US Army Heritage and Education Center

Historical Services Division

AVOIDING AN INVASION AND DROPPING THE ATOMIC BOMB: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF WAR TERMINATION IN THE PACIFIC WAR

Conrad C . Crane, PhD
Chief, Historical Services Division

Jessica J. Sheets, PhD
Research Historian

Douglas I. Bell, PhD
Post-Doctoral Fellow

Michael E. Lynch, PhD
Senior Historian

Shane P. Reilly
Contract Research Analyst

U.S.ARMY

THE UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
Historical Services Division

Avoiding an Invasion and Dropping the Atomic Bomb: The Historiography of War Termination in the Pacific War

by Conrad C. Crane

Anyone trying to understand the end of World War II in the Pacific should start by reviewing American journals and newspapers during the period between V-E and V-J Days. May Newsweek headlines called the conflict in the Pacific Theater "War Without Quarter," and proclaimed that the Japanese were "Fanatical and Capable of Long Resistance." Kamikaze attacks received widespread publicity, as did the Japanese announcement that branded all their citizens as "suicide attackers." The expected invasion of the Home Islands was viewed with dread. The next month Newsweek grimly announced "Japanese Etch Grim War Plans With Suicide a National Weapon." In July the Saturday Evening Post revealed "What Japan Has Waiting For Us." Much can be gleaned from the front page of the May 30 New York Times. Headlines trumpet Marine advances on Okinawa against suicidal resistance. Another article notes that the Russians are planning to draft 15 year-olds. The first revelations about the fire raids on Japan appear, with Curtis Lemay's estimate that they had probably incinerated a million civilians. Except for Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who was surprised and appalled by the reports, no one else seemed to care about such carnage. Worse was expected soon.

Of all the areas of research and writing concerning World War II, there is none filled with more contention and controversy than that concerning the end of the war in the Pacific. This was clearly demonstrated during the intense debate over the content of the Smithsonian's 1995 Enola Gay exhibit commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. As we move farther away from the atmosphere of 1945 described above, the actions taken by the Allied Powers to force Japanese surrender appear more extreme, and the victors are more easily portrayed as villains by the vanquished or questioned by a newer generation about the motivations leading to the obliteration of enemy cities.

The final acts of the air war against Japan marked the culmination of the slide to total war that characterized World War II, but the literature on the aerial campaigns in the Pacific is not as extensive as that concerning the European Theater. The standard comprehensive operational summary remains the official history, Craven's and Cate's The Army Air Forces in World War II, primarily volumes four and five. Another useful official source is The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, a comprehensive, immediate post-war study of the

effects of airpower on Germany and Japan by specially selected military and civilian experts. The tone of each separate report tends to reflect the individual biases of different authors, and the claims trumpeted in the summary volumes (written by those most committed to the decisiveness of airpower) are not always matched by the individual reports describing actual targets, though the analysis of bombing results is very detailed. One report postulates that a concerted attack on Japanes railroads might have terminated the war even earlier. MacIsaac's somewhat biased study of the survey can provide a reader more background on its conduct. Gentile's book provides the best overview of the distortions and contradictions inherent in USSBS reports. An invaluable official source that really gives a reader an authentic feel for combat and has terrific pictures is the Historical Times eight volume reprint of Impact: The Army Air Forces Confidential Picture History of World War II. These magazines were published by the AAF intelligence bureau to keep units in the field updated on enemy tactics and friendly actions, and they provide the best pictorial record of the air war a reader can find. Coverage is also very comprehensive, with articles on every obscure area of operations. Barrett Tillman's Whirlwind does attempt to provide an overview of all American air attacks against Japan, including by the Navy, though it is not very deep. Useful official Allied views of the Pacific air war can be gleaned from Odgers' and Gillison's volumes about the Royal Australian Air Force, as well as from Ross' book on its New Zealand conterpart.

Beginning in 1941, US aerial operations were spread all over the Pacific Theater. The early days of American involvement are best covered in Caidin's The Ragged, Rugged Warriors. Robert Scott's God is My Copilot and Claire Chennault's Way of a Fighter are memoirs that provide insight into the famous Flying Tigers and operations in China, and Saburo Sakai's Samurai! furnishes a first-hand recollection from the premier surviving Japanese ace. Another source on Japanese air operations is Zero! by Okimiya and Horikoshi. Glines has written the best accounts of the daring 1942 Doolittle Raid where the AAF first bombed the Japanese homeland, and that coverage should be supplemented with Jimmy Doolittle's autobiography and Ted Lawson's Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo. In Attack on Yamamoto, Glines has also written about the controversial mission to shoot down the plane carrying that important Japanese leader. For books describing General George Kenney's Fifth Air Force and its support of General Douglas MacArthur's drive in the southwest Pacific, readers should refer to Steve Birdsall's Flying Buccaneers and Kenney's own memoirs. Griffiths' biography is very good. Kenney was an outstanding and resourceful commander who, like his Air Force, usually gets unjustly overshadowed by more glamorous leaders or campaigns. Sunflower University Press has done a series of aviation books relying heavily on first-hand accounts of the varied facets of the Pacific air war. Among the best examples are Yoshino's Lightning Strikes on the 475th Fghter Group of the Fifth Air Force and Kissick's Guerrilla One covering the 74th Fighter Squadron of Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force.

The most important, and most controversial, air operations against Japan were conducted by B-29's of the Twentieth Air Force, operating from China and the Marianas Islands. The greatest gap in the historical literature of the Pacific air war involves good memoirs of the common airmen in this campaign. Though there are some published collections of short reports or observations, such as Marshall's and Thompson's excerpts from combat diaries, only Morrison in Hellbirds and Herbert in Maximum Effort have really provided extensive accounts of their personal experiences. Morrison has also written a one-volume history of 20th AF operations entitled Point of No Return, as has Kerr in Flames Over Tokyo. Kerr focuses more on the development of incendiary weapons and their application in the great fire raids that devastated Japan's cities. The deadliest air attack of the war was the 9-10 March night bombing that burned out sixteen square miles of Tokyo and killed between 90,000 and 100,000 people. Caidin and Cortesi have written popular accounts that convey the horrors and effectiveness of that mission, while Edoin has covered it from the Japanese side in The Night Tokyo Burned. Kenneth Werrell's Blankets of Fire is the best one-volume history of the development of the problematic B-29 and its role in World War II. He gives the naval blockade more credit for devastating the Japanese economy than air attacks, but argues that the fire raids did have great emotional impact on the Emperor and civilian decision-makers there.

The incendiary campaign was conceived and executed by the most innovative tactical and operational air commander of World War II, and the AAF's supreme problem-solver, General Curtis LeMay. He discusses his decision process and actions in his revealing memoir written with MacKinley Kantor, Mission with LeMay. Coffey's biography, Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay, is the best available for anyone trying to understand this complex and gifted leader who did so much to shape the modern US Air Force, as well as to bring Japan to its knees, but there is much still left to write about him. Any ambitious writer who can thoroughly and objectively analyze LeMay and his amazing career is guaranteed a Pulitzer Prize. He argued that his B-29s alone could bring surrender without invasion or the atomic bomb by 1 October 1945, since by then he would have destroyed every Japanese city. (A similar argument was advanced by the Strategic Bombing Survey.) General Haywood Hansell, LeMay's predecessor who was relieved because of the ineffectiveness of his precision bombing of Japan, has done a provocative analysis of their actions and possible alternative air strategies in Strategic Air War Against Japan. Hansell argues that an attack of the Japanese power system would have been more efficient than the fire raids with fewer civilian casualties, though he realizes that such a precision campaign would have probably taken longer to be effective, and "time pressures" on LeMay might have mitigated against such a course of action. Hansell also thinks the B-29s could have caused an enemy collapse eventually without the atomic bomb, but believes that its use was essential to convince both the Japanese to surrender and the US Army that it did not need to invade.

Hansell hints and LeMay scoffs at concerns about the morality of the high civilian casualties caused by the incendiary campaign, which set an important precedent for the eventual use of the atomic bomb. Ethical issues of American bombing are discussed in great detail by three books that appeared in the late 1980s. Sherry in his broad study, The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon sees the air war against Japan as the culmination of American "technological fanaticism", organizational and professional drives built on faith in technology to overcome any difficulty and win the war. Schaffer looks at more operational details than Sherry in Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II, but is also very critical of the morality of AAF bombing. Schaffer blames groupthink and vague definitions of "military necessity" for the slide to total war, and does a detailed analysis of varying American perceptions about targeting for aerial bombardment. Crane gives the most sympathetic treatment to the AAF in Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II, and the revised edition, American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil. He was driven to answer the question why there was no real debate about whether to use atomic weapons, only about how. He argues that US airmen were committed to precision bombing and generally did the best they could with the technology and conditions of World War II to limit civilian casualties. The strategic bombing of Japan was an exception, however, though Crane blames special conditions in the theater and LeMay's unique personality for the evolution of B-29 operations, rather than more impersonal forces. While Kerr claims that the fire raids were motivated by ordnance experts and Sherry and Schaffer blame leaders in Washington and vagaries in bombing doctrine, Crane argues that the incendiary campaign was the product of LeMay's operations analysts and his own penchant for problem solving. Since precision bombing would not work because of problems with technology and weather, the 20th Air Force could destroy Japanese industry by burning down the urban areas around the factories. The objectives of the campaign were later expanded to exploit civilian terror and dislocation, and the B-29s eventually burned out 180 square miles of at least sixty-seven cities. For Crane, the leap from precision bombing to the fire raids was more critical in the slide to total war than the resort to the atomic bomb. It was farther from Schweinfurt to Tokyo than from Tokyo to Hiroshima, both literally and figuratively.

More people died in the fire raids than from the atomic bombs, but the terrible devastation and horrible casualties described so vividly in Hersey's Hiroshima in 1946 or caricatured in Nakazawa's comics of Barefoot Gen in the 1970s have commanded much more attention. The best source concerning the Manhattan Project that produced the new weapons is Rhodes' Pulitzer Prize-winning The Making of the Atomic Bomb. General Leslie Groves' memoir of the program he headed, Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project, is also very useful. Martin Sherwin and Kai Bird have written the definitive biography of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist most responsible for the success of the project. Al Christman has brought to light the role of another key player in the atomic drama, Navy Captain Deke Parsons. Enola Gay by Thomas

and Witts, focusing on the 509th Composite Group that dropped both "Little Boy" and "Fat Man", describes the training and preparations that led to Hiroshima, and the men who performed the mission. Contrary to the stories that have surfaced over the years, no members of the crews of the planes who dropped either bomb have suffered nervous breakdowns or come out against their use. (Thomas and Witts explain that an alcoholic pilot of a weather plane later did blame his problems on the bomb.) The airmen's sentiments are best expressed by the comment a crewman on the Nagasaki raid penned in his journal, "Those poor Japs, but they asked for it." While they felt compassion for their victims, they also were and remain morally confident that their actions were justified.

That position is not acceptable for critics of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki missions, troubled by what we now know in hindsight about the terrible suffering and death that resulted. The most intense controversy about the end of the war in the Pacific revolves around the question of whether the B-29s needed to cap the air war against Japan by dropping the atomic bombs in order to bring surrender. Some historians question the real motivations for using nuclear weapons, whether other approaches might have brought an early surrender, and why President Harry Truman did not pursue these so-called alternatives.

This spirited debate over the morality and utility of these weapons is a relatively recent phenomenon. In a Fortune magazine poll taken in December 1945, fewer than five per cent of those queried thought the bombs should not have been dropped. As stated at the beginning of this essay, anyone who wants to study or research the decision to use the atomic bomb should start by getting a feel for the atmosphere of the Pacific War in 1945, especially the increasing carnage of ground combat as American forces approached Japan. Max Hastings does a fine job depicting the increasing brutaility of the latter stages of the war in his book Retribution. Feifer's Tennozan: The Battle of Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb is a graphic description of a land and sea campaign that claimed 30,000 American, 110,000 Japanese, and 150,000 Okinawan lives. This heightened the fears, which Feifer thinks were bonafide, of leaders all the way up to Truman, of even higher casualties in any invasion of the Home Islands, and inspired the sentiments in servicemen so eloquently expressed in Fussell's Thank God For the Atomic Bomb. These emotions were shared by Allies in the theater, as revealed by Harper in Miracle of Deliverance: The Case for the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was a British soldier slated for Operation ZIPPER, the British invasion scheduled for September 1945 to retake Malaya. Lord Mountbatten insisted that it be conducted as planned even after the surrender, and despite no enemy resistance the landings turned into a muddy debacle. In addition to the heavy casualties a contested ZIPPER would have produced, Harper also emphasizes the thousands of Allied POWs who would have been massacred or starved to death if the war had not ended so abruptly and early. Home front attitudes as V-J Day approached are covered by John Chappell in his book, Before the Bomb: How America Approached the End

of the Pacific War, especially the combination of belligerence and war-weariness that sometimes produced confused and contradictory inclinations.

The plans of each side concerning the invasions of Kyushu and Honshu are covered in great detail in Skates' The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb. He believes that American firepower would have kept US casualties relatively low for the invasion of Kyushu, and eventually made the second phase landings on Honshu unnecessary. Allen and Polmar have looked at the same information in Code-name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb, and come to the opposite conclusion, arguing that the excuse of the atomic bomb gave the Emperor a way to avoid the Decisive Battle desired by his military leaders that would have cost both sides hundreds of thousands of casualties. Barton Bernstein has conjectured in an article in Pacific Historical Review that intelligence reports in July and August that revealed a massive Japanese buildup in Kyushu would have eventually forced abandonment of that operation and a landing somewhere else.

Brower's book provides the best coverage of the deliberations of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning the conflicting options of assault or siege to defeat Japan. Haunted by fears of war weariness at home and the specter of intensifying enemy resistance, the Navy and Army Air Forces supported a sea blockade and aerial bombardment while the Army insisted that only an invasion would accomplish military and political goals in a timely manner. In the end the JCS pursued these objectives and more. Brower concludes that the JCS clearly understood that Japan's defeat would result from the increasing application of a combination of military, psychological and political pressures upon the island nation. They developed a strategy using multiple means and ways. The JCS tightened the crippling blockade, launched a relentless aerial assault with conventional and atomic weapons, contributed to efforts to induce an early Japanese capitulation by clarifying the unconditional surrender formula, and strongly urged both Roosevelt and Truman to secure early Soviet entry into the war. For Brower, it took the whole series of shocks to finally bring Japanese surrender; B-29 operations and the atomic bomb, diplomatic pressure, the inexorable island-hopping advance toward Japan, Russian entry, and the naval air and submarine campaign strangling the home islands described in more detail in Morison’s volumes and Blair’s Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan.

Brower is probably correct that any monocausal explanation for the end of the war in the Pacific is bound to be insufficient and unsatisfactory. This has not prevented such arguments from being made, especially by historians wanting to minimize the importance of atomic weapons. Especially notable is Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, who argues fervently that it was Soviet entry into the war that was the decisive factor that forced his nation’s leadership to accept surrender.

The best description of actual conditions in Japan under the strains of the sophisticated strategy Brower describes is Thomas R. Havens' Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War II. Haruko and Theodore Cook have also provided rich commentary about the home front in the Home Islands in their oral history. Havens agrees with Allen and Polmar that civilians and soldiers alike would have resisted right to the very end, primarily because of "a basic fear of what would happen if people stopped." (p.191) Though the public was exhausted it did not choose peace, and Havens speculates that Operations OLYMPIC and CORONET could have been "the bloodiest invasion by sea in history." (p.188)

The theme of avoiding such a result and saving lives by ending the war speedily with the help of the atomic bombs dominates official explanations about the decision to use them. There were some critics of the U.S. action soon after the war. Radical Dwight Macdonald attacked the use of the bomb on moral grounds and expressed fear about the power of the nation-state to use it, while some others suggested that the bombs might have been directed at the Russians as much as the Japanese. Though such opinions were rare, many of the key leaders involved in the decision crafted essays in its defense.

The most effective response was Secretary of War Henry Stimson's, which he wrote with the help of key subordinates and published in Harper's in 1947. He argued that policy makers dropped the bomb after careful consideration because it was a legitimate weapon that held some hope of shortening the war and saving American lives. There were no sure alternatives available to bring Japanese surrender as quickly and maybe end the war in 1945. In his memoirs Stimson expanded on his arguments and emphasized that "the least abhorrent choice" (p.633) of many unpleasant alternatives was to drop the bomb and hopefully avoid a bloody invasion. Always troubled by the civilian casualties from air attacks, Stimson also saw an additional benefit of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Japanese surrender stopped the fire raids. President Truman justified the use of the bomb on what he defined as military targets in his memoirs by claiming that General George Marshall had advised him that "it might cost half a million American lives to force the enemy's surrender on his home grounds." (p.417) The source and reliability of this figure has caused considerable controversy, and Miles and Bernstein have argued that Truman never received any casualty estimates that high from his military advisers, though Giangreco's work reveals that planners' predictions covered quite a wide range. Many critics cite a June Joint War Plans Committee report that estimated casualties of 40,000 dead and 193,500 total, and claim that this somehow lessens the justification for the use of the bomb. As Robert James Maddox pointed out in an essay in American Heritage, the idea that saving a million casualties justifies the use of the bomb but 200,000 does not is "bizarre", and Allen and Polmar have a fine discussion in their book of the fluctuations in invasion casualty estimates in the summer of 1945. While Douglas MacArthur appears to have lowered his predictions to the President to soothe Truman's

fears about the general's leadership in Operation DOWNFALL, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff feared losses might be unacceptably high, and MacArthur's own medical planners were preparing for 395,000 Army casualties alone in the first 120 days of combat. In a memorandum pleading for a negotiated end to the war that might have circulated past Truman, Herbert Hoover actually did use the figure of a million casualties that could be saved. Bernstein has done considerable research into the writing of both Stimson's and Truman's memoirs, and while he gives Stimson credit for seizing the "moral high ground" for future debates about the bomb, he also speculates that Truman's ardent attempts to justify his actions demonstrate some ambivalence and sense of guilt about Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Bernstein is the most thorough and objective of all the revisionists who have come to reexamine the atomic bomb decision, and his edited collection, The Atomic Bomb: The Critical Issues, provides readers with a sampling of all the major schools of thought that had appeared by the mid-1970s. Another source for those trying to get a handle on the extensive literature is Walker's historiographical essay, which generally takes up where Bernstein ended. Walker has also written a concise but thorough book analyzing Truman's decision process, concluding that dropping the bomb shortened the war and saved a not inconsequential number of American (and Japanese) lives, but conceding that a host of counterfactual and moral questions can never be answered in a way acceptable to all scholars. Both Bernstein and Walker agree that the first real scholarly effort to use primary sources and provide a definitive evaluation of the subject was provided by Herbert Feis in 1961. While he concurred with the argument that the bomb was dropped to end the war and save lives, Feis agreed with the Strategic Bombing Survey that LeMay could have ended the war with conventional bombing by the close of 1945. While he believed the bomb's use was not essential, it was justified by the desire to win the war as quickly as possible. Some other noteworthy contributions to atomic bomb scholarship of the early 1960's include Batchelder's The Irreversible Decision, 1939-1950, a moral-ethical response to Hiroshima, and Giovannitti's and Freed's The Decision to Drop the Bomb, a book that grew out of an NBC television documentary with some particularly good quotes and first-hand accounts from participants on both sides.

Feis did imply in one paragraph that decision-makers might have perceived that an added benefit of the bomb would be to impress and restrain the Russians, but it took the release in 1965 of Alperovitz's Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, one of the most influential books of Cold War revisionism, to really give that argument some credibility. He went much farther than Feis, arguing that the atomic bombs were used for political reasons, not military ones. Alperovitz agreed with Feis that Japan was already defeated, but argued that policy-makers were not willing to pursue any alternative approaches to surrender, including a negotiated settlement, because they wanted to use the bomb to intimidate the Soviets and secure a better peace with fewer

concessions to Communism. This was done by Harry Truman, under the influence of Secretary of State James Byrnes, in an effort to reverse Franklin Roosevelt's more conciliatory policies toward Russia. The bomb was intended to start the Cold War, not end World War II. Alperovitz's book was very much a product of the questioning atmosphere of Vietnam and the 1960s, and while his arguments were embraced by many eager to doubt official explanations and policies, scholars from both right and left attacked his position, for among other problems, his questionable use of evidence. Alperovitz has since published two updates of his work, including the most recent The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb. While his scholarship has improved, his main arguments have not changed, and the number of his supporters has declined. His position still must be dealt with by anyone writing on this issue, however.

The best exposition of the strengths and flaws in Alperovitz's arguments is in a spirited exchange between himself, Bernstein, and Robert Messer in International Security. As Bernstein sums up, "Whether anti-Soviet purposes constituted the *primary* reason for using the bomb (as Alperovitz's book also argues), or a *secondary but necessary* reason (as some others think), or a *confirming but not essential* reason (as I contend) is the general range of the ongoing dispute about why the bombs were used." (p.219) He should have added that some scholars also still support the official position giving even less credence to any political motivation. For instance McCullough in his Pulitzer-Prize winning biography of Truman, emphasizes that the president relied mainly on General Marshall and Secretary Stimson for advice on such matters, and not Secretary Byrnes, and the decision was indeed based on military factors. Truman dropped what he saw as a "terrible" weapon to save American lives, to avoid a repeat of the bloody ground combat he knew from World War I on Kyushu or Honshu.

Revisionists agree with Alperovitz that there were other viable alternatives to the use of the bomb, and the question then becomes why they were not pursued. The official position is that no one was looking for ways to avoid using the bomb, but instead everyone was trying to avoid an invasion. Both Bernstein and Sherwin have offered that modifying the terms of unconditional surrender might have made the bombing of Hiroshima unnecessary. In A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance, Sherwin agrees that military factors dominated the decision to use the bomb, though diplomatic leverage did give it political advantages. He also argues that the bombing of Nagasaki was indefensible, since inadequate time was allowed for the impact of the first bomb to take effect on Japanese decision-makers.

Since the publication of his book, Sherwin has become even more adamant that if unconditional surrender terms could have been modified to guarantee the status of the Emperor the war could have ended even sooner, but concerns about domestic politics as well as a desire for diplomatic leverage prevented Truman from considering such an option. Bernstein has pursued

similar themes, though he is more understanding of the perceptions and constraints policy makers faced. Unlike Alperovitz, Bernstein has been willing to reshape his arguments based on new evidence. He has thoroughly examined the alternatives available to using the bomb -- a demonstration in an isolated location, a modification of surrender demands, an exploration of Japanese peace feelers, waiting for Soviet entry into the war, and allowing LeMay to continue his campaign -- and has concluded that none by itself seemed likely to end the war quickly, either in the opinion of leaders in 1945 or in hindsight today. He speculates that perhaps a combination of alternate approaches, such as the JCS was trying, might have been successful without the bomb, but admits that while such a result seems likely, it is "far from definite". Bernstein has forged a middle ground between the more radical revisionist and traditional schools, arguing that the bomb's use was unethical and had some perceived peripheral benefit in intimidating the Russians, but that it was considered a legitimate weapon in 1945 with a primary purpose to help end the war and avoid a costly invasion.

The release of much new material as the 50th anniversary of V-E day approached helped keep the debate over the use of the bomb fresh and lively. Truman's papers and letters have been interpreted in a number of ways, but they have provided new perspectives on his decision. McGeorge Bundy, who helped Stimson write his memoirs, produced his own; and, while lamenting the fact that the administration did not pursue alternative options more seriously, he denies that possible impact on the Soviet Union had any real bearing on the use of the bomb. One of Bundy's more interesting suggestions is that the United States should have invited neutral observers to the atomic test explosion in New Mexico, who then could have conveyed a convincing warning to the Japanese. Kai Bird has written a critical biography of Bundy and continues to echo Alperovitz's arguments about the use of the bomb. Bird remains the most adamant revisionist among current writers dealing with such issues.

Most useful of more recent revelations has been the release of ULTRA and MAGIC intercepts. Though revisionists have seized upon individual messages to show that American leaders should have known that Japan was on the verge of defeat and looking for a face-saving way to surrender, the total picture available was much more ambiguous. In Marching Orders, Lee covers the daily intelligence summaries and shows that whenever a Japanese diplomat considered alternatives to fighting on, military leaders adamantly resisted. As Drea writes in MacArthur's ULTRA, "As far as Allied military intelligence was concerned, the Japanese civil authorities might be considering peace, but Japan's military leaders, who American decision makers believed had total control of the nation, were preparing for war to the knife." (p.214)

Descriptions of the process leading to Japanese surrender support this view. Butow wrote Japan's Decision to Surrender in 1954, but it remains the standard work. He gives much credit to the atomic bomb for creating conditions that allowed the Emperor to intercede successfully for surrender. Craig's The

Fall of Japan and Toland's The Rising Sun also provide graphic descriptions of the tortuous Japanese path to capitulation, and how close it came to being detoured at the last minute. The Pacific War Research Society's Japan's Longest Day is another valuable source, especially for its content from interviews. The respected historian Akira Iriye is especially critical of the Japanese government's decision to send peace feelers to the Soviet Union, and he argues that this failure to deal directly with the United States needlessly prolonged the war.

One of the more original treatments of war termination in the Pacific is Fighting to a Finish by Leon V. Sigal. A political scientist, Sigal looks at the end of the war through the lens of bureaucratic politics, and while his research is not as extensive as in most of the books by historians, he does have some provocative arguments. For Sigal, American and Japanese actions were less a result of rational calculation than of domestic politics and organizational processes. He contends that the lesson for modern war termination is that leaders must make careful political preparations at home before they can secure desired peace abroad.

While revisionists tended to dominate writings about the atomic bomb from the 1960s through the 1990s, the perceived reinterpretation of history by the Smithsonian Enola Gay exhibit inspired a strong reaction. While Bird and others tried to defend the themes of the exhibit, offended veterans like O'Reilly and Rooney lashed out against it. The most original counter-revisionist response is Newman's Truman and the Hiroshima Cult. Not only does he support the traditional position and argue for the necessity and morality of dropping the bomb on Japan, he also claims that attacking the United States about using the atomic bomb has become a secular "cult of atonement" where the guilt for later sins by the U.S. government and its agencies, such as Vietnam, is heaped upon Hiroshima. Newman is also disturbed by portrayals of the Japanese that emphasize their image as innocent victims of a terrible weapon and discourage discussion of their own wartime brutality and transgressions. In an issue of Commentary, Kagan has done a very incisive job summarizing and countering the main revisionist arguments, and the book by Maddox, Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision After Fifty Years pursues the same themes, returning to the arguments of the official explanation emphasizing the military necessity for using the bomb. As Kagan answers those who decry America's failure to confront its "moral failings" about Hiroshima, "An honest examination of the evidence reveals that their leaders, in the tragic predicament common to all who have engaged in wars that reach the point where every choice is repugnant, chose the least bad course. Americans may look back on that decision with sadness, but without shame." (p.23)

In a recent collection looking at how America ends its wars, Gerhard Weinberg, the dean of American World War II historians, emphasizes the importance of the second atomic bomb, signifying that more could be coming, and the apparent American acceptance of keeping the Emperor, in convincing

the peace faction to create the deadlock that forced him to break it. The resulting American occupation not only guaranteed the return of Japan to the civilized world, it also insured the position of the United States in the Pacific with secure bases that would be essential to fight the next war in Asia. John Dower has written the seminal account of that occupation, though the contemporary summary from General MacArthur edited by Charles Willoughby is also worth reading. MacArthur's quick response saved millions of Japanese from death by starvation in the winter of 1945. It is worth contrasting the relatively smooth transitions in Japan and the Phillipines with the upheavals that erupted throughout the rest of the liberated Japanese empire. Ronald Spector's book In the Ruins of Empire provides a comprehensive litany of the unintended consequences of the removal of Japanese authority. The first volume of Allan Millett's trilogy on the Korean War is superb in describing the impact of American unpreparedness to handle the wartime aftermath on that peninsula. One interesting postwar "What if" to contemplate concerns Allen's and Polmar's discussion of Soviet plans to invade Hokkaido in September, aided by naval assets the US had provided. While the Soviets did not expect to do much more than gain a foothold, that would have created quite a political dilemma for Allied occupation. If Japanese surrender had been delayed long enough for the Soviets to establish a presence in the Home Islands, they could have demanded an occupation zone, and perhaps Japan would have ended up partitioned like Germany.

Weinberg also deems historical interpretations that attribute the dropping of the atomic bombs to racial factors or the desire to intimidate the Soviets as "far-fetched fairy tales" that he has never seen any evidence to substantiate. A much more diplomatic dismissal is presented by Richard Frank in what is the best existing account of the end of the war and the impact of the atomic bomb. He is an accomplished lawyer as well as an historian, and he has brilliantly analyzed all the most recent evidence to make his case, including a very candid assessment of the few strengths and many weaknesses of American intelligence. Frank addresses every issue covered in this essay, from whether railroad attacks could have ended the war without an invasion (probably, but months later with the death of many more non-combatanats), to the utility of the atomic bombs (without them, the Emperor's intercession would have been delayed, and the war dragged on.) He describes how revelations about the Kyushu buildup had Nimitz prepared to recommend against the landing there. For Frank, the whole casualty debate is a red herring. American leaders knew the public would not abide a large number of casualties, and be believes that once the size of the Japanese buildup on Kyushu was realized, the use of the bombs would have been inevitable. His analysis of Soviet intervention is especially detailed. He points out that more Japanese died as a result of Soviet captivity on the mainland than from both atomic bombs. Without Hiroshima, the Soviet offensive in Manchuria would have been delayed, with uncertain impact. It might have galvanized the Japanese Army to resist surrender even more, or it might have allowed time for leaders to evaluate a new American bombing

campaign against food and transportation. Again the war would have ended later, with more Japanese deaths, and there definitely would have been Soviets in Hokkaido, resulting in a divided occupation as in Germany.

The atomic bomb was not the only secret project designed to shorten the war in the Pacific Theater. Bat Bomb by Couffer is an informative and sometimes hilarious first-hand account of a project to have Mexican freetailed bats burn down Japanese cities with small incendiary bombs. Project X-RAY actually showed some promise before it was terminated in early 1944 in favor of the Manhattan Project. Like Rhodes' book on the atomic bomb, this one also reveals a lot about how scientific research and development is conducted in wartime. More sobering is Unit 731 by Williams and Wallace. They describe Japanese programs in China to develop chemical and biological weapons, which often involved experiments on Chinese victims. The war ended before a plan could be attempted to deliver biological agents to the United States in balloons released into prevailing winds. Mikesh's book explains how hundreds of paper balloon bombs were launched with conventional explosives, however, and Webber describes how Japanese submarines also launched seaplanes to drop incendiaries on forests in the American Northwest. Allen and Polmar have a fine description in their book of the extreme means on both sides that might have been used if the war had continued, and Crane covers American plans to use gas and destroy the Japanese rice crop. In doing research on early ideas for the tactical use of nuclear weapons, Bernstein found that Marshall had even considered using nine atomic bombs to support landings in Kyushu. No one can dispute that the war would have indeed become even more terrible if it had continued. This was very evident to people on both sides who were alive in 1945. Historians today, however, will continue to debate whether the war could have been ended differently than with the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the shadow those mushroom clouds cast over the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Thomas B. and Norman Polmar. Code-name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Alperovitz, Gar. Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965.

_____. The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb. New York: Knopf, 1995.

_____, Robert L. Messer, and Barton Bernstein. "Correspondence: Marshall, Truman, and the Decision to Drop the Bomb." International Security 16 (Winter 1991/92): 204-221.

Batchelder, Robert C. The Irreversible Decision, 1939-1950. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.

Bernstein, Barton. "Eclipsed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Early Thinking About Tactical Nuclear Weapons." International Security 15 (Spring 1991): 149-173.

_____. "Seizing the Contested Terrain of Nuclear History: Stimson, Conant, and Their Allies Explain the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb." Diplomatic History 17 (Winter 1993): 35-72.

_____. “The Alarming Japanese Buildup on Southern Kyushu, Growing U.S. Fears, and Counterfactual Analysis: Would the Planned November 1945 Invasion of Southern Kyusho Have Occurred?” Pacific Historical Review 68(November 1999): 561-609.

_____, ed. The Atomic Bomb: The Critical Issues. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976.

_____. "The Dropping of the A-Bomb: How Decisions Are Made When a Nation Is at War." The Center Magazine (March/April 1983): 7-15.

_____. "The Perils and Politics of Surrender: Ending the War with Japan and Avoiding the Third Atomic Bomb." Pacific Historical Quarterly 46 (February 1977): 1-27.

_____. "Understanding the Atomic Bomb and the Japanese Surrender: Missed Opportunities, Little-Known Near Disasters, and Modern Memory." Diplomatic History 19 (Spring 1995): 227-273.

Bird, Kai. The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy: Brothers in Arms. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

_____ and Lawrence Lifschultz. Hiroshima's Shadow. Stony Creek, CT: Pamphleteer's Press, 1998.

Birdsall, Steve. Flying Buccaneers: The Illustrated History of Kenney's Fifth Air Force. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Blair, Clay, Jr. Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan. New York: Bantam, 1975.

Brower, Charles F., IV. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Strategy in the Pacific War, 1943-1945. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Bundy, McGeorge. Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years. New York: Random House, 1988.

Butow, Robert J.C. Japan's Decision to Surrender. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954.

Caidin, Martin. A Torch to the Enemy. New York: Bantam Books, 1960.

_____. The Ragged, Rugged Warriors. New York: Bantam Books, 1979.

Chappell, John D. Before the Bomb: How America Approached the End of the Pacific War. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997.

Chennault, Claire Lee, with Robert Hotz, ed. Way of a Fighter. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949.

Christman, Al. Target Hiroshima: Deke Parsons and the Creation of the Atomic Bomb. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998.

Coffey, Thomas M. Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay. New York: Crown Books, 1986.

Cook, Haruko Taya and Theodore F. Japan at War: An Oral History. New York: New Press, 1992.

Cortesi, Lawrence. Target: Tokyo. New York: Zebra Books, 1983.

Couffer, Jack. Bat Bomb: World War II's Other Secret Weapon. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.

Craig, William. The Fall of Japan. New York: Dial Press, 1967.

Crane, Conrad C. American Airpower Strategy in World War II:Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016.

_____. Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

Craven, Wesley Frank and James Lea Cate, eds. The Army Air Forces in World War II. Seven Volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948-1953.

Doolittle, Gen. James H. with Carroll V. Glines. I Could Never Be So Lucky Again. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

Dower, John W. Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Drea, Edward J. MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992.

Edoin, Hoito. The Night Tokyo Burned. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

Feifer, George. Tennozan: The Battle of Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb. New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992.

Feis, Herbert. Japan Subdued: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

____. The Atomic Bomb and the End of the War in the Pacific. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

Ferrell, Robert H., ed. Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959. New York: W.W. Norton, 1983.

_____, ed. Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.

"Fortune Survey: Use of the Atomic Bomb." Fortune 37 (December 1945):305-306, 309.

Frank, Richard B. Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Fussell, Paul. Thank God for the Atomic Bomb and Other Essays. New York: Summit Books, 1988.

Gentile, Gian P. How Effective is Strategic Bombing?: Lessons Learned from World War II and Kosovo. New York: NYU Press, 2001.

Giangreco, D.M. Hell To Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009.

Gillison, Douglas. Royal Australian Air Force, 1939-1942. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1962.

Giovannitti, Len and Fred Freed. The Decision to Drop the Bomb. New York: Coward-McCann, 1965.

Glines, Carroll V. Attack on Yamamoto. New York: Orion Books, 1990.

_____. Doolittle's Tokyo Raiders. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

_____. The Doolittle Raid: America's Daring First Strike Against Japan. New York: Orion Books, 1988.

Griffith, Thomas E. MacArthur's Airman: General George C. Kenney and the War in the Southwest Pacific. Lawrence: Universoty Press of Kansas, 1998.

Groves, Leslie R. Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project. New York: Harper, 1962.

Hansell, Maj. Gen. Haywood, Jr. Strategic Air War Against Japan. Washington: USGPO, 1980.

Harper, Stephen. Miracle of Deliverance: The Case for the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985.

Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi. Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005.

Hastings, Max. Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944-1945. New York: Knopf, 2008

Havens, Thomas R. Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War II. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

Herbert, Kevin. Maximum Effort: The B-29s Against Japan. Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1983.

Hersey, John. Hiroshima. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1946. Updated edition in 1985.

Impact: The Army Air Forces' "Confidential" Picture History of World War II. Eight Books. Reprint of 1943-1945 periodicals. Harrisburg: Historical Times, Inc, 1982.

Iriye, Akira. Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-1945. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Kagan, Donald. "Why America Dropped the Bomb." Commentary 100 (September 1995): 17-23.

Kenney, George C. General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War. Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1987 reprint of 1949 edition.

Kerr, E. Bartlett. Flames Over Tokyo: The U.S. Army Air Forces' Incendiary Campaign against Japan, 1944-1945. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1991.

Kissick, Luther C., Jr. Guerrilla One: The 74th Fighter Squadron behind Enemy Lines in China, 1942-45. Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1983.

Lawson, Ted. Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo. New York: Random House, 1943.

Lee, Bruce. Marching Orders: The Untold Story of World War II. New York: Crown Publishers, 1995.

LeMay, Curtis with MacKinley Kantor. Mission with LeMay. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

Macdonald, Dwight. "The Bomb." Politics 2 (September 1945): 257-260.

MacIsaac, David. Strategic Bombing in World War II: The Story of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey. New York: Garland Publishing, 1976.

Maddox, Robert James. "The Biggest Decision: Why We Had to Drop the Atomic Bomb." American Heritage 46 (May/June 1995): 70-77.

_____. Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years After. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995.

Marshall, Chester W. and Warren Thompson, Final Assault on the Rising Sun. North Branch, MN: Specialty Press Publishers, 1995.

McCullough, David. Truman. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

Messer, Robert L. "New Evidence on Truman's Decision." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 41 (August 1985): 50-56.

Mikesh, Robert C. Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks on North America. Washington, D.C: Smithsonian, 1973.

Miles, Rufus E., Jr. "Hiroshima: The Strange Myth of Half a Million Lives Saved." International Security 10 (Fall 1985): 121-140.

Millett, Allan R. The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. History of United States Naval Operations in World War II. 15 Volumes. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948-1962

Morrison, Wilbur H. Hellbirds: The Story of the B-29s in Combat. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1960.

_____. Point of No Return. New York: Times Books, 1979.

Nakazawa, Keiji. Barefoot Gen: Volume 1, A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima. San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2003. (The series contains at least ten volumes.)

Newman, Robert P. Truman and the Hiroshima Cult. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995.

Odgers, George. Air War against Japan, 1943-45. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957.

Okumiya, Masatake and Jiro Horikoshi with Martin Caidan. Zero! New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1956.

O'Reilly, Charles T. and William A Rooney. The Enola Gay and the Smithsonian Institution. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005.

Pacific War Research Society. Japan's Longest Day. New York: Ballantine, 1972.

Ross, John Macaulay Sutherland. Royal New Zealand Air Force. Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, RNZAF, 1955.

Rhodes, Richard. The Making of the Atomic Bomb. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Sakai, Saburo with Martin Caidan and Fred Saito. Samurai! New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1958.

Schaffer, Ronald. Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985.

Scott, Colonel Robert L. God is My Co-Pilot. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.

Sherry, Michael S. The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987.

Sherwin, Martin J. A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance. New York: Knopf, 1975.

_____ and Kai Bird. American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

Sigal, Leon V. Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Skates, John Ray. The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

Spector, Ronald. In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia. (New York: Random House, 2007)

Stimson, Henry L. "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb." Harper's 194 (February 1947): 54-56.

_____ with McGeorge Bundy. On Active Service in Peace and War. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.

Thomas, Gordon and Max Morgan Witts. Enola Gay. New York: Pocket Books, 1978.

Tillman, Barrett. Whirlwind: The Air War Against Japan 1942-1945. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010.

Toland, John. The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945. New York: Random House, 1970.

Truman, Harry. Memoirs: Year of Decisions. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1955.

United States Strategic Bombing Survey. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey. 10 Volumes. New York: Garland Press, 1976.

Willoughby, Charles A., ed. Reports of General MacArthur, Volume I Supplement, MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation, Military Phase. Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1966.

Walker, J. Samuel. "The Decision to Use the Bomb: A Historiographical Update." Diplomatic History 14 (Winter 1990): 97-114.
_____. Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Webber, Bert. Retaliation: Japanese Attacks and Allied Countermeasures on the Pacific Coast in World War II. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975.

Weinberg, Gerhard L. “The End of the Pacific War in World War II,” in Matthew Moten, ed. Between War and Peace: How America Ends its Wars. New York: Free Press 2011: 220-236.

Werrell, Kenneth P. Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers Over Japan During World War II. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1996.

Williams, Peter and David Wallace. Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War II. New York: Free Press, 1989.

Yoshino, Ronald W. Lightning Strikes: The 475th Fighter Group in the Pacific War, 1943-1945. Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1988.

US Army Heritage and Education
Center US Army War College
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle, PA 17013

http://ahec.armywarcollege.edu