fixed downward. This post-war reversal of fortunes, from the perspective of the Meiji and Victorian generations, as well as the previous wartime division of Japan and Britain into Axis and Allied powers, was a bizarre historical rupture. For Monck and Yokouchi, the mutually beneficial 'civilised' world of the fin-de-siècle British and Japanese empires had disappeared in a cataclysm of parachute mines and incendiary bombs.

To those who grew up watching 'enlightened' lords and industrial leaders guide their empires to fame and profit, Japan and Britain's collision course was not a foregone conclusion. Both prided themselves on professional armed forces, 'civilisation and enlightenment', monarchy, and a dedication to parliamentary government. By the end of the nineteenth century, 'British financial backing for Japan's imperial ambitions ... became a central feature of the dawning era of East Asian international relations'.[17] From the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance to the early 1930s, the two countries frequently collaborated in the imperial 'great game', successfully containing Russia, opposing the Communist International, exacting concessions from the Qing Dynasty and Chinese Republic, concluding successful naval arms limitation treaties, and even being allies in the First World War.[18]

Relations were sometimes strained, such as during the failure of the Racial Equality Proposal at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the Washington Naval Conference (1921–1922); moreover,

post-First-World-War Japanese growth could threaten and rankle British merchants and Commonwealth citizens. While the early period of Japanese expansion was not driven by excess capital and production,[19] from the First World War a second industrial revolution in Japan made their companies equal and direct competitors with Britain's for markets throughout Africa and Asia. Still the Japanese did not see their actions as a direct challenge to the old world order that Britain helped create: Japanese imperialists explicitly compared their annexation of Korea in 1910 to the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and many British expatriates in Shanghai actually expressed a desire for Japanese seizure of the city because, they believed, it would bring order. Throughout this period the Japanese Imperial Navy and the Bank of Japan worked amicably with, and were inspired by, their British counterparts: British citizens celebrated Japanese 'efficiency' and the elegance of their arts; Japanese scientists and engineers worked closely with their British colleagues in a fairly free and collegial international environment.[20] Alfred Stead and H. G. Wells imagined the present and future importance of Japan for the twentieth century world, sometimes explicitly comparing it to Britain. This positive view of Japanese modernity was not limited to Britain: rediscovered original cuts of *Metropolis* reveal that Thea von Harbou launched the futuristic narrative not in Germany, but Tokyo's Yoshiwara district. While early English views of Japanese visitors to the United Kingdom, in the 1860s, were a mixture of condescending bemusement and appreciation for their earnestness in learning modern engineering,[21] by the 1930s, both British and Japanese aviation experts were working furiously to best each other on equal footing.

Indeed, after the 1929 market crash Britain was mired in the Great Depression and Japanese leaders launched a 'quest for autonomy', which involved describing Japan's former ally as an eternal enemy.[22] The Japanese economy boomed after Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo took Japan off of the gold standard and launched aggressive fiscal and monetary policies, which seriously threatened the British position in important Asian markets. Meanwhile, the Japanese civilian bureaucrats, elected officials, and business leaders with whom the British collaborated were intimidated or murdered in a system that wartime commentators described as 'government by assassination'.[23] The Japanese invasion of northeastern China (Manchuria) proved a breaking point. In 1931, the Earl of Lytton headed an exploratory committee to investigate the Japanese seizure of Manchuria, and by October 1932 they determined the new state, Manchukuo to be a puppet regime under the control of the Japanese Army; this directly led to Japan's departure from the League of Nations in 1933. Furthermore, the old guard who had led Japan at the

end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, understanding Japan's limitations and the necessity of international cooperation, was quickly passing away.

The new breed of Japanese bureaucrats were not advocates of Western-style 'civilisation and enlightenment', but staunchly opposed to 'Anglo-American encirclement' and in favour of regional autarky. Throughout the 1930s, the Japanese military expanded rapidly in mainland Asia, until conflicts between Chinese Nationalist and Japanese regional forces transformed into a devastating eight-year total war in 1937.[24] This war was conducted in the back garden of historic British interests based in cities like Shanghai. The rapid expansion of Japanese power in the 1930s put the country on a collision course with the British Empire (and their American ally) in Asia, and the United States retaliated by organising lend-lease programs aiding China and oil and steel embargoes to Japan. Japanese authorities, and many members of the public, viewed American and British soldiers stationed in East and Southeast Asia as defenders of Western imperialism – which, it must be said, they were. Consequently, the attack on Pearl Harbor was followed immediately by the ouster of American forces in their 1898 colony, the Philippine Commonwealth. By 1942, Japanese armed forces inflicted upon Great Britain its worst military defeat in modern history during the fall of Singapore. Japanese leaders and ideologues justified these wars of aggression by describing them as wars of defence, and pointed to the inexcusable history of imperial violence and exploitation inflicted on Asia and the Pacific by global superpowers like Great Britain and the United States. The division between Britain and Japan, thus, predated Pearl Harbor, but was still something rather new.

Despite the growing conflict, wartime urban life in Britain and Japan revealed some important similarities, including the role of finance, industrial production, modern culture, and the endurance of imperialism. Unlike America's division of New York and Washington, DC, or China's split between Beijing (or wartime Nanjing) and Shanghai, London and Tokyo combined the financial and political power of two capitalist empires in one centralised space. These metropoles were also the showcases of imperial wealth and conquest, which created an understandable hostility toward these over-privileged and excessively powerful urban spaces. Dorothy Hughes noted that, in Liverpool, early responses to rationing and evacuation orders from London were sceptical: 'Don't believe it's necessary', one man in his sixties was heard to say in a shop, 'It's only to find work for some of these people up in London'.[25] Regional hostility was exacerbated by the capital cities' insistence on their privilege as cultural, economic, and political leaders, even if they

were not representative of broader trends. As Louise Young put it, 'Japanese modernity was not simply made in Tokyo and exported to the provinces'; instead, we should see cities such as Tokyo and London as the 'outliers and exceptions' of modern life, and the regional cities as 'standard-bearers'.[26] Modern Japan and Britain were not defined by Tokyo and London: they had historically important 'second cities', such as Manchester and Osaka; powerful and influential urban areas such as Birmingham, Nagoya, Liverpool, and Kobe; and cultural centres such as Kyoto and Oxford. The modern era also saw the emergence of major cities whose growth was driven by new industries, such as Kawasaki, Hull, Okayama, and Sheffield; as a direct consequence of industrialisation, Manchester's population quadrupled from 1801 to 1851, which was one of the fastest rates of urbanisation in world history – even when excluding the explosive growth of nearby cities like Oldham and Rochdale.[27] Similarly, Osaka's population trebled from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1920s, excluding the rapid growth of the Kansai region as a whole. Both Osaka and Manchester, to take just two examples, required inputs from abroad, including the empire, to feed the factories and workers that drove British and Japanese industrialisation. These regional cities boasted not only world-class architecture, but also the many signs of modern civilisation, including museums, public parks, cinemas, electric lighting, mass transit, dance halls, and reinforced concrete towers. As Virginia Woolf ended her story of traditional England in *Orlando* (1928) with the confusion of the London's department stores, so Kawabata Yasunari began his story of modern Japan in *Asakusa kurenaidan* (The Red Gang of Asakusa, 1930) with the perplexing pastiche of Tokyo's urban environment. The modern city in Britain and Japan was a tangled web of deeply interdependent systems, including rail lines, traffic lanes, pavements, shops, sewers and water supply ducts, telephone and telegraph lines, radio towers, airstrips, hospitals, gas pipes, schools, postal services, and food depots – and this urban machine was deeply imbricated with the global system of imperialism. Bombers targeted these cities as a matter of necessity, as they were correctly seen as the war machine's workshops.

Citizens sometimes recognised the peril of how closely modernity, war, industrialisation, and imperialism were linked. In Liverpool, H. B. Monck often reflected in his war diary on how modernisation, which created the major cities of Britain and Japan, made life worse: 'We pay a big price for our industrialisation', he wrote, 'It may mean a big empire but whether it makes for real happiness and contentment I am doubtful. I never heard of a Norwegian or Finlander crying in a corner because he was the citizen of a small country'. Unfortunately, the Second World

War's devastation demonstrated quickly just how febrile the net of city life was. Urban space, perhaps due to its concrete, stone, and metal, appears to be quite resilient, but when it can be brought low by a single night's air raid, that illusion is quickly dispelled. For ordinary people like Matsubara Kijirō, a paediatrician in Takamatsu, aerial bombardment almost instantly transformed the seemingly eternal city into a much more sinister space. 'This was the final image of my hometown', Kijirō wrote during the firebombing of the city, 'Who could foresee that this quiet city, almost as if in slumber, would in just a few seconds become like the depths of hell itself?'[28] One of the most important similarities between Japan and Britain, then, was the civilian population's confidence in urban power and permanence, followed by dramatic displays of their weakness and vulnerability.

Rather than allow this book to be mired in a tendentious overstatement of their similarities, suffice it to say that Britain and Japan, up to the Second World War, operated as mirrors of each other on opposite sides of the globe – even if those mirrors were not perfect reflections. Of course, Japanese and British political systems, culture, and society were not exactly alike, but was the United Kingdom really more similar to, say, the United States, their paramount ally, which had no monarchy, was a secular federal system, had rapid class mobility, severe domestic racial conflicts, significant immigration from around the world, and a continental economy that bridged the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans since the 1850s? Both Britain and Japan were maritime empires that were facing down enemies with greater industrial might and larger, stronger armies. Both would have their national destinies completely transformed by the emergence of American global power (and, to a lesser extent, Soviet power). Put bluntly, the main difference in the Japanese and British war experience was the fact that Britain was the future superpower's ally, and Japan its enemy. Germany, meanwhile, was a continental country with no significant history of overseas empire, torn between two superpowers, and utterly dedicated to the extermination of an ethnic minority within its own borders. Comparing and contrasting island empires like Britain and Japan, rather than including outliers like Germany and the United States, is a far more effective way to reveal the transnational aspects of the civilian experience of the Second World War.

The Commanding Heights: Air Power and the Morality of Killing Non-Combatants in the Second World War

Despite their historical similarities, it may be unfair to compare Japan and Britain's war experience when the former suffered so much more

than the latter. First, Japan's urban residences were predominantly constructed with wood, whereas British homes were brick and mortar, making firebombing more effective against Japan, and firestorms killed more people than explosives. Second, the German Air Force (GAF) failed to produce long-range heavy bombers for the air war that could have wreaked havoc across Britain, especially in lightly defended regional cities. Wartime British Royal Air Force (RAF) aircraft production eventually rivalled that of the GAF, whereas the Japanese Air Force (JAF, including Army and Navy) never had any chance of matching United States (Army) Air Force's (USAF) industrial might. The Army JAF tasked to defend the home islands was trained primarily to fight Soviet forces on land in Asia, not defend against USAF bombers on the sea, and by that stage the more sophisticated Naval JAF had been nearly wiped out defending the empire in the Pacific – by the time the JAF had functioning interceptor command centres for home defence, like the RAF, the war was over.[29] The GAF dropped roughly 75,000 tonnes of explosives on Britain, and launched 12,000 'flying bomb' (V1) and rocket (V2) attacks, mostly aimed at London.[30] The United States, a much more powerful country than Germany, dropped roughly 160,800 tonnes on Japan (excluding the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), but to much greater effect due to the nature of firebombing. Third, British defences vis-à-vis the GAF in 1940 were better, and steadily improving, when compared to Japan's capabilities vis-à-vis the emerging superpower in 1945, and the situation in Japan was steadily worsening as the country was starved of steel, oil, and even food. Still, statistics can mask the social experience of the war: the bombing of British cities was certainly a serious matter if you were in a city that was under attack. The fact that Leeds was only lightly bombed makes no difference to you if you are living in hollowed out Hull.

The 'rise of air power' was an uncertain process that was, from the military's perspective, only partly linked to the experience of civilians being bombed by a foreign adversary. The RAF's aggressive use of bombing against civilians was in part a product of the German attacks on British cities, but air power had its advocates beforehand as well. Historians of air power have already detailed the early history of bombing theory, including well-known figures such as Hugh Trenchard, Giulio Douhet, and William Mitchell.[31] Initially, however, most leaders, even in Nazi Germany, were dovish about attacking cities simply to slaughter non-combatants, mainly because they feared being seen as immoral aggressors and thereby aiding enemy propaganda. The scars of the First World War and the ongoing pain of the Great Depression also contributed to the suppression of air power in the inter-war era. Anglo-American

pre-war budgets were tight and the lack of preparedness among the air forces and defences in the late 1930s, when Germany advanced into Austria and Czechoslovakia, was alarming. Even at maximum output levels, in 1939 the British could not produce enough pilots and fighter planes to defend the home islands, much less support an invasion to aid France. In the spring of 1939, British air strategy was still purely defensive, resorting to retrofitting old bombers to serve as makeshift fighter aircraft. In the United States, as well, Congress saw bombers as 'aggressive' weapons, and was stubbornly cutting budgets for new purchases as late as April, 1940.[32] Effective use of air power did not translate into an awareness of, or concern for, domestic vulnerability. The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) had advantageously used air assaults against the Chinese Nationalist regime in 1931 and 1937, and were planning a greater demonstration of such power in Pearl Harbor. Strikingly, however, the Japanese government had few concrete plans for urban evacuations, even for children, going into the end of the war; worse still, Japanese anti-aircraft guns were slow in tracking low-flying B-29s, especially at night, and were inadequately supplied to defend the home islands – despite the fact that Americans were testing firebombing techniques over Japanese occupied areas in China, such as the attacks on Hankow on 18 December 1944.[33] Thus, despite decades of warnings in military and civilian circles about the future of air power, most countries were found wanting when bombers threatened their territory.

The attraction to aggressive bombing of civilians, by contrast, was too difficult to resist. There was an inherently transnational aspect to the transmission of bombing knowledge and, arguably, bombing ethics, as militaries in each country studied the air power efforts of others.[34] Even before Pearl Harbor, the use of air power in the Spanish Civil War, the German invasions of the Netherlands and Poland, and the Japanese invasions of China in 1931 and 1937 supported the expansion of aircraft production. Indeed, Richard Overy reminded us that it was the RAF (in 1939), not the GAF, that attacked civilians in the early exchanges between Britain and Germany. Consequently, the first massive GAF air raid on British soil was a 'revenge bombing' for the RAF raids which the German public demanded.[35] By the summer of 1939, British factories, including those in (later) heavily bombed cities like Coventry and Bristol, were turning out as many aircraft and plane parts as they could.[36] The Americans were late to embrace air power, but they caught up with a vengeance: after the capitulation of France in June 1940, Henry Arnold, Chief of the USAF, was given over eleven billion US dollars to 'get an air force'.[37] By 1942, Avro Lancaster bombers allowed British forces to

strike deep into German territory, and B-17s flown by their US allies similarly were able to inflict heavy damage to industrial, military, and civilian targets. By 1943 the United States was producing more aircraft than Britain, Germany, and Japan combined, and their long-range B-29s would change air power forever.

Beyond strategic reasoning, the 'Blitz' of British cities in late 1940 and early 1941 was also influential in changing the military and public mind-set about attacking civilians. GAF raids strengthened the position of those in Britain who favoured the mass bombing of civilians, which was already part of a longstanding debate on the ethics and efficacy of bombing. Early on, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin had articulated the view that many strategists later embraced: namely, that air attacks had to 'kill more women and children quicker than the enemy if you want to save yourselves'.[38] As the Allies began attacking German cities, the British drew explicit comparisons between the Blitz and later area bombing of German civilians: for example, Arthur Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the RAF Bomber Command, argued that if 'the Germans had gone on using the same force for several nights against London ... the fire tornado they would have raised would have been worse than anything that happened in Hamburg', and insisted on destroying the German towns of Lübeck and Rostock simply to demonstrate the power of such attacks.[39] US bombing strategy for Japan was influenced by their interaction with the British, who already accepted attacks on non-combatants as the war's new modus operandi. It is not necessary to accept Nicholson Baker's view that Britain and the United States were antagonising the Axis in order to see that killing innocent civilians in pursuit of victory was embraced by Allies and Axis alike.[40]

Wartime documents show us that the normalisation of civilian bombing was not limited to high-level officers like 'Butcher' Harris – ordinary people thought enemy action made area bombing morally acceptable, and this view persists up to the present in our collective war memory. Approaching the topic of civilian bombing, one is beset by moral contradictions: critical analyses of the Allied bombing of German and Japanese civilians must also confront the immorality of the policies supported by the Nazi regime and the Japanese Empire. Still, attacks on sympathetic views of Axis non-combatants are often riddled with logical fallacies such as guilt-by-association. Although the West's cultural revulsion for Nazism is not relevant for the memory of the war against Japan, some historians have borrowed from that moral certainty to insist that the harsh tactics used against the Japanese people were justified by the social, political, and/or military culture of that country. Barrett Tillman, for example, asserted that the bombing of Japanese civilians was required

because against 'an enemy who seemed bent upon extinction, there was precious little middle ground for the Allies', attributing this to a 'cultural chasm' between West and East. The debate over the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has revealed even more divisions between historians' opinions on the morality of attacking non-combatants. Citing Max Hastings, Tillman further argued that the 'myth that the Japanese were ready to surrender anyway has been so completely discredited by modern research that it is astonishing some writers continue to give it credence'.[41] Richard B. Frank, in his study of the use of mass bombing against Japan, pointed to the Japanese military's use of such tactics in China and against Western colonial forces in Southeast Asia and the Pacific; according to this view, Japanese people, including Christian socialists, pacifists, children, and the infirm, were the victims of a benighted leadership that had brought to Japan a war of their own creation.[42] On a basic level, this argument has merit: the people most responsible for the losses suffered in Germany and Japan were the leaders who started such wars, and this is why war crimes tribunals executed them for 'crimes against peace' – Japanese writers like Nagai Kafū articulated this view during the war.[43] The lack of commitment in prosecuting war criminals in the Far East, including those who executed Allied prisoners of war and conducted human experimentation, however, makes this argument for the moral purpose of the war tenuous at best.[44] Even if area bombing was strategically necessary, the genocidal and racist iconography that suffused US wartime propaganda should also encourage us to question the 'justice' of it.[45]

Apart from historians' personal views of the air war, they have also struggled to understand how Allied leaders justified their use of brutal attacks on non-combatants. The motives behind strategists such as Curtis LeMay and Arthur Harris have been ably studied by historians like Tami Biddle, Barrett Tillman, and Thomas Coffey, and this reveals our abiding interest in the morality of their actions – particularly if we believe that their advocacy of indiscriminate bombing of civilians facilitated the end of the war.[46] These examinations of government policy and military strategy necessarily rely on textual representations of participants' justifications, so in fact we shall never know what they 'really thought' about the bombing of civilians; in recording his views of using the atomic bomb, for example, Harry Truman would have certainly considered his historical legacy. Furthermore, Western observers who maintain that bombing ended the war are also inadvertently supporting those in Japan who would use the Allied assault on civilians as a foundation for victim narratives, which disrupts meaningful discussions of the responsibility of ordinary people for supporting wars of aggression.[47] Not all wartime

strategists agreed that the massacre of non-combatants was justifiable or even useful. On the atomic bombing, Gar Alperovitz has mobilised many quotes from contemporary US military officials who condemned the use of such a weapon on moral grounds, and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, after examining Japanese language military documents, demonstrated that the emperor's argument against the continuance of the war for belligerent officers in the IJA was the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, not the bombing campaigns.[48] More importantly, if we accept that German and Japanese support for bombing civilians in Britain and China justified similar mass bombardment of ordinary people in reprisal, because these societies were somehow afflicted with a desire for mass violence, does that mean that there is a similar moral deficiency in Anglo-American culture that encourages us to massacre the elderly, the handicapped, and children? Wherever one's sympathies may be, the pro-bombing view has a problem in its central principle: either bombing and terrorising innocent people was necessary to crush their war effort, or it was useless because the 'enemy' supported the war fanatically anyway; both of these assertions cannot be true, and in both cases we lose the moral high ground by killing non-combatants.

The Nazi regime and the Japanese Empire committed terrible atrocities in their attempts to create a new world order. If one only examines the commanding heights of both history and historiography, the use of any and all means to stop this threat will seem justified. Nevertheless, as Kenneth P. Werrell put it: 'Certainly the cause was just, but were the tactics?'[49] The simple categorisation of Japan and Britain into 'evil' and 'good' powers may be satisfying, but it is dangerous in part because it provides justification for future mass violence. US President Donald Trump advocated targeting civilians in the suppression of ISIS, despite the fact that these tactics have failed in the suppression of terrorism elsewhere,[50] and he later used the chemical weapon attacks against civilians in Syria to justify a military intervention. Many Americans have been troubled by his comments, but elected and supported him anyway. Beyond the incoherence and inconsistency of pandering politicians, this position suffuses the Second World War scholarship on, and memory of, the bombing war against the Axis powers, dripping into contemporary discussions in a truly alarming way. The extent to which the brutality of the Second World War was enabled by popular support, and thereby brought suffering to everyone involved, is thus subject to thorough scrutiny in this book. In order to address these issues without indulging in 'good vs. evil' tropes, it is necessary to examine the experiences and views of ordinary civilians in both Axis and Allied countries side by side.

City People Speak: Sources for the Urban Experience of the Second World War

> This diary is suffering. [If only I had] the time to set down all the things that are happening, and they certainly seem to be getting under way, but I, in common with the rest of the world, don't seem to be able to work up any enthusiasm . . . Is it that we are so accustomed to setbacks that we are incapable of rejoicing? Or is it the depressing time of the year, dark days, blackouts, a Christmas that isn't, rising prices, rationing, and air raids?
>
> – Dorothy Hughes, Liverpool, 18 December 1940

On 2 October 1940, Swansea's *South Wales Evening Post* ran an article entitled 'War Diary Craze'. The author noted that the period of aerial bombardment 'has moved thousands of civilians to keep a day-to-day diary, notes of experiences, meetings with people, siren times and indeed escapes from injury', indicating an explosion of life-writing that was spreading across Britain. In Japan, too, diary writing and other forms of record keeping were actively encouraged by schools, relatives, and the military. Tied to the Confucian notion of self-cultivation (*shūyō*), Japanese recruits were encouraged to think of diary writing as a 'mirror of truth' to reflect on their faults and improve.[51] Inoue Tamiko, a 14-year-old schoolgirl during the May 1945 firebombing of Tokyo, recalled that, even though her diary was reviewed (*ken'etsu*)[*] by a teacher, it 'really did [reflect] my true feelings, and I believe in it even now. I wrote that diary by candlelight in air raid shelters'.[52] We have come to have so many accounts of the war because, fortunately, those who lived through the war considered their experiences to be historically important, and post-war society felt these records were worth preserving, especially at the local level. Unfortunately, we have failed to seriously engage with many of these testimonies, focusing on areas of post-war political interest (and conflict) such as London, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and, to a much lesser degree, Nagasaki. Ordinary people across both countries have left us a treasure trove of personal accounts depicting aerial bombardment; consequently, if we want to truly understand the civilian experience of the Second World War, we have to move beyond myopic post-war preoccupations with capital cities and nuclear weapons.

Britain and Japan both had a long history of bureaucracy that enabled the widespread embrace of official and personal record-keeping. Some citizens of bombed cities kept exceedingly simple accounts, such as

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[*] While students knew their diaries could be read by teachers, for the most part teachers did not censor them or change the content; for most teaching staff, it was primarily a composition exercise.

W. Craddock's diary of the destruction of Coventry – which simply had 'raids' recorded for each day – and D. H. Kent's descriptions of air raids over London, which only list attacks occurring during specific 'blitz' periods (e.g. late 1940 and early 1941).[53] Other diary writers, like Edith Christabel Peirse, were invested in personal emotional vicissitudes; following a nasty row with her father, she noted that 'Father in a fit of temper has taken one of my diaries, for spite'. For a dedicated diary writer like Edith, this was a serious violation, but it shows how some writers saw the document as a formal war record, while others embraced it as a confessional.[54] Schoolgirls in Japan, such as Yoshida Fusako, participated in 'self-criticism groups' (*hanseikai*), wherein girls who had been drafted into war labour pointed out faults to each other and suggested ways to overcome them – Fusako used her diary to record this progress.[55] In Japan, as I have argued elsewhere, diaries were a site in which the author's desires 'negotiated' with the demands of others in order to delineate the boundaries of what was possible for the individual; this was also the case in Britain, where schools assigned students to write diaries to be reviewed by teachers and parents, and soldiers kept diaries to be scrutinised by superior officers. Nevertheless, viewing their rather formulaic diaries in retrospect, the texts could trigger more passionate responses in the post-war, as Narita Shigeru wrote: 'As you can see in my diary from the time [of the Nagoya raids], I kept it every single day. I wonder [now] how the bereaved family members ever managed to carry on after those events. I am emotionally overwhelmed (*kan muryō*) thinking about it'.[56] Like many diarists, Narita rather dispassionately recorded the deaths of friends and acquaintances during the war itself; were it not for his post-war commentary, the wartime diary would tell us little about how he felt at the time.

Further, one should never make assumptions about who would keep a diary, and what kind of diary, based on the class, gender, or age of the author. William 'Bill' Bernard Regan, who was a bricklayer and wartime rescue worker in the Isle of Dogs, London, kept a diary that alternately read as a strict record of his missions and a personal account of his antics with neighbourhood friends. 'These writings were going to be a diary written at home after each shift', he sheepishly explained during the height of the air raids, 'but it hasn't worked out like that. (Silly me.)' Nevertheless, Bill kept writing day by day, even if it did not conform to his expectations of what a 'diary' should be.[57] Some of the texts used in this volume were produced by participants in the Mass Observation project launched by the anthropologist Tom Harrisson and his colleagues in 1937. Participants could craft the diaries to satisfy the needs of the project organisers, as H. B. Monck described: 'Sent off an

instalment of my diary. Was glad to get a letter from M.O. that it has proved useful, was very dissatisfied with it myself'.[58] Nevertheless, like soldiers who were asked to keep official diaries in wartime, personal sentiments appeared regularly in M.O. diaries, and the authors accepted them as accurate reflections of what they thought and felt. In her M.O. diary, Dorothy Hughes wrote about how the experience of being bombed in Liverpool was reflected in her account, and used the diary to encourage herself to be a better member of British wartime society:

Reading the previous entries, seems that the latest raids must have got me down, and I am ashamed. I find that one gets depressed in spasms, but we must keep up. I'm afraid I think too deeply, state everything too seriously. I am sad, not for myself, although heaven knows my life is no picnic, but for civilisation and the world in general. I feel I am growing too damned sensible! I haven't, I hope, lost me sense of humour, but don't laugh half so much as I used to.

Dorothy was not unusual among M.O. diarists for including personal information in her diary, including 'loss' of her boyfriend, writing 'I shall never love anyone else, as long as I live'.[59] Ordinary people outside of M.O. also believed that their experiences were important, and thus kept surprisingly meticulous records of the war that, today, we value highly as historical documents. Some writers, of course, 'started [a] diary just to pass the time'.[60] The *South Wales* article's author speculated that, while civilians during the war 'were making extensive notes about war experiences with a view to writing reminiscences ... there is not likely to be a market for them'.[61] This was, obviously, a bad prediction, considering war memoirs are among some of the most widely read history genres in the Anglophone world.

The profundity of war narratives around the world begs for more comparative history. How can we truly 'know' the Second World War if we only examine it from the European or Asian perspective? What is 'true' about the Second World War must be so in both Britain and Japan, not just Britain and Germany, or Japan and China. While this book will not examine all fronts of the war, it embraces the comparative approach in the simplest way possible – by looking at two countries that, until the 1930s, established enduring maritime empires in the East and the West. They embraced monarchy, institutionalised a state religion, respected social hierarchy, rejected communism, adored their empires, and placed high cultural value on arts, engineering, efficiency, and, some would argue, racial superiority. One of the tragedies of the Second World War is that this convergence of civilisations did not produce a greater peace, but arguably the most brutal conflict in human history. As this book makes clear, popular support for total war was crucial for this outcome.