

Briefing Paper

After the bomb

The minister has been invited to a memorial service at Hiroshima Park and needs to understand contemporary Japanese views about the bombing.

1. Introduction

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 8 and 9, 1945 marked not only the end of the Second World War, but also the beginning of a nuclear era within the Cold War's context. Since then, nuclear weapons programs proliferated in various countries such as the Soviet Union, the UK, France, China, among others. This report is intended to provide an overall understanding of contemporary Japanese views regarding the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the issues and opinions that have received the attention of the media in Japan.

2. Historical Background

By May 1945, following Germany's surrender and the end of the war in Europe, the USA with the aid of Great Britain, moved closer to Japan. On July 26, Truman, Churchill and Kai-shek issued the Potsdam Declaration, demanding Japan's surrender under threat of "prompt and utter destruction."¹ On August 8, Emperor Hirohito declared that it had "become impossible to continue the war" and expressed his hope to "conclude the war as swiftly as possible".² However, on August 9, the Soviet Union, declared war on Japan in violation of the Neutrality Pact and the United States dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki later that day. One week later on August 15, the Emperor announced Japan's surrender by accepting the Potsdam Declaration.

¹ "Potsdam Declaration: Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender Issued, at Potsdam, July 26, 1945". National Science Digital Library. & "Milestones: 1937-1945 / The Potsdam Conference, 1945". United States Department of State, Office of the Historian.

² "Emperor Hirohito notified about Hiroshima A-bomb half day after," *The Japan Times*, 9 Sept 2014.

The atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki together killed more than 200,000 people.³ About 70,000 Koreans are thought to have been living in the two cities when the bombs were dropped, 40,000 of which died.⁴ In Nagasaki, “roughly 70 percent of the 195 detainees in a relocation camp about 1.6 km from ground zero were Dutch, while most of the remainder were Australian or British”.⁵

3. Post-bomb Debates.

The dropping of the atomic bombs has generated long debates. In this briefing we will focus on the Historic-Political, Legal, Ethical, Military, and Memorial perspectives.

Historical-Political

While some debaters have focused on Truman's decision, others on whether or not the bombings actually caused the Japanese to surrender. The fundamental question that has divided scholars over four decades is whether the bomb was necessary to win the war in the Pacific on terms satisfactory to the United States.⁶ The Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan is believed to have been “a strong factor” behind Tokyo's surrender six days later.⁷ This view is contested on the one hand, by Asada Sadao and Richard Frank, who argue that, more than the Soviet declaration of war, the bombs were a direct cause of Japan's decision to surrender because: 1)the Soviet invasion of Manchuria gave them a first indirect shock, 2)the bombs came as a “surprise attack”⁸ that only reinforced the Emperor's intervention.”⁹ On the other hand, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa argues that “the most important, immediate cause of Japan's surrender was the emperor's ‘sacred decision’ to

³ “The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki”, *The Atomic Archive*,
http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/MED/med_chp10.shtml (Accessed on 2 August 2014)

⁴ “A-bomb survivors tell stories”, *Japan Times*, 1 May, 2014.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Walker, J Samuel; Alperovitz, Gar. “Was it necessary to drop the atom bomb on Japan?” *New York Times Upfront*; May 9, 2005; 137, 14; ProQuest pg. 32

⁷ Mai lida on Oliver Stone, “Film director Stone dismisses U.S. A-bomb claim as “tremendous lie.” *The Japan Times*, 8 Aug., 2013. pp.1–4.

⁸ Asada, “Shock,” 504.

⁹ Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), 348.

do so, engineered by an elite who calculated that the Soviet entry into the war was more decisive than the atomic bombs to seek the termination of the war.¹⁰

Legal

In 1963 the atomic bombs were subject of a Japanese judicial review, according to which “the act of dropping an atomic bomb on cities was at the time ruled by international law found in Hague Convention of 1907 IV-The Laws and Customs of War on Land,¹¹ and IX - Bombardment by Naval Forces in Time of War,¹² and the Hague Draft Rules of Air Warfare of 1922–1923,¹³ and was therefore illegal”.¹⁴ “It must be regarded as indiscriminate aerial bombardment of undefended cities, even if it were directed at military objectives only, inasmuch as it resulted in damage comparable to that caused by indiscriminate bombardment.”¹⁵

Ethical

Based on the doctrine of the Dirty Hands, Michael Walzer states that the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were simply immoral and could not be justified by supreme emergency.¹⁶ For Walzer, *only* something like the circumstances of supreme emergency¹⁷ could provide a dirty hands justification because dirty hands aren't permissible, or

¹⁰ Hasegawa, T., 2007. The Atomic Bombs and the Soviet Invasion: What Drove Japan’s Decision to Surrender? *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. In-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific ...and the world.

¹¹ Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV); October 18, 1907, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School

¹² Bombardment by Naval Forces in Time of War (Hague IX); October 18, 1907, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹³ The Hague Rules of Air Warfare The Hague, December, 1922-February, 1923 These rules were never adopted.

¹⁴ Boyle, Francis A. (2002). “The Criminality of Nuclear Deterrence”. Atlanta: Clarity Press. p. 58.

Falk, "The Claimants of Hiroshima", p.308

¹⁵ "Shimoda case (Compensation claim against Japan brought by the residents of Hiroshmina & Nagasaki), Tokyo District Court, 7 December 1963". International Committee of the Red Cross. Retrieved February 3, 2014.

¹⁶ In fact, the supreme emergency may “justify” very little of the terror bombing since the likelihood of a German invasion of Britain ended with the victory of RAF fighter pilots in the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940.

¹⁷ “according to which political and military leaders may sometimes find themselves in situations where they cannot avoid acting immorally, even when that means deliberately killing the innocent.”

necessary when anything “less than the ongoingness of the community” is at stake, or when the danger that we face is anything less than communal death.¹⁸

Military

According to Truman, “the atomic bomb probably saved half a million U.S. lives”¹⁹. However, when Eisenhower was informed about the usage of the atomic bomb, he was recalled saying that it was unnecessary for the purpose of saving American lives, because the Japanese were already largely defeated.²⁰

Memorial

One year after the bombings, the survivors celebrated the Peace Recovery Festival²¹, which received international attention and motivated the mayor to rebuild Hiroshima as the world’s peace city.²² The Hiroshima Peace Memorial (HPM) park and museum were completed in 1954 with Tange Kenzo’s traditional design, which paradoxically reminded the wartime Japan but was never altered.²³ With an increasing number of visitors, the museum’s approach had to satisfy not only the national, but also, the world’s demands of truth and justice. With the 1970s and 1980s remodeling, questions were raised regarding the museum’s purpose and meaning: Should the focus be placed on the suffering of the Japanese people caused by the bombs, or instead on the Japanese imperialistic past of war and violence as to never be repeated, or should the perpetrator’s point of view be included as part of the museum’s message? The jibunshi²⁴ in the 1980s belonged to the attempts to redefine the past, “ranging from unprecedented open-mindedness and

¹⁸ Walzer, Michael. "Politics and Passion." *Towards a more egalitarian liberalism*(2004): 46.

¹⁹ Iriye, Kyoko; Selden, Mark (1990). "The Atomic Bomb: Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki". Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁰ Walker, J Samuel; Alperovitz, Gar. "Was it necessary to drop the atom bomb on Japan?" *New York Times Upfront*; May 9, 2005; 137, 14; ProQuest pg. 32

²¹ Which later became the Peace Festival (平和祭)

²² Schäfer, S., 2008. "The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and its Exhibition". *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan. Folkestone: Global Oriental*: 156

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Personal History (自分史)

expressions of responsibility, to a new historical revisionism that opposed any reconciliation with the wartime past.”²⁵

4. The situation today

Last August 15, 2014, marked the 69th anniversary of Japan’s surrender and demonstrators in Shibuya repeatedly shouted, “Senso hantai” (No war), under a blazing sun.²⁶ Unlike most Chinese people who still feel contempt for the Japanese and its imperialistic past of violence against them, most Japanese people appear to have no remorse against the USA and its people despite the two atomic bombs that they dropped at the end of the World War II.²⁷ The two dominant explanations for this are that: 1) The Japanese people were censored by the government to express their personal views in order to prevent a future attack by the USA, and 2) They were genuinely committed to peace and wanted to renounce to war by all means.

In support of the first view, in post-war Japan, while the catastrophe of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was widely known, discourse on the atomic bomb was controlled by the censorship enforced in the public spheres.²⁸ Ex post facto censorship was enforced even in remote areas of Japan.²⁹

a) The hibakusha

The hibakusha (被爆者) or “the affected by the bomb” usually refers to the survivors of the atomic bombs, and as of March 31, 2014, the Japanese government reported that there were 192,719 of them mostly living in Japan.³⁰ The hibakusha have been largely

²⁵ Schäfer, S., 2008. “The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and its Exhibition”. *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan. Folkestone: Global Oriental*: 156

²⁶ “EDITORIAL: Japan needs meaningful language, not demagogic words, to discuss”, *Asahi Shinbun*, 15 August, 2014.

²⁷ “Chinese ask: Why doesn’t Japan hate America for dropping the A-bombs?”, *Japan Today*, 14 July, 2014.

²⁸ Yurita, M., 2007. Reclaiming the Authorship of Hiroshima Testimonies : Differentiating Testimonies and Memories of Historical Events. , 2, pp.39.

²⁹ Masami Nakagawa, 'Genbaku Hodo to Ken'etsu', 20seiki Media Kenkyuujo, 3, 2003, pp.42-47.

³⁰ ^ Nakazaki, Taro (August 6, 2014). "Hiroshima marks 69th anniversary of A-bombing" (http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201408060014). *Asahi Shimbun*. Retrieved 2014-08-09.

discriminated by the Japanese society based on prejudices about radiation's effects on human.³¹ However, they are characterized for not getting involved into accusatory narratives, or by attempting to seek revenge against US citizens, political leaders, or institutions.³² On the contrary, they are still working hard to send a message of peace to the world. Their contribution to the world can be summarized in three points: 1) Even after enduring terrible experiences, they chose to live; 2) They speak out about their experiences, contributing to prevent, according to some, the nuclear arms race; and 3) They provide a new vision of community of memory that transcends existing boundaries (national, social and cultural) and elaborates the hibakusha's central message of "not retaliation."³³ Even after their great struggles, there are people that expect more from them as it is written in one of the messages at the HPM park: 'Wake up! You, Hibakusha! Our time is now scarce, yet you waste time complaining as victims. Get out and scold society; make some efforts for scolding society; brighten your life until you burnt out.'³⁴

b) Nationalism

Although designed for peace, the park presents elements such as a rising sun flag which indicate continuity between the prewar regime and what is often referred to as "A-bomb nationalism" (hibaku nashonarizumu).³⁵

Making the exhibition a Hiroshima Museum of Victims was part of the first goal of remembering the victims. However, when the leaders of the sponsoring NGOs demanded a widening of the museum's approach with the purpose of taking a critical stance towards Japan's militarist past, they faced criticism. Ikeda Masahiko, who was the administration's representative to the committee deciding on the new exhibition pointed out that: "Japanese imperialism bothered its

³¹ "Prejudice haunts atomic bomb survivors". Japan Times. Retrieved 2007-08-25.

³² Miyamoto, Y. (2012). *Beyond the Mushroom Cloud: Commemoration, Religion, and Responsibility After Hiroshima*. Fordham Univ Press.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ From Museum Visitor Notebook at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall. This visitor left his message on the visitor notebook with his name and affiliation. While the Memorial Hall reserves the rights to publish whatever the comments left on the visitor notebooks, it says the Memorial Hall does so without disclosing the authorship of the comments. Therefore, in this paper, this visitor's comment is cited only as "a survivor"

³⁵ Yoneyama, Lisa. "Twentieth Century Japan: The Emergence of a World Power, Volume 10: Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory: University of California Press, . p 16

neighbours. But if we overemphasize this point, the misunderstanding arises that the bombing of Hiroshima was right."³⁶ Ikeda's choice of words was largely criticized because he made Japan's war crimes during imperial years appear as a minor issue. However, from a different perspective, indeed focusing on Japan's war crimes as the reason why the atomic bombs were dropped is not only contested but it also appears to justify the atomic bombings. This clearly opposes the message of peace that the museum intended to deliver.

For the Japanese people, Hiroshima does not only symbolize a city destroyed by the USA, its meaning goes beyond nationality, and culture as it has been expressed in Japanese media: "We do not believe that America is only the perpetrator and Japan, only the victim."³⁷ According to Yamaguchi, "nuclear technology should not be part of the world of humans."³⁸

c) Nuclear Energy

Just as Great Britain, Japan became an empire with a great need for resources, especially energetic ones. But still some wonder how the only country to experience nuclear bombings came to embrace nuclear power, a decision that ultimately led to Fukushima Nuclear plant's crisis.

Censorship is, and has been another important factor. Both after the atomic bombings and after the Fukushima crisis, lack of transparency has been covered by the discourse that "radiation levels pose little or no threat to health."³⁹ In the past, two articles were censored for discussions of the effects of the atomic bombs and today, information about Fukushima disaster is withheld or manipulated, further worsened by the recent issuing of the state secret laws.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ikeda Masahiko, *Asahi Shinbun*, 11 May 1990.

³⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, 11 May 1990.

³⁸ Ikeda, M. & Tsukui, K., 2014. "Life of man who survived both Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings subject of children's book" By YUKARI TAKAHASHI, *Asahi Shinbun* 朝日新聞 デジタル, pp.1-2.

³⁹ Bartashius, J., Fukushima disaster colors A-bomb anniversaries. *The Japan Times*, pp.1-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

5. Conclusions

Australia, as an exporter of Uranium, stands in a privileged position to make significant decisions regarding nuclear energy to enforce peace in the world.

Recomendations

- 1) The Japan-Australia's co-development of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative can be fostered even more by including the USA, the member-country that completes Japan's Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, in a common effort to jointly attempt to reduce nuclear dependence.
- 2) Although Japan's relationships with China and the Republic of Korea are complicated by competing territorial claims and historical issues, Australia can help the development of a mutual understanding between these countries and their past through cultural initiatives. Among the hibakusha's hardest constraints was that of how to express what they experienced. This is where Arts can make a difference by going beyond a realist discourse that usually overlooks people's emotions as the shapers of cultural identity. With the theme of peace and forgiveness, Australia can provide through scholarships, contests or cultural events, a space for Chinese, Japanese and Korean artists to express in painting, music, dance or poetry, etc. a message of peace that acknowledges the suffering of the *other*, during the wartime years.

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