Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

5 August 2019

Title: Dropping the Atomic bomb: An Unjustified Massacre

The Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945 resulted in an estimated 200,000 instant deaths. The initial death toll followed by an intense nuclear fallout that resulted in decades of suffering would lead any individual with a conscience to question; were the atomic bombings justified? A number of historians believe that the Second World War could have ended on acceptable terms. If that is proven to be the case, then it supports the notion that the atomic bombings of the two Japanese cities were unjustified.

An important aspect of the second world war was that by its end, Japan was left with little support, it was under a naval blockade with most of its navy already destroyed. At the same time, its cities were being heavily attacked by allied forces (Selden and Selden). Alperovitz notes that the diary of William Leahy, the then Chief of Staff for President Truman, showed that he saw the war ending on acceptable terms as a real possibility. Leahy was well aware of the ground realities as he had presided over the combined U.S. and British Chiefs of Staff. He further wrote that the atomic bombs were a “barbarous weapon” that provided no significant material assistance in the war because the Japanese forces were ready to surrender against the odds. He remarked that by dropping the atomic bombs, the U.S. had “adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages" (Alperovitz).

It is also important to note that the U.S. possessed a range of other industry resources to defeat Japan. The B-29 bombers created a major impact on the war and forced Japan to surrender. Records of private conversations among the Japanese leadership showed that they had already accepted defeat in the war and were ready to negotiate a surrender (Selden and Selden). In addition, the strategy of blockading cities and cutting off important supply lines for the military and civilian populations would have served the purpose. However, the U.S. military seemed to be interested more in ending the war with a devastating attack that destroyed schools and hospitals, rather than thwarts an invasion.

However, since the death toll from the War was already high and allied forces had become war-weary, Walker writes that the U.S. deliberately came up with terms of surrender that they knew would be unacceptable to the Japanese sense of ‘honor’. The devastating attack was, therefore, a way to avenge American casualties and keep the Soviet Union in check (Walker). Yet, the attacks could not prevent the Cold War and the Soviets eventually caught up with the U.S. in the arms race. Thus, there was little justification for using the bomb on a strategic level. Moreover, the miscalculation with regards to the death toll from the nuclear fallout and radiation makes the decision even more controversial.

Finally, on an ethical level, there exists no justification of using such weapons on innocent civilians, not only because it was a negation of the political process but because no ends justify employing such devastating and destructive means. Even if the nuclear fallout can be attributed to a gross scientific miscalculation, the initial destructive power of the atom bomb had already been witnessed in tests. There was no justification of using an ethically questionable weapon on an enemy that was already defeated and ready to surrender. Instead, the judgment of the political elites was clouded by revenge and the need to exhibit American power instead of a peaceful reconciliatory approach through the political process. The horrific incident of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings serve as a reminder to us today that political reconciliatory approach must never be negated and take precedence over settling matters by force, otherwise, destruction and havoc will be the ultimate outcome.

# **Works Cited**

Alperovitz, Gar. “From the Archives: Atomic Bombing of Japan Was Unnecessary.” *Progressive.Org*, 27 July 2005, https://progressive.org/%3Fq%3Dnode/2290/.

Selden, Kyoko Iriye and Mark Selden. *The Atomic Bomb: Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Voices from Hiroshima*. 2nd. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Walker, J Samuel. *Prompt and utter destruction : Truman and the use of atomic bombs against Japan*. Rev. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.