attacked Iraq's Sunni vice president, Tariq al-Hashemi, and the Sunni finance minister, Rafi al-

gist or it. By that standard, Iraq has ceased to be a state.

In the aftermath of April elec-

their battle against ISIS, he remains adamantly opposed to U.S. military assistance for the

the Middle East—and no good reason why the U.S. should continue worshiping at its altar.

The E-Cigarette Gateway Myth

By Michael B. Siegel

Fifty years after the Surgeon General's landmark report on smoking and health, cigarettes remain the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., and some 40 million Americans still smoke.

Enter the electronic cigarette, which has enormous potential to improve public health because many smokers can replace the deadly cigarettes that burn tobacco, producing tens of thousands of toxins, including more than 60 known human carcinogens. The e-cigarette is a battery-powered, smoke-free device that delivers nicotine vapor without most of the carcinogens produced by tobacco combustion. Yet it is feared and stigmatized by legislators and health officials, and may even be regulated out of existence.

One reason is the so-called gateway theory, which has been the subject of newspaper headlines and city council meetings, and even prompted a Senate investigation. Last September, in an interview with Medscape (a website for medical professionals) Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that "many kids are starting out with e-cigarettes and then going on to smoke conventional cigarettes." The same month he was quoted by the Associated Press as warning that e-cigarettes are "condemning many kids to struggling with a lifelong addiction to nicotine."

The evidence is lacking that people who use them go on to become addicted to cigarette smoking.

The gateway hypothesis is a myth. The evidence shows that very few nonsmokers "vape." The primary reason people use e-cigarettes is to quit or cut back on smoking conventional cigarettes. Moreover, of the few nonsmoking youths who do experiment with e-cigarettes, there is currently no evidence that they subsequently progress to cigarette smoking.

The first study to examine the gateway hypothesis was by Dr. Ted Wagener from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. His research, presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research last October, found only one young person out of a sample of 1,300 college students who initiated nicotine use with vapor products and then went on to smoke cigarettes.

In June, Dr. Constantine Vardavas of the Harvard School of Public Health published a broader analysis of 26,566 European smokers in the journal Tobacco Control. It showed that e-cigarette users are likely to be heavy smokers who have tried to kick the cigarette habit over the prior year. Dr. Vardavas and his two colleagues found that just 1% of nonsmokers tried vaporizing products like e-cigarettes.

Cigarette smoking among young people, whom public-health experts are rightfully focused on protecting from use of either type of product, continues to decline. The CDC's National Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that teenage smoking has dropped over the last several years, falling to 15.7% in 2013 from 18.1% in 2011. The smoking rate among U.S. high-school students in 2013 was the lowest level since the survey began in 1991. Meanwhile, experimentation with e-cigarettes among high-school students doubled from 2011 to 2012.

Recent data from the U.K. confirm the same phenomenon. Despite a dramatic increase in e-cigarette experimentation among young people, smoking rates in England in 2013 reached a historic low, according to a report from the U.K.'s Health and Social Care Information Centre.

By promoting a message that flies in the face of the government's own statistics—which show a sharp decline in youth smoking concurrent with a dramatic increase in e-cigarette experimentation—some federal public-health officials appear to be trying to create a "gateway" narrative where none exists.

The government has an obligation to carefully scrutinize any new consumer product that is presented as an alternative to smoking. But government agencies and public-health officials have no business discouraging or disparaging e-cigarettes in the absence of any data that they are causing harm. This is especially the case when these products have so much potential to curb cigarette smoking, the public health scourge that still claims half a million lives a year.

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BOOKSHELF | By Alonzo L. Hamby

demonstrated that these capabilities were formidable. Japan had transferred to Kyushu many of its divisions in Manchuria, which was left vulnerable to the Soviet offensive that swept across it in the final days of the war.

Mr. Ham recounts a familiar story of deadlock between Japanese diplomats who knew the war was lost and military leaders who asserted that national suicide was preferable to surrender. He believes that, given the Soviet declaration of war against Japan on Aug. 8 (in his mind, more important than the bombs) and the continuing U.S. naval blockade, an American invasion would not have been necessary; but he admits that at the least the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave an irresolute emperor and his military chiefs an excuse to end the war. "Tokyo was able to surrender without conceding defeat on the battlefield, where it mattered most to the samurai mind."

The author's liberally distributed indignation is understandable. The Pacific war was vicious and homicidal. From the 1937 rape of Nanking on, Japan engaged in the indiscriminate killing of millions of Chinese. The U.S. incendiary bombing offensive against Japan was indiscriminate and consumed the lives of many innocents. Mr. Ham condemns Henry Stimson, the U.S. secretary of war, for first objecting to the targeting of civilians and then "accepting the grotesque casuistry that 'workers' homes' represented a military target."

Yet in an age of industrialized total war, the assumption was not illogical. It was invoked by Nazis who bombed the East End of London, then by British and Americans who destroyed one German industrial center after another about as effectively as Le May went at Japan. Dresden and many other German cities gave up their own quotas of maimed and burned children. The atomic bombs added only the special horror of radiation sickness. Timothy Snyder's important book "Bloodlands" (2010) aptly underscores the awful nonnuclear carnage in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Dutch Van Kirk, looking back on Hiroshima with few regrets, expressed the logic of 20th-century total war with terse eloquence: "It's really hard to talk about morality and war in the same sentence."

Mr. Hamby is a distinguished professor of history at Ohio University. His biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt will appear in 2015.