

Nagasaki and Hiroshima

Student's Name

University

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The United States of America's decision to hit Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs during the Second World War has been an intensely debated topic. The bombing of these two Japanese cities is among the best documented historical events that elicit lasting heated reactions. The bombings marked the end of the greatest armed conflict ever witnessed in the world. Among the ethical concerns that surfaced from the attack are massive amounts of casualties it caused and the effects of the resultant radiation that affected the survivors. Such questions lead to the dilemma as to whether the destructive weapons were necessary in the first place. This paper explores the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, examines the causes, various interpretations and ramifications of the bombings.

Modern Hiroshima was founded in 1589 as many canals and bridges were constructed to ease the importation of goods from the countryside and connect all parts of the metropolis. Hiroshima thus became an important Japanese military base that also hosted the Imperial Headquarters. In the summer of 1945, the US and its allies were at war with Imperial Japan after the Pearl Harbor attack of 1941 (Sekimori, Shohnno & Marshall, 1989). As the war in Japan progressed, the US had one of the most critical decisions to make. Top among the options was to hit the Japanese with a newly tested bomb hoping that they would swiftly surrender. The alternative option was to conduct a massive land invasion of Japan while hoping that they would be defeated with total force. Whichever way, it was evident that there would be many casualties no matter what option the US chose.

The secretary of war at the time convinced President Truman to make the crucial decision of bombing Japan (Dorn, 2008). Subsequently, the U.S. Air Force dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Consequently, 140,000 out of the 350,000 Hiroshima residents

Japan died on that day and some months after that (Dorn, 2008). The destruction was ghastly, the Kyuohotagawa and Motoyasugawa rivers had masses of darkened, bloodied and skinless corpses that floated in macabre positions (Sekimori et al., 1989). Survivors who looked like zombies were seen all over wandering blindly after the fatal assault. It was a hellish scene that turned day into night as modern technology became the greatest nemesis of humanity. Nevertheless, President Truman promised more lethal attacks from the air if the Japanese refused to surrender. The Japanese Emperor did not comply, and three days later, Nagasaki was hit with another atomic bomb on August 9 claiming another 80,000 lives (Dorn, 2008). Only then did the Emperor decide to surrender.

There are divergent views and rationalizations over the decision to use atomic bombs on Japan. The nuclear attacks were justified because it was imperative to win the war with the least casualties possible. Additionally, Japanese soldiers were feared for their vicious fighting styles that could have led to the hundreds of thousands of American casualties if an invasion of Japan was commissioned (O'Connell, 2011). Moreover, the fact that the US had invested much in developing the bombs and the huge costs involved needed some justification. On the contrary, opponents of the bombings would argue that despite their swift demolition, the Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombs were highly inefficient. Out of fifty kilograms of uranium, only one detonated in the Hiroshima bomb meaning that the destruction could have been more horrifying (Dorn, 2008). Ironically, Einstein and other top scientists that designed that atomic bomb would later become peace activists.

The Second World War ended, and a peace treaty was drafted between the US, Japan and other nations (O'Connell, 2011). However, the effects of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings were immense on all levels. Besides the associated health effects, the atomic bombings had

international effects as well. Even the inventors of the atomic bomb were not satisfied with what they had predicted and reached a conclusion that the bomb should never be used again (Dorn, 2008). The controversy behind the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will continue for many years to come. The exact rationale as to why the atomic bombs were used may never be fully understood with the same question coming up over and over again, "Did it have to happen?"

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