

Should harry s. truman have dropped the atomic bomb? essay sample

[Politics](#), [President](#)



"I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me." Harry S. Truman, our thirty-third president of the United States, spoke this on April 12, 1945. This was a significant day in which two major things happened; President Franklin D. Roosevelt died unexpectedly, and Harry S. Truman was sworn in as president. Henry L. Stimson, Roosevelt's secretary of war, who later became Truman's, reintroduced the proposal of the Manhattan Project and its person in charge, Major General Leslie Groves. There was a secret meeting held at the White House at which Harry Truman was informed that the terrible and powerful weapon was almost complete. (Truman 204). After, the Interim Committee was formed, including Truman's secretary of state, the president of Harvard, the president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the head of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Its purpose was to aid president Truman in deciding whether or not to use the atomic bomb. The committee also heard from many scientists who gave them information and suggestions. (Truman 204-5). May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered, but there were still controversies with Japan. President Truman pleaded with the Japanese government to surrender like Germany did, but they were stubborn and loyal to their country. The Japanese were formidable because they would rather die than admit defeat. As a result, Truman met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on June 28, hoping to determine the decision on whether or not to use to bomb. Truman had a bit of a wake up call when he was told how many American soldiers would die as a cause of not using the bomb and made up his mind to use it. Many ideas were brought up in the meeting, but it was finally agreed upon to use four atomic bombs on four different targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Nagasaki, and

Niigata. (Truman 206). President Truman, Secretary of State Byrnes, Secretary of War Stimson, Army Chief of Staff Marshall, and a few others, contributed to the decision to use the bomb on Japan even though Truman had the last say in the matter. The Japanese had already wiped out 92,000 American soldiers and wounded another 200,000.

There were different estimates of casualties among the group, including General Marshall who told Truman to be ready for at least 500,000 American casualties, whereas Stimson, Secretary of War, estimated around a million. Overall, Truman could not see the point in wasting so many American lives when he had such a powerful weapon in stock, so he made his final decision. (Moskin 254-55). After the first two bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Truman implored Japan to surrender one last time, and to no one's surprise, they declined. Harry was of course, unsettled by the thought of killing thousands upon thousands of "boys from the United States," and could not bare the thought of planning all of their deaths while they were oblivious to their short futures ahead. (Truman 206).

From the point of view of the Japanese: on August 6, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. The Japanese had more than four million men on their home islands: Korea, Manchuria, and North China, to protect and defend their beloved homelands. An even bigger army was stationed at Kyushu as well as several thousand planes meant for kamikazes if they were needed. Later that day, Nagasaki was bombed. Four days later, a meeting took place in which Emperor Hirohito, (who was believed to have descended

from the gods) agreed that too many people had died and that it was time to surrender. (Moskin 253-4).

In a speech written by Truman at a university in 1965, Truman said, " It was a question of saving hundreds of thousands of American lives... you don't feel normal when you have to plan hundreds of thousands of... deaths of American boys who are alive and joking and having fun while you're doing your planning. You break your heart and your head trying to figure out a way to save one life..." (Truman 206). This quote not only demonstrates the enormous heart that Truman had, but also how far he was willing to go to save as many American lives as he could. He was an unadulterated man who had the best intentions for our country but had no other choice than to destroy the enemies and save us. (Truman 206).

Did Harry S. Truman make the right decision in dropping the atomic bomb? A poll taken in August 1945 that confirms that 85% of Americans agreed with Truman's judgment. Although many people supported his difficult choice, some did not. " Only 1. 7 percent of 595 newspaper editorials surveyed opposed using the atomic bomb." (Alperovitz 427). As said by The Atlanta Constitution, " If it were not for the treachery of Pearl Harbor; the horrible cruelties of the Death March of Japan [sic]; the stories told by the starved, filth encrusted, dazed American prisoners coming out of Japanese prison camps, we might feel sorrow for the Japanese who felt the atomic bomb." (Alperovitz 427).

There is some conflict with the matter of the second bomb dropped on Nagasaki. Should the city have been bombed immediately after Hiroshima? Or should the U. S. have waited for a response from Japan first? President Truman gave the order for the second bomb to be dropped without a response from the Japanese government, which caused great resentment throughout America. One Manhattan Project physicist, Victor Weisskopf said, " On some occasion I ventured to say that the first bomb might have been justifiable, but the second was a crime." (Alperovitz 532).