Part 1

The Origins of the Cold War

In light of the enormous impact of the Cold War since World War II— the immeasurable human energies it exhausted, the gargantuan amounts of wealth it consumed, the shifting of national priorities it demanded, the attention it diverted from other concerns, the civil liberties it impinged on and the intellectual freedom it constrained, the anguish and fears it caused so many people, the threat it posed to the earth's inhabitants, and the enormous loss of life in the proxy wars (Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan)—it becomes necessary to investigate its origins.

The Cold War was for many years so divisive a subject that it was all but impossible to study it with detachment and objectivity. So strong were the feelings and so total the commitment of each side to its cause, and so contemptuous and mistrusting was each of the other side, that each had its own self-serving version of the origin and history of the Cold War.

The United States and the Soviet Union each perpetuated a series of Cold War myths that sustained them over the years. The people of the United States generally felt (1) that the Soviet Union broke its postwar promises regarding Eastern Europe and was therefore responsible for starting the Cold War; (2) that its aggressive action in Eastern Europe was a manifestation of the determination of the Soviet Union to capture the entire world for Communism; (3) that so-called international Communism was a monolithic (i.e., singular) movement centered in and controlled by the Soviet Union; (4) that Communism was enslavement and was never accepted by any people without coercion; and (5) that the great victory of the United States in World War II, as well as its immense prosperity and strength, attested to the superiority of its values and its system—that, in short, the United States represented humanity's best hope.

The Soviets argued (1) that the United States and the Western allies purposely let the Soviet Union bleed in World War II, and furthermore lacked gratitude for the role that it played in the defeat of Hitler, as well as for the enormous losses it suffered in that cause; (2) that the United States was committed to the annihilation of Communism in general and to the overthrow of the Communist government of the Soviet Union in particular; (3) that the laws of history were on its side, meaning that capitalism was in decline and Communism was the wave of the future; (4) that the US political system was not really democratic but was controlled by Wall Street, or at any rate by a small clique of leading corporate interests; and (5) that capitalist nations were necessarily imperialistic and thus responsible for colonization across the globe, and that the leading capitalist nation, the United States, was the most imperialistic of them all.[1]

As unquestioned assumptions, these myths became a mental straitjacket. They provided only a narrow channel for foreign policy initiatives by either country. When notions such as these were embedded in the thinking of the two adversaries, it became all but impossible for the two countries to end the Cold War and equally impossible to analyze objectively the history of the conflict.

The myths came into play during the Cold War, and especially in its earliest phase even before the defeat of Nazi Germany—when the Allied leaders met at Yalta in February 1945. For this reason, in the opening chapter, we examine the wartime relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective strengths and positions at the end of the war. We also analyze the US decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan and the impact it had on US-Soviet relations. In Chapter 2, we turn to the Yalta Conference and examine its bearing on the beginning of the Cold War. We then trace the hardening of Cold War positions over critical issues in Eastern Europe in the four years following the end of World War II. By 1947, when the US policy of "containment" of Communism was in place, the Cold War myths were firmly entrenched on both sides.

In March 1964, William Fulbright, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, attempted to challenge some of these and other Cold War myths. He questioned whether Communist China's "implacable hostility" to the West was "permanent," whether Fidel Castro in Cuba posed "a grave danger to the United States," and whether there was something "morally sacred" about the US possession of the Panama Canal, which it had seized in 1903. Yet few listened; indeed, Fulbright spoke before a nearly empty Senate chamber.

The Cold War quickly became global, and in fact it was in Asia where it became most inflamed in the first decade after the war. In Chapter 3, we discuss its impact on Asia by treating the Allied Occupation of defeated Japan, the civil war in China, and the Korean War—all Cold War issues. The Allied occupation of defeated Japan was thoroughly dominated by the United States

over the feeble objections of the Soviets, and eventually the United States succeeded in converting Japan into an ally in the global Cold War. The Chinese revolution, which brought the Communists to power in 1949, was fought entirely by indigenous forces, but the stakes were great for the two superpowers. The United States responded to the Communist victory in China with still firmer resolve to stem the advance of Communism in Asia. Less than a year later that resolve was tested in Korea, where Cold War tensions grew most intense and finally ignited in the Korean War. The armed conflict between East and West was contained in Korea, but it threatened to explode into the dreaded World War III.

After the standoff in Korea, Cold War tensions oscillated during the remainder of the 1950s. During this period, covered in Chapter 4, new leaders—Dwight Eisenhower in the United States and Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union—exhibited a new flexibility, which made possible some reduction in tensions and the solution of a few of the Cold War issues. But the Cold War myths remained entrenched during this period, as manifested by sporadic crises and the substantial growth in the nuclear arsenals of both countries. The two superpowers came to the brink of nuclear war in 1962 over the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, an episode that turned into the most dangerous of the many Cold War confrontations.

Note

1. These myths are an adaptation of a similar set of Cold War myths in Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War, 1945–1972* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1982), pp. 8–9.

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The End of World War II and the Dawn of the Nuclear Age

World War II was a cataclysmic event, by far the most deadly and destructive war in history. It raged for almost six years in Europe, beginning with Nazi Germany's attack on Poland in September 1939 and ending with the surrender of Germany to the Allied Powers led by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain on May 9, 1945. The war lasted even longer in Asia, where it began with the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937 and ended with Japan's capitulation to the Allies on August 14, 1945.

World War II represented something new in recent history: total war. It was total in the sense that it involved or affected the entire population of nations, not just the men and women in uniform. Everyone was drawn into the war effort and everyone became a target. This was not merely a war between armies but between societies. Because a nation's military might rested on its industrial capacity, the civilian workforce contributed to the war effort and thus became targets and victims of new and more deadly modern weapons.

Another major dimension of the war was the introduction of atomic weapons. There are many difficult questions to ponder concerning the US use of atomic bombs against Japan, one of the most important and most controversial issues in modern history. But the fundamental question remains: Was it necessary or justifiable to use the bomb? It is also important to consider what bearing the emerging Cold War had on the US decision to drop the bomb on Japan, and what bearing its use had on subsequent US-Soviet relations.

After the war, the victorious nations—mainly the United States and the Soviet Union—took the lead in shaping the postwar world. In order to understand their respective postwar policies, one must consider the impact of World War II on these two nations, the new "superpowers."

The "Grand Alliance" against Nazi Germany—fashioned during the war by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain—began to crumble as soon as the war was over and gave way to Cold War hostility. Politicians of these and other nations searched for a new international structure for the maintenance of global peace through collective security—the United Nations (UN). Although the founding of the United Nations was attended by great hope, it was from the beginning severely limited in its capacity to attain its objective of world peace.

History's Most Destructive War

The carnage of World War II was so great as to be beyond comprehension. Much of Europe and East Asia was in ruins. Vast stretches of both continents were destroyed twice, first when they were conquered and again when they were liberated. It is impossible to know the complete toll in human lives lost in this war, but some estimates run higher than 70 million people. The nation that suffered the greatest loss of life was the Soviet Union. It lost an incredible 27 million people in the war, a figure that represents at least half of the total European war dead. Poland lost 5.8 million people, about 15 percent (perhaps even 20 percent) of its population. Germany lost 4.5 million people, and Yugoslavia, 1.5 million. Six other European nations—France, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Britain—each lost more than a half million people. In Asia, perhaps as many as 20 million Chinese and 2.3 million Japanese died in the war, and there were large numbers of casualties in various other Asian countries, from India in the south to Korea in the northeast. In Vietnam, the famine caused by the wartime Japanese occupation led to the death of 2 million people. In some European countries and in Japan, there was hardly a family that had not lost at least one member in the war.[1]

Approximately two-thirds of those who died in World War II were civilians—many of them specifically targeted for destruction. In contrast, during World War I much less than half of the dead were civilians, who tended to be incidental victims of the consequences of the war, famine, and disease—"collateral damage," as it were. World War II, however, to an extent not witnessed in modern European history, became a war against civilians, who were deliberately targeted.

Germany's war of conquest in Eastern Europe, under the direction of Adolf Hitler, led to the systematic murder of an estimated 12 million civilians—Jews, Slavs, and gypsies. Other victims included the disabled, conscientious objectors, and political opponents (notably Communists). The Jewish Holocaust—replete with mass executions and gas chambers—reduced Europe's prewar Jewish population from 9.2 million to 3.8 million. In 1945 came the shocking revelations of forced labor and extermination camps in Eastern Europe—Theresienstadt, Auschwitz (where 1.5 million Jews died),

Treblinka, Buchenwald. It raised the vexing question of how German society—heir to a humanist tradition that gave the world Beethoven, Goethe, Bach, and Schiller—descended (willingly or unwillingly, the debate continues) to such a level of depravity.

Another factor leading to the huge toll of civilian lives was the development of airpower—bigger and faster airplanes with longer range and greater carrying capacity. Indiscriminate bombing of the enemy's cities, populated by noncombatants, became common practice during the war.

Aerial bombardment began in earnest in the 1930s, even before the war. Its deadliness was demonstrated by the German bombing of Spanish cities in the Spanish civil war (most famously at Guernica in April 1937) and the Japanese bombing of Shanghai (in 1932) and other Chinese cities. In World War II, Britain carried out bombing raids on Berlin before Germany began its bombardment of Britain, but the latter (the "Blitz" as the British called it) represented the first sustained, large-scale bombing attack on the cities of another country. An estimated 38,000 British citizens died in the Blitz. British and US bombers retaliated with a massive bombardment of Germany. At the end of the war, an Anglo-US bombing raid on the German city of Dresden in February 1945 (when Germany was all but defeated) killed some 135,000 people, nearly all civilians. The Japanese, who also used airpower, suffered the destruction of virtually all of their cities by saturation firebombings by US bombers. And the war ended with the use by the United States of a dreadful new weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb, wreaking horrible devastation upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. In the end, the nations that fought in the name of democracy in order to put an end to militarism resorted to the barbaric methods of their enemies. If unrestrained warfare had come to mean sustained, indiscriminate bombing of noncombatants with weapons of mass destruction, what hope was there for humankind should total war ever again occur?

The suffering and sorrow, the anguish and desperation of the survivors of the war lingered long after the last bombs had fallen and the victory celebrations had ended. Never in history had so much of the human race been so uprooted. In Europe alone there were approximately 65 million refugees, a staggering figure. Among them were East Europeans—Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and others—fleeing the advancing Red Army; 13 million Germans expelled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other parts of Eastern Europe; as well as slave laborers—on farms, factories, and construction sites—employed in Nazi Germany.[2]

The ethnic cleansing that the Germans began in 1939 was completed by their victims in 1945. It was based on the eternal principle expressed in W. H. Auden's poem "September 1, 1939" that "those to whom evil is done, do evil in return." The Czechs showed the Germans little mercy as they expelled them from the Sudetenland; the Germans in East Prussia suddenly discovered that, after all, their armies had committed atrocities in the East and the Red Army

would respond in kind. (Former German territories, which became parts of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, remained for decades among the unresolved issues of the Cold War.)

The figures cited above do not include the uncountable millions of refugees in China plus some 6 million Japanese—half of them military personnel—scattered across Asia at war's end. The United States transported most of these Japanese back home and returned Koreans, Chinese, and others to their homelands. In Manchuria, however, which the Soviets occupied temporarily, several hundred thousand Japanese were never repatriated. They succumbed either to the severity of the Manchurian winter without adequate food, shelter, or clothing or to the brutality of Soviet labor camps in Siberia. In China, cities such as Beijing (Peking) and Shanghai were swollen with weary, desperate people scavenging for food. They were plagued by disease, poverty, inflation, and corruption, all of which ran rampant in China during and well after the war.

The inferno of World War II left many cities gutted and vacant. Dresden, Hamburg, and Berlin in Germany and Tokyo, Yokohama, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki in Japan were virtually flattened, and many other cities in these and other countries were in large part turned to rubble. Some were entirely vacated and devoid of life for a while after the war. The huge and once crowded city of Tokyo, which lay mostly in ruins, saw its population dwindle to only a third of its prewar size. Stalingrad, in the wake of the greatest battle ever, had virtually no people left. In these once bustling cities, survivors scrounged in the debris in hopes of salvaging anything that might help them in their struggle for survival. At war's end homeless people moved into those few buildings that still stood—an office building, a railroad station, a school—and lived sometimes three or four families to a room, while others threw up shanties and shacks made of scraps of debris. Decades later one could still find here and there in many of these cities rubble left over from the war.

The physical destruction wrought by the war, estimated at over $2 trillion, continued to cause economic and social disruption in the lives of survivors long afterward. Not only were cities and towns destroyed but so too were industrial plants and transportation facilities. The destruction of factories, farmlands, and livestock and of railroads, bridges, and port facilities made it extremely difficult to feed and supply the needy populations. Acute shortages of food and scarcity of other life essentials continued well after the fighting was over. In these dire circumstances, many became desperate and demoralized, and some sought to ensure their survival or to profit from others' misfortune by resorting to hoarding goods and selling them on the black market. These were grim times in which greed, vengeance, and other base instincts of humanity found expression.

The widespread desolation and despair in Europe bred cynicism and disillusionment, which in turn gave rise to a political shift to the left, toward socialist solutions. Shaken and bewildered by the nightmarish devastation all

about them, many Europeans lost confidence in the old political order and turned to other more radical political doctrines and movements. Many embraced Marxism as a natural alternative to discredited fascism as an ideology that offered hope for the future. The renewed popularity of the left was reflected primarily in postwar electoral victories of the moderate left, such as the Labour Party in Great Britain and the Socialist Party in Austria. Communists, too, were able to make strong showings in elections—if only for the time being—particularly in France and Italy. In Asia the political swing to the left could be seen in China, Indochina, and to a lesser extent in Japan. Alarmed by this trend, US leaders soon came to the view that massive aid was necessary to bring about a speedy economic recovery to eliminate the poverty that was seen as the breeding ground for the spread of Communism.

During the war, in November 1943, the US Congress created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the purpose of which was the rehabilitation of war-torn areas. By the fall of 1946, many of the transportation facilities and factories in Western Europe were repaired and industrial production began to climb slowly, but the harsh winter of 1946–1947 brought new economic setbacks with a depletion of food supplies, raw materials, and financial reserves. Economic stagnation and attendant deprivation spread throughout nearly all of Europe—in defeated and devastated Germany as well as in victorious Britain. A similar situation prevailed in the war-ravaged nations of Asia, especially China and Japan.

When one considers the death, destruction, suffering, and social dislocation, it becomes clear that World War II was much more than a series of heroic military campaigns and more than a set of war games to be played and replayed by nostalgic war buffs. It was human anguish and agony on an unprecedented scale. And nowhere were the scars any deeper than in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Atomic Bombing of Japan

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and, three days later, another one on Nagasaki. In each instance a large city was obliterated and tens of thousands of its inhabitants were either instantly incinerated or left to succumb to radiation sickness weeks, months, and even years later. According to Japanese estimates, the atomic bomb strikes killed about 140,000 people in Hiroshima and about 70,000 in Nagasaki. US estimates of the death toll from the atomic bombings are 70,000 in Hiroshima and 40,000 in Nagasaki. The discrepancy in the fatality figures is partly the result of different methods of calculation and partly from differing intentions of those doing the counting. Thus, as World War II was about to end, the nuclear age began with the use of a new weapon, one that a Japanese physicist later called "a magnificent product of pure physics."[3]

The people of the United States and their wartime president, Franklin Roosevelt, were determined to bring about the earliest possible defeat of Japan. Roosevelt, who had commissioned the building of the atomic bomb, was prepared to use it against Japan once it was ready, but he died in April 1945. The decision whether to use the revolutionary new weapon fell to the new president, Harry S. Truman, who had not even been informed of the existence of the atomic bomb program until after he took office. In consultation with the secretary of war, Henry Stimson, Truman set up an advisory group known as the Interim Committee, which was to deliberate on whether to use the revolutionary weapon. The committee recommended that it be deployed against Japan as soon as possible, and without prior warning, on a dual target (meaning a military or war-plant site surrounded by workers' homes, i.e., a Japanese city).[4] The rationale for this strategy was to enhance the atomic bomb's shock value. The bomb was successfully tested in a remote New Mexico desert on July 16, just as Truman was meeting British prime minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin at Potsdam, Germany. Elated by the news of the test, Truman approved the military orders for the bomb's use nine days later, on July 25. The following day, Truman issued the Potsdam Proclamation, which spelled out terms for Japan's unconditional surrender and warned of "prompt and utter destruction" for noncompliance. But it made no specific reference to the new weapon. When the Japanese government rejected the proclamation, the orders for the first atomic bomb strike were carried out as planned.

The Japanese government dismissed the proclamation, for it was silent on the most important question, a guarantee by the victors that Japan would be allowed to retain the most sacred of its institutions: the emperor. The US intelligence community, which from the very beginning of the war had been able to decode Japanese diplomatic and military cables, was well aware that the Potsdam Proclamation had a "magnetic effect" on the emperor, Prime Minister Suzuki Kantaro, and the army. Some Japanese officials thought that Article 10 of the proclamation implied the retention of the emperor and thus could be used as the basis of a surrender; others wanted a clarification. Article 10 suggested that the Japanese government—including the emperor—would play a role in postwar Japan. Only two questions remained: Would Washington clarify Article 10? Would it accept a Japanese surrender before atomic weapons were used?[5]

Many people have since questioned the use of the atomic bomb, and opinions differ sharply. The orthodox view, presented by US officials and generally shared by the US public, is that by cutting short the war and sparing the casualties that would have occurred in the planned invasion of Japan, the atomic bomb actually saved many lives, Japanese as well as US. This explanation concludes that, although use of the bomb was regrettable, it was nonetheless necessary. Japan's diehard military leaders were determined to

fight to the bitter end, as they had in the Pacific islands, and they were prepared to fight even more fanatically on their own soil (as exemplified in the late spring of 1945 by the bloodiest battle in the Pacific, on the island of Okinawa, where more than 12,000 US soldiers and Marines lost their lives in less than three months of fighting). To bring about the earliest possible surrender of Japan and an end to the long and costly war, US officials felt compelled to use the revolutionary new weapon at their disposal.

One commonly finds in US literature the figure of 1 million as the estimate of US troops who would have been killed in the invasion of Japan had the atomic bombs not been used. But the figure is grossly exaggerated as it is more than three times the total number of US military deaths resulting from World War II—both in Europe and in the Pacific—in four years of warfare. The 1 million figure was used by Secretary of War Stimson after the war in an article intended to justify the use of the atomic bombs. At a meeting of military officials to discuss the planned invasion of Japan, on June 18, 1945, General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, thought it was impossible to give an estimate of the casualties in such an invasion, but surmised that in the first month they would probably not exceed those suffered in the invasion of Luzon—31,000.[6]

The projection of 1 million dead US troops, basically a justification of the atomic bombing of Japan, neglects many important historical facts. First, Japan was all but defeated, defenseless against the sustained US naval and air

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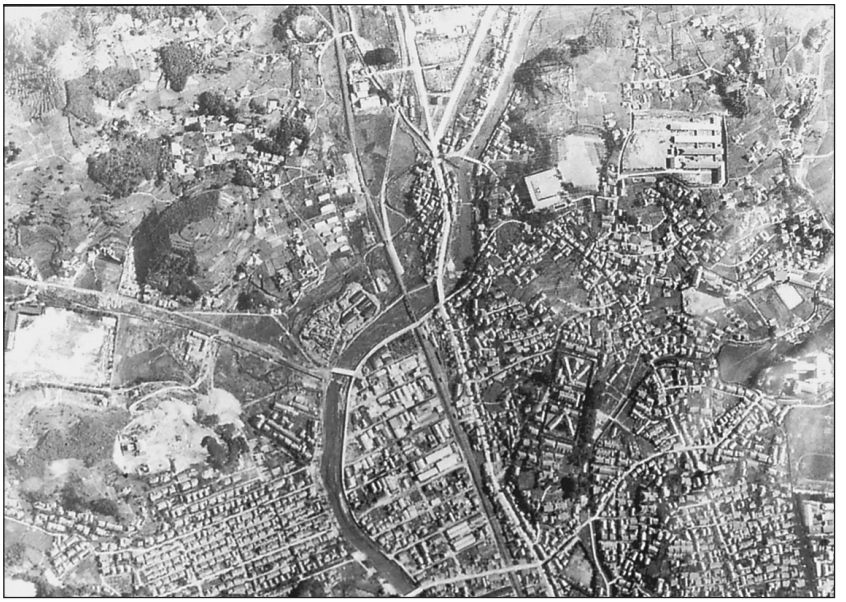
Hiroshima, Japan, August 1945. Located near ground zero, this building with its "A-Bomb Dome" has been preserved as a peace monument.

bombardments; its navy and merchant marine were sunk, its armies were weakened and undersupplied, and it was already being strangled by a US naval blockade. US leaders, who had underestimated Japan at the beginning of the war, were now overestimating its remaining strength. Although the diehard determination of its military leaders kept Japan from surrendering unconditionally, the nation's capacity to wage war had been virtually eliminated.

Second, before the United States had tested the atomic bomb in mid-July, the Japanese were already seeking negotiations with Washington to end the war. They sought to do this through Soviet mediation, since direct communication between Tokyo and Washington had been broken off during the war; Japan, however, was not at war with the Soviet Union. The US government was fully aware of these efforts and of the sense of urgency voiced by the Japanese in their communications to Moscow. US policymakers chose to ignore these diplomatic overtures, which they dismissed as unreliable and possibly a trick. The major obstacle to Japan's effort to achieve a diplomatic settlement to the war was the US insistence upon unconditional surrender, which called for Japan's acceptance of complete submission to the will of the United States, as opposed to a negotiated settlement to end the war.

The Japanese wanted at least a guarantee of the safety of their sacred imperial institution—which is to say, the retention of their emperor, Hirohito, in whose name the imperial forces had fought the war. The US government steadfastly refused to offer any such exception to the unconditional surrender policy. The Potsdam Proclamation did not offer Japan any guarantees regarding the emperor, and thus the Japanese did not accept it as a basis for surrender. This was the only condition the Japanese insisted upon, and eventually the United States granted it, but only after the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 6 and 9, respectively. On August 11, the Japanese government still insisted on surrender that "does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler."[7] The Truman administration accepted this condition in its reply when it demanded the unconditional surrender of the Japanese forces "on behalf of the Emperor of Japan." Had this condition been granted beforehand, the Japanese may well have surrendered and the atomic bombs would have been unnecessary.

Third, the Japanese might have been spared the horrendous fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had the US government provided them with an explicit warning about the nature of the new weapon and possibly an actual demonstration of an atomic blast as well. If Tokyo then still refused to accept the surrender terms, the use of the atomic weapons might have been morally justifiable. The Japanese were given no specific warning of the atomic bombing, other than the vague threat in the Potsdam Proclamation of "prompt and utter destruction." The Interim Committee ruled out a specific warning or a demonstration of the bomb in favor of its direct use on a Japanese city to shock the Japanese into surrender. It was argued that a demonstration would be risky



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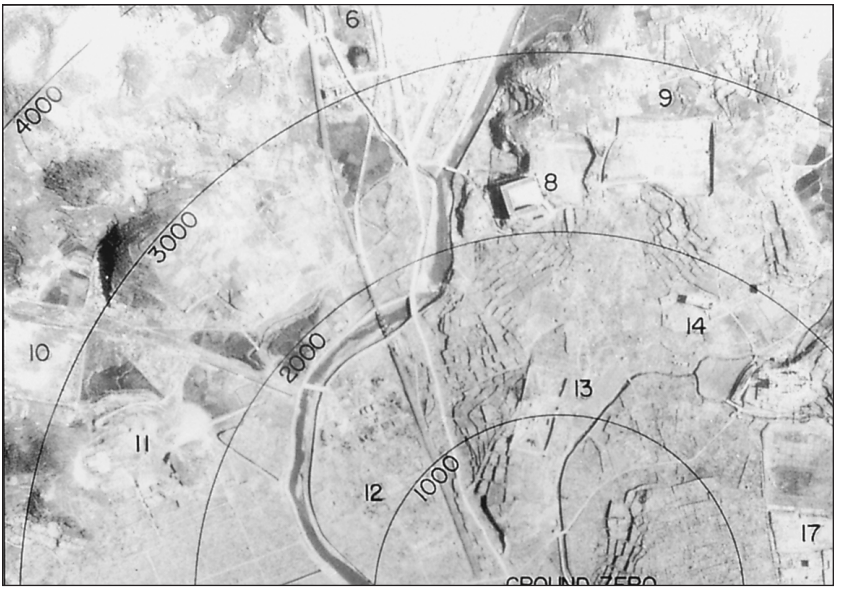
Nagasaki before



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Nagasaki after

because of the possibility of the bomb failing to work, thus causing the United States to lose credibility and the Japanese military leaders to gain confidence.

Fourth, an unquestioned assumption of most of those who defend the use of the atomic bombs is that it produced the desired results: Japan quickly surrendered. Still, questions arise. Did the atomic bombings actually cause the Japanese to surrender? And was a second bomb necessary to bring it about? (The plan was for a "one-two punch" using both bombs in rapid succession and then, if necessary, a third, which was to be ready within ten days, so as to maximize the new weapon's shock value and force Japan to capitulate as rapidly as possible.)

Those who specifically protest the bombing of Nagasaki as unnecessary, and therefore immoral, assume that the bombing of Hiroshima was sufficient to cause Japan's surrender, or that Japan should have been given more time to assess what had hit Hiroshima. One may indeed question whether the interval of three days was long enough for the Japanese military to assess the significance of the new force that had destroyed one of their cities. But a more fundamental question is whether the atomic bombings indeed caused Japan's surrender. Japanese newspapers, the testimony of Japanese leaders, and US intercepts of Japanese diplomatic cables provide reason to believe that the Soviet entry into the war against Japan on August 8 was as much a cause for Japan's surrender as the two atomic bombs. The Soviet Union was the only major nation in the world not at war with Japan, and the Japanese leaders were still desperately hoping for continued Soviet neutrality or possible Soviet mediation as a vehicle to end the war. They took heart in the fact that the Soviet Union had neither signed the Potsdam Proclamation nor signified support for it, even though Stalin was meeting with Truman and Churchill when it was issued. But with the Soviet attack the last shred of hope was gone. With Japan's large army in Manchuria subject to an attack by an equally large and well-armed Red Army, Japan could no longer avoid admitting defeat. As for the effect of the atomic bombings on Japanese leaders, Japan's inner cabinet was divided three-to-three for and against accepting the Potsdam Proclamation before the bombing of Hiroshima, and it remained so afterward. It remained equally divided after the Soviet entry into the war and the bombing of Nagasaki, until finally the emperor himself broke the deadlock in favor of ending the war.

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Roosevelt and his military advisers had strongly desired an early entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, and he was willing to concede much to Stalin to attain this. But after the Battle of Okinawa (April 1–June 22, 1945, during which an estimated 200,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians died) and after the atomic bomb was successfully tested, leading figures in the Truman administration were not so sure they wanted the Soviet Union to join the war against Japan. Nor did they want the Soviets to know anything about the atomic bomb. In fact, both

Roosevelt and Truman pointedly refused to inform Moscow about the development and planned use of the new weapon (about which Stalin's spies, however, had already informed him).

This last point raises intriguing and important questions about the connection between the US use of the bomb and its policies toward the Soviet Union at the end of the war. One historical interpretation asserts that the United States used the atomic bombs on a defeated Japan not so much as the last act of World War II, but as the first expression of US power in the Cold War. In other words, the bomb was used to coerce the Soviet Union into behaving itself in Eastern Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. This interpretation would explain the hurried use of the bombs before the Soviet Union had entered the war and nearly three months prior to the planned US invasion of Japan. It would explain Truman's refusal to inform Stalin about the new weapon before (or even after) its use against Japan. In this way, it is argued, the United States sought to maintain its nuclear monopoly (shared with Britain) and to engage in what became known as "nuclear diplomacy" as a means to curb Soviet ambitions.

This interpretation by revisionist historians, based on substantial evidence and logic, remains speculative. Those who hold the traditional view, of course, reject it and offer counterarguments. They emphasize the fanaticism and intransigence of the Japanese military leaders, who even resorted to suicidal kamikaze airplane attacks on US ships. And they argue that the atomic bomb was needed to subdue an irrational enemy who seemed determined to fight to the bitter end. Therefore, in this view, it was solely for military purposes that Truman decided to use the atomic bomb. They also argue that Truman, as commander in chief, had the responsibility to use every military means at his command to produce the earliest possible defeat of Japan. If he had not used the atomic bomb and more US military personnel had died in the continuing war, they assert, he would surely have been condemned as being politically and morally liable for their deaths.

Those who hold this view also argue that Truman could hardly have decided against use of the atomic bomb. As a new occupant of the White House following the popular Roosevelt, Truman inherited Roosevelt's cabinet, his policies, and specifically his resolve to treat the atomic bombs as a legitimate weapon of war. General Leslie Groves, head of the Manhattan Project (the code name of the secret program to build the atomic bomb), fully expected that the bomb would be used as soon as it became operational. The military planning for its use was well under way by the time the first test was conducted. Many of the scientists and military personnel involved in the project anticipated the successful deployment of the weapon they had brought into being after four years of expensive and herculean effort. Truman could hardly have stemmed the momentum. General Groves was especially determined to deploy the new weapon to determine its destructive force. Military planners picked

out a set of Japanese cities as targets and ordered that they be spared from conventional bombing so that they would remain unspoiled for the nuclear experiment.

The Political Fallout

Historians are also in disagreement over the impact of the atomic bomb on the Cold War. If the Truman administration actually attempted nuclear diplomacy after the war, it is safe to say it did not work. The nuclear threat, implicit in the exclusive Anglo-US possession of the atomic bomb, did not produce any significant change in Soviet behavior or policies anywhere. But it did, no doubt, affect attitudes on both sides that contributed to Cold War mistrust. US possession of the bomb caused its leaders to be more demanding and less flexible in dealing with Moscow, and the US possession and use of the bomb surely caused Stalin to increase his suspicions of the West.

It is fairly certain that the secretive manner of the United States in building and then using the atomic bomb made a postwar nuclear arms race likely, if not inevitable. Truman's secretary of state, James Byrnes, who also served on the Interim Committee, contended that it would take the Soviet Union at least ten years to develop an atomic bomb and that in the interim the United States could take advantage of its "master card" in dealing with the Soviet Union. Leading US nuclear scientists, however, including lead scientist Robert Oppenheimer, predicted that the Soviet Union could build the bomb within four years.[8] Several of the Manhattan Project scientists attempted to warn the Truman administration that the atomic monopoly could not be maintained for long and that a nuclear arms race would surely follow if the US government did not inform the Soviet Union about this revolutionary new weapon of mass destruction and did not attempt to bring it under international control. This advice, given both before and after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, went unheeded, and the result was exactly what the scientists had predicted. Indeed, Oppenheimer's prediction that the Soviets would have their own atomic weapon in four years was right on target.

The US government did, however, after months of careful study of the complicated issues involved, offer a proposal for international control of atomic power. This proposal, the Baruch Plan, presented to the United Nations in June 1946, was unacceptable to the Soviet Union because, among other reasons, it permitted the United States to retain its nuclear arsenal indefinitely while restricting Soviet efforts to develop one. The Soviets countered by proposing the immediate destruction of all existing nuclear weapons and the signing of a treaty outlawing future production or use of them. The United States, understandably unwilling to scuttle its atomic monopoly, flatly rejected this proposal. Talks continued for the next three years at the United Nations, but they proved fruitless. In the meantime, the Soviet Union's frantic effort to

build an atomic bomb did bear fruit as early as the US atomic scientists had predicted—July 1949. The nuclear arms race was thus joined.

The United States and the Soviet Union at War's End

The two nations that emerged from the war as the most powerful shapers of the postwar world, the two new superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, had very different wartime experiences. No nation has ever suffered as many wartime casualties as the Soviet Union, and no major nation in World War II suffered as few as the United States.

In June 1941, the German army of more than 2 million soldiers invaded the Soviet Union, destroying immense areas and leaving some 1,700 cities and 70,000 villages in ruins and some 70 percent of its industries and 60 percent of its transportation facilities destroyed. During the war, the Germans took several million Soviet prisoners, many of whom did not survive their ordeal, and several million others were forcibly conscripted to labor in German factories and on farms until the end. The horrors of the German invasion and the assault on Soviet cities (notably Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad) aroused the patriotism of Russians as well as non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union, who fought heroically to defend the nation in what became known as the Second Great Patriotic War (the first one being against the Napoleonic invasion of 1812), celebrated ad infinitum in songs, memorials, literature, film, and paintings.

Ultimately, the Soviet people endured, and the Soviet Red Army chased the German army back to Berlin. But the cost in lives was enormous: an estimated 7.5 million military deaths and twice—possibly three times—as many civilian lives. There were perhaps twice as many Soviet battle deaths in the Battle of Stalingrad alone as the United States suffered in the entire war (330,000); another estimated 1 million (largely civilians) died in the siege of Leningrad. In contrast, the United States emerged from the war largely unscathed. Except for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor at the outset of the war and the brief Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska at the far end of the Aleutian Islands, it was not invaded or bombed. For every US death resulting from the war there were more than 80 Soviet deaths.

Any discussion of postwar policies of the Soviet Union and its relations with the United States must begin with a recognition of the incredible losses it suffered in the war against Nazi Germany and the insistence that there be no repetition of this history.

In comparison to the immense physical destruction sustained by the Soviet Union, the US infrastructure suffered no damage. On the contrary, the US economy experienced a great wartime boom, which brought it out of the Great Depression. While the Soviet Union's industrial output fell by 40 percent during the war years, that of the United States more than doubled. And while the Soviet Union sorely needed economic rehabilitation to recover from

the ravages of war, the United States possessed unparalleled economic power. Indeed, no nation ever achieved such economic supremacy as that achieved by the United States at the end of World War II. In a war-ravaged world where every other industrial nation had suffered extensive damage and declining production, the US economy, with its wartime growth, towered over all others like a colossus. What is more, the United States had the capacity to greatly extend its huge lead. It possessed in great abundance every resource necessary for sustained industrial growth in the postwar era: large, undamaged industrial plants; skilled labor; technology; raw materials; a sophisticated transport system; and, last but not least, a huge supply of capital for investment.

The United States came through the war with another important although intangible asset: a greatly inflated national ego. The nation was brimming with renewed confidence and optimism, and the pessimism spawned by the Great Depression became a thing of the past. The US people saw their victory in war as proof of the superiority of their way of life. With their nation standing tall at the pinnacle of power in the war-torn world, the people exhibited what has been called an "illusion of American omnipotence."[9] Here we have, indeed, what Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines, had predicted five years earlier, the dawn of the "American Century." Bolstered by this new confidence and sense of supremacy, the United States now displayed a new determination to play the role of a great power and to exercise its leadership in shaping the postwar world. It was astonishing to see, therefore, its self-confidence so rapidly shaken once the Cold War got under way.

The Quest for Collective Security

The task of establishing a new world order after the defeat of Germany and Japan fell to the victors, the United States, the Soviet Union, and to a lesser degree Great Britain. During the war, the leaders of these "Big Three" countries—Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill—met not only to coordinate war plans but also to lay plans for a postwar settlement. Roosevelt, in particular, was confident that the harmony and—relative—trust developed during the war would endure and that through personal diplomacy the Big Three could settle the enormous problems of the postwar world, such as the futures of Germany, Eastern Europe, Japan, and other parts of East Asia. Before the war ended, however, two of the three were no longer in power: Roosevelt died in April 1945, and Churchill was defeated in the election of July of that year. But it was already apparent even before Roosevelt's death that the wartime alliance would not outlast the war. In retrospect, it became clear that the Big Three had little in common other than a common enemy, and once the enemy was defeated their conflicting interests came to the fore.

Wartime solidarity could not be counted on to guide the postwar world to safety and security and would not, in any case, endure beyond the war. The Big Three did endeavor, however cautiously, to erect a new international structure

designed to settle international problems. The Big Three were in general agreement on the concept of maintaining peace through collective security. Roosevelt was most ardent in advocating a new international peacekeeping organization to replace the defunct League of Nations. Early in the war, he began sounding out Churchill on this idea and then found occasion to discuss it with Stalin as well. All three were concerned about maintaining a postwar working relationship among the "united nations," as the Allied powers were sometimes called. Roosevelt wished to avoid a return of his country to isolationism, and Stalin did not want the Soviet Union to be diplomatically isolated as it had been prior to World War II.

There was much discussion about what shape the new collective security organization should take—its structure, functions, and authority. The most difficult issue was the conflict between a commitment to internationalism, on the one hand, and nationalist concerns, on the other. Specifically, the question was how much of any member nation's sovereignty was to be surrendered to the new supranational body in the interest of maintaining world peace. Would the new international organization have enough authority to enforce its decisions on member nations and yet permit each the right to protect its national interests? Another key question was the relationship of the major powers to the many smaller nations of the international body. From the outset the Big Three were in agreement that they would not sacrifice their power to majority rule.

National Archives

The Big Three. Soviet marshal Joseph Stalin, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, and British prime minister Winston Churchill at the Tehran conference in November 1943.

They insisted that their own nations, which had played the major role in World War II, should be entrusted with the responsibility to maintain the postwar peace, and that the new international organization should invest authority in them to exercise leadership unobstructed by the collective will of the smaller, but more numerous, member states.

These issues were resolved at a series of wartime conferences. At a meeting in Moscow in October 1943, the Allied foreign ministers agreed in principle to the creation of the organization that would come to be known as the United Nations. In August 1944, as victory in the war approached, representatives of the Big Three, now joined by Nationalist China, met at Dumbarton Oaks (in Washington, DC) to hammer out the shape of the new international body. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945 (see Chapter 2), the Big Three came to terms on the matter of securing for each of the major powers the right to veto decisions by the new international body. This cleared the way for convening a conference in San Francisco in April 1945, where the United Nations charter, which spelled out the principles, authority, and organizational structure, as well as a commitment to human rights, was signed by representattives of the new organization. In September 1945, the United Nations officially opened its headquarters in New York City.

The principal organs of the United Nations were the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. The most powerful and important of these was the Security Council, which was given the responsibility to keep the peace. It was empowered to determine whether an action such as armed aggression by a member nation constituted a breach of the United Nations Charter and to recommend corrective measures or sanctions, including the use of force under the principle of collective security. The Council was composed of five permanent members (the Big Five: the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Nationalist China, and France) and six other nations elected for two-year terms. The permanent members were given absolute veto power, which is to say the Council could not enact a binding resolution unless unanimity existed among the Big Five. In this manner the Big Five intended to protect themselves from actions by the world body against their own interests. It must be noted that both the United States and the Soviet Union insisted on this veto power, and without it they would not have joined the United Nations. It should also be noted that it was this same provision that soon rendered the United Nations Security Council ineffective because in the ensuing Cold War unanimity among the major powers became all but impossible to attain. In the early years of the United Nations, the Soviet Union, which often stood alone against the other four major powers, resorted again and again to the veto.

The UN General Assembly was composed of all of the member nations, each with an equal voice and a single vote. It acted as an open forum in which international problems and proposed solutions were discussed. The Assembly

passed resolutions by majority vote, but these were treated merely as recommendations and were not binding on the member nations, particularly the Big Five. The General Assembly was important mainly for giving the smaller nations a voice—albeit generally ignored—in world affairs.

The UN Secretariat was the permanent administrative office concerned primarily with the internal operations of the organization, which was to be headed by a secretary-general, the highest and most visible officer of the United Nations. He was appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. In effect, it meant finding a compromise candidate from a neutral country acceptable to the two sides in the Cold War. As such, the secretary-general's authority tended to be limited since he took his marching orders from the Security Council.[10]

The other bodies of the United Nations, especially the specialized agencies (e.g., the World Health Organization) under the Economic and Social Council, functioned more effectively than the Security Council precisely because they were more operational than political in nature and the problems they addressed could be separated from Cold War polemics. This also was true for such UN bodies as the International Court of Justice, the highly effective World Health Organization, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), and UNHCR (the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, an agency that, in 1951, took over the functions of UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, or UNRRA).

The founding of the United Nations was an expression of hope by the survivors of a catastrophic world war, the fulfillment of dreams for an organization dedicated to international peace and order. It was not long, however, before the United Nations proved unable to fulfill those dreams and even became an object of derision for many. The United Nations did on several occasions intervene to settle or moderate international disputes when and where the interests of both the United States and the Soviet Union were either minimal or not in conflict. Bigger issues, however—such as ending the Berlin blockade of 1948, ending the First Indochina War, or the Austrian settlement (see Chapters 2, 4, and 5)—were resolved outside UN jurisdiction. The veto power that both superpowers had insisted on and the Cold War context rendered the Security Council all but powerless to keep the peace in the postwar era.

Notes

1. The magnitude of the slaughter was such that no exact figures are possible. For the aftermath of the war, see Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2013). For a breakdown of the figures in East Asia, see John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), pp. 295–301.

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *The State of the World's Refugees, 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 1, "The Early Years."

3. Dr. Yoshio Nishina, "The Atomic Bomb," Report for the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Washington, DC: National Archives), p. 1, Record Group 243, Box 56.

4. "Notes of the Interim Committee," Record Group 77, Manhattan Engineering District Papers, Modern Military Branch, National Archives (Washington, DC: National Archives, May 31, 1945), pp. 9–10.

5. Pacific Strategic Intelligence Section, intelligence summary of August 7, 1945, "Russo Japanese Relations (28 July–6 August 1945)," National Archives, Record Group 457, SRH-088, pp. 3, 7–8, 16. For the Japanese attempts to surrender, beginning on July 13, 1945, see "Magic Diplomatic Extracts, July 1945," Military Intelligence Service (MIS), War Department, prepared for the attention of General George C. Marshall, National Archives, Record Group 457, SRH-040, pp. 1–78.

6. Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 8–9.

7. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, I, 1945: Year of Decisions* (New York: Signet, [orig. 1955] 1965), p. 471.

8. "Notes of the Interim Committee," May 31, 1945, pp. 10–12; Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 109–113. Byrnes was apparently less influenced by the views of the scientists than he was by General Groves, who speculated that it would take the Soviet Union from ten to twenty years to produce an atomic bomb.

9. Sir Denis Brogan, cited in Louis Halle, *The Cold War as History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 25.

10. The first secretary-general was Trygve Lie of Norway (1946–1952), who was followed by Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden (1953–1961), U Thant of Burma (1961–1971), Kurt Waldheim of Austria (1972–1981), Javier Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru (1982–1991), Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt (1992–1996), Kofi Annan of Ghana (1997–2006), and Ban Ki-moon of South Korea (2007).