# **Truman's Motivations:**

# Using the Atomic Bomb in the Second World War

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Truman was a great champion of the atomic bomb, but why? Was the atomic bomb needed? In addition to playing an essential role in ending World War II, the atomic bomb served Truman in several other ways. The use of the atomic bomb at the end of the war helped the Truman administration avoid congressional investigations into the clandestine development and the cost of the atomic bomb, permitted the United States to retaliate against Japan for Pearl Harbor, and allowed Truman to use the atomic bomb as a bargaining tool with the Soviet Union. Because of these benefits, some historians have suggested that Truman did not pursue all reasonable measures to secure Japan's surrender before the use of the atomic bomb. If Truman's goal was to end the war as soon as possible, why did he attempt to delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war? Furthermore, why did he fail to modify the demand for Japan's unconditional surrender if he knew not guaranteeing the post-war existence of the emperor's position was a barrier to Japan's surrender?

Upon critical examination, however, one can determine that Truman hoped to end the war as soon as possible without paying Stalin too high a price for the Soviet Union's intervention. Moreover, neither the clarification of the Emperor's post-war position nor the Soviet Union's entry into the war would have led to Japan's surrender; and therefore the atomic bomb was necessary and responsible for forcing Japan's capitulation.

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#### **INTRODUCTION:**

"A bright light filled the plane. The first shock wave hit us. We were eleven and a half slant miles from the atomic explosion, but the whole airplane cracked and crinkled from the blast" recalled Colonel Paul Tibbets, the pilot who dropped the atomic bomb on Japan (Seattletimes.com). Truman was a great champion of the atomic bomb. In addition to playing an essential role in ending World War II, the atomic bomb served Truman in several other ways. The use of the atomic bomb at the end of the war helped the Truman administration avoid congressional investigations into the clandestine development and the cost of the atomic bomb, permitted the United States to retaliate against Japan for Pearl Harbor, and allowed Truman to use the atomic bomb as a bargaining tool with the Soviet Union. Because of these benefits, some historians have suggested that Truman did not pursue all reasonable measures to secure Japan's surrender before the use of the atomic bomb. If Truman's goal was to end the war as soon as possible, why did he attempt to delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war? Furthermore, why did he fail to modify the demand for Japan's unconditional surrender if he knew not guaranteeing the post-war existence of the emperor's position was a barrier to Japan's surrender? Upon critical examination, however, one can determine that Truman hoped to end the war as soon as possible without paying Stalin too high a price for the Soviet Union's intervention. Moreover, neither the clarification of the Emperor's post-war position nor the Soviet Union's entry into the war would have led to Japan's surrender; and therefore the atomic bomb was necessary and responsible for forcing Japan's capitulation.

#### BENEFITS OF USING THE ATOMIC BOMB FOR TRUMAN'S ADMINISTRATION:

The incredible cost of developing the atomic bomb was itself an incentive for its use in World War II. The cost of creating the atomic bomb was approximately two billion dollars (Sherwin, 138). If you convert that cost into today's dollars the cost of its development would near \$20 billion (Brooks.edu). To put this in perspective, in today's dollars the total cost of all the bombs, mines, and grenades used throughout the entire Second World War was only \$31.5 billion and the total cost of all the small arms materiel used in the entire war was only \$24 billion (Brooks.edu). Since the atomic bomb's development was hidden from congress and the American public throughout the war, Byrnes, the director of the Office of War Mobilization, was concerned that if "the project proves a failure, it will then be subjected to relentless investigations and criticism" (Sherwin, 200). Likewise Groves revealed more concerns in his memorandum written about two weeks before Roosevelt's death: "[Roosevelt] was certain that the weapon would bring the war to a rapid conclusion, thereby justifying the years of effort, the vast expenditures, and the judgement of the officials responsible for the project" (Sherwin, 145). Furthermore, after the Germans were defeated, the Allied effort to develop the atomic bomb increased. Opprenheimer recalled after the war: "I don't think there was any time where we worked harder at the speed-up than in the period after the German surrender and the actual use of the bomb...." (Sherwin, 145). The atomic bombs' role in terminating the war did prevent endless investigations of the Truman administration. Although it is impossible to enter Truman's mind, one can speculate that its cost provided an incentive for its use.

Furthermore, Truman may have used the atomic bomb to retaliate against Japan for their attack on Pearl Harbor. After hearing of the results of the raid against Hiroshima, Truman spoke biting words about the atomic bomb's destruction: "This is the greatest thing in history" (Sherwin, 221). This does not prove that Truman's principle motivation for using the atomic

bomb was to retaliate, but Pearl Harbor was in Truman's memory: "Nobody is more disturbed over the use of atomic bombs than I am but I was greatly disturbed over the unwarranted attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and their murder of our prisoners of war" (Alperovitz, 563). In defending the use of the atomic bomb he particularly mentioned Pearl Harbor, and the brutality that the Japanese inflicted upon American prisoners of war. Truman's diction suggests that he harbored resentment towards Japan: "The only language they seem to understand is the one we have been using to bombard them. When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast...." (Alperovitz, 563). Although it is impossible to determine what Truman thought or felt one can speculate that Japan's brutality played a role in his decision to use the atomic bomb.

The United States most certainly considered Russia a factor in the early development of the atomic bomb: "There was never from about two weeks from the time I [Groves] took charge of this Project any illusion on my part but that Russia was our enemy...." (Sherwin, 62). Roosevelt, the president of the United States before Truman, also shared this view: "[The] President began to deal with atomic energy as an integral part of his general diplomacy, linking and encompassing both the current wartime situation and the shape of postwar affairs" (Sherwin, 84). Roosevelt was also cognizant of how Churchill hoped the atomic bomb could be used as a bargaining chip with the Soviet Union (Sherwin, 68). Likewise from the very onset of the project Groves viewed Russia as America's enemy. Roosevelt was made totally aware of the possible political implications of using the atomic bomb as Simpson discussed with Roosevelt "the idea of using the [atomic bomb] as a bargaining counter in postwar negotiations with the Soviet Union" (Sherwin, 166). Furthermore Chairman of the OSRD (Atomic Energy Executive Committee) wrote that the "major consideration must be that of national security and postwar strategic significance" (Sherwin, 80). From the earliest stages of the atomic bomb's development politicians were considering its postwar significance.

Truman's advisors heavily influenced Truman's feeling towards the Soviet Union. Truman became president of the United States following Roosevelt's tragic death. And since Roosevelt and Truman were not the best of friends to say the least (which is in and of itself an interesting matter) Truman was relatively uninformed about the atomic bomb's development and Roosevelt's international policies relating to the Soviet Union. Truman felt bound by Roosevelt's former policy to use the atomic bomb in the war, and not to open up negotiations with the Soviet Union because he had not been elected president; Roosevelt had won this position (Sherwin, 146). His lack of information also allowed his advisors to easily mold his opinion of the Soviet Union. Roosevelt had not kept Truman informed of his foreign policy; therefore, when Truman became president he lacked his own foreign policy, and consequently adopted the foreign policy of his advisors. In describing how Truman's policy was shaped Kissinger said, "Soviet policies were explained to Truman in inherent bad faith model. [It is] clearly self-perpetuating for the model itself denies the existence of data that could disconfirm it" (Sherwin, 153). From the earliest outset Truman's advisors painted the Soviet Union in the worst possible light. Additionally, it was the belief of Stimson, Truman and Byrnes that only after the power of the atomic bomb was shown would the Soviet Union become accepting of America's point of view and territorial objectives (Sherwin, 194). Truman's advisors convinced him that if the atomic bomb was used the Soviet Union, an enemy, might be kept at bay.

#### TROUBLING QUESTION ABOUT THE DECISION TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB:

There is some evidence that suggests that the atomic bomb was not necessary to secure Japan's surrender. If the bomb was truly developed to end the war as soon as possible, why wasn't the future existence of the position of the Emperor guaranteed? This appears contradictory, since his position was maintained after the war. Why wasn't the Soviet Union's intent made clearer? Nevertheless, "On August 6 an American B-29 dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima without warning, devastating the city and killing as many as 80,000 people" (Sigal, 2). From a humanitarian point of view if the use of the atomic bomb could have been avoided Hiroshima was a great tragedy. There is some support for this speculation. The United States' Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that "in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated" (Alperovitz, 645). In spite of this statement, however, if one carefully examines this survey, one realizes it did not accurately reflect Japan's willingness to surrender.

Additionally, air force General Curtis LeMay insulted the use of the atomic bomb, calling the new weapon "the worst thing that every happened.... Even without the atomic bomb and the Russian entry into the war, Japan would have surrendered in two weeks" (Sigal, 178). At first glance this statement in unsettling, however, the motivation of the pilot must be considered. The air force was not a champion of the atomic bomb. They would rather show that the conventional bombing campaigns alone were responsible for driving Japan to its knees. Atomic bombs, unlike bombing campaigns, only require a few airplanes and would not necessitate a large air force. Nevertheless, the troubling question has been raised: Was the atomic bomb necessary, and was every reasonable measure taken to force Japan's surrender before its use?

### SOVIET UNION'S EFFECTS ON JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES:

Until the Soviet Union's invasion of Japan, many Japanese hoped the Soviet Union would intervene on their behalf: "Notwithstanding Sato's warnings that the Soviets would not alter the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, the summary characterized Togo as still blindly bent on 'fly[ing] into the arms of Russia' despite 'the possibility that Russia might not be there to catch him' "(Frank, 238). Near the end of the war, however, Togo was convinced that the Soviet Union had no intention of helping Japan, because they had already made agreements with America to divide up the spoils of war upon Japan's defeat:

Togo lacked the one thing he needed to be convincing [in 1945]: he lacked concrete evidence. He was thus caught between his own desire to see the war terminated as soon as possible and the army's insistent demand that he undertake immediately to court the Soviet Union (Butow, 79).

All of Japan's officials did not blindly hope that the Soviet Union would save them.

Unfortunately the officials who harbored this belief did not have the evidence they needed to persuade a majority of the governmental officials that this was true. The Japanese still hoped the Soviet Union might intervene on their behalf when the atomic bomb was dropped and the Russian army invaded Manchuria (Butow, 149). The fact that Japan was completely ignorant of Russian plans to invade Manchuria is support for this idea. The Japanese military official estimate of Russian forces was three Infantry divisions stationed at the Manchurian border when there were actually fifteen divisions, and the estimate stated that there were two to three tank brigades when there were actually eight brigades (Frank, 289). Obviously, the Soviet Union's attack surprised the Japanese. When the invasion began on August 9 General Headquarters stated that the "scale of these attacks is not large" (Frank, 289). Even once the invasion had begun the Japanese were in denial that in fact this was the beginning of a full-scale invasion.

Russia harbored aspirations of territorial expansion in East Asia. This can be seen by looking at both Stalin's and the Soviet Union's behavior. Stalin expected that for Russia's assistance in the defeat of Japan "Russia will share in the actual occupation of Japan" (Frank, 217). This at one time was a concession that the United States was willing to make. However with the advent of the atomic bomb the United States no longer desired Soviet assistance. Stalin still then tried to gain territory and influence even when his help was not needed. This can be seen because after the Soviet Union was caught off guard by the United States' surprise use of the atomic bomb: "[Stalin] decided to enter the war on 9 August, a week earlier than previously scheduled, or a week earlier than President Truman had anticipated" (Bix, 104). The Soviet Union desired to share in the spoils of war by joining in the war against Japan.

United States government officials hoped to keep the Soviet Union out of East Asia. In Byrnes' book, Speaking Frankly, Byrnes wrote: "As for myself, I must frankly admit that... I would have been satisfied had the Russians determined not to enter the war" (Alperovitz, 274). Here is clear, first hand, evidence that after obtaining the atomic bomb the United States did not desire Soviet assistance. This view was also expressed by Secretary of War Stimson: "[If] the Russians seek joint occupation after a creditable participation in the conquest of Japan, I do not see how we could refuse them at least a token occupation" (Sigal, 135). Grew agreed: "Once, Russia is in the war against Japan, then Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea will gradually slip into Russia's orbit" (Sigal, 97). Therefore it is undeniable that many powerful people involved in the war effort did not want the Soviet Union to be involved in Japan's defeat.

Once Truman knew that the United States had developed an atomic bomb that had proven effective in tests, he supported the bomb's use. Truman, unfortunately, revealed very little about his own ideology so it is difficult to put reasons behind his actions. However, after looking at the

August 15, 1960 issue of U.S. News and World Report, one can gain valuable insight into Truman's psyche. Byrnes was interviewed and asked:

"Was there a feeling of urgency to end the war in the Pacific before the Russians became too deeply involved?" and he responded: "There certainly was on my part, and I'm sure that, whatever views President Truman may have had of it earlier in the year, that in the days immediately preceding the dropping of the bomb his views were the same as minewe wanted to get through the Japanese phase of the war before the Russians came in" (Alperovitz, 274).

This did not come out for a number of years because of possible political ramifications, but this is significant evidence that Truman wanted to end the war without Soviet intervention. At this time Byrnes had no reason to be untruthful or mislead the American public. In 1960 Byrnes revealed this glimpse into Truman's psyche.

Truman wanted the Soviet Union out of the war, and his administration actually attempted to delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war. China was told by high-ranking officials in the States Department to stall their negotiations with the Soviet Union so that their entry into the war would be delayed. Churchill reported:

Mr. Byrnes told me this morning that he had cabled to T.V. Soong advising him not to give way on any point to the Russians, but to return to Moscow and keep on negotiating pending further developments it is quite clear that the United States do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan (Alperovitz, 270-271).

This is concrete evidence that the United States intended to stall the Soviet Union's entry into the war. Brown's diary also reveals Byrnes hoped to delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war by having the Chinese delay their negotiations: "[Byrnes] hopes Soong will stand firm and then Russians will not go in war.... Then he feels Japan will surrender before Russia goes to war and this will save China. If Russia goes in the war, he knows Stalin will take over and China will suffer" (Alperovitz, 267). This is further evidence which supports the idea that the United States tried to delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war, because they hoped to limit Stalin's war gains. The United States feared the price of Stalin's help.

Even if the Soviet invasion had not been delayed their invasion alone would not have been enough to force Japan to surrender: "Soviet intervention did not invalidate the Ketsu-go military and political strategy; the Imperial Army had already written off Manchuria (Frank, 347). The Soviet invasion of Manchuria was not readily apparent to the Japanese populace. Even after the invasion the Japanese "thought Japan was winning the war. There was, therefore, no public opinion pressing for peace—until the savage bombing of the homeland" (Brooks, 116). General Umezu, Chief of the General Staff of the Imperial Japanese Army, was not distraught after the invasion: "Although Russian attack has made the situation unfavorable, I do not think we need abandon the opportunity to deliver one last blow to America and England" (Brooks, 79). He did not view the Russian attack as a fatal blow to the Japanese military strategy.

Although Japanese military officials may have realized that they would be unable to defeat America over the course of a long protracted war, they hoped for one glorious military battle which would allow them to gain better conditions than unconditional surrender. Koiso, near the end of the war, wanted to throw Japan's military resources into one all-out effort to win a battle before seeking an end to the war: "Let's make a peace overture only after such a victory [because the terms of settlement would certainly be somewhat less onerous] if we ride on the wave of victory [when suing for peace]" (Sigal, 33). One way to view this is that "[armies] do not make the decision to end the wars the states, the nation's leaders calculate the likelihood that by continuing the war it can improve the terms of settlement, compared with what it would presently obtain" (Sigal, 14). Following this logic it is possible and even logical to continue a war after it is lost in the hope of obtaining better terms. Therefore the inevitability of Japan's defeat, which at times was obvious to both sides, is in itself not a good reason to delay the use of the atomic bomb: military defeat and war termination are two very different things.

#### THE CALL FOR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER:

The Potsdam Declaration contained the insistence on unconditional surrender, which consequently left the continued existence of the Emperor ambiguous. This was a concern for the Japanese officials and the Americans knew it. Approximately five days before the Potsdam conference was scheduled to begin American leaders, who had been able to decipher the Japanese code, decoded Togo's cable to Sato in Moscow: "[It] is His Majesty's heart's desire to see the swift termination of the war. In the Greater East Asia War, however, as long as America and England insist on unconditional surrender our country has no alternative but to [fight on]" (Brooks, 156). It is apparent then, that prior to the Potsdam conference the United States did know that all issues pertaining to the Emperor were of the utmost importance.

The Potsdam Declaration left the position of the emperor up to interpretation and failed to clearly state his fate. It failed to state whether the emperor was "one of 'those who deceived and misled the people of Japan' whose 'authority and influence' were to be 'eliminated for all time,' or a war criminal destined to face 'stern justice,' or part of a 'peacefully inclined and responsible government' "(Sigal, 143). The controversy was over a phrase suggested by Byrnes to describe the government: "this may include a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty" (Bix, 91). There were some concerns that this wording had multiple interpretations. It could be interpreted to mean that the United Nations intended to "depose or execute the present Emperor and install some other member of the Imperial family" or that it was "a commitment to continue the institution of the Emperor and Emperor worship" (Frank, 220). After many debates the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally decided on new language which they felt was less ambiguous: "Subject to suitable guarantees against further acts of aggression, the Japanese people will be free to choose their own form of government" (Sigal, 132). Unfortunately, this was ambiguous as well. The

the conditions, but still in the end the Potsdam Declaration said nothing about either the Soviet entry into the war or the Emperor.

Truman was repeatedly urged to alter the unconditional surrender conditions prior to the Potsdam Declaration. Truman was urged on fourteen separate occasions to consider altering the unconditional surrender conditions:

by Acting Secretary of State Grew, former President Herbert, Counsel to the President Samuel I. Rosenman, Assistant Secretary of War, Admiral Leahy, State Department in a formal recommendation of June 30, 1945; Under Secretary of the Navy Ralph, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Alperovitz, 300).

This is undeniable proof that Truman was aware of the possible ramifications for failing to alter the terms of unconditional surrender.

Truman was unable to alter the terms of unconditional surrender because the cry for unconditional surrender was too strong and had gained too much momentum: "Unconditional surrender... had become a political shibboleth by the time Truman took office.... [Truman was not] ready to retreat publicly from this path that Roosevelt had blazed" (Sherwin, 225). Truman became president because Roosevelt's died. Truman's support for unconditional surrender was reinforced as soon as he took office. Truman reflected, "I was applauded frequently, and when I reaffirmed the policy of unconditional surrender, the chamber rose to its feet" (Sigal, 94). This support for Roosevelt's legacy made it difficult for Truman to alter the terms of unconditional surrender. This policy had come to symbolize the sacrifices that America had incurred during the war and it represented a goal which America had been fighting to obtain. There was an "aura surrounding the Roosevelt legacy of unconditional surrender" that Truman found almost impossible to go against without firm, powerful, evidence and not mere speculation (Frank, 216).

Truman felt it difficult to guarantee the position of the Emperor because of political concerns at home and in Japan: "As wars draw to a close, officials do battle on two fronts at

once: on one, to bring the enemy state to terms, and on the other, to end the war in a way that best serves their organizational interests" (Sigal, 23). Near the end of the war Truman did consider changing the terms. However, the consensus among many officials was that modifying the terms was not a prudent course of action. MacLeish, serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Public and Cultural Affairs, suggested there would be "'a very unfavorable public reaction' to any reinterpretation of unconditional surrender" (Sigal, 112). This idea is supported by a poll that found most Americans hated the Emperor. This poll asked people to pass on the Emperor's fate, and "33 percent of a national sample favored executing him; 17 percent wanted him put on trial; 11 percent preferred imprisonment; and 9 percent favored exile" (Sigal, 95; Frank, 215). It is not a prudent course of action to absolve the Emperor of all wartime responsibility when over 70% of the American public felt that he should be exiled or even executed; popular support for the war effort was essential for continuing the war against Japan.

Once Truman knew the atomic bomb had been proven effective he felt the possible benefits did not outweigh the risks inherent in clarifying the position of the Emperor:

[Hull warned: should] it fail the Japs would be encouraged while terrible political repercussions would follow in the US. Would it be well first to await the climax of allied bombing and Russia's entry into the war?" [Bynes concurred:] "terrible political repercussions" were too great a risk (Sigal, 128).

Truman agreed with Hull and Bynes; he thought there was the risk of possible civil unrest at home and that if they failed the Japanese would be encouraged to continue their fight to the bitter end. Critics of the atomic bomb's use point out that after the war the Emperor was untouched, but once the war was over, there was no longer the risk that his preservation would encourage the Japanese to fight on. This risk was nullified and even if there were a political backlash at home, it would not interfere with the war effort, the war would have been won. The preceding points are essential to understanding why the Emperor's position could not be clarified during the war.

## AFTER THE POTSDAM DECLARATION—THE NECESSITY OF THE BOMB:

Japan's response to the Potsdam Declaration was ambiguous. The Japanese military officials had an almost impossible task. If they were to release anything they needed to satisfy many different groups within Japan. They needed to find a way to:

strike a balance between the cabinet's decision not to say anything that would destroy the possibility of negotiating for better terms through Moscow and a certain necessity for it to say something that would appease the military's demand for a strongly worded rebuttal and would also satisfy the expectations of the misguided masses (Butow, 144).

There was no immediate official response, instead it was a Japanese newspaper the United States looked to for Japan's answer. In response to the Potsdam Declaration Japanese official Suzuki used the word mokusatsu: "[Suzuki's] phrase, mokusatsu, passed out of the conference room Friday afternoon and found its way onto the front pages of Japan's Saturday morning papers" (Butow, 146). The word, mokusatsu, does not have one translation into English: "For a person who was privy to the cabinet's decision mokusatsu may have conveyed the meaning of "withholding comment" (Butow, 144). However, it can also be interpreted to mean "to reject." Therefore their response was unclear and did not transmit to the United States a willingness to accept the Potsdam Declaration.

Japan's response to the Potsdam Declaration gave Truman and the nation further evidence that Japan needed to be compelled to surrender. The allied newspapers interpreted the word mokusatsu to mean "reject" (Brooks, 164). Truman concurred with this definition and said, "[Japan's] leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum" (Brooks, 164). Since the American newspapers reported the interpretation of the controversial word to mean "reject" Japan was able to see America's interpretation of their response. However, "there is no record of an effort by the Japanese government to overtly or covertly transmit to the Allies any hint that mokusatsu did not precisely reflect its attitude" (Frank, 234). Additionally if Hirohito, who read the newspapers

daily, had been concerned about the ambiguity of Japan's response and possible misinterpretation of its meaning, to this very day "we have no record of it" (Bix, 91).

Japan's secret cables intercepted and decoded by the United States failed to suggest Japan had any desire to surrender. James F. Byrnes memoirs suggest that there was no reason to delay the use of the atomic bomb. A decoded cable from Japanese militarists to Japan's Ambassador in Moscow read:

"We cannot consent to unconditional surrender under any circumstances. Even if the war drags on, so long as the enemy demands unconditional surrender we will fight as one man against the enemy in accordance with the Emperor's command." Byrnes said, "That cable, which we intercepted, depressed me terribly. It meant using the atomic bomb; it probably meant Russia's entry into the war" (Sigal, 7).

When the United States intercepted this cable, Byrnes was "depressed" because he knew that it was infeasible to alter America's call for unconditional surrender and this would most likely mean that the atomic bomb would have to be used against Japan.

Even if the preservation of the Emperor were guaranteed there is substantial evidence this clarification would not have led to Japan's surrender. America intercepted a cable dialogue between Sato and Foreign Minister Togo, which supports this claim. In this dialogue, which was made available to American officials, Sato informed Foreign Minister Togo that the best terms Japan could obtain were unconditional surrender with the stipulation that the Imperial institution could remain. When Sato suggested the best Japan could hope for was to keep the Emperor, but otherwise accept the unconditional surrender, "Togo in unambiguous language and in the name of the cabinet absolutely rejected such terms: 'We are unable to consent to it under any circumstances whatsoever' "(Frank, 230). This dialogue led American officials to believe the demand for unconditional surrender need not be modified.

Additionally, information not available to American officials during the war shows the necessity of the atomic bomb, as the Japanese were not on the verge of surrendering after

receiving the Potsdam Declaration. There was some debate in Japan as to whether Japan should surrender. Japan's leading businessman urged Suzuki to accept the Potsdam terms. This evidence has been used by those who support the idea that Japan was on the verge of surrendering, but upon examining Suzuki's reply it becomes quite clear that this was not the case:

[For] the enemy to say something like that means circumstances have arisen that force them also to end the war. That is why they are talking about unconditional surrender. Precisely at a time like this if we hold firm they will yield before we do. Just because they have broadcast their Declaration, it is not necessary to stop fighting. You advisers may ask me to reconsider but I don't think there is any need to stop [the war] (Frank, 235).

This statement reveals many important things about the Japanese military plan. It suggests that not modifying the terms of the Potsdam Declaration to guarantee the position of the Emperor was actually the right course of action. Suzuki used the Potsdam Declaration that made no such guarantee to create the idea that "circumstances have arisen that force them to end the war." This is exactly the view that the Truman administration wisely wanted to avoid. Furthermore, his statement that "at a time like this if we hold firm they will yield before we do" shows that, to Suzuki winning militarily was not important but winning the "battle of wills" was. Before the use of the atomic bomb Suzuki felt that the Japanese would be able to win the "battle of wills" and outlast the Americans, because America was looking for a way out of the war. Suzuki had no intention of surrendering, and clarifying the position of the Emperor would have only helped him continue his cry for war.

Even after the use of the atomic bomb the Japanese were divided on whether to surrender: "Only on August 9, after withstanding months of blockade and bombardment, obvious preparations for invasion, two atomic bombs, and Soviet intervention, did the Big Six formulate terms for ending the war" (Frank, 344). Unfortunately the Big Six were unable to come to a

conclusion. There were two opposing plans. A plan with four conditions and the foreign minister's plan which was to surrendering with only the first condition:

- 1. A guarantee that the imperial family will continue to reign.
- 2. Disarmament of the armed forces by Japan herself.
- 3. Trial of war criminals by Japan herself.
- 4. Occupation of Japan to be limited to the minimum time and places.

It was suggested that these conditions be preliminary to our acceptance of the Potsdam terms (Brooks, 77).

This question, as a result of the deadlock, was placed before the Emperor. Emperor Meiji said, "But it does not matter what will become of me. Determined, as I have stated, I have decided to bring the war to an end immediately. For this reason I agree with the foreign minister's proposal" (Brooks, 108). The important thing here is even after the use of the atomic bomb the Japanese leaders were still divided. If they were divided after the atomic bomb was used they most certainly would have been divided before its use. The use of the atomic bomb, regardless of the Emperor's previous position convinced the Emperor that surrendering was in Japan's best interest and allowed the Emperor to help end the war

The atomic bomb allowed Japan to surrender. It convinced the Emperor to intervene and break the deadlock in favor of accepting the Potsdam Declaration. Why did the Emperor finally intervene? When he originally urged his officials to accept the terms and surrender for Japan's better good he gave three reasons: "a collapse of domestic morale" and two military concerns: "inadequate preparation to resist the invasion and the vast destructiveness of the atomic bomb and the air attacks" (Frank, 345). There was no mention of the Soviet intervention, and two of his three reasons related to the atomic bomb: "collapse of domestic moral [as a result of] the vast destructiveness of the atomic bomb...." It is true, however, that later on August 14 when he restated his position he did cite both the Soviet Union's intervention and "scientific power" (Frank, 345). This time he did mention the Soviet Union, but the Emperor still mentioned the

atomic bomb. Therefore, there is no logical way one could conclude that the atomic bomb was not a major factor in his decision to intervene:

Neither the use of the atomic bomb or the Russian entry into the war convinced Japan to surrender. However the shock of both, especially the use of the atomic bomb gave the people the opportunity and the Emperor a sense of urgency to become involved which allowed people to involve him which may have ended the war. (Sigal, 279).

The atomic bomb allowed the military establishment an honorable way out of the war. Suzuki's analysis: "If military leaders could convince themselves that they were defeated by the power of science but not by lack of spiritual power or strategic errors, they could save face to some extent" (Frank, 347). Japanese officials were able to believe that they were not ruined by a lack of honor, but by science.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Truman's main motivation for using the atomic bomb was to force Japan to surrender. Some revisionist historians have suggested that Truman unnecessarily prolonged the war in order to use the atomic bomb. Truman may have delayed the Soviet Union's entrance into the war, but he had commendable reasons. If the Soviet Union participated in Japan's defeat Stalin would expect post-war concessions. Once Truman knew that the United States possessed the atomic bomb he hoped to use this technology to defeat Japan without the high cost of Stalin's assistance. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union's entrance into the war, in and of itself, would not have been enough to force Japan's surrender, because it did not interfere with Japan's plan for one glorious military battle to break America's will to continue the war. Truman could not modify the demand for unconditional surrender because it had gained too much momentum. The Emperor was extremely unpopular in America and Truman was concerned about a political backlash if he went against Roosevelt's call for unconditional surrender. Likewise, in Japan, Truman feared that this clarification could actually inspire the Japanese to fight on and give them the false hope that the United States would allow Japan to end the war on terms better than unconditional surrender. This danger was real as Suzuki used the Potsdam Declaration, which did not modify the terms of unconditional surrender, to support the idea that the United States' resolve was weakening. Additionally, Japan's "rejection" of the Potsdam Declaration and intercepted cables further led Truman to believe that Japan was not on the verge of surrendering. In the end it was the atomic bomb, perhaps coupled with the Soviet Union's invasion, which led to the end of the war. When Emperor Hirohito finally surrendered he cited the atomic bomb in both surrender speeches and the Soviet invasion in one. The atomic bomb played a key role in convincing the Emperor to surrender. The use of the atomic bomb was both justified and necessary to draw the war to a rapid and definite conclusion.

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