

After Hiroshima

Historical Context

1- Why America Dropped the Bomb by Donald Kagan

<http://fairbanksonline.net/Fairbanks Online/Atomic Bomb Trials Research files/WhyAmericaDroppedtheBomb.pdf>

"...figures as Norman Cousins, P.M.S. Blackett, Carl Marzani, and the historians William Appleman Williams and D.F. Fleming-were influenced by the emerging cold war, whose origins, for the most part, they attributed to American policy under President Truman. As one exemplar of the new revisionist movement put it:

The bomb was dropped primarily for its effect not on Japan but on the Soviet Union. One, to force a Japanese surrender before the USSR came into the Far Eastern war, and two, to show under war conditions the power of the bomb. Only in this way could a policy of intimidation [of the Soviet Union] be successful."

*"Another phrased the same purpose in different words:
The United States dropped the bomb to end the war against Japan and thereby stop the Russians in Asia, and to give them sober pause in Eastern Europe."*

*"In 1965, in *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, Gar Alperovitz picked up the main themes of the earlier writers, arguing for them now on the basis of new documentation and in a cultural climate-the climate of the mid-60's- newly hospitable to revisionist interpretations of American motives and behavior. According to Alperovitz, the bombs were not needed "to end the war and save lives-and . . . this was understood by American leaders at the time." **Their aim, he wrote, was political, not military; their target was not Japan but the Soviet Union.**"*

The chief villain was Harry Truman, who, in Alperovitz's reading, was bent on reversing Franklin D. Roosevelt's policy of peaceful accommodation with the Soviets. Thus, when he learned of the prospect of the bomb, Truman decided to delay the Allied meeting at Potsdam until the weapon could be tested. If it worked, he could take a tougher line in Eastern Europe and, perhaps, end the war before the Soviets were able to make gains in East Asia. In his eagerness to achieve these political goals, Truman failed to give proper attention to Japanese peace feelers; refused to change the demand for unconditional surrender, which was a barrier to Japanese acceptance of peace terms; and did not wait to see if Soviet entry into the Asian war might by itself cause Japan to surrender. In short, **the confidence provided by the American monopoly on atomic weapons allowed Truman to launch, at Japan's expense, a "diplomatic offensive" against the Soviet Union, one which would play a role of great importance in engendering the subsequent cold war.**

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DgUABAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Why+America+dropped+the+atomic+bomb+hiroshima&ots=ZodubdOBgz&sig=lJZLflVbKimmh5xrLsUqIo86fRk#v=onepage&q=Why%20America%20dropped%20the%20atomic%20bomb%20hiroshima&f=false> (see screenshots for further information, extracted from the book itself)

In the thirty-five years since the destruction of Hiroshima, the consensus that existed to use the atomic bomb has disappeared. Within three years after the war the charge would be made that the bomb had been dropped not so much to force a Japanese surrender—already assured in any event, it is argued—but to keep the Russians out of Manchuria and to impress them with the power of the new weapon. The subsequent claim that the Truman administration practiced “atomic diplomacy”—using the U.S. monopoly of the bomb to gain political advantage—has perhaps become the centerpiece of the controversy over reinterpretation of cold war origins that continues today.² Begun among historians, this debate over the means and motives of American foreign policy since 1945 now extends, in this era of renewed cold war, to the way we see ourselves in the world.

Previous studies on the atomic bomb have focused upon President Truman’s wartime decision to use that weapon against Japan. This emphasis upon events during the opening year of the atomic age has come about because of the dramatic and tragic manner of the bomb’s first use, the prior unavailability of sources beyond that date, and the continuing furor over atomic diplomacy. But Hiroshima is—properly—only the beginning of the story of the atomic bomb in the cold war.

Responsible traditional as well as revisionist accounts of the decision to drop the bomb now recognize that the act had behind it *both* an immediate military rationale regarding Japan and a possible diplomatic advantage concerning Russia. Apart, these two considerations reinforced the already existing inclination of Truman and most of his advisers to use the weapon. Together, their effect was compelling to that decision.³

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The true test of intention concerning America's future plans for the atomic bomb, therefore, comes after the weapon has been demonstrated to the world at Hiroshima. Unlike the decision to use the bomb, there

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Prologue

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was no compelling direction for U.S. atomic-energy policy following the surrender of Japan. Rather, the fact that America alone possessed atomic bombs gave her a perhaps unique position of power and responsibility in history, as well as the opportunity to attempt to use that monopoly as a bargaining card of some worth in the approaching peace settlement, and possibly beyond.

The role of the atomic bomb in the cold war after Hiroshima—from the surrender of Japan in 1945 to the end of the U.S. nuclear monopoly in 1949 and the subsequent decision to proceed with development of the hydrogen bomb—is the subject of this book. Some of its conclusions collide with the assumptions and tenets held by those on both sides of the atomic-diplomacy debate. But new evidence made available by the declassification of government documents, the opening of previously restricted personal papers, and the passage of time warrant a reassessment of earlier wisdom

A REASSESSMENT OF CANTER'S THEORY

The findings of this study confirm, for example, that some in the Truman administration believed the bomb might make a decisive difference in America's postwar dealings with Russia. But the evidence beyond Hiroshima makes it equally clear that miscalculation, illusion, and classic irony accompanied and transformed this expectation on its way to becoming policy. Thus Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, who initially hoped to use the atomic bomb as a lever to move the Russians closer to the American vision of a postwar world, himself became the victim of atomic diplomacy turned around at the first meeting of the victorious powers. There a humbled Byrnes observed that the Russians were, after all, "stubborn, obstinate, and they don't scare."⁴

At the same time, the previous definition of atomic diplomacy merely as a threat—implicit or explicit—is seen here as too restrictive to describe U.S. policy on the bomb after the war. A view so limited overlooks the important role played by the promise of atomic energy's cooperative control after the war, held out to the Russians first by Byrnes, and then by Bernard Baruch at the United Nations. This promise of cooperation was potentially as powerful an instrument of persuasion as the bomb's threat, and was another means by which America's atomic monopoly could be the country's "winning weapon."

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Pages 6 to 7 are not shown in this preview.

THE WINNING WEAPON

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nuclear monopoly. That fear and suspicion continue today as a peculiar product of the atomic age, when nearly a dozen nations have or may soon have nuclear weapons. In a world fundamentally altered by atomic energy since 1945, the political, diplomatic, and military role of the atomic bomb in the cold war is today not only history—but legacy.

2- FEAR, WAR, AND THE BOMB: Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy by P.M.S. Blackett

<http://calteches.library.caltech.edu/648/2/Books.pdf>

“Blackett maintains that atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki not for military reasons- Japan was already defeated-but for real and compelling diplomatic reasons, occasioned in large measure by the knowledge that Stalin had assured Roosevelt at Yalta that Russia would declare war on Japan three months after V-E day. The European war ended on May 8. The Soviet offensive was due, and did start, on August 8. The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6. Blackett comments: **“So we may conclude that the dropping of atomic bombs was not so much the last military act of the second World War, as the first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia now in progress.”**

3- Hiroshima as Politics and History

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2945113?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Martin J. Sherwin

History has often been enlisted in the service of politics, but the history of United States diplomacy, so frequently influenced by the memoirs of government officials, has been particularly vulnerable. How Americans came to understand their government's decision to use atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a classic case of a historical narrative shaped by government insiders to serve their view of the national interest. The controversy over the planned exhibition, centering on the *Enola Gay* (the plane that bombed Hiroshima), at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II is a reminder that, even in the post-Cold War United States, history remains a hostage to politics, past and present.

Henry L. Stimson, secretary of war from 1940 to 1945, was the most important formulator of the history of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; in modern political parlance, its chief "spin doctor." Writing in 1947 to President Harry S. Truman, Stimson explained that his seminal article, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," was in part "intended to satisfy the doubts of that rather difficult class of the community which will have charge of the education of the next generation, namely educators and historians."¹

To satisfy those potential doubters, Stimson explained that the Truman administration faced the choice of either using atomic bombs or invading Japan. The sole motivation for the atomic attacks, he wrote, was to save American lives by ending the war as quickly as possible. Missing was the idea, frequently discussed in his diary, that a dramatic wartime demonstration of the bomb would help control Joseph Stalin's postwar ambitions. Nor did he discuss Japanese messages intercepted by United States military intelligence indicating that the Japanese had been trying to surrender "conditionally" since June 1945. Assisted by the chilling effect that the Cold War had on debate and the long delay before the relevant documents became available to historians, Stimson achieved his goal. Many Americans—and for a long time perhaps most educators and historians—accepted his explanation.²

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¹ Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's Magazine*, 194 (Feb. 1947), 97–107; Henry L. Stimson to Harry S. Truman, Jan. 7, 1947, Henry L. Stimson Papers (Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.).