

Spring 2017

# President Truman decides to use the atom bomb

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President Truman Decides to Use the Atom Bomb

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An Honors College Project Presented to  
the Faculty of the Undergraduate  
College of Arts and Letters  
James Madison University

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by Amanda Louise Dodge

May 2017

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of History, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference on March 25, 2017 .

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## Preface

Even though the majority of the work on this thesis was completed in the past school year, the subject has interested me long before. I found it fascinating how foreign policy and international interactions in today's world are often dominated by atomic weapons. Who has them? Who is trying to build them? Will they use them? I decided to research exactly when this aspect of our modern society became such an influence. I started with the creation of the bomb and the Manhattan Project and became absorbed in all aspects of the topic. I was fortunate enough to be able to expand my research and produce this thesis.

The first chapter of this thesis sets the stage for the war leading up to the bomb. The majority of this chapter is a review of the traditional facts of World War II but from the perspective of historical significance to the atomic bomb. While this chapter may be tedious to World War II and atomic experts, it is critical for historiographical context for the analysis in the chapters that follow it.

The second chapter focuses on the invasion plans being devised during the spring and summer of 1945. This invasion, Codename Downfall, would be the primary alternative to the atomic bomb, upon its completion. This chapter also begins the analysis of Truman's decision-making process, by looking at what types of information he was given and who gave it to him.

Chapter three describes the use of the atomic bombs. In addition to furthering the analysis of Truman's choice, this chapter discusses the physical effects of the bomb. It includes primary source accounts from those who witnessed

the explosion and the aftermath, detailing the horrors of the new weaponry and the shock of its impact.

Chapter four calls President Truman's traditional justification for his use of the bomb into question. Ending the war quickly may have been Truman's primary motivating factor, but there is significant evidence that multiple additional factors were influential, including anti-Japanese sentiments and worries over communist Russia.

I readily admit that there is more to learn about this subject and that the question I chose to answer is nearly impossible to answer decisively. It is very nearly impossible to conclusively determine what a human being is thinking, since we have not yet developed mind reading. But I still enjoyed my research and I am proud of the thesis I have created.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Raymond Hyser, for pushing me to complete this project and listening patiently while I complained about my entire life. Without your help, I probably would not have survived this project or my senior year. And thank you for all of the mints!

I would also like to thank Dr. Steven Guerrier and Dr. Phillip Dillard for their hard work on my thesis team. I greatly appreciate your willingness to work with me and help me complete this undertaking. Additionally, I would like to apologize to Dr. Dillard for crashing his hard drive with my paper.

I would like to thank the James Madison University Department of History for providing funding to allow me to present my work at the Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference at Chowan University. It was an honor to represent my school and to display my hard work.

I would like to thank my parents, of course, for supporting me always. Thank you for putting up with all of the library books I stacked up by my seat on the couch, even though I know you hated the clutter. Hopefully this paper is worth all of the tuition, meal plan and rent bills you paid! I love you both infinitely.

Lastly, I would like to thank the true queen, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, for inspiring me to work my hardest. To quote her incredible jam, “Formation,” she told me “the best revenge is your paper.” She meant making money, but I wrote this thesis instead.

## Chapter One: Before the Bomb

In less than one minute, at 8:16am Japan Standard Time, eighty thousand people died instantly. The morning of August 6, 1945 saw the first use of the atomic bomb, which was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. In total, the death toll was estimated to be around 185,000. These events led to the end of World War II in the Pacific theater and have undeniably affected U.S. foreign policy and global military relations forever. The complexity and secrecy of the atomic bomb raises questions about how President Harry S. Truman came to the decision to use one of the deadliest weapons in history.<sup>1</sup>

Simply looking at the United States' eventual entanglement in World War II, it may be difficult to believe America had no intentions of getting involved in this conflict. But during the early years of the war, the United States remained mostly isolationist, save providing some financial and supply aid to the Allied powers. This policy changed, however, once Japan attacked a U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. This unsolicited attack drew President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the full military weight of the United States into the global war the

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<sup>1</sup> For a biography of President Truman, see Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman and the Modern American Presidency* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983). For a general coverage World War II, see A. W. Purdue, *The Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For a chronological look at the Pacific theater, see Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York: Free Press, 1985). See Michael Amrine, *The Great Decision: The Secret History of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Putman, 1959) for a recount of Truman's early presidency and how and when he was informed of the atomic bomb. For a closer look at the key scientists behind the Manhattan Project and the bomb's effects on Japan, see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986). For an even more in depth background study of the Manhattan Project, see Vincent C. Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb* (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1985). For information on the atomic bomb's effects on Japan's political structure, which is not mentioned in this essay, see Sadao Asada, "The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender: A Reconsideration," *Pacific Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (November 1998): 477-512.

very next day. Joining forces with the other Allied countries of Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, the United States declared war on Japan and in turn, on Japan's ally, Germany. But facing two opponents on such completely separate parts of the world created problems for the Allied countries in terms of managing resources and the war effort effectively. British and American strategy attempted to solve this issue by prioritizing the fronts, tackling the European front first, and then the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> The United States military was well aware the war against Japan would be predominately a naval fight, and the American navy and naval production dwarfed that of Japan's, often by fivefold, or even more in some aspects. This naval dominance only increased once the United States eventually turned its full attention onto the Pacific in the later years of the war.<sup>3</sup>

The United States spent three and a half years focused on fighting in the Atlantic theater of the war, from December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, until Germany's surrender on May 9, 1945. While there was celebration of the victory in the European front, there was still another war to be won against the Japanese in the Pacific. While the United States concentrated the majority of its energy and resources on the war with Germany in Europe, they had not completely neglected the war with Japan. Over the course of the early years of American involvement in the war, the American military faced Japan in many important battles. These battles set the stage for American successes once the military turned its full focus to the Pacific theater after victory in Europe. Among

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<sup>2</sup> Purdue, *The Second World War*, 147.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas W. Zeiler, *Unconditional Defeat: Japan, America, and the End of World War II* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2004), 5.

the more critical encounters were the Battles of the Coral Sea in May 1942 and the Solomon Islands in the summer of 1943, and the Battle of Midway in June 1942. These battles halted the Japanese advancement in the Pacific, despite the fact that they were not fought with the full force of the American military, which was focusing on Germany.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the military strategy and culture of Japanese society created an entirely new beast for the American military, as compared to the fighting style they experienced in the war against Germany. The Japanese operated under “a mythology that stressed a heaven-granted mandate to assume the leadership of eastern Asia.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a critical component of Japanese society was the emphasis on maintaining honor. Japan’s culture featured “a willingness to accept death as the means and end of resistance.”<sup>6</sup> Japanese soldiers and military commanders believed it was honorable to die fighting; whereas, it was highly shameful to surrender and leave a battle alive but not victorious. A common phenomena stemming from this philosophy was kamikaze attacks. Kamikaze were Japanese airmen who, in a desperate attempt to clinch the victory for Japan, would intentionally fly their aircraft into enemy ships, killing themselves but also inflicting damage upon the enemy’s vessel. Overall, the Japanese military fought savagely and to the death, making the war in the Pacific costly in terms of human life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> H.P. Willmott, *The Second World War in the Far East* (London: Cassell & Co., 1999), 89-94.

<sup>5</sup> Willmott, *The Second World War in the East*, 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> Willmott, *The Second World War in the Far East*, 181.

<sup>7</sup> Willmott, *The Second World War in the East*, 181.

As a result, military strategy for the defeat of Japan was much different than for the defeat of Germany. The Japanese military had attacked and taken control of the Philippines, Siam, Burma, French Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Korea, large swaths of land in northern China and East Asia, as well as a series of smaller chain islands in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>8</sup> The American military's plan focused on re-acquiring one Pacific island at a time and pushing back Japanese control in the region to the home islands of Japan. If this "island hopping" campaign were successful, eventually American forces would use islands close enough to Japan to use bomber planes to destroy key industrial centers that were critical to Japan's war effort. This island hopping strategy was incredibly violent and required enormous amounts of manpower and supplies to slog from island to island.<sup>9</sup>

The American strategy of island hopping took a serious toll on the American forces. Each new island presented harrowing new problems for the soldiers attempting to liberate it from Japanese control. Many islands tended to be tiny in area, and therefore lacked the landmass necessary for elaborate military maneuvers. The climates of these Pacific islands were tropical, hot and humid, and their topography ranged from rainforests to barren rocks. Soldiers had to adapt to changes in climate and landscape every time they reached a new island, which was strenuous and draining. In addition, island hopping strained military resources. Moving entire companies, as well as aircraft carriers and battleships, almost constantly, and while maintaining battle ready positions, was extremely costly, not

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<sup>8</sup> Willmott, *The Second World War in the East*, 46-47.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 36, 41.

to mention a significant amount of work. To top it off, the Japanese soldiers “fought close-quarter, desperate battles of unusual savagery . . . driven by battle ethics that allowed only victory or death, fought to the last man rather than surrender.” All of these factors made each and every battle in the American strategy of island hopping incredibly costly in multiple ways.<sup>10</sup>

The worst of these island battles were Iwo Jima and Okinawa, with Iwo Jima being the “largest amphibious marine assault ever, and the bloodiest.” Between just these two battles, it is estimated that, in total, about 110,000 Americans were either killed or wounded. While the ferocity of the Japanese style of fighting contributed to these high casualty rates, it can also be partially blamed on the sheer length of the battles. The Battle of Iwo Jima began on February 19, 1945 and the island was declared captured on March 26, over one month later, while the Battle of Okinawa began on April 1, 1945, and the island was not taken until June 30, a full two months of combat. These battles, though hard-fought, did provide crucial advances for the American military, however. The island of Iwo Jima became an airfield base for American fighter pilots, and the island of Okinawa was the perfect strategic point to block any supply ships from reaching Japan from the south. This was an especially sweet victory because Japan’s main supply of oil was imported through the southern waters, and American control of Okinawa could cut the supply.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of the American island hopping strategy was to take away territory Japan had claimed by force, but also to maneuver the American military

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<sup>10</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 36, 41, 42, 44; Willmott, *The Second World War in the Far East*, 180, 181.

ever closer to Honshu, the main island of Japan. Military leaders had been loosely planning an invasion into this island since the early days of the war, as the final attack to end the war in the Pacific. After the victory in Europe and the U.S. turning to focus her economic and military might on Japan, the plans for the invasion of Honshu became increasingly defined, earning the codename Downfall. But the sheer violence that the Japanese exhibited throughout their campaigns and their defiant unwillingness to surrender up to and including suicide or death, deeply affected Americans and military leaders. The stories and images of the brutality of the battles in the Pacific and the rapidly rising death tolls were disturbing, and they only seemed to get worse as the United States battled closer and closer to the main islands of Japan. The United States began to see the Japanese soldiers, and by extension Japan as a whole, as vicious, bloodthirsty and decidedly unwilling to compromise. This perspective may have had an influence later, once it came time to make decisions regarding the use of the new atomic weaponry.<sup>12</sup>

The United States commander-in-chief, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, initiated research into new armaments. During his presidency, he commissioned a secret project for the research and development of atomic energy and weaponry. This confidential undertaking, called the Manhattan Project, employed some of the most knowledgeable scientists, physicists and engineers in the world at the time, including some brilliant minds, such as J. Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi and

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<sup>12</sup> John Ray Skates, *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994) 3.

three Nobel Prize winning scientists, Arthur H. Compton, Harold Urey, and Ernest Lawrence. Brigadier General Leslie Groves was appointed to lead the project in September 1942.<sup>13</sup> Groves made sure the Manhattan Project's confidentiality policy was strictly enforced. No unnecessary persons were informed of its existence, let alone its purpose. This included some surprisingly important officials, such as Vice President Harry S. Truman and high-ranking military leaders like Generals Douglas MacArthur and Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of Manhattan Project was to harness the nuclear fission process into something that could be used strategically in a military setting. But in order to keep the project secret, production was split into three different centers in Tennessee, New Mexico and Washington State. The plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee predominately worked with uranium, an extremely radioactive and dangerous element. The plant at Hanford, Washington, worked to manufacture plutonium. And the center in Los Alamos, New Mexico was the mind center of the operation, housing the work of the theoretical physicists and scientists experimenting with

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<sup>13</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 18-21. Among the more prominent scientists were J. Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist and a physics professor at the University of California, Berkeley; Eugene Wigner, a Hungarian-born physicist; Glenn Seaborg, a forerunner chemist working with plutonium also at University of California, Berkeley; Enrico Fermi, an Italian physicist; and three Nobel Prize winning scientists, Arthur H. Compton, for physics in 1927, Harold Urey, for chemistry in 1934, and Ernest Lawrence, for physics in 1939. Brigadier General Leslie Groves was appointed to lead the project in September of 1942 and he was the one who convinced Oppenheimer to join the project.

<sup>14</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 25, 28, 30-32. In fact, during his time in the Senate, Truman came close to discovering the top-secret project through his position as the Chairman of the Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. He was about to launch an investigation to discover the purpose of the large-scale, expensive production centers in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Hanford, Washington and Los Alamos, New Mexico that were being funded by the army. But before he could, Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, met with Truman and told him, "I can't tell you what it is, but it is the greatest project in the history of the world. It is most top-secret. Many of the people who are actually engaged in the work have no idea what it is, and we who do would appreciate your not going into those plants." After this meeting, Truman called off the investigation into those plants and delayed his knowledge of the secretive project for a little while.

new ideas. The bomb would eventually be assembled at the New Mexico location. Splitting the Manhattan Project's research and production into multiple facilities was an attempt to maintain the confidentiality of the program. If one facility were to be infiltrated by spies or those with ill will, they would only have gained access to one-third of the production or research information. Additionally, the scientists working in the Tennessee or Washington state locations could be kept as ill-informed as possible, since they would only be able to assess one piece of the puzzle. By the spring of 1945, though, the Manhattan Project scientists had a fairly comprehensive understanding of the workings of atomic energy and were mere steps away from assembling a fully functional atomic bomb for testing.<sup>15</sup>

President Roosevelt did not live to see victory in either Europe or the Pacific, or the success of the Manhattan Project. He died on April 12, 1945, seventeen days before Hitler's suicide and twenty-seven days before Germany's surrender. That evening, Vice President Harry S. Truman was sworn in as the President of the United States. But because of the confidentiality of the Manhattan Project, Truman was entirely unaware of the revolutionary scientific development now under his control, and the decision that he would have to make that would literally change the world prior to his inauguration as president. After President Roosevelt's death, and the new President Truman's inauguration, the first person to inform Truman of the existence and purpose of the Manhattan Project was the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. Truman remembered his brief meeting with Stimson, who mentioned an

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<sup>15</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 31-33.

“immense project that was underway – a project looking to the development of a new explosive of almost unbelievable destructive power.” Stimson’s startling and incomplete information confused the new president.<sup>16</sup>

The next person to discuss the atomic bomb with the new president was James Byrnes, who provided slightly more information than Secretary Stimson. Byrnes had an extensive career in all three branches of the United States federal government, while maintaining a close relationship with President Roosevelt. Byrnes was not officially briefed on the details of the Manhattan Project, but his supplemental information was enough to clarify Truman’s confusion regarding the new destructive power Stimson mentioned. Truman would later make Byrnes his Secretary of State.<sup>17</sup>

On April 25, 1945, President Truman received an official briefing regarding the Manhattan Project from Secretary Stimson and General Leslie Groves. Truman recalled that Stimson told him, “the project was nearing completion and that a bomb could be expected within another four months.” Stimson also suggested Truman should form some sort of committee of qualified individuals to advise the president on matters relating to atomic policy for both during the war and afterwards. Following this advice, Truman formed the Interim Committee, which was comprised of eight key players in atomic decision-making. Soon-to-be Secretary of State James Byrnes represented the president on the committee and Secretary of

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<sup>16</sup> Purdue, *The Second World War*, 182; Len Gionvannitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965), 26.

<sup>17</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 36-37; Walter S. Schoenberger, *Decision of Destiny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 116-117.

War Stimson was appointed the chairman. The Interim Committee also organized a secondary advisory scientific panel consisting of the lead scientists on the project. This panel helped provide perspective of those who created the bomb and their opinions on how it should be used.<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 1945, the Manhattan Project finally assembled the first atomic bomb. On July 16, 1945 at 4:00 am, at the Trinity Test Site in New Mexico, the first detonation of the atomic bomb was successful. A general described the detonation: “There came this tremendous burst of light. The whole country was lighted by a searching light with the intensity many times that of the midday sun. It was golden, purple, violet, gray and blue.” The blast was so intense and the roar so loud that it awoke a sleeping town 30 miles away from the test site. Residents saw “a pillar of fire, six miles high,” but were kept uninformed as to the cause of this mysterious and terrifying event.<sup>19</sup>

President Truman learned of the success of the Trinity Test while he was in occupied Germany attending the Potsdam Conference. A coded message containing only three words, “Babies Satisfactorily Born,” informed him that the test went off

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<sup>18</sup> Giovannitti and Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*, 54; Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 70-71; Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 49-50; Truman, quoted in Raymond M. Hyser and J. Chris Arndt, “Voices of the American Past,” Vol. 2, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012) 494. The Interim Committee’s members consisted of Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph Bard, President of Harvard University and Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee James Conant, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Chief of Field Service of the Office of Scientific Research and Development Karl Compton, Assistant Secretary of State William Clayton, President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development Vannevar Bush, Stimson’s assistant George Harrison to represent Stimson when he was absent, soon-to-be Secretary of State James Byrnes to represent the President and Secretary of War Stimson as the chairman. The scientific advisory panel consisted of J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence, Arthur Compton and Enrico Fermi.

<sup>19</sup> Giovannitti and Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*, 54.

better than had been expected. Little did President Truman know the implications and consequences of the decision he now faced.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 164-167.

## Chapter 2: Planning an Invasion

After the successful testing of the atomic bomb, the next two weeks involved many meetings, memos and questions that needed to be answered. Eventually, the United States, Britain and China issued the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945, instructing Japan to surrender or face “prompt and utter destruction.” Two days later, the Japanese government refused the declaration.<sup>21</sup> This refusal left President Truman and his Interim Committee with the decision on how to best end the war with Japan. There were three options considered: invasion into mainland Japan, a naval blockade around the island or use the new atomic bomb.

The option of an invasion of Japan was seriously considered. In fact, as most military leaders were unaware of the Manhattan Project and the weapon that was being built, an invasion of the mainland of Japan was considered to be the only viable option. The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a complete invasion plan to President Truman in a meeting in June. They believed this plan would “clearly indicate to the Japanese how firmly resolved the U.S. was to bring about their complete surrender,” ending the war in the Pacific and thus finally ending the Second World War.<sup>22</sup>

In order to achieve this “complete surrender,” military leaders developed a highly detailed plan that culminated in a full-scale invasion of the homeland of Japan, featuring support from the Soviet Union. The plan as a whole was named Operation Downfall, but it was split into two main sections, nicknamed Operation

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>22</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 543.

Olympic and Operation Coronet. The first part, Olympic, scheduled an attack on Kyushu, the large, southern island of Japan, beginning on November 1, 1945, which would be referred to as X-Day, to follow the theme of Normandy's D-Day. This invasion drew upon the experiences of the island hopping campaign and comprised a coordinated naval and aerial bombardment following an amphibious invasion of ground troops. The Soviet army would simultaneously attack Japan from the north, through their occupations in China. While working with the Soviets was not ideal, President Roosevelt and Generalissimo Stalin prearranged plans for coordination at an earlier conference. Additionally, the sheer size of the Soviet military would be a clear asset. The second half of the attack plan, Coronet, planned for an invasion of another major Japanese island, Honshu, in the spring of 1946, with the invasion landing fittingly named Y-Day. These invasions were to be a combination of land and sea assaults, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>23</sup>

President Truman's main concern about this plan was the casualties. Along with most other Americans, Truman was aware of the Japanese ruthlessness and unwillingness to surrender, as was demonstrated throughout the island hopping campaign, but especially the high costs in taking Okinawa and Iwo Jima. He wanted to ensure that as few American lives as possible were lost, and an invasion into the core of the Japanese empire would surely be met with every method of defense the Japanese could possibly muster. Along with the invasion plans, the Joint Chiefs also presented casualty estimates at 35 percent, about equal to

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<sup>23</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 543; Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, *Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan - and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 135, 147.

casualties incurred from the battle at Okinawa and estimated casualties for a hypothetical attack on any other militarily strategic Japanese island. The invasion plan presented to Truman called for about 767,000 soldiers, and at a 35 percent casualty rate, 268,000 men would be either wounded or killed. This casualty estimation was not the only one that President Truman received, however.<sup>24</sup>

Former President Herbert Hoover also sent a memo to President Truman regarding a possible invasion of Japan. Despite the fact that he had not been officially briefed on the situation, Hoover urged negotiated peace with Japan or else “it might cost ‘the lives of 500,000 to a million boys’ to end the war.” The severity of Hoover’s estimates unsettled the president who then forwarded the memo to Stimson, among other advisors. Stimson also forwarded his copy of the Hoover’s memo to General George Marshall. General Marshall returned two responses to Stimson, both of which claimed Hoover’s estimates were much too high. Truman never saw the two responses. It was likely clear to Truman that Hoover was ill-informed and therefore not in the position to make reliable estimates, but the sheer enormity of the numbers Hoover quoted may have unsettled President Truman to some extent.<sup>25</sup>

Some of Truman’s military advisors provided another set of casualty estimates for the invasion. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, General Douglas MacArthur and Chief of Staff of the United States Army General George Marshall issued three more casualty estimates for the planned invasion of Japan, all of which

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<sup>24</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 543.

<sup>25</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 99.

were lower than Hoover's estimates by about half. Interestingly, President Truman never saw any of these casualty estimates. If this information reached Truman, it might have affected his later decision to use the bomb. The lower casualty estimates may have evened out the balance between the loss of American lives in the event of an incursion into Japan versus the loss of Japanese lives if atomic weaponry was used.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps if President Truman had seen the lower estimates, his fears may have been quelled slightly. If Truman had not been so fearful of high American casualties, he may have never used the bomb.

A combined naval blockade and aerial bombardment of Japan was another, lesser-known option to end the war. This proposal would have been expensive and time-consuming, but President Truman considered it seriously, nonetheless. He wrote in his diary on June 17, 1945, "I have to decide Japanese strategy – shall we invade Japan proper or shall we bomb and blockade? That is my hardest decision to date." A naval blockade and aerial bombardment of Japan would combine to deplete Japanese supplies and bring surrender more quickly. But President Truman's military advisors believed more along the lines of a cooperation of a naval blockade, an air bombardment, and an invasion into Kyushu would bring a Japanese surrender. They did not want these elements to work independently. Stimson wrote that, as of July 1945, "we were planning an intensified sea and air blockade, and greatly intensified strategic air bombing, through the summer and early fall, to be followed on November 1 by an invasion of the southern island of Kyushu." Stimson

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<sup>26</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 100.

added that this invasion of Kyushu was to be followed by “an invasion of the main land of Honshu in the spring of 1946.” Stimson’s remarks demonstrate that the naval blockade was never truly intended to serve on its own, but instead as a small part of a larger assault.<sup>27</sup>

The final option to end the war in the Pacific was the atomic bomb. But there were many unanswered questions about the new bomb. No one was really sure how powerful the blast would be until the Trinity Test. In fact, General Leslie Groves sent an estimate to General George Marshall that the blast of the first detonation of the atomic bomb would be equal to the explosion of 500 tons of TNT, but once the bomb was tested, the blast was actually equal to 20,000 tons of TNT. Once it was understood how much devastation the bomb could inflict, the new weapon took on a new importance. Under the previous estimates of force equaling 500 tons of TNT, the atomic bomb would still have been much stronger than regular bombs. But the results from the Trinity Test showed the bomb was at least forty times stronger than that, heightening both the possibility for destruction and the weight of the decision to use it or not.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the summer, a few possibilities for potential uses of the bomb arose, aside from the two cut-and-dry options, use the bomb or not.. The bomb could have been used as only a demonstration. Manhattan Project scientists could have invited Japanese officials to observe another test in the desert, which would have

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<sup>27</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 47; Cynthia Kelly, ed., *The Manhattan Project: The Birth of the Atomic Bomb in the Worlds of Its Creators, Eyewitnesses, and Historians* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2007), 384-385.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Amrine, *The Great Decision: The Secret History of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Putman, 1959), 132.

resulted in no actual destruction or loss of life, but would have hopefully scared the Japanese into surrendering. There were also different possibilities regarding when and how many times surrender should be offered before use of the bomb. The efficacy of asking for surrender before the use of the bomb, though, was doubtful, without clear examples of the destruction of the bomb as a motivating factor.

There were a few groups of people related to the Manhattan Project whose opinions were important to Truman in his decision-making process. One such group was Truman's military advisors. But the military leaders were dubious about the effectiveness of the new bomb. Some doubted the bomb would even detonate properly. Most high-ranking military leaders believed a technical demonstration of the bomb instead of strategic use was a poor idea because the bomb might not detonate and the United States would look foolish in the face of invited Japanese officials.<sup>29</sup>

President Truman's personal military advisor and Chief-of-Staff Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy was one of those skeptics. Admiral Leahy was doubtful that the atomic bomb could even be made, let alone be as powerful as it was estimated to be. He thought that mass bombardment was "against the civilized laws of war" and that "these new concepts of 'total war' [were] basically distasteful to the soldier and sailor of [his] generation." He also believed that direct invasion of the mainland of Japan would be difficult and bloody, since an invasion on Kyushu would result in a similar casualty rate as Okinawa, 35 percent. As a result, Leahy

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<sup>29</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 132.

believed that an air bombardment and a naval blockade would be the best way to end the war with the least cost in lives. He was mostly alone in this belief, however, since most of Truman's other advisors ruled that option unviable as the sole strategy to end the war, like Leahy wanted it to be. The eventual course of action of full, tactical use of the atomic bomb was, therefore, not something that pleased Admiral Leahy.<sup>30</sup>

Most other military leaders seemed to agree with Admiral Leahy's casualty estimates or that Leahy was only slightly overestimating, even if they did not agree with his opinions on how to end the war. Leahy noted in a diary entry on June 18, 1945, that General Marshall estimated invasion casualties at 63,000 men out of 190,000 troops, about a 33 percent loss, which was close to his own estimate. They did disagree, however, about the invasion plans, Codename Downfall. Truman's other military advisors such as General Marshall, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz, believed the United States should launch an invasion of mainland Japan. In the same diary entry, Leahy described the meeting between the Joint Chiefs of Staff, President Truman and a few other military leaders: "General Marshall and Admiral King [members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with Leahy] both strongly advocated an invasion of Kyushu at the earliest practicable date." Truman even authorized the execution of the plan of attack at that meeting, prior to the completion of and successful testing of the atomic bomb. He wished the death toll estimates were lower but Truman said that after the June 18 meeting, he was

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<sup>30</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 134; Quoted in "A28. Leahy Diary Entry, June 18, 1945," in Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 207-208; Robert James Maddox, *Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 57.

“clear on the situation now’ and was ‘quite sure’ the chiefs should proceed with the invasion plans.” The invasion was never carried out though, because it was scheduled for November 1945 and by that time, the atomic bomb had been used and Japan had already surrendered.<sup>31</sup>

Secretary Henry Stimson’s opinion of a course of action against Japan was different from most of the other military leaders advising Truman. Stimson wrote in his diary about a meeting with Truman the day after the meeting Leahy described. On June 19, 1945 Stimson remembered “it became very evident today in the discussion that we all feel that some way should be found of inducing Japan to yield without a fight to the finish,” implying that Stimson was against a direct invasion of Japan to end the war. This then suggests that Stimson was an advocate for tactical use of the atomic bomb, and his position as a close advisor to Truman may have had an influence on the president’s ultimate decision.<sup>32</sup>

Another curious note from Stimson came a year and a half after the bombs were dropped when Stimson published an article in *Harper’s Magazine* defending the decision to drop the bomb. He wrote that he was given casualty estimates for the invasions of Kyushu and Honshu that totaled over one million men. No estimates were found that reached the extremes that Stimson claimed he was told. The closest estimate found was former President Hoover’s uninformed casualty estimate of between 500,000 and a million, so it is unclear why Stimson cited those excessive estimates. Secretary Stimson was very much involved with Truman and

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<sup>31</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 134; Quoted in “A28. Leahy Diary Entry, June 18, 1945,” in Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 207-208; Maddox, *Weapons for Victory*, 57, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 208.

the decision to use the bomb, though. It is very possible that Stimson used his personal beliefs to influence the information Truman received during the weeks leading up to the bomb, such as influential casualty estimates, only allowing Truman to have access to military information that would influence him to end the war swiftly with the use of the bomb.<sup>33</sup>

Another important opinion in Truman's decision was that of the scientists who created the weapon. The director of the Manhattan Project General Groves and Arthur Compton of the Interim Committee asked J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence and a scientist named Farrington Daniels to poll the scientists at Los Alamos, Berkeley and the Chicago Metallurgical Laboratory about the use of the bomb. These polls comprised only one question: "Which of the following procedures comes closest to your choice as to the way in which any new weapons that we may develop should be used in the Japanese war?" The results were as follows:

46% -- Give a military demonstration to Japan to be followed by a renewed opportunity for surrender before full use of the weapons is employed.

26% -- Give an experimental demonstration in this country, with representatives of Japan present: followed by a new opportunity for surrender before full use of the weapon is employed.

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<sup>33</sup> Kelly, *The Manhattan Project*, 383.

15% -- Use them in the manner that is from the military point of view most effective in bringing about prompt Japanese surrender at minimum human cost to our armed forces.

11% -- Withhold military use of the weapons, but make public experimental demonstration of their effectiveness.

2% -- Keep the whole project secret and do not use the weapon at all.<sup>34</sup>

While syntax and vocabulary choice can be debated, it appears that 85 percent of the scientists polled voted against full military tactical use. To further that view, the words “renewed opportunity for surrender” in the most popular option and “new opportunity for surrender” in the second most popular option suggest that surrender should already have been offered before any use of this new weaponry. Curiously, only 15 percent of the polled scientists voted for the option President Truman eventually chose.<sup>35</sup>

The scientific advisory panel also provided their “Recommendations on the Immediate Use of Nuclear Weapons” to President Truman and the Interim Committee. In this report, they described how they believed the new atomic weaponry should be handled. They made it quite clear that they have “no claim to special competence in solving the political, social, and military problems which are presented by the advent of atomic power.” They recommended a mere

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<sup>34</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 146-147.

<sup>35</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 145-148.

demonstration of the new weapon would not bring victory, that only “direct military use,” would bring a Japanese surrender. However, the report does mention that this was not a unanimous conclusion. It is curious that only 15 percent of the scientists working on the production of the bomb voted for full, tactical use of the bomb, but the majority of the scientific advisory panel, comprised of the supervising scientists of the project, voted the same way. Truman needed to decide whose opinion he trusted more, that of the working scientists who handled the bomb and its technology every day or that of the advising supervisors, whose names would go down as a footnote in history as the architects of the most powerful weapon ever created.<sup>36</sup>

Truman’s specially appointed Interim Committee also had their own interpretation of the atomic bomb, but the opinions were varied. Arthur Compton, who commissioned the poll of the Manhattan Project scientists, interpreted the poll responses in a strange way. He read the results as “87% voted for its military use, at least if after other means were tried this was found necessary to bring surrender,” instead of 85 percent voting against full military use. It seems as though Compton interpreted the results to fit into his own opinions. Arthur Compton, a member of the scientific advisory panel, was the brother of Karl Compton, a member of the Interim Committee. It could be the two brothers had

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<sup>36</sup> Kelly, *The Manhattan Project*, 290-291. The report does make a curious stipulation, though. The panel agreed that before the new weapon was used, the United States should inform Britain, France, China and Russia about the new advancements in the field of atomic weapons, and that these weapons may be ready for use in this war. This stipulation was ignored, however.

some influence over each other and their respective committees, both of which reported to and influenced President Truman.<sup>37</sup>

Another member of the Interim Committee, Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph Bard, had another different opinion. Bard believed that the United States should not use the bomb unless Japan was warned beforehand. He wrote a memorandum detailing his opinion, saying he “had the feeling very definitely that the Japanese government may be searching for some opportunity which they could use as a medium of surrender.” It seems as though Bard opposed dropping the bomb, unless it was used as a warning to the Japanese. If Bard’s plan proved effective, and the Japanese did surrender after a warning, then the atomic bomb would never have been used. It is possible that Bard was actually against the use of the bomb, but did not want to directly disagree with the other members of the committee, especially when some of those other members and additional military advisors were his superiors.<sup>38</sup>

Truman inherited both the plan to invade the mainland of Japan and the plans for the development of the atomic bomb from his predecessor, Roosevelt. And this complicated Truman’s decision making process. If President Roosevelt truly believed in the success of the planned invasion into Honshu, then what was the purpose of the Manhattan Project to create atomic weaponry? But Roosevelt passed away before the successful detonation test of the atomic bomb, and was therefore entirely unaware of the incredibly destructive properties of the Manhattan Project’s

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<sup>37</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 145-148.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in “A31. Ralph Bard Memorandum on the Use of the Atomic Bomb, June 27, 1945,” in Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 209-210.

creation. Roosevelt seriously considered the invasion plan, as evidenced by his notations on a map titled “Japan and Adjacent Regions of Asia and the Pacific Ocean,” in the Map Room of the White House. Roosevelt penned a short military to-do list, culminating in a simple bullet labeled “Invade Jap Homeland Fall of 1945.” But the invasion plans would likely be an incredibly costly endeavor. What would cost more, the destruction of the atomic bomb or the invasion? All of these questions fell heavily on President Truman’s shoulders, as he was forced to make a choice that would forever change the world.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Allen and Polmar, *Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan*, 123.

### Chapter 3: The Atom Bomb

Once the atomic bomb was a reality, President Truman's choice became increasingly more pressing. His options were a full-scale invasion into the Japanese homeland or the use of the new atomic bomb. Truman was well aware of the seriousness of atomic weaponry. He may not have yet understood the exact physical effects of the bomb, as was the case with most of the scientists, but he understood the political implications. He wrote in his memoirs reflecting on his time in office, "We were now in possession of a weapon that would not only revolutionize war but could alter the course of history and civilization." Truman's remarks were hauntingly accurate.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the wide range of advisors surrounding the president, Truman held a higher regard for the opinions of two men in particular: General George Marshall and Secretary of War Henry Stimson. He cited "the greatest respect . . . for the experience and judgment" these two men brought to the table. His faith in their skills most likely led Truman to believe their opinions about the use of the atomic bomb as well. Secretary Stimson was an advocate for tactile use of the bomb and General Marshall showed Truman multiple casualty estimates for an invasion into Japan that were so costly, they likely influenced him away from the invasion option. Truman told his biographer, Jonathan Daniels, Marshall "thought such a landing would involve half a million casualties." Truman also wrote in a letter in 1953, "It was [Marshall's] opinion that such an invasion would cost at a minimum one

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<sup>40</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Vol. One: A Year of Decisions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 415.

quarter of a million casualties, and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy.” Truman noted other military personal agreed with Marshall’s assessment. These estimates are especially critical because if Truman had been under the impression that as many Americans as Japanese were going to be killed, he would likely have been heavily influenced towards using the bomb. It would have been better to only kill 200,000 Japanese, as opposed to a million Japanese and a million Americans.<sup>41</sup>

In the end, Harry Truman’s decision came down to “how soon we could wind up the war in the Pacific.” He had been open to the invasion plans, but after the successful testing, Truman was convinced that the atomic bomb, not an invasion, would lead to the quickest end. A panel of scientists commissioned by the Interim Committee advised Truman the bomb should be “used without specific warning and against a target that would clearly show its devastating strength,” and “no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end.” This left the president with only one option: a full, military use of the atomic bomb.<sup>42</sup>

On July 26, 1945, President Truman, along with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chairman of the Nationalist Government in China Chiang Kai-shek, while at the Potsdam Conference, issued the Potsdam Declaration, which

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<sup>41</sup> Truman, *Memoirs: Vol. One: A Year of Decisions*, 235; Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 516-517.

<sup>42</sup> Truman, *Memoirs: Vol. One*, 235, 419.

ordered Japan to surrender or “face prompt and utter destruction.”<sup>43</sup> The declaration’s terms of surrender included removing from power anyone who encouraged Japan’s push for “world domination,” as well as disarmament of the military, charges for war criminals and cessation of economic activity that would rearm the military. It does mention specifically, however, that the Japanese people will not be enslaved, and they will be allowed to continue other economic activities, as long as they remained peaceful and accepting of their loss. This threatening document signaled the last official opportunity for the Japanese to surrender before the use of the new atomic bomb, without directly informing the Japanese of what was to come. Two days later, the Japanese officially refused the declaration and declined to surrender. President Truman had to make a decision.<sup>44</sup>

In Japan, accepting the Allied Powers’ push for surrender was not an option that was seriously considered. Japanese culture preferred death to surrender. Additionally, the Japanese feared if they were to surrender to the Allies, they would be forced to abolish the structure of the Emperorship. Their emperor, Hirohito, was not only an important political figure but a treasured religious leader as well. The Potsdam Declaration did not make any mention of or condition for the preservation of the Emperor in the terms of surrender, and the Japanese did not want to risk the chance that, upon surrender under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, the

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<sup>43</sup> Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>44</sup> H. P. Willmott, *The Second World War in the Far East* (London: Cassell & Co., 1999), 206.

Emperor would be eliminated. Therefore, Japanese military leaders began to prepare for the natural continuance of the war, the next Allied invasion.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the fact that the leaders of the United States, China and Great Britain issued the Potsdam Declaration, it is hard to believe that any of them actually expected the Japanese to heed such a warning. The ferocious and unrelenting fighting in the Pacific battles indicated that the Japanese were unwilling to surrender. American leaders were all of the opinion that Japanese surrender was highly unlikely, but they differed in their opinions on how to end the war. Most military leaders thought that Japanese surrender could be achieved by relentless continuation of the invasion of the mainland, whereas most of the scientists thought the bomb would be the quickest and most decisive path to ending the war. It was universally agreed upon, though, that Japan should be offered surrender before either plan, invasion or bomb. Truman tried to convince Japan to surrender using threats and severe language, but it was always highly doubtful that the surrender would be accepted. The Potsdam Declaration therefore takes on the role of a tick off an ethical to-do list. The Japanese turned down this official warning and chance to surrender, as was expected by most everyone, and this opened the door to use of the bomb without heavy ethical criticism.

The military order authorizing the use of the bomb on Japan clearly defined the relative uselessness of the Potsdam Declaration. It was made clear that Japan would have the opportunity to surrender before the use of the bomb. This

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<sup>45</sup> Willmott, *The Second World War in the Far East*, 206.

opportunity, the Potsdam Declaration, issued on July 26, warned Japan to surrender or face “prompt and utter destruction.” The problem, however, lies in the date on the official military authorization of use of the atomic bomb. The authorization letter states, “The 509 Composite Group, 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about 3 August 1945 on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki.” This letter was dated “24 July 1945”, two days before Japan was warned to surrender. It seems as though allowing Japan an opportunity to surrender may have been merely a formality and that military leaders were aware that Japan was not going to surrender that easily, resulting in the deployment of the atomic bomb anyway. This authorization letter was not made public at the time, however, as it was a top-secret military document, allowing the general public to believe that Japan had an honest opportunity to surrender before they were bombed.<sup>46</sup>

Japan was strategic about the concept of surrender, though. After the fall of Saipan in the summer of 1944, even before the war in Europe was over, Japanese military leaders knew they would be unable to defeat the American military, especially if the war raged on for a significant length of time. It was apparent United States military forces outmatched Japan’s in essentially every category. But the Japanese could not surrender immediately, as they were afraid they would be forced to abolish the emperor. They had to time their surrender perfectly, short enough to limit the destruction inflicted by the Allied forces, but long enough to

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<sup>46</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 184-185; Cynthia Kelly, ed., *The Manhattan Project: The Birth of the Atomic Bomb in the Worlds of Its Creators, Eyewitnesses, and Historians* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2007), 317.

convince the Allies to let them keep their emperor. The Supreme Council was in charge of Japanese military decisions, led by Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kōichi Kido, as well as Emperor Hirohito and they were tasked with the delicate decision of how long to wait. They believed, even though they would be unable to defeat the United States militarily, they might be able to just keep fighting until the Americans lost the willpower to continue the war and offered amenable and lenient terms of surrender. There was some disagreement among the council members about how long to wait. Some argued if the war continued long enough for the American military to infiltrate the Japanese homelands, there would be absolute devastation and death for the Japanese people, and that was not a worthy price to pay to avoid the shame of surrender.<sup>47</sup>

There was still the question of where to drop the bomb. Following the instructions of President Truman, General Leslie Groves commissioned the preexisting Target Committee to perform a military study to locate the best cities that would be both militaristically and psychologically effective in defeating Japan, or forcing their surrender. This committee had previously been working on selecting targets for regular bombs, but was tasked in May to choose targets for the potential atomic bomb. A preliminary report found sixteen Japanese cities to be sizeable enough to bring about Japanese surrender if bombed. A summarized report was presented to General Groves in May 1945, listing the top five most advantageous

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<sup>47</sup> J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs against Japan*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 29. Japan's Supreme Council was comprised of Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kōichi Kido, War Minister Korechika Anami, Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai, Chief of the Army General Staff Yoshijiro Umezu and Chief of the Navy General Staff Soemu Toyoda.

targets: Kyoto, Hiroshima, Yokohama, Kokura Arsenal and Niigata. Stimson and Truman later removed Kyoto from the list for being too significant to Japanese culture and historic art, as well as the home of the treasured Japanese Emperor, an interesting show of compassion in this narrative full of destruction. Tokyo was also left off the list because Truman believed the atomic bomb was a military weapon and should be “used as a weapon of war in the manner prescribed by the laws of war.” In the final military order to drop the bomb, however, issued a few months later on July 24, 1945, four approved targets were listed, in the order of attack: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki.<sup>48</sup>

On August 6, 1945, at the crack of dawn, an observation plane took off from an American air base in the Mariana Islands and headed for Hiroshima to assess if the weather in the area would be suitable for the deployment of the atomic bomb that day. The plane signaled the base, “Fair weather, ready for air raid.” The local Japanese military headquarters saw the foreign plane and issued an air raid alert that an attack was imminent, but the observation plane flew off and the air raid alarm was cancelled. Hiroshima citizens thus continued about their day and headed to work.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Kelly, *The Manhattan Project*, 319-321, 385; Truman, *Memoirs: Vol. One*, 419-420; Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 185; Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 523. The study was issued at the end of April and laid out 16 places that were to be studied further to ascertain their strategic value as bombsites. Those sixteen places were: Yokohama, Osaka, Tokyo Bay, Kure, Kawasaki, Nagoya, Yawata, Kobe, Kokura, Fukuoka, Sasebo, Yamaguchi, Kumamoto, Shimosedka, Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The findings of the study were put into the report that was presented to General Groves.

<sup>49</sup> Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain, trans. *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*. The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981) 21.

At 8:15am Japanese Standard Time, the world bore witness to the first use of atomic weaponry on human targets. This first bomb, aboard a plane named the *Enola Gay*, detonated forty three seconds after it was dropped from the cargo hold. The explosion was approximately six hundred meters above the city, which flooded the area with “a tremendous flash of light [that] cut across the sky.”<sup>50</sup> At the epicenter, temperatures topped several million degrees Celsius and a fireball radiated out from the blast.<sup>51</sup>

This first atomic bomb shook Hiroshima. The pressure that pushed out from the epicenter of the blast flattened all buildings and trees within an approximate two-mile radius, and structural damages were seen as far away as six miles from the center of the blast. Three-quarters of a mile away from the epicenter, a woman tried to escape the blast “when something picked her up and she seemed to fly into the next room over the raised sleeping platform, pursued by parts of her house.” Despite all of the damage, there are almost no reports of Hiroshima survivors hearing any noise with the detonation of the bomb, possibly resulting from hearing damage or shock from the blast. Total casualty figures were estimated a few months later in November 1945 to be as high as 130,000 dead and 220,000 injured in some capacity or another.<sup>52</sup>

After the first bomb, Japan scrambled to understand exactly what happened in Hiroshima. The new technology of atomic weaponry, and the scale of the damage

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<sup>50</sup> John Hershey, *Hiroshima* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ishikawa and Swain, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 22, 420.

<sup>52</sup> Ishikawa and Swain, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 22, 41, 420; Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 9, 12-13; Ishikawa and Swain, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 22, 420.

incurred from just one bomb in particular confused the Japanese. Regular bombs were common weapons in the war, but no single bomb had ever caused the widespread, instantaneous destruction before. Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, pastor of Hiroshima Methodist Church, reported:

Hundreds and hundreds [of victims] who were fleeing [Hiroshima], and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns – of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos.<sup>53</sup>

This dramatic destruction, combined with the surprise bombing, sent the Japanese scrambling to understand just what had happened.

Following the first bomb on Hiroshima, the United States intended to wait five days for a sign of surrender from the Japanese. Weather reports for the Japanese Islands called for heavy rain, however, so the deployment of the second

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<sup>53</sup> Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 4, 39-40.

bomb was pushed up two days. When no surrender was received, the American military dropped a second bomb, this time in Nagasaki. This bomb, on August 9, 1945, was originally intended for Kokura, but the forecasted rains were already upon the city and the plane was forced to head to its second target, Nagasaki. Because of the change of location, the second bomb was dropped later in the day as compared to the first bomb in Hiroshima.<sup>54</sup>

The explosion over Nagasaki was stronger and more destructive than its counterpart in Hiroshima. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima, referred to as “Little Boy,” was comprised of uranium and weighed 12.5 kilotons; whereas, the Nagasaki bomb, “Fat Man,” was predominately plutonium and weighed 22 kilotons. It is unclear exactly why two different types of radioactive material were used in the bombs, but the change in materials led to slightly different designs and weights between the two bombs. Because this second bomb was larger, the destruction of physical property, such as buildings and infrastructure was greater in force in Nagasaki than in Hiroshima, and the radius of impact was larger in Nagasaki. Hiroshima still suffered the higher number of casualties, however, because it was more densely populated. The casualty estimates for the bomb in Hiroshima reached 130,000 dead and 220,000 injured, compared to estimates for Nagasaki, which reached 70,000 dead and 200,000 injured by October 1945.<sup>55</sup>

While the detonation of the atom bomb may have produced devastating property destruction, the damage to the Japanese citizens was even more shocking.

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<sup>54</sup> Truman, *Memoirs: Vol. One*, 426; Ishikawa and Swain, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 27, 420, 367.

<sup>55</sup> Ishikawa and Swain, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 30-31, 420.

Those victims, who were not crushed by falling structures, suffered severe burns, from both radiation and the sheer heat of the fireball of the blast. Historian Frank Chinnock described the devastation in areas closest to the fireball: “within the Red Circle of Death, it was as if a malevolent god had suddenly focused a gigantic blowtorch on a small section of our planet . . . . The people exposed within that doomed section neither knew nor felt anything, and their blackened, unrecognizable forms dropped silently where they stood.” To make matters worse, no one could yet understand the long-term effects from the radiation. The radioactive material inside the bomb created frequent instances of radiation burns, cancers and tumors in surviving victims.<sup>56</sup>

Following this second attack, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito and his cabinet issued an intent to negotiate surrender. The Japanese were hesitant to surrender unconditionally because they feared they would be forced to denounce their treasured Emperor, but they wanted to prevent yet another devastating atomic bomb. After some negotiation on the exact terms of surrender, the Allied Powers allowed Japan to retain Emperor Hirohito, as long as he agreed to cease hostilities against the Allies and completely enforce the capitulation throughout the country. Japan agreed to these terms and President Truman accepted the Japanese surrender on August 14 at 7:00pm. About two weeks later, on September 2, an official surrender ceremony was performed on the United States battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. President Truman declared this date V-J Day, Victory Over Japan.

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<sup>56</sup> Frank W. Chinnock, *Nagasaki: The Forgotten Bomb* (Cleveland, OH: New American Library, 1969), 90.

While this may have officially signified the end of the Second World War, the scars left behind continue to affect the world to this day.<sup>57</sup>

The decision to deploy the new, incredibly deadly atomic weaponry could not have been an easy one for President Truman. His options came down to a full-scale invasion into the strongholds of the Japanese Empire, which would have resulted in hundreds of thousands of lives lost between the Japanese and American militaries, or deployment of the atomic bomb, which would result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Japanese citizens. Both of these choices would result in unavoidable death, so the heart of Truman's choice had to be whose lives were more valuable. The first instinct of an American is to say that the lives of the American military were more important, and that the bomb was justified. The American lives on the line were members of the military. Many soldiers were drafted, and did not choose to fight by their own free will. One then turns to the issue of the Japanese. Their nation was at war with the United States, so why should they be valued? But the locations selected as targets for the atomic bombs were civilian not military targets, and were therefore full of innocent women and children. This is the ethical debate Truman wrangled with in his decision and continues to plague historians to this day.

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<sup>57</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 68, 73-74.

## Chapter 4: Ulterior Motives

The intent behind the use of the atomic bomb on Japan was to force Japan's surrender and end the war quickly. Secretary of War Henry Stimson stated this goal very clearly in an article published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1947 "the principle political, social and military objective of the United States in the summer of 1945 was the prompt and complete surrender of Japan." Other military leaders involved with the decision repeated similar statements, including President Truman himself. In the summer of 1945, the United States military faced a long and bloody invasion, as "the Japanese Army's essential strategy was to fight a massive battle for the homeland." The atomic bomb was a quick way to avoid or ease such an invasion. But there may be some lesser-discussed rationale behind the decision-making process, including retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor and the general violence of the war in the Pacific, as a display of power and military superiority to the world, and to prevent the Soviet Union from exercising extensive influence into Japan.<sup>58</sup>

A possible reason to use the bomb on Japan was as retaliation and revenge for both the surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor and the general brutality of the war in the Pacific. There were 3,600 American casualties from the attack on Pearl Harbor. Additionally, the Japanese assault destroyed millions of dollars of naval vessels, aircraft and other military equipment, but the unprovoked aspect of the attack remained fixed in many people's mind. In an official presidential announcement

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<sup>58</sup> Henry Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1947, 39; Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 116.

read to the press by the assistant press secretary, President Truman even referenced the attack on Pearl Harbor in relation to purposes for the bomb, saying, “The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold.” Later, he ominously said “When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast.” Historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa comments, “Punishing the Japanese, soldiers and civilians alike, with atomic devastation represented in Truman’s mind a just retribution against the ‘savage and cruel people’ who had dared to make a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and mistreat American POWs.” It is clear that, while the attack on Pearl Harbor was not the sole motivating factor for the use of the bomb on Japan, enacting revenge on the Japanese for the unsolicited attack was a sweet benefit.<sup>59</sup>

Once the war had actually begun, the Japanese were incredibly relentless in their fighting techniques and strategies, and surrender was actually considered shameful. As a result, the battles in the Pacific were long and bloody, like Iwo Jima and Okinawa, which totaled about 110,000 casualties. Overall, there were approximately 170,000 American casualties from the Pacific theater. With these numbers, almost two thirds of United States casualties in the Pacific theater of World War II were incurred in the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa alone. But these were not the only hard-fought battles in the Pacific. The battles of

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<sup>59</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 6; Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 42, 44; “By the Numbers: The US Military,” The National WWII Museum, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/us-military.html>; Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), 3-4; Harry Truman quoted in Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 563; Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 182.

Guadalcanal, Saigon, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines, all of which blocked Japanese advancement through the Pacific, were also long and bloody. A direct invasion of the Japanese mainland would likely have resulted in as high or even higher casualties than previous battles. President Truman's advisors were providing him with estimates ranging from approximately 270,000 casualties to 500,000, and even some estimates of one million. Truman was interviewed in 1951 and the journalist recalled, "he asked what the population of Hiroshima was and his recollection was that they said about 60,000. He said that it was far better to kill 60,000 Japanese than to have 250,000 Americans killed." Truman's comments clearly demonstrate that the atomic bomb could have been used against the Japanese as a consequence for this large loss of American lives in the war and to prevent further carnage with a planned invasion of the home islands.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the savagery of battle, Americans were horrified at the Japanese treatment of other peoples during the war. Americans were not yet fully aware of the atrocities of the Holocaust in Europe, but they were more informed of the Japanese Imperial Army's actions. Reports of aerial bombing of Chinese civilians, and the shocking stories from the Rape of Nanking in 1937, among other tales, infuriated the American people. For example, "Japanese soldiers [were] shooting civilians, even those carrying children, who attempted to give themselves

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<sup>60</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 6; Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 42, 44; "By the Numbers: The US Military," The National WWII Museum, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/us-military.html>; Lifton and Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America*, 3-4; Larry Jewell and Patrick Clancey, "Army Battle Casualties and Nonbattle Deaths in World War II," *HyperWar Foundations*, accessed January 27, 2017, <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/ref/Casualties/Casualties-Intro.html>; Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy*, 181.

up to the Marines,” after the United States military overpowered Japanese forces in Saipan in July 1944. Historian J. Samuel Walker notes “the graphic evidence of Japanese atrocities and inhumanity towards prisoners and civilians fed an image of an enemy that was cruel, barbarous, and deserving of annihilation,” like that which results from the destruction of an atomic bomb. These were reports of the actions of the Imperial Army, not the Japanese citizens as a whole. Nonetheless, the shock value of these reports likely made it easier to condemn the Japanese civilians with the order for the use of the atomic bomb.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to the benefits of the use of the atomic bomb, it also provided a favorable alternative to collaborative invasion with the Soviet Union into Japan. America sentiments for the Soviet Union’s aid and involvement in the war against Japan began as early as December 10, 1941, a mere three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor and two days after the United States’ declaration of war. General Douglas MacArthur pressed “that every possible effort be made to obtain immediate entry of Russia into the war.” The sheer size of Russia’s military made them a valuable ally and formidable opponent. The expectation of Russian involvement continued throughout the following years, and was further reinforced at the Yalta Conference. In February 1945, at the Yalta Conference, President Franklin Roosevelt negotiated a separate secret agreement with Generalissimo Joseph Stalin. Stalin agreed to launch an invasion against Japan three months after Germany officially surrendered. In exchange, Roosevelt agreed to ensure the Soviet

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<sup>61</sup> J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs against Japan* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 20-21, 23.

Union received the Soviet land taken by Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.<sup>62</sup>

But beginning around the time of President Truman's inauguration, the administration grew increasingly less interested in Soviet involvement in the Pacific. Military invasion plans that included Soviet involvement were still developed throughout the summer though. The overall plan was nicknamed Operation Downfall, but the operation was split into two key sects: Operations Olympic and Coronet. These plans mostly focused on the movements of the American forces but they were strategized on the expectation of Soviet assistance. The Soviet army was to launch an invasion into the Japanese holdings in China, drawing the bulk of the Japanese military efforts onto the mainland of Asia and away from the Japanese home islands. Shortly thereafter the American troops would begin their assault from the south. With the majority of the Japanese troops defending their Chinese claims from Soviet invasion, it would be significantly easier for the American forces to overcome the defenses of the main island. With a significant amount of Japanese forces pulled into Asia, the number of Japanese forces in battle would be less than American military leaders were anticipating in an invasion only involving Japan and the United States. It is unclear if there were any casualty estimates for an invasion against only a fraction of the Japanese army.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 85-86; Dennis D. Wainstock, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 23.

<sup>63</sup> Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 88.

But in the summer of 1945, attentions were diverted to the atomic bomb and all of the new complications and questions that came with it. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Truman informed Stalin of the completion and successful testing of the atomic bomb. It is possible that Truman believed it was necessary to inform Stalin about the progress of the bomb because it would likely affect the Soviet's intervention with Japan, and he was attempting to spark a renegotiation of previous secret negotiation at Yalta. Stalin was dismissive of the bomb, however, and the terms of the Soviet entrance into the Pacific remained the same.<sup>64</sup>

On August 8, two days after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and launched their attack, on schedule as per the secret Yalta agreement. The bomb may have been dropped, though, with the goal of "keeping Russia out of any share in the Pacific victory, and of threatening Russia with our power in the postwar world." It is possible that Truman may have been unsettled at the premise of Soviet intervention into Japan, in any capacity, and therefore uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the agreement that Roosevelt made with Stalin. While the United States and the Soviet Union were technically on the same side in World War II, the Soviet's system of communism was disconcerting for the democratic capitalists of America. Expanding the Soviets' sphere of interaction and influence could possibly be a catalyst for the expansion of communism, which directly conflicted with the United States' interests. This was especially threatening considering the fragile state of the Japanese government as the war was near an

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<sup>64</sup> Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 99.

end. The government was weak and crumbling, making it more susceptible to outside influence. And there was the possibility communism was an attractive solution to the political and economic difficulties facing the Japanese nation, which would have been a tragedy for the devout democratic capitalist United States. Dropping the bomb before extensive Soviet interference in Japan served dual purposes of bringing the war to an end more quickly and limiting the Soviets' level of influence.<sup>65</sup>

The timeline of events of the Pacific War provides considerable evidence in support of this conclusion. President Truman was well aware of the planned Soviet interference in Japan. Roosevelt and Stalin's secretive Yalta Conference agreement stated that the Soviet Union would enter the war in the Pacific three months after Germany's official surrender. Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945, making the projected date for Soviet involvement August 8, 1945. It is remarkably suspicious that the atomic bomb was deployed on August 6, 1945, a mere two days before the agreed-upon Soviet entrance. This timing makes it abundantly clear the United States was committed to preventing the Soviet Union from entering Japan and exerting its influence, and that the atomic bomb was the tool chosen to achieve this end. While prevention of extensive Soviet influence in Japan was not a decisive factor in the choice to use the bomb, it was very clear a key factor in choosing when to use it.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, 319; Michael Amrine, *The Great Decision* (New York: Putnam, 1959), 232.

<sup>66</sup> Wainstock, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb*, 23.

An equally viable reason for use of the atomic bomb could be that President Truman wanted to give the Soviet Union a display of the United States' military power and technological advancement. At the Potsdam Conference, President Truman informed Stalin of the existence of America's new atomic bomb. Truman recalled that Stalin did not seem overly interested. Stalin's only remark was "he was glad to hear it and hoped we would make 'good use of it against the Japanese.'" It is unclear how much information Stalin had regarding the new atomic weapon before the conversation with Truman, but more than likely, Stalin was already well informed of the new technological advancements, since there had been a number of Russian espionage scandals over the course of the Manhattan Project's work. By being the first to make use of the new technology, though, the United States could display their dominance and technological superiority to threaten the Soviet Union, which set the stage for and ended up becoming a recurring theme in America's Cold War interactions with the Soviets.<sup>67</sup>

It seems to be a common theme throughout these suggested motives, however, that these were not the main goals in the use of the atomic bomb, but merely added bonuses. While these motives may have provided extra reasons to use the atomic bomb against Japan, none of these were the sole reason, or even significant factors in President Truman's decision-making process. They were merely beneficial bonuses. The largest and most influential factor for President

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<sup>67</sup> Amrine, *The Great Decision*, 187-188.

Truman was the prevention of American deaths in a direct invasion, which he stated on multiple occasions, in defense of his use of the bomb.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the world forever. Its groundbreaking weapons technology and strength shocked the world and has affected foreign policy and global interactions to this day. President Harry Truman made the fateful decision to use the bomb twice in a combat setting, swiftly bringing World War II to an end. The bomb was not Truman's only option, however, as an invasion plan was being seriously organized. Additionally, ending the war swiftly may not have been Truman's only motivating factor, since the Russians and the general brutality of the war may have been influential.

The United States became involved in World War II after Japan launched a surprise attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. Throughout the war, American military efforts were torn between the war in the Pacific and the war in Europe. The United States had troops in both theaters but focused on defeating Germany first, and therefore prioritized the fight in Europe. Three and a half years later, in May 1945, Germany surrendered and the United States turned its full attention to defeating Japan in the Pacific.

In the early years of the war, President Franklin Roosevelt commissioned a top-secret project, named the Manhattan Project, to investigate and develop atomic energy and weaponry. This project was so secretive that many of the scientists were not told the complete purpose for their research. In April 1945, President Roosevelt passed away, though, leaving Vice President Harry Truman to lead the United States to victory in the war. Shortly after becoming president, Truman was

informed of the existence of the Manhattan Project and the details of the research. He then set about creating an advisory team to provide guidance through the critical decision of using the atomic bomb once it was completed. This advisory team included some Cabinet members, top military advisors, and a special panel of atomic scientists, called the Interim Committee.

In addition to using the atomic bomb, Truman also seriously considered an invasion into the main islands of Japan. Since the atomic bomb had not been completely assembled and tested yet, launching an invasion into the Japanese homelands was essentially the default option. Therefore, Truman and his advisors spent much of the summer of 1945 discussing strategy and cost for the impending invasion. The Pacific War to that point had been incredibly bloody, a result of the American strategy of island hopping and the vicious fighting techniques of the Japanese military.

Japanese culture fostered a savage Japanese military. In traditional Japanese culture, surrendering in battle was considered shameful. It was more honorable to die fighting than to return home having yielded to the enemy. As a result, the battles in the Pacific were absolutely brutal, resulting in significant loss of life and property on both Japanese and American ends. This ferocity would likely only worsen the nearer the American military drew towards the core islands of Japan. Even with anticipated support from the Russian forces, launching an invasion would be incredibly costly, as multiple advisors forewarned President

Truman. While the exact casualty estimates provided Truman varied rather considerably, all estimates forecasted heavy American losses.

But the threat of significant American casualties did not make the atomic bomb a sure thing. The atomic technology was brand new and Truman's military and scientific advisors alike struggled with how exactly to implement the new bomb. Some advisors, such as Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, were skeptical that the new bomb should be used. Leahy was doubtful the bomb would be strong enough to affect any substantial damage that would facilitate a Japanese surrender, but he also held personal beliefs against large-scale bombings with regular bombs as well. Other advisors were supportive of using the atomic bomb, but there were differences amongst them in terms of how the bomb should be used. The majority of the Manhattan Project scientists believed Japan should be offered clear terms of surrender prior to the use of the bomb, if not multiple opportunities for surrender. But Secretary of War Henry Stimson was an advocate of full tactical use of the atomic bomb to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. All of these different opinions from his advisory committees had an effect on President Truman as he made his decision.

On July 16, 1945, Manhattan Project engineers completed a successful test of the first atomic bomb at White Sands, New Mexico. When Truman was informed of this success, he was participating in the Potsdam Conference, meeting with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, to frame the post-war peace. Truman chose to inform Stalin of the new bomb, likely because of the upcoming Soviet involvement

in the Pacific War as outlined by the secret Yalta Agreement between Stalin and Roosevelt, but Stalin showed little excitement about the breakthrough, making only a comment about using it to end the war sooner.

Following the completion of the bomb, the next decision was where to use it. General Leslie Groves commissioned the preexisting Target Committee to narrow down a list of targets for the new bomb. President Truman was very clear about his proclivity for using the bomb on a military target, and he removed Kyoto from the Target Committee's reported list of targets, as he believed Kyoto was too significant to Japanese culture. Additionally, Kyoto was the ceremonial home of the Japanese Emperor, and such an attack on this sacred place would likely create more issues than solutions. The committee and Truman finally settled on Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki, in preference order for attack.

In cooperation with the other world leaders at the Potsdam Conference, Truman issued the Potsdam Declaration to Japan. This declaration, issued on July 26, 1945, warned Japan to surrender unconditionally or face utter destruction. This clearly threatened Japan, but without fully informing them of the new atomic technology or its capabilities. This document only outlined a few general terms of surrender, however, and the Japanese were unwilling to accept unconditional surrender, fearing they would be forced to abolish the role of the Emperor. Japan unofficially refused the Potsdam Declaration, and President Truman issued the order to deploy the atomic bomb shortly thereafter.

On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The force of this bomb was greater than just about anyone anticipated, including the scientists that created it. The city was flattened, approximately 130,000 people were killed and over 220,000 more were injured. The sheer devastation left Japan reeling. Scrambling to aid their civilians, the Japanese government failed to send a surrender call to the United States. Therefore, three days after the Hiroshima attack, a second bomb was dropped, this time on Nagasaki, resulting in 70,000 deaths and another 200,000 injuries. Following the second bomb, the Japanese government quickly submitted to surrender negotiations. After it was settled that Japan might keep their emperor, they agreed to officially surrender. The surrender ceremonies made the forfeit official on September 2, 1945.

It was widely publicized that Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb was to prevent excessive loss of American lives in the event of an invasion. But there were additional factors that likely had at least a small influence on President Truman's final decision. Preventing Russia from exerting significant influence over Japan was probably relevant to Truman, as was retribution for Pearl Harbor and generally displaying American technological superiority.

Despite the fact that both Presidents Roosevelt and Truman anticipated and planned for Soviet involvement in the war in the Pacific, Russian interference in a weak and war-torn Japan was very far from ideal for the United States. Soviet assistance would have most likely eased the burden on the United States army, and made an invasion much easier, but the threat of the expansion of communism into

war-torn Japan was very nerve-wracking. It was probable that Truman utilized the bomb with strategic timing to prevent the Soviet Union from becoming too involved with vulnerable Japan.

Additionally, the sheer brutality of the fighting with Japan, and the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, may have influenced Truman. Faced with a savage army that committed atrocities against not only American civilians, but civilians of other nations as well, Truman may have found it much easier to condemn the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The loss of life for the ruthless Japanese over the loss of American life was a fairly clear choice.

Historians may never know exactly why Truman made the choice he made. They may speculate about the invasion casualty rates or ulterior motives, but only President Truman will truly know why he chose to use the atomic bomb. Regardless of why it was utilized, the bomb has forever shaped interactions between nations. Truman's decision changed the world as we know it.

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