

The historical significance of President
Obama's visit to Hiroshima—The U.S.
freed from the spell of the atomic bomb

By Seishiro Sugihara, Former Professor at Josai University

Translated by Norman Hu

The Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact

Translator's introduction

Few have commented on the importance of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima on May 27, 2016. But among these, Seishiro Sugihara discusses its significance as an act of reconciliation between Japan and the United States, even while he decries the atomic bombings as crimes against countless innocents. Sugihara emphasizes how important it is that this reconciliation was born from the use of the atomic bombs, and how it is a critical and bold statement in the 21st century, when it has become all too commonplace for nations to criticize each other without regard for the long-term consequences.

Japan is the only nation to have experienced the impact of an atomic bomb, and the United States is the only one to have dropped such a weapon in an act of war. Western scholars often discuss Hiroshima with a view to justify what the U.S. did to Japan at war's end, while Asians may see that action as excessive and entirely preventable. While many Americans argue that the atomic bombs shortened the war and saved further loss of life (both among the Japanese but in particular those of American troops), Japanese people continue to regard the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a supreme tragedy. President Obama highlighted "the remarkable transformation" in relations between the U.S. and Japan inasmuch as seventy years ago, "it would have been very difficult to imagine given the hostility between our two countries."

This essay was recognized in 2016 for its contribution to modern and contemporary history by the APA Group's 9th Prize Essay Competition. It is presented here for the benefit of readers outside Japan who may find it more accessible in English translation. Sugihara presents the case that these close ties between erstwhile bitter enemies are a testament to humanity's ability to reconcile beyond even the most virulent of enmities. Crucially, it is a clear statement that one needs to acknowledge history and learn from it, but above all: look forward.

The historical significance of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima—The U.S. freed from the spell of the atomic bomb

By Seishiro Sugihara,
Former professor at Josai University

Introduction

- (1) What President Obama brought about at Hiroshima Peace Park
- (2) President Obama's visit to Hiroshima provides impetus to rectify understanding of history
- (3) The war between Japan and the United States was principally initiated by the US government, and became more horrifying than necessary because of the US government
- (4) The Japanese side's share of the responsibility for prolonging the war until the atomic bombings
- (5) Dropping the atomic bomb difficult to avoid at the time, but completely unnecessary in the long term
- (6) The greatest historical significance of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima was that it freed the U.S. from the spell of the atomic bomb

Introduction

On the evening of May 27, 2016 President Barack Obama, leader of the only nation to use atomic weapons in combat, became the first incumbent U.S. president to visit Hiroshima, the place where those weapons were used; he laid a wreath at the memorial cenotaph for atomic bomb victims, delivered a speech, and talked with survivors. He remarked that, "we have a shared responsibility to look directly into the eye of history and ask what we must do differently to curb such suffering again."

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, leader of the nation that was bombed, laid a wreath alongside that of President Obama, and expressed his "determination to realize a world free of nuclear weapons."

This essay is an attempt to clarify the historical significance of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima.

(1) What President Obama brought about at Hiroshima Peace Park

President Obama spent a scant fifty minutes in Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park: he visited the Atomic Bomb Museum, and then together with Prime Minister Abe laid wreaths at the memorial cenotaph for atomic bomb victims, and observed a moment's silence. After that he gave a speech lasting seventeen minutes which began: "Seventy-one years ago, on a bright, cloudless morning, death fell from the sky and the world was changed. A flash of light and a wall of fire destroyed a city and demonstrated that mankind possessed the means to destroy itself." Although no mention was made of who had unleashed such death, these words were sensitive to the feelings of those who had this death visited upon them, and suggested how humanity should proceed in future.

The president went on to say that, "perhaps above all, we must reimagine our connection to one another as members of one human race," and therefore "the memory of the morning of August 6th, 1945 must never fade." He concluded that this "is the future we can choose — a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening."*

After the speech, President Obama walked over to two *hibakusha*, or bomb survivors, and firmly shook hands with the first and engaged him in conversation. The second was a survivor who had looked into American POWs killed by the atomic bomb and presented his findings to the U.S.; the president embraced him warmly and thanked him for his efforts.

The president then walked forward to a place where the A-Bomb Dome could be seen, listened to some remarks from Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, and then left the Peace Park in the presidential limousine.

The Japanese government did not seek an apology during President Obama's visit to Hiroshima. Bomb survivors too appreciated that there were reasons the U.S. could not offer an apology, and in a dignified way welcomed President Obama who visited Hiroshima on his own accord. Both sides showed good sense and behaved admirably.

Even though it was understood there would be no apology, the president's visit had the blessing of the American people. Even without the apology, past mistakes were acknowledged; so it could be argued that, because an incumbent president visited Hiroshima and prayed for the spirits of the atomic bomb victims, the American people had opened their hearts 70 years after the dropping of the atomic bomb.

*Translator's note: See "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan at Hiroshima Peace Memorial, May 27, 2016."
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan-hiroshima-peace> [Retrieved on Jan. 9, 2017.]

Thus it could be said that Japan and the survivors who were bombed, and the United States who dropped the bomb, effected a reconciliation for the first time in 71 years.

Upon further reflection though, the grave issue of dropping the atomic bomb is not merely one to be resolved between the U.S. and the atomic bomb survivors, or even between the U.S. and Japan. The atomic bomb is a cruel weapon that can destroy a city and kill tens of thousands living there in an instant, and can continue to inflict suffering on survivors for a long period thereafter due to exposure to radioactivity. The fact that bombs were actually dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not only a wrong committed against the atomic bomb victims and Japan, it was also a wrong committed against humanity. Reconciliation between the atomic bomb victims and the U.S., or between Japan who was bombed and the U.S. that dropped the bomb, does not automatically erase the wrong committed against humanity.

This is why the matter requires further deliberation. Regardless of the enormity of the wrong committed against a person, one day that person must forgive that wrong. Regardless of the enormity of the wrong committed against humanity, one day humanity must forgive that wrong. Only through forgiveness can we attain enlightened heights.

President Obama's visit to Hiroshima did not only signify the reconciliation between the A-bomb survivors and the United States, or between Japan and the United States, it also meant forgiveness for the wrong committed against humanity. It must be asserted that President Obama's visit to Hiroshima represented the formal observance of that.

(2) President Obama's visit to Hiroshima provides impetus to rectify understanding of history

Let us assume we have settled the question concerning reconciliation and forgiveness for the atomic bombing; then conversely a number of issues emerge regarding historical awareness which must be revised by shining a light on that history.

Historical awareness can change with the passage of time, and immediately following the violent carnage of war between two nations, every citizen is subject to fierce feelings of hostility; moreover, the amount of historical material needed to understand that history is in short supply. This is why the understanding of history immediately after a war is undoubtedly biased. Historical awareness moderates with the passage of time, and becomes fairer and more accurate as more historical materials emerge that can prove causality. In other words, historical awareness must be revised over time.¹

¹ In the United States, the word "revisionism" with respect to historical awareness has negative connotations; it means to present a counterargument to an established legitimate

At this point in time, namely on the occasion of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima, I would like to touch upon the bare minimum of such revisions below in Points (3), (4) and (5).

(3) The war between Japan and the United States was principally initiated by the US government, and became more horrifying than necessary because of the US government

From Japan's perspective, the war between Japan and the United States included the Greater East Asia War; and the Greater East Asia War was a conflict that settled a major issue in human history, namely the liberation of colonized lands in Asia; this point cannot be disregarded when examining the Greater East Asia War. However, with regards to the war between Japan and the United States alone, the antagonism between Japan and the United States before the war was not so severe as to warrant such a degree of ferocity on the battlefield. Clearly there had been disagreement over China, but this was not so entrenched to justify such a fierce war.

Just before the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, the Japanese government tried in earnest to avoid hostilities, while the American people were not so at odds with Japan to warrant going to war. However, the U.S. government under the leadership of President Roosevelt, clearly provoked Japan into waging war with the imposition of the so-called Hull Note, later described at the Tokyo Trial as being so severe that "even the Principality of Monaco [and] the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg would have taken up arms."²

The U.S. government had decoded all Japan's diplomatic telegrams so it was aware of the situation within the Japanese government, and knew perfectly well what sort of response would ensue if it imposed the Hull Note; moreover,

version of "historical awareness" and is seen as an odious attempt to develop an illegitimate understanding of history.

However, historical awareness is something which must be a reformulation of that understanding, based on the discovery of new evidence and free from the raw emotions present when events are actually happening; in its literal sense, "revision-ism" is precisely the method for deriving a legitimate "historical awareness."

The war between Japan and the United States, presided over by Roosevelt and continued until the atomic bombings, has been liberated from intense wartime feelings of hostility; and the understanding of that war must be revised constantly as new historical materials and evidence continue to emerge.

² On March 15, 1948, Ben Blakeney, counsel for Japan's defense at the so-called Tokyo Trial, paraphrased American libertarian Albert Jay Nock by claiming that "even the Principality of Monaco [and] the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg would have taken up arms" if they had received the Hull Note.

See Nobuo Fuji, *"Tokyo Saiban" wa shogen suru (ge)* [The "Tokyo Trial" Bears Witness, vol. 2] (Tokyo: Kakubunsha, 1991), p. 79; International Military Tribunal for the Far East, *Proceedings* (Tokyo: 1946-1948), Defense summation, p. 43698.

war broke out in the end anyway, even though measures could have been taken to avoid hostilities. It can only be concluded that, essentially, this war was one the American government had hoped for, and indeed brought about. Army Secretary Henry Stimson noted in his diary that on November 25, 1941, at a meeting of military leaders centered around Roosevelt, and also including the secretary of state, they discussed how to “maneuver [Japan] into the position of firing the first shot”³; arguably, this is clear evidence and not mere supposition that the United States prepared to have Japan bring America into the war.**

However, it was Japan that initially attacked Pearl Harbor and launched the war, so the Japanese government cannot in any way escape its responsibility for the outbreak of war. Even if war between Japan and the United States was started through provocation by the United States, Japan must take equal responsibility for launching the war because it succumbed to that provocation. If war between Japan and the United States was started as part of Roosevelt’s strategy, the Japanese side could also have devised a strategy to avoid or evade war. If this is the case, the war between Japan and the United States was one that could have been avoided but wasn’t because of Japan’s inferior diplomatic operations and capabilities.

Ultimately, the war between Japan and the United States was actually brought about by the Roosevelt administration, but formally the Japanese side started the war, so in that respect, Japan clearly had as much responsibility for the outbreak of war.

Serious issues regarding the war between Japan and the United States included not only that of both governments being involved in the outbreak of war, but also how the war was prosecuted; Roosevelt expanded the scale of the war to its maximum limit.

On January 24, 1943, Roosevelt met with the British prime minister Winston Churchill at Casablanca; without any consultation beforehand to deny Churchill the opportunity to object, Roosevelt declared at a press conference there he would demand Germany and Japan surrender unconditionally.⁴

³ Stimson, *Diaries*, November 25, 1941, reel 7, vol. 36, p. 48; Misuzushobo, ed., *Gendaishi Shiryo* [Sources of Modern History], *Taiheiyo senso I* [Pacific War, vol. 1] (Tokyo: 1968), pp. 14-5.

**Translator’s note: Robert Butow is reluctant to ascribe too much significance to Stimson’s “maneuver” remark. The Japanese, in his view, were already “on the verge of resorting to force” and needed little persuasion to pursue a policy “they had formulated on their own.” Nevertheless, despite Butow’s misgivings, at the very least a senior member of the president’s war cabinet entertained the idea that the U.S. could take advantage of a Japanese first strike. See R. J. C. Butow, “How Roosevelt Attacked Japan at Pearl Harbor,” in *Prologue*, Fall 1996, Vol. 28, No. 3. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC.)

⁴ The first time Roosevelt mentioned “unconditional surrender” was at Casablanca in January 1943. This was the venue for Roosevelt’s meeting with Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill. At a press conference on January 24 to mark the end of the talks, Roosevelt

How much of an obstacle this statement regarding unconditional surrender would become during the closing stages of the war between Japan and the United States will be discussed below; but in simple terms, the imposition of unconditional surrender meant that no negotiations for surrender would be accepted from the losing side, and as a result hostilities would continue to the bitter end.

Let us look at how the war subsequently developed. Saipan fell on July 7, 1944. Japan had already lost command of the air, so with the fall of Saipan the U.S. military could use the B29 to freely bomb anywhere on the Japanese mainland. In other words, it can be argued that the outcome of the war between Japan and the United States was clearly settled at this point. Under normal circumstances, this was the stage where procedures would have been implemented to press Japan to surrender.

However, Roosevelt continued to conduct the war with the following in mind: to land American troops on the Japanese mainland; to literally destroy Japan; to prosecute the war to its fullest extent; and to maximize the number of victims.

At Yalta on February 9, 1945, on the assumption that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan, Churchill put the following suggestion to Roosevelt:

“The Prime Minister expressed the opinion that it would be of great value if Russia could be persuaded to join with the United States, the British Empire, and China in the issue of a four-power ultimatum calling upon Japan to surrender unconditionally, or else be subjected to the overwhelming weight of all the forces of the four powers. Japan might ask in these circumstances what mitigation of the full rigor of unconditional surrender would be extended to her if she accepted the ultimatum. In this event it would be for the United States to judge the matter; but there was no doubt that some mitigation would be worthwhile if it led to the saving of a year or a year and a half of a war in which so much blood and treasure would be poured out.”⁵

suddenly blurted out the term “unconditional surrender.” Churchill, who was also present, was dumbfounded because of the enormity of the statement. Roosevelt explained this by saying “the next thing I knew, I had said it,” but in fact it was “very deeply deliberated.” Seishiro Sugihara, *Between Incompetence and Culpability: Assessing the Diplomacy of Japan’s Foreign Ministry from Pearl Harbor to Potsdam*, translated by Norman Hu (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), p. 4; James MacGregor Burns, *Soldier of Freedom* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), p. 323; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp 695-7.

⁵ U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*. (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1955), p. 826. For a Japanese translation of this extract, see Makoto Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)* [American policy towards Japan’s occupation, vol. 2] (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1985), p. 131.

When examining the Second World War, including the war between Japan and the United States, Churchill’s opinion here is extremely important. However, few researchers in

But Roosevelt paid no attention to Churchill's recommendation. Japan and the Soviet Union had concluded a neutrality pact in April 1941, and when war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union in June of that year, Japan consequently upheld the pact and did not invade the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Soviet Union was able to redeploy military troops against Germany which had been stationed in Siberia and targeted at Japan; it could be argued that this allowed the Soviet Union to win its war against Germany. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was in a position where it was not only compelled in a general sense "to uphold the pact" but would also do so out of obligation. Not only did Roosevelt ignore the existence of this pact, he invited the Soviet Union to conduct landing operations on the Japanese mainland.

If Roosevelt had accepted Churchill's recommendation at this point, Japan would have been shocked if it had been made clear the Soviet Union would participate in the war against Japan if the Japanese did not surrender, and it may even have been possible that Japan would have accepted surrender terms of the scale later seen in the Potsdam declaration and have surrendered. Even by concealing the Soviet Union's participation in the war against Japan, Japan may have surrendered after the air raids on Tokyo on March 10—an attack which targeted civilians, and was obviously contrary to international law and indefensible—if the Tokyo air raids had been accompanied by terms similar to those in the Potsdam declaration urging Japan to surrender.

Saipan had fallen and the United States was in a position where it could bomb the Japanese mainland at will because Japan had lost control of the air, so the landing operations for Iwo Jima were also in fact unnecessary. The campaign to take Okinawa started on April 1, but strategically it was completely unnecessary if its purpose was to force Japan to surrender.

It is claimed that 80% of Japanese casualties during the war between Japan and the United States came after the fall of Saipan, but the same thing can be said of the American side.⁶

Europe or the United States ever mention Churchill's comments. For example, neither Arthur Conte or Michael Dobbs mention this statement by Churchill in their works. (See Arthur Conte, *Yalta ou le partage du monde* [Yalta or the partition of the world] (Paris: Laffont, 1965); Michael Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945: FDR, Stalin, Churchill, and Truman—From World War to Cold War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).) European and American research appear to show little interest in considering views that take into account the Japanese side.

⁶Harry Wray and Seishiro Sugihara, *Nihonjin no genbaku toka ron wa konomama de yoi no ka—genbaku toka wo meguru Nichi-Bei no hajimete no taiwa* [Can the discourse by the Japanese on dropping the atomic bomb be left like this?—The first Japan-U.S. dialogue on the dropping of the atomic bomb] (Tokyo: Nisshin Hodo, 2015), p. 286; John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, (New York: W. W. Horton, 1999), pp. 48-63.

(4) The Japanese side's share of the responsibility for prolonging the war until the atomic bombings

Ultimately, Roosevelt conducted the war between Japan and the United States to broaden it as far as possible, and produce the maximum number of casualties. This Roosevelt died suddenly on April 12, 1945. His vice president Harry Truman became president, but he was completely unaware of the circumstances under which the war with Japan had broken out. He did not know about the harsh demands contained in the Hull Note which the American government had thrust upon Japan before the outbreak of war; nor that the attack on Pearl Harbor was supposed to occur thirty minutes after the delivery of a “final notice,” which had been delayed due to clerical blunders at Japan’s Washington embassy. He was also unaware of secret accords at Yalta stipulating that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan two to three months after Germany’s collapse. Similarly, he did not know that development of the atomic bomb was underway.⁷

Truman, who became president suddenly without complete knowledge of the issues, could do little apart from declaring he would first “carry out the war and peace policies of Franklin Roosevelt.” Truman announced in his first address to Congress on April 16 that, “Our demand [on the enemy] has been, and it remains—Unconditional Surrender!”⁸

⁷ President Truman first heard about the development of the atomic bomb on April 12, 1945, following the first cabinet meeting after his swearing in as president. He received his first official report and briefing on April 25.

See, Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs Vol. 1: Year of Decisions 1945* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 10 [Apr. 12], p. 90 [Apr. 25]. See Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945*, pp. 170-1.

Moreover, let me comment here on why Truman did not know about the Hull Note.

Although the Hull Note was a classified document when it was forced upon the Japanese government on November 26, 1941, it was declassified by Hull late in the evening on December 7, the day of the “sneak attack” on Pearl Harbor.

However, during this period of time, the fact that Japanese diplomatic cables were being decoded remained top secret, and Secretary of War Stimson’s diary had still not been made public; therefore, no-one apart from those who had forced the Hull Note upon Japan could have been aware that it had been thrust onto Japan to strengthen that country’s resolve to go to war. Truman became president without being fully aware of the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the war, so either he had not read the Hull Note, or was unable to glean its substantive significance even if he had read it.

See Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1948), p. 234.

⁸ “Carry out the war and peace policies,” Truman, *Memoirs Vol. 1*, p. 43; Harry S. Truman: “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress.,” April 16, 1945. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12282>; Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, p. 140.

A meeting of U.S. military leaders was held on June 18 to decide the landing strategy for the Japanese mainland. Naturally, the issue of the great sacrifices made at the Battle of Okinawa was raised, and that sticking to the unconditional surrender formula would create the problem of increasing the sacrifice of American soldiers. While Truman acknowledged the validity of such considerations, he said, “he did not feel that at this time it was possible for him to take any action with reference to public opinion on this matter.”⁹

Why did Truman state that the unconditional surrender formula could not be changed? This was because the American public at this time strongly supported the unconditional surrender formula.

Why did the American public so wholeheartedly support the unconditional surrender formula? They were unaware of the substantive significance regarding why, just before the outbreak of war, the United States government had forced the Hull Note onto Japan. Moreover, the surprise assault on Pearl Harbor, which marked the beginning of the war between Japan and the United States, was originally supposed to have occurred thirty minutes after the delivery of a “final notice”; however, the delivery of the notice was delayed due to clerical bungling at Japan’s Washington embassy, and turned the assault into a “sneak attack.” They were convinced Japan had started the war with a deliberate “sneak attack,” and consequently were furious with Japan.

Roosevelt took maximum advantage of the clerical blunder at Japan’s Washington embassy; however, the American public was enraged, and were manipulated to avidly support the unconditional surrender formula laid out by Roosevelt. As a result, the scale of the war was expanded to the utmost, the number of victims was increased to the maximum, and ultimately it led to the dropping of the atomic bombs. The announcement of the dropping of the atomic bomb made by President Truman sixteen hours after it was used at Hiroshima, claimed first of all to have “repaid many fold” the people who had attacked Pearl Harbor; and after the second bomb was dropped at Nagasaki, he claimed in a radio broadcast immediately after that, “We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor.”¹⁰

⁹ “Minutes of Meeting held at the White House, June 18, 1945, Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection.” See

https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/documents/pdfs/21.pdf, p. 41; Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, pp. 180-3.

¹⁰ Announcement, Aug. 6, 1945: “Announcing the Bombing of Hiroshima” See

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-hiroshima/> ; Radio broadcast, Aug. 9, 1945: “A Warning to Japan Urging Surrender” See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-japanwarn/> .

At the time of the atomic bombings, the “sneak attack” at Pearl Harbor was given as the primary reason to justify them. However, in the fall of 1945, the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack was convened in the U.S. Congress, and as this investigation progressed, it became clear that the “sneak attack” at Pearl Harbor was not

(5) *Dropping the atomic bomb difficult to avoid at the time, but completely unnecessary in the long term*

As mentioned above, Truman decided on June 18, 1945, to carry out the operation to land on the Japanese mainland, but even a cursory examination reveals that this mainland invasion strategy, in essence the continuation of Roosevelt's direction for the war, was in itself completely unneeded. As previously argued, if bombers had been used to destroy military facilities and supply and transport networks after the fall of Saipan, no American troops would have to be sacrificed and virtually the same war outcome would have resulted as that attained in any invasion strategy. In Japan, preparations were being made to deal with a final decisive battle based on the premise of this American strategy to land on the Japanese mainland; however, on June 4 during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, when Colonel Suketaka Tanemura of the Army's General Staff Office was asked what could be done if American troops persisted with their attack through aerial bombardment rather than landing on the mainland, he replied that, "that situation would be the most troubling."¹¹ From the American perspective the landing strategy was clearly undesirable, but it must be emphasized that it was absolutely untenable when considering the sacrifice of the lives of American troops.

Although written in hindsight, a bombing survey was carried out under presidential order after the surrender of Japan. According to the *United States Strategic Bombing Survey*, "it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if

planned, but had been due to clerical blunders by staff at the Japanese embassy in Washington; moreover, because Roosevelt and other American leaders in fact already knew this, it became no longer possible to claim the "sneak attack" at Pearl Harbor as justification for dropping the atomic bombs. In the February 1947 edition of *Harper's Magazine*, Henry Stimson published his well-known essay "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" in which—even though he estimated that if the operation to take the Japanese mainland was carried through to its conclusion, it "might be expected to cost over a million casualties, to American forces alone" [p. 102]—there was no longer any mention of extracting revenge for Pearl Harbor. On the other hand, proceedings such as the Tokyo Trial began instead to condemn the "Nanking Incident" of 1932.

Akira Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu to Nihon no unmei (jo, ge)* [*Mokusatsu—The truth about the Potsdam Declaration and the fate of Japan (vols. 1 and 2)*] (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2000), pp. 1:112-4 and 2:97-166; Seishiro Sugihara, *Gaimusho no tsumi wo tou—yahari Gaimusho ga Nihon wo dame ni shite iru* (Tokyo: Jiyusha, 2013), pp. 136-7. For an English translation, see Seishiro Sugihara, *Question of Guilt: Japan's Foreign Ministry and Its War Responsibility* (SDHF 2016), translated by Norman Hu <http://www.sdh-fact.com>.

¹¹ Suketaka Tanemura, *Daihon'ei kimitsu nisshi* [Imperial Headquarters secret diary] (reprinted edition) (Tokyo: Fuyosha, 1979), pp. 290-1.

Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.”¹²

However, if the war had been conducted according to Roosevelt’s directions, the campaign to land on the Japanese mainland would definitely have been carried out and would have led to the sacrifice of innumerable American troops; and if the enactment of his strategy had been an inflexible condition, it can only be concluded that Soviet entry into the war against Japan would have been crucial.

On July 12, four days before the successful detonation of the first atomic bomb in human history (July 16), Truman was in Potsdam and had read decoded intercepts of cables sent by Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo to Naotake Sato, Japan’s ambassador to Moscow; he learned that Japan was looking for a way to surrender, and was asking the Soviet Union to mediate its capitulation.¹³

From Japan’s perspective, the intention to surrender had been clarified, so it can surely be said it was possible to bring about Japan’s capitulation even without dropping the atomic bomb.

Nevertheless, the view emerged on the Japanese side that the United States, which had brought atomic bombs into the war, was prioritizing the use of those bombs, and deliberately delaying Japan’s surrender. In fact, Truman had arranged the timing of the big summit meetings at Potsdam to coincide with the development schedule of the atomic bomb, and was constantly mindful that all policy-making with regards to the war was linked to these bombs that potentially could change the war dramatically.

However, it should probably be pointed out that, even though it might seem as though there had been a policy to not allow Japan to surrender until the atomic bombs were used, one cannot go so far as to say that such a position existed as conscious policy.

In other words, within American government circles, it clearly had been decided first and foremost to carry out a mainland landing strategy to destroy Japan in the same way as Germany, and that to do so the United States faced a situation where Soviet participation in the war was indispensable. When Truman met with Stalin for the first time on July 17, he had received reports the previous day about the successful detonation of the atomic bomb; it was under these circumstances, in a good mood and his face wreathed in smiles, that he

¹²*United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report (Pacific War)*, Washington DC, 1 July 1946 (Washington: USGPO, 1946), p. 26. For a Japanese translation, see Kengo Tominaga, ed., *Gendaishi shiryō 39—Taiheiyō senso 5* [Modern history materials Vol. 39—The Pacific War Pt. 5] (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 1975), p. 56: *Beikoku senryaku bakugeki chosadan “Taiheiyō senso hokokusho”* [United States strategic bombing survey “Pacific war report”].

¹³Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945*, p. 300; *FRUS, Potsdam II*, p. 1587.

greeted Stalin who made clear promises to join the war against Japan.¹⁴ Stalin too deduced the situation faced by the American government, and calmly conveyed the information to Truman that Japan had asked the Soviet Union to mediate for surrender.

In a telegram from Foreign Minister Togo addressed to Japan's ambassador to Moscow requesting mediation by the Soviet Union, he stated that, "as long as America and England insist on unconditional surrender, our country has no alternative but to see it through in an all-out effort for the sake of survival and the honor of the homeland."¹⁵ From the American point of view, Japan was calling for elimination of the "unconditional surrender" condition about which the United States was most adamant, and would fight it out with all its resources if this was not removed; thus, it was perhaps unavoidable that they would not view the situation as having reached a stage where the landing operation could be abandoned and surrender negotiations could begin.

However, not only had the test regarding the atomic bomb succeeded, but a detailed report about it reached Stimson on July 21, along with other reports stating that the atomic bomb would be ready for use earlier than expected.¹⁶ Moreover, it was revealed how the power generated exceeded pre-test expectations. It seemed possible now to force Japan to surrender through the shock of dropping the atomic bomb. This meant that the point of view of Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, who had been closely involved with the use of the atomic bomb, would evolve rapidly.

While Soviet participation in the war against Japan had been hailed with enthusiasm, feeling towards the Soviet Union gradually soured; rather than relying on Soviet power, it came to be regarded as a better idea if Japan's capitulation could be realized through the use of American power alone. Disgust was building over the Soviet Union's growing violence in eastern Europe, so if by using the atomic bomb American power on its own could categorically bring about Japan's capitulation, this was something to be welcomed.¹⁷ Moreover, if there was a heightened awareness that it would also have the effect of checking

¹⁴ Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945*, p. 296; Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (jo)*, pp. 309-10; *FRUS, Potsdam II*, pp. 43-6, 1562-87.

¹⁵ Cable #893, Togo to Sato, July 12, 1945. See "Japanese Peace feelers in the Soviet Union" http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/library/correspondence/togo-sato/corr_togo-sato.htm#; Japan Foreign Ministry, ed., *Shusen shiroku (jo)*, [Historical account of the end of the war, vol. 1] (Tokyo: Shimbun Gekkan-sha, 1952), pp. 448-9.

¹⁶ Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945*, pp. 302-3; "detailed report," see Leslie. R. Groves to Henry Stimson, July 18, 1945, "Memorandum for the Secretary of War" - see Truman Library, Lamont Papers; "earlier than expected," see Stimson, *Diary*, July 21, 1945. See also Stimson, *Diary*, July 19, 1945; Truman, *Memoirs*, July 25, 1945.

¹⁷ Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945*, pp. 304-5; Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu*, pp. 310, 314. See also: *Diary of John J. McCloy*, "July 23-24, 1945," in John J. McCloy Papers (Box DY1, folders 16-19), Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library; Stimson, *Diary*, July 22, 1945.

the Soviet Union, then on the contrary wasn't this a result that would be eagerly anticipated?

With regards to the atomic bomb, Truman at this time lacked the detailed knowledge of a scientist, and still had no strong feelings about the ethics of its military use, making it easier to consider only its efficiency as a weapon; furthermore, his disposition was one of intense outrage because he was convinced the “sneak attack” at Pearl Harbor had been a deliberate act by Japan to start the war with the United States. On top of this, Truman himself was known to hold racist prejudices,¹⁸ and if we consider that he probably had less objection using it against Japan than Germany, then this was truly regrettable for the side against whom the bomb was actually used, namely Japan. We can only conclude that, deep down, Truman at this time probably had no hesitation in dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The most important and pressing problem for Truman was how to reduce the number of American troops sacrificed during the bloodshed of the planned invasion strategy; if using the atomic bomb could eliminate the need to carry out the invasion plan altogether, then Truman had no reason to demur from using the bomb.

Truman announced on July 25 that the atomic bomb would be used on military facilities only, and should not target women or children. He was apparently convinced this was how the operation would be carried out, so here too there was no reason to think twice about it.¹⁹

However, let us consider here what would have happened if, to the contrary, the first atomic bomb test on July 16 had failed and atomic weapons had not been developed. In other words, what sort of outcome would have resulted in lieu of the atomic bombings?

Probably the most obvious thing is that the atomic bombs would not have been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Conversely though, the campaign to invade the Japanese mainland would have been executed, the number of victims would surely have increased, and the impact of the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan would have grown; in the worst case scenario, Japan may even have become a partitioned nation.

¹⁸ It is widely known that Truman was an ardent bigot. After dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Truman wrote in private correspondence: “When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast.” However, it is also true he was against the compulsory detention of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during the war between Japan and the United States.

See “Correspondence between Harry S. Truman and Samuel Cavert,” August 11, 1945. Truman Papers, Official File. 692-A: Manhattan Project; Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), pp. 93-100.

¹⁹ Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (ge)*, pp. 67-8.

Under these circumstances, as the war continued the Soviet Union would have entered hostilities against Japan, but with stiff resistance from the Japanese side it is doubtful invasion of the Japanese mainland could have been easily accomplished. Nevertheless, it still would not have been prevented, and annexation of the Japanese mainland was entirely possible. Once an area was occupied by the Soviet Army it was unlikely to be relinquished, and that area would become part of the partitioned nation. On August 16, Stalin asked Truman to hand over the northern half of Hokkaido, but Truman refused on August 18²⁰; however, the longer the war persisted, the more likely Japan's partition would become possible. The situation as of August 16 was still formally based on the premise of an amicable cooperative relationship enjoyed by the United States with the Soviet Union, and a committee within the U.S. military had drawn up plans for the shared occupation of Japan, with Hokkaido and Tohoku allotted to be occupied by the Soviet Union.²¹

Let us take a look at the Potsdam declaration. This was an enumeration of the United States's anticipated occupation policy if Japan surrendered unconditionally, and to that extent arguably it represented the framework of unconditional surrender from the viewpoint of the United States; but from the Japanese perspective, it was an enumeration of surrender conditions which, if accepted, would lead to surrender, namely surrender with conditions. From the perspective of international law, it specified occupation policy in advance, therefore Japan's surrender under international law was irrefutably one of conditional surrender.

So the question is whether any guarantee of the emperor system was included in those conditions. At the very least, there was no stipulation in the Potsdam declaration that clearly guaranteed it.

Under military pressure, Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki issued his notorious *mokusatsu* [ignore] comment regarding the Potsdam declaration on July 28, 1945 (Japan time). This was inevitably reported abroad as a "rejection," and was directly linked to the atomic bombing. If he wanted to stipulate as to a guarantee for the emperor system, he should at least have inquired about it, even if he could not immediately accept the Potsdam declaration. By so doing, the United States would have been obliged to respond to that inquiry and the dropping of the atomic bomb would have been delayed at least while that response was put together. The lack of a guarantee for the emperor system proved fatal for the Potsdam declaration, but it cannot be argued the United States omitted provision for the emperor system so that Japan would not surrender immediately. There are no statements or records of meetings to indicate this. The emperor system would be established within the framework of

²⁰ Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (ge)*, pp. 298-300.

²¹ Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, pp. 216-221; "JWPC 385/1, Ultimate Occupation of Japan and Japanese Territory (August 16, 1945)," Record Group 218, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

occupation policy, under the unconditional surrender formula doggedly adhered to by the United States; it was likely President Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes felt it would cause problems in the court of public opinion if any guarantee was offered, thus invalidating the unconditional surrender formula. In this respect, it should be noted that Stimson's knowledge of the circumstances in Japan gave him a different perspective.

Before President Truman left the United States for Potsdam, War Secretary Stimson prepared a clause for inclusion in the declaration to be made at Potsdam which specifically guaranteed the maintenance of the emperor system, and handed it to Truman. However, there was intense opposition within the State Department to issuing a statement that included any such guarantee of the emperor system; so on July 16, Truman, along with Byrnes who had just been appointed secretary of state on July 3, decided not to make this statement, going along with the opinion of the former secretary of state Cordell Hull.²²

Taking into account the likelihood of fierce resistance within the State Department, Hull sent a telegram to Byrnes which arrived on July 16. In that telegram, Hull explained that if this guarantee for the emperor system was included, "the Japs would be encouraged while terrible political consequences would follow in the U.S." If the guarantee was going to be made, "would it be well first to await the climax of allied bombing and Russia's entry into the war?"²³

On the evening of July 16, Stimson received word of the successful atomic bomb test. Stimson had been closely involved in the drafting of the Potsdam declaration, and he persuaded Truman that there would still be the option of dropping the bomb if Japan did not accept the declaration; the Potsdam declaration, which at one time was not going to be issued, was now linked with the dropping of the atomic bomb, and brought out again.²⁴

Unfortunately, the clause in Stimson's draft which guaranteed the emperor system was deleted; however, the main reason at the time for this was that, as previously mentioned, the American government could not make any guarantees for the emperor system that appeared at odds with its firm adherence to the unconditional surrender formula.

The basic policy was to use the atomic bomb to force Japan's early surrender and bring an end to the operation to invade the Japanese mainland: dropping the atomic bomb and the surrender of Japan perfectly complemented each other. From Truman's viewpoint the Potsdam declaration was being forced into the process, and he had no great expectations for it on its own.

²² Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, p. 198; Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (jo)*, p. 299.

²³ U.S. Department of State, *FRUS: Diplomatic papers: The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, vol. 2, p. 1267.

²⁴ Sugihara, *Between Incompetence and Culpability*, p. 19.

On the subject of methods to coerce Japan to surrender, another was to suggest that the Soviet Union enter the war against Japan. However, after a secret accord about Soviet participation in the war was reached at Yalta in February 1945, this accord remained “confidential” even within the American government, and even the State Department was not informed until Roosevelt passed away; secrecy was maintained within government circles, and was dutifully maintained by the American government from start to finish.

On June 9 Truman, accompanied by acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew, discussed the secret accord with a prominent Chinese official T. V. Soong who was in the United States, and Soong relayed this to Chiang Kai-shek. There was a provision in this accord that Soviet participation in the war against Japan required the agreement of the Kuomintang government of China, and the United States was required to provide the necessary cooperation for that; even under these circumstances Truman dutifully explained that he too was bound by the terms of this secret accord. He had no intention of breaching the terms of the accord.²⁵

Even though Japan would have found Soviet participation in the war equally as shocking as the use of the atomic bomb, in the end there was no intention to use this as a means to bring about an end to the war.

Stimson made preparations in the United States for a declaration to be made at Potsdam that could also include the Soviet Union as a signatory nation, but Truman hoped for a Japanese surrender without Soviet cooperation, and without consulting the Soviets at all, issued the declaration signed by only three countries: England, China and the United States.²⁶ However, Japan interpreted

²⁵ Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, pp. 174-5.

As a means to force Japan to surrender, advising the Japanese of plans for the Soviet Union to join the war against Japan should have been a very effective method; however, among those at the time in a position within the U.S. government to exert any influence over policy formation, none noticed this or suggested it strongly. Japan would have perceived Soviet participation in the war against Japan as a threat, and although advanced warning of such plans would have been a very compelling way to usher the Japanese towards surrender, there was no one who clearly specified it or suggested it. It seems strange from today’s perspective, but in short, during the approximately four months between Roosevelt’s death and Japan’s surrender, the U.S. government was restricted to, was under the spell of, and rigidly adhered to the line set out by Roosevelt. See J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 91.

²⁶ The draft for the Potsdam declaration submitted by Stimson made provision to include the Soviet Union. After Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes examined this draft in Potsdam, references to the Soviet Union were removed. There are few details in the historical materials about the process of removing such references, but it probably came about because of the confidence that the United States could on its own force Japan’s surrender, thanks to it being the first to succeed in developing the atomic bomb.

It could be argued that, legally, the Soviet Union was not in a position to be included in the Potsdam declaration, because it had signed a neutrality pact with Japan; but it is

the absence of the Soviet Union as a signatory nation to mean Soviet mediation was still possible and it hesitated to accept the declaration, delaying its eventual acceptance. At this time, neither Truman nor Byrnes had noticed that the absence of the Soviet Union as a signatory to the Potsdam declaration would have this contrary effect.

In any event with regards to the Potsdam declaration, from Japan's perspective the lack of clarity concerning the preservation of the emperor system, as well as the notion discussed in the previous paragraph that Soviet mediation might still be possible because Stalin's signature did not appear on the declaration, made its immediate acceptance impossible, and led to the *mokusatsu* comment; time passed inexorably on towards the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.²⁷ However, when the Potsdam declaration was issued,

unlikely that this was taken into consideration when the Soviet Union was excluded. Rather, after the declaration was made in Potsdam, Byrnes was somewhat confused when Stalin requested a document be issued calling upon the Soviet Union to join the war against Japan. In a sense it was only natural that Stalin would ask the United States and England to explicitly make such a request, if the Soviet Union was going to unilaterally abrogate the neutrality pact. Conceivably, when the American side received this request it might have been the first time the United States became aware of the neutrality pact issue. However, the American government could not overtly tell the Soviets to break the neutrality pact. This would account for Byrnes's confusion.

There may have been a certain logic in removing the Soviet Union as a signatory to the Potsdam declaration; but from Japan's perspective it appeared as though the Soviet Union was maintaining its neutrality, and gave hope that Moscow might yet take up the mantle of mediation. This became a factor in delaying Japan's surrender, and is surely an irony of history.

See James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 207-9.

²⁷Upon hearing the announcement of the Potsdam declaration, Japanese government leaders could not decide immediately how to respond. Therefore, under pressure from the military who feared a collapse in morale, Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki explained at a cabinet press conference on July 28 that, "This declaration is a rehash of the Cairo talks, and I don't think there is any need to attach great importance to it [*jushi suru yo naki*]." This was dispatched by a Japanese news agency as "ignore" [*mokusatsu*], which in turn was paraphrased as "reject" by a foreign news agency.

In Japan, a particular theory has long been promulgated during the postwar era: namely, that this statement by the prime minister could be interpreted as *mokusatsu*, and in fact ended up being reported as *mokusatsu*; and that it triggered the decision to use the atomic bomb and brought about Soviet participation in the war against Japan. But this interpretation is incorrect.

The U.S. government knew from intercepted and decoded cables that Japan intended to surrender, but as discussed in the main body of this essay, it was probably not at the stage where it could accept Japan's intention to surrender, given that Japan was trying to avoid the unconditional surrender formula insisted upon by the United States, and that it knew fully well Japan was making preparations for a decisive battle for the Japanese mainland. Therefore, Truman and Byrnes did not have high expectations for the Potsdam declaration. Truman considered the issuing of the declaration as giving Japan one last chance before the

not much was anticipated in the first place from the American side, and it should be noted that Japan's refusal was almost exactly the reaction Truman had expected; it is worth mentioning that afterwards, the atomic bombs ended up being used as planned.

Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, out of shock over the use of the atomic bombs. The Soviet Union unilaterally broke its neutrality pact with Japan by entering the war on August 9 while the pact was still in effect, and this also had some impact, but it is obvious that Japan's surrender was accelerated by the shock of dropping the atomic bomb; it is also clear that, because of this, the operation to invade the Japanese mainland was canceled, many American soldiers no longer needed to die, and many more Japanese soldiers and civilians did not need to die.

If there had been no shock brought about by the use of the atomic bombs, and Japan had not surrendered on August 15, the Soviet Union's entry into the war would have been virtually assured on August 15, and the U.S. operation to invade the Japanese mainland would have commenced with the Kyushu landings on November 1; although the Japanese military would have resisted, isn't it worth pointing out that the Soviet Union's invasion of the Japanese mainland would have been virtually certain? Japan would then have become a partitioned nation. At a banquet held by Churchill in Potsdam on July 23, Stalin "proposed that our next meeting [of the Big Three] should be in Tokyo."²⁸

Viewed in this way it has to be concluded that, in some respects, it is difficult to deny American assertions that the use of the atomic bombs brought

atomic bombs were used, and while the Japanese government indeed "rejected" it, this was not necessarily disappointing. In fact, in his announcement after dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, the president stated that the Potsdam declaration had been rejected; but when the "rejection" response was actually received, there had been no sign of any surprised reaction within the U.S. government at all.

Moreover, although refusal of the Potsdam declaration has clearly been specified as the pretext for the Soviet Union's participation in the war against Japan, from Moscow's perspective, fighting Japan had been an idea embraced by Stalin since before the secret accord was reached at Yalta in February, 1945; considering the enormous profit to be gained in the Far East by joining the war against Japan, it would have fought Japan under any pretext, and it should probably be noted that Prime Minister Suzuki's *mokusatsu* comment had nothing to do with it at all. If the Japanese side had immediately accepted the declaration at Potsdam when it was issued, it can certainly be argued that it would have been possible to bring an end to the war without dropping the atomic bombs; however it should be obvious that, at that moment, the Japanese side was not in a situation where it could make such a response.

See: Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Shusen shiroku (ge)* [Historical record of the end of the war, vol. 2] (Tokyo: Shimbun Gekkan-sha, 1952), pp. 501-18; Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (jo)*, pp. 27-51.

²⁸ Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (ge)*, p. 28; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, vol. 6: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), p. 578.

about Japan's early surrender, and prevented an even greater tragedy befalling Japan. Nevertheless, if we consider what might have been if Roosevelt had not laid out his formula for unconditional surrender, it can be said with certainty that the use of atomic bombs would have been totally unnecessary to bring about Japan's surrender.

Roosevelt knew better than anyone else in the United States how much the Japanese government had hoped to avoid hostilities before the outbreak of war between Japan and the U.S. He also knew that the "sneak attack" at Pearl Harbor had been brought about by administrative blunders at Japan's Washington embassy, a pivotal truth about the war between Japan and the United States. He was also well aware that the war itself had been the result of provoking Japan, and was a war substantially started by the United States, because he had been the very person who had committed that provocation.

Nonetheless, he forced the unconditional surrender formula on Japan, expanded hostilities between Japan and the U.S. as far as possible, and brought about the deaths of not only Japanese citizens but also many Americans by embroiling them in the war.

Moreover, war acts committed against Japan were brutal. As mentioned above, the air raid over Tokyo on March 10, 1945, was an atrocity that killed around 100,000 civilians. It cannot be denied that, from the very start, this had been targeted against civilians; it was without doubt a war crime, a bombing raid that obviously violated international law. Not only that, the Tokyo air raid was not associated with lofty goals that could somehow legitimize its application, such as speeding up the end of the war, or reducing the number of American soldiers to be sacrificed. Nor was anything equivalent to an advance warning given, such as the declaration, however imperfect, made at Potsdam before the atomic bombings.

The U.S. servicemen who carried out this air raid did not know that, around the time of the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, the American government had forced the Hull Note upon Japan, or that the "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor had not been intentional; they believed that Japan had unilaterally picked a fight with the United States by launching a "sneak attack," and consequently the air raid seemed like a logical act of retaliation. For the United States it was a just war, and this may have seemed like logical conduct as part of that.

People in the United States must appreciate that these acts of brutality, based as they were on such misunderstandings, were carried out under Roosevelt who knew everything about the circumstances of the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States.

At a June 18 meeting Truman held with military leaders to decide how to carry out the operation to invade the Japanese mainland, it was reported that the first Kyushu landing operation alone, scheduled to start on November 1, would commit 190,000 troops, and 66,500 battle casualties could be expected if the

battle of Okinawa was taken as a guide.²⁹ In a postwar report regarding the use of the atomic bombs issued in January 1947 under Stimson's name, the projected number of battle casualties overall in an operation to invade the Japanese mainland had swelled to one million; but in any case if the mainland invasion campaign had been carried out, it is clear that U.S. troop casualties would have numbered in the tens of thousands.

Roosevelt had no qualms about presiding over a war that led to an extraordinary number of war casualties around the world, and may have seemed like a lighthearted leader to the American public, but in fact he was a president with a fiendish side. Truman, on the other hand, could be faulted for embracing Roosevelt's war leadership uncritically. No-one should make light of that flaw when appraising Truman, but in the leadership role he inherited, he was arguably an honest president who earnestly and in complete sincerity did all he could to minimize the sacrifice of American troops.

As one of the few Americans who learned early on how merciless the atomic bomb was as a weapon, on August 10, 1945, Truman accepted Stimson's counsel and cancelled further use of the atomic bomb beyond the first two.³⁰

From the discussion above it becomes clear that, in substance, the responsibility for using the atomic bomb lay not with Truman but with Roosevelt.

(6) The greatest historical significance of President Obama's visit to Hiroshima was that it freed the U.S. from the spell of the atomic bomb

On May 27, 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama, leader of the nation that had used the atomic bomb, visited Hiroshima which was devastated by the bomb; he laid a wreath at the memorial to the deceased, made some remarks, and talked with *hibakusha*, or atomic bomb survivors. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, leader of the side against whom the bomb was dropped, also laid a wreath at the memorial, and gave a speech calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Through the concerted efforts of President Obama and Prime Minister Abe, a settlement between Japan and the United States concerning the atomic bombing has been reached, at least formally; it must be noted that, in the name of all humankind, the settlement also represents forgiveness of this wrong perpetrated against humanity by the use of the atomic bomb. Obama's visit to bomb-torn Hiroshima as president of the United States, and all the events that

²⁹ Iokibe, *Beikoku no Nihon senryo seisaku (ge)*, pp. 180-3; "Minutes of Meeting held at the White House on Monday, 18 June 1945 at 1530." By JCS Secretary, CCS File, RG 218, National Archives. These figures are based on Admiral Leahy's estimates that "the troops on Okinawa had lost 35 percent in casualties." [p. 5.]

³⁰ Naka, *Mokusatsu—Potsudamu sengen no shinjitsu (ge)*, pp. 254-5.

took place at the Peace Memorial Park with Prime Minister Abe, were part of the ceremony to mark this. All wrongs committed against humanity must one day be forgiven; and if this is the case, then the events which took place in the peace park are a part of the ceremony to mark this.

On this occasion both President Obama and Prime Minister Abe called for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the president made the following remarks in his speech at the memorial: “Among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them.” It is indeed a solemn task that lies ahead for humanity, so that humankind will never again repeat this tragedy.

Needless to say, the abolition of nuclear weapons is no simple thing. During President Obama’s visit, the black briefcase containing secret launch codes for the use of nuclear weapons in fact also came with him to the atomic-bombed area of Hiroshima; and it should not be overlooked that, during the president’s speech too, it was placed near the memorial monument.

Even while conducting a ceremony calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, preparatory measures for nuclear war cannot be neglected because, when contemplating the threat of nuclear war, one cannot let down one’s guard for a moment.

Incidentally, back in October 2013 when it didn’t occur to anyone that President Obama’s visit to Hiroshima would happen—namely, two and a half years before the actual event—there was someone who predicted it would undoubtedly take place. This was Mr. Toshio Motoya, president of the APA Group, a Japanese hotel and hospitality chain. In October 2013, when approached with the matter of a project to construct a 14-story, 727-room hotel in Hiroshima, Motoya predicted that President Obama would visit Hiroshima and immediately decided to purchase the hotel because of an anticipated rise in tourism. About fifteen months before Obama’s visit to Hiroshima, a groundbreaking ceremony for the hotel was held on February 18, 2015; a reporter at a press conference at the time asked whether enough demand existed to justify building a hotel of this size, the largest in the Chukoku/Shikoku region. “President Obama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who has appealed for nuclear disarmament, will surely come to Hiroshima in 2016. This will mean a rapid rise in the number of people visiting Hiroshima from Europe and the United States.” It was obvious that no reporter present had even considered President Obama would visit Hiroshima, and laughter broke out.³¹

President Obama gave a speech in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic, on April 5, 2009, in which he said, “As a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral

³¹ Toshio Motoya, (Seiji Fuji, pseud.), *Honto on Nihon no rekishi: riron kingendaishi II (shikaban 2016)* [The Real History of Japan: Theoretical Modern History II] (self-published, 2016), pp. 92-3.

responsibility to act.” As president, he maintained the hope to leave a visit to Hiroshima as part of his political legacy.

But in reality, how feasible was it for President Obama to visit Hiroshima? Public opinion in the United States was unshakable that no apology be given. And would people in Japan who had actually been bombed really welcome the president’s visit to Hiroshima without an apology?

However, as the 71st anniversary of the atomic bombings approached, atomic bomb survivors swallowed their pain and welcomed President Obama’s visit to Hiroshima. This was a remarkable response from the *hibakusha* survivors.

In connection with President Obama’s visit to Hiroshima, Motoya referred to something quite significant regarding the atomic bombings. He pointed out that, so far, the United States had been under a spell with respect to the use of these atomic bombs. The United States wronged humanity by using the atomic bombs as weapons, and continued to embrace a sense of guilt. In order to alleviate these feelings of guilt, it was necessary to keep believing that Japan had been an evil country deserving of the punishment of having atomic bombs used against it. And it was necessary to have the Japanese themselves believe Japan had been an evil country, therefore implementation of the War Guilt Information Program was continued, even after the Occupation was lifted. This is in substance the case Motoya made.³²

However, thanks to the visit to Hiroshima by President Obama, it must be pointed out that the United States has been released from this spell. The wrong committed by the U.S. has been forgiven. In other words, all the events in the Peace Park during President Obama’s visit to Hiroshima were part of a ceremony to forgive the past wrong of dropping the atomic bombs, and to release the United States and the American people from the spell of using them; indeed, it can be argued that the American public was released from the spell of the atomic bomb.

This means that with the conclusion of these ceremonial events, the United States, which has been released from the spell of the atomic bomb, no longer needs to consider Japan to have been an evil country, nor is it necessary any longer to have Japan itself continue to believe it had been an evil country.

If this is the case, then from now on both the Japanese and American peoples, thanks to this alone, will be able to speak plainly and correctly when it comes to this chapter of history.

From the American perspective, it will no longer be necessary to distort historical facts to such an extent that Japan is seen as having been evil; and there will no longer be any need to have the Japanese continue to believe that Japan had been an evil country.

³² Ibid.

Although slightly off topic, China is now accusing Japan of using its troops to slaughter 300,000 civilians in Nanjing in 1937, even though there is no photographic evidence, not even a single picture, to prove this. On October 9, 2015, China registered historical materials at UNESCO's Memory of the World Register regarding the fabricated Nanjing massacre. Notwithstanding, these materials have not been made public. They can't be made public because they are bogus materials, so why is Japan undeservedly being forced to deal with such ridiculous matters?³³

At present, the comfort women issue which implicates the former Japanese military is being spread around the world by South Korea, but it is clear this issue started in 1982 when articles published by the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that someone by the name of Seiji Yoshida claimed to have had experiences which in fact were lies, namely that he had violently hunted and rounded up comfort women. Nonetheless, South Korea is still attacking Japan over claims that 200,000 *jugun ianfu* (comfort women in military service) were forcibly abducted by Japanese authorities. Not only do these attacks denigrate Japan, but they also distort the Korean people's view of themselves, and undeniably damage the interests of the Korean nation.³⁴

Even if for instance such things actually happened in the past as real historical events, why can they not be forgiven after 70 years? Let alone bringing up things that have no basis in historical fact: why must Japan be denigrated in this way?

One must not distort historical facts to such an extent regarding a particular country in order to produce a censorious historical awareness. Historical awareness means having an understanding of history which allows everyone to frankly engage in free discussion about the past, while enriching the way of life for all, and allowing all peoples to coexist in peace. History wars over an historical awareness to denigrate a particular country are simply not something which should exist in this world.

The greatest significance behind President Obama's Hiroshima visit is that, as Motoya indicated, it frees the American people from the spell of dropping the atomic bombs; this allows the proper development of a fair historical awareness, as it should have been all along, and makes it possible to elevate humankind to an even higher plane.

³³ Seishiro Sugihara, “ ‘Nankin jiken’ sekai kioku isan toroku no dai shittai” [Terrible blunder at the Memory of the World Register regarding the ‘Nanking Incident’], *Voice*, December 2015, pp. 145-50.

³⁴ On September 2, 1982, the *Asahi Shimbun* published an article based on a lecture given by a certain Seiji Yoshida on “ ‘Hunting Down’ young Korean women.” Many follow up articles were also published afterwards. However, in 1992 historian Ikuhiko Hata conducted field surveys, and determined that the account of these experiences had been fabricated. But the *Asahi Shimbun* did not retract these bogus articles. Nonetheless, on August 5 and 6, 2014, it admitted these articles were erroneous, and retracted them, 32 years after the fact.

Humanity must make even more progress, and historical awareness can be restored to something fair by regarding President Obama's visit to Hiroshima as an occasion to forgive the wrongs committed by the United States. President Obama's visit to Hiroshima at this time is the essence of what Japan and the United States have worked so hard to realize.

Motoya makes another important point about President Obama's visit to Hiroshima. The atomic bombings by the United States of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively, are themselves extremely tragic events; but he points out that the innumerable dead atomic bomb victims were instrumental in curtailing a Third World War which may have led to war dead and injured reaching ten million, that would have arisen if, as anticipated, the Soviet Union had turned large parts of the world Communist. In other words, the atomic bomb casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by undergoing an atomic baptism of fire which transformed them into sacrificial victims, made the people of the world aware that atomic bombs should never be used as weapons of war. The result, according to Motoya, was that the "Hot War" became a "Cold War" and averted the outbreak of a Third World War which might have led to 10 million war dead and injured.³⁵

While those who died in the atomic bombings did not willingly acquiesce to this, perhaps paradoxically we must come before their spirits and recognize that they indeed fulfilled such a purpose through their passing.

President Obama's visit to Hiroshima is imbued with this significance, and after he laid a wreath at the memorial, he prayed silently before the monument; but among the things that must have been passing through his mind at that time would have been thoughts of the *hibakusha* who brought about peace through their sacrifice in the atomic bombs.

Unfortunately, peace in the world at present includes the reality of nuclear weapons, and these are maintained as a means of deterring war. But one day we must respond to the *hibakusha* spirits so that peace can be realized not by nuclear might but by the power of the human mind.



Postscript:

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Pearl Harbor on December 26 (Dec. 27, Japan time) the same year President Obama visited Hiroshima, and laid a wreath to comfort the souls of victims of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

³⁵ See fns. 31 and 32.

This trip was not made in return for President Obama's visit to Hiroshima, but as a separate act to visit Pearl Harbor to comfort the spirits of the victims. And it symbolized paying respect to all American troops who lost their lives during the war between Japan and the United States.

Prime Minister Abe's visit to Pearl Harbor was essential as far as this essay is concerned, but it was splendid that he took the opportunity provided by President Obama's trip to Hiroshima to immediately visit Pearl Harbor and pay his respects to the souls of the victims.

The issue over responsibility for the dropping of the atomic bombs will probably be pursued at a later time.

[July 2017]