

CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB: TRUMAN'S TRUE INTENTIONS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

DOMINICK ABEL SEVERANCE

FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 13, 2007

DEDICATED TO ASHLEY,
MY BELOVED FIANCEE

AND

TO MY MOTHER,
WHO SUPPORTED ME

AND

TO SUSIE,
WHO WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR ME AT LUNCH

AND

TO DR. WARREN CARROLL
FOUNDER OF CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE, MY *ALMA MATER*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: THE EMPEROR, THE JAPANESE SITUATION, AND PEACE FEELERS: WHAT TRUMAN KNEW ABOUT JAPAN BEFORE HE DECIDED TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB.	4
WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR AND JAPANESE SHINTOISM.	5
JAPAN’S INDUSTRIAL, SOCIAL, AND MILITARY SITUATION BEFORE THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB.	10
DIPLOMACY, OPERATION “MAGIC”, AND THE JAPANESE DESIRE FOR PEACE.	21
CHAPTER 2: TRUMAN’S MILITARY, SCIENTIFIC, AND POLITICAL LEADERS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES: WHAT TRUMAN WAS ADVISED TO DO CONCERNING JAPAN AND THE ATOMIC BOMB.	31
VIEWS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN’S MILITARY ADVISORS	32
VIEWS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN’S SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS.	49
VIEWS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN’S POLITICAL ADVISORS.	54
VIEWS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN’S ADVISORY COMMITTEES.	62
CHAPTER 3: TRUMAN’S TRUE INTENTIONS FOR THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB	67
CONCLUSION.	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	78

INTRODUCTION

Writing in his journal on July 25, 1945, President Truman described with utter clarity his views on the destructive nature of the atomic bomb: “We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire of destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley era, after Noah and his fabulous ark.”¹ Yet, despite his characterization of the bomb as the fire that would destroy the world, Truman goes on to state: “This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10. . . . It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful.”² How could a Christian man justify using what seemed to be the very power of God against enemy cities with the intent to kill over 100,000 innocent civilians with the power from one atomic bomb?

Truman’s argument for the use of atomic weapons against Japan focused on the fact that the targets were strictly military and no innocent civilians would be harmed: “I have told the secretary of war, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers are the target and not women and children.”³ Truman further argues that the U.S., on account of its reputation as a leader of the civilized world, would never bomb a civilian city: “Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.”⁴ Moreover, Truman stated that the U.S. had no moral reprehensibility for using atomic weapons against Japan because the Japanese had already received sufficient warning concerning what would happen if the Japanese government refused to surrender: “We will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives.

¹Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955), 75.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance.”⁵ Yet ultimately, Truman’s ideals failed to affect the reality of his actions in dropping the bomb.

Was the bomb even necessary to secure peace with Japan? Could President Truman have attained peace without spilling the blood of thousands of innocents? The answer to both questions is an overwhelming yes. Firstly, Truman knew that the Japanese were virtually defeated in their social, industrial, and military spheres. Secondly, he further knew that factions within the Japanese government had Imperial sanction to sue for peace if the Allies ensured the safety of the Emperor and the institution of the Imperial Throne. Moreover, on account of the hopelessness of the Japanese situation and Japan’s willingness to sue for peace, nearly every one of Truman’s military advisors agreed that the atomic bomb was unnecessary to induce the Japanese to surrender. Truman’s political advisors also counseled the president to clarify the term “unconditional surrender” to allow the Japanese to retain their Emperor and choose their own form of government after the war. Yet, despite Japan’s willingness to surrender and his own advisors counsel to secure peace as soon as possible through clarification of the term unconditional surrender, President Truman never pursued peace with Japan prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb. The question remains: if President Truman was so intent on saving American lives and ending the war with Japan, why did he not pursue peace with the Japanese prior to the bombs?

It seems in looking at history that President Truman deliberately prolonged the war in order to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. Furthermore, Truman ordered the bomb dropped without warning and directly on top of the city center, not on top of the military base on the outskirts of the city. President Truman justified his reason to drop the bomb by stating that Hiroshima was a

⁵Ibid.

strictly military target and Japan had been given sufficient warning. But since the bombs were not militarily necessary to secure peace with Japan, Truman had no reason to drop the bomb.

In order to determine what President Truman's true intentions were for ordering the use of atomic bombs against Japan, it is necessary to look at three different areas: (chapter 1) what Truman knew about the Japanese social, cultural, military, industrial, and political situation prior to the dropping of the bomb; (chapter 2) what Truman's various advisors counseled him concerning Japan and the bomb in light of the Japanese situation; and finally, (chapter 3) what possible reasons Truman might have had for dropping the bomb on a Japanese city rather than pursuing peace with the Japanese prior to using the bomb. In the end, one can only conclude that President Truman's primary intention for dropping the bomb was not securing a Japanese surrender and ending the war quickly. Rather, Truman's true intention was to use the destruction of a Japanese city to shock the world and manipulate the horror, the novelty, and destructive power of the bomb to create fear and produce political leverage in the international community to ensure the security of American political interests.

CHAPTER 1

THE EMPEROR, THE JAPANESE SITUATION, AND PEACE FEELERS: WHAT TRUMAN KNEW ABOUT JAPAN BEFORE HE DECIDED TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB

U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson was an astute intellectual who had studied the politics and growing Japanese militarism in the Orient with fervor. He was a former Governor-General of the Philippines and had visited the Japanese mainland twice in his tenure.⁶ Before he became President Truman's Secretary of War in 1945 he had been President Howard Taft's and President Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of War, President Calvin Coolidge's special emissary in Nicaragua, and President Herbert Hoover's Secretary of State. With such a long political tenure, especially in matters of war and foreign affairs, by 1945 Henry Stimson was one of the most influential and knowledgeable members of President Truman's cabinet.

During WWII, Henry Stimson had at his disposal four areas of intelligence on various aspects of Japan's situation during the war: Operation "Magic;"⁷ spies in the Thai embassy in Tokyo;⁸ Allied generals and admirals; and his own personal experience. These four sources of

⁶While acting as chairman of the Interim Committee, Secretary of War Henry Stimson made a personal request that the Japanese city of Kyoto be removed from the list of possible atomic bombing targets. Stimson knew the Japanese regarded Kyoto as the cultural and religious center of their empire. Having visited the city personally, Stimson understood the cultural and spiritual importance of the city to the Japanese. He felt he could not let the indiscriminate destruction of the atomic bomb destroy the beautiful city and thousands of years of Japanese history. (*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 425)

⁷Operation "Magic" was a massive U.S. military effort to decrypt Japanese radio transmissions sent throughout the Pacific theater. By the end of the war, millions of transmissions had been decrypted and were a tremendous aid for the U.S. war effort. U.S. submarines could intercept scheduled Japanese shipping more effectively by learning Japanese trade routes and generals could know how many food rations the enemy had in store before he invaded. But besides just military uses, the decrypted transmissions also followed the peace movement within the Japanese government and the efforts of the Japanese prime minister and Emperor at facilitating peace with the Allied nations through Russia.

⁸From the end of 1944 on, both the Office of Strategic Services and Special Operations Executive cooperated actively with the Thais to train and supply guerrilla forces for future operations and to provide intelligence for the Allies. Such intelligence proved extremely valuable. Not only did it include information on Japanese activities in Southeast Asia but also through their embassy in Tokyo the Thais garnered information on political and economic conditions in Japan as well as reports on the effectiveness of American air raids. (John B.

intelligence would have provided Stimson and President Truman with a comprehensive understanding of three particular aspects of the Japanese empire worthy of note: first, the Japanese people worshipped their Emperor as a divine and incarnate god whose Imperial Will was absolute;⁹ secondly, Truman knew the Japanese were on the verge of industrial, social, and military defeat; and thirdly, the Emperor and high-level factions within the Japanese government were actively seeking peace prior the dropping of the atomic bomb given certain concessions already granted under the Atlantic Charter.

1: Worship of the Emperor and Japanese Shintoism

With the institution of Japanese Shintoism as the national religion of Japan, Japanese citizens and scholars delved deeply into the intricacies and tenets of the faith trying to explain the main tenets of Japanese Shintoism; the divinity of the Emperor and the role of each Japanese citizen in service of the Imperial Throne. As early as 1919, Henry Stimson would have had full knowledge of the intricate relationship of the Japanese Emperor to his people. By his decision to drop the atomic bomb in 1945, President Truman had as comprehensive an understanding of Japanese culture and knew that the key to peace with Japan prior to the atomic bomb depended upon the status of the Emperor after the war: if the Allies threatened to harm the Emperor every Japanese citizen was willing to give up his life in defense of the Imperial Throne, but if the Allies ensured the safety of their Divine Ruler, the reason behind Japanese fanaticism and the

Haseman, *The Thai Resistance Movement During the Second World War*. (De Kalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 91.)

⁹The Japanese believed their Emperor to be a divine, incarnate deity and descendent of the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami. Respectfully, they capitalize the title “Emperor,” the institution of the “Throne,” and the “Imperial Will.” For the sake of continuity and to stress the augustness with which the Japanese honored their Imperial Lord, these words will remain capitalized for the remainder of this thesis.

continued Japanese war effort would be removed and the Japanese government would be willing to sue for peace.

It is important to understand the role of the Emperor in Japanese Shintoism in order to understand why the Japanese people would continue to fight and die on his behalf. To the Japanese, the Emperor was no mere ruler chosen by the people or a king with absolute power. Rather, the Emperor was a descendent of the honored and esteemed sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, and an incarnate deity himself:

The Emperor is the divine manifestation of Amaterasu Omikami and rules the empire in accordance with her will. Thus, the Emperor and the Imperial Throne, transmitted in an unbroken line, are sacred and inviolable.¹⁰

Moreover, since he was the direct descendent from the very goddess from whom all Japanese claim their heritage, the Emperor was seen as the father and the sole source of life for the Japanese nation:

We say the Emperor is like a father and mother to us, but that is an inadequate comparison. The Emperor is a personage far above and superior to our fathers and mothers. We who exist today were born through the august power of the Emperor. Whoever we are, old or young, we bathe in his glory. Assuming that there were no Emperor, not one of us could by any possibility have been born.¹¹

Consequently, because the Emperor was seen as divine, he was granted a threefold power over the Japanese nation: every Japanese citizen became his subject; the Imperial Will became absolute; and the Imperial Throne became sacrosanct and inviolable.

The notion that the Emperor was a god meant loyalty and self-sacrifice to and for the Emperor became the paramount virtues of Japanese Shintoism:

¹⁰“National Organization and Shinto” (Tokyo, 1919). Translated and cited by Daniel Clarence Holtom, *The Political Philosophy of Modern Shinto: A Study of the State Religion of Japan*. (New York: AMS Press, 1984), 45.

¹¹Karusuhiko Kakehi, “A Study of the State” (Tokyo, 1938). Cited by Otto D. Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1945), 45.

In our country acts of loyalty to the Emperor as the head of our collective family system partake of a moral nature, so that it is hardly necessary to say that one aspect of loyalty permits of an ethical explanation. . . . Indeed the loyalty of the Japanese has been so conspicuously transformed into faith and religion as to lead foreign scholars to go so far as to say that loyalty constitutes the religion of the Japanese people. The Emperor is an Incarnate Deity and occupies in Japanese faith the position which Jehovah occupied in Judaism. It has also been made clear that the spirit of loyalty which impels our goodly subjects is nothing other than the heat of faith which controlled the chosen Hebrew people. Therefore, for the Japanese standpoint, that attitude of consciousness which stimulates loyalty to the Emperor, regarded as man, when he is regarded as Deity, immediately becomes filled with the content of an enthusiastic religious faith which offers body and spirit as holy sacrifice. Shinto is both an internal and external religion, in that it is a national religion which worships the Emperor as divine.¹²

Linked very closely to the virtue of loyalty, the virtue of self-sacrifice called for the Japanese nation, and each Japanese citizen, to give up everything they might own, even their very lives, if it could fulfill the Imperial Will:

Shinto has culminated in Mikadoism or the worship of the Mikado or Japanese Emperor as divinity during his lifetime as well as after his death. . . . Japanese patriotism or loyalty is. . . the lofty self-denying, enthusiastic sentiment of the Japanese people toward their august ruler, believed to be something divine, rendering them capable of offering up anything and everything all dearest to them willingly, that is, of their own free will, of sacrificing not only their wealth and property, but their own life itself, for the sake of their divinely gracious sovereign.¹³

Loyalty called for absolute devotion to the Emperor. Self-sacrifice called for the individual to be willing to give up his life for the will of the Emperor. Taken together these two virtues spurred an unconditioned disdain for surrender and fanaticism in battle to fulfill the Imperial Will and bring glory to the Imperial Throne.

In 1937, Takemoto Toyonosuke, a priest of one of the greatest and most religiously significant shrines in all of Japan, the Atago shrine in Kyoto, wrote in *Yomiuri Shimbun*

¹²Genchi Kato, "Our National Organization and Shinto" (Tokyo, 1919). Translated and cited by Daniel Holtom, *The Political Philosophy of Modern Shinto*, 45.

¹³Genchi Kato, "A Study of Shinto" (Tokyo, 1937). Cited by Robert Oleson Ballou, *Shinto, the Unconquered Enemy; Japan's Doctrine of Racial Superiority and World Conquest* (New York: Viking Press, 1945), 188.

describing the particular rewards each servant of the Emperor gained by fulfilling the Imperial Will:

Since the Emperor is considered divine, by serving and worshiping the Emperor, the individual enters into an existence that is deathless and eternal, one that flourishes more and more for ever. . . . The individual existence gains inner serenity and life is given meaning. . . . What is here meant by imparting meaning to life is not to be judged by the standard of personal gain, but rather it means participation as subjects in the support of Imperial Rule. . . . It means a fervent pushing on to spread the Imperial rule and to extend the Imperial glory.¹⁴

Working to extend Imperial Rule was the highest calling. Dying for the Emperor was the greatest honor a Japanese citizen could ever hope to attain. Should the Emperor's life ever be threatened, in accord with Japanese Shintoism, the entire Japanese nation was ready to defend his Throne and die in his name.

With the coming of the Great Depression in the Japanese economy in the late 1920's, an aggressive, nationalistic, and expansionistic military element gained control of the government. The "peace party"¹⁵ was slowly weeded out, assassinated, or intimidated into submission.¹⁶ The Emperor was made the "nominal" head of the government. General Douglas MacArthur's

¹⁴Takemoto Toyonosuke, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Tokyo: 1937). Cited by Daniel Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1938), 45.

¹⁵The Japanese military was not a monolithic centralized organization. Thousands of factions existed within the framework of the military. Organizations such as the Imperial Military Reserve Association, the Youth Association, and the National Defense Woman's Association had representatives and chapters in every rural community; the National Defense Woman's Association alone had over 4,000 branches. (Richard J. Smethurst, *A Social Basis for Pre-war Japanese Militarism: The Army and the Rural Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 23.)

¹⁶From 1931 to 1936 a militaristic, patriotic sentiment grew tremendously in Japan, climaxing in February 1936 when officers stationed in Tokyo staged a revolt against the government and rival factions of the army: the finance minister, the inspector-general, and former Prime Minister Admiral Saito Makoto were assassinated, government buildings occupied, and homes of high-level Japanese officials like the lord privy seal and even the inspector general of military training were broken into. The Army used the fear created by the assassinations and the attempted coup to secure its powerful hold on the government and create a policy of strong arming officials who might dare challenge the now newly established status quo of an aggressive, expansionistic military element running the Japanese government. Officers associated with a conservative mindset that expressed ideas in contrast to absolute military control were purged from the army through retirement or transferred to unimportant posts. By 1940, the aggressive military element had an iron-clad grip on the government. (Ronald H. Specter, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 37.)

Southwest Pacific Command prepared a restricted background study into the nature of the Japanese government:

In spite of heavy inroads on their shipping and major military reserves in the Central and Southwest Pacific, today [1 July 1944] the Emperor, the military gangsters, the armed forces and the entire population are united as one, determined to fight until final victory or death. . . . They know their war has a divine mission because it has Imperial Sanction. This is sufficient to give Tojo absolute control, to lead the soldier to fanatical battlefield performance, the people to extreme fortitude, all to self-destruction if necessary.¹⁷

Essentially, the study concluded that the Japanese government had used the Emperor's absolute power over the people and his nominal role as "head" of the government to centralize power in the national government. The Emperor was unable to prevent this usurpation of his power on account of tradition, which dictated that the Imperial Throne should refrain from interfering with politics, because it was profane and unworthy of Imperial attention.¹⁸ Thus, the Emperor gave his Imperial Sanction for each government policy set before him without having direct influence over the national government.

The relationship between the Emperor and the government created a "circle of power" wherein the Emperor empowered the government although he enjoyed no political power himself. The Emperor's power, however, resided in the absolute obedience which his subjects, i.e. every Japanese citizen, gave to him. This absolute obedience did give the Emperor some power over the government: if the Emperor were to break tradition and disagree with the

¹⁷"Answer to Japan" Booklet, 20-21, Box 2, Dr. Edward P. Lilly Papers, Joint Chiefs of Staff Historical Section, Record Group 218, National Archives.

¹⁸In their relation to Japan's political structure [*Kokutai*]. . . the armed forces were unique. By tradition and—after 1936—by law, the ministers of the army and navy were chosen from among their respective senior officers on active duty. Both the army and the navy, by refusing to name a minister, could prevent the formation of a cabinet of which they disapproved; by withdrawing their minister, they could force dissolution of an existing government. In addition to these very considerable powers, the military also claimed "the right of supreme command," according to which the chiefs of the Army and Navy General Staffs were independent of the government and directly responsible to the Emperor in matters vital to the national defense. As a corollary, the service chiefs had direct access to the Emperor on military or strategic matters. Tradition held that the Emperor did not directly interfere or advise the government—he merely gave assent to what they had already decreed. (*A Social Basis for Pre-War Japanese Militarism*, 164.)

government, the Japanese people were bound by Japanese Shintoism to obey the Emperor rather than the national government. Moreover, if the government tried to enforce its policies and resolutions without Imperial Sanction, the Japanese populace was bound to destroy all those who fought against the Emperor in defense of the Imperial Throne.

Could the Emperor have convinced the militaristic government to surrender before the dropping of the atomic bomb? Three considerations must be made. First, as noted earlier, although the government was militaristic, peace factions still existed both within the government and among the Japanese people.¹⁹ Secondly, the military fought on behalf of the Imperial Will. If the Imperial Will endorsed and authorized a Japanese surrender, the militaristic elements of the government would have instantaneously lost all authority to continue forcing the Japanese people to war. Thirdly, if the Allies had proffered peace terms which ensured the safety of the Emperor after the war, since the military also fought on behalf of the safety of the Throne, the military would have lost all reason to continue fighting to the death. Summarily, with the Imperial Throne and a faction within the government supporting peace, in accord with Japanese Shintoism, the Japanese people would support their Emperor in surrendering rather than the military's desire for a fight to the death.

2: Japan's Industrial, Social, and Military Situation before the Dropping of the Atomic Bomb

Industrially Japan was on the verge of collapse. Since August 1, 1941, the US, Britain, and the Netherlands East Indies had embargoed all oil, steel, and other necessary staples for war

¹⁹When the Emperor sued for peace after the bombing of Nagasaki, the militaristic element of the government tried to stage a *coup d'etat*. The coup failed due to loyal followers and soldiers who prevented the rebel forces from harming the Emperor. (Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 605.)

to Japan.²⁰ By September 1943,²¹ American submarines had become incredibly effective at destroying Japanese shipping:²²

By 1944, American submarines sank more than 600 Japanese ships for a total of 2.7 million tons—or half a million more tons than the previous three years combined. About half of Japan’s merchant fleet, including replacements, and about two thirds of her tanker fleet had been destroyed by the end of 1944. The flow of oil from the East Indies was almost completely cut and general bulk imports fell by close to 40%.²³

To further devastate Japanese industries, after the destruction of the Japanese navy at the battle of Leyte Gulf,²⁴ the American Surface Fleet blockaded all the homeland islands of Japan.²⁵ And beginning with the aerial bombing of Tokyo on March 9, 1945, American bombers firebombed 60 Japanese cities, destroying thousands of buildings and factories, rendering millions of Japanese civilians homeless, and killing over 900,000 men, women, and children.²⁶

²⁰Since 90% of Japan’s oil came from imports, roughly 80% of which came from the Americans, this presented a serious issue for Japan’s wartime economy. The Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies, Korea, Manchuria, and the Philippines helped to off-set the effects of the embargo, but after the battle of the Philippines when the Americans were able to wrest the resource rich islands back from Japan, the Japanese industrial situation was once again in danger of collapse. (John Costello, *The Pacific War* (New York: Rawson, Wade, 1981), 168.)

²¹*Eagle against the Sun*, 485.

²²A defective exploder often jammed when it rammed into something. Nimitz’s ordnance experts at Pearl Harbor replaced the exploder with a new, stronger, lighter, metal firing pin devised. (Clay Blair, *Silent Victory The U.S. Submarine War against Japan* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975), 410-11.)

²³*Silent Victory*, 792.

²⁴The punishing defeat at Leyte Gulf all but wiped out the Imperial Navy. The sinking of four carriers, six cruisers, and twelve of its destroyers, as well as the loss of many hundreds of planes, had reduced its handful of surviving warships to an impotent rump of a fleet that could neither protect itself from air attack nor effectively guard the sea approaches to Japan. (*The Pacific War*, 502-518.)

²⁵So effective was the blockade that the warships that survived the Leyte Gulf battles had to stay in their home ports because tankers could not get oil to Japan. If the warships did venture out, they faced a high risk of destruction from lurking U.S. Navy submarines. (*The Pacific War*, 528) An April 25, 1945 intelligence report noted: “A Tokyo broadcast on 17 February, in which the Japanese forces in China and other overseas garrisons were warned that they might have to operate without help from the homeland.” (G-2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation with Respect to an Operation against Southern Kyushu in November 1945, April 25, 1945, p. 10, “OLYMPIC,” Box 1842, Entry 418, Record Group 165, National Archives.)

²⁶The reason for the firebombing tactic was due to the large amount of cloud cover over many of the Japanese cities, which prevented high altitude precision bombing. Unable to find or locate their targets and finding conventional bombing ineffective, the Air Force utilized the fact that a majority of the buildings in a Japanese city

Socially, without the support of her native industries and regular shipping, Japan faced overwhelming starvation and lack of basic staples for life by August 1945. On April 18, 1945, the Joint Intelligence Committee for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff put forward the following report concerning Japan's devastated industries and their impact on the social situation in the Japanese empire:

With respect to essential raw materials for her war industries, Japan is even more dependent than Great Britain upon imports from overseas. . . . Due to the shortage of ocean shipping, Japan's main rail lines are already overburdened, while motor transport is totally inadequate. . . . The continued heavy destruction of machinery and equipment will make it impossible for Japan to replace losses with her existing or potential machine tool and heavy equipment industry.

Under these circumstances the Japanese "will" to continue the war may be expected to weaken progressively. Entirely apart from the physical results obtained by air-sea blockade combined with strategic bombing, the psychological effects upon the Japanese people as a whole will be most detrimental and will progressively undermine their confidence in victory or even confidence in the hope of avoiding complete and inevitable defeat.²⁷

On the first week of July 1945, the Japanese government established a 10% cut in staple rations.²⁸ Radio broadcasts were made instructing the population on how best to cook and serve grass for consumption.²⁹ The Japanese Board of Technology stated it would be processing 150 million acorns as a substitute for rice.³⁰ The board also announced that new plans were being

were wood and began a policy of using incendiaries and area bombing. This way, even if American bombers missed their targets, they would still accomplish their mission by destroying the workers, the homes of the workers, and, if the fire eventually reached the target, the target itself. (*The Pacific War*, 510)

²⁷Joint Intelligence Committee 266/I, "Defeat of Japan by Blockade and Bombardment," April 18, 1945, "ABC 386 Japan (15 Feb. 45) Sec I-a," Box 504, Entry 421, Record Group 165, National Archives.

²⁸Raymond Swing broadcast, July 3, 1945, Box 27, Swing Papers, LC.

²⁹Food was strictly regulated by a points system, and the fabric used to make what new clothes were available was so poor that people preferred to wear dirty garments rather than risk [the clothes] disintegration in the wash. Food was becoming scarcer as heavy shipping losses cut into imports. Priority in rice rations was given to the 3 million soldiers being posted back to defend the home islands who received a scant 400 grams a day while civilians had to make do with 300. . . . Sugar and soap had all but disappeared and to save rubber and leather, people had taken to wearing the traditional clogs. (*The Pacific War*, 528)

made to manufacture starch from potato vine and other plants. As the war continued, and more shipping and industries were destroyed, Japan faced inevitable defeat through widespread industrial, and subsequent social, starvation.

Having received daily “Magic” summaries³¹ of the Japanese industrial and social status throughout the war, by August 1945 President Truman knew the Japanese situation was militarily hopeless prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Truman knew that without the support of her industries and shipping, Japan’s navy could not replace capital ships lost in the major naval battles of the Pacific.³² Truman also knew that Japanese replacement pilots were so poorly trained they were simply no match for the more experienced American fighters in the air. And finally, Truman knew that without air and naval support the Japanese army could do little more than hole itself up in defensive positions and wait for an enemy advance.

With the surrender of Germany in early May 1945, Allied forces and supplies were freed up for use in the Pacific theater: the USSR began transporting troops to the Manchurian border;³³ Britain sent her submarines to join the American’s subs patrolling the Pacific;³⁴ and American

³⁰Radio Tokyo went “all out” in praise of acorns—and declared that a campaign to popularize the idea of eating acorns would follow. (*The New York Times*, July 23, 1945, 4.)

³¹Daily “Magic” summaries were compilations of all the newly acquired information on the Japanese situation available to the military at the time. Any new information the military learned about the Japanese war effort was compiled into a single daily “Magic” summary and given to the president.

³²Capitol ships are warships of the first rank in size and armament. The term would have included such large vessels as aircraft carriers and battleships. (Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003)

³³The Russian troops were mobilized and prepared to invade China, but waited to do so until three months after the fall of Germany honoring the agreement Josef Stalin had made at the Yalta conference. (*The Pacific War*, 230)

³⁴It wasn’t until November of 1944 that the Royal Navy submarines were able to join up with the Americans. (*The Pacific War*, 528)

warships and troops began the final attacks on the last islands of Japan's defense perimeter. Gar Alperovitz, author of *The Decision to the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, aptly summarizes the Japanese situation by August 1945:

The scales of war had been tipped so steeply against the Japanese that no counterweights at their disposal could possibly have balanced them. Germany, which for the Japanese had been a seemingly invincible first line of defense and which had also served to keep Russia sufficiently busy in the west to keep out of the Pacific, was facing inevitable destruction; the defense perimeter that the Japanese had created far out beyond their island base had been cracked and deeply penetrated; worst of all, Japan's military potential was dropping rapidly with her industrial capacity, as American submarines and planes cut the last of her economic lifelines to the outside world and great aerial armadas began the methodical destruction of her cities.³⁵

But even with overwhelming industrial, naval, and air superiority, American forces in battles like Okinawa continued to suffer thousands of casualties. The Japanese military, in utter desperation, was becoming increasingly fanatical in its attempts to halt the American advance: pilots were ordered to fly their planes into enemy ships, soldiers to fight until death, and citizens to train in combat so they could join the military's effort to repel an American invasion of the homeland. But how effectively could this fanaticism prevent a combined Allied assault without the destruction of the entire Japanese nation and despite lacking air, naval, and industrial support?

Japan's naval losses in the battles of Midway, the Marianas, and Leyte Gulf,³⁶ coupled with the American submarines patrolling the Pacific,³⁷ left her with only three remaining

³⁵*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 35.

³⁶Having lost all its pilots capable of operating from carriers and unable to train more due to lack of time and resources, Japanese carriers were emptied and used as decoys to direct American Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet away from the Leyte beaches. (*Eagle against the Sun*, 429) (*The Pacific War*, 508)

³⁷The US submarine offensive against Japan was one of the decisive elements in ensuring the empire's defeat. A force comprising less than 2% of US Navy Personnel had accounted for 55% of Japan's losses at sea. US submarines sank over 1,300 Japanese ships including a battleship, eight aircraft carriers, and eleven cruisers in the course of the war. (*Eagle Against the Sun*, 487) (*Silent Victory*, 851-852)

battleships in her entire surface fleet³⁸ by the battle of Okinawa.³⁹ With the sinking of the *Yamato*,⁴⁰ the Japanese navy's surface fleet ceased to exist. Furthermore, without the industrial capacity to replace lost capital ships, the Japanese navy had to resort to employing shinyu,⁴¹ small boats loaded with explosives and launched from land, to combat enemy warships at Okinawa and the Japanese homeland. Ironically, even though the Japanese employed hundreds of shinyu in the battle of Okinawa, not a single shinyu succeeded in damaging an American vessel.⁴²

The Japanese air force suffered a similar fate of destruction as the navy. Due to air battles like Formosa, the Japanese air force lost so many of its experienced pilots that training for replacement pilots had to be reduced from 800 hours to 200 hours just to fill the basic quota of

³⁸Inoguchi Rikihei, Tadashi Nakajima, and Roger Pineau, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), 162.

³⁹The battle of Okinawa was an incredibly important battle in the war against Japan. Since Okinawa was situated less than 300 miles from the Japanese mainland, the island was considered part of Japanese soil and was therefore fiercely defended. The Japanese fought with almost fanatical ferocity; the Japanese army of 100,000 fought to the death and the air force and navy introduced massive kamikaze waves in an effort to prevent the American forces from capturing the island. Although a major military victory for the Americans for a variety of reasons, 30,000 American service men died conquering the island and many ships were damaged. Terrified that one battle could claim so many American lives, American political opinion concerning the Pacific began turning to despair: if a battle for a 60 square mile island with 100,000 Japanese troops cost 30,000 American lives, how many lives would be lost conquering the Japanese mainland? This particular question would haunt the American war effort and served as the basis for Truman's reasoning that by using the atomic bombs to force a Japanese surrender he had consequently saved over a million American servicemen's lives which would have been lost in the impending invasion of the Japanese homeland.

⁴⁰For the battle of Okinawa, the Japanese navy mustered the remainder of her naval strength led by the super-battleship *Yamato*. The operation called for the newly created "Second Fleet" to beach itself in front of the enemy forces and fire every gun of every ship until the last shell had been expended or the last ship destroyed. From the very inception of the plan, there was no thought that any of these ships would return. It was truly a kamikaze mission. (*Divine Wind*, 163) Because the fleet lacked air support, American aircraft sank the entire Japanese fleet before it even reached the island. (*The Pacific War*, 559)

⁴¹The operators of the shinyu were ordered to ram enemy boats, killing the operator. The shinyu were therefore a derivative of the kamikaze tactic used by the Japanese air force. (*The Divine Wind*, 53)

⁴²*The Divine Wind*, 49.

pilots needed in the war.⁴³ The new, insufficiently trained Japanese pilots were no match for the more experienced American carrier pilots:

The Japanese Navy's First Air Fleet had already been decimated three times by American carrier planes since the battle for Saipan, which the American's referred to as 'the Marianas Turkey Shoot' due to the 424 Japanese aircraft shot down compared to the 126 American planes shot down.⁴⁴

After Marianas, rather than risk having Japanese pilots shot down in aerial combat, the Japanese air force resorted to "kamikaze tactics," i.e. ordering pilots to fly their planes loaded with bombs into enemy ships. Unlike the Japanese navy's *shinyus*, however, the Japanese air force's kamikaze corps was remarkably effective at Okinawa, killing more American soldiers and sailors at sea than the army did on land.⁴⁵ Realizing that Japanese kamikaze pilots were the most effective tool the Japanese had to combat the American military juggernaut, after the battle of Okinawa, Japan focused all remaining industrial strength upon aircraft production and grounded the remaining air fleet in order to save fuel, pilots, and planes for kamikaze attacks.

But how effective was the air force's kamikaze corps at halting the American advance at Okinawa? Roughly 930 Japanese planes were expended sinking 17 ships and damaging 99 others. Yet, out of all the American ships lost, not single capital ship was sunk and only five

⁴³Without a steady supply of oil and planes being reserved for homeland defense, training was later reduced to watching films and flying antiquated bi-planes. (*The Divine Wind*, 20.) The Japanese Board of Technology stated that it was researching how to use pine root oil as an experimental airplane fuel and that it had created a "wooden aircraft production department" in the Japanese Munitions Ministry. (*The New York Times*, July 23, 1945, 4.)

⁴⁴Although Japanese losses in land-based aircraft and pilots were rapidly replaced, losses among Admiral Ozawa's remaining carrier air crews, who had been unwisely flung into the battle off Formosa, could not. (*The Divine Wind*, 17)

⁴⁵The tactic used by the pilots was to load their planes with 500 pound bombs and fly their planes directly into enemy vessels. Ideally, a couple hundred Japanese planes could sink a majority of the American ships and carriers. By the battle of Okinawa, the entire Japanese air force was divided into kamikaze corps of hundreds of planes flying in formation against the enemy. (*The Pacific War*, 302)

transport ships were damaged.⁴⁶ American Vice-Admiral Charles Brown summarized beautifully the effectiveness and ultimate tragedy of the kamikaze tactic:

Any way one looks at the Kamikaze Corps, there is stark tragedy. For whatever the private motivations or official explanations for the Kamikaze, and however fascinating they may be, the key question for the pragmatic military man must be—was it a successful tactic?

My answer is an unqualified no. True, the Special Attack Force—the Kamikaze—did tremendous damage. It sank a lot of ships and damaged a multitude of others. It killed and wounded thousands of men—inflicted more casualties in the U.S. fleets off Okinawa than the Japanese Army did to the invading troops in the long battle ashore. . . . But by that time [Okinawa] Japan was already hopelessly worsted, and even in its flaming sacrifice the Kamikaze Corps sank no U.S. warship of cruiser size or larger. That, in a way, is the real tragedy of the Kamikaze, as far as its pilots were concerned—that this extraordinary tactic was not conceived until it was already too late for even the most desperate measures to stay the inevitable defeat of Japan.⁴⁷

Though the massive waves of kamikaze planes were effective at damaging ships, if the Japanese pilots could not penetrate the American naval, defensive perimeter around Okinawa to attack capital ships and transports, their efforts were ultimately futile.⁴⁸

Of all Japan's military branches, the Japanese army caused the American forces the greatest consternation in the war. While the Japanese air force attacked American ships at the battle of Okinawa with the kamikaze corps, Japanese troops were holed up in defensive positions on the island and, when the American landing forces came onshore,⁴⁹ fought with a fanaticism⁵⁰

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷*The Divine Wind*, VII.

⁴⁸*The Divine Wind*, 211, 233, 234.

⁴⁹The Japanese situation was so bad that on September 17, 1945 Lt. General George C. Kenney, Commander of Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific, telegraphed General "Hap" Arnold, Commander of the Army Air Forces: "The situation is developing rapidly and there are trends which indicate that the Jap is not going to last much longer. His sea power is so badly depleted that it is no match for any one of several task forces we could put into action. His air power is in a bad way. He has a lot of airplanes—probably more than he had a year ago—but he has lost his elements, flight, squadron and group leaders and his hastily trained replacements haven't the skill or ability or combat knowledge to compete with us. . . . Without the support of his sea power and air power, his land forces cannot do anything except hold out in isolated beleaguered spots all over the map until bombs, bullets,

that struck fear in the hearts of Americans everywhere; out of the 100,000 Japanese soldiers on the island, less than 300 surrendered.⁵¹ But it was the knowledge that roughly 25 million Japanese people were prepared to complement the roughly two million Japanese soldiers in defense of the homeland that really made Okinawa a cause for fear. If the Japanese soldiers were willing to fight to the last man on Okinawa, the entire Japanese nation was prepared to die fighting for their Emperor on the Japanese homeland:

The Japanese people were not “citizens,” but subjects bound to the Emperor’s will. It was in the Emperor’s name that the great “holy war” against the allied nations was waged. Until now the sovereign’s words had been handed down in the form of Imperial rescripts—as printed texts, pronouncements humbly read by others. The line from the Imperial Rescript on Education was daily recited by all Japanese during their school years: ‘Should any emergency arise offer yourselves courageously to the State.’⁵²

School girls created fire lanes in Japanese cities to more effectively contain American firebombing.⁵³ Citizens were organized into companies and trained in defense with bamboo spears and sticks.⁵⁴ These, the Japanese Imperial Headquarters promised, would be replaced

disease, or starvation killed them off.” (Lt. General George C. Kenney to General Arnold, September 17, 1944, “McCormack Papers,” Part 2, SRH-141, Record Group 457, National Archives.)

⁵⁰When faced with a lack of proper anti-tank weaponry, Japanese soldiers joined the kamikaze corps by strapping satchel charges to their chests trying to running underneath American tanks. (*The Divine Wind*, 50.)

⁵¹Veteran war correspondent Robert Sherrod noted that less than 5% of the Japanese fighting forces had ever surrendered during any one battle, but that figure was actually closer to 1%. (Robert Lee Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), 24.)

⁵²*The Divine Wind*, 578.

⁵³The extent of the U.S.’s first firebombing was tremendous. On March 9 and 10, 1945, 16 square miles of Tokyo burned, at least 84,000 killed, and roughly 120,000 injured. (*The Pacific War*, 527)

⁵⁴To enable the civilian population to meet the danger of assault by the American forces now just over 300 miles from their sacred shore [Okinawa], the government propaganda machine was hard at work inculcating the military spirit. Children were drilled with bamboo staves, factory workers practiced lunging with bamboo spears, and farmers were taught how to turn their implements into spears. Teenage girls were to be armed with carpenters’ awls and shown how to use them as lethal weapons. (*The Pacific War*, 566)

with guns and grenades when the time came.⁵⁵ In a series of 1950's interviews with John P. Sutherland of *U.S. News and World Report*, U.S. General of the Army George C. Marshall summarized the feelings of the American military and people after Okinawa:

We had to assume that a force of 2.5 million Japanese would fight to the death, fight as they did on all those islands we attacked. We figured that in their homeland they would fight even harder. We felt this despite what generals in cigars had to say about bombing the Japanese into submission.⁵⁶

As a nation, Japan was prepared to die before she was willing to surrender and thereby allow any harm to befall her Divine Emperor.⁵⁷

Interestingly, while the radical Japanese effort to push back the American attack on Okinawa ultimately failed, the fanaticism with which the Japanese military fought did succeed in bringing fear and consternation into the hearts of the American forces: if 30,000 Americans died subjugating Okinawa, how many lives would America lose invading the home island of Japan? The Japanese military had roughly two to three million servicemen and over 25 million citizens to defend the Japanese homeland.⁵⁸ The American forces feared that an invasion of Japan would consist of dozens of battles like that on Okinawa and inflict hundreds of thousands of American casualties. However, even if the Allied forces did invade and conquer Japan, success still remained uncertain. If the Emperor refused to authorize the Allied terms for peace, every soldier

⁵⁵Edwin Palmer Hoyt, *The Kamikazes*. New York: Arbor House, 1983. 262

⁵⁶John P. Sutherland, "The Story General Marshall Told Me," *U.S. News and World Report*, November 2, 1959, 50-56, cited material on 52-53.

⁵⁷To give up one's life for the sake of the Emperor cannot be called self-sacrifice. It is rather discarding one's lesser self to live in the great Imperial virtue, and exalting one's true life as a national subject. (Japanese Department of Education, *The Basic Meaning of the National Policy* (Tokyo: 1939). Cited by Otto D. Tolischus in *Shinto, the Unconquered Enemy*, 192.)

⁵⁸*The Pacific War*, 528

and citizen of Japan would continue fighting even if it meant the death of the entire Japanese nation.

President Truman and U.S. military leaders knew the security of the Emperor was the key to a Japanese surrender, for as long as the Emperor's life remained in danger, the Japanese nation was prepared to fight to the death. On July 18, 1945, Charles H. Donnelly, secretary of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote in his personal diary: "General Marshall cautioned against any move to oust the Emperor because it would lead to a last-ditch defense by the Japanese."⁵⁹ In the summer of 1944, General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Command prepared a restricted background study of the Japanese situation which emphasized:

To dethrone, or hang, the Emperor would cause a tremendous and violent reaction from all Japanese. Hanging of the Emperor to them would be comparable to the crucifixion of Christ to us. All would fight to die like ants. The position of the gangster militarists would be strengthened immeasurably. The war would be unduly prolonged; our losses heavier than otherwise would be necessary.⁶⁰

Summarily, as long as the nation was prepared to fight to the death in defense of the Throne, no form of suffering could be inflicted on the Japanese people which would induce them to surrender, even if that meant the death of everyone within the Japanese nation for the sake of the Imperial Throne.

By August 1945, President Truman knew that the atomic bomb was militarily unnecessary for two reasons. First, quantitatively, Japan was already militarily defeated, her people facing imminent starvation, and her industries utterly devastated. Japan had successfully withstood the firebombing of over 60 of her cities. Yet, due to Japanese virtues of loyalty and

⁵⁹"Autobiography by Charles Howard Donnelly, Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve (Retired)," copyright July 11, 1979, p. 743, Donnelly Papers, United States Military History Institute.

⁶⁰"Answer to Japan" Booklet, 20-21, Box 2, Lilly Papers, Joint Chiefs of Staff Historical Section, Record Group 218, National Archives.

self-sacrifice to and for the Emperor, she was prepared to fight to death on behalf of the Throne. This meant the sheer destructive power of the atomic bomb had no more certainty of forcing the Japanese to surrender than a potential invasion and conquest of Japan. Secondly, and more importantly, the Emperor and factions within the Japanese government were already seeking peace prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb as long as they could ensure the safety of the institution of the Throne after the war. Had President Truman only clarified the term “unconditional surrender”⁶¹ to allow the Emperor to remain on the Throne unmolested, Truman could have worked with the peace factions within the Japanese government to reach a common peace accord prior to August 1945 which would have mitigated the need for atomic weapons.

3: Diplomacy, Operation “Magic,” and the Japanese Desire for Peace

As early as May, 1945, President Truman knew that Japanese citizens had made unofficial “peace feelers” in the mutually neutral nations of Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, and the Vatican. As early as August 11, 1944, Truman knew that high-level officials within the Japanese government were seeking a facilitated peace with the Allies through the USSR, and he

⁶¹The term unconditional surrender is important because it had different meanings depending on how the president decided to define the term for the nation surrendering. On February 12, 1943, in an address to White House press correspondents, President Franklin Roosevelt defined “unconditional surrender,” as a term which meant more for enemy leaders than for the people themselves: “The only terms on which we shall deal... are the terms proclaimed at Casablanca: unconditional surrender. In our uncompromising policy we mean no harm to the common people of the Axis nations. But we do mean to impose punishment and retribution in full upon their guilty, barbaric leaders.” (Cordell Hull, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II (New York, 1948), 1570-71.) President Truman made some clarifications to the term “unconditional surrender” on May 8, 1944 after Germany’s surrender: “Our blows will not cease until the Japanese military and naval forces lay down their arms in unconditional surrender. Just what does the unconditional surrender of the armed forces mean for the Japanese people? It means the end of the war. It means the termination of the influence of the military leaders who have brought Japan to the brink of disaster. . . . Unconditional surrender does not mean the extermination or enslavement of the Japanese people.” (Statement by the President, May 8, 1945, Confidential Files, White House Central Files, HSTL; also in “ABC 387 Japan (15 Feb. 45),” Box 505, Entry 421, Record Group 165, National Archives.) Although in the Potsdam Declaration the Allies echo Truman’s May 8 clarification by demanding the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, no assurances were made or clarifications provided as to what would happen to the Emperor after the end of the war.

knew that by July 13, 1945 the Emperor had officially endorsed the faction's efforts to peacefully end the war. If Truman had proffered peace to the Japanese government in accord with the Atlantic Charter, the war in the Pacific could have concluded without the use of atomic bombs. This would have allowed the Japanese people to retain their Emperor, potentially end the war before August 1945, and consequently saved hundreds of thousands of Japanese and American lives. By failing to even attempt to facilitate peace accords with the Japanese before August 1945, President Truman deliberately protracted a war costing thousands of casualties daily, waiting until the atomic bombs could be used on Japanese cities.

From May 12 to July 16, 1945, President Truman received no fewer than seven unofficial requests from representatives in four different countries attempting to facilitate peace between Japan and the Allied nations. Though these requests had no official backing, these unofficial "peace feelers" illustrated two very important points concerning a possible peace with Japan before the atomic bomb. First, there was a strong and diverse peace movement within the Japanese populace, actively attempting to facilitate peace between the Allies and Japan. Second, although the nations and Japanese representatives through whom the "peace feelers" came were diverse, there was a general unanimity that the key to peace with Japan depended on the security of the Imperial Throne after the war.

On January 30, 1945, the Office of Strategic Services submitted a series of reports to the State Department concerning unofficial Japanese "peace feelers" coming from the Vatican: "In regard to Japanese negotiations, beginning in early January 1945, with the Vatican looking toward mediation by the Pope in the war of the Pacific. . . [I]t appears that the Japanese Government is involved, as negotiations are now being conducted at the Vatican by the Japanese

Minister (Ken Harada) and his assistants.”⁶² On April 6, 1945, the following report by Sweden’s minister in Tokyo was sent to the State Department through Herschel V. Johnson, the U.S. minister in Stockholm:

It seems probable that very far-reaching conditions would be accepted by the Japanese by way of negotiation. There is no doubt that unconditional surrender terms would be unacceptable to the Japanese because it would mean dishonor. Application of such terms would be fatal and lead to desperate action on the part of the people. . . . The Emperor must not be touched. However, the Imperial power could be somewhat democratized as is that of the English King.⁶³

On May 12, 1945, William Donovan, director of the Office of Strategic Services, reported to President Truman that he had received an unofficial “peace feeler” from the Japanese Minister to Switzerland:

A Source, on 11 May, talked with Shunichi Kase, the Japanese Minister to Switzerland. He reports that Kase expressed a wish to help arrange for a cessation of hostilities between the Japanese and the Allies. Kase reportedly considers direct talks with the Americans and the British preferable to negotiations through the USSR, because the latter eventuality would increase Soviet prestige so much that the whole Far East would become Communist.⁶⁴

On May 7 and May 19, 1945, the Office of Strategic Services reported to President Truman that a Japanese citizen in Portugal was attempting to contact American representatives concerning a possible Japanese surrender:

On May 7, 1945 the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] representative reported that . . . a source stated that he had been asked by Masutaro Inoue, Counselor of the Japanese Legation in Portugal, to contact US representatives. Source quoted Inoue as saying that the Japanese are ready to cease hostilities, provided they are allowed to retain possession of their home islands. . . .

On 19 May, the OSS representative reported Inoue again had repeated to source his desire to talk with an American representative. On this occasion Inoue declared that

⁶²Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1945, Vol. VI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 475.

⁶³FRUS, 1051, April 6, 1945, Record Group 457, National Archives.

⁶⁴Memorandum for the President, from Donovan, May 12, 1945, “Rose Conway File,” Papers of Harry S. Truman; also in FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 481.

actual peace terms were unimportant as long as the term “unconditional surrender” was not employed.⁶⁵

On June 4, 1945, President Truman was made aware of another unofficial attempt by a Japanese citizen to establish peace through Switzerland:

Source is in touch with Fujimura, who is understood to be one of the principle Japanese Naval representatives in Europe. . . . Fujimura indicated to source that the Navy circles who are now in control in Japanese Government would be willing to surrender but wish, if possible, to save some face from the present wreckage. These Navy circles, he declares, particularly stress the necessity of preserving the Emperor in order to avoid Communism and chaos. Fujimura emphasizes that Japan cannot supply itself with basically essential foodstuffs.⁶⁶

On July 16, 1945, the Operation for Strategic Services notified President Truman that Allen Dulles, one of their agents in Sweden who was in contact with “officials” in Japan through Per Jacobsson, a wealthy Swedish banker, reported to them that:

Throughout discussions with Jacobsson, the Japanese officials stressed only two points: (a) the preservation for the Emperor, and (b) the possibility of returning to the constitution promulgated in 1889.⁶⁷

On July 20, 1945, Dulles recalled that: “Under instructions from Washington, I went to the Potsdam Conference and reported there to Secretary Stimson on what I had learned from Tokyo—they desired to surrender if they could retain the Emperor and the constitution as a basis for maintaining discipline and order in Japan after the devastating news of surrender became known to the Japanese people.”⁶⁸ On September 26, 1945, the British ambassador to the U.S.

⁶⁵FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 487-88.

⁶⁶Memorandum for the President, from G. Edward Buxton, June 4, 1945, Rose Conway File, Papers of Harry S. Truman; also in FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 486.

⁶⁷Memorandum for the President, from Donovan, July 16, 1945, Rose Conway File, Papers of Harry S. Truman, HSTL; also in FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 489-90.

⁶⁸Allen Dulles, *The Secret Surrender* (New York: Norton, 1966), 255-56.

gave Secretary of State Cordell Hull a paraphrase of a telegram sent from Sweden's minister in Tokyo. The message was dated prior to Germany's surrender:

I learn from a very reliable source that in important civilian circles in Japan the peace problem is being discussed with increasing anxiety. A speedy German collapse is expected and it is not believed that Japan can then continue the war. It is therefore considered necessary to get peace as soon as possible before the country and towns are destroyed.... If any willingness appeared to exist in London the Japanese would be ready for preliminary discussions through Swedish channels. Behind the man who gave me this message stands one of the best known statesmen in Japan and there is no doubt that this attempt must be considered as a serious one.⁶⁹

Although unofficial and lacking any political influence or weight, these "peace feelers" were very poignant, because they showed that the Japanese people were willing to accept a diplomatic peace prior to the atomic bomb as long as the Allies ensured the safety of the Emperor.

As early as August 11, 1944, President Truman knew high-level officials within the Japanese government were willing to initiate peace discussions with the Allies through the mutually neutral USSR. These official "peace feelers" expressed the same concerns as their unofficial counter-parts: Japan would not be able to endure the war much longer, yet would never accept a peace under the ambiguous term "unconditional surrender". But the official "peace feelers" had two important factors which the unofficial "peace feelers" lacked: they were not only endorsed by high-level officials within the Japanese government, but they also had the authorization and explicit support of the Emperor.

Yet before he had even received word of the unofficial "peace feelers," Truman had explicit proof that high-level officials within the Japanese government were also seeking peace with the Allies. On August 11, 1944, under the heading "Japanese Consider Peace Possibilities," Operation "Magic" reported that the War Department had decrypted transmissions from officials

⁶⁹U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, Vol. V* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 1184.

within the Japanese government actively pursuing peace with the Allies through the mutually neutral USSR. It was designated as “Eyes Only” for the president and his closest advisors:

Foreign Minister Shigemitsu has instructed Ambassador Sato [in Moscow] to find out whether Russia is willing to assist in bringing about a negotiated peace. Shigemitsu’s instructions, although cautiously worded, clearly imply that he has in mind a move by Russia to initiate peace discussions between Japan and the Anglo-Americans. . . . [It] seems hardly likely that he would have taken such a step without having consulted at least some of the more important members of the new Japanese Cabinet. . . . This is the first time that the Japanese have been willing to suggest to Russia directly that they are ready for peace.⁷⁰

Appended to this report was the text of Foreign Minister Shigemitsu’s August 7, 1944 decrypted transmission which included an internal Japanese assessment:

In the Pacific, the American offensive is becoming violent. The enemy has already broken into our territorial waters and by means of absolute superiority on the sea and in the air is steadily drawing nearer to our homeland itself with the intention of severing our sea communications and destroying our shore installations. This situation will become increasingly serious as Germany’s military strength diminishes.⁷¹

Almost a year later, on July 13, 1945, U.S. Intelligence experts intercepted even more “explicit and dramatic evidence of Japan’s official desire to end the war”⁷² when Foreign Minister Shigemitsu informed Ambassador Sato, who had already contacted the USSR three times on behalf of the Japanese government, that the Emperor was officially supporting the foreign minister’s attempts to bring about peace through the USSR:

I should like the Russian Government to bear particularly in mind the fact that the Special Envoy I have discussed with Molotov three times in the past; this time the Envoy will be sent at the particular desire of the his Majesty....

His majesty the Emperor, mindful of the fact that the present war daily brings greater evil and sacrifice upon the peoples of all belligerent powers, desires from his heart that it may be quickly terminated....

⁷⁰MAGIC, NO. 869, August 11, 1944, Record Group 457, National Archives.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 28.

So long as England and the United States insist upon unconditional surrender the Japanese Empire has no alternative but to fight on with all its strength for the honor and the existence of the Motherland.

It is the Emperor's private intention to send Prince Konoye to Moscow as a Special Envoy with a letter from him containing the statement given above. Please inform Molotov of this and get the Russian's consent to having the party enter the country.⁷³

On that same day, U.S. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal gave his assessment of the Japanese transmission to President Truman. The assessment stated:

The first real evidence of a Japanese desire to get out of the war came today through intercepted messages from Togo, Foreign Minister, to Sato, Jap Ambassador in Moscow, instructing the latter to see Molotov if possible before his departure for the Big Three meeting and if not then immediately afterward to lay before him the Emperor's strong desire to secure a termination of the war. . . . Togo said further that the unconditional surrender terms of the Allies was about the only thing in the way of termination of the war and he said that if this were insisted upon of course the Japanese would have to continue to fight.⁷⁴

The next day, on July 14, 1945, the Pacific Strategic Intelligence Section—the navy's top Pacific intelligence group—prepared a paper based on Forrestal's assessment: "Although the above [intercepted cable] traffic does not reveal definitely whether or not the Japanese Chiefs of Staff participated with the Foreign Office in "secretly giving consideration to termination of the war," the fact that the move is stated to be an expression of "the Emperor's will," would appear to be of deep significance."⁷⁵ On July 17, 1945, U.S. intelligence intercepted another transmission from Foreign Minister concerning a possible Japanese surrender.:

If today, when we are still maintaining our strength, the Anglo-Americans were to have regard for Japan's honor and existence, they could save humanity by bringing the war to an end. . . . If however, they insist unrelentingly upon unconditional surrender, the Japanese are unanimous in their resolve to wage a thorough-going war. The Emperor himself has deigned to express his determination and we have therefore made this request

⁷³MAGIC, No. 1205, July 13, 1945, Record Group 457, National Archives.

⁷⁴Unpublished Forrestal Diary, July 13, 1945; Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, p. 74.

⁷⁵Publication of the Pacific Strategic Intelligence Section, *Russo-Japanese Relations (1-12 July 1945)*, July 14, 1945, p. 10, SRH-084, Record Group 457, National Archives.

of the Russians. Please bear particularly in mind, however, that we are not asking the Russian's mediation in anything like unconditional surrender.⁷⁶

These intercepted Japanese communications confirm indubitably that officials within the Japanese government were actively seeking peace prior to the atomic bomb and as early as August 1944. They also strongly reflect their unofficial counterparts: after the fall of Germany, the only hindrance to a possible peace with Japan depended upon a clarification of unconditional surrender to ensure the safety of the Imperial Throne after the war.

On July 21, 1945, Captain Ellis M. Zacharias of the United States Navy, an officially designated spokesman for the United States and a staff officer in the psychological warfare department of the Pentagon, announced to Japan their available alternatives in a public radio broadcast:

Japan has already lost the war. Your [the Japanese] progressive defeats and our progressive victories have brought the war to Japan's very doorstep. . . . The Japanese leaders face two alternatives. One is the virtual destruction of Japan followed by a dictated peace. The other is unconditional surrender with its attendant benefit as laid down by the Atlantic Charter.⁷⁷

The broadcast was allowed to stand with Presidential sanction, and the *Associated Press* ran a story from Potsdam on July 23, 1945, under the title "Truman Approved Warning to Japan": "The American warning to Japan calling for immediate surrender, broadcast from Washington by a naval officer [Zacharias], was viewed tonight as part of President Truman's strategy here to secure American aims in the Far East. . . . The radio broadcast to Japan was known to have been

⁷⁶MAGIC, No. 1210, July 17, 1945, Record Group 457, National Archives.

⁷⁷*The New York Times*, July 22, 1945, 4. The full text of the broadcast received extensive coverage and was on the front page of *The New York Times* under the headline: "Japan is Warned to Give Up Soon: U.S. Broadcast Says Speed Will Bring Peace Based on Atlantic Charter." In the same vein, the *Washington Post* also noted in its report that "CBS commentator [Tris] Coffin predicted that the Potsdam announcement on Japan would promise the Japanese freedom of religion and the right to choose whatever form of government they want." (*Washington Post*, July 22, 1945, 2; also noted in *Baltimore Sun*, July 22, 1945, 1.)

made with the President's full knowledge."⁷⁸ Peace in accord with the Atlantic Charter would have allowed the Japanese to choose their own government after surrendering under the clause: "The signatory nations would respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."⁷⁹ Since neither President Truman nor any other high-level U.S. officials ever publicly disagreed with Captain Zacharias' broadcast, the entire world viewed 'unconditional surrender with its attendant concession of the Atlantic Charter' as the official U.S. stance on potential peace terms with Japan.

On July 25, 1945, two days after and as a seeming response to Zacharias' broadcast, Foreign Minister Togo sent a transmission to Ambassador Sato in Moscow stating: "The fact that the Americans alluded to the Atlantic Charter is particularly worthy of attention at this time. It is impossible for us to accept unconditional surrender, no matter in what guise, but it is our idea to inform them by some appropriate means that there is no objection to the restoration of peace on the basis of the Atlantic Charter."⁸⁰ Thus, before he dropped the atomic bomb, Truman not only knew of the existence of unofficial and official "peace feelers," but also that the Japanese government and people were willing to sue for peace as long as they could keep their Emperor under the terms of the Atlantic Charter. If Truman's true intention for dropping the atomic bomb

⁷⁸*The New York Times*, July 23, 1945, 5.

⁷⁹The Atlantic Charter was the declaration of peace aims set forth by President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill on August 14, 1941, and later affirmed by representatives of twenty-six states in January 1942. The Japanese looked favorably on peace terms according to the Atlantic Charter because the safety of the Emperor and the Imperial Throne would have been guaranteed. The Atlantic Charter also precluded territorial changes without the consent of the people involved and ensured access by all states to trade and raw materials. The Atlantic Charter would have been mutually acceptable to the American government because it also required that a general movement towards peace and disarmament be guaranteed by the establishment of a permanent system of global security. The full text of the Atlantic Charter was printed in *The New York Times*, August 15, 1941, I.

⁸⁰FRUS, Pots. I, 873.

on Hiroshima was to facilitate and expedite a Japanese surrender, why did he not pursue or attempt to initiate peace talks with the Japanese government prior to the atomic bomb?

If Truman's true intention was to expedite a Japanese surrender, he could have at least attempted to initiate peace talks with the Japanese government. Such an action, if successful, would have saved hundreds of thousands of American lives in a potential invasion, over a 100,000 non-combatant lives in an atomic bombing of a Japanese city, and prevented the USSR from entering the war in the East entirely. By refusing to facilitate peace accords with the Emperor and peace factions within the Japanese government by clarifying the status of the Emperor under the term "unconditional surrender," President Truman deliberately protracted the war until atomic weapons could be used against Japan and thereby caused, not saved, American lives in the Pacific. In the words of Gar Alperovitz, author of *The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*:

The judgment not only that the atomic bomb was not needed, but that the war could have been concluded earlier if the Emperor's position had been clarified, points to a much larger issue. Since a clarification of the unconditional surrender formula was delayed in significant part because of the atomic bomb, as we shall see, some analysts have suggested that the new weapon itself may well have prolonged the war and therefore cost, rather than saved, lives.⁸¹

Ironically, Truman allowed the Emperor to remain on the Throne after the war, though he refused to clarify the status of the Emperor before the conclusion of the war, even though he knew such an action could have easily swayed the Japanese government and people to surrender. Truman's decision to use atomic bombs against Japan therefore had little to do with Japan herself. The decision to bomb Japan was made with other intentions in mind.

⁸¹*The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb*, 351.

CHAPTER 2

TRUMAN'S MILITARY, SCIENTIFIC, AND POLITICAL LEADERS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES: WHAT TRUMAN WAS ADVISED TO DO CONCERNING JAPAN AND THE ATOMIC BOMB

On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage, and Vice-President Truman⁸² was inaugurated as the thirty-third President of the United States.⁸³ As president, Truman suddenly became both a leader of an Allied military approaching Berlin, and commander-in-chief of American forces suffering tremendous casualties on Okinawa. On April 25, 1945, Secretary of War Harry Stimson met with President Truman and informed him of the Manhattan Project,⁸⁴ the U.S. government's top-secret effort to create atomic bombs, and one of the largest and most expensive programs the U.S. had ever attempted.⁸⁵ To aid him in the various political, military, and scientific spheres, President Truman had at hand some of the world's greatest generals, admirals, scientists, and politicians at the time. Having already noted in the previous chapter the hopelessness of the Japanese situation and Japan's many efforts to

⁸²Harry S. Truman was Vice-President only 82 days before he was sworn in as President of the United States. Prior to Roosevelt's death, Truman had met with the president officially only eight times. (*The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb*, 12.) Truman found himself immediately overwhelmed by his new position as president, a feeling he exemplified in a statement he made to group of journalists following his inauguration: "If you ever pray, pray for me now. I don't know whether you fellows ever had a load of hay fall on you, but when they told me yesterday what had happened, I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets fell on me." (Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 19.)

⁸³Truman retained Henry Stimson as Secretary of War and appointed James F. Byrnes, one of the few aides President Roosevelt had taken with him to the Yalta Conference in February 1945, as his Secretary of State.

⁸⁴The term "Manhattan Project" stems from the Manhattan Engineer District of the US Army Corps of Engineers which had done much of the early research and was based in New York City.

⁸⁵The closest Truman came to knowing of the extent and power of the "Manhattan Project" before he became president was when, as head of the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, he attempted to investigate the atomic research facilities of Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington in order to root out corruption in defense spending. Senator Truman had noticed that these facilities consumed tremendous amount of resources, but had produced nothing substantial to help the war effort. Consequently, he sent two officials to the sites to investigate. In his memoirs, Truman notes that Secretary Stimson immediately urged the recall of the investigators. On fiat, Truman called off his investigation and did not go further into the matter. (Donald H. Riddle, *The Truman Committee* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 64.)

facilitate peace prior to August 1945, the question can now be asked: did Truman act in accord with the majority of his advisors when he ordered the use of atomic bombs against a seemingly defeated Japan already desiring peace?

The following quotes from Truman's various advisors are divided into groups according to who said the quote—admirals and generals in the military, scientists who worked on the atomic bomb, Truman's various political aides, and finally the special Interim and Targeting Advisory Committees. A short general summary is provided at the beginning of each section to provide a brief overview of the opinions expressed within that particular group. This systematic analysis of President Truman's advisors will help to determine whether he acted in accord with a majority of his advisors and thereby help determine the authoritative grounds Truman might have or might have not received to justify the use of atomic weapons.

I: Views of President Truman's Military Advisors

President Truman met with his military officials and Joint Chiefs of Staff on a frequent basis throughout the war. His military leaders were some of the best admirals and generals in the world. By August 1945, nearly every military leader acknowledged the hopelessness of the Japanese situation and the willingness of the Japanese government to settle for peace prior to the bomb. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had even submitted a draft declaration for Truman to review for Potsdam which included a clause in line with the Atlantic Charter which would have allowed the Japanese to keep their Emperor. Yet, against the advice of almost every one of his military leaders, without stating any particular reason, Truman never attempted to pursue peace with the Japanese and even deliberately deleted the clause from the final edition of the Potsdam Declaration.

A: Views from the U.S. Navy

Four high ranking admirals spoke out against President Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan: Admirals William D. Leahy, Chester W. Nimitz, Ernest J. King, and Frederick Halsey. All four of them stated that Japan was already defeated by the time the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Moreover, they agreed the bomb was unnecessary to force the Japanese to surrender because Japan was already suing for peace. Admiral Strauss believed that the assurance of the Imperial Throne after the war was the key to a Japanese surrender prior to "the bombs." While not agreeing the U.S. should refrain from using atomic weapons, Admiral Strauss did argue the bomb should not be dropped on non-combatants. Additionally, since the Japanese were willing to sue for peace prior to August 1945, Under-Secretary to the Navy Ralph Bard suggested that the U.S. should talk with representatives of the Japanese government to facilitate a peace accord between the two nations. He did note, however, that if the bomb was deemed necessary, the U.S. should issue a preliminary warning prior to dropping the atomic bomb in order to preserve the U.S.'s status as a humanitarian nation.

Admiral Leahy, the five-star admiral who had presided over the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combined American-British Chiefs of Staff, stated his views poignantly on the military futility of using the atomic bomb against Japan:

[T]he use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender. . . . [I]n being the first to use [the atomic bomb], we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.⁸⁶

On July 20, 1945, Admiral Leahy noted to Secretary of State Byrnes:

⁸⁶William D. Leahy, *I Was There; The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), 441.

It is my opinion at the present time that a surrender of Japan can be arranged with terms that can be accepted by Japan and that will make fully satisfactory provision for America's defense against future trans-Pacific aggression.⁸⁷

On October 5, 1945, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, expressed his views on the atomic bomb at the foot of the Washington Monument:

The Japanese had, in fact, already sued for peace before the atomic age was announced to the world with the destruction of Hiroshima and before the Russian entry into the war. . . . The atomic bomb played no decisive part, from a purely military standpoint, in the defeat of Japan.⁸⁸

In 1949, Admiral Nimitz declared in a speech to the National Geographic Society:

I am convinced that the complete impunity with which the Pacific Fleet pounded Japan at point-blank range was the decisive factor in forcing the Japanese to ask the Russians to approach us for peace proposals in July.

Meanwhile, aircraft from our new fields in the Okinawa group were daily shuttling back and forth over Kyushu and Shokoku [*sic*] and B-29s of the Twentieth Air Force were fire-bombing major Japanese cities. The pace and the fury were mounting and the government of Japan, as its official spokesmen have now admitted, were looking for a way to end the war.⁸⁹

Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, stated publicly:

The President in giving his approval for these [atomic] attacks appeared to believe that many thousands of American troops would be killed in invading Japan, and in this he was entirely correct; but I felt, as I had pointed out many times, that the dilemma was an unnecessary one, for had we been willing to wait, the effective naval blockade would, in the course of time, have starved the Japanese into submission through lack of oil, rice, medicines, and other essential materials.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Diaries of William D. Leahy, June 18, 1945, on microfilm at the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress.

⁸⁸*The New York Times*, September 22, 1945, 3.

⁸⁹Hanson Baldwin, *Great Mistakes of War* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1950), 93-94.

⁹⁰Ernest Joseph King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King, A Naval Record* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1952), 621.

Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., Commander of the U.S. Third Fleet stated publicly in 1946:

The first atomic bomb was an unnecessary experiment. . . . It was a mistake to ever drop it. . . . [the scientists] had this toy and they wanted to try it out, so they dropped it. . . . It killed a lot of Japs, but the Japs had put out a lot of peace feelers through Russia long before.⁹¹

While testifying before Congress in 1949, Admiral Halsey argued that atomic bombs were morally indefensible when dropped on civilian targets:

I believe that bombing—especially atomic bombing—of civilians, is morally indefensible. . . . I do not have to wrestle with my conscience. I know that the extermination theory has no place in a properly conducted war.⁹²

These four admirals, although their reasonings varied immensely, all agreed the use of the atomic bomb was unnecessary to end the war with Japan.

Although not agreeing that the U.S. should refrain from using atomic bombs against Japan, Rear Admiral Lewis Strauss, special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy from 1944 to 1945, did believe that since President Truman deleted the clause from the Potsdam Declaration which would have ensured the safety of the Imperial Throne after the war, Truman actually prevented the Japanese from being able to accept peace prior to the bomb:

That fact that. . . [Forrestal] took the Japanese messages with him to Potsdam leads me to believe that he hoped their collective impact might result in a realization on the part of the conferees there that the war was essentially over and that little more than a question of semantics separated the terms which the victors would impose and those which the vanquished were eager to accept. . . . Joseph Grew and Forrestal had prepared with Secretary Stimson's concurrence a pronouncement to be made to Japan by the President and calling upon Japan to surrender but it would have permitted the retention of the institution of the Imperial house. . . . This was omitted from the Potsdam declaration and as you are undoubtedly aware was the only reason why it was not immediately accepted

⁹¹Baruch to James V. Forrestal, September 10, 1946, James V. Forrestal File, Baruch Papers, Princeton University Library.

⁹²Testimony of Admiral Halsey, September 8, 1949, File: "Congressional Hearings 1949-57," Box 35, Halsey Papers, Library of Congress [LC].

by the Japanese who were beaten and knew it before the first atomic bomb was dropped.⁹³

Moreover, Admiral Strauss believed that the bomb should never have been dropped on non-combatants:

It seemed to me not only that it was a sin—to use a good word—[a word that] should be more often used—to kill non-combatants, but that if such a weapon could be made it would be better that it not be used in a war which was ending in order that we might reserve to ourselves the knowledge of its construction and its use in the event that some day we might need it to preserve our government and our safety.⁹⁴

Rather than drop the bomb on Japanese cities and risk the lives of non-combatants, Admiral Strauss proposed the bomb should have been demonstrated to the Japanese government by obliterating a large forest of cryptomaria trees:

I proposed to Secretary Forrestal at that time that the weapon should be demonstrated. . . . Primarily, it was because it was clear to a number of people, I among them, that the war was very nearly over. The Japanese were nearly ready to capitulate. . . . My proposal to the Secretary was that the weapon should be demonstrated over some area accessible to the Japanese observers, and where its effects would be dramatic. I remember suggesting that a good place--satisfactory place for such a demonstration would be a large forest of cryptomaria [sic] trees not far from Tokyo. The cryptomaria tree is the Japanese version of our redwood. . . . I anticipated that a bomb detonated at a suitable height above such a forest . . . would [have] laid the trees out in windrows from the center of the explosion in all directions as though they had been matchsticks, and of course set them afire in the center. It seemed to me that a demonstration of this sort would prove to the Japanese that we could destroy any of their cities, their fortifications at will.⁹⁵

Admiral Strauss' suggestion, though viable, was ultimately dismissed on the charges that if the atomic bomb failed while the world watched, the U.S. would be publicly humiliated and

⁹³Strauss to Albion, December 19, 1960, Strauss Papers—AEC, Japanese Surrender & A-Bomb, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.

⁹⁴Strauss interview for NBC White Paper, 1964, 18-19, Box 103, Feis Papers, LC.

⁹⁵Strauss interview for NBC White Paper, 1964, pp. 13-14, Box 103, Feis Papers, LC.

ashamed. But could a “surprise” attack on a Japanese city have secured “the bomb’s” proper detonation any more securely than one over an unpopulated forest?

Like Admiral Strauss, Ralph Bard, Under-Secretary of the U.S. Navy, agreed that the atomic bomb shouldn’t be used against a civilian city. He formally dissented with the Interim Committee’s suggestion to President Truman that the atomic bomb should be used against a Japanese city without warning.⁹⁶ In a June 27, 1945 memorandum, Under-Secretary Bard suggested:

Ever since I have been in touch with this program I have had a feeling that before the bomb is actually used against Japan that Japan should have some preliminary warning for say two or three days in advance of use. The position of the United States as a great humanitarian nation and the fair play attitude of our people generally is responsible in the main for this feeling.

During recent weeks I have also had the feeling very definitely that the Japanese government may be searching for some opportunity which they could use as a medium of surrender. Following the three-power conference emissaries from this country could contact representatives from Japan somewhere on the China Coast and make representations with regard to Russia’s position and at the same time give them some information regarding the proposed use of atomic power, together with whatever assurances the President might care to make with regard to the Emperor of Japan and the treatment of the Japanese nation following unconditional surrender. It seems quite possible for me that this presents the opportunity which the Japanese are looking for.

I don’t see that we have anything in particular to lose in following such a program. The stakes are so tremendous that it is my opinion very real consideration should be given to some plan of this kind. I do not believe that the under present circumstances existing there is anyone in the country whose evaluation of the chances of success of such a program is worth a great deal. The only way to find out is to try it out.⁹⁷

⁹⁶President Truman claimed he gave the Japanese advance warning in the Potsdam Declaration with the statement: “The might that now converges on Japan is immeasurably greater than that which, when applied to the resisting Nazis, necessarily laid waste to the lands, the industry and the method of life of the whole German people. The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland. . . . We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.” (Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman 1949-1953* (New York: Norton, 1982), 23.) This, however, is far from a deliberate warning to the Japanese of the absolute destructive and catastrophic nature of the atomic bomb and its effects on cities and populations.

⁹⁷*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 225-226.

In the end, as he had done with the rest of the navy, Truman ignored Under-Secretary Bard's suggestions: Truman made no attempt to sit down with the Japanese government concerning a possible peace between the two nations nor did he dully warn the Japanese of the destructive nature of the atomic bomb.

B: Views from the U.S. Army

The views of the U.S. Army closely reflected those of the U.S. Navy. U.S. Generals Douglas MacArthur, Carter W. Clarke, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Bonner Fellers, in conjunction with British Major General Sir Hastings Ismay, believed that the atomic bomb was not necessary to win the war. This opinion emanated from the knowledge that the Japanese were militarily on their last legs and willing to sue for peace. Generals Marshall and MacArthur agreed that the atomic bomb shouldn't be used against civilian cities and suggested, rather, that it be used only against strictly military targets.⁹⁸ After the bombing, General Eisenhower made many private and public statements saying simply: "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."⁹⁹ But it is British General Ismay's remarks which remain the most poignant: since the Japanese people worshipped their Emperor as a god, if the Allies would only ensure the safety of the Imperial Throne after surrender, the Emperor and the Japanese people would be more likely to accept peace with the Allies.

General Douglas MacArthur, former Chief of Staff and Field Marshal of the Philippine Army, was probably the most experienced and knowledgeable general in the U.S. army in

⁹⁸Hiroshima and Nagasaki did have military elements. Hiroshima had about 46,000 soldiers stationed outside the city and Nagasaki was a major port and industrial center. But they were also the homes for hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. MacArthur and Marshall were primarily concerned that the indiscriminate nature of the atomic bomb would mean that non-combatants would be killed in the significantly large blast radius. (*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 340)

⁹⁹*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 352-358.

matters concerning the Japanese situation in the Pacific.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, out of all the U.S. generals, MacArthur had one of the largest propensities for feelings of vindictiveness towards the Japanese: thousands of his troops had died at the hands of the Japanese on the Bataan Death March.¹⁰¹ Yet, General MacArthur never let his passions control him. He firmly argued that atomic bombs should only be used against strictly military targets and regretted that they had ever been used against non-combatants at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On July 29, 1985, former-President Richard M. Nixon reported to *The New York Times* that once, in a private meeting he had with General MacArthur, the general expressed his feelings concerning the use of the atomic bomb in WWII:

General Douglas MacArthur once spoke to me very eloquently about it, pacing the floor of his apartment in the Waldorf. He thought it a tragedy that “the bomb” was ever exploded. MacArthur believed that the same restrictions ought to apply to atomic weapons as to conventional weapons, that the military objective should always be limited damage to noncombatants. . . . MacArthur, you see, was a soldier. He believed in using force only against military targets, and that is why the nuclear thing turned him off.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰General MacArthur had fought against the Japanese in their initial assault of the Philippines after Pearl Harbor and then again in later battles like the battle of Leyte Gulf.

¹⁰¹So quick was the Japanese advance, in an effort to clear away as many POWs as possible, the Japanese military ordered that all American and Philipino forces which had surrendered to march north to a POW camp named O'Donnell. The Japanese had no respect for the Geneva Convention concerning the treatment of POWs and that, coupled with the fact the Japanese military code called for only the greatest dishonors for soldiers who had surrendered in battle, the Japanese Army had no respect for the Allied soldiers, many of whom were weak and tired from the fight or were sick with dysentery. Dozens of men were bayoneted to death; many were clubbed or buried alive when they failed to keep up with their fellows, or when they fell out from exhaustion or in search of water. One soldier recalled how “one of these Jap soldiers. . . grabbed this sick guy by the arm and guided him to the middle of the road. Then he just flipped him out across the road. The guy hit the cobblestones about five feet in front of a tank and the tank pulled on across him. Well, it killed him quick. There must have been ten tanks in that column and every one of them came up there right across the body. When the last tank left there was no way you could tell there'd even been man there. But his uniform was embedded in the cobblestone.” (Donald Knox, *Death March: The Survivors of Bataan* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 121.) So many men died on the march, the march became known the world over as the Bataan Death March. Out of the 20,000 odd soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines captured by the Japanese at the surrender of the Philippines, less than 60% survived Japanese imprisonment to return home in 1945. (William C. Braly, *The Hard Way Home* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), 31.)

¹⁰²“What the President Saw: A Nation Coming into its Own,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 1985, p. 48.

Yet, General MacArthur's feelings towards the bomb did not come after 40 years of reflection. The day after Hiroshima was bombed, MacArthur's pilot, Weldon E. Rhoades, noted in his diary: "General MacArthur definitely is appalled and depressed by this 'Frankenstein' monster [the bomb]. I had a long talk with him today, necessitated by the impending trip to Okinawa."¹⁰³ Additionally, General MacArthur considered the retention of the Emperor after the war as a viable avenue for peace. In early May 1946, while on a tour of the Pacific, former-President Herbert Hoover met with General Douglas MacArthur alone for several hours.¹⁰⁴ On that day, Hoover recalled:

I told MacArthur of my memorandum of mid-May 1945 to Truman, that peace could be had with Japan by which our major objectives would be accomplished. MacArthur said that was correct and that we would have avoided all of the losses, the Atomic bomb, and the entry of Russia into Manchuria.¹⁰⁵

In the end, General MacArthur viewed the use of the atomic bomb against Japanese cities as not only a morally reprehensible act but also unnecessary due to Japan's willingness to sue for peace prior to the bomb.

The views of General of the Army George C. Marshall were very close to those of General MacArthur's. Both believed that the atomic bomb should not be dropped on non-combatants. Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy recalled:

General Marshall said he thought these weapons might first be used against straight military objectives such as a large naval installation and then if no complete result was derived from the effect of that, he thought we ought to designate a number of large

¹⁰³Weldon E. Rhoades, *Flying MacArthur to Victory* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 429.

¹⁰⁴Prior to his meeting MacArthur, former- President Hoover had written a memorandum to President Truman concerning the clarification of the term unconditional surrender and assuring the non-molestation of Emperor after surrender. This memorandum will be discussed in much detail under the opinions of Truman's political advisors.

¹⁰⁵Herbert Hoover Diary, 1946 Journey, May 4, 5, 6, 1946, Post-Presidential Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.

manufacturing areas from which the people would be warned to leave—telling the Japanese that we intend to destroy such centers. . . . Every effort should be made to keep our record of warning clear. We must offset by such warning methods the opprobrium which might follow from an ill-considered employment of such force.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, both believed that the safety of the Emperor after the war was the key to a Japanese surrender prior to “the bombs.” On July 17, at a Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting:

General Marshall stated that from a purely military point of view he considered that the attitude of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be that nothing be done prior to the termination of hostilities that would indicate the removal of the Emperor of Japan, since his continuation in office might influence the cessation of hostilities in areas outside of Japan proper.¹⁰⁷

General Marshall, however, very poignantly pointed out that the decision to drop the atomic bomb had very little to do with the military, but was a political decision made on a political level.

McCloy recalled:

[Marshall's] insistence to me that whether we should drop an atomic bomb on Japan was a matter for the President to decide, not the Chief of Staff since it was not a military question. . . . The question of whether we should drop this new bomb on Japan, in his judgment, involved such imponderable considerations as to remove it from the field of a military decision.¹⁰⁸

Since General Marshall knew the atomic bomb was no longer a military tool on account of Japan's willingness to sue for peace prior to August 1945, Marshall seems to conclude that Truman must have made his decision to drop the atomic bomb for solely political reasons.

Since he was preoccupied with the closure of the war with Germany, General Eisenhower, the triumphant Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, had little to say concerning the actual use of the bomb. Overall, he was disgusted by its inherent

¹⁰⁶McCloy Diary, Memorandum of Conversation with General Marshall and the Secretary of War, May 29th, 1945, 25.

¹⁰⁷State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS], Pots. II, 40.

¹⁰⁸McCloy to Hadsel, April 8, 1985, Series 33, Folder 46, COR4, McCloy Papers, ACA.

ability to destroy whole cities and called it an “awful thing” of science.¹⁰⁹ In his memoirs, however, General Eisenhower wrote of his reaction when Secretary of War Henry Stimson informed him that the atomic bomb would be used against Japan:

During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping “the bomb” was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of face.¹¹⁰

Drawing from his writing, General Eisenhower felt the atomic bomb was unnecessary against Japan because she was already defeated by the end of the war and actively seeking avenues of peace. Consequently, General Eisenhower reasoned that if the U.S. used atomic weapons against an already defeated Japan, the atomic bomb could also threaten the world opinion of the U.S.

Brigadier General Carter W. Clarke, the officer in charge of preparing Operation “Magic” cable summaries, and Bonner Fellers, the officer in charge of psychological warfare on MacArthur’s wartime staff, both spoke out against Truman’s decision to drop the bomb. On July 6, 1959, General Clarke stated in an interview:

We brought them [the Japanese] down to an abject surrender through the accelerated sinking of their merchant marine and hunger alone, and when we didn't need to do it, and we knew we didn't need to do it, and they knew that we knew we didn't need to do it, we used them as an experiment for two atomic bombs.¹¹¹

General Fellers, in an article reprinted in 1947 by *Reader’s Digest*, made a similar statement:

“The atomic bomb neither induced the Emperor’s decision to surrender nor had any effect on the

¹⁰⁹*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 352-358.

¹¹⁰Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956; The White House Years* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), 312-13.

¹¹¹Clarke interview with Dr. Forrest Pogue, July 6, 1959, p. 29, Pogue Papers, George C. Marshall Research Library.

ultimate outcome of the war.”¹¹² Although General Clarke, General Fellers, and President Truman had access to the same information, Generals Clarke and Fellers disagreed with the president that the decision to drop the bomb was necessary to force Japan to surrender.

Finally, British Major General Sir Hastings Ismay, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defense, although thousands of miles away, viewed the Japanese situation in much the same light as General Marshall concerning the role of the Emperor in a Japanese surrender. In his memoirs General Ismay wrote:

The Japanese were already on their last legs; but if they were given to think that a rigid interpretation would be placed on the term unconditional surrender, and that their Emperor—to them the Son of Heaven—would be treated as a war criminal, every man, woman, and child would fight on till Doomsday. If, on the other hand, the terms of surrender were phrased in such a way as to appear to preserve the right of their Emperor to order them to lay down their arms, they would do so without a moment’s hesitation.¹¹³

General Ismay’s statement that if the Allied nations did gain control of Japan without the sanction of the Emperor, the Japanese people were willing to fight to the last man in defense of the Imperial Throne is worthy of note. There was no security that the bomb could force the Emperor to endorse surrender. If the Emperor chose to continue fighting, the entire nation would fight until killed. On the other hand, if the Allied nations could secure the safety of the Emperor after the war, as long as the Emperor endorsed the terms, the Japanese people would gladly lay down their arms in peace. The key to a Japanese surrender, as Ismay so appropriately points out, was the status of the Emperor after the war and ensuring the safety of his Imperial Throne.

¹¹²Bonner Fellers, “Hirohito’s Struggle to Surrender,” *Reader’s Digest* (July 1947), 90-95, cited material from 93.

¹¹³Hastings Lionel Ismay, *The Memoirs of General Lord Ismay* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 60.

C: Views from the Air Force

Since an air force was a relatively new concept in warfare and would only become its own branch of the U.S. military after WWII, there were fewer generals in the air force compared to the other branches. The impact of the air force on the Japanese situation, however, was tremendous. Single-handedly, U.S. planes had reduced 60 Japanese cities to rubble, leveled hundreds of square miles of industrial buildup, and rendered millions homeless.¹¹⁴ The atomic bomb from the air force's point of view was unnecessary to force the Japanese to surrender on account of the tremendous amount of Japanese cities and industries which had been destroyed by aerial bombing. Even though they viewed the atomic bomb as unnecessary, Air force Generals "Tooe" Spaatz and Hap Arnold both stated they would not oppose President Truman's orders to drop the atomic bomb. Both generals, however, viewed such a decision as politically, rather than militarily motivated.

General Carl "Tooe" Spaatz, commander of the U.S. Army Strategic Air Force, stressed in a 1965 oral history interview for the air force: "[The decision to drop the bomb] was purely a political decision, it wasn't a military decision. The military man carries out the order of his political bosses."¹¹⁵ When asked by a *New York Times* reporter whether the atomic bomb was what had induced Japan to finally surrender, General Henry "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Air Force, responded unequivocally: "The Japanese position was hopeless even before the first atomic bomb fell, because the Japanese had lost control of their own air."¹¹⁶ Reaffirming his previous statement in his 1949 memoirs, General Arnold observed

¹¹⁴*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 18; *The Pacific War*, 527.

¹¹⁵Spaatz interview with Len Giovannitti for NBC White Paper, 1964, p. 8, Box 103, Feis Papers, LC.

¹¹⁶*The New York Times*, August 18, 1945, p. 4.

that: “It always appeared to us that, atomic bomb or no atomic bomb, the Japanese were already on the verge of collapse.”¹¹⁷ Although he saw the atomic bomb as unnecessary, General Arnold said he would not oppose having his men drop the bomb if President Truman ordered him.

Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, General Arnold’s deputy, reported that Arnold once told him:

When the question comes up of whether we use the bomb or not, my view is that the Air Force will not oppose the use of the bomb, and they will deliver it effectively if the Commander in Chief decides to use it. But it is not necessary to use it in order to conquer the Japanese without the necessity of a land invasion. . . . That was the representation I made when I accompanied General Marshall up to the White House for a discussion with Truman on June 18, 1945.¹¹⁸

General Eaker went on further to note that General Arnold considered the decision to drop the atomic bomb as politically, not militarily, motivated:

Arnold’s view was that it [the dropping of the atomic bomb] was unnecessary. He said that he knew the Japanese wanted peace. There were political implications in the decision and Arnold did not feel it was the military’s job to question it.¹¹⁹

Because the atomic bomb was unnecessary, both Generals Hap Arnold and Tooeey Spaatz considered the decision to drop the bomb as a purely political rather than military decision. If ordered by Truman to drop the bomb on Japan, both Generals Arnold and Spaatz stated they would not oppose dropping the weapon although they disagreed with President Truman on the necessity of such a decision to facilitate a Japanese surrender.

¹¹⁷Henry Harley Arnold, *Global Mission* (Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania: Tab Books, 1989), 598.

¹¹⁸Eaker interview with Hugh N. Ahmann, February 10-11, 1975, p. 559, U.S. Air Force Oral History Program, Air Force Historical Research Agency [AFHRA].

¹¹⁹Eaker interview with Charles Hildreth and Alfred Goldberg, May 22, 1962, p. 4, U.S. Air Force Oral History Program, AFHRA.

D: Views from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Military Committees

The problem the Joint Chiefs had with proffering a peace that both the U.S. and Japan could mutually accept was the singular phrase used by President Roosevelt and President Truman, unconditional surrender.¹²⁰ The Joint Chiefs understood that it was impossible for the Japanese to place their Emperor in deliberate danger, and thus, it was impossible for Japan to accept the term unconditional surrender. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs understood that if the term unconditional surrender remained unqualified concerning the safety of the Emperor, the war would continue until the entire Japanese nation was killed in defense of the Throne.¹²¹ Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff drafted a form of the Potsdam Declaration containing a clause which would have allowed the Japanese to choose their own form of government after the war. President Truman, however, deleted the clause from the final draft and subsequently refused to make any clarification concerning the status of the Emperor after the war.

Aiding the Joint Chiefs of Staff for both the U.S. and Britain were the respective intelligence committees. In a report by the Joint Intelligence Committee labeled “Japanese Surrender—Postwar Resistance” on March 29, 1944, the Committee suggested the following: “Course of conduct of Japanese armed forces deployed in the areas under consideration, to a large extent, will depend upon the Japanese political situation as of the time that our peace terms are enforced. The crux of the political situation will lie in the all-important status of the Japanese

¹²⁰Though not a current Chief of Staff, Admiral Leahy was a former-chief of staff for President Roosevelt, so his views on unconditional surrender are included here rather than in the U.S. Navy section.

¹²¹On June 18, 1945 Admiral Leahy, a former Chief-of-Staff under President Roosevelt, stated: “I can not agree with those who say to me that unless we obtain the unconditional surrender of the Japanese we will have lost the war. . . . What I do fear was that our insistence on unconditional surrender would result only in making the Japanese desperate and thereby increase our casualty lists.” (Department of Defense [DoD], *Top Secret Entry*, Sec. V, p. 26; DoD, *Entry*, 84.)

Emperor.”¹²² Additionally, on July 8, 1945, the Combined US British Intelligence Committee issued the following estimate of the enemy situation:

We believe that a considerable portion of the Japanese population now consider absolute military defeat to be probable. The increasing effects of sea blockade and the cumulative devastation wrought by strategic bombing, which has already rendered millions homeless and has destroyed from 25% to 50% of the buildup area of Japan’s most important cities, should make this realization increasingly general. An entry of the Soviet Union into the war would finally convince the Japanese of the inevitability of complete defeat.¹²³

With the information provided by these two committees, in conjunction with the information the Joint Chiefs were daily receiving from Operation “Magic” concerning Japan’s political and social situation, by July 8, 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew that Japan was desperate, willing to make peace, and that the status and security of the Emperor was key if peace was to be achieved with Japan.

On June 12, 1945, Chief-of-Staff of the Navy James Forrestal addressed the Secretaries of War, Navy, and State (acting) concerning altering the term unconditional surrender: The minutes record that:

Mr. Forrestal [Chief-of-Staff of the Navy] said he thought the note we should take was one of avoiding a frozen position [on unconditional surrender] which might result in our not being able to take advantage of results in Japan; that the question of issuing warning to Japan of what the continuation of the war would mean was a matter of coordination and timing. He felt that real thought should be given to the matter so that we did not find ourselves in the position where we might be encouraging the militant group in Japan to build up strength for themselves amongst the populace. He had in mind the somewhat mystical relationship of the people to the Emperor and the general religious background of some of the Japanese nationalism.¹²⁴

¹²²Joint Intelligence Committee [JIC] 181, “Japanese Surrender – Postwar Resistance,” March 29, 1944, “JIC by No. 175-189,” ACSI “P” Files, Box T-164, Entry 82, Record Group 319, National Archives.

¹²³Combined Chiefs of Staff [CCS] 643/3, “Estimate of the Enemy Situation (as of July 6, 1945),” July 8, 1945, pp. 9-10, “CCS 381 (6-4-43), Section 2, Part 5,” Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS] Decimal Files 1942-45, Record Group 218, National Archives.

¹²⁴*Tumultuous Years*, 321.

The Secretary of War stated that: “he felt that if we could accomplish all of our strategic objectives without the use of this phrase, we should have no hesitation in abandoning it.”¹²⁵

During a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff the first day of Potsdam Conference, Britain’s Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, called attention to the July 8, 1945, Combined Intelligence Committee report concerning the survival of the institution of the Emperor after surrender. Sir Alan Brooke then asked if the U.S. Chiefs of Staff had given thought to clarifying the term unconditional surrender for the Japanese so as to preserve the Emperor and ensure peace:

From the military point of view it seemed to the British Chiefs of Staff that there might be some advantage in trying to explain this term to the Japanese. . . . If, for instance, an interpretation could be found and communicated to the Japanese which did not involve the dissolution of the Imperial institution, the Emperor would be in a position to order the cease-fire in outlying areas whereas, if the dynasty were destroyed, the outlying garrisons might continue to fight for many months and years.¹²⁶

On July 18, 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the following addition to the draft of Potsdam Declaration in a memorandum to the president: “Subject to suitable guarantees against further acts of aggression, the Japanese people will be free to choose their own form of government.”¹²⁷ This alteration allowed Japan to surrender on terms more closely aligned to the Atlantic Charter and thereby gave them the power to keep their Emperor if they so desired. Although the Japanese had already expressed an openness to surrender under the terms of the Atlantic Charter, President Truman deleted the clause from the final draft of the declaration and never subsequently clarified his position concerning the status of the Emperor after the war.

¹²⁵Committee of Three Minutes, June 12, 1945, Record Group 59, National Archives.

¹²⁶FRUS, Potsdam [Pots.] II, 36.

¹²⁷FRUS, Pots. II, 1268-69

Nearly every one of President Truman's high-level military advisors were in agreement that Japan was not only on the verge of defeat, if not defeated already, but also actively willing to sue for peace and therefore the bomb was unnecessary to attain a Japanese surrender. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred, proposing that President Truman clarify his position concerning the term unconditional surrender and the status of the Emperor after the war. But, as many of Truman's military advisors remarked, the decision to drop the bomb on Japan was not a military, but a politically motivated decision. If President Truman had adopted the addition to the Potsdam Declaration regarding the clarification of unconditional surrender, the chances of the Japanese accepting the terms set forth by the Allied powers would have probably risen considerably and thus mitigated the need for either the atomic bomb or a costly Allied invasion of the Japanese homeland.

2: Views of President Truman's Scientific Advisors

President Truman's scientific advisors probably represent some of the more divided and diverse opinions concerning the atomic bomb. Leo Szilard, one of the founding scientists of the Manhattan project¹²⁸, and James Franck, Nobel laureate in physics, actively spoke out against the atomic bomb, issued petitions, and wrote letters to President Truman. They requested that Truman reconsider his decision to use the atomic bomb against Japanese cities, or, should the weapon be used, that he give the Japanese sufficient warning. Robert Oppenheimer, scientific

¹²⁸In August of 1939, Szilard approached his old friend and collaborator [Albert Einstein](#) and convinced him to sign a letter to President Roosevelt concerning the establishment of a nuclear program that would be able to compete with a possible nuclear program the Germans were working on. The [Einstein-Szilard letter](#) led directly to the establishment of research into nuclear fission by the U.S. government and ultimately to the creation of the Manhattan Project. Later, Szilard moved to the [University of Chicago](#) to continue work on the project. There, along with Enrico Fermi, a fellow scientist, he helped to construct the first "neutronic reactor," a uranium and [graphite](#) "[atomic pile](#)" in which the first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was achieved, in 1942. (*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 580)

director of the Manhattan Project, and Enrico Fermi, Italian physicist who had helped Szilard construct the first neutronic reactor, supported President Truman's decision to use the bomb against Japanese cities without warning.¹²⁹ In order to understand the opinions of President Truman's scientific advisors one must consider their lack of the Japanese situation at the time, experience in the field, or access to decrypted Operation "Magic" transmissions. The advice of the scientists, therefore, was limited to their scientific field of knowledge, with no bearing on whether the bomb was a necessary element in securing a Japanese surrender. Even those who spoke for the use of the bomb admitted that they knew little of the military and political factors surrounding the atomic bomb and the Japanese situation by August 1945. Robert Oppenheimer recalled:

We didn't know beans about the military situation in Japan. We didn't know whether they could be caused to surrender by other means or whether the invasion was really inevitable. But in backs of our minds was the notion that the invasion was inevitable because we had been told that.¹³⁰

Despite their lack of knowledge regarding the political and military spheres, President Truman's scientific advisors nevertheless desired that the bomb they created was used in a morally and publicly acceptable way.¹³¹

On July 4, 1945, Szilard wrote about a petition which he submitted to President Truman concerning dropping the atomic bomb on Japan: "I personally feel it would be a matter of importance if a large number of scientists who have worked in this field went clearly and

¹²⁹*Tumultuous Years*, 435.

¹³⁰Heinar Kipphardt, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 34.

¹³¹This idea of the scientific community representing the people comes from a memorandum Szilard wrote to President Roosevelt fearing a potential nuclear arms race if the atomic bomb should be used against an enemy nation: "The fact that the people of the United States are unaware of the choice which faces us increases our responsibility in this matter since those who have worked on 'atomic power' represent a sample of the population and they alone are in a position to form an opinion and declare their stand." (U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, Harrison-Bundy File, Folder #76.)

unmistakably on record as to their opposition on moral grounds to the use of these bombs in the present phase of the war.”¹³² By July 17, 1945, Szilard submitted his petition to the president with the signatures of over 150 additional scientists:

We, the undersigned scientists, have been working in the field of atomic power for a number of years. Until recently we have had to reckon with the possibility that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war [from Germany] and that her only defense might lie in a counterattack by the same means. Today with this danger averted we feel impelled to say what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and the destruction of Japanese cities by means of atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such an attack on Japan could not be justified in the present circumstances. We believe that the United States ought not to resort to the use of atomic bombs in the present phase of the war, at least not unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan after the war are publicly announced and subsequently Japan is given an opportunity to surrender. The liberation of atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander-in-Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan.

Atomic bombs are primarily a means for the ruthless annihilation of cities. Once they were introduced as an instrument of war it would be difficult to resist for long the temptation of putting them to such use. The last few years show a marked tendency toward increasing ruthlessness. At present our Air Forces, striking at the Japanese cities, are using the same methods of warfare which were condemned by American public opinion only a few years ago when applied by the Germans to the cities of England. Our use of atomic bombs in this war would carry the world a long way further on this path of ruthlessness.

We respectfully petition that the use of atomic bombs, particularly against cities, be sanctioned by you as the Chief Executive only under the following conditions:

1. Opportunity has been given to the Japanese to surrender on terms ensuring them the possibility of peaceful development in their homeland.
2. Convincing warnings have been given that a refusal to surrender will be followed by the use of a new weapon.
3. Responsibility for use of atomic bombs is shared with our allies.

We, the undersigned scientific personnel, believe that the world-wide social and political consequences of the power of the weapon now being developed on this Project impose a special moral obligation on the government and people of the United States in introducing the weapon in warfare.¹³³

¹³²*The Decision to Use the Bomb*, 305.

¹³³Szilard Petition, First Version, July 3, 1945, Source: U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, Harrison-Bundy File, folder #76.

For Szilard, although the atomic bombs were created as deterrents, with the threat of Germany's atomic program no longer present, the U.S. possessed a unique weapon that no other country in the world had the capacity to produce at the time. In light of the power the bombs contained as offensive military weapons, Szilard held that President Truman had the moral obligation to ensure that the U.S. set a good precedent for the world by using atomic weapons responsibly.

On July 11, Nobel Laureate in Physics James Frank issued a report to President Truman:

From this point of view, the way in which nuclear weapons, now secretly developed in this country, will first be revealed to the world appears of great, perhaps fateful importance.

One possible way—which may particularly appeal to those who consider the nuclear bombs primarily as a secret weapon developed to help win the present war—is to use it without warning on an appropriately selected object in Japan. It is doubtful whether the first available bombs, of comparatively low efficiency and small size, will be sufficient to break the will or ability of Japan to resist, especially given the fact that the major cities like Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe already will largely be reduced to ashes by the slower process of ordinary aerial bombing. Certain and perhaps important tactical results undoubtedly can be achieved, but we nevertheless think that the question of the use of the very first available atomic bombs in the Japanese war should be weighed very carefully, not only by military authority, but by the highest political leadership of this country. If we consider international agreement on total prevention of nuclear warfare as the paramount objective, and believe that it can be achieved, this kind of introduction of atomic weapons to the world may easily destroy all our chances of success. Russia, and even allied countries which bear less mistrust of our ways and intentions, as well as neutral countries, will be deeply shocked. It will be very difficult to persuade the world that a nation which was capable of secretly preparing and suddenly releasing a weapon, as indiscriminate as the rocket bomb and a thousand times more destructive, is to be trusted in its proclaimed desire of having such weapons abolished by international agreement.

Thus, from the “optimistic” point of view—looking forward to an international agreement on prevention of nuclear warfare—the military advantages and the saving of American lives, achieved by the sudden use of atomic bombs against Japan, may be outweighed by the ensuing loss of confidence and wave of horror and repulsion, sweeping over the rest of the world, and perhaps dividing even the public opinion at home.

The best possible atmosphere for the achievement of an international agreement could be achieved if America would be able to say to the world, “You see what weapon we had but did not use. We are ready to renounce its use in the future and to join other nations in working out adequate supervision of the use of this nuclear weapon.”

This may sound fantastic, but then in nuclear weapons we have something entirely new in the order of magnitude of destructive power, and if we want to capitalize

fully on the advantage which its possession gives us, we must use new and imaginative methods. After such a demonstration the weapon could be used against Japan if a sanction of the United Nations (and of the public opinion at home) could be obtained, perhaps after a preliminary ultimatum to Japan to surrender or at least to evacuate a certain region as an alternative to the total destruction of this target.¹³⁴

This report suggested demonstrating the weapon publicly so the entire world could witness its destructive power. Differing from Szilard's approach, Franck made no mention of moral obligation but only of negative public opinion and the tarnished reputation the U.S. would acquire for setting such a precedent of the use of atomic weapons in war.

In contrast to Szilard's and Franck's desire to limit the use of atomic weapons, Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi, Oliver Lawrence, and Allen Compton sought the immediate use of atomic weapons against Japan. In response to President Truman's request that a scientific opinion concerning the use of the atomic bomb be drafted, these four scientists submitted their report on June 16, 1945:

You have asked us to comment on the initial use of the new weapon. This use, in our opinion, should be such as to promote a satisfactory adjustment of our international relations. At the same time, we recognize our obligation to our nation to use the weapons to help save American lives in the Japanese war.

(1) To accomplish these ends we recommend that before the weapons are used not only Britain, but also Russia, France, and China be advised that we have made considerable progress in our work on atomic weapons, that these may be ready to use during the present war, and that we would welcome suggestions as to how we can cooperate in making this development contribute to improved international relations.

(2) The opinions of our scientific colleagues on the initial use of these weapons are not unanimous: they range from the proposal of a purely technical demonstration to that of the military application best designed to induce surrender. Those who advocate a purely technical demonstration would wish to outlaw the use of atomic weapons, and have feared that if we use the weapons now our position in future negotiations will be prejudiced. Others emphasize the opportunity of saving American lives by immediate military use, and believe that such use will improve the international prospects, in that they are more concerned with the prevention of war than with the elimination of this

¹³⁴Report of the Committee on Political and Social Problems, Manhattan Project "Metallurgical Laboratory" University of Chicago, June 11, 1945 Source: U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.: Record Group 77, Manhattan Engineer District Records, Harrison-Bundy File, folder #76.

specific weapon. We find ourselves closer to these latter views; we can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use.¹³⁵

Unlike Franck and Szilard, Oppenheimer and his fellow scientists viewed the proactive use of atomic weapons positively. They saw a threefold benefit in the use of atomic weapons against Japan: improving the U.S.'s international relations, saving American lives in the war, and an effective deterrent to future wars.

3: Views of President Truman's Political Advisors

Before the Potsdam Proclamation, Truman was approached no less than 14 times by his political advisors seeking to clarify the term unconditional surrender and his providing assurances of the security of the Japanese Throne in order to secure peace with Japan.¹³⁶ Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew, former-President Herbert Hoover, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy specifically recall telling Truman that the term unconditional surrender was the single greatest obstacle to Japan's acceptance of peace. By July 1945, the State Department, the War Department, and former-President Hoover all concurred that Truman should clarify unconditional surrender in order to attain peace with Japan and thereby save American lives in the Pacific.

On May 28, 1945, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew advised President Truman that the key to peace was clarifying the term unconditional surrender to ensure no harm would come to the Emperor by allowing the Japanese people to determine their own government after the

¹³⁵Ralph A. Bard, Memorandum on the Use of the S-1 Bomb, June 27, 1945, File 77, H-B Files, M1108, National Archives.

¹³⁶*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 300.

war.¹³⁷ Secretary Grew knew that by securing the safety of the Emperor and allowing the Japanese to determine their future political structure, Japan would have an honorable way to surrender that would be acceptable to the Japanese people:

The Japanese are a fanatical people and are capable of fighting to the last ditch and the last man. If they do this, the cost in American lives will be unpredictable.

The greatest obstacle to unconditional surrender by the Japanese is their belief that this would entail the destruction or permanent removal of the Emperor and the institution of the Throne. If some indication can now be given the Japanese that they themselves . . . will be permitted to determine their own future political structure, they will be afforded a method of saving face without which surrender will be highly unlikely.

It is believed that such a statement would have maximum effect if issued immediately following the great devastation of Tokyo which occurred two days ago. . . . The psychological impact of such a statement at this particular moment would be very great. . . .

The President said that he was interested in what I said because his own thoughts had been following the same line.¹³⁸

On the other hand, Secretary of State Grew also told President Truman that without a clarification of unconditional surrender the Japanese would not accept any peace terms offered by the U.S.:

It is our view, however, that a mere call on the Japanese to surrender, in whatever terms it might be couched but without clarification of unconditional surrender, is not likely to bring any affirmative response.¹³⁹

Along with his statement, Grew enclosed a draft proclamation “designed to allay certain fears of the Japanese and to meet their basic position, that the United Nations shall not molest the person of the emperor or disestablish the institution of the throne.”¹⁴⁰ Unable to convince President

¹³⁷Grew was the former ambassador to Japan and had spent 10 years there. (*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 48)

¹³⁸Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 1431.

¹³⁹*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 276.

¹⁴⁰Memorandum for the President, from Joseph C. Grew, June 13, 1945, “Japan,” Stimson Safe File Entry 74A, Record Group 107, National Archives.

Truman on his own, on June 16, 1945, Grew sent a letter to the president's special counsel, Judge Samuel Rosenman, requesting that Rosenman take up the issue of clarification of unconditional surrender with Truman:¹⁴¹

I think it will be a matter of plain common sense to give the Japanese a clearer idea of what we mean by unconditional surrender.... That the Japanese will then be permitted to determine for themselves the nature of their future political structure.¹⁴²

On June 30, 1945, the State Department recommended to the president that:

The principal United Nations at war with Japan issue a joint statement outlining the program for the treatment of a defeated Japan with the following objectives:

- (1) to dissipate the present Japanese fear of the unknown
- (2) to combat the Japanese domestic propaganda to the effect that unconditional surrender means the extinction of the Japanese state and the enslavement of the people,
- (3) to create a conflict in Japan between the die hard militarists and those who wish to end the war before all of Japan is destroyed,
- (4) to eliminate the most serious single obstacle to Japanese unconditional surrender, namely, concern over the fate of the throne.¹⁴³

Nearly a month before the Potsdam Conference, Secretary of State Grew approached President Truman no less than five times concerning clarifying the term unconditional surrender to ensure the safety and preservation of the Emperor in order to facilitate a peace with Japan.

¹⁴¹On June 19, the day after the white house gathering, the main cabinet members involved met again. Forrestal's diary records that Stimson strongly agreed with Grew that the terms of surrender should allow for the Japanese to keep their form of government: "Surrender terms: Grew's proposal, in which Stimson most vigorously agrees, that something be done in the very near future to indicate to the Japanese what kind of surrender terms would be imposed upon them and particularly to indicate to them that they would be allowed to retain their own form of government and religious institutions while at the same time making it clear that we propose to eradicate completely all traces of Japanese militarism. Both Stimson and Grew most emphatically asserted that this move ought to be done, and that if it were to be effective at all it must be done before any attack was made upon the homeland of Japan. Grew stated that he had addressed a letter to Judge Rosenman on Saturday last [June 16] embodying his views and that Judge Rosenman had said he would take it up with the President on Sunday last [June 17]." (Unpublished Forrestal Diary, June 19, 1945, Record Group 145, National Archives.)

¹⁴²Grew to Rosenman, June 16, 1945, "Japan (After Dec. 7/1941)," Box 8, Stimson Safe File, Entry 74A, Record Group 107, National Archives.

¹⁴³FRUS, Pots. I, 201.

In addition to Acting Secretary of State Grew's recommendations, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy also recommended to President Truman the clarification of the term unconditional surrender ensuring the safety of the Emperor after the war in order to facilitate peace with Japan. On June 17, 1945 President Truman met with his cabinet and many other advisors. McCloy recalled telling the Secretary of War Henry Stimson his views on the Japanese situation during the course of this meeting:

I said, Mr. Stimson, it seemed to me that we were now at a point where our superiority was so vast over the Japanese; there were no more cities to bomb, no more carriers to sink or battleships to shell; we had difficulty finding targets; we had this tremendous moral and physical ascendancy which resulted from our with in Germany and our moving across the Pacific from the treachery of Pearl Harbor to the doors of Japan; and I thought there must be some other means that ought to be explored in terminating the war without further bloodshed. . . . He said he was inclined to think that was right.¹⁴⁴

President Truman overheard the conversation and asked what McCloy meant by a political solution:

Well, I said, 'Some communication to the Japanese government which would spell out the terms that we would settle for—there would be a surrender; I wouldn't use again the term unconditional surrender, but it would be a surrender that would mean that we would get all the important things we were fighting for; . . . that now if we could accomplish our objectives without further bloodshed, there was no reason why we shouldn't attempt to do it; and I thought this was a good opportunity.

[President Truman then asked for him to spell out what those terms were.]

I, just off the top of my head, said that I would tell him [Japan] that we've got all this—we've got this massive Air Force and Navy and we have no more targets, and we would be quite prepared to permit Japan to continue to exist as a nation, as a viable nation, that we would permit them to choose their own form of government, including the retention of the Mikado, but only on the basis of a constitutional monarchy, give them access to, if not—rather than control over raw materials outside their borders, and so on I spelled the thing out. And the president said 'Well, that's just what I've been thinking about. I wonder if you could put that down and give it to Secretary of State and see what we [can] do from that.'¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴McCloy interview with Fred Freed for NBC White Paper, "The Decision to Drop the Bomb", Roll 1, File 50A, Box SP2, McCloy Papers, 15-18.

¹⁴⁵McCloy interview with Fred Freed for NBC White Paper, "The Decision to Drop the Bomb", Roll 1, File 50A, Box SP2, McCloy Papers, 15-18.

In a separate statement for the NBC White Paper, McCloy was even more explicit concerning his views on how to end the war with Japan without bloodshed:

When asked for what my terms for surrender would be, I said a specific offer of the retention of the Mikado as a constitutional monarch if they wanted him; a specific promise of an opportunity for a viable economy by giving Japan access to, but not control over, raw materials, and I also urged a specific reference to the bomb itself by way of threat—not by indirection or circumlocution. . . . I am disposed to think this sort of message transmitted in good time might have produced surrender without the bomb and I am disposed to think that this would have been better than dropping the bomb.¹⁴⁶

McCloy later recalled that the only opposition came from Secretary of State Byrnes who argued that ensuring the safety of the Emperor could be seen as political weakness:

I [McCloy] immediately called upon Mr. Byrnes. He told me that he would have to oppose my proposal because it appeared to him that it might be considered a weakness on our part. Mr. Byrnes inferred he might not insist on treating the Emperor as a war criminal, but he would oppose any “deal” as concomitant of a demand for surrender.¹⁴⁷

Interestingly, even though President Truman and everyone except Secretary of State Byrnes seemed supportive of McCloy’s proposals, Truman never clarified unconditional surrender to allow the Japanese to retain their Emperor after the war.

On July 2, 1945 Secretary of War Henry Stimson, noting the U.S.’s significantly superior economic and moral standing, advised Truman:

We have the following enormously favorable factors on our side—factors much weightier than those we had against Germany:

Japan has no allies.

Her navy is nearly destroyed and she is vulnerable to a surface and underwater blockade which deprive her of sufficient food and supplies for her population.

She is terribly vulnerable to our concentrated air attack upon her crowded cities, industrial and food resources.

She has against her not the Anglo-American forces but the rising forces of China and the ominous threat of Russia.

¹⁴⁶Questions from NBC fro Mr. McCloy Re: NBC White Paper on “The Decision to Surrender,” circa 1964, p. 5-6, File 50A, Box SP2, McCloy Papers.

¹⁴⁷James Reston, *Deadline: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991), 499.

We have inexhaustible and untouched industrial resources to bring to bear against her diminishing potential.

We have great moral superiority through being the victim of her first sneak attack. I think the Japanese nation has the mental intelligence and versatile capacity in such a crisis to recognize the folly of a fight to the finish and to accept the proffer of what will amount to an unconditional surrender.¹⁴⁸

On July 12, 1945 with the support of Secretary Stimson, the War Department's Operations Division advised President Truman: "Japanese surrender would be advantageous for the U.S., both because of the enormous reduction in the cost of the war and because it would give us a better chance to settle the affairs of the Western Pacific before too many of our allies are committed there and have made substantial contributions towards the defeat of Japan. . . . The present stand of the War Department is that Japanese surrender is just possible and is attractive enough to the U.S. to justify us in making any concession which might be attractive to the Japanese, so long as our realistic aims for peace in the Pacific are not adversely affected."¹⁴⁹

On July 16, 1945 Stimson informed President Truman:

The great marshalling of our new air and land forces in the combat area in the midst of the ever greater blows she [Japan] is receiving from the naval and already established Army forces, is bound to provoke thought even among their military leaders. Added to this is the effect induced by this Conference [at Potsdam] and the impending threat of Russia's participation, which it accentuates. Moreover, the recent news of attempted approaches on the part of Japan to Russia, impels me to urge prompt delivery of our warning. I would therefore urge we formulate a warning to Japan to be delivered during the course of this Conference, and rather earlier than later, along the lines of the draft prepared by the War Department and now approved, I understand, by both the State and Navy Departments.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸Henry Stimson to Harry S. Truman, July 2, 1945, enclosure: *Proposed Program for Japan*, "White House Correspondence," Box 15, Stimson Safe File, Entry 74A, Record Group 107, National Archives; also in Stimson Diary, July 2, 1945, and U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 890-93.

¹⁴⁹Ray Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1951), 345-46.

¹⁵⁰FRUS, Pots. II, 1266.

The draft to which Stimson referred was a recommended draft proclamation of surrender terms that could be issued to Japan and which had been worked out by a joint committee of the State, War, and Navy Departments and approved by Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew:

The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as our objectives are accomplished and there has been established beyond doubt a peacefully inclined, responsible government of a character representative of the Japanese people. This may include a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty if it be shown to complete satisfaction that such a government will never again aspire to aggression.¹⁵¹

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, feared that the Japanese might infer “under the present dynasty” to mean the U.S. would execute the present Emperor and place another member of the Imperial family on the Throne. To prevent any possible ambiguities concerning the intentions of the U.S. towards the Emperor, the Joint Chiefs wrote a memorandum to President Truman on July 18, 1945 recommending that the phrase “this may include a constitution monarchy under the present dynasty” be replaced with: “Subject to suitable guarantees against further acts of aggression, the Japanese people will be free to choose their own form of government.”¹⁵²

Secretary of War Stimson concurred with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and on July 24, 1945 had a meeting with President Truman:

I then spoke of the importance which I attributed to the reassurance of the Japanese on the continuance of their dynasty, and I had felt that the insertion of that in the formal warning was important and might be just the thing that would make or mar their acceptance.¹⁵³

Thus, by mid-July, 1945 the Department of State and the Department of War were in agreement that the preservation of the position of the Emperor was the key to a possible Japanese surrender.

¹⁵¹FRUS, Pots. I, 899.

¹⁵²Robert J. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), 57.

¹⁵³Henry Stimson and Alice Bartlett Stimson. *Henry A. Stimson Papers, 1858-1935* (New York: Doubleday, 1952), 23.

In addition to his cabinet members, on May 28, 1945, almost three weeks after the surrender of Germany, former-President Herbert Hoover sent a memorandum to President Truman telling him that certain there were certain political elements]within Japan favored peace. Hoover argued that the Japanese were willing to sue for peace for the following reasons:

- (a) The appointment of Suzuki, a one-time anti-militarist elder-statesman, as prime minister;
- (b) The desire of the Japanese to preserve the Mikado [Emperor] who is the spiritual head of the nation;
- (c) The sense they showed after the Russo-Japanese war of making peace before Russia organized her full might;
- (d) The fear of complete destruction which by now they must know is their fate;
- (e) The fact that there is a large middle class in Japan which was the product of industrialization, who are liberal-minded, who have in certain periods governed Japan and in these periods they gave full cooperation in peaceful forces of the world. That this group again exert itself is the only hope of stable and progressive government.¹⁵⁴

On June 4, 1945, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary: “It would seem desirable to pursue further the thought contained in the memorandum. . . with a view to formulating the conditions incidental to Japanese complete defeat or specific terms of unconditional surrender.”¹⁵⁵ On June 13, 1945, at the president’s request, the State Department reviewed the memorandum concluding:

There is much with which we would agree in the brief discussion by Mr. Hoover of the factors favorable to the acceptance by the Japanese of the terms proposed by him. Every evidence, without exception, that we are able to obtain of the views of the Japanese with regard to the institution of the throne, indicates that the non-molestation of the person of the present emperor and the preservation of the institution of the throne comprise irreducible Japanese terms. . . . We are disposed to agree with the view that failure on our part to clarify our intentions in this regard, or the proclamation of our intention to try the emperor as a war criminal and to abolish the institution of the throne, will insure prolongation of the war and cost a large number of human lives.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴Memorandum for the Secretary of War, from Harry S. Truman, enclosure: Memorandum on Ending the Japanese War, June 9, 1945, “Japan (After Dec. 7/41),” Box 504, Entry 421, Record Group 165, National Archives.

¹⁵⁵Stimson Diary, June 1, 1945; Memorandum for General Hull, from Lincoln, June 4, 1945, “ABC 387 Japan (15 Feb. 45),” Box 504, Entry 421, Record Group 165, National Archives.

By the time President Truman cosigned the Potsdam Declaration, he had been informed by the War Department, the State Department, and former-President Hoover that he should he clarify unconditional surrender to ensure the safety and preservation of the Imperial Throne. Yet, Truman never made even a single attempt to clarify his position in order to attain peace with Japan even though he did allow the Emperor to remain unharmed on the Throne after the war.

4: Views of President Truman's Advisory Committees

The Interim and Targeting Committees were created by Secretary of War Henry Stimson with the authorization of President Truman. The purpose of these two committees was purely advisory; the purpose of the Targeting Committee: to determine which areas in Japan would be best targets for the atomic bomb; the purpose of the Interim Committee: to determine whether or not the Japanese should be warned of the destructive nature of the atomic bomb prior to the bombing. Despite the overwhelming advice President Truman received from his other advisors concerning the atomic bomb, these two committees framed the policy which Truman ultimately adhered to in ordering the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima.

On May 11, 1945, the Targeting Committee submitted its report to President Truman and Secretary Stimson with the following findings:

6. Target Selection: Possible targets possess the following qualification:
 - (1) they are important targets in a large urban area of more than three miles in diameter,
 - (2) they are capable of being damaged effectively by a blast, and
 - (3) they are unlikely to be attacked by next August. Dr. Stearns had a list of five targets which the Air Force would be willing to reserve for our use unless unforeseen circumstances arise.
 These targets are:

¹⁵⁶Memorandum for the President, from Joseph C. Grew, June 13, 1945, "Japan," Stimson Safe File, Entry 74A, Record Group 107, National Archives.

(1) Kyoto - This target is an urban industrial area with a population of 1,000,000. It is the former capital of Japan and many people and industries are now being moved there as other areas are being destroyed. From the psychological point of view there is the advantage that Kyoto is an intellectual center for Japan and the people there are more apt to appreciate the significance of such a weapon as the gadget. (Classified as an AA Target)

(2) Hiroshima - This is an important army depot and port of embarkation in the middle of an urban industrial area. It is a good radar target and it is such a size that a large part of the city could be extensively damaged. There are adjacent hills which are likely to produce a focusing effect which would considerably increase the blast damage. Due to rivers it is not a good incendiary target. (Classified as an AA Target). . . .

7. Psychological Factors in Target Selection

A. It was agreed that psychological factors in the target selection were of great importance. Two aspects of this are (1) obtaining the greatest psychological effect against Japan and (2) making the initial use sufficiently spectacular for the importance of the weapon to be internationally recognized when publicity on it is released.

B. In this respect Kyoto has the advantage of the people being more highly intelligent and hence better able to appreciate the significance of the weapon. Hiroshima has the advantage of being such a size and with possible focusing from nearby mountains that a large fraction of the city may be destroyed. The Emperor's palace in Tokyo has a greater fame than any other target but is of least strategic value. . . .

8. Use Against "Military" Objectives

A. It was agreed that for the initial use of the weapon any small and strictly military objective should be located in a much larger area subject to blast damage in order to avoid undue risks of the weapon being lost due to bad placing of "the bomb."¹⁵⁷

Essentially, the Targeting Committee suggested the bombing of Japanese cities rather than strictly military targets precisely because the psychological shock caused by the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians would sufficiently shock the world. The Targeting Committee reasoned that the sudden destruction of an entire city from one bomb would shock Japan into submission and, in that same instant, be destructive enough to terrify the world.

¹⁵⁷*Minutes of the second meeting of the Target Committee*. Los Alamos, May 10-11, 1945 Source: U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, TS Manhattan Project File '42-'46, folder 5D Selection of Targets, 2 Notes on Target Committee Meetings.

On May 1, 1945, with the authorization of President Truman, Secretary of War Henry Stimson brought together leaders in the scientific, corporate, military, and government fields and formed the Interim Committee to review the Targeting Committee's report and determine whether the target for the atomic bomb should be warned of its impending destruction.¹⁵⁸ On June 1, 1945 the committee submitted its report:

Mr. Byrnes recommended, and the Committee agreed, that the Secretary of War should be advised that, while recognizing that the final selection of the target was essentially a military decision, the present view of the Committee was that the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used on a war plant surrounded by workers' homes; and that it be used without prior warning.¹⁵⁹

Although the committee's recommendation was addressed to Stimson, Byrnes went directly from the meeting to brief President Truman who reportedly concurred with the committee's opinion.¹⁶⁰

On June 21, 1945, the Interim Committee reaffirmed its position stating:

The weapon should be used against Japan at the earliest opportunity, that it be used without warning, and that it be used on a dual target, namely, a military installation or war plant surrounded by or adjacent to homes or other buildings most susceptible to damage.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸Stimson was chairman. The other members were: James F. Byrnes, as the President's personal representative; Ralph A. Bard, Under Secretary of the Navy; William L. Clayton, Assistant Secretary of State; Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development and president of the Carnegie Institution; Karl T. Compton, Chief of the Office of Field Service in the Office of Scientific Research and Development and president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology; James B. Conant, Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee and president of Harvard University; and George L. Harrison, an assistant to Stimson and president of New York Life Insurance Company. (Stimson Diary, May 2, 1945. Memorandum for the Secretary of War, from Harrison, May 1, 1945, File 3, sub-series II, Roll 4, Top Secret Files, Manhattan Engineer District, M 1109, National Archives.)

¹⁵⁹Notes of the Interim Committee Meeting, May 31, 1945, 13-14, File 100, Roll 8, H-B Files, M1108, National Archives.

¹⁶⁰Peter Wyden, *Day One: Before Hiroshima and After* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 163.

¹⁶¹[Log of the Interim Committee Meeting, June 21, 1945, 6-7.](#)

The Interim Committee agreed with the Targeting Committee's conclusion that civilians should be killed in the blast. The Interim Committee, however, stated additionally that the atomic bomb should be used without warning and as soon as possible.

On August 9, 1945, the day of the Nagasaki bombing, President Truman spoke to the American people via radio broadcast stating: "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in the first instance to avoid, in so far as possible, the killing of civilians."¹⁶² Truman's statement that the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima because it was primarily a military base strongly contrasted the area actually bombed: the atomic bomb was dropped on the center of the city not the army depot.¹⁶³ It seemed that although Truman justified the bombing by stating that Hiroshima was a military base over 95% of the casualties were civilians.

Despite the overwhelming amount of advice President Truman received from his military, scientific, and political advisors counseling him to refrain from using the atomic bomb on Japanese cities, Truman decided to adhere to the advice of the Targeting and Interim Committees and use atomic weapons against Japanese cities without warning. Since Truman refused to adhere to his military advisors and pursue the Japanese attempts at peace, his motives were clearly not militarily based for attaining a possible Japanese surrender with the least loss of American life. Rather, it seemed that Truman deliberately prolonged the war waiting for atomic

¹⁶²So effective was President Truman's speech on the American people that Former Navy Chaplain Willard H. Reeves, in his book *Remembering Hiroshima*, recalled: "That evening [when the atomic bomb was dropped] we were all very quiet as we gathered in the wardroom for dinner. We knew that even before the bomb was dropped the enemy had been defeated and seeking peace. There was an air of sadness at the thought of Hiroshima's needless destruction. Finally one of our officers broke the silence. "Why?" was all he said. . . . When I returned home after the war and told my story, people would look at me in complete disbelief. They all seemed totally convinced by the media and governmental pronouncements that the dropping of the bombs was absolutely essential to ending the war." (*Conflict and Crisis*, 78)

¹⁶³*Hiroshima-shi Nagasaki-shi Genbaku Saigaishi Henshi Inkai* [*Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*] (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 12.

weapons in order to thoroughly shock the entire world when the atomic bomb was introduced into warfare through the killing of thousands of innocent civilians. But why did Truman so ardently desire to shock the world with the atomic weapon? That question will be more closely examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

TRUMAN'S TRUE INTENTIONS FOR THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

In accord with the conclusions of his Targeting and Interim Committees, President Truman knew that the atomic bomb had to be demonstrated on a Japanese city without warning in order for the bomb to be most effectively noticed by the entire world. Such a decision meant that the atomic bomb could only be used on the U.S.'s sole remaining enemy, Japan. Moreover, thousands of civilians had to die in order for the bomb to receive sufficient international recognition. After Truman heard that the first atomic bomb had been successfully detonated in the desert of New Mexico, he became supremely confident in dealing with Russia during the Potsdam Conference. With the bomb in his control, Truman knew he could exercise tremendous influence over the international politics of the time and, as long as he maintained an atomic arsenal, well into the future.

President Truman placed tremendous weight on the atomic bomb's ability to affect international policy. In a 1954 security hearing, Robert Oppenheimer described how, shortly before heading off to the Potsdam Conference, President Truman had urged him to begin the first test of the atomic bomb as soon as possible. Truman wanted to have as much information as possible on the destructive capabilities of atomic weapons before he met up with Josef Stalin at the Potsdam Conference:

President Truman had delayed his meeting with Stalin until the atomic bomb could be tested. I don't want to overstate that. It was my understanding, and on the morning of July 16, I think Dr. Bush told me, that it was the intention of the United States statesmen who went to Potsdam to say something about this to the Russians. I never knew how much. Mr. Stimson explained later that he had planned to say a good deal more than what was said, but when they saw what the Russians looked like and how it felt, he didn't know whether it was a good idea. The historical record as it is published indicates that the President said no more than we had a new weapon which we planned to use in Japan,

and it was very powerful. I believe we were under incredible pressure to get it done before the Potsdam meeting and Groves and I bickered for a couple of days.¹⁶⁴

On July 21, 1945 Truman received word that the first atomic bomb had been successfully tested in the desert of New Mexico. Upon hearing the news, Secretary of War Henry Stimson stated that he saw an immediate change in the president: “The President was tremendously pepped up by it and spoke to me of it again and again when I saw him. He said it gave him an entirely new feeling of confidence and he thanked me for having come to the Conference and being present to help him in this way.”¹⁶⁵ Stimson further noted:

[Churchill] told me that he had noticed at the meeting of the Three yesterday that Truman was evidently much fortified by something that had happened and that he stood up to the Russians in a most emphatic and decisive manner, telling them as to certain demands that they absolutely could not have and that the United States was entirely against them.

[Churchill] said, “Now I know what happened to Truman yesterday. I couldn’t understand it. When he [Truman] got to the meeting after having read this [Groves’] report he [Truman] was a changed man. He told the Russians just where they got on and off and generally bossed the whole meeting.” Churchill said he now understood how this pepping up had taken place and that he felt the same way. His own attitude confirmed this admission.¹⁶⁶

Stimson’s diary continues: “Churchill was now not only not worried about giving the Russians information of the matter but was rather inclined to use it [the atomic bomb] as an argument in our favor in the negotiations.”¹⁶⁷ Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy also noted the change in the president: “Throughout it all the ‘big bomb’ is playing its part—it has stiffened both the Prime Minister and the President . . . and after getting Groves’ report they went to the next

¹⁶⁴Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 28.

¹⁶⁵Stimson Diary, July 21, 1945, Record Group 177, Box 145, Stimson Papers, National Archives.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, July 22, 1945.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

meeting like little boys with a big red apple secreted on their persons.”¹⁶⁸ For President Truman the atomic bomb was the key to securing American interests in Europe and possibly superseding the incredible influence of the U.S.S.R. on international affairs.

In understanding President Truman’s true intentions for dropping the atomic bomb, it is important to understand the political tension between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. after Germany’s surrender. On May 19, Grew wrote the president a memorandum stating:

Already Russia is showing us—in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia—the future world pattern that she visualizes and will aim to create. With her certain stranglehold on these countries, Russia’s power will steadily increase and she will in the not distant future be in a favorable position to expand her control, step by step, through Europe. . . . A war with Soviet Russia is as certain as anything in this world can be certain.¹⁶⁹

Although the U.S.S.R. was not a super-power in any sense of the word, she did have one of the largest land armies on the European and Asian continents. In 1947 and 1948, problems began between the Allied forces and the U.S.S.R. on the European continent as Stalin wanted the Russian border extended further into Poland. The Allies obliged him, but the Marshall Plan would later impel Stalin to push upon East Central Europe a hard-line version of Soviet communism, beginning with the coup d’etat in Czechoslovakia in February 1948.

With relations already strained with the U.S.S.R. after Germany’s surrender, British and American government officials became increasingly apprehensive of Russia’s massive troop buildup on the Manchurian border and her entrance into the war against Japan. The Allies feared that Stalin wanted to use his troops to “extend the hammer and sickle deep into China”¹⁷⁰ and

¹⁶⁸McCloy Diary, July 23 and July 24, 1945, Record Group 145, Box 145, McCloy Papers, National Archives.

¹⁶⁹*Turbulent Era*, 1446.

¹⁷⁰Stephen Walker, *Shockwave: Countdown to Hiroshima* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 36.

force the American forces to a co-occupation of the Japanese homeland as had been done in Berlin. In the words of Henry Stimson, the use of the atomic bomb against Japanese cities would send a clear and distinct message to the U.S.S.R. and Stalin that the Americans now had a weapon that could level entire cities and the U.S. was willing to use it to enforce her will:

I told him [Truman] that my own opinion was that the time now and the method now to deal with Russia was to keep our mouths shut and let our actions speak for words. The Russians will understand them better than anything else. It is a case where we have got to regain the lead and perhaps do it in a pretty rough and realistic way. They have taken it away from us because we have talked too much and have been too lavish with our beneficences to them. I told him this was a place where we really held all the cards. I called it a royal straight flush and we mustn't be a fool about the way we play it. They can't get along without our help and industries and we have coming into action a weapon which will be unique. Now the thing is not to get into unnecessary quarrels by talking too much and not to indicate any weakness by talking too much; let our actions speak for themselves.¹⁷¹

Agreeing with Stimson that the atomic bomb could be used to intimidate the U.S.S.R., on July 31, 1945, President Truman wrote to his wife, Bess: “Stalin doesn't know it but I have an ace in the hole and another one showing—so unless he has threes or two pair (and I know he has not) we are sitting all right.”¹⁷²

The use of the poker metaphor is important because it demonstrates the level of strategic and tactical political thinking both of Henry Stimson and President Truman when it came to the U.S.S.R. President Truman knew that “if he played his cards right” and waited “with the ace [the atomic bomb] up his sleeve” till the right time to “show his cards,” he could surprise Stalin and the world enough to make the U.S.S.R. take a step back and reassess its situation. This meant that the atomic bomb had to precede the Russian move across the Chinese border and possibly halt the Soviets in their tracks by means of a hasty Japanese surrender. According to Secretary

¹⁷¹Henry Stimson *Papers*, 23.

¹⁷²Harry Truman, *Dear Bess The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (New York: Norton, 1983), 522.

of State Byrnes, such a surrender would mean that “Russia will not get in so much on the kill, thereby being in a position to press for claims against China.”¹⁷³ Of course no shock would be as great as a surprise atomic blast obliterating an entire city in seconds.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Secretary Byrnes concurred with President Truman’s feelings that the bomb could be used to prevent the spread of Russian influence. Leo Szilard aptly described the intention of President Truman when he quoted Secretary of State James Byrnes’ view on the relationship between the atomic bomb and the U.S.S.R.:

Mr. Byrnes did not argue that it was necessary to use the bomb against the cities of Japan in order to win the war. He knew at that time, as the rest of the government knew, that Japan was essentially defeated and that we could win the war in another six months. At that time Mr. Byrnes was much concerned about the spreading of Russian influence in Europe. His view was that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable.¹⁷⁴

On May 15, 1945, Stimson wrote in his diary:

The problem is that the President has now promised apparently to meet Stalin and Churchill on the first of July and at that time these questions [relating to the Yalta Far East agreements and Russian participation in the Pacific War] will become burning and it may be necessary to have it out with Russia on her relations to Manchuria and Port Arthur and various other parts of North China, and also the relations of China to us. Over any such tangled wave of problems the S-1 [atomic bomb] secret would be dominant and yet we will not know until after that time probably, until after that meeting, whether this is a weapon in our hands or not. We think it will be shortly afterwards [successfully tested], but it seems a terrible thing to gamble with such big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in your hand.¹⁷⁵

On July 23, Stimson’s diary further noted:

The president had told me at a meeting in the morning that he was very anxious to know whether Marshall felt we still needed the Russians in the war or whether we could get along without them, and that was one of the subjects we talked over. . . . Of course Marshall could not answer directly or explicitly. We had desired the Russians to come

¹⁷³William Brown’s Book, July 24, 1945, Folder 602, Byrnes Papers, CUL.

¹⁷⁴Leo Szilard, “A Personal History of the Atomic bomb,” University of Chicago Roundtable, No. 601 (September 25th, 1949), 14-15.

¹⁷⁵Diaries of Henry L. Stimson, May 15, 1945, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

into the war originally for the sake of holding up in Manchuria the Japanese Manchurian Army. That now was being accomplished as the Russians have amassed their forces on that border, Marshall said, and were poised, and the Japanese were moving up positions in their Army. But he pointed out that even if we went ahead in the war without the Russians, and compelled the Japanese to surrender to our terms, that would not prevent the Russians from marching into Manchuria anyhow and striking, thus permitting them to get virtually what they wanted in the surrender terms. . . . Marshall felt as I felt sure he would that now with our new weapon we would not need the assistance of the Russians to conquer Japan.¹⁷⁶

By using the bomb against Japan, Truman set a precedent for how the U.S. would treat any country that encroached on American interests. Should the U.S.S.R. try to use her massive land army or political clout to influence international politics in either Asia or Europe, America's atomic arsenal would unflinchingly defend American interests against the U.S.S.R.

Preventing the spread of communism, however, wasn't the only intention President Truman had in mind when he ordered the use of atomic bombs to end the war. He also hoped to be able to use the threat of the atomic weapons to prevent future wars and cases of aggression against the United States and her allies. On June 26, 1945, George Harrison, formal member of the Interim committee and assistant to Henry Stimson, personally reported the Committee's conclusions to the Secretary of War:

This matter of notice to the Russians was made the subject of thorough discussion at the last meeting of the Interim Committee on June 21. It was unanimously agreed that in view of the importance of securing an effective future control, and in view of the fact that most of the story, other than production secrets will become known in any event, there would be considerable advantage, if a suitable opportunity arises at the "Big Three" meeting, in having the President advise the Russians simply that we are working intensely on this weapon and that, if we succeed as we think we will, we plan to use it against the enemy. Such a statement will be supplemented by the statement that in the future, after this war, we would expect to discuss the matter further with a view to insuring that this means of warfare will become a substantial aid in preserving the peace of the world rather than a weapon of terror and destruction.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶Stimson Diary, July 23, 1945.

¹⁷⁷Memorandum for the Secretary of War, from Harrison, June 26, 1945, File 77, Roll 6, H-B Files, M1108, National Archives.

After the surrender of Germany, Charles DeGaulle confronted President Truman concerning a potential future German offensive against France. Truman coolly replied: “The atomic bomb will give pause to countries which might be tempted to commit aggressions.”¹⁷⁸ Stimson expounded upon this concept when he mentioned the political aspects of the bomb in a paper he submitted to the president: “If the problem of the proper use of this weapon can be solved, we would have the opportunity to bring the world into a pattern in which the peace of the world and our civilization can be saved.”¹⁷⁹ By dropping the bomb on Japanese cities, Truman demonstrated to the world that he was prepared to unilaterally wipe out all civilizations that might stand in the way of American interests.

Finally, Truman hoped that the bomb would allow him to keep the term “unconditional surrender” as the official peace terms of the United States without compromise. Such a stance by Truman would show the world that the U.S. was prepared to destroy anyone who might stand in the way of America’s interests. In his memoirs titled *Year of Decisions*, President Truman wrote:

If expectations were to be realized, [Stimson] told me, the atomic bomb would be certain to have a decisive influence on our relations with other countries. . . . [Byrnes had already told me] that the weapon might be so powerful as to be potentially capable of wiping out entire cities and killing people on an unprecedented scale. And he had added that in his belief the bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war.¹⁸⁰

Truman’s intention for the bomb here is quite clear: he wanted the Japanese to accept unconditional surrender regardless of assurances that could be made concerning their Emperor.

¹⁷⁸“Memorandum of Conversations at the White House on August 22, 1945 between the President and General de Gaulle,” “France,” “Subject File,” President’s Secretary’s Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

¹⁷⁹Stimson Diary, April 25, 1945.

¹⁸⁰*Year of Decisions*, 87.

By refusing to clarify his position concerning the Emperor, Truman prolonged the war and used the Japanese people's fanatical attempt to defend the Throne to justify the bombing of Japanese cities. Though he could have ended the war sooner by allowing the Emperor to remain on the Throne, such an action would have forced the U.S. to compromise its international position of accepting no other terms of surrender than those set forward in the Potsdam Declaration. By failing to compromise on something that would have assuredly brought peace to the Pacific, Truman demonstrated that the U.S. would enforce a hard-line doctrine of never ceding any ground when it came to American demands.

Thus the atomic bomb was used against Hiroshima, resulting in over 70,000 deaths, and three days later, over Nagasaki, resulting in an additional 45,000 deaths. In the mind of President Truman, the atomic bomb allowed the U.S. to fight back against the advance of communism and the spread of Russian influence and power over two continents, but this came at the cost of over 100,000 Japanese lives. President Truman justified the use of the atomic bombs as a militarily necessary action that was taken against an obstinate, war-mongering people who would never accept peace. Under that reasoning, President Truman argued that the bombing saved over a million American lives by preventing a bloody land campaign across the Japanese isle. Instead of the ridicule and criticism he could have received, President Truman was hailed as a hero for ending the war and saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers who would have died in an invasion of the Japanese homeland. His true intentions for dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, however, were not to force the Japanese to surrender and to save American lives as he claimed, but to use the bomb as leverage in his efforts to prevent the spread of communism, deter future wars, and dictate his own terms of surrender for the Japanese.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the Japanese position towards the Emperor and the possibility of attaining a Japanese peace prior to August 1945 if the Allies ensured the safety of the Emperor after the war, it is impossible to say that “the bombs” dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were militarily necessary to ensure a Japanese surrender. Furthermore, due to Operation “Magic” it is impossible to say that President Truman did not realize these facts and continued with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in spite of what his advisors counseled. One can only conclude that President Truman ordered the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki not out of an attempt to shorten the war and thereby save American lives, but out of ulterior political motives.

President Truman’s true intentions for dropping the bomb on Hiroshima stemmed from his desire to use atomic weapons as leverage in order to ensure American interests in the near and far off future. He bombed Japanese cities in order to create enough shock by drawing attention to the spectacle of the bomb. Truman counted on the novelty and fear surrounding the bomb to help combat the spread of Russian influence in Asia and Europe, deter other countries who might desire to wage future wars of aggression against the United States, and force American interests in Japan and on the European continent.

Probably the most dangerous and long lasting aspect of Truman’s use of the atomic bomb was the precedent it established of using weapons of indiscriminate and enormous destructive power against enemy cities in war. With the capacity to end all civilization on the planet, the tensions between the U.S.S.R. and America, both nuclear powers after the 1950’s, meant the entire world was afraid of dying in a nuclear attack for the next 40 years until the end of the Cold War. Regarding the inherent insecurity atomic bombs create in the international political sphere, while visiting Moscow shortly after Hiroshima, Eisenhower stated:

Before the bomb was used, I would have said yes, I was sure we could keep the peace with Russia. Now, I don’t know. I had hoped the bomb wouldn’t figure in this war. Until now I have said that we three, Britain with her might fleet, America with the strongest air force, and Russia with the strongest land force on the continent, we three could have guaranteed the peace of the world for a long, long time to come. But now, I

don't know. People are frightened and disturbed all over. Everyone feels insecure again.¹⁸¹

On April 25, 1945, Stimson mentioned the political aspects of the bomb in a paper he submitted to President Truman:

Within four months we shall in all probability have completed the most terrible weapon ever known in human history, one bomb of which could destroy a whole city.

Although we have shared its development with the UK, physically the US is at present in the position of controlling the resources with which to construct and use it and no other nation could reach this position for some years.

Nevertheless it is practically certain that we could not remain in this position indefinitely. . . . The future may see a time when such weapon may be constructed in secret and used suddenly and effectively with devastating power by a wilful [*sic*] nation or group against an unsuspecting nation or group of much greater size and material power. With its aid even a very powerful unsuspecting nation might be conquered within a very few days by a very much smaller one, although probably the only nation which could enter into production within the next few years is Russia.

The world in its present state of moral advancement compared with its technical development would be eventually at the mercy of such a weapon. In other words, modern civilization might be completely destroyed.

In the light of our present position with reference to this weapon, the question of sharing it with other nations and, if so shared, upon what terms, becomes a primary question of our foreign relations. Also our leadership in the war and in the development of this weapon has placed a certain moral responsibility for any disaster to civilization which it would further.¹⁸²

Truman retorted to this paper dismissively: "Stimson seemed at least as much concerned with the role of the atomic bomb in the shaping of history as in its capacity to shorten this war."¹⁸³

Truman failed to grasp how short-lived the U.S. monopoly on atomic weapons would be until, in the late 1940's, the U.S.S.R. successfully tested their first atomic bomb. With both powers possessing weapons that could destroy entire civilizations, the fears of Szilard and Franck were realized as the world quivered at the thought of the indiscriminate nature of atomic warfare.

President Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb was imprudent. It was done not out of

¹⁸¹Edgar Snow, *Journey to the Beginning: A Personal View of Contemporary History* (New York: Random House, 1958), 360-61.

¹⁸²Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 87.

¹⁸³Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 87.

military necessity but as a power play against the U.S.S.R. The repercussions of his actions include the lingering tensions between the two countries and the rest of the world for the next roughly 40 years as the two super-powers contested for influence around the world.

Incontrovertibly, Truman must ultimately be held responsible for the introduction and politicization of nuclear weapons. Had he not decreed the wanton destruction of two Japanese cities in order to impress the world and shock the U.S.S.R. into a submissive posture, the threat of nuclear war might never have been unleashed upon the world. It was only 40 years after President Truman had ordered “the bomb” to be used against Japanese cities that the world was freed from the icy grip of fear in the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and the potential end of civilization itself should Russia and the U.S. ever unleash their nuclear arsenals.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alperovitz, Gar, and Sanho Tree. *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*. New York: Knopf, 1995.
- Arnold, Henry Harley. *Global Mission*. Military classics series. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab Books, 1989.
- Ballou, Robert Oleson. *Shinto, the Unconquered Enemy; Japan's Doctrine of Racial Superiority and World Conquest*. New York: Viking Press, 1945.
- Baldwin, Hanson Weightman. *Great Mistakes of the War*. New York: Harper & Bros, 1950.
- Blair, Clay. *Silent Victory The U.S. Submarine War against Japan*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975.
- Butow, Robert J. C. *Japan's Decision to Surrender*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954.
- Costello, John. *The Pacific War*. New York: Rawson, Wade, 1981.
- Cline, Ray S. *Washington Command Post: the Operations Division*. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1951.
- Combined Chiefs of Staff 643/3, "Estimate of the Enemy Situation (as of July 6, 1945)," July 8, 1945, pp. 9-10, "CCS 381 (6-4-43), Section 2, Part 5," JCS Decimal Files 1942-45, RG 218, NA.
- Donovan, Robert J. *Tumultuous Years The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1949-1953*. New York: Norton, 1982.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956; The White House Years*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963.
- Grew, Joseph C. *Turbulent Era; A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952.
- Haseman, John B. *The Thai Resistance Movement During the Second World War*. [De Kalb, Ill.]: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1978.
- Hiroshima-shi Nagasaki-shi Genbaku Saigaishi Henshū Inkai. *Hiroshima and*

- Nagasaki, the Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings.* New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Holtom, Daniel Clarence. *The National Faith of Japan; A Study in Modern Shinto.* New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1965.
- Holtom, Daniel Clarence. *The Political Philosophy of Modern Shintō A Study of the State Religion on Japan.* New York: AMS Press, 1984.
- Hoyt, Edwin Palmer. *The Kamikazes.* New York: Arbor House, 1983.
- Hull, Cordell. *Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. II:* New York, 1948.
- Ismay, Hastings Lionel Ismay. *The Memoirs of General Lord Ismay.* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974.
- Inoguchi, Rikihei, Tadashi Nakajima, and Roger Pineau. *The Divine Wind Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II.* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1978.
- Joint Intelligence Committee 181, "Japanese Surrender – Postwar Resistance," March 29, 1944, "JIC by No. 175-189," ACSI "P" Files, Box T-164, Entry 82, RG 319, NA.
- Joint Intelligence Committee 266/I, "Defeat of Japan by Blockade and Bombardment," April 18, 1945, "ABC 386 Japan (15 Feb. 45) Sec I-a," Box 504, Entry 421, RG 165, NA.
- King, Ernest Joseph, and Walter Muir Whitehill. *Fleet Admiral King, A Naval Record.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1952.
- Kipphardt, Heinar. *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer; A Play Freely Adapted on the Basis of the Documents by Heinar Kipphardt.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1969.
- Leahy, William D. *I Was There; The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time.* New York: Whittlesey House, 1950.
- Lewin, Ronald. *The American Magic Codes, Ciphers, and the Defeat of Japan.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982.
- Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney to Gen. Arnold, September 17, 1944, "McCormack Papers," Part 2, SRH-141, RG 457, NA.
- Memorandum for the President, from G. Edward Buxton, June 4, 1945, Rose Conway File, Papers of Harry S. Truman, HSTL

- Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2003.
- Raymond Swing broadcast, July 3, 1945, Box 27, Swing Papers, LC.
- Reston, James. *Deadline A Memoir*. New York: Random House, 1991.
- Rhoades, Weldon E. *Flying MacArthur to Victory*. Texas A & M University military history series, 1. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987.
- Riddle, Donald H. *The Truman Committee*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964.
- Schaffer, Ronald. *Wings of Judgment American Bombing in World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Sherrod, Robert Lee. *Tarawa; The Story of a Battle*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944.
- Smethurst, Richard J. *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism The Army and the Rural Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- Snow, Edgar. *Journey to the Beginning*. New York: Random House, 1958.
- Spector, Ronald H. *Eagle against the Sun The American War with Japan*. New York: Free Press, 1985.
- Statement by the President, May 8, 1945, Confidential Files, White House Central Files, HSTL; also in "ABC 387 Japan (15 Feb. 45)," Box 505, Entry 421, RG 165, NA.
- Stimson, Henry A., and Alice Bartlett Stimson. *Henry A. Stimson Papers*. 1858.
- Storry, Richard. *The Double Patriots; A Study of Japanese Nationalism*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1973.
- The New York Times*. New-York N.Y.: H.J. Raymond & Co, 1857. July 23, 1945 Truman, Margaret. *Harry S. Truman*. (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1973
- Truman, Harry S., Bess Wallace Truman, and Robert H. Ferrell. *Dear Bess The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959*. New York: Norton, 1983.
- Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman Year of Decisions (Vol. 1)*. New York: Doubleday, 1955.

Walker, Stephen. *Shockwave Countdown to Hiroshima*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005.

Wyden, Peter, *Day One: Before Hiroshima and After*, New York:Simon and Schuster, 1984, p. 163.