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The Decision and the Debate: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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The Decision and the Debate: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

by

Nick Tolleson

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education
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PART 1

Historiography: Why did we drop the atomic bombs?
Why did we drop the atomic bombs?

On August 6, 1945, a debate began. On that day, a uranium device known as “Little Boy” was detonated over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Two days later, on August 9, 1945, an implosion type device nicknamed “Fat Man” was used on the Japanese city of Nagasaki. As a result of these two atomic bombings, it’s estimated that 200,000 Japanese, mostly civilians, died, either instantly or from injuries sustained from the explosions. This event signaled the atomic age, and is something that historians have been discussing since that fateful day in 1945. So profound was this event in American consciousness, that historian J. Samuel Walker cites a 1999 poll conducted by the Newseum, a museum of news media located in Arlington, Virginia. The poll asked a selected panel of 67 journalists to take the top 100 stories of the 20th century. Among this large group of “prominent reporters, editors, broadcasters, photographers, and cartoonists”, the event that ranked the most significant was the atomic bombings of Japan in the summer of 1945. Considering this major event of the 20th century, the main issue that divides scholars is whether or not the bomb was necessary to bring the conflict with Japan to an end.

One side of the debate, dubbed the “traditional interpretation”, insist that the atomic bomb was needed in order to avoid an invasion of Japan and the large number of American casualties that would result. Heavily influenced by policy makers involved in the decision, historians who support this position tell of a Japan on the verge of defeat, but refusing to surrender, and argue that this forced President Truman to choose between dropping the bomb and staging an invasion.

The other side, known as the “revisionist interpretation”, which emerged during the 1960s, argued the bomb was not needed to end the war, citing a weakened Japan on the verge of defeat.

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seeking surrender terms on the condition their emperor would retain the throne. Historians of this vein argue that Truman and his advisors were aware of Japan’s desperate situation and its desire to drop out of the war, but still decided to use the bomb.

For my part, my interest in how technology affected the face and conduct of warfare led me to the atomic bomb. I’ve always loved reading and learning about World War I and World War II, and I realized that one major reason for this is that the early 20th century saw the emergence of technology that pushed war from the 18th and 19th centuries of limited warfare, to “total war”. No longer were there distinct rules of engagement, and the division between civilian and combatant became more and more blurred. Throughout history, technological advancements served to improve our way of life, and mankind managed to keep up with such advancements. However, with technological advancements in warfare, mankind created these awesome and terrible weapons, and using technology that was taking us into these dark and terrible places we never thought we’d reach. So, naturally, considering the effect technology had on warfare, the most significant thing that comes up is the atomic bomb. Thinking back to High School, the reasoning behind the use of the bomb was fairly simple: that Truman’s primary reason was to spare the American lives that would have been lost in an invasion of the Japanese home islands. Textbooks didn’t seem to go any further than that, and thus failed to fully examine such a crucial decision that affected the course of global history. Upon embarking on my research, I imagined the debate surrounding the atomic bomb as a conversation, focusing on information and interpretations that moved the conversation forward. For the goal of my thesis, I sought to examine what’s listed in the NYS Social Studies Curriculum as “Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan.”
During the late 40's and 50's, policy makers involved in the decision heavily influenced historians writing about the use of the atomic bomb. At this point in history, Americans were happy the war had been brought to an end, and there was this belief that the atomic bomb played a large role in this. As such, historians writing during this time did not really question the necessity of the bomb. Basing his interpretation on Secretary of State Henry Stimson's article “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb”, featured in the February 1947 issue of Harper's Weekly, Rudolph Winnacker in 1947 defended the decision on the grounds that there was no other way to force Japan into surrender. Though there had been suggested alternatives to direct military use, such as demonstration or a preliminary warning, they were deemed “impractical” because until the July 1945 test, no one knew the atomic bomb was going to work. “Nothing would have been more damaging”, Stimson wrote, “to our effort to obtain surrender than a warning or a demonstration followed by a dud.” Though the United States Strategic Bombing Survey of 1946 concluded air bombardment could “bring about sufficient pressure and obviate the need for invasion” without the need of the atomic bomb, Winnacker goes on to prove that Japan was unwilling to surrender. Winnacker does acknowledge the existence of a “peace party” within the Japanese government that favored peace, and that Japanese officials had been attempting to use Russia as mediator of peace. However, the rejection of the Potsdam Declaration, which promised destruction if the Japanese resisted, proved this peace party had little influence, and the “vague proposals” between Russia and Japan did not satisfy American objectives. Winnacker thus agrees with Stimson that in order to “extract a genuine surrender from the Emperor and his military advisers, they must be administered a tremendous shock

3 Winnacker, 28.
which would carry convincing proof of our power to destroy the empire." ⁴ For such purposes, Stimson stated, and Winnacker seems to agree, "the atomic bomb was an eminently suitable weapon." ⁵

Re-examining the decision to use the atomic bomb ten years later is Louis Morton. Morton felt that the passage of time between Hiroshima and 1957 warranted another look at that event. Following a similar approach to Winnacker, Morton focused on the unwillingness of Japan to surrender despite its losses, and put much weight into the accounts of Henry Stimson. In his discussion of alternatives to the bomb, Morton mentions a poll of 150 Chicago Laboratory scientists, in which 2/3 voted for a preliminary demonstration, while the rest were split between whether or not to use the bomb at all. Similar alternatives are also mentioned by Winnacker, and like Winnacker, Morton points out that many, including the Interim Committee designed to deal with the questions of the bomb, saw little value in such alternatives. ⁶ In fact, the Interim Committee’s conclusions towards the use of the bomb, and the focus on Stimson’s accounts, only serve to strengthen Morton’s argument of the necessity of the bomb. Morton went a little further than Winnacker in dealing with the issue of Japanese surrender, stating that the main obstacle was the “unconditional” part. “The Japanese believe”, Morton pointed out, “that “unconditional surrender” would be the equivalent of national extinction.” ⁷ However, there was no way of getting around it, as it was “firmly rooted in allied war aims and its renunciation was certain to lead to charges of appeasement.” ⁸ This fear of appeasement, Morton suggests, was a consideration in the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, 1945, which made no mention of the postwar state of the Emperor. The rejection of the declaration further proves the necessity of the

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⁴ Winnacker, 27.
⁵ Winnacker, 28.
⁷ Morton, 334.
⁸ Morton, 344.
bomb in Japan’s surrender, as Morton felt “such an action lay at the heart of the atomic bomb; events now seemed to justify its use.”⁹ Though delving further into questions regarding potential peace talks with Japan, Morton arrived at similar conclusions as Winnacker.

One departure from Winnacker’s interpretation is a strong focus on Russia. A historian in 1957, Morton was writing from a time in which postwar tensions between Russia and America had begun to take shape in what later would be referred to as the Cold War. When the bomb was something of an unsure thing, it wasn’t part of military plans, and therefore invasion plans were given the highest priority. Morton suggest that officials of the time were unsure whether or not the defeat of Japanese forces in the home island would be sufficient for Japanese forces elsewhere to do the same. With this in mind, Soviet participation was something long pursued by American officials. However, diplomatic relations changed in June of 1945. According to Truman, agreements with Stalin until that point had been a “one way street”, and that he “intended thereafter to be firm in his dealings with the Russians.”¹⁰ Admiral King is also quoted as saying “regardless of the desirability of the Russians entering the war”, there was no doubt “we could handle it alone.”¹¹ Morton suggests that “some responsible officials” feared the political consequences of Soviet intervention and saw the bomb as a “powerful deterrent to Soviet expansion in Europe”, but the only official Morton names regarding this viewpoint is Secretary of State James Byrnes, who felt the “bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe.”¹² However, though Stalin had voiced intentions to join the war on August 8, Americans had no exact date on when the Soviets would join the war. Also, the final date for the dropping

⁹ Morton, 350.
¹⁰ Morton, 342.
¹¹ Morton, 324.
¹² Morton, 347.
the bomb was left to General Spaatz, who had no idea when the Soviets were joining the fray. However, Morton goes on to state such viewpoints had little influence on the decision to use the bomb. Rather, the military situation in the Pacific had a greater role. Beyond that, Morton also suggests that once officials realized the potential of the bomb, there was an assumption it would be used. “At no time”, Stimson noted, “did I ever hear it suggested by the President, or by another responsible member of government, that atomic energy should not be used in the war.”

Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the most prominent scientist of the Manhattan Project, stated “we assumed if they [atomic bombs] were needed, they would be used.”

Though Morton had begun to link issues surrounding the use of the atomic bomb with diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, he nonetheless supported the traditional view that the bomb’s primary purpose was to end the war, and that it was needed to force a resistant Japan towards surrender. Bringing a different viewpoint in 1965 was Gar Alperovitz, who put more weight into that connection with Atomic Diplomacy. Alperovitz wrote during a time in which the use of atomic force waned due to the cultural upheaval taking place around the world. As society begun to be more outspoken in protest against the government, largely due to the Vietnam War, Alperovitz’s take on the decision to drop the atomic bomb reflected this social consciousness. With Atomic Diplomacy, Alpertovitz brought forth evidence that implied the principle reason for using that atomic bomb was to exert pressure on the Soviet Union. Alperovitz focused on American policy and Truman’s diplomatic relations with Russia following the defeat of Germany.

13 Morton, 350.
14 Morton, 335.
15 Morton, 339.
In postwar Europe, Truman had to deal with issues that involved expanding Soviet influence, such as predominant influence in Poland and Rumania, and Soviet objectives in Manchuria and North China. "Most key American policy makers", Alperovitz believed, "feared Soviet domination, the imposition of totalitarian governments, and the breakdown of economic interchange between Eastern and Western Europe." In Alperovitz's view, the proposed August 8 intervention of the Soviets in the Pacific war was more of a concern than the planned invasion of November 1. Byrnes voiced this opinion, stating "we wanted to get through with the Japanese phase of the war before the Russians came in", because he "feared what would happen when the Red Army entered Manchuria." Through all of this, Alperovitz felt that there was a desire to end the war before Russia got involved and before Soviet operations paved the way for domination in Manchuria and North Korea. Alperovitz mentions that Truman "admittedly knew very little about foreign affairs", and thus turned to the support of Roosevelt's advisors. Joseph Grew felt "a future war with Soviet Russia is as certain as anything in this world can be certain", and James Forrestal felt that "for some time the Russians had considered that we would not object if they took over all of Eastern Europe." In fact, the potential benefit of the atomic bomb led Truman to delay a confrontation with Stalin over issues in Central Europe and the Far East. In April of 1945, Byrnes told Truman that he believed the atomic bomb would "put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war." Stimson seconded this view, suggesting to the President in May to postpone the discussion of European issues because with the atomic bomb "we shall probably hold more cards in our hands than later." Adding to this argument, Alperovitz points out the timing in which Truman learned of the atomic bomb.

17 Alperovitz, 112.
19 Alperovitz, 63.
20 Alperovitz, 57.
Though Stimson had casually mentioned to Truman that an “immense project...was under way”, he didn’t fully brief Truman on the project until April 25, nearly two weeks after taking over for Roosevelt.21 It wasn’t until the April 23 meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov that Stimson wrote to Truman: “I think it is very important that I should have a talk with you as soon as possible...about an issue that has such bearing on our present foreign relations.”22 This only helps confirms Alperovitz’s view that diplomatic issues played a large role in the use of the atomic bomb.

Alperovitz’s connection between the atomic bomb and American diplomacy takes front and center in the Potsdam Conference on July 16. Hoping to avoid meeting with Stalin regarding issues with postwar Europe until the test results from Alamogordo, Truman had postponed the Potsdam Conference twice, in what Alperovitz called Truman’s “delayed showdown strategy”. When Truman hears of the successful test of the atomic bomb on July 21, Alperovitz calls this “the psychological turning point of the Conference.”23 In a diary entry by Stimson, he notes that Truman “said it gave him an entirely new feeling of confidence.”24 Thus, according to Alperovitz, the effect of the atomic bomb was a game changer, Truman now had the power to actively shape events within the Soviet sphere of influence. Though in Alperovitz’s words, his book solely “attempted to describe the influence of the atomic bomb on certain questions of diplomacy”, and influence diplomacy had on the use of the bomb “on the basis of the presently available evidence”, he nonetheless shed some doubt on the intentions behind the atomic bomb.25 One dominant theme Alperovitz returns to is from a quote by Stimson, in which justified a “delayed showdown strategy” by saying “it seems a terrible thing to gamble with such

21 Alperovitz, 55-56.
22 Alperovitz, 55.
23 Alperovitz, 150.
24 Alperovitz, 150.
25 Alperovitz, 236.
big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in hand.” 26 This “master card” view, Alperovitz suggests, had a huge influence in the decision to use the bomb. Going beyond Morton in connecting relations with Russia to the bomb, Alperovitz’s book caused many historians to seriously question the motives behind Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Following Gar Alperovitz’s Atomic Diplomacy, scholars developed a keen interest with regards to the influence Soviet-American relations in postwar Europe had on the decision to drop the atomic bomb. Reflecting the impact Atomic Diplomacy had on scholarly discussions of the atomic bomb in 1972, Thomas Patterson moved away from the constant focus on Stimson, and more on James Byrnes. Patterson’s sole piece of evidence with regards to the Soviet-atomic bomb connection is a conversion Byrnes had with Republican Senator Warren Austin on August 20, 1945. According to Patterson, this conversion included “significant comments on Potsdam, the atomic bomb, and relations with Russia.” 27

In Austin’s record of his conversation with Byrnes, he brings up issues previously raised by Alperovitz. The most significant, however, is Byrnes’ feelings towards Soviet entry into the war with Japan. In Austin’s words, Byrnes “had hoped that we could finish up the war with the Japanese without participation by the Russians.” 28 Austin then mentioned Byrnes’ thoughts regarding the original target date of Soviet entry into the Pacific conflict, August 15, 1945. According to Austin, Byrnes “hoped the Russians could not mobilize until that time because he knew of the development of the atomic bomb and the probability of its being effective.” 29

Though this differs from Alperovitz’s account, which stated Stalin was prepared to enter the war

26 Alperovitz, 57.
28 Patterson, 228.
29 Patterson, 228-229.
on August 8, Patterson still seems to be pushing forth Stimson’s “master card” view. However, Patterson does more than just focus on American perceptions towards Russia’s postwar intentions. Using the August 15 date, Byrnes told Austin that “the bomb dropped on Hiroshima woke him [Stalin] up”, noting the August 8 entry of the Soviets, claiming “the bomb advanced the date of Stalin’s mobilization by six days.”30 In Austin’s record of his conversation with Byrnes, Patterson sees a clear connection between the use of the atomic bomb to Russia’s entry into the war against Japan. Agreeing with Alperovitz, Patterson feels the primary goal of the atomic bomb was “keeping the Russians out.”31

According to Barton Bernstein, the problem with studies surrounding the use of the atomic bomb, and especially its connection to Soviet relations, was that historians focused too much on the Truman period and neglected to examine the influence of the Roosevelt administration. In Bernstein’s eyes, “Roosevelt initially defined the relationship of American diplomacy and the atomic bomb.”32 To develop his argument, Bernstein looked at the early stages of atomic bomb development. Roosevelt knew that the bomb could be a key to the war, as Vannevar Bush, a scientific advisor to the president and chairman of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, told Roosevelt the bomb “would be a thousand times more powerful than existing explosives, and its use might be determining.”33 He points out that Roosevelt regretted the necessity of an alliance with Russia, and feared the limited economic and political access the spread of Soviet influence would produce. This influenced his decision to establish an “Anglo-American monopoly” regarding the existence and development of the atomic bomb.34

30 Patterson, 229.
31 Patterson, 226.
33 Bernstein, 24.
34 Bernstein, 27.
Here, Bernstein suggested that many in Roosevelt’s administration felt once the bomb’s existence was revealed to the world, the Soviets would want a stake in the development and international control of it. This would leave the door open for “atomic diplomacy”. Following the conclusions of the Interim Committee, Stimson noted that “it was already apparent, that the critical questions in American policy toward atomic energy would be directly connected to Soviet Russia.”

Bernstein then furthers the idea mentioned by both Morton and Alperovitz, that it was always assumed from the beginning that the atomic bomb was a legitimate weapon. As far back as October of 1942, Stimson had directed General Leslie Groves that the mission is “to produce [the bomb] at the earliest possible date as to bring the war to a conclusion.” Coming into office after Roosevelt’s death, Truman trusted the advice of officials, predominantly Stimson and Byrnes, who not only had developed assumptions on the use of the bomb, but were also anti-Soviet. Like Alperovitz and Patterson, Bernstein suggests many of these advisors agreed with Stimson’s “master card” diplomacy. “No policy maker”, Bernstein thus argued, “ever effectively challenged this conception.” With this in mind, Truman inherited assumptions and policies regarding the atomic bomb that he found hard to move away from.

Though Bernstein supported the necessity of the bomb, and argued that Truman was heavily influenced by assumptions and policies established before coming into office, he nonetheless pointed out feelings that could have further influenced Truman towards the use of the bomb. Besides a quick end to the war, and possibly aiding in efforts to secure concessions in

\[35\] Bernstein, 39.
\[36\] Bernstein, 32.
\[37\] Bernstein, 41.
\[38\] Bernstein, 59.
a Soviet dominated postwar Europe, the bomb had another benefit: retribution. A few days following the bombing of Nagasaki, Truman hinted at this feeling in a private letter, stating:

"Nobody is more disturbed over the use of the atomic bomb than I am but I was greatly disturbed over the unwarranted attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. The only language they seem to understand is the one that we have been using to bombard them. When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast." 39

Bernstein doesn’t dwell too much on this statement of Truman, but one can suggest that due to the emphasis Alperovitz, Patterson, and Bernstein put on diplomatic intentions with regards to the bomb, it became harder to defend the long supported military reasons behind it.

In 1985, it was the 40th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was featured in a CBS “In The News” story, and was the focus of a July 1985 Time article titled, “My God, what have we done?” On August 6, 1985, Americans awoke to thousands of symbolic "death shadows" across the country as part of the “Shadow Project”, a stark reminder of the 40th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 40 It was in this mode of thinking in which Rufus Miles, Jr. focused his criticism towards the long held “myth” of the large number of averted deaths by the use of the atomic bomb. Acknowledging the influence of Stimson’s article in the 1947 issue of Harper’s Weekly, and its effect on the traditional perceptions towards the atomic bomb, Miles is the first to focus on the line by Stimson regarding the proposed invasion of November 1, 1945, in which he stated “I was informed that such operations might be expected

39 Bernstein, 61.
to cost over a million casualties to American forces alone.\textsuperscript{41} Though Alperovitz, Patterson, and Bernstein had questioned the solid view put forth by Winnacker and Morton that the bomb was necessary, Miles is the first to fully break from the traditional interpretation.

Miles’ main focus is to examine what he calls “the strange myth of a million lives saved.”\textsuperscript{42} This is a large part of the traditional perspective: that the bomb was used primarily to avoid the large amount of casualties an invasion of Japan would have cost. As proven in both Morton and Winnacker’s historical interpretations regarding the atomic decision, Miles argues that Stimson’s article had become the main reference point since its publication in 1947. In his discussion of the proposed November 1, 1945 invasion of Japan, Miles points to the June 18 White House meeting between Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to the minutes, officials felt that the casualty estimate with regards to the first 30 days of the Kyushu invasion “should not exceed the cost of Luzon”, a battle in the Philippines which resulted in 31,000 American casualties.\textsuperscript{43} Further supporting this estimate was General Douglas MacArthur’s Pacific report regarding his operations between March of 1944 and May 1945, which showed “13,742 U.S. killed compared to 310,165 Japanese killed, or a ratio of 22 to 1.”\textsuperscript{44} So, according to Miles, the million casualty estimate must have been an “off the top of the head” guess made in early 1945, before American officials realized how rapidly Japan’s military strength was deteriorating.\textsuperscript{45} One partial answer to this mystery, according to Miles, might be found in a letter Truman wrote on January 12, 1953. In this letter, Truman states that he asked General Marshall how many lives it would cost to invade Tokyo, and “it was his opinion that such an invasion

\textsuperscript{42} Miles, Jr., 121.
\textsuperscript{43} Miles, Jr., 134.
\textsuperscript{44} Miles, Jr., 134.
\textsuperscript{45} Miles, Jr., 137.
would cost at a minimum a quarter of a million American casualties, and might cost as many as a
million." But, according to Miles, "if we use the Pacific ration of deaths to casualties", Marshal
was estimating that American casualties could be between 50,000 and 250,000, quite different
from one million. As Morton pointed out, the invasion was seen necessary until the atomic
bomb test was proven to work. Miles thus finds it hard to believe that Truman would have
approved such an invasion if this was the casualty estimate they were working with. For Miles,
the exaggeration of casualty estimates was an attempt by Truman and others involved in the
decision to defend themselves on moral grounds.

Reexamining the alternatives that Morton and Winnacker had stated as "impractical",
Miles argued that there existed many bomb alternatives that had a high probability of success
with relatively low casualties, all of which were considered to some degree by Truman and his
advisors. Citing Morton's view towards the value of Soviet entry into the war, and supporting a
similar view put forth by Alperovitz, Patterson, and Bernstein, Miles concludes that American
officials felt the atomic bomb freed them from the diplomatic entanglements with Russia that
would have resulted in their entry into the war. Taking the idea of diplomatic concerns and
applying it to Japan, Miles put much emphasis on the alternative of negotiated peace with Japan.
Miles cites many advisors that felt Japan was defeated and that negotiations could work if there
were modifications to ""unconditional surrender"". Harry Hopkins informed Truman that
"Japan is doomed and the Japanese know it" informing Truman of the "peace feelers" being sent
out. Joseph Grew felt ""unconditional surrender"" should be defined in terms understandable to

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46 Miles, Jr., 137.
47 Miles, Jr., 137.
48 Miles, Jr., 139.
the Japanese who must be convinced that destruction or national suicide is not implied." Though Miles believes such efforts would have worked, he argues that peace talks weren’t fully considered once the successful bomb test on July 16 convinced Truman they had the means to end the war without concessions or negotiations with Japan. Japan’s rejection of the Potsdam Declaration only further favored the prompt use of the atomic bomb. In other words, Miles feels as if “atomic diplomacy” had a large role in the use of the atomic bomb on Japan.

Joining the debate again in 1985 was Alperovitz, who maintained his view of “atomic diplomacy”, but shifted his focus on the “assumption theory” put forth by Morton and Bernstein. In his newest edition of *Atomic Diplomacy*, Alperovitz examined statements made by many military leaders prior to August 6, voicing opposition to the bomb. In a June 18, 1945 diary entry, Admiral Leahy wrote “it is my opinion at the present time that a surrender of Japan can be arranged with terms that can be accepted by Japan.” Undersecretary of the Navy, Ralph Bard, told Truman on June 27, 1945, that he “had the feeling very definitely that the Japanese government may be searching for some opportunity which they could use as a medium of surrender.” On July 20, 1945, after being briefed by Stimson on the use of the bomb Dwight D. Eisenhower told Truman “Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of ‘face’…it wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing.” Using the testimony of military officials from the summer of 1945, it was clear that “Truman did not”, Alperovitz argued, “inherit a clear policy on the use of the bomb”. Alperovitz thus shed further doubt on the traditional interpretations defended by the likes of Bernstein and Morton, but more

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49 Miles, Jr., 125.
50 Miles, Jr., 128.
51 Miles, Jr., 129.
53 Alperovitz, 36.
54 Alperovitz, 36.
55 Alperovitz, 35.
importantly, Alperovitz’s reentry into the debate undermined the “at no time” statement Stimson made in his Harper’s Weekly article, a foundation of the traditional interpretation.

Following the works of Alperovitz, the 40th anniversary signaled a turning point in how society viewed the atomic bomb, and Miles no doubt was highly influenced by that. Another turning point with regards to the decision to use the atomic bomb came with the Enola Gay controversy of 1995. On January 30, 1995, an exhibition was planned called “The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II”, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This planned exhibition brought the dual perception of the bomb back into public consciousness. In this exhibit, viewers could see a vision that historians such as Morton and Winnacker put forth, that the bomb helped end the war and removed the need for invasion. On the other hand, those of the revisionist school that Alperovitz and Miles were apart of saw the horrible carnage it caused and its Cold War implications. Due to the controversy, the exhibit was cancelled, but it nonetheless stirred up both sides of the debate.

Robert Maddox, in his take on the atomic bomb decision, acknowledged the critics who accused policy makers of the time “of at best failing to explore alternatives”, as Miles did, and “at worst of using the bombs primarily to make the Soviet Union “more manageable””, something Miles, Bernstein, and Alperovitz explored. Defending the decision, Maddox sought to prove that evidence clearly indicated that Truman used the bomb to prevent a costly invasion. It is interesting to note that defenders of the bomb’s use in the 40s and 50s focused more on a resistant Japan than a desire to avoid a costly invasion. As historians began to question the decision more and more, it seems defenders of the traditional interpretation focused their efforts

more on moral arguments. Besides the focus on casualty estimates, historians defending the
decision began emphasizing Truman's role in the decision, despite the fact that many historians
had given him a passive role in events. While Maddox went through previously mentioned issues
such as a Japan on the verge of defeat, and Japanese hopes for peace, he took the examination of
World War II in a new direction, putting more focus on the military portion of 1945 Japanese
government. Maddox put an emphasis on the fact that the military faction held greater sway
over the government than the "peace party" had. As such, they were hoping to make the coming
American invasions so costly that the United States would abandon its policy of "unconditional
surrender". To support this argument, Maddox pointed out the military operations in Okinawa,
in which Japanese forces inflicted nearly 500,000 American casualties largely due to kamikazes,
and the dispatch of the Japanese battleship Yamato on its Okinawa suicide mission. Such
knowledge of Japanese ferocity could have been in the mind of Truman, when he said "when
you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast." Maddox's overall conclusion
was that the bomb was needed for a Japanese surrender.

Maddox then goes on to discussing the casualty estimate historians such as Miles had a
problem with. Strangely enough, casualty estimates weren't something historians writing shortly
after 1945, such as Winnacker and Morton, focused on. Writing ten years after Miles, Maddox
further clarifies the casualty estimates the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave Truman in the June 18, 1945
meeting. While Miles' casualty number focused on the invasion of Kyushu, Maddox's number
included that proposed 1946 invasion of Honshu. From the June 18 meeting, the total casualty
estimate was 193,500 - far from the "one million lives saved" officials such as Stimson put a
strong emphasis on. According to Maddox, some felt such a discrepancy revealed "sinister

57 Bernstein, 61.
motives", calling into question the necessity of the bombs. Such historians, Maddox argued, discredited the million number as a cover up, hoping to prove ideas of "atomic diplomacy". Regarding the June 18 report, Maddox pointed out that it noted that casualty estimates "are not subject to accurate estimate" and that the large number was "admittedly only an educated guess." Almost as if saying "cut them some slack", Maddox seemed to be suggesting revisionist historians look too much into the casualty estimates, and disregarded the feeling many historians had that these estimates were nothing more than a moral excuse.

Adding to the more traditional view towards the bomb's use was Alonzo Hamby. Again shifting the focus from policy makers such as Byrnes and Stimson to Truman, Hamby saw a man whose soldier experiences in World War I had a large influence on his decision to use the atomic bomb. As Maddox pointed out, the ferocity the Japanese demonstrated in the Okinawa invasion helped shape American perceptions towards the Japanese. According to Hamby, as Truman read the reports of Japanese soldiers fighting with "suicidal tenacity", Truman began to look back at the destruction and loss of fellow soldiers he experienced in France. Though Hamby never provides evidence of this, he does shine light of such feelings in the June 18 meeting with his Joint Chiefs of Staff. After reading the battle reports from Okinawa, Truman had reservations regarding the Kyushu invasion, asking his Chiefs if Kyushu would be "another Okinawa closer to Japan?" Directing his attention towards revisionist beliefs, Hamby suggests there is no "evidence in Truman's personal accounts that he saw the use of the bomb as a way of making a point to the Russians." He also goes into the suggestion that Japan would have surrendered without the use of the bomb, but with a combination of a naval blockade and the shock of Soviet

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58 Maddox, 73.
59 Maddox, 72.
61 Hamby, 25.
interference. Supporting the thoughts put forth by Winnacker, Morton, and Maddox, Hamby
points out “Japan did not muster the will to surrender until two atomic bombs had been
dropped.”62 Ultimately, Hamby goes back to Truman’s sympathy towards American soldiers,
focusing on the words of Francis Heller. Originally assigned to be part of the first wave of the
Honshu invasion, he noted “I thought this is where I would have been killed if not for the atomic
bomb.”63 It was the Francis Hellers, Hamby suggests, that “were the ultimate vindication” of
Truman’s decision to use the bomb.64

Whether for the military purposes of forcing a Japanese surrender, or diplomatic
intentions regarding Japan or Russia, many historians implied that once the bomb was proven a
sure thing with the test of July 1945, not many American officials, including Truman, argued
against its use. Whether focusing on military or diplomatic intentions, historians put great
weight into the words of Stimson. Entering the debate surrounding the bomb a second time in
1998, is Barton Bernstein. Though in 1975, Bernstein had argued that Truman had inherited the
assumption that the bomb was legitimate, and that “no policy maker ever effectively challenged
this conception”, his 1998 portrait of Truman reflected a man troubled by morality.65

Reflecting the doubt around the “million lives saved” belief that began as soon as 1985,
Bernstein reexamined the casualty estimates of the Japanese invasions. Bernstein noted that pre-
Hiroshima estimates were constantly “changing, and often unclear.”66 In his account of the June
18 meeting between Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Marshall informed Truman

62 Hamby, 25.
63 Hamby, 25.
64 Hamby, 25.
65 Bernstein, Barton J. “Truman and the A-Bomb: Targeting Noncombatants, Using the Bomb, and His Defending
66 Bernstein, 551.
that American casualties would be somewhere between 63,000 and 190,000. Bernstein points out that even that estimate was skewed, as it did not reflect the total number of troops that were to be utilized in the Kyushu invasion. Regardless, Bernstein states that there was no pre-Hiroshima estimate that reached anywhere near a million.\(^{67}\) As Miles did before him, Bernstein points to Truman’s January 1953 letter, in which he claims the million lives estimate was brought to him by Marshall. Both this letter and Stimson’s *Harpers Weekly* article formed the basis for this number. In terms of the high casualty claims, Bernstein reaches the same conclusion that Miles did: that the use of large numbers, for Truman anyways, was designed to ease Truman’s mind about the mass killings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and also to deal with the criticisms he suffered as a result of the decision.

Bernstein notes that after the war, Truman continued to defend his decision, claiming that he was always comfortable with it. Another aspect of Truman’s postwar justification Bernstein discusses is the presumed nature of the Japanese targets American officials had before August 6, 1945. In a diary entry dated July 25, 1945, Truman emphasized that he told Stimson to use the atomic bomb “so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children...the target will be purely a military one.”\(^{68}\) Looking at this statement, one can imply that Truman made it clear that the bomb was solely to be used on military targets. However, according to the minutes of the Interim Committee meeting of May 31, 1945, Stimson “agreed that the most desirable target would be a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers’ houses.”\(^{69}\) Truman was well informed of both the conclusions and the proceedings of the Committee, and Bernstein feels it is unlikely that Stimson

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\(^{67}\) Bernstein, 551.
\(^{68}\) Bernstein, 558.
\(^{69}\) Bernstein, 559.
deceived Truman about the nature of the Japanese targets. According to Bernstein, this might have been an act of self deception on Truman's part, as he seemed to not admit to himself that the brunt of bomb casualties would be civilian. Also, despite the fact that there was no mention of the atomic bomb in the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, in a response to a 1946 pro-Hiroshima article by Karl Compton, Truman stated "the Japanese were given fair warning."70

Far from being comfortable with the use of the atomic bomb, Bernstein suggests Truman felt a need to rewrite aspects of his pre-Hiroshima past.

Writing in 2005, Peter Kross joined the trend of defending Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb, and expands upon issues brought forth by Hamby. In his defense of Truman's decision, Kross took a closer look towards Japanese perceptions of the impending 1945 invasion, and their unwillingness to surrender. One source of evidence Kross uses is the intercepted diplomatic messages, known as "MAGIC", between Japanese officials. Through these messages, Truman learned of the transfer of thousands of Japanese troops to bases in Manchuria and plans to mount a guerilla war in order to defend against any possible American invasion.

Kross then goes into quoting Japanese militarists in an effort to strengthen arguments put forth by Winnacker, Morton, and Hanby. Baron Kantaro Suzuki, appointed Prime Minister in April 1945, stated that it was his intention to "fight to the very end...even if it meant the deaths of one hundred million Japanese."71 Another intercepted message Kross emphasizes is one between Japan's Soviet Ambassador, Naotake Sato, and Molotov. According to Sato, "the Pacific War, is a matter of life and death for Japan, and as a result of America's attitude, we have no choice but to continue the fight."72 Here, Kross reached a conclusion that Winnacker and Morton had

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70 Bernstein, 560.
72 Kross, 44.
reached over 40 years ago: that the shock of the bomb was the only thing that would force the Japanese into surrender.

Taking this argument even further, Kross goes on to suggest Japanese military officials were unwilling to surrender even after the bombing of Nagasaki on August 9. After Nagasaki, Kross notes, a hurried meeting of Japan’s Supreme Council took place with Emperor Hirohito to discuss what course of action to take. As mentioned before by historians such as Winnacker, the Emperor stated that Japan could not sustain any more losses and that surrender was the better choice. Kross then details a coup orchestrated by military officials who wanted to continue the war. Despite the fact the coup led by Lt. Col. Masahiko Takeshita failed, other soldiers revolted and tried to kill Prime Minister Suzuki in Tokyo, while Major Kenji Hatanka sought control of the government radio studio in an attempt to call the Japanese people to arms. With such evidence, Kross concludes that only the magnitude of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would have “forced the most militant elements of Japanese society to lay down their arms.”

Throughout my study regarding historical interpretations of the atomic bomb, I thought Truman would be a driving force, as he was the one that ultimately made the decision. Not only that, both textbooks and the NYS curriculum makes it seem as if Truman made the decision independently. However, this perception emerged that Truman was simply a man who got caught up in the whole atomic bomb question. Throughout my research, the person most historians gave the most weight to is Henry Stimson. Prior to the 60’s, many historians such as Winnacker and Morton used Stimson to justify the bomb’s use, as he was seen as the chief defender of the decision. During that period, the primary justification of the bomb’s use was

73 Kross, 45.
74 Kross, 45.
Japan’s unwillingness to surrender. In that view, the bomb is dropped, the war is ended, and Americans go home happy. However, as many Americans began questioning their government largely due to the Vietnam War, Alperovitz began linking diplomatic intentions with the bomb’s use, calling into question the purely military objectives put forth by Morton and Winnacker. Historians such as Miles, Bernstein, Patterson, and Alperovitz reinterpreted views put forth by officials such as Stimson, developing the concept of “atomic diplomacy”. Not until the 40th anniversary, and later the Enola Gay exhibit of the 50th anniversary, did historians like Maddox really began to examine the alternatives, question the supposed casualty justification, and debate the morality of the decision. Bernstein rejoined the debate, focusing on Truman’s conflicts with morality. Suddenly, in the works of Hamby and Kross, Truman came to represent the moral force behind the bomb’s use, and the Japanese were further vilified.

So, where does that leave us? In the course of my research, I started with little more than the traditional interpretation of the decision to use the bomb. From my perspective, the bomb was a military decision, and Truman was a driving force behind it. However, as I became aware of the revisionist interpretation, I learned that such explanations left students with an easy, but incomplete answer. Despite the fact that revisionist historians brought forth evidence that shed doubt on the traditional interpretation, the historical view that began in the late 40’s somehow worked its way into current textbooks, almost as if sneaking past any kind of scholarly work that criticized it. So, here we are, teaching from a curriculum that singles out Truman as the man behind the decision, pushing forth the idea that the bomb’s primary purpose was to spare the lives that would have been lost in the Japanese invasion. Looking at the Oswego City School District Regents Prep page, it has a chart regarding the decisions for and against the use of the
bomb. Nowhere in the chart does it list alternatives such as modifying the terms of "unconditional surrender", the potential of Soviet entry on Japanese surrender, or other suggested alternatives such as prior warning or preliminary demonstration. You could probably write entire chapters in textbooks on the possible alternatives to the bomb's use alone. Taking a look at a 2010 U.S. History and Government Regents Exam, students are given the task of writing a thematic essay dealing with a presidential action, and are expected to explain the circumstances and the impact of that decision. If a student chooses Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb on Japan, the scorer is supposed to look for an answer that "connects the need to force the "unconditional surrender" of Japan without high American casualties from a protracted invasion of the islands." While this naturally reflects the NYS curriculum, the main point is that students are supposed to connect the bomb with military concerns. Why not present students with the many alternatives, or the doubts scholars had with the military intentions that textbooks put so much emphasis on? Perhaps it's a matter of time constraint: such a discussion could consume too much class time. Then again, it could be part of what James Loewen called the "international good guy" approach, which the traditional interpretation supports. Taking Loewen's ideas further, the emphasis that textbooks put upon the traditional interpretation could be part of an effort to avoid difficult questions. In the end, I think that the decision to drop the atomic bomb deserves better treatment, as it can be a great way for students to become involved in a critical examination of history. The truth is out there, but it's not necessarily in the history textbooks.

PART 2

Original Research: Henry Stimson and Atomic Diplomacy
Henry Stimson and Atomic Diplomacy

What I learned in high school about why the United States used the atomic bomb against Japan never sounded like the full story. Attempting to gain a better understanding of why Truman chose to use this new weapon against the Japanese, I conducted historiographical research, looking at what historians had been saying about the events of August 6th and 9th in 1945. I found that long after the atomic bombs were used against Japan in the late summer of 1945, historians have been divided on whether or not the bomb was needed to bring the conflict with Japan to an end. One take on this decision that has persisted even today, dubbed the “traditional interpretation, insists that the atomic bomb was a necessary evil, something needed in order to avoid an invasion of Japan, and the large number of American casualties that would result. Heavily influenced by policy makers involved in the decision, historians who support this position tell of a Japan on the verge of defeat, but refusing to surrender, and argue that this forced President Harry Truman to choose between dropping the bomb and staging an invasion. This interpretation, in other words, sees the atomic bomb as a purely military weapon. However, in 1965, Gar Alperovitz offered another explanation for the bomb’s use in his book Atomic Diplomacy. Writing during a time in which the American public began to be more outspoken in protest against the government, largely due to the Vietnam War, Alperovitz brought forth evidence that implied the principle reason for the atomic bombs’ use was to exert pressure on the Soviet Union. In Alperovitz’s 1965 book, he focused on American policy and Truman’s diplomatic relations with Russia following the defeat of Germany. “Most key American policy makers”, Alperovitz believed, “feared Soviet domination, the imposition of totalitarian governments, and the breakdown of economic interchange between Eastern and Western
Europe.” Rather than a purely military weapon, Alperovitz believed that the atomic bomb was used primarily with diplomatic intentions in mind. Through an examination of the personal and official documents of those involved in “the decision”, there is much evidence to suggest that Truman’s decision to use the bomb was highly influenced by what Alperovitz called “atomic diplomacy”.

In Alperovitz’s take on the decision to drop the atomic bomb, Secretary of War Henry Stimson is perhaps the most influential individual, and his diary strongly supports Alperovitz’s reliance on his views towards the bomb. From 1943 until his retirement in September of 1945, Stimson was the person responsible for overseeing the Manhattan Project, the project the produced the atomic bomb. Much of Alperovitz’s theory regarding the intentions behind the bomb derives from a quote from Stimson, in which he justified postponing the Potsdam Conference of 1945 by saying “it seems a terrible thing to gamble with such big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in hand.” This “master card” view, Alperovitz strongly believes, had a huge impact on American policy makers when it came to deciding whether or not to use the newly available weapon following its successful first test in July of 1945. In the diaries of Stimson himself, a picture emerges of a man who began making strong connections between Russia and the atomic bomb, even before Truman came into office. Beyond his personal diary, Stimson’s "master card" view permeates many official documents, thus supporting the idea that "atomic diplomacy" played a large role in "the decision".

Towards the end of the European Theatre of World War II in 1944, the Soviets had gained a foothold in Eastern Europe as a result of the campaign against Nazi Germany. Due to their large

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78 Alperovitz, 57.
presence, Joseph Stalin gained a strong negotiating position as far the reorganization of postwar Europe was concerned. This greatly concerned many American policy makers as the Yalta Conference drew near in February of 1945, which was designed to be an international forum to discuss such matters. Such concerns begin to make their appearance in Stimson's diary on December 31, 1944, where he wrote about a meeting with Roosevelt regarding “troubles” with Russia. In the meeting, Stimson told Roosevelt that “we would not gain anything at present time by further easy concessions to Russia and recommending that we should be more vigorous on insisting upon a quid pro quo.”

Stimson knew before going into Yalta that Stalin’s occupation of Eastern Europe would most likely give him greater confidence in negotiating the state of postwar Europe. Another issue was the secret of the Manhattan Project. Prior to Yalta, in the early months of 1945, the Manhattan project was a closely guarded secret, and thus Stimson told Roosevelt that he “believed that it was essential not to take them into our confidence until we were sure to get a real quid pro quo from our frankness.”

In a way, the atomic bomb was shaping to be a new toy on the international playground, and the Russian kid would have to play nice if he wanted in on the secret. Once the bomb was used, it obviously couldn’t be kept a secret after that. Though Stimson “had no illusions as to the possibility of keeping it permanently” the secret of the atomic bomb, he wasn’t convinced “it was yet time to share it with Russia.” Even though the first successful test of the atomic bomb wouldn’t be for another five months, Stimson began to see the new weapon as a means of diplomatic leverage with the Soviets.

Beginning on February 3, 1945, leaders from the United States, Great Britain and Russia met at the Yalta Conference in Crimea, with the main focus being to developing an agenda for governing Germany during the postwar period. At this point in the issues surrounding postwar Europe, Franklin Roosevelt was still the President of the United States. Though the second meeting of the “Big Three” produced agreements that suggested a positive postwar cooperation among the three powers, after the conference Stimson still had doubts that sharing their secret with the Russians was a smart move. Noting a meeting with Director of the Office Scientific Research and Development Vannevar Bush in a diary entry on February 13, 1945, Stimson mentioned telling Bush that he “talked with Harvey Bundy about S-1 and its possible connection with the Russians.” Still a closely guarded secret, S-1 was the codename given for the Manhattan Project. Despite the fact that Bush was pleased with the proceedings of the conference at Yalta, Stimson argued that it was necessary to “hold off conferences on the subject until we have some much more tangible “fruits of repentance” from the Russians.” This same issue comes up two days later in Stimson’s diary, where he notes of a discussion with Bush regarding postwar problems surrounding the project. Bush felt strongly that there should be “a general pooling among the nations of all scientific research and the interchange of everything.” This would be a view shared by many members of the scientific community. Stimson knew that the project would not remain a secret forever and would necessitate a means of international control, so he did feel that “such a plan was along the right lines.” Still, Stimson was tying the bomb to diplomatic issues with Russia, and responded to Bush that it was “inadvisable” until

82 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
83 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
84 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
85 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
“we had gotten all we could in Russia in the way of liberation in exchange for S-1.” Before letting Russia in on their atomic secret, Stimson wanted to first make sure that Russia would make good on promises made at Yalta. The "liberation" Stimson referred to was newly liberated Poland from German occupation.

By March of 1945, Stimson noted that “this matter [the atomic bomb] now is taking up a good deal of my time.” On March 15, 1945, he wrote, “I spent part of the morning in getting ready for an interview with the President on this subject of S-1.” In this meeting with Roosevelt, the issue regarding sharing the project with Russia once again came up. Despite the fact that Stimson had felt great reluctance in sharing such knowledge, he regardless knew it was something that would need to be addressed. He told Roosevelt of “the two schools of thought that exist in respect to the future control after the war of this project”, one being the “secret close-in attempted control of the project by those who control it now”, and the other being “international control based upon freedom of both science and of access.” Stimson had long been adhering to the “secret close-in” approach, while Bush had suggested the other approach. Stimson urged Roosevelt that “those things must be settled before the first projectile is used.”

Stimson’s discussion with Roosevelt regarding the sharing of information would be the last time he spoke with the President about the bomb before his death on April 12, 1945.

There had been much discussion with regards to sharing the knowledge of the atomic bomb with Russia, which in an early April 1945 diary entry Stimson referred to as the “trustee question.”

In this entry, dated April 2, 1945, Stimson recalled a meeting with Secretary of State Edward Stettinius and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, in which that very issue was being discussed. During that meeting, Stettinius brought forth some “emergency news he wanted to consult us about.” The important part of Stettinius’s message, according to Stimson, regarded “the increasing strain of the relations between us and Russia”, which was the result of a “pretty sharp message from the President to Stalin.” One main focus of the Yalta Conference had been the postwar government of Poland. In a letter from Roosevelt to Stalin on February 6, 1945, Roosevelt wrote that “in so far as the Polish Government is concerned, I am greatly disturbed that the three great powers do not have a meeting of minds about the political setup in Poland.” At Yalta, it was agreed that the government of Poland should be “reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.” More specifically, it was agreed among the three powers that Poland would be allowed to hold “free and unfettered elections” to help form their postwar government. By late March of 1945, it seemed unlikely that Stalin was going to allow free elections in Poland. The message Bush was referring to was a letter Roosevelt wrote to Stalin on March 29, 1945. In it, Roosevelt felt that there had been a “discouraging lack progress made in the carrying out”, regarding the “political decisions which we reached at the Conference, particularly those regarding the Polish question.” In his letter, Roosevelt made it clear that “for the successful

93 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
94 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
97 “The Yalta Conference Agreement February 11, 1945.”
development of our program of international collaboration that this Polish question be settled fairly and speedily." In the eyes of Roosevelt, this would help push Soviet influence out of Russia, something historian Barton Bernstein focused on. Bernstein felt Roosevelt regretted the necessity of an alliance with Russia, and feared the limited economic and political access the spread of Soviet influence would produce. This influenced his decision to establish an "Anglo-American monopoly" regarding the existence and development of the atomic bomb. This quite possibly explained why Stimson felt it so necessary to keep Russia out of the loop. The day following his meeting with Forrestal and Stettinius, Stimson noted in his diary that "there has been growing quite a strain of irritating between our government and the Russians."

Following the death of Roosevelt, Harry Truman was sworn in as President on April 12, 1945. On that day, Truman noted in his diary of a short conversation between him and Stimson following Truman's first cabinet meeting. After the meeting, Truman wrote that Stimson "asked to speak to me about a most urgent matter." Though Stimson alluded to Truman of "an immense project that was underway", Truman wrote in his diary, "that was all he felt free to say at the time, and his statement left me puzzled." It's important to note that as Vice President to Roosevelt, Truman was left out of the loop regarding the Manhattan Project for most of its existence. In early 1942, Truman got wind of a facility being built near Pasco, Washington. This facility would go on to produce the plutonium needed to construct the atomic bomb. In a phone conversation between Stimson and Truman, Stimson wanted to quickly discuss a matter

99 "Letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Joseph Stalin (29 March 1945)."
101 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
103 Truman, 10-11.
“in connection with the plant in Pasco, Washington.” Stimson had been informed that there was a plant in Minneapolis where machinery had been removed, and he was curious about it. Stimson stated that the machinery was being used “not only for a specific purpose, but a unique purpose” as part of a “secret development”, and that he was “one of the group of two or three men in the whole world who know about it.” In a letter to his daughter on August 3, 1945, Truman admitted that Roosevelt “never did talk to me confidently about the war, or about foreign affairs or what he had in mind for the peace after the war.” This made Stimson a huge influence over Truman when the project was revealed to him, as Alperovitz mentioned that Truman “admittedly knew very little about foreign affairs”, and thus turned to the support of Roosevelt’s advisors. Apparently, Stimson saw information surrounding the project as something of a "need to know" basis. Truman would eventually follow this same treatment when finally sharing the bomb’s existence with Stalin at the Potsdam Conference.

Despite the fact that he was sworn in on April 12, 1945, Truman was not made fully aware of the Manhattan Project until a meeting between him and Stimson on April 25. Two days prior to that, Stimson wrote in his diary, “I was plunged into one of the most difficult situations I have ever had since I have been there.” Stimson here returned to making strong connections between the atomic bomb and relations with Russia. On April 23, 1945, he mentions that “Stettinius had got into a jam with Molotov, the Foreign Minister of Russia”, and that they had “apparently flatly refused to permit the agreement at Yalta” with regards to the formation of the Polish

105 Stoff, 162.
108 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
government. Instead, the Russians were “insisting that the Lublin [Russia dominated] people shall be recognized as the government of Poland”, despite the fact that Russia had agreed at Yalta to “a free and independent ballot for the ultimate choice of representatives in Poland.”

Seeing as “the State Department had got itself into a mess”, and agreements regarding postwar Europe between the Allied powers were falling apart, it’s at this point that Stimson decides to inform Truman of the Manhattan Project. In a memorandum to President Truman dated April 25, 1945, Stimson wrote:

“I think it is very important that I should have a talk with you as soon as possible on a highly secret matter. I mentioned it to you shortly after you took office but have not urged it since on account of the pressure you have been under. It, however, has such a bearing on our present foreign relations and has such an important effect upon all my thinking in this field that I think you ought to know about it without much further delay.”

The timing of Stimson’s April 25 memorandum is something Alperovitz used to support his view of the atomic bomb. Among other things, the memorandum mentioned that the only other country with the capability to construct an atomic bomb was Russia. In his memorandum, Stimson also acknowledged that “the question of sharing it with other nations and, if so shared, upon what terms, becomes a primary question of our foreign relations.” On the day of his memorandum, Stimson did reflect upon the conversation he had with Truman a few years ago, stating that Truman “remembered the time I refused to let him into this project when he was

109 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
110 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
111 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
112 Truman, 85.
113 Stoff, 95-96.
chairman of the Truman Committee”, a Senate committee put together to monitor military spending.\textsuperscript{114} Though Stimson had casually mentioned to Truman that an “immense project was under way”, he didn’t fully brief Truman on the project until April 25, 1945, nearly two weeks after taking over for Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{115} Not until after the troublesome meeting with Molotov that Stimson chooses to write Truman: “I think it is very important that I should have a talk with you as soon as possible about an issue that has such a bearing on our present foreign relations.”\textsuperscript{116} It becomes very clear that the “issue” is the atomic bomb, and that “foreign relations” refer to the differences between the United States and Russia. In Alperovitz’s eyes, this only helped confirm that diplomatic issues had been closely linked with the use of the atomic bomb. Following his meeting with Truman regarding “S-1”, Stimson mentions in his diary a meeting that would eventually lead to the establishment of the Interim Committee. Stimson had a meeting on May 1, 1945, with his assistants, Harvey Bundy and George Harrison. In this meeting, Bundy and Harrison brought a proposal regarding the “appointment of a committee to outline a program of action.”\textsuperscript{117} Bush and another scientist involved with the Manhattan Project, James Conant, had been urging Stimson to create a committee to study the problems associated with the development of the atomic bomb. Harrison’s main concern was that “some assurance must be given of the steps to be taken to provide essential controls over post war use and development both at home and abroad.”\textsuperscript{118} Essentially, this committee would make the big decisions regarding both the development and use of the atomic bomb, of which Stimson played a large role.

After Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945, the United States shifted its focus to defeating Japan, and once again, issues surrounding the postwar period created tension, especially between

\textsuperscript{114} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{115} Alperovitz, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{116} Alperovitz, 55.
\textsuperscript{117} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{118} Manhattan Engineering District Records, Harrison-Bundy files, folder # 69, RG 77, National Archives.
the United States and Russia. While some felt that Russian participation in the Pacific Theatre would help end the conflict sooner, there were some that felt Russian participation could increase their influence following the war. In many ways, this fear played a large role in the Yalta proceedings, as many of the “agreements” favored Western powers at the expense of Russian dominance. Russia had previously agreed in February of 1945 to enter the Pacific War “two or three months after Germany had surrendered”, under the condition that territorial matters between Russia and China would be settled first.\textsuperscript{119} In regards to a meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Moscow W. Averell Harriman on May 1, 1945, Stimson wrote in his diary that he “wanted to get his views on the situation in Russia and the chances of getting a Russia that we could work with.”\textsuperscript{120} Although Harriman felt the chances of Russia “implementing the new constitutions for the sixteen provinces” that were part of the Yalta agreements, Harriman nonetheless believed that Russia was “really afraid of our power or at least respects it.”\textsuperscript{121} After hearing Harriman’s statement, Stimson felt “very confidently our problem connected with S-1 in this matter.”\textsuperscript{122} If the Russians were afraid of, or at least respected the power of the United States before the bomb was used for the first time, Stimson knew the atomic bomb could only make dealing with the Russians easier.

While the Manhattan Project was still in development, many military leaders were in the process of planning an invasion of Japan. Stimson notes in his diary that he “had a short talk with [Army Chief of Staff General George] Marshall”, and asked Marshall if “we couldn’t hold matters off from very heavy involvement in casualties until after we had tried out S-1.”\textsuperscript{123} Though Russian involvement could prove beneficial to bringing the Pacific War to an end, many, Stimson

\textsuperscript{119} U.S. Dept. of State, “Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945”, pg. 984.
\textsuperscript{120} Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{121} Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{122} Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{123} Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
included, want to ensure Russian compliance with the agreements made at Yalta. Russia had failed to adhere to the promises made regarding Poland, so before including them in plans for an invasion of Japan, American leaders wanted to make sure Russia would not pull the same thing twice. Stimson received a message from Joseph Grew, Under Secretary of State, on May 13, 1945, which addressed those very concerns. Among the questions listed in Grew's message, he asked "should the Yalta decision in regard to the Soviet political desires in the Far East be reconsidered or carried into effect in whole or in part?". On that day, Stimson received a statement from the State Department, which included a list of "commitments" that Russia would have to adhere to before the United States would be prepared to respect Yalta agreements involving the Far East. Of primary concern to Stimson, Russia was to use their influence with the Chinese Communists to aid in the unification of China under a government run by the Chinese Nationalists, thus restoring Chinese sovereignty to Manchuria. According to Stimson, "these questions cut very deep and in my opinion are powerfully connected with our success with S-1."

More and more, Stimson saw in the atomic bomb a means of getting Russian compliance with regards to both postwar Europe and the Far East. In his diary on May 14, 1945, Stimson mentions a meeting he had with British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, where they discussed "general matters but especially S-1." He told Eden about the timetable of the project, as well as his own "feeling as to its bearing upon our present problems of an international character", most likely referring to the diplomatic issues between the United States and Russia. Feeling strongly that the atomic bomb would allow the United States a diplomatic edge, Stimson

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124 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
125 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
126 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
127 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
informed Eden that although complications stemmed from “Russia’s difficulties”, this nonetheless was “a place where we really held all the cards.” 128 It seems plausible that this could be the moment in time in which Stimson began to develop his “master card” viewpoint that Alperovitz put such great weight into, as Stimson mentioned something about a “royal flush”, and that “we mustn’t be a fool about how we play it.” 129 It stands to reason that this “royal flush” Stimson was referring to was in fact the atomic bomb.

Despite the fact that Stimson was convinced the atomic bomb would give the United States a huge advantage in diplomatic issues with Russia, in May of 1945, it was still untested. On May 15, 1945, Stimson met with a number of individuals, including Harriman, Forrestal, and Grew, to discuss issues Grew mentioned in his May 13 letter to Stimson. Stimson notes a “red hot session” regarding the “Yalta Conference and our relations with Russia.” 130 Such issues had yet to be resolved, and this was a problem, as “the trouble is that the President has now promised apparently to meet Stalin and Churchill on the first of July”, at the Potsdam Conference. 131 Stimson wrote in his diary that “over such a tangled wave of problems the S-1 secret would be dominant”, but again, as the bomb was still untested, he was not sure “whether this weapon was in our hand or not.” 132 It’s at this point with the Potsdam Conference fast approaching that Stimson first refers to the atomic bomb as the “master card”, and reveals a reluctance in taking part in the Potsdam Conference prior to the bomb’s first test. Though the test, Stimson though, would be “shortly afterwards”, he still felt it seemed “a terrible thing to gamble with such high big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in your hand.” 133 Still, even at this point

128 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
129 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
130 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
131 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
132 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
133 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
Truman hoped to work out the strained relations between the United States and Russia. In a diary entry dated May 19, 1945, Truman recalled a conversation with Harry Hopkins regarding a proposed meeting with Stalin to discuss agreements made at Yalta. Truman told Hopkins, who had been serving as an American emissary to Russia since Roosevelt’s administration, that he was “anxious to have a fair understanding with the Russian government”, and he expected Stalin “to carry his agreement out to the letter.” Russia had done little to make good on their agreement to allow free elections in Poland, and it seemed unlikely they would take any different action with regards to the Far East. Truman’s hope to work things out with Russia could have been out of necessity: the atomic bomb was still an unsure thing, and therefore Russia’s participation in the Pacific conflict seemed an essential component to its successful outcome.

Alperovitz’s connection between the atomic bomb and Russia thus takes center focus in the Potsdam Conference that began on July 16, 1945. Hoping to avoid a meeting with Stalin until the test results from Alamogordo, New Mexico, the site of the upcoming test, Truman had postponed the Potsdam Conference twice in what Alperovitz called Truman’s “delayed showdown strategy.” Excerpts from General Leslie Groves’ office diary support the theory put forth by Alperovitz that Truman wanted to delay the meeting with Stalin until he knew the atomic bomb was a viable weapon for sure. In an entry dated July 2, 1945, a discussion between Groves and lead scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer regarding setting the test date is the main focus. Though Oppenheimer had told Groves that “the 14th was possible but not sure”, and the “wisest thing was to schedule it for the 17th”, Groves disagreed. According to this entry, Groves felt

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135 Alperovitz, 55.

that it was "extremely important that it be completed by the earlier date because of the "various things involved", further stating that "the upper crust wanted it as soon as possible."\textsuperscript{137} Later in 1954, Oppenheimer went before a Security Hearing, and explained the reasoning behind the date of the first test. Attorney Lloyd Garrison asked Oppenheimer if there was a "particular effort to get it done before the Potsdam Conference", to which Oppenheimer replied, that he was told at the time that it would be "very important to know the state of affairs before the meeting at the Potsdam Conference."\textsuperscript{138}

Stimson again expressed a desire to hold off from participating in the Potsdam Conference in a memorandum he sent to Truman on May 16, 1945. In this memorandum that focused on the campaign against Japan, Stimson informed the President that:

> "The work of deploying our forces from Europe to the Pacific will necessarily take so long that there will be more time for your necessary diplomacy with the other large allies than some of our hasty friends realize. Therefore I believe that good and not harm would be done by the policy towards your coming meeting which you mentioned to me. We shall probably hold more cards in our hands later than now."\textsuperscript{139}

While the process of diverting troops from Europe from the Pacific would certainly take a great deal of time, the fact that Stimson once again talks about holding "more cards in our hands later than now" implies that this could have been another attempt to avoid meeting at the Potsdam Conference before the atomic bomb's July test.\textsuperscript{140} Since informing Truman of the Manhattan

\textsuperscript{137} U.S. National Archives, Record Group 200, National Archives Gift Collection, "Diary of Lt. Gen. Leslie R. Groves," Microfilm roll #2.
\textsuperscript{139} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{140} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
Project in April of 1945, Truman had developed a great reliance in Stimson with matters regarding the atomic bomb. By May, Truman had put a great deal of trust in what Stimson had to say regarding Russia, as he notes in a May 16 entry that Stimson “came in to discuss with me his viewpoint on the Russian situation”, and that he ‘has a very sound viewpoint on the matter.”

With the first test of the bomb less than a month away, many scientists working on the Manhattan Project feared the repercussions of not sharing its existence. This was something that Stimson had frequently considered and discussed with several individuals including Truman. Both Bush and Conant sent Stimson a series of memorandums regarding this very issue. During the Interim Meeting of May 14, 1945, Bush handed out a letter amongst the members that summarized the purpose of those letters. In it, Bush argued:

“There is hope that an arms race on this [nuclear] basis can be prevented, and even that the future peace of the world may be furthered, by complete international scientific and technical interchange on this subject, backed up by an international commission acting under an association of nations and having the authority to suspect.”

At this point in the project’s development, both the United States and Great Britain working together on completion of the Manhattan Project. As relations between Russia and the United States were becoming strained due to the many ignored or unsettled agreements made at Yalta, many feared keeping Russia out of the loop in terms of the atomic bomb would not end well. Think about it: your one of a few superpowers, and a nation you’ve been having a hard time getting along with turns out to have a weapon of incredible destructive power. Fearing for its

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141 Truman and Ferrel, 25.
142 Bush-Conant Files, Record Group 227, Microfilm M1392, Roll 4, Folder 19, National Archives
safety, and wanting to remain a superpower, it seemed only logical that keeping the secret from Russia could only result in an arms race. Some, fearing the power of the atomic bomb, went beyond asking for international cooperation in nuclear power. In a letter from Manhattan Project engineer O.C Brewster, Brewster pleaded Stimson not to use the weapon, arguing “with the threat of Germany removed we must stop this project...the destruction of civilization...is a very real and, I submit, almost inevitable result.” As the atomic bomb was surely going to change warfare forever, and create a significant danger to world peace, the argument for sharing the knowledge with Russia had some advantages. During the Interim Committee meeting on May 31, 1945, Dr. Oppenheimer felt that it would be “wise for the United States to offer to the world free interchange of information”, arguing that such a move would serve to strengthen the United States’ moral position. Still, those who had influence over the project felt differently. James Byrnes argued against sharing such knowledge. Noting this in his diary, Stimson wrote that “Mr. Byrnes expressed the view, which was generally agreed to by all present”, was to push forward with the Manhattan Project “to make certain that we stay ahead and at the same time make every effort to better our political relations with Russia.” Bush agreed, stating that he doubted “our ability to remain ahead permanently if we were to turn over completely to the Russians the results of our research.” Oppenheimer still saw hopes in cooperation, as he felt they had “always been friendly to science” and that they should “not prejudge the Russian attitude in this matter.” In response, Byrnes expressed his concern that if information was shared with the

143 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
144 Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945, Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection, page 8.
145 Manhattan Engineering District Records, Harrison-Bundy files, file 100, RG 77, National Archives.
146 Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945, Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection, page 9.
147 Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945, Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection, page 11.
Russians, that Stalin would then ask to be brought into the partnership.\(^{148}\) Apparently, neither Stimson, Byrnes, or any other members of the committee felt they had anything to gain in sharing the atomic bomb with Russia. Besides that, Stimson himself saw the bomb as a “master card”, something that would give the United States a diplomatic edge anyways.

Following the Interim Committee meeting on June 1, 1945, Stimson informed Truman on June 6 the committee’s recommendations. With regards to the questions surrounding sharing info with Russia, Stimson told Truman “that there should be no revelation to Russia or anyone else of our work in S-1 until the first bomb had been successfully laid on Japan.”\(^ {149}\) With regards to the issue of how the Russians would react to the knowledge that the United States possessed such a weapon, Stimson and other members of the committee decided to go with a “we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it” approach. Still, keeping the project a secret was a problem, as the Potsdam Conference was fast approaching. Stimson realized that “the greatest complication was what might happen at the meeting of the Big Three”, and was relieved when Truman told him he had postponed the meeting until July 15 in order to give those working on the bomb more time to complete the test.\(^ {150}\) However, Stimson did discuss with Truman the conditions under which the Russians could be made aware of the project. They discussed some “quid pro quos” that would have to be considered before taking Russia into “partnership”, which included “namely the settlement of the Polish, Rumanian, Yugoslavian, and Manchurian problems.”\(^ {151}\) Clearly, Truman agreed with Stimson that “it seems a terrible thing to gamble with such big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in hand.”\(^ {152}\) Still, at a White House meeting on June

\(^{148}\) Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945, Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection, page 11.

\(^{149}\) Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.

\(^{150}\) Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.

\(^{151}\) Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.

\(^{152}\) Alperovitz, 55.
18, one of Truman’s priorities with the upcoming Potsdam Conference was “to get from Russia all the assistance in the war that was possible.”

The issue of the atomic bomb at the Potsdam Conference came up again in the Interim Committee meeting June 21. Members of the committee realized that Truman couldn’t leave the conference without saying something to Stalin about the bomb, and there would be “considerable advantage” to in telling Stalin that the United States was working on a weapon that could be used in the campaign against Japan.

Still, the Interim Committee advised Truman to be sparse on the specifics, as they felt “should the Russians press for more details, they should be told that we were not ready to furnish more information at present.”

In disagreement with the decision made at the meeting, Harriman wrote a memorandum regarding the fears of the bomb’s use on June 26, 1945. Still feeling that Russia should be made aware of the atomic bomb, Harriman felt “great concern for the future if atomic power is no controlled though some effective international control.”

Stimson again returned to the issue of sharing the project with Russia in an entry on July 3, 1945. He suggested to Truman that when meeting with Stalin, that “he should look sharp and, if he found that he thought that Stalin was on good enough terms with him, he should shoot off at him what we had arranged.”

Even then, Stimson felt it was not necessary to disclose everything surrounding the project to Stalin, as he suggested to Truman that he simply tell Stalin that they were “busy with this thing and working like the dickens”, and that if he pressed for more details, to tell Stalin “that we were not prepared...
to give them.”\textsuperscript{158} Despite the fact that Stimson had urged Truman not to share specifics regarding the bomb, many scientists working on and familiar with the project felt that it was a moral imperative that the United States reveal their secret weapon to the world. In response to a petition by Leo Szilard, who co-wrote the famous 1939 letter with Albert Einstein to Roosevelt that led to the birth of the Manhattan Project, scientists at the project laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, fashioned their own version, dubbed the Oak Ridge Petition. Receiving the signatures of over 67 scientists, the petition argued it was the “moral obligation” of the United States to make this weapon known through a demonstration to the “peoples of the world.”\textsuperscript{159} A revised version of this petition was sent out on July 13, 1945, which stated that the bomb should only be used under certain conditions, one of them being that the “responsibility for use of atomic bombs is shared with our allies.”\textsuperscript{160}

On July 16, 1945, the first test of the atomic bomb, the Trinity Test, took place near Alamogordo, New Mexico. In a diary entry, Stimson wrote that “at 7:30 PM Harrison’s first message concerning the test of the S-1 bomb arrived and I took it at once to the President’s house and showed it to Truman and Byrnes.”\textsuperscript{161} The next day, Stimson wrote about British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s response to Harrison’s message, stating that Churchill was “intensely interested and greatly cheered up, but was strongly inclined against any disclosure.”\textsuperscript{162} In other words, the successful test changed nothing with regards to sharing the existence of the bomb with Russia. It seems Stimson at this point had changed his viewpoint on this particular

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{158} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\bibitem{159} U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, Harrison-Bundy File, folder #76.
\bibitem{160} U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, Harrison-Bundy File, folder #76.
\bibitem{161} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\bibitem{162} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\end{thebibliography}
issue, as he "argued against this to some length" with Churchill. In this diary entry dated July 17, 1945, Stimson began to feel that Russia should be made aware of the atomic bomb, for the sake of foreign relations with Russia.

The meeting between Stalin, Truman, and Churchill finally took place at the Potsdam Conference in a Berlin suburb on July 17, 1945. This meeting was meant to make decisions regarding the postwar treatment of Germany, the rehabilitation of Europe, and issues surrounding the Pacific War. Stimson found himself excluded from the meetings, and hoped to send his Assistant, John McCloy, to the conference in order to stay up to date. Stimson’s frustration with being kept out of the loop is evident in a July 19 diary entry, in which he writes, “shortly after nine o’clock I went around to the Little White House and saw Byrnes in respect to this matter of having McCloy participate in the Conference.” Byrne informed Stimson of restrictions placed upon the number of assistants each participating nation could bring, making McCloy’s inclusion impossible. Still, although Stimson had suddenly began to agree that sharing knowledge of the atomic bomb with Russia could have some benefits a few days prior to the Potsdam Conference, after a few days of dealing with the Russians, Stimson once again changed his tune. In Stimson’s memoirs, he admitted that he “personally was deeply disturbed, at Potsdam, by his first direct observation of the Russian police state in action.” Exhibiting a more pessimistic tone towards the Russians, Stimson wrote in his diary on July 19, 1945:

“It is becoming more and more evident to me that a nation whose system rests upon free speech and all the elements of freedom, as does ours, cannot be sure of getting on

163 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
164 Stimson, Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, microfilm, reel 9.
permanently with a nation where speech is strictly controlled and where the Government uses the iron hand of the secret police." 166

These very concerns were the focus of a memorandum entitled “Reflections on the Basic Problems Which Confront Us” that he gave to Truman on July 19, 1945. Stimson strongly felt that no international organization whose members included a nation “whose governmental action is so controlled by the autocratic machinery of a secret political police can give effective control of this new agency with its devastating possibilities.” 167 Stimson had long made it clear that he saw Russia as a rival power, one in which the atomic bomb would be key in dealing with, but this is the first time Stimson directly mentions ideological differences between the two nations.

Though the Trinity Test completed with success just before the Potsdam Conference opened up on July 17, 1945, Stimson did not receive a full report from Groves until July 21. This seemed to be a blear game changer in regards to diplomatic dealings with Russia. That day Stimson wrote in his diary that “at eleven thirty five General Groves’ special report was received by special courier”, and that he “made an appointment with the President for as soon as he could see me.” 168 In this meeting, Stimson read Groves’ report to Truman and Byrnes, and Truman responded by saying “it gave him an entirely new feeling of confidence.” 169 In the meeting, Churchill said 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.” 170 After learning of Groves’ report, Churchill said, “now I know what happened to Truman yesterday, when he got to

166 Stimson and Bundy, 638.
167 Stimson, Henry Lewis, *Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Library) microfilm, reel 128.
the meeting after having read this report he was a changed man."\textsuperscript{171} Stimson then wrote in his diary Churchill's response to the report, stating that "he now not only was not worried about giving the Russians information of the matter but was rather inclined to use it as an argument in our favor in the negotiations."\textsuperscript{172}

Up until July 16, 1945, the atomic bomb had not been tested, and therefore was not a firm alternative to an invasion of Japan. So, there was still a desire to include the Russians in the campaign in order to bring the Pacific War to a swifter end. This changed once the Trinity Test was successful. On July 23, Stimson wrote that "the President had told me at a meeting in the morning that he was very anxious to know whether Marshall felt that we needed the Russians in the war."\textsuperscript{173} According to Marshall, even if the United States went ahead without the aid of the Russians, "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."\textsuperscript{174} As previously stated by both Stimson and Churchill, the successful test of the atomic bomb gave Truman a new sense of confidence, and Stimson clearly felt this as he wrote that "Marshall felt as I felt sure he would not now with our new weapon we would not need the assistance of the Russians to conquer Japan."\textsuperscript{175}

With the atomic bomb now a viable weapon, the moment to inform Stalin had finally come on July 24, 1945. On one side, several scientists such as Bush and Oppenheimer had strongly pushed the benefits of sharing the existence of the atomic bomb with Russia. They had feared that a failure to do so would surely guarantee a postwar atmosphere of hostility and

\textsuperscript{171} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{172} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{173} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{174} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
\textsuperscript{175} Stimson, \textit{Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives}, microfilm, reel 9.
suspicion. However, other individuals such as Stimson and Byrnes, had felt keeping it a secret would be essential to gaining diplomatic advantages against Russia in the postwar world. Truman’s announcement to Stalin, seen from different viewpoints, makes it evident that Truman had stuck with the advice Stimson had been giving him since his memorandum on April 25, 1945. Truman himself noted, that “on July 24 I casually mentioned to Stalin that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force.” Standing five yards away, Churchill waited to see Stalin’s reaction, not knowing that Truman had done nothing more than make a casual mention of the bomb. Expecting an immediate reaction, Churchill noted that Stalin’s face “remained gay and genial” as the talk between Truman and Stalin soon came to an end. Truman later told Churchill that Stalin “never asked a question” about this weapon, which lead Churchill to conclude that Stalin clearly had little idea of the Manhattan Project, its product, or its potential significance. According to Byrnes, “at the close of the meeting of the Big Three on the afternoon of July 24, the President walked around the large circular table to talk to Stalin” presumably about the atomic bomb. Truman told Byrnes that he had informed Stalin that the United States had “developed a new bomb more destructive than any other known bomb, and that we planned to use it very soon unless Japan surrendered.” According to Truman, Stalin exhibited a lack of interest, only saying that he was happy to hear of the bomb and that he hoped the United States would use it. Another account of Truman’s announcement to Stalin came from Truman’s interpreter, Charles Bohlen. According to Bohlen, Truman had decided that it was important to Stalin about the bomb, but that Truman had said that he would “stroll over to

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180 Byrnes, 263.
181 Byrnes, 263.
Stalin and nonchalantly inform him.”  

Bohlen noted that Truman had failed to mention that the new weapon was an atomic bomb, and also that Stalin neither pressed for more information nor showed any interest in the news. “So offhand was Stalin’s response”, Bohlen recalled, “that there was some question in my mind whether the President’s message had got through.”  

One could argue that this very moment in time spurred what would be later known as the Cold War.

Truman finally made the fateful decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan while still at Potsdam on July 25, 1945. In Truman’s bombing order, a list of Japanese targets was chosen which included the cities of Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata, and Nagasaki. Coming full circle, Stimson was heavily involved, as “discussion of any all information concerning the use of the weapon against Japan is reserved to the Secretary of War and the President of the United States.”  

In a letter to Truman wrote to his wife, Bess, on July 31, 1945, Truman also exhibited a new sense of confidence, most likely due to the now available atomic bomb. In this letter, Truman wrote “he [Stalin] doesn’t know it but I have an ace in the hole”, a line very similar to Stimson’s “master card” statement from April of 1945.

The end goal of my thesis has been to examine what’s listed in the NYS Social Studies Curriculum as “Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan.” Thinking back to my time in High School Social Studies, the reasoning behind the atomic bomb’s use was very simple: that Truman’s primary reason was to spare the American lives that would have been lost in an invasion of the Japanese home islands. During my time doing my historiography, I found that despite the evidence revisionist historians such as Alperovitz had brought forth to the debate

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183 Bohlen, 247-248.
185 Truman and the Bomb, a Documentary History Chapter 8: The President To His Wife, July 31.
surrounding the bomb, the historical view that began in the 40s somehow had found its way into today’s classrooms, almost as if sneaking past any kind of work that criticized it. Taking a cue from Alperovitz, I sought to find just what role Henry Stimson had in those fateful days of August 1945. From the beginning, in his memorandum to Truman on April 25, 1945, all the way to the final bombing order on three months later, Henry Stimson’s “master card” view towards the bomb played heavily in its eventual use. A key line from Alperovitz’s book, “most key American policy makers feared Soviet domination, the imposition of totalitarian governments, and the breakdown of economic interchange between Eastern and Western Europe”, is something that is clearly evident in Stimson’s diaries, and many of the official documents related to the atomic bomb. The United States had come up with a weapon that could clearly level the international playing field, and in the case of postwar Europe and the Far East, important figures such as Stimson, Byrnes, and Truman clearly sought to use the atomic bomb to exert pressure on Soviet Russia. Many scientists such as Bush and Conant wanted to share the existence of the bomb, fearing that keeping from Stalin would only serve to create an atmosphere of distrust and hostility, which in turn would inevitably lead to an arms race. By examining the thoughts and writings of Stimson, it become clear that his “master card” viewpoint won the day, thus giving credence to what Alperovitz called “atomic diplomacy”.

So, where does that leave our students learning about the events and people that shaped the past? In my historiography, I suggested that presenting students with the many alternatives to the use of the bomb, or the doubts scholars had with the military intentions that textbooks put so much emphasis on would serve to give them a better understanding of why Truman chose to use the atomic bomb on Japan. While making students aware of such issues would surely serve to benefit their historical knowledge and give them a greater opportunity to become involved in a
critical examination of history, my time spent seeing things through the eyes of Alperovitz, with the words of Stimson as my guide, has allowed me to devise another means of discussing the decision to use the atomic bomb. It’s clear to me that tensions between the United States and Russia played heavily into both the use and the secrecy surrounding the atomic bomb. Again, Stimson, Truman, and many involved in “the decision” had been warned of a possible arms race, but felt that the risks were worth the advantage the United States would gain in diplomacy. No one can argue that the atomic bomb brought World War II to its conclusion, and that both the United States and Russia emerged as the world’s superpowers. Also, it’s clear that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave birth to the Nuclear Age and later the Cold War. However, perhaps not enough time is spent on how keeping the secret of the bomb from Russia and the connection between the bomb and diplomacy led to its eventual use. It seems to me that Stimson’s influence on Truman, and that fateful conversation between Truman and Stalin at Potsdam, could be seen as what laid the groundwork for the Cold War. Perhaps if Truman had listened to the scientists, things would have turned out differently. Regardless, instead of putting such emphasis on the military designs behind the atomic bomb, perhaps it’s time we take a page from Alperovitz, and instead begin focusing on “atomic diplomacy”.

PART 3

Presenting the research and using it in the classroom
Presenting the research

As I’ve always done with any kind of research project, I began with only a slight idea of what I was doing. This was the frame of mind I was in when I decided to participate in the graduate conference this past April. Just as there were different avenues I could have explored in my research, there were many ways I could present what I’ve done and what I’ve learned. Plus, I’ve always been somewhat of an introvert, so I was hesitant to do something that would involve speaking in front of an unknown number of strangers. However, considering the fact that I’m pursuing a career in education that would force me to work with many students, educators, and parents, this was something I’ve had to overcome. As this was a topic that I was greatly interested in, and due to the fact that I put forth great effort in researching it, I felt that sharing it would be something I would enjoy. Most importantly, though, I knew I had one more step in my thesis research to complete. I felt preparing for presenting at a scholarly conference would help me refine what I’ve taken out of this experience. This was perhaps the greatest challenge I faced in preparing for my presentation. So, just as I did with the beginning of my research, I decided to wing it, do my best, and see where it took me.

Choosing a topic for my thesis research wasn’t an easy one. The sheer task of completing this massive project was something that scared me, even before I took my first class as a graduate student. Being a history major, I went to the one place I knew I’d find a topic: the NYS social studies curriculum. It became clear to me that the only way I’d get through my research was to pick something that interested me: that is, something I wanted to learn more about, or a question I felt wasn’t clearly answered before I set out to the wilds of college. So, I thought back to high school, and remembered my affinity for leaning about how technology changed how
warfare on a global scale. Trying to get more specific, I remembered how much I enjoyed learning about World War I and II. This process of sifting through ideas and topics lead me to my question: what were the main motives behind the United States using the atomic bomb on Japan in 1945?

Even with a topic in mind, doing any kind of research, in my mind, begins with winging it. I wish I could say I developed this concrete plan at the get go, but I'll admit I was jumping into an ocean of interpretations and ideas, and I'm not that good of a swimmer. However, the interest I had in my topic acted as a driving force behind sifting through the many interpretations scholars and historians had developed as times changed. Over the course of my historiography, I found that scholars of the "traditional interpretation" focused on military intentions and insisted it was a better alternative to a costly invasion, while those of the "revisionist" school focused more on diplomatic intentions, and for many reasons argued that the bomb was not needed to end the war. Both sides offered compelling evidence to support their stance on the motives behind using the atomic bomb. However, sifting through all these facts and interpretations led to a book called "Atomic Diplomacy", and helped me sharpen where I wanted to go with my original research.

Through my historiographical research, I found that during the late 40s and 50s, policymakers involved in the decision heavily influenced what historians had to say about the bomb's use. During this period, Americans were happy the war had been brought to an end, and few questioned the necessity of the bomb. Relying heavily on Secretary of War Henry Stimson's article, "the decision to use the atomic bomb", which appeared in the February 1947 issue of Harper's Weekly, Rudolph Winnacker in 1947 defended the decision on the grounds that there was no other way to force a Japanese surrender. Writing ten years later, Louis Morton expanded
on ideas brought forth by Winnacker. Though the Interim Committee’s conclusion towards the use of the bomb only served to strengthen Morton’s argument of the bomb’s necessity, Morton put a new focus on Russia. While some officials felt Soviet aid could help end the war, Morton suggested that “some responsible officials” feared the political consequences of Soviet intervention and saw the bomb as a “powerful deterrent to Soviet expansion in Europe”.

However, Morton felt such viewpoints had little effect on the decision to use the bomb, and the only official Morton named regarding this viewpoint was Secretary of State James Byrnes, who felt the “bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe”. Morton thus became part of a trend of linking issues surrounding the use of the bomb to diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia.

A big shift in the perception towards the bomb’s use came in 1965, in a book called “atomic diplomacy” by Gar Alperovitz. Focusing on American policy and Truman’s diplomatic relations with Russia following the defeat of Germany, Alperovitz brought forth evidence implying that the bomb’s main purpose was to exert pressure on the Soviet Union. “Most key policy makers”, Alperovitz argued, “feared Soviet domination, the imposition of totalitarian governments, and the breakdown of economic interchange between Eastern and Western Europe.” Alperovitz felt there was a push to end the war against Japan before Russia got involved, and more importantly, before Soviet operations paved the way for domination in Manchuria and North Korea. A major point of Alperovitz’s argument is an interpretation of how Truman became aware of the atomic bomb’s existence. Though Stimson had mentioned that an “immense project was under way,” he didn’t fully brief Truman on the project until April 25, nearly two weeks after becoming President. Stimson became a central character for Alperovitz. Justifying postponing the Potsdam Conference, Stimson argued that, “it seems a terrible thing to
gamble with such big stakes in diplomacy without having your master card in hand.” This “master card” view, Alperovitz suggests, hugely impacted the decision to use the bomb. Going beyond Morton, Alperovitz’s book caused many historians to seriously question the motives behind Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Following Gar Alperovitz’s book, scholars developed a keen interest in the role Soviet-American relations in postwar Europe had on the decision to use the atomic bomb.

After reading Alperovitz’s book, I became interested in the “revisionist” take. For Alperovitz, Stimson perhaps had the biggest influence when it came to the decision, and for many reasons, he became the focus of my original research. From 1943 until his retirement in September of 1945, Stimson was responsible for overseeing the Manhattan Project. It was Stimson who let Truman in on the secret project codenamed “S-1”. Beyond his direct involvement in the Manhattan Project, his 1947 Harper’s Weekly article had a huge influence on traditional interpretations of the bomb’s use, and thus became an important reference point since its publication.

Ultimately, it was this trial and error process of sifting and refining that I used to prepare for my presentation. Knowing that you only have about 15 minutes to work with really forces you to nail down what you’re trying to say. Going through my historiography, I found many different paths I could have explored in my aim of learning more about the motives behind the United States using the bomb against Japan in 1945. I could have looked into why the United States chose the bomb over military alternatives that may have worked. I could have further examined evidence that Japan had lost their ability to fight, and why the United States failed to make greater efforts toward negotiating surrender. I could have explored how influential Franklin Roosevelt’s plans and feelings towards the bomb’s use were on Truman’s decision to
use it. In doing such research, it’s easy to get distracted by the many forks in the road all the information provides.

As I did at the end of my historiography, with my presentation I had to decide exactly what I wanted to focus on. I knew that my main aim had become to find evidence that either supported or disproved Alperovitz’s “atomic diplomacy” theory behind the bomb’s use. I had decided that I was going to argue, as I had done with my original research, there was strong enough evidence to support Alperovitz’s theory. With this in mind, I combed through the research I had completed, making notes of anything and everything that was relevant to this idea that that bomb’s primary purpose was a diplomatic one. Even with a clear idea of what I wanted to look for, this required further refinement and pruning. Focusing solely on the evidence that strengthened my argument, I was able to take over 50 pages of research, and boil it down into a 15 minute presentation. Though this was quite a challenge, it not only helped me refine what I was trying to get out of my research, it made me feel more confident about the end product.

Though teaching in of itself is a matter of trial and error, we live in a time in which state tests require us to clearly define what it is that we're trying to put in our students' heads. Looking back at how I approached my research, I found a few key parallels to teaching social studies.

One of my most vivid memories during my time as a teacher in training was at the start of my student teaching. I was assigned to an 11th grade history and government class, and the group of history teachers responsible for that subject were laying out there general plan of topics for the year. I had always known that there was the NYS social studies curriculum they had to follow, but I was never sure of how they prioritized all the topics included in that curriculum. In that room, I discovered how naive I was in thinking that teachers had a degree of control over
what they taught in their classes. Instead, their primary concern was simply, will it be on the state test? The curriculum was turned into a road map of people, places, and events. Though I initially felt uncomfortable with this "teaching to the test" model because it seemed like a constricting force put upon teachers, it also taught me how important it is to have a clear aim of what you want to do so you can figure out how you want to do it. For me, it was the topic of why the atomic bomb was used against Japan. I even used the NYS curriculum for ideas in how I might research my topic, just as teachers might use it to teach the same topic.

Then again, as any person will tell you, even when following a road map, you can get lost along the way. This was something that I had to face throughout my research. Though I had an idea of what I was researching, it was through trial and error that I arrived where I am now in my research. This same process can be applied to any classroom. Even though the state tests can guide you in what you should be teaching, it's through trial and error that you discover how you should teach. Though I began with a general topic, I considered many different paths and approaches before I refined what I wanted to get out of my research. I began with trying to ascertain the motives behind the bomb's use, and I ended up defending the idea that its primary purpose was as a diplomatic tool. This allowed me to get more and more specific as to what evidence I wanted to look for, and the people, places, and events I might find that evidence. Using the road map analogy again, teachers might follow this same process in how they approach similar topics. Social studies is one subject in which there is no limit in the amount of primary resources one can use to strengthen their lessons and enrich student learning. The only thing one has to do is see what's out there, and figure out what will work for whatever topic you're teaching or researching.
In both teaching and researching, the key to getting where you need to go is hitting the historical highway with an idea of where you want to go, and letting the journey do the rest.
Using it in the classroom

Lesson 1: “Historical debates” textbook activity

INTRODUCTION

Too often, textbooks present history in a way that is either partially biased, or free from the controversy that is part of any historical study. Although they can be a valuable resource, they rarely are sufficient enough in promoting higher level thinking. Not only that, history in of itself rarely tells both sides of the story, and textbooks sometimes reflect that. By having students deal with historical controversy and critique how textbooks handle historical events and people, they take a more active role in what they draw from history, thus becoming more engaged as they apply critical thinking to historical study. This lesson is designed to have students learn about the historical controversy surrounding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Using critical thinking and analysis, they are to reflect upon what they know and feel about the bombings, analyze what the textbooks say about them, research the differing historical perspectives, and write a passage that both provides information about the bombings and covers the historical controversy behind them.

CONNECTION TO THE STANDARDS

This lesson ties into the following NYS Social Studies Learning Standards

• Standard 1: History of the United States and New York
• Standard 2: World History
• Standard 3: Geography
OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Demonstrate their knowledge of the motives behind the atomic bomb's use through a class discussion
- Consider the varying interpretations of why the atomic bomb was used by researching the opposing views through the use of online sources
- Evaluate the treatment the textbook gives regarding why the atomic bomb was used by comparing it to what the students learned in their research
- Analyze the opposing views, and explain the two sides of the scholarly debate by identifying and presenting the supporting evidence, then synthesize them into a textbook passage that considers both
- Describe the components of their revised interpretation and explain what makes this more balanced through a class discussion

Peace in peril: 1933-1950

4. The atomic bomb

- B. Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

CONNECTION TO THE CURRICULUM

Unit Six: The United States in an age of global crisis: responsibility and cooperation
MATERIALS

- A copy of the following article, distributed among the entire class:

- Social Studies textbook

- Computers for research

PROCEDURE

Introductory lesson

1. Class discussion about the atomic bomb: Why was it used? Class discussion in which students share what they've learned about the motives behind the use of the atomic bomb.

   Guiding questions:
   - What do you remember about the atomic bomb, and why it was used?
   - How do you feel about its use? Do you think it was necessary, or not? Why?
   - How might historians disagree about this event?

2. Have students read "where do we stand on the A-bomb?" Teacher reads while the students fall along.
3. Class discussion: reflect on initial discussion - has what they learned fall under the traditionalist category or revisionist category?

Main lesson

1. Students will be given a list of online sources they can use to get information about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the scholarly debate surrounding the event. They are to explain the arguments, the evidence used to support this argument, and compare/contrast the arguments.

* NOTE: Students will be given 1-2 days in class to work on their research – they will then be given the rest of the week to work on it outside of class.

2. Students will analyze what their textbook has to say about the subject. They will then incorporate what they've learned into a "Historical debates" passage that they feel would be a good addition to the World War II section of their textbook. They will then be expected to explain why they think their treatment is an improvement upon how the textbook handles the subject. One thing students will be graded on is how well they incorporate evidence used by both interpretations.
Atomic bomb lesson 1 activity: “Historical debates”

YOUR TASK: The publishing company you work for has recently come under fire for presenting many historical events and people in a biased fashion. In an effort to provide school districts and their students with a more balanced approach that allows students to use critical thinking to create their own conclusions to history, they have decided to add “Historical debates” sections to their textbook chapters. You and your partner have been tasked to draft a passage of their World War II section that deals with the bombing of Hiroshima, and the differing interpretations historians have regarding this event.

You are to include:

- A write up of the event
- Two differing historical perspectives that answers the questions:
  - What were the motives behind the bomb’s use?
  - Was the bomb necessary to end the war?
    - Be sure to give a brief explanation of main argument as well as information used to support their argument for each side of the historical debate
- Excerpts from at least two primary documents that support each argument
- A separate, detailed explanation of how their textbook handles the subject, and how their revised chapter handles it.

Other things to consider in your research:
• What possible influences did Truman have in his decision to use the atomic bomb?
• Were there military options that could have been implemented?
• Was there evidence that Japan was ready to surrender before the bomb was used?
• What possible role did foreign relations between Russia and United States have in the decision to use the atomic bomb?
• How realistic was the casualty estimates used to justify the bomb’s use?

SOURCES

Below is a list of online sources that can be of use – other sources can be used, but must be reviewed prior to use

• Information about the atomic bomb

• Useful sites:
    http://eternalflames.ucsc.edu/exhibits/show/atomicopinions.
    http://www.naturalnews.com/019176_atomic_bomb_Hiroshima.html

• Useful sites for primary sources:

http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/pre-cold-war/hiroshima-nagasaki/index.htm


Lesson 2: “The Enola Gay Revisited”

INTRODUCTION

Very often, historical events create controversy among historians and the public alike. As such, disagreements arise in how events are interpreted and how they are presented. One such historical event is the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1995, the Smithsonian Museum made plans to construct an Enola Gay exhibit to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the bombings. It was immediately criticized for failing to present the events in their historical context, presenting the Japanese as victims and containing an anti-war message. Veterans felt that it didn’t adequately discuss Japan’s role in World War II, the struggle American soldiers suffered, or the relief American citizens felt once the war was over. As a result, the exhibit was significantly revised, and its historical content reduced. This controversy is an excellent chance for students to critically examine how history is presented, encouraging them to become more engaged as they apply higher level thinking to historical study. This lesson is designed to teach students about the historical controversy surrounding the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Using critical thinking and analysis, they are to reflect upon what they know about the bombings, examine how the exhibit presented them and why it stirred controversy, research the differing historical perspectives, and produce a proposal for a revised exhibit that both provides information about the events and covers the historical controversy behind them.

CONNECTION TO THE STANDARDS

This lesson ties into the following NYS Social Studies Learning Standards
- Standard 1: History of the United States and New York
- Standard 2: World History
- Standard 3: Geography

**CONNECTION TO THE CURRICULUM**

Unit Six: The United States in an age of global crisis: responsibility and cooperation

- Peace in peril: 1933-1950
  - 4. The atomic bomb
    - B. Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

**OBJECTIVES**

Students will...

- Discuss the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan and explain how it is a divisive historical subject through class discussion
- Evaluate the 1995 Enola Gay exhibit, and explain why it was controversial
- Evaluate the validity of those who designed the exhibit as well as those who protested it against its interpretation of the event and how its presented
- Consider the varying interpretations of why the atomic bomb was used by researching the opposing views through the use of online sources
- Analyze the opposing views, and explain the two sides of the scholarly debate by identifying and presenting the supporting evidence in a brief report
• Create an alternative exhibit, and be able to justify its interpretation of events and relevant content

MATERIALS

• Handouts of the following newspaper articles:
  
  
  
  

• Computers for research

• Materials for exhibit: display boards, markers, pencils, rulers, etc.

PROCEDURE

Introductory lesson:

1. Class discussion about the atomic bomb: How might the decision to use the atomic bomb divide historians and other people? What are your feelings towards what happened in August of 1945? Class discussion in which students reflect on what they know about the atomic bomb, and share what they feel are pros and cons about the bomb's use.

2. In groups of 3-4, have students read one of four news articles regarding the 1995 Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, and the controversy surrounding the exhibit.
3. Class discussion: students reflect on how they feel about the exhibit, and explain the possible issues surrounding the exhibit. How did the Enola Gay exhibit portray the atomic bomb? Consider what it says/doesn't say. How does it present the events? Does it present the atomic bombing in a positive or negative light? Are there things that are possibly being left out or exaggerated?

Main lesson:

In groups of 3-4, students are given the following task:

1. Students will be directed to a few resources in order to get a better handle on the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay controversy of 1995.

2. Students will be given a list of online sources they can use to get information about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the scholarly debate surrounding the event. They are to explain the arguments, the evidence used to support this argument, and compare/contrast the arguments.

   • NOTE: Students will be given 1-2 days in class to work on their research – they will then be given the rest of the week to work on it outside of class.

3. Students will analyze how the original exhibit presented the bombings. They will then incorporate what they’ve learned into an “Enola Gay Revisited” exhibit proposal that they feel would be a better means of presenting the events in their historical context and the controversy surrounding it. They will then be expected to explain why they think their treatment is an improvement upon how the original exhibit handled them. One thing students will be graded on is how well they incorporate evidence used by both interpretations.
Atomic bomb lesson 2 activity: “The Enola Gay Revisited”

YOUR TASK: Following the recent controversy surrounding the proposed Enola Gay exhibit, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum has decided to revise their exhibit with a more balanced approach that presents the event in its historical context and allows patrons to use critical thinking to create their own conclusions. They have asked you and your team of young historians to draft a proposal of a revised exhibit. You are to focus on:

1. Constructing the exhibit: include pictures, primary sources, text that incorporates research/sources.
2. Compare: what elements of the original exhibit did you use? What did you leave out? Why?
3. Justify: why is your revised exhibit more balanced?

You are to include:

- A write up of the event
- Relevant pictures
- Two differing historical perspectives that answers the questions:
  - What were the motives behind the bomb’s use?
  - Was the bomb necessary to end the war?
Be sure to give a brief explanation of main argument as well as information used to support their argument for each side of the historical debate.

- Excerpts from at least two primary documents that support each argument
- A separate, detailed explanation of how the previous exhibit handled the subject, and how your revised exhibit provides a more balanced treatment.

**Other things to consider in your research:**

- What possible influences did Truman have in his decision to use the atomic bomb?
- Were there military options that could have been implemented?
- Was there evidence that Japan was ready to surrender before the bomb was used?
- What possible role did foreign relations between Russia and United States have in the decision to use the atomic bomb?
- How realistic was the casualty estimates used to justify the bomb’s use?

**Sources**

- More background on the Enola Gay controversy:

  http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/post-cold-war/smithsonian-controversy/index.htm

- Information about the atomic bomb


    http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/atomic_bomb.htm.


    http://www.ushistory.org/us/51g.asp.

- Useful sites:


    http://eternalflames.ucsc.edu/exhibits/show/atomicopinions.

http://www.naturalnews.com/019176_atomic_bomb_Hiroshima.html


Useful sites for primary sources:


http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/pre-cold-war/hiroshima-nagasaki/index.htm


Smithsonian Scales Back Exhibit Of B-29 in Atomic Bomb Attack

By KAREN DE WITT,

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30—This spring, when the Smithsonian Institution displays part of the fuselage of the Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan, it will be accompanied only by a small plaque and perhaps a video interview with its flight crew.

Yielding to critics, the Smithsonian's Board of Regents voted today to eliminate the rest of the 10,000-square-foot exhibit that had been planned to commemorate the end of World War II and the 600-page script that was to accompany the bomber.

For months, veterans' groups and members of Congress have complained that the exhibit and script portrayed Americans as racist, raised doubts about the United States' rationale for dropping the bomb and underestimated the number of casualties that would have resulted if American troops had invaded Japan.

The complaints touched off a bitter debate about the morality of the bombing and the lessons of history, not only in the United States but also in Japan, America's leading economic rival.

"In this important anniversary year, veterans and their families were expecting, and rightly so, that the nation would honor and commemorate their valor and sacrifice," said I. Michael Heyman, secretary of the Smithsonian, in announcing today's decision to scale back the exhibit.
"They were not looking for analysis and, frankly, we did not give enough thought to the intense feelings such analysis would evoke."

The scaled-down exhibit is scheduled to open in May at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum here.

Arguments over the original plan erupted almost as soon as it became public more than a year ago. Veterans' groups complained that the presentation undervalued their part in ending the Pacific phase of World War II and painted the use of the bomb as tantamount to a war crime. They said it should have explained how the United States entered the war and should have mentioned Japanese atrocities during the war.

Members of Congress and veterans groups had called for the dismissal of Martin O. Harwit, the director of the Air and Space Museum. Mr. Heyman said that he would look into the management of the Air and Space Museum, but would not say whether he would ask for Mr. Harwit's resignation.

"One doesn't make personnel decisions in the middle of passion and heat," Mr. Heyman said at a news conference here. He also said there would be no catalogue of the show and that items and artifacts relating to the bombing, lent by the Government of Japan, would be returned.

Some veterans groups said they were pleased with today's decision, while others, including the Air Force Association, remained skeptical, saying it would wait until the exhibit opened before offering an opinion of today's decision.
But several historians and groups like the Physicians for Social Responsibility, an antinuclear group based in Washington, decried the move, calling it censorship and arguing that the original exhibit provided a historical context for the bombing that would not be available now.

Gone is any discussion of the issues that influenced President Harry S. Truman's decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and another on Nagasaki three days later. Japan surrendered on Aug. 14, 1945.

Gone are arguments over the morality of using atomic weapons. Gone, too, is talk of American lives saved by the use of the bomb or of the 130,000 Japanese who were killed or injured in the attack on Hiroshima, and the 75,000 killed or injured in Nagasaki.

After the veterans complained, several groups, including the American Legion, met with Smithsonian curators and, by late October, a compromise seemed to be in the making that would have preserved the entire exhibit. But the discussions broke down over the question of how many casualties the United States would have had if it had invaded Japan instead of dropping the bomb.

The veterans, who maintained that the exhibit underestimated the likely casualties, won support in Congress. Last week more than 80 Republican and Democratic members of the House sent a letter to Mr. Heyman demanding the dismissal of Mr. Harwit because of the controversy.

Michael D. McCurry, the White House press secretary, said President Clinton supported the Smithsonian's decision. He said the President conceded that academic freedom was an issue in the debate, but "nonetheless felt that some of the concerns expressed by veterans groups and others had merit."
But some historians and antiwar groups were bitterly disappointed by Mr. Heyman's decision.

"It was a tragic capitulation to political pressure," said Dr. Robert K. Musil, a historian who is director of policy and programs for Physicians for Social Responsibility. "It is reminiscent of the McCarthy era, when pro-military veterans groups intervened directly into what could be taught, learned or displayed about American history or American culture."

Dr. Musil said the American people had lost a chance to learn about the advent of the atomic age. "This is more than just about one bomb; this ushered in a whole new era, the atomic era with all its proliferation of weapons and environmental and health consequences," he said.

But leaders of the American Legion, which spearheaded the move to cancel the exhibit, said they were pleased with the decision.

The exhibit "was flawed from the start," said William M. Detweiler, national commander of the American Legion. "We don't have the complete picture, but over the past two months, it has become clear that the Air and Space Museum was committed to the negative message and intended to present it no matter what, or who, they offended."

The Enola Gay came to the Smithsonian from the Air Force in 1949. The historic bomber remained in storage in Suitland, Md., until the 1960's, when efforts to restore and reconstruct the plane were begun. The restoration began in earnest in 1984, when Mr. Harwit said he viewed it as a tool to teach the public about what led to the bombing of Hiroshima.
The decision by the United States to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima was one of such great historical importance -- taking the lives of an estimated 150,000 people and directly leading to the end of World War II -- that it cannot stop causing controversy.

Veterans have long wanted to memorialize the war by displaying the B-29 Superfortress that delivered the bomb on Aug. 6, 1945, and they are about to get their wish. The National Air and Space Museum plans to put the bomber, the Enola Gay, on display in May.

But after seeing previews of the tentative script and photographs that will be part of the exhibition, some veterans groups are worried that the Americans are depicted as aggressors and the Japanese as victims. The veterans, as well as military historians and members of Congress, say the exhibition -- "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II" -- will be too forgiving of the Japanese, and they have been pressuring the Smithsonian Institution, of which the air museum is part, to revise it. 24 Congressmen Protest

The pressure increased recently when 24 Congressmen sent a letter to the Smithsonian calling the exhibition anti-American and a "historically narrow, revisionist view" of the Enola Gay's mission.
On Tuesday, Robert McCormick Adams, the secretary of the Smithsonian, wrote the lawmakers that the exhibition was still "at an intermediate stage" and that its curators were soliciting comments from interested parties. The letter said the exhibition's view of World War II would be written "having not only maintained a respect for fact but also having achieved a very difficult, inherently controversial balance between the emphasis given to what led to the use of the bomb and the visual evidence of its destructiveness."

In addition to the renovated fuselage of the Enola Gay, the exhibition will include photographs, documents and artifacts, some from Japanese museums, to try to represent the various perspectives. It will include a history of the war and first-hand accounts of the bombings from Japanese civilians and will depict the scene at Nagasaki, where American forces dropped a second atomic bomb three days after the one at Hiroshima.

Museum officials say the exhibition will be a historically accurate presentation of controversial events that will be challenging to some visitors. "There are a lot of different schools of thought," said Martin Harwit, the museum director, "and there are very strong emotional feelings. I think what we've tried to do is to show what people have been thinking and what is important and to add that to the story." Critics Talks of Lapses

Military historians from the Army and the Air Force, as well as veterans groups, have said the exhibition's script does not persuasively explain Japanese aggression leading to the bombings or the pressures put on President Harry S. Truman and his advisers to end the war quickly and avoid the high number of casualties that could result from invading Japan.
In response, museum officials began last week to plan an additional display intended to address more of the early history of the war and its examples of Japanese aggression in the Pacific. But the debate over the museum's perspective on the atomic bomb reflects the worry over who will have the final word on the history of World War II.

"For survivors and veterans, it's a show of the importance of the commemorative voice," said Edward Linenthal, a professor of religion and American culture at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, an expert on war memorials who is a member of a museum's advisory board. "They see their numbers dwindling, and they want their imprint left and their narrative of the events."

Richard Hallion, the historian of the Air Force who is also on the advisory board, said: "We're now in a position in which the World War II veteran is disappearing, where younger people do not comprehend what this war was about. That's why this has a special responsibility to be as accurate as possible." 

Debate Over Lives Saved

Nothing in the exhibition's latest script is more controversial than the number of projected American casualties from an invasion of Japan, long thought to be the greatest factor in the decision of Truman and his top military strategists to drop the bombs. The exhibition's script, following recent historical work, says the casualties were estimated at 30,000 to 50,000. The figure advanced by many military historians and veterans groups is at least 10 times higher.

The museum's curators are in a position like that of the curators of the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima. The Japanese curators have begun to alter the message of their displays, though in the opposite direction. Alongside the descriptions of Japanese suffering from the atomic bomb
are now more references to Hiroshima's place in the Japanese war effort and a discussion of Truman's decision to go ahead with the bombing.
The World: The History That Tripped Over Memory; War of Words: What the Museum Couldn't Say

By TIMOTHY McNULTY

Published: February 05, 1995

IF the curators and historians had had their way, a visitor to the National Air and Space Museum would have had a chance, starting in May, to walk through an extraordinary exhibition designed to provoke questions, thought and perhaps debate about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima 50 years ago. The exhibit was going to be big, so big they figured they would have to restrict entry.

But nobody will see that exhibit as it was originally envisioned, and as it is depicted here. I.

Michael Heyman, who inherited what became the Enola Gay debacle when he took over as Secretary of the Smithsonian four months ago, announced last week that the renovated fuselage of the plane that dropped the bomb, along with a plaque and a video, are all that will remain.

In the exhibition's original form, the Enola Gay's fuselage would have been only the central artifact; before and after viewing it, visitors would be encouraged to re-examine the conventional understanding of the Pacific war, the decision to use nuclear warfare to end it, the horrors the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings wrought, and the nuclear arms race that followed.
"The primary goal of this exhibition will be to encourage visitors to undertake a thoughtful and balanced re-examination of these events," a July 1993 planning document said. "The Museum hopes that the proposed exhibition will contribute to a more profound discussion of the atomic bombings among the general public of the United States, Japan and elsewhere."

But veterans groups, then members of Congress, complained that the scripts were unbalanced and revisionist, an insult to the soldiers who fought and died. So the section on the cold war was deleted, and material was altered, or added, to give more emphasis to Japanese aggression and suffering by Americans. Japanese artifacts were pared down.

Then historians complained that the exhibit had become inaccurate and politicized. The Air and Space curators again revised it, and then again and again -- five times before they were done. No one was satisfied, all sides stayed angry.

The decision to go with a minimalist exhibition may mute the Hiroshima debate, but leaves the likelihood that the Smithsonian, as a Government-supported national museum, must confront basic questions about its role. Should it adopt the professional skepticism of historians toward the time-honored understanding of events, especially at moments when people want to celebrate their memories, not question them?

Here is a small sampling of what the exhibit would have offered -- and of the debate that killed it. TIMOTHY McNULTY THE EXHIBIT'S NARRATIVE A Fight to the Finish

In December 1941, Japan attacked U.S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and launched other surprise assaults against Allied territories in the Pacific. Thus began a wider conflict marked by extreme bitterness. For most Americans, this war was fundamentally different than the one
waged against Germany and Italy -- it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism. . . . It appeared to both sides that it was a fight to the finish. . . .

Instead of proving easy operations against an enemy on the verge of collapse, Iwo Jima and Okinawa became costly battles of attrition. . . . By the end of the fighting on the two islands, total U.S. casualties for the first half of 1945 had exceeded those suffered during the previous three years of the Pacific war. . . .

The Decision to Drop the Bomb

. . . Harry Truman inherited a very expensive bomb project that had always aimed at producing a military weapon. Furthermore, he was faced with the prospect of an invasion and he was told that the bomb would be useful for impressing the Soviet Union. He therefore saw no reason to avoid using the bomb. Alternatives . . . other than an invasion or atomic-bombing . . . are more obvious in hindsight than they were at the time. . . .

Opposition to dropping the bomb on Japan without warning also came from . . . Admiral [William D.] Leahy and General Eisenhower. Leahy said in 1950 that he had denounced the bombing as adopting "ethical standards common to barbarians in the dark ages," but 1945 documents only suggest that he was skeptical that the atomic bomb would ever work. Eisenhower claimed in 1948 . . . to have opposed the use of the bomb in conversations with President Truman. . . . But corroborating evidence for these assertions is weak. . . .

After the war, estimates of the number of casualties to be expected in an invasion of Japan were as high as half a million or more American dead -- twice the number of U.S. servicemen killed.
on all fronts during World War II. In fact, military staff studies in the spring of 1945 estimated
30,000 to 50,000 casualties -- dead and wounded -- in "Olympic," the invasion of Kyushu. Based
on the Okinawa campaign, that would have meant perhaps 10,000 American dead. Military
planners made no firm estimates for . . . the second invasion, but losses clearly would have been
higher.

Delivering the Bomb

The Army Air Forces quickly realized that a standard bomber group would not be able to carry
out the mission. To ensure secrecy, a uniquely organized . . . "composite group" trained in
isolation for a mission . . . kept secret even from them. . . .

Ground Zero: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On the morning of August 6, 1945, 544 first- and second-year students and eight teachers of the
First Hiroshima Municipal Girls' High School were clearing rubble to create a firebreak . . . some
300-500 meters (1,000-1,650 feet) from the hypocenter. They took the full force of the blast and
heat. Most died instantly. A few apparently survived the initial explosion only to die in the
flames that followed. . . . Perhaps 16 of the 544 girls survived. . . .

The Legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The introduction of nuclear weapons into the world, and their first use at Hiroshima and
Nagasaki, left powerful legacies. . . . For Japan, the United States and its Allies, a horrific war
was brought to an abrupt end, although at a cost debated to this day; for the world, a nuclear
arms race unfolded that still threatens unimaginable devastation.
THE DEBATE . . . The script gives the impression that President Truman, in making his decision to drop the bomb, did it to impress the Soviet Union rather than to save American lives in any potential invasion of Japan. The script also conveys the idea that Truman was motivated by racism and that dropping the bomb was unjustified. Fact: the exhibit includes 49 photos of Japanese casualties and 3 photos of American casualties. There are many additional problems with the script, including that it does not sufficiently emphasize Japan's military aggression during 1931-1945. . . .

Memo from Richard P. Hallion, the Air Force historian, April 19, 1994.

The United States Senate recently adopted a resolution sponsored by Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum which reminded the Smithsonian of its "obligation under Federal law to portray history in the proper context of the times." . . . The current (fifth) script of the Enola Gay exhibit utterly fails to "portray history in the proper context of the times."

. . . Certain irrevocable facts cannot be omitted without so corrupting the exhibit that it is reduced to mere propaganda, thus becoming an affront to "those who gave their lives for freedom." . . .

The statements by General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Admiral William D. Leahy which reflected their opinion that the bombings were unnecessary should . . . be re-inserted. . . .

Letter to I. Michael Heyman, Secretary of the Smithsonian, from a group of scholars, Nov. 16, 1994.

The highest of the figures cited for the invasion of Kyushu at the June 18 (1945) meeting appeared to be those of Admiral Leahy, who said that he expected loss rates comparable to those
suffered at Okinawa, or around 30 percent. Prof. Barton Bernstein of Stanford University ... [earlier] interpreted that figure to mean 30 percent of the 766,700 "total assault troops" Marshall [General George C. Marshall] had mentioned earlier in the meeting. ... 

Letter from Martin O. Harwit, the curator of the Air and Space Museum, to the American Legion's internal affairs director, Hubert R. Dagley, Jan. 9, 1995

From 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. the President conferred with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and Assistant Secretary of War McCloy. ... General Marshall and Admiral [Ernest J.] King both strongly advocated an invasion of Kyushu at the earliest practicable date. General Marshall is of the opinion that such an effort will not cost us in casualties more than 63,000 of the 190,000 combatant troops estimated as necessary for the operation.

A June 18, 1945 entry in Admiral Leahy's diary, as cited in Mr. Harwit's letter. Found by Professor Bernstein, it was used by curators to revise the exhibit's discussion of casualty estimates.

National Air and Space Museum officials, despite an accord reached with our representatives in September 1994 ... have restored to the exhibit highly debatable information which calls into question the morality and motives of President Truman's decision to end World War II quickly and decisively by using the atomic bomb. The hundreds of thousands of American boys whose lives were thus spared ... are, by this exhibit, now to be told their lives were purchased at the price of treachery and revenge.
After months of contention, a vastly scaled-down version of the Smithsonian Institution’s Enola Gay exhibit will open at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington on Wednesday. The debate -- which featured veterans' groups accusing the museum of revisionism, historians charging Congress with pandering to the veterans, and the resignation of the museum director, Martin Harwit -- was watched as closely in Japan as it was here.

Japan's anxiety about its reputation in America is especially acute this year, and not primarily because of the trade conflict. Hundreds of articles in the press dealing with the 50th anniversary of Japan's surrender have focused on America's ambivalence over its conduct in the last days of the war. The Japanese feel ambivalence too, and the parallels are instructive for both nations.

Contrary to what Americans might suppose, most Japanese are not bluntly critical of those who attacked the proposed Smithsonian exhibit questioning the wisdom of the decision to drop the bomb.

America's struggle over this part of its history reminds many Japanese that they, too, cannot raise the issue of Japan's wartime conduct without breaking a polite silence that is now half a century old.
Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's attempt to make the Parliament apologize for initiating the war failed as miserably as did our plans to display how we ended it. Attempts by the Japanese to organize exhibits or conferences on the Rape of Nanking and medical experiments on prisoners of war were met with barrages of criticism similar to those the Smithsonian faced.

In January, thousands of Japanese academics signed a petition criticizing the planned World War II museum in Tokyo for its neglect of Japanese atrocities. But Government officials, ignoring this protest and the resignation of a number of museum advisers, gave in to pressure from the relatives of wartime casualties. The new War Dead Peace Memorial Hall will offer no explanation of how the war started or escalated.

In both countries, the facts of wartime atrocities can be uncovered with little effort. What we do not yet know for sure is how we should react to those facts and what they imply about our societies today.

The sociologist Chizuko Ueno, writing in Asahi Shimbun, a Tokyo daily, observed that the Smithsonian exhibit "reminds us of how postwar Japan has yet to face up to the issues of the comfort women [women from conquered countries forced to serve as prostitutes to Japanese soldiers], reparations to former colonies and the aftermath of forced labor." In Japan as in the United States, opinion on the morality of the war is as split as it is stubbornly held.

Many Japanese would agree with the historian Barton Bernstein, who wrote in a recent issue of Foreign Affairs that it was a "redefinition of morality that made Hiroshima and Nagasaki possible." These Japanese would admit that it was in part the actions of their own military that helped shape this redefinition.
But there are perhaps more Japanese who, like the 80 members of Congress who clamored for the museum director's dismissal, reject any suggestion that Japan's moral conduct in the war was anything other than right. Many of Japan's most powerful leaders remain mute about actions against civilians that the rest of the world remembers as barbarous.

Both Americans' ambivalence over Hiroshima and what Kenzaburo Oe, winner of the 1994 Nobel Prize for Literature, called in his acceptance speech Japan's ambiguity over its role in the war involve a common reluctance to think too carefully or long about anything that threatens the national sense of legitimacy.

What most aggravated veterans' groups was the assertion, raised in the originally proposed exhibit, that fewer people would have died in an Allied invasion than did in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Might not the fervor with which critics attacked the Smithsonian spring from an unacknowledged ethical quandary over those who were killed in the bombing?

As a country founded on moral principles, America would of course prefer to think of its own aggression as always just. It runs against the American grain to think some lives less precious than others. But we insist upon the right to think otherwise if the lives in question are those of the enemy.

To argue that the deaths in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were necessary -- a small cost exacted to avoid a larger one -- may be part of the ongoing attempt to convince our consciences that we are not guilty of the crime our moral precepts threaten to charge us with.

In lieu of a full discussion in our schools and churches of what Hiroshima means, we are left with but this one exhibit -- now little more than the forward fuselage of a plane -- as a focus for
our doubts. One corner in a museum will have to suffice not only to narrate but also to judge a defining moment in our history. In any case, this is too much to ask of any exhibit, however large or complete.

In Hiroshima's Peace Park, a famous stone inscription refers to "a mistake that must never be repeated" -- but just whose mistake, Japan's or America's? The new Holocaust Museum in Washington may be as unambiguous a moral statement of the value of human life as Americans have ever made. Yet the museum is not without controversy or detractors. Some view the Holocaust less as a critical event of our century than as one of a series of tragic historical aberrations. Others feel the museum overly emphasizes the suffering of Jews at the expense of recognizing other Nazi victims.

Still, the impossibility of resolving the moral conundrums of modern warfare should not excuse us from looking at what our actions, right or wrong, have wrought. The part of a plane that goes on display this week may yet be enough to stir such reflection, if museum-goers let their imaginations recognize the role it played in something that the survivors of the bombing often insist (in another conundrum) is unimaginable.

The polished metal will speak loudly because the very absence in the exhibit of the photographs of victims and the half-melted rosary beads and the other proof of the human cost of Hiroshima attests to the presence of an American, as well as Japanese, tragedy. This may mean that the Enola Gay exhibit says more than wished by those who have censored it.