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war that (mercifully) did not occur, but it is clear that the operational level of war will no longer be the focus of attention once nuclear weapons are brought into action.

Today, the U.S. military reigns supreme when it comes to combined-arms operations. No one would argue that the U.S. military has not mastered operational art. Saddam Hussein's army simply melted away as U.S. and coalition forces made their dash toward Baghdad in March–April 2003. But the U.S. military has sadly rediscovered in Iraq that military operational prowess is no guarantee of quick strategic success, especially when the *Schwerpunkt* involves winning hearts and minds of a skeptical and well-armed local populace.



Hugh Gusterson, *People of the Bomb: Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. 312 pp. \$19.95.

*Reviewed by Robert S. Norris, Natural Resources Defense Council, Washington, DC*

*People of the Bomb* is a collection of previously published journal articles and book chapters that date back to 1991. The eleven chapters plus a postscript cover a wide range of topics but are loosely held together by a few unifying themes. The main subject of the book is U.S. militarism during and after the Cold War; specifically, how the U.S. national security state attempts to control the consciousness or collective imagination of the American public to shape its view of the outside world. Through the power of language, a convenient reality is created that defines the country's challenges and threats and provides the rationale for its policies. A further purpose of this “manufactured consensus” is to keep the population pliant and unquestioning. Nuclear weapons and the language that surrounds them are essential parts of this process.

Hugh Gusterson, an anthropologist and ethnographer by training, brought a fresh perspective to the field in his first book, *Nuclear Rites: A Nuclear Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), an account of living among the nuclear weapon scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. That book incisively described the scientists' rites, rituals, beliefs, and values. In his new book, Gusterson draws on other scholarly disciplines and a few academically fashionable Parisian gurus, with a sprinkling of Marxist and feminist theory thrown in. The title of the book is slightly misleading, abetted by the unusual cover photograph. I was expecting portraits of people who work or worked at the main sites of “America's Nuclear Complex”—Hanford, Oak Ridge, Savannah River, Pantex, Rocky Flats—but that is not what I found.

The themes from *Nuclear Rites* are reshaped in several of the chapters here. Gusterson recounts his meeting with Sylvia, a Japanese-American weapon designer, whose aunt was at Hiroshima. She, like many of the scientists he encounters, does not fit his preconceived stereotype. Through her he learns how weapon scientists are formed. To be able to work on nuclear weapons requires resocialization and a new way of thinking. The central ideological axiom that must be instilled is that the weapons

are necessary for deterrence and, if the United States remains strong, will never be used. In this subculture, nuclear tests become a rite of passage demonstrating expertise and control over weapons of such unimaginable power that they could, if used on a large scale, end most life on earth.

The quality of the chapters is a bit uneven. Some of the essays were written a decade or so ago, and the issues and topics discussed often seem dated. On the weaker side is one that recounts how Gusterson and a weapon designer watched a film on television about cyborgs. The essay includes such obtuse sentences as: "Thus, if I have a quarrel with Janice Radway's approach to the ethnography of reading, it is that articulating a fundamentally post-structuralist insight about the multipleness of the world with a structuralist sensibility, she assigns too much stability to her reader's responses, discerning in them a clearly consistent set of beliefs about the world that ultimately correlates with the social position of the readers" (pp. 59–60). Unfortunately, the book contains far too much of this kind of mumbo-jumbo.

Some of the stronger chapters examine the role of language in the rise of the United States to its status as the preeminent power in the post-1945 world. Gusterson aligns himself with a "critical security studies" perspective rather than the traditional realist perspective, which he says dominates international relations theory. The former school of thought examines how the national interest is socially constructed through the use of a dominant discourse. Gusterson cites as an example of "manufacturing consent" Dean Acheson's radio broadcast on 18 March 1949 that initially informed his American audience about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Gusterson critiques some of the experts on nuclear strategy and the Soviet Union who failed to predict the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He examines their articles in the journal *International Security* in the three years prior to the end of the Cold War, showing that most of them failed even to entertain the possibility that anything was amiss. With their blinders on, they operated within a narrow framework in which they could not imagine that the arms race and the Soviet Union would at some point end. Gusterson argues for better explanatory theories and recognition of these experts' conceptual failure.

Gusterson provides some interesting observations on what he calls "nuclear salvage history," the attempts to give credit to those who have made contributions to nuclear weaponry over the decades. Because of the restrictive secrecy and classification rules within the weapons programs, many key figures have been largely invisible. With the end of the Cold War, some of the rules were relaxed and many documents were declassified that allowed a richer story to emerge. Gusterson cites Richard Rhodes as the main historian of the U.S. fission and fusion bomb programs and David Holloway, in his *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), for revealing dozens of hitherto unknown figures in the Soviet nuclear bomb program. Although some earlier weapon scientists have gained recognition, most of those working behind the fence today remain invisible. Even the titles of many of the papers they have written are secret. Like their counterparts in the intelligence community, they lead unusual professional lives. Their public résumés are blank, and most of their papers and articles can be read by only a

few colleagues. Gusterson asks what impact this may have on the weapons laboratories in the future. The moratorium on U.S. nuclear weapons testing that began in 1992 is bound to complicate the recruitment of a new generation of weapon scientists.

Gusterson concludes with a short postscript written early in George W. Bush's first term, well before the September 2001 terrorist attacks. Why something more recent could not have been written for a book published in 2004 is a bit of a mystery. Nevertheless, Gusterson sketches in a few themes of a new nuclear discourse that was being articulated by Bush administration officials to justify new weapons, new strategies, and new policies. These officials claimed that deterrence was no longer good enough to ensure that "rogue states" would refrain from attacking, and thus the United States needed to deploy ballistic missile defense. They disparaged the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as an outmoded relic and arms-control treaties as unnecessary encumbrances.

As we enter what Gusterson terms the "second nuclear age," he laments that this new discourse will win the day if it goes unchallenged. From the vantage point of 2005, we can see that much of what he feared has come to pass and the game looks lost. In preparing the country for a preemptive war against Iraq, the Bush administration successfully shaped the public's consciousness to suit its needs. The potential for "manufacturing consensus" is illustrated by the fact that long after overwhelming evidence to the contrary had emerged, a majority of Americans continued to believe that Saddam Hussein had or was close to having nuclear weapons in 2003.



Max Holland, *The Kennedy Assassination Tapes: The White House Conversations of Lyndon B. Johnson Regarding the Assassination, the Warren Commission, and the Aftermath*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. 453 pp. \$26.95.

*Reviewed by Gerald Posner, Independent author and attorney*

*The Kennedy Assassination Tapes* is a sober and thorough study, mostly of President Lyndon Johnson's White House conversations relating to the murder of John F. Kennedy. These transcripts, available for more than a decade, have been the subject of numerous articles and studies and have been used extensively in well-received books. But Max Holland's approach, a steadfastly unbiased presentation of the conversations, is remarkably refreshing. He does a wonderful job of taking to task other authors who have selectively used the conversations to advance conspiracy theories about Kennedy's assassination as supposed retribution for the murder of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem or to overstate Johnson's eventual disagreements with the Warren Commission's conclusions.

Holland is a well-versed expert on the Warren Commission, having won a J. Anthony Lukas Award in 2001 for his work-in-progress about the commission. He uses his knowledge to anchor every conversation solidly. The succinct annotations accompanying the transcripts provide necessary and often lively information about their