

(no subject)

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 19 Jan 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5925>

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Lee Berman — 19 Jan 2011, 14:25

Perceptions vary based on history and culture. What many Americans consider a justifiable, even necessary action is considered one of the worst crimes ever against humanity by most of the rest of the world.

That seems a highly unlikely assertion. Got any statistics to back it up?

I should be more careful in my word choice. "Most" does imply a majority and is likely to instigate a call for proof from those who disagree. Given that most of the world lives below poverty level in Asia, Africa and S. America it might be more accurate to say that most of the world doesn't know or care much about US foreign policy.

Among those in Europe, Asia, Africa and S. America who do know and care about U.S. foreign policy, it may be that a majority have a negative view but better to sidestep that and amend my statement to "many in the rest of the world".

Jeff Wilson: I thought he was speaking in the context of war crimes, crimes against humanity, etc. down at the Hague, while most Americans think of them as things that happen in other countries, if they bother to think about them at all, and the US is pointedly not a signatory to the agreements that would make its past deeds actionable.

Jeff you correctly interpret that mentioning Hiroshima was an illustration of a general principle. I chose Hiroshima because it is such a polarized issue. Many Americans consider it the right action and I think most consider it at worst a necessary evil. While most..erm...many in the rest of the world do not see it as even remotely necessary. Some in the world accuse that the US deliberately delayed using the atomic bomb until Germany surrendered because they didn't want to perform the radiation experiment that it was to be used on white people.

Others have made the valid point that while world opinion of US military action is what it is now, it surely was a lot different if you had asked the same questions to people 60-70 years ago. All of this supports my original assertion: Perceptions vary based on history and culture.

So, who is right? Americans? Europeans? Chinese? Muslims? People now? People 60 years ago?

The same principle applies to the interpretation of Gene Wolfe books as it does to global politics.

Jeff: All were awful, but the atomic weapon makes it so much easier and convenient to be awful. The overkill bombardment of Berlin and the Okinawan slaughter required a huge human cost in sustaining the terrible resolve to kill and keep killing for as long as it took, so that few of the victors could look

forward to repeating it.

I agree 100%. Yet, I have to admit that the last 60 years of relative global peace (Pax Americana?) are more a result of fear of atomic weapons than the far worse results of conventional bombings in WWII. People are funny. I think maybe they don't fear conventional weapons because they are an extension of the use of fire. Nuclear energy is spooky and people fear being killed by it so much more than than being burned or ripped apart by chemical reactions.

Gerry Quinn — 19 Jan 2011, 14:57 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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I think "many in the rest of the world have a negative view" is correct. It is a little more nuanced than "most of the rest of the world consider it one of the worst crimes ever against humanity".

- Gerry Quinn

António Pedro Marques — 19 Jan 2011, 15:48 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn wrote (19-01-2011 14:57):

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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I don't think it can really be discussed meaningfully nowadays. Everyone and their cactus have opinions on things related to the US, without necessarily knowing anything about the matters.

Among the people who do have an informed perspective, not many question the wisdom of the bombings. All the same, they can recognise they were brutally horrendous insensitive racist hateful acts. The motivations for something and its net value are independent.

The reason people abhor nuclear bombing in a way that they don't conventional bombing, is that in conventional bombing a reasonable proportion of the potential victims is able to fight for their lives, even if the odds are low. With nuclear bombing, the idea people have is that it just kills everyone in a given radius instantaneously. That sounds inhuman (yes, inhuman, not simply inhumane).

Jeff Wilson — 19 Jan 2011, 23:05 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 1/19/2011 8:57 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

I think "many in the rest of the world have a negative view" is correct. It is a little more nuanced than "most of the rest of the world consider it one of the worst crimes ever against humanity".

I would have to rank it a distant third behind the Killing Fields and the Rape of Nanking.

But I think I've gotten us off track, getting so wound up in man's inhumanity to man. I need to say that my dad also represents the positive side of obedience in unthinkable things in that despite being raised in small-town Arkansas he still followed orders to risk his life guarding the black students from the white mob at the integration of Central High in Little Rock as a national guardsman.

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