Why Japan Surrendered

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The end of World War II in the Pacific is the most successful case of military coercion among modern nation-states. On August 15, 1945, Japan unconditionally surrendered to the United States, although it still possessed a two-million-man army in the home islands which was prepared and willing to meet any American invasion, as well as other forces overseas. Indeed, Japan's surrender represents a rare instance of a great power surrendering its entire national territory to an opponent that had not captured any significant portion of it. This coercive success saved the lives of tens of thousands of Allied soldiers and many more Japanese.[1]

From the standpoint of understanding coercion, what matters is not the exact date of Japan's surrender, but the fact that it surrendered without offering last-ditch resistance. The key question is: why did Japan capitulate before invasion and decisive defeat of her home army?

Debate has raged for decades over this question. This prolific literature offers three principal explanations, all of which assume that civilian vulnerability was the key to coercion. The first argues that the decisive factor was fear of future punishment from atomic bombing: "It was not one atomic bomb, or two, which brought surrender. It was the experience of what an atomic bomb will actually do to a community, *plus the dread of many more,*

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1. Contrary to exaggerated claims at the time that Japan's surrender saved a half million American lives, Rufus Miles persuasively estimates that the invasion of Kyushu, the southern most of Japan's four main islands, would have cost perhaps 20,000 American deaths. While estimates for Japanese casualties are unavailable, they would likely have resembled those during Pacific operations from March 1944 through May 1945, in which Japanese losses were over twenty times higher than American casualties. Rufus E. Miles, Jr., "Hiroshima: The Strange Myth of Half a Million American Lives Saved," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Fall 1985), pp. 121–140.

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that was effective."[2] Japan surrendered, it is argued, to avoid the risk of having its population centers annihilated.

The second focuses on the effects of conventional strategic bombing on Japan's population. This position is largely identified with the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS): "It was not necessary for us to burn every city, to destroy every factory, to shoot down every airplane or sink every ship, and starve the people. It was enough to demonstrate that we were capable of doing all this."[3] The decline in morale had a profound effect on Japan's political leadership, according to the USSBS: "At the time surrender was announced, [low morale] was rapidly becoming of greater importance as a pressure on the political and military decisions of the rulers of the country."[4]

The third explanation stresses American demands, contending that Japan's decision resulted from a concession by the United States, permitting Japan to retain the emperor. This concession reduced the costs of surrender, and so made Japan willing to give in rather than face the continued suffering of its society.[5]

The principal implication of all three of these arguments is that had American air power not driven up the costs and risks to civilians, Japan would not have surrendered prior to invasion of the home islands.

However, none of these explanations is consistent with the facts. First, the argument that the threat of atomic attack coerced Japan fails, because conventional bombing had already achieved such a high level of destruction that atomic bombs could not inflict dramatically more damage; the "hostage" was

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2. Karl T. Compton, "If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Used," *Atlantic Monthly*, No. 178 (December 1946), p. 54 (emphasis in the original); Louis Morton, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (January 1957), pp. 334–353; Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

3. United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), *Japan's Struggle to End the War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [U.S. GPO], 1946), p. 10. Air Force Chief of Staff General Henry Arnold later contended, "the Japanese acknowledged defeat because air attacks, both actual and potential, had made possible the destruction of their capability and will for further resistance." Quoted in Martin Caidin, *A Torch to the Enemy: The Fire Raid on Tokyo* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960), p. 23.

4. USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1947), p. 6. The USSBS also claims that strategic bombing of industry, while it did not cause Japan's surrender, helped accelerate it by hastening the collapse of the economy. As discussed below, it was the blockade rather than bombing that gutted Japanese industrial production, a fact recognized by the USSBS itself in several subsidiary reports.

5. Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 198. See also Feis, *The Atomic Bomb.*

already dead. Second, the argument that bombing collapsed Japanese morale is also wrong. Despite being subjected to the most harrowing terror campaign in history, Japan's civilian population did not pressure the government to surrender, industrial workers did not abandon their jobs, and Army discipline remained excellent. Third, the argument that a reduction of American demands can explain the outcome misreads the facts. The United States never communicated any commitment to retain the emperor, or willingness to reduce any other demands.[6]

I argue that a fourth explanation is correct. Military vulnerability, not civilian vulnerability, accounts for Japan's decision to surrender. Japan's military position was so poor that its leaders would likely have surrendered before invasion, and at roughly the same time in August 1945, even if the United States had not employed strategic bombing or the atomic bomb. Rather than concern for the costs and risks to the population, or even Japan's overall military weakness *vis-à-vis* the United States, the decisive factor was Japanese leaders' recognition that their strategy for holding the most important territory at issue—the home islands—could not succeed. As Japanese leaders came to doubt whether they could prevent the home islands from being invaded and overrun, they preferred surrender to the costs of continuing the war.

Three key events persuaded Japanese leaders that their military position was untenable. First, and most important, by the summer of 1945, the Allied sea blockade had completely cut off all outside sources of supply, crippling the key economic and military pillars supporting Japan's strategy. Second, the fall of Okinawa in June placed American tactical air power in range of the southernmost home island of Kyushu. Finally, the rapid collapse of the Japanese armies in Manchuria under Soviet attack indicated by analogy that

6. Leon Sigal's work is perhaps the most important since the early 1960s. He debunks the myth that American concessions on the emperor induced Japan's surrender. Contrary to the widely held view, the United States made no such concession prior to Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam declaration on August 15, 1945. His second major argument offers a new explanation based on Japanese domestic politics. Japanese decision makers were motivated, he argues, by their own interests in preserving their institutions and domestic power, and thus, intervention by the emperor to overcome the domestic log-jam accounts for the surrender. A problem with this argument is that it is inconsistent with the first: if actors behave according to domestic considerations and if the United States made no concession to preserve the imperial institution, then the emperor would have acted against his own interest in preserving the throne by surrendering. Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: the Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

the home army was unlikely to perform as well against the Americans as had been expected.[7]

To establish which of these four explanations is correct, three questions must be answered. First, what were the American coercive strategies and how faithfully and capably were these strategies executed? Second, what were the relationships among the progress of the American coercive campaigns, changes in the prospects for Japan's diplomatic and military strategies, and changes in Japanese leaders' willingness to surrender? Finally, can alternative explanations account for Japan's surrender?

Execution of Military Operations

Military pressure to end the war progressed through three stages, as more and more coercive implements and strategies were brought to bear. In the first stage, the United States employed an interdiction strategy, based on a submarine blockade and precision bombing of industrial targets. The second stage, which began in early 1945, incorporated both interdiction and "Douhet-style"[8] bombing of cities. While the naval interdiction effort continued, strategic bombing shifted from interdiction targets to a strategy focused on attacking civilian morale. In the final stage, in the summer of 1945, the interdiction and conventional Douhet strategies were supplemented with an

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7. On this point my argument agrees with the British official history, which says, "The Russian declaration of war was the decisive factor in bringing Japan to accept the Potsdam declaration, for it brought home to all members of the Supreme Council the realization that the last hope of a negotiated peace had gone and that there was no alternative but to accept the Allied terms sooner or later." Major General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, Vol. 5: *The Surrender of Japan* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office [HMSO], 1969), pp. 433–434.

8. The city bombing strategy, favored by many Air Force officers, used incendiary raids on urban areas to compel Japan to surrender by shattering the will of the Japanese people. I call this a "Douhet strategy" because it rests on the belief made famous by the Italian air theorist, Guilio Douhet, that infliction of high costs can shatter civilian morale, unraveling the social basis of resistance, and causing citizens to pressure the government to abandon its territorial goals. As the Strategic Bombing Survey states, "the implicit strategy now was to mount such an air offensive that Japan would be forced to surrender because of the disruption of its organized economic, political, and social life, without an actual military invasion of the home islands." USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 34. For general discussion of Douhet strategies and detailed discussion in the Japanese case, see Robert A. Pape, *Punishment and Denial: The Coercive Use of Air Power* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming), chaps. 2–3.

invasion threat and a mixed "Schelling-Douhet"[9] strategy based on the atom bomb.

INTERDICTION

Once American forces gained the initiative in 1943, coercion rather than invasion became the preferred means of ending the war.[10] Success in early island operations, the growing superiority of the American fleet organized around aircraft carriers, the progress of the submarine campaign, and the new B-29 long-range bomber all persuaded American strategic planners that the main pressure applied to Japan should come from the sea and air. Although much of the planning for blockade and bombardment of Japan occurred in 1943, these components of U.S. strategy took some time to execute fully. American submarines did not achieve great success in sinking Japanese ships until late 1943 and 1944, while large-scale bombing could not begin until the Mariana Islands were seized in mid-1944.

NAVAL INTERDICTION. The American naval interdiction strategy was based on commerce warfare. Under this strategy, the attacker simply tries to sink as much merchant shipping tonnage as possible, reducing the defender's stock of shipping by destroying vessels faster than they can be replaced. If successful, this proceeds exponentially, as fewer supplies are available to produce replacement ships while attacking forces can concentrate against a dwindling number of targets. The ultimate goal is to reduce the defender's shipping capacity below the minimum needed to maintain its war economy.

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9. The atomic bombings of Japan were intended to compel surrender both through their shock effect on civilian morale, as in a Douhet strategy, and through the threat of horrendous further devastation, which I call a "Schelling strategy," because the idea of manipulating the risk of punishment for political purposes has largely come to be identified with the work of Thomas C. Schelling. For general discussion of Schelling strategies and detailed discussion in the Japanese case, see Pape, *Punishment and Denial*, chaps. 2–3. The landmark works regarding the atomic bomb decision are Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harpers*, No. 194 (February 1947), pp. 97–107; Morton, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb"; Len Giovannitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965); Feis, *The Atomic Bomb;* and Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 300–316.

10. The naval blockade actually began on a small scale shortly after Pearl Harbor, and escalated continuously until by the summer of 1945 Japan was cut off virtually completely. The blockade was carried out primarily by submarines, operating singly or in small groups. The goal was to sink as much Japanese merchant shipping tonnage as possible, rather than concentrating on stopping especially important cargos. Karl Lautenschlager, "The Submarine in Naval Warfare, 1901–2001," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter 1986/87), p. 121.

Japan was exceptionally vulnerable to commerce warfare. First, seventy-five percent of the country's most important raw materials and high percentages of other basic goods and foodstuffs were imported from overseas. Second, the Japanese merchant fleet was fairly small, and highly sensitive to small losses because it was already used to nearly full capacity at the start of the war.[11] Third, Japan's shipbuilding industry was small, so her capacity to replace losses was very limited. Japan had 6 million tons of shipping available when the war began, and it built or captured another 4 million tons during the war, making a total of only 10 million tons, compared to the 85 million tons of Allied shipping confronted by the German commerce warfare effort in the Atlantic.[12] According to Japanese pre-war estimates, Japan required an absolute minimum of 5 million tons to continue a protracted war.[13]

The U.S. strategy to cut Japanese lines of communications depended primarily on submarines, which destroyed far more tonnage than all other instruments combined, although land- and carrier-based air power also played a role towards the end of the war. The submarine campaign was initially hampered by problems in weapons design, particularly torpedoes, and excessively cautious tactics based on a submerged approach rather than surface attack at night. Also, few modern submarines could make the long voyages from Central Pacific and Western Australian bases to the main shipping lanes off the Asian mainland. By mid-1943, however, these difficulties had largely been solved. The number of U.S. submarines on patrol at any given time rose from an average of 13 in 1942 to 18 in 1943, to 27 by January 1944, and to 43 by October.[14]

By contrast, geographical limitations prevented air power from contributing much to the blockade until late 1944. Although the 14th Air Force stationed in China made limited attacks against the Japanese shipping routes between Singapore, China, and Japan, it was not until the capture of the central Philippines in late 1944 that land-based air power could cut into Japan's economic lifeline on a significant scale.[15] Carrier-based air power was

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11. In fact, only 65 percent of Japan's domestic trade was carried by her own shipping in 1941. Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), p. 251.
12. These figures include all vessels of 500 tons or more. Lautenschlager, "The Submarine in Naval Warfare," pp. 114, 119, 122.
13. Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, p. 104.
14. Arthur Hezlet, *The Submarine and Sea Power* (London: Peter Davies, 1967), pp. 210–227.
15. USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1946), p. 36.

allocated to major operations against Japanese naval forces and island bases, and was hardly used for commerce raiding until 1945.

The naval interdiction succeeded completely, destroying the Japanese economy. Shipping losses were so severe that by August 1945 Japan's merchant fleet had been reduced to just half a million tons.[16] In fact, over 75 percent of the tonnage destroyed was sunk prior to January 1, 1945.[17] Thus, submarines had essentially won the tonnage war before air power could intervene to help.

The economic effects of the blockade were devastating, although they did not materialize immediately because Japan had stockpiled large quantities of raw materials prior to the war. Despite heavy shipping losses, during the first two years of the war Japan was able to increase output in most categories. However, these reserves could be spent only once. By late 1944, prior to the initiation of strategic air attacks, the raw material base of Japan's war economy had been undermined and her industry was in steep decline.

By 1945, commodity imports had practically ceased, with disastrous effects on industrial production. Oil was the most critical problem. Japan depended on overseas supplies of oil for 90 percent of her requirements. Aware of this weakness, U.S. forces gave priority to sinking tankers, drastically cutting Japan's import capacity; after March 1945 no oil entered Japan.[18] Although Japan had a stockpile of over 40 million barrels in 1941 compared to an estimated annual requirement of 35 million, this had dwindled to 3.7 million barrels by the end of March 1945 and just 800,000 by July.[19] Finally, by July 1945, with stockpiles of all major materials exhausted and no more coming in, Japan's economy was completely shattered. (See Table 1).

PRECISION BOMBING. Interdiction also involved precision bombing against key Japanese war industries. The primary instrument was the B-29, the product of an ambitious project to develop a very long range bomber by 1944. A new bomber was needed because existing U.S. heavy bombers did not have the range to strike Japan from Pacific or Chinese bases, while carrier

16. Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, p. 104.
17. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 475. Approximately 6,835,000 tons of shipping were sunk between August 1, 1941 and January 1, 1945, and 1,782,140 between January 1 and August 15, 1945.
18. Hezlet, *The Submarine and Sea Power*, p. 223.
19. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, appendix 11; Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, pp. 134–135, 144. In addition to the economic effects, lack of fuel drastically curtailed Japanese air and naval operations.

Table 1. 1945 Production in Key Industries as Proportion of Peak.

Industry	Peak Production	1st Quarter, 1945	2nd Quarter, 1945	July 1945
Rubber	1944 (1st qtr)	18% (4th qtr)	10%	
Aluminum	1944 (2nd qtr)	26%	15%	8%
Oil Refining	1941	27%	9%	
Steel	1943	32%		13%[a]
Motor Vehicles	1941	18%	6%	0%
Ordnance[b]	1944 (3rd qtr)	42%	31%	22%
Aircraft Engines	1944 (2nd qtr)	42%	39%	29%
Airframes	1944 (3rd qtr)	67%	61%	36%
Explosives	1945 (1st qtr)	100%	75%	45%

SOURCE: Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), pp. 125–126, 129, 133, 134, 155, 185–186, 231, 235–236, 243, 247, 248, 249.

NOTE: Where quarter is specified for peak production, this is the only quarter for which data is available.

[a]The quality of what steel was produced declined due to increasing shortages of high-grade coking coal, cobalt, nickel, chrome, and molybdenum. Aluminum quality also declined as an increasing proportion of production consisted of reprocessed scrap. Cohen, *Japan's Economy,* pp. 125–126, 156.

[b]"Ordnance" includes small arms, artillery, tanks, half-tracks, ammunition, and military electronics, by yen value at 1945 prices; calculated from detailed figures for naval ordnance and reported fraction of total spending accounted for by the Navy.

aircraft lacked the weight of striking power for sustained bombardment of a major industrial state like Japan.[20]

Precision bombing began in June 1944 and ended in March 1945. It started with Project Matterhorn, which used B-29s of XX Bomber Command stationed in India and staging through forward bases at Chengtu in China. From this distance the bombers could just reach the southernmost home island of Kyushu, but not the main industrial areas on Honshu. As a result, Matterhorn dropped a mere 800 tons of bombs on Japan in nine missions; forty other missions were flown against targets in China, Manchuria, Korea, and South East Asia. Matterhorn demanded excessive logistic support in

20. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II,* Vol. 5: *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 3–33.

relation to the weight of bombs dropped, and so was de-emphasized once the Mariana Islands became available.[21]

The main American bombing effort was based in the Marianas, which were captured in the summer of 1944. Heavy bomber bases were quickly prepared and the XXI Bomber Command began precision bombing operations in November, continuing until early March 1945. Even this was a small effort, amounting to just 20 missions which dropped 5400 tons of bombs (compared to the overall total of 160,800 tons ultimately dropped on Japan, and 1,360,000 tons dropped on Germany).[22]

The JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) target directive specified that bombers should attack, in order of priority, aircraft engine manufacturers, airframes, port areas, and urban areas.[23] In fact, nearly all the effort (15 of 20 raids) was dedicated to attacking aircraft production.[24]

The campaign was a failure, for two reasons. First, operations were hindered by the long flying distances that restricted payloads to three tons out of the nominal ten, poor weather, Japanese fighter opposition, a sub-optimal ordnance mix of too many high explosives and too few incendiaries and, initially, a shortage of aircraft. Thus, little damage was done. Out of Japan's nine principal aircraft engine and assembly plants, only three suffered any lasting damage.[25]

Second, and more important, any damage inflicted by bombing could contribute little to reducing Japan's fighting capacity, because aircraft production was already in steep decline due to the shortages of key materials caused by the naval blockade. Production of aircraft engines had already fallen off sharply, and airframes slightly, in the last two months of 1944, *before* the plants were struck by B-29s.[26] In addition, the quality of Japan's

21. Gary J. Shandroff, "The Evolution of Area Bombing in American Doctrine and Practice" (New York: Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1972), p. 130; Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 175.
22. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 574; USSBS, *Summary Report (Pacific War)*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1946), p. 16. Two additional major B-29 missions were sent against Iwo Jima as well as some minor raids against both Iwo Jima and Truk.
23. The Matterhorn target directive had included aircraft production, steel, ball bearings, electronics, and merchant shipping. In practice, however, only steel offered significant targets within range of the U.S. forward base at Chengtu. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 551–554.
24. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 554–574.
25. Ibid., pp. 554, 573.
26. For example, output at the Ota aircraft plant had fallen from a peak of 300 per month to less than 100 before the plant was first attacked in February. Allocation of aluminum to the industry had declined 70 percent by the first quarter of 1945. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 570; Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, p. 227.

remaining industrial output had fallen so far that the equipment still being produced was highly unreliable. For instance, aircraft availability rates fell from 80 percent at the beginning of the war to 20 percent, while 40 percent of non-combat ferrying flights resulted in losses.[27] Thus, even if left undestroyed, Japan's remaining industries could contribute little to the combat capability of Japanese forces.

DOUHET: MARCH–AUGUST 1945

Starting with the fire raid against Tokyo on March 9, 1945, the American strategic bombing effort shifted from an interdiction strategy to a Douhet strategy based on inflicting maximum damage on population centers.[28]

The transition in strategies can be dated by tracing changes in targeting, mission profiles, and munitions. An ideal interdiction strategy would pinpoint key war industries and raw materials, while an ideal Douhet strategy would simply blot out residential and commercial areas of whole cities. Interdiction missions would be flown in daylight for maximum accuracy and at high altitude to avoid air defenses, while Douhet missions, requiring lesser accuracy, could be flown at night when air defenses would be weaker. Finally, while bombloads for both types of missions might include a mix of high explosives and incendiary bombs, Douhet strikes would employ a higher proportion of incendiaries.[29]

The impetus for the change to a Douhet strategy came from the air staff in Washington, which had come to favor area bombing over precision industrial attacks even before the bombing of Japan had begun.[30] As soon as the XXI Bomber Command started operations, pressure was put on its precision bombing–oriented commander, General Haywood S. Hansell, to adopt area incendiary bombing. Test incendiary raids were ordered as early as

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27. Cohen, *Japan's Economy,* pp. 144, 230.
28. The primary reason that chemical and biological weapons were not used was strong opposition by the British. Churchill feared that use of gas against Japan would encourage German gas attacks against Britain. In 1944, the United States agreed not to initiate the use of gas or retaliate unilaterally without prior consent by the British. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish,* p. 163.
29. The high explosive bombs would break up structures so that the incendiaries could set the pieces on fire. Since homes are normally more flammable than factories or the industrial equipment in them, fewer high explosives are needed for residential area bombing. For a detailed account of the development of American incendiary tactics, see John W. Mountcastle, "Trial by Fire: U.S. Incendiary Weapons, 1918–1945" (Durham, N.C.: Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1979).
30. Shandroff, "Evolution of Area Bombing," pp. 134–138; and Mountcastle, "Trial by Fire," pp. 210–220.

November 11, 1944, before the first strikes had been flown.[31] The pressure intensified after a successful incendiary raid on Hankow, China by India-based B-29s on December 18. Finally, on January 20, 1945, Hansell was replaced by General Curtis C. LeMay, who had commanded the B-29s in India, and was known as an advocate of night incendiary attacks.[32]

Following a pair of small experimental raids against Kobe (February 4) and Tokyo (February 25), the incendiary campaign began in earnest with a spectacular fire raid against Tokyo on March 9. This raid remains the most devastating air attack in history, exceeding even the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 84,000 people died and 16 square miles (25 percent of the city) were destroyed.[33] A series of fire raids was then launched from March 11 to 19 against Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe, which flattened another 16 square miles of Japan's most important cities.[34]

The fire blitz was temporarily halted only because LeMay ran out of incendiary bombs.[35] For the next two months, the B-29s were diverted to support the Okinawa invasion by bombing airfields on Kyushu and aircraft factories in Japan, and mining Japanese coastal waters. Even so, LeMay managed to send two major fire raids against Tokyo, which burned away another 22 square miles.[36]

The next major round of incendiary raids, between May 14 and June 15, sought to finish off Japan's six largest cities (Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, Osaka, Yokohama, and Kawasaki). Attention was then turned to secondary cities (with populations over 100,000), and 58 of 62 were burned. The war ended

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31. The first fire raids were flown against Tokyo on November 29 and Nagoya on January 3. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 564–565.
32. Shandroff, "Evolution of Area Bombing," p. 136; Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 143–144, 609, 612–614.
33. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 617.
34. Tactics for the fire raids were designed to incinerate Japanese cities most effectively. Since precision accuracy would be unnecessary, missions were flown at night. In addition, LeMay developed a set of special tactics to reduce fuel requirements and enable the planes to carry heavier payloads. First, since the Japanese had very little short- and medium-range flak, the bombers flew at very low altitudes (5,000 instead of the usual 20,000 feet). Second, because Japan had no real night-fighter capability, bombers could attack individually instead of flying in formation, and carry no armament. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 612–614; Brooks E. Kleber and Dale Birdsell, *Chemicals in Combat*, Vol. 3 of U.S. Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History, *The U.S. Army in World War II*, Ser. XI: The Technical Services, VII: Chemical Warfare Services (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1966), pp. 626–627; and Mountcastle, "Trial By Fire," pp. 135–165.
35. Shandroff, "Evolution of Area Bombing," p. 143.
36. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 627–635.

before the tertiary cities (those with populations over 30,000) could be bombed.[37]

The extent to which the Douhet strategy was implemented can be measured by the degree of destruction to Japan's population centers.[38] In all, 178 square miles were razed, amounting to 40 percent of the urban area of the 66 cities attacked. Twenty-two million people, 30 percent of Japan's entire population, were rendered homeless. 2,200,000 civilian casualties were inflicted, including 900,000 fatalities. These more than exceeded Japan's combat casualties in the Pacific of approximately 780,000.[39]

MIXED DOUHET/SCHELLING: THE ATOMIC BOMB

The final decision to drop the atomic bombs was taken by President Truman following Japan's rejection of the Potsdam Proclamation on July 28, 1945. Hiroshima was bombed on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9. Some 80,000 died at Hiroshima and the city was leveled; at Nagasaki 35,000 died and part of the city was destroyed.[40]

Evaluating the effectiveness of the atomic bombings as a Douhet strategy requires assessing their additional contribution beyond what was already being done by conventional fire bombing. This can be measured in two respects: morale or shock effect, and the additional damage and suffering inflicted on the population.

Surprisingly, the shock effect of the atomic bomb was minor. Due to the Japanese government's tight control of information, news of the bombings spread only slowly and the war ended before much of the population learned

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37. The best short overview of the urban area attacks is Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, chap. 20.

38. The degree to which the Douhet strategy was executed is often unappreciated. One reason may be that political leaders understated its magnitude in memoirs, and media coverage at the time largely neglected the counter-city campaign. Both Churchill and Truman hardly mention the conventional attacks and, when they do, they give the impression that counter-city attacks had just gotten under way when the war ended. Likewise, press reports during the war paid scant attention to the incendiary campaign against Japanese civilians. Sherry, *Rise of American Air Power*, pp. 315–316.

39. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 643, 674–675; USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 34; and USSBS, *Summary Report (Pacific War)*, pp. 17, 20. Official Japanese figures, based on unscientific data collection and reporting procedures, were considerably lower (930,000 total civilian casualties). The USSBS Morale Division built its estimate from a sample survey and is probably more accurate. For a detailed discussion of Japanese casualty estimates, see Sherry, *Rise of American Air Power*, p. 413.

40. Nagasaki suffered less because the city stood among a number of hills that shadowed large parts of the city from the blast. Figures for both cities do not include deaths due to long-term radiation effects. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 724–725.

what had really happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[41] While the emotional effects on the survivors were devastating, it is not certain that citizens of unattacked cities would have been equally affected even if there had been time for the news to spread.[42]

As far as damage is concerned, atomic bombs could contribute much less than is commonly thought. The two bombs that were dropped killed about 1/7 as many people as the conventional incendiary attacks. The Strategic Bombing Survey later estimated that damage equivalent to that caused by both atomic bombs could have been matched by 330 B-29 sorties using incendiaries; XXI Bomber Command was flying four times that many sorties every week by August 1945.[43]

To be effective as a Schelling strategy, the atomic bombings should have met two main requirements. First, they should have been employed to threaten vast future damage, rather than to maximize current damage. Second, the time between detonations should have been long enough to allow the bomb's import to sink in, and for the Japanese to reconsider whether to accede to American demands.

Neither of these criteria were met. The first could not be met, because the fire bombings had already inflicted such tremendous damage. By the time the atomic bombs fell, a vast portion of the urban population had either become casualties or had fled to the countryside. By the end of the war, Japan's 66 largest cities had become shadows of their pre-war selves; those with over 100,000 had lost 58 percent of their 1940 populations, and those with over a million had lost two-thirds. If one defines the "hostage" as major and secondary cities with over 100,000 people, then the hostage was nearly dead before the atomic bombs fell.[44]

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41. Few people outside the target areas had any real comprehension of what the atomic bombs meant. For discussion of Japanese control of the media and confusion of the population regarding the atomic bombs, see Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 91–109; and Michihiko Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6–September 30, 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955).

42. USSBS argues that morale effects of both conventional and atomic bombing were similar in that those closest to the blast were affected substantially more than those not in the immediate vicinity. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 34.

43. 210 B-29s would have been needed for Hiroshima, and 120 for Nagasaki. USSBS, *The Effects of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, p. 33.

44. More than 10 million Japanese, one seventh the national population and one fourth of urban dwellers, fled to farms for refuge. Thomas R.H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People in World War II* (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 154–173.

Without many more bombs—perhaps dozens—that the United States did not have, atomic bombing certainly could not have overshadowed the effects of incendiary attacks.[45] Probably the most damaging use for atomic bombs would have been in re-striking the largest cities, which had already been badly burned but still had people living amid the rubble. These targets would have been quickly used up, forcing the atomic campaign to turn to smaller cities where its advantage over conventional bombing would have been smaller.

The timing requirement was also not satisfied. Since the Schelling strategy aims to coerce by increasing future risks, it is necessary to permit the opponent to assess those risks and act accordingly. However, the second atom bomb was dropped only three days after the first, barely sufficient time for the Japanese government to carry out a quick investigation of the effects of a wholly revolutionary weapon, and not enough to develop a reasoned assessment of the danger it presented.

Despite these weaknesses, the atomic bombings might have been an effective Schelling strategy, providing that the Japanese did not guess that the United States had no more bombs. This strategy usually depends on signaling fairly clearly the scale of punishment that the attacker intends to inflict, but the coercive potential of the atomic bomb depended precisely on the fact that the Japanese had no way of knowing how much destruction would be visited upon them. Having no way to estimate how many bombs were in the U.S. arsenal, they might have believed that we had an unlimited number, and therefore feared that they would suffer devastation on an even greater scale than they had already.

INVASION

In fall 1944, the timetable for ending the war against Japan was disrupted by events in Europe, when it became clear that the collapse of Germany was not imminent. Since the invasions of Kyushu and especially Honshu depended on redeployment of large numbers of troops from Europe, which would require four to six months, plans for these operations had to put on hold. Hence, during the winter and spring of 1945, air and sea operations

45. In fact, no more bombs were on hand at the end of the war and only two were produced by the end of 1945. "U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Weapons Stockpile, 1945–1989: Numbers of Weapons," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (November 1989), p. 53.

against the Japanese homeland continued, but without a fixed time-table for invasion.[46]

The final debate over the timing of the invasion took place following Germany's collapse in May 1945. The Navy and Army Air Forces still objected to invasion. Army Air Forces Commanding General Arnold tried to persuade General Douglas MacArthur that air attack would make invasion unnecessary, while Admiral William Leahy lobbied President Truman for an extension of the blockade.[47] Despite these objections, the final schedule of amphibious operations against the Japanese homeland was established in late May, and confirmed by Truman, the JCS, and senior civilian advisors on June 18.

The reasoning behind the decision was contained in a JCS staff study which argued that while the Japanese home army lacked aircraft and fuel, it had 2 million men plentifully supplied with ammunition and powerful discipline. Although Japan was virtually cut off from the Asian mainland, her food supplies were thought to be adequate at least through 1945. So, despite the close blockade and intense bombardment of Japan, the JCS "doubted whether the general economic deterioration had yet reached, or would reach for some time, the point at which it would affect the ability of the nation to fight or repel an invasion."[48] Moreover, if the Allies were to forgo occupation, the Japanese government might withdraw from occupied territory on the Asiatic mainland, yet not agree to unconditional surrender. With some misgivings, Truman accepted the JCS recommendation although, according to Secretary of War Henry Stimson: "He had hoped there was a possibility of preventing an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other."[49]

The invasion of Kyushu (Operation Olympic) was to begin on November 1, 1945, followed by the invasion of the Tokyo plain on Honshu (Operation Coronet) on March 1, 1946.[50] The last preliminary step, completed in mid-

46. Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1951), pp. 340–342.
47. Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb*, pp. 5–8; Admiral Ernest J. King and W.M. Whitehead, *Fleet Admiral King* (New York: Norton, 1952), p. 605; William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), pp. 384–385.
48. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 182.
49. Stimson, quoted in Feis, *The Atomic Bomb*, p. 11.
50. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 152. No formal directive for Coronet was ever issued by the JCS, since Japan surrendered well in advance of the start of Olympic. Planning for this operation during the summer and fall of 1945 involved more logistics than strategy—more about how to redeploy large numbers of Army formations from Europe than about how to employ them in the Japanese theater. Grace Person Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan* (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 701–710.

June, was the capture of Okinawa, without which American tactical aircraft could not reach Kyushu. The plan for Kyushu had three phases. First, strategic air bombardment would continue the destruction of Japanese industrial power and communications. Next, the southern part of Kyushu would be isolated from the rest of the island, the mainland, and Honshu by a close naval blockade and tactical air interdiction. Finally, fourteen U.S. Army and Marine divisions would commence an assault against the estimated 15–18 Japanese divisions defending southern Kyushu.[51] The American forces would enjoy greater superiority in air, ground, and naval firepower than ever before in the Pacific war, and were expected to overrun the objective area within 30 days.[52]

In summary, the interdiction, Douhet, and invasion strategies all satisfied their basic requirements, but at different times. Although air interdiction contributed little, the naval blockade had achieved most of its military objectives by the end of 1944, making inevitable Japan's economic collapse in 1945. The Douhet strategy was implemented quite effectively from its inception in March 1945, largely depopulating Japan's cities by August. While it could not be carried out before November, the invasion strategy was highly credible, especially after the fall of Okinawa in June provided the necessary forward bases. For its part, the atomic bomb contributed little to the Douhet strategy, but could have been effective as a Schelling strategy, depending on Japanese estimates of the size of the U.S. arsenal.

Explaining Japan's Decision to Surrender

In order to determine whether it was military or civilian vulnerability that played the decisive role in Japan's decision to surrender, first, we must understand how the Japanese government made consequential decisions. Second, we need to know Japan's political objectives in the Pacific war, and her military and diplomatic strategies for achieving them. Finally, we must measure the relationship between the increasing vulnerabilities of Japan's population and of her military strategy, and changes in Japanese leaders' willingness to surrender.

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51. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 154.
52. If the campaign took longer than 30 days, U.S. forces could be reinforced from Europe at the rate of 3 divisions a month. Ibid., p. 155.

JAPANESE DECISION MAKING

Unlike some cases in which the military and political calculations of the target state's leadership cannot be measured directly and so must be inferred from the behavior of the state as a whole, in the Japanese case there is sufficient evidence to reconstruct the analyses and positions of various groups within the governing elite.[53]

Japan was governed by an oligarchy composed of three principal elements.[54] As it was an authoritarian state, popular opinion played no direct role in the process, and in practice was merely one factor to be considered among others by elites.[55]

The first and most powerful group was the military, which controlled strategic planning without civilian oversight. Because the Japanese constitution provided that a cabinet could not be formed without a War minister and Navy minister, the military also had effective veto power over all government actions. Of the two branches, the Army was by far dominant. Civilian, Navy and even senior Army officials who opposed Army interests were often simply assassinated by radical junior officers. In addition, the formation of the Kwantung Army after the seizure of Manchuria in 1931 gave the Army an instrument wholly beyond central control. The Navy was much weaker, but did have the advantage over the civilians in that it had the military information and skills to raise an occasional credible dissent to the Army.

The second group was the civilian leadership, which included the senior statesmen serving in the cabinet, some of whom were retired military officers, and the emperor's chief adviser, the Lord Privy Seal Kido. This group had the formal responsibility for running the country, but in practice did not act against the wishes of the military. Their most important function was to serve as counsellors to the emperor, who would occasionally summon one or more of them to offer analysis and recommendations. Although the emperor did

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53. However, while there is good evidence for the major coalitions, we do not have sufficient evidence for all individuals to treat each as a separate case.

54. For discussion of pre-war and wartime Japanese politics, see Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); David J. Lu, *From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs, 1961); Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); and Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

55. For descriptions of the oligarchical and consensual nature of Japanese government during this period, see Robert J.C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 10–17; and USSBS, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*.

not express his own opinion directly, the simple fact of an audience would lend weight to the summoned official's recommendations.

Last was Emperor Hirohito, who served primarily as a religious symbol to unify the national consciousness of the country. Although in principle he had the power to make law, in practice he took no formal part in government, except that cabinet decisions were required to be reported to him.

In theory, national policy decisions were made according to a rule of unanimous consent. The cabinet, which combined the Army and civilian groups, worked out a decision and then presented it to the emperor, who never departed from it. In practice, this did not work because of the Army's overwhelming dominance. The Army controlled the military police, a prime instrument for repression of dissent. For instance, in April 1945 War Minister Anami ordered the arrest of some 400 persons suspected of harboring end-the-war sentiments, including a former ambassador to England and a judge of high rank.[56] Civilians recognized the dominant role of the army.[57]

JAPANESE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Japan's main territorial goals in the Second World War were driven by a need for economic and military autarky. Japan sought to control the major agricultural and raw materials–producing areas of East and Southeast Asia, including Manchuria, much of China, and the Dutch East Indies.[58] War with the United States was precipitated partly by the American, British, and Dutch economic embargo of July 1941, which cut off most of Japan's oil supplies.[59]

During the war against the United States, Japanese strategy passed through four phases. In the first, Japan aimed at quick capture of the East Indies as well as strategic points along a defensive ring from the North Pacific all the way to Burma, including the Philippines, Central Pacific islands, New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, Siam, and Malaya. This perimeter, they believed, would defy U.S. counter-offensive efforts, forcing it to accept Japan's gains. This strategy enjoyed some success until the Japanese tried to extend

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56. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 75.
57. After the war, Prime Minister Suzuki said, "The Cabinet would have collapsed immediately had the War Minister submitted his resignation. Because Anami refrained from submitting his resignation, the Suzuki Cabinet was able to attain its major goal, namely, the war's termination." Ibid., p. 204.
58. The Philippines, Malaya, and Burma all had some economic value, but were attacked for strategic reasons. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, pp. 237–262.
59. For a recent discussion of how Western economic coercion backfired, see Jonathan G. Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937–1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

the perimeter to include Midway Island and Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians, enabling the United States to destroy the Japanese carrier fleet at Midway in June 1942.[60]

Once the Japanese lost command of the sea, the initiative passed to the United States. During the second phase, Japan fought a defensive war, seeking to "hold the ring" in the central and southern Pacific in order to present the United States with the prospect of a long-drawn-out war and thus induce it to abandon its counteroffensive.[61]

The third phase began in July 1944. Following the loss of Guadalcanal, New Guinea, the Marshalls, and the Marianas, it became clear to most Japanese elites that Japan could not achieve the original objectives for which she had waged war against the United States in the first place. The cabinet of General Hideki Tojo, which had begun the war, fell and was replaced by a new government headed by Premier Kuniaki Koiso.[62] However, Japan did not immediately sue for peace, because Japanese leaders believed that continued resistance would inflict enough costs on the Americans to induce them to lighten their terms. Japan especially hoped to end the war with her most important mainland possessions intact.[63]

Towards this end, Japan began to seek intermediaries to facilitate negotiations, hoping to find an ally who would help moderate the unconditional surrender demands of the United States.[64] This, however, did not mean that Japan was willing to accept peace at any price. An indication of the commitments Japan still believed itself capable of defending can be gained from the September 1944 cabinet discussions about the concessions Japan would have to offer the USSR to "mediate" between Japan and the United States.[65] Estimating that the Soviets would demand much of Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, part of the Kuriles, and other territories, the Cabinet decided not to proceed at that time.[66]

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60. On Japan's initial strategy in the South Pacific, see Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 7–12; Paul M. Kennedy, "Japanese Strategic Decisions, 1939–1945," in *Strategy and Diplomacy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 179–196.
61. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, pp. 393–406.
62. Although some of the Jushin had begun to doubt Japan's ability to maintain control over her newly acquired territories as early as 1943, the fall of Tojo was the first real opportunity to change Japan's fundamental policy. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 15.
63. Ibid., p. 43, n41.
64. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 174.
65. China, Sweden, and Britain were also approached as possible intermediaries, with no result.
66. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 89.

The fourth and final stage began with the U.S. invasion of Okinawa in April 1945. Koiso fell and was replaced by Admiral Kantaro Suzuki. Suzuki's cabinet, however, was not formed to produce a negotiated settlement. Although the Japanese expected that after Okinawa the Americans would invade the home islands, this did not trigger a decision to open surrender negotiations. To the contrary, the Army, the emperor, and Suzuki himself believed that Japan's best strategy was to fight an intense battle on the home islands rather than accept surrender.

This plan had two tracks. The first was an approach to the Soviet Union, beginning in June, in search of diplomatic or military aid.[67] The second track was to prepare for a major battle against the invasion forces.

Japanese leaders were divided over the goals of Soviet mediation. For the civilians, the purpose was to get help in encouraging the United States to reduce its surrender terms. For the military, which was not interested in surrender, the purpose was to ensure Japan's ability to continue the war. In particular, they sought to purchase Soviet oil and aircraft in return for Southeast Asian rubber, tin, lead, and tungsten or, if necessary, for territorial concessions. At best, some in the Navy hoped eventually to draw the Soviet Union into the war on Japan's side. At a minimum, they wanted to prevent a Soviet attack. Because of the lack of consensus, contact with the Soviets was not pursued with any sense of urgency or with a consistent set of priorities. In any case, the Soviets were unresponsive.[68]

In April 1945, the Japanese military began planning for homeland defense.[69] Remarkably prescient, Japanese Army intelligence predicted that American forces would follow the capture of Okinawa with an invasion, first of Kyushu and then of the Tokyo plain area of Honshu. They estimated that the United States would invade Kyushu with 15–20 divisions and Honshu with approximately 30 divisions. While invasion might come as early as July, it was considered more likely that the United States would not be prepared to attack Kyushu until October 1.[70]

Japan's strategy was to inflict such heavy losses on American forces, both at sea as they approached the landing zones and on the beach once they

67. Statements by some Japanese officials to the effect that Japan first approached the Soviets in February 1944 are erroneous, according to Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 127.
68. Ibid., pp. 77, 112–141.
69. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 147.
70. Ibid., p. 149; Donald S. Detwiler and Charles B. Burdick, eds., *War in Asia and the Pacific, 1937–1949*, Vol. 12: *Defense of the Homeland and End of the War* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1980), p. 75.

landed, that the United States would be compelled to retreat.[71] The key was not to actually defeat the American forces militarily, but to raise the price of conquering Japanese territory higher than American society would be willing to stand. According to General Shuichi Miyazaki, Chief of the Operations Bureau, the Army "hoped to concentrate its strength entirely in the area where the American forces would make their first landing, and it hoped to strike a decisive blow, thereby forcing the enemy to abandon [its] intention of attempting a second landing or else seriously delay this move."[72]

The high command's defense plan, "Ketsu-Go," called for augmenting the homeland's existing defenses with divisions brought back from China and Manchuria and newly raised divisions and air fleets, supplemented with large numbers of lightly armed guerrillas. Operationally, the American assault would be countered by large conventional forces positioned in and near the likely landing areas, while guerrilla forces covered lower-priority regions. Accordingly, southern Kyushu and the Tokyo area were allotted more than half of the 67 divisions and 35 independent brigades available, while provision was made for rapid reinforcement of the initial invasion area. For instance, should Kyushu be attacked first, its fifteen divisions would be augmented with three others from Honshu. Given Japan's mountainous terrain, the possible landing beaches were well demarcated. These beaches were to be heavily fortified with obstacles, mines, and entrenched troops and artillery emplacements. If possible, the invaders were to be defeated on the beaches; otherwise mobile assault divisions would counter-attack and destroy the beachheads.[73]

Rather than provide close air support for the army, Japan's air power was to be used in kamikaze (suicide) units against troop transports approaching the landing zones. Because of a dearth of trained pilots and aviation fuel, kamikaze tactics were expected to be more effective in inflicting losses than standard types of air operations.[74] It was estimated that by cannibalizing reconnaissance and training units, some 800 army fighter and bomber aircraft and 3,000 kamikaze aircraft could be made available.[75] All these preparations were to be completed by the end of August.

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71. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, pp. 96, 149.
72. Quoted in Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 49.
73. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, pp. 147–148; Detwiler and Burdick, *Defense of the Homeland and End of the War*, pp. 1–255.
74. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 99.
75. Kamikaze air strength actually totaled more than 4,800. Detwiler and Burdick, *Defense of the Homeland*, Document No. 119, p. 2.

CAUSES OF CHANGE IN JAPANESE BEHAVIOR

To evaluate the relative effects of civilian and military vulnerability on Japan's decision to surrender, we must trace the effects of changes in vulnerabilities on the positions of the major groups in the Japanese government regarding surrender. To do this, the case is divided into a number of discrete time slices, and the degree of Japan's vulnerability to each type of threat—nuclear, conventional fire attack, and invasion—is measured for each period. If the preferences of one group changed at the same time as an increase in one type of vulnerability, while the other type remained constant, this would show that the first and not the second was the cause of that group's decision.

Carrying out this analysis reveals that the only factor to influence all principal groups was Japan's military vulnerability to invasion. Japan's vulnerability to nuclear attack had some influence on some groups but not on the Army, the critical group. The vulnerability of Japanese civilians to conventional attack had hardly any effect on any decision makers.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The two independent variables are civilian vulnerability and military vulnerability. Civilian vulnerability is coded as "low" where civilian costs were not sufficient to merit the costs of civilian defense procedures, "medium" where large civilian costs could be avoided with defensive steps, "high" where major parts of the population are uncertain about whether they will survive even with defenses, or "very high" where major parts of the population are certain not to survive because avoiding the enemy's attacks is impossible.

Measurement of military vulnerability focuses on the home islands, because control of her national homeland was the most important value that Japan was being called upon to surrender. Vulnerability is coded as "low" where there was no risk of the home islands being overrun in the short term, "medium" where the risk was considerable but could be reduced by added defensive measures, "high" where the risks of losing were great despite the best available countermeasures, but that it might be possible to inflict enough attrition to reduce the enemy's commitment to control the territory, and "very high" where the likelihood of loss of control over the territory approached certainty because both defeat and heavy attrition of enemy forces are impossible.

CIVILIAN VULNERABILITY. Before June 1944, Japanese society was not vulnerable to attack.[76] In October 1943, the government ordered non-essential

76. Prior to June 1944 Japan was never bombed, except for the fifteen-plane Doolittle raid of April 1942.

civilians to evacuate urban areas, but few did and no resources were devoted to enforcing the order.[77]

From June to November 1944, vulnerability was low. During this period, China-based B-29s bombed Japan on several occasions, but only a few cities in Kyushu were affected and damage was extremely light.

In November 1944, civilian vulnerability increased to medium, when Marianas-based B-29s began bombing industries throughout the country. Although thousands of civilians were killed or injured, protective measures such as air defenses, evacuations, and fire lanes cut through city neighborhoods helped keep costs and risks low. For example, the relative ineffectiveness of early experimental incendiary raids convinced the Japanese that their fire-prevention systems were highly efficient.[78]

After March 1945, however, civilian vulnerability was high. The massive American incendiary raids inflicted high levels of casualties which Japanese protective measures could not significantly reduce.[79] As the summer wore on, the problem grew as Japanese air defenses waned, American bomber strength grew, and the campaign spread out to strike smaller cities, so that fewer and fewer safe places remained.[80]

Following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the vulnerability of Japan's population to nuclear attack became very high. Current costs and risks were not significantly higher than those from incendiary attack. The initial atomic bombs were not much more lethal than the largest incendiary raids, certainly not by the orders-of-magnitude increase in lethality that has come to be associated with hydrogen bombs. More people died in the first major incendiary raid on Tokyo than at Hiroshima. Despite this, the ultimate risks faced by Japan had escalated markedly. Given sufficient time for the United States to produce weapons, Japan's vulnerability to nuclear attack was unlimited.

In fact, the degree of vulnerability perceived by Japanese leaders varied, depending on whether they understood immediately what these revolutionary weapons implied and how many more they thought the United States might possess. Some civilian leaders were immediately convinced that Japan could not sustain this new form of warfare, while some Army and Navy representatives denied that an atomic bomb had been used at Hiroshima.

77. Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, pp. 161–162.
78. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 565.
79. Alvin Coox, *Japan: The Final Agony* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), pp. 28, 33, 41.
80. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 658.

Not until August 10, after the Nagasaki bombing, did the investigators finally agree that Japan faced the prospect of an enemy now equipped with atomic power.[81] By then, however, the government had already decided to surrender.

MILITARY VULNERABILITY. Prior to July 1944, military vulnerability was nil. Japan's strategy for holding the defensive perimeter in the Pacific had not yet been decisively defeated. Japanese leaders still hoped that at some point escalating losses would deter the United States from continuing the war, allowing Japan to keep its territorial gains.

Beginning in July 1944, with the fall of the Marianas, military vulnerability rose, although it remained low. The Marianas were the first positions to fall in Japan's inner defensive perimeter, and the battle for the islands destroyed much of her remaining naval power. As a result of this defeat Tojo's cabinet fell. Japan was clearly losing the war, and invasion of the home islands had to be considered as a remote possibility. Also by this date, submarines had stripped Japan of much of the shipping needed to continue a protracted war.

In April 1945, military vulnerability increased to medium with the U.S. landings on Okinawa, the strategic gateway to the invasion of Japan. With all imports of raw materials blocked and stockpiles largely consumed, production in key war industries had fallen 25 to 50 percent or more. While the military recognized the risk of an invasion by powerful American forces, they believed that Japan still retained sufficient resources to make Ketsu-Go effective. With the morale advantage of fighting on home soil, Japanese forces would be capable of defeating the attackers. In addition, there was still hope that the Soviets would provide diplomatic and military assistance, although they had announced on April 5 that they would not renew the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact when it expired in April 1946.[82]

In June 1945, military vulnerability rose to "high." With Okinawa in American hands, invasion had to be expected as soon as support bases could be made ready. The connection with the Asian mainland was now completely cut, making it impossible to bring back any forces to reinforce Ketsu-Go.[83] With stockpiles exhausted, production of war equipment was running down rapidly, falling by 55–100 percent in different categories by July. A report by

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81. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 151–152.
82. Imperial General Headquarters argued that a decisive battle on Japan's shores would end in victory for Japan. Ibid., pp. 73–77.
83. For a summary of a Japanese Army report on "The Present State of National Power," see ibid., p. 94. For a similar American appraisal, see Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 109.

the premier's cabinet secretary concluded that Japan could not continue the war because of the decline in munitions, shipping, and food.[84] In addition, the Soviets had failed to respond to Japan's requests for assistance.

Under these conditions, it was clear that Japan could not prepare for Ketsu-Go as fully as was expected in April.[85] On June 12, Admiral Kiyoshi Hasegawa reported to the emperor that the Navy had not been able to carry out preparations as planned. In particular, the kamikaze units would be unable to cope with the demands of an invasion. At about the same time, General Yoshijiro Umezu, chief of staff of the Army, was forced to admit that the Army was encountering serious difficulties in preparing even basic defenses for the Tokyo plain.[86]

Still, the Army remained confident that even if ultimate victory was beyond any realistic possibility, the Japanese strategy of inflicting punishing losses on the invading forces would succeed despite these problems. Lieutenant General Seizo Arisue, chief of the Army's Intelligence Bureau, said, "If we could defeat the enemy in Kyushu or inflict tremendous losses, forcing him to realize the strong fighting spirit of the Japanese Army and people, it would be possible, we hoped, to bring about the termination of hostilities on comparatively favorable terms."[87]

The Soviet invasion of Manchuria on August 9 raised Japan's military vulnerability to a very high level. The Soviet offensive ruptured Japanese lines immediately, and rapidly penetrated deep into the rear.[88] Since the Kwantung Army was thought to be Japan's premier fighting force, this had a devastating effect on Japanese calculations of the prospects for home island

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84. USSBS, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*, p. 7.

85. "While a full-scale suicide effort could have been supported by the supplies on hand, they not only would have been exhausted in a few months of full-scale combat but were qualitatively inadequate, with such essential items as tanks, heavy artillery and field communications equipment largely lacking. . . . Under these circumstances it was obvious that the invasion would find Japan without means for prolonged resistance, and that even if it were initially repelled, disintegration of the entire economy would occur in a short time." USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy*, p. 41.

86. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 115–116, n13.

87. General Shuichi Miyazaki was somewhat less confident, saying that victory "was beyond all expectation. The best we could hope for [was to inflict] a major blow on the enemy." Miyazaki and Arisue quoted in Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 228.

88. For an excellent history, see David M. Glantz, "August Storm: The Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive in Manchuria," *Leavenworth Papers*, No. 7 (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1983); and Glantz, "August Storm: Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945," *Leavenworth Papers*, No. 8 (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1983).

defense.[89] If their best forces were so easily sliced to pieces, the unavoidable implication was that the less well-equipped and trained forces assembled for Ketsu-Go had no chance of success against American forces that were even more capable than the Soviets.

As a result of Japan's depleted ability to execute Ketsu-Go, it was not likely that U.S. forces invading Kyushu would meet strong opposition. Contemporary American analyses estimated that conquering Kyushu would cost about 20,000 Allied lives. American planners were still more optimistic about taking Honshu, which they estimated would cost 15,000 lives, presumably because they expected that the battle for Kyushu would consume the last of Japan's war production.[90] These figures are not high compared with the 13,000 lost at Okinawa against a much smaller, but better-supplied Japanese force.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The dependent variables are the policy preferences of each of the three major groups in the Japanese government. To determine the effect of increasing civilian and military vulnerability on Japanese decision making, the views of each major group on surrendering must be assessed for each period when there was an increase in either type of vulnerability. Policy views are coded as "no surrender," which means not willing to surrender prior to invasion; "limited surrender," which means willing to surrender most overseas possessions but not the home islands; "flexible surrender," which means willing to surrender before invasion, but not without attempting to obtain more favorable terms; and "immediate surrender," which means willing to accept unmodified American terms at once.[91]

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89. The Kwantung Army's reputation was earned by its performance in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but by 1945 non-replacement of aged equipment and repeated drafts for Pacific island service had reduced it to no more than a shadow of its former prowess. Even so, it still maintained better equipment and training than could be provided for most of the make-shift Ketsu-Go forces. See Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, pp. 193–196.

90. Barton J. Bernstein, "A Postwar Myth: 500,000 U.S. lives Saved," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June–July 1986, p. 39.

91. Much of the evidence for Japanese officials' views is problematic, because it comes from statements made by the principals to American interrogators after the war. The problem is that evidence may be biased towards presenting the officials as favoring surrender earlier or more strongly than they in fact did. Given the anticipation of war crimes trials, senior officials had powerful incentives to maximize the extent to which they personally, and the emperor in particular, favored surrender, painting the military as responsible for continuation of the war. Also, because many of the interviews were conducted by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which was concerned to demonstrate the effectiveness of strategic bombing, the interviewees

CIVILIANS. Given Japan's political system, only a small number of civilians could influence policy on the war. The key figures on whom we have detailed evidence are Kuniaki Koiso and Mamoru Shigemitsu, respectively premier and foreign minister from July 1944 to April 1945; Kantaro Suzuki and Shigenori Togo, who took over these positions in April; Prince Fumimaro Konoye, an influential non-cabinet advisor;[92] and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Koichi Kido, the emperor's personal adviser. Of these, Suzuki was the most important in the surrender decisions.

Changes in these leaders' positions on surrender correspond only weakly to increases in Japan's civilian vulnerability. None of them changed their views in response to the escalations of conventional bombing in November 1944 or March 1945, although several were influenced by the dropping of the atomic bomb on August 6. By contrast, all of them were strongly influenced by the worsening of Japan's military vulnerability, particularly the invasion of Okinawa in April 1945, and the collapse of Japan's war economy during the summer.

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had an incentive to agree that air power had played the decisive role in bringing about the surrender. For a collection of statements that conventional air power won the war assembled by the Air Force from postwar interviews, see *Mission Accomplished: Interrogations of Japanese Industrial, Military and Civil Leaders of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1946). Despite these difficulties, the fact that we know the likely direction of any bias helps us develop methods which can separate more reliable from less reliable evidence. First, we should be more confident of views if we have corroboration from two or more sources. In particular, we should rely more strongly on statements made in official meetings, whose date and attendance can be verified, and of which multiple accounts often exist, than on the accounts by single individuals of informal conversations or of their private preferences. Second, we should give more credit to statements that could not help the witness's war crimes liability or reputation. Accordingly, an individual's statement that he did not favor surrender until well after he assumed official responsibility (e.g., Premier Koiso, who consistently advocated seeking a decisive battle rather than surrender) should be trusted, while a claim that he worked for surrender from the start of his tenure in office (e.g., Premier Suzuki) should not be uncritically accepted. Similarly, claims that the emperor was kept uninformed until late in the war may reflect attempts to preserve his reputation, although evidence from major government meetings of his statements favoring negotiations can probably be considered reliable. Third, our assessments of individuals' statements should be affected by evidence of their previous preferences prior to their involvement in surrender decisions. For example, Togo was well known as a member of the "peace party" from an early stage in the war. By contrast, Suzuki was chosen as premier partly because the Army saw him as more reliably committed to continuing the war than the major alternative candidate, Prince Konoye. Indeed, Togo initially declined to enter Suzuki's cabinet for this reason. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 48. Taken together, these methods permit us to characterize Japanese leaders' views with fairly high confidence. Instances where codings remain uncertain despite the best available evidence are noted in the text.

92. Konoye had been premier three times in the 1930s and was also considered for premier in April 1945. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 46.

The attitudes of civilian leaders were determined largely by their loss of confidence in Japan's ability to execute the Army's Ketsu-Go plan. However, some individuals required more evidence than others. Togo and Kido seem to have lost confidence in Ketsu-Go in June 1945, while Suzuki appears to have harbored hopes of inflicting a major defeat on American forces up until the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. Toshikazu Kase, foreign minister after the war, emphasized the effect of military vulnerability as the primary concern of Suzuki: "The more the prime minister learned of the extensive depletion of our war potential and our military helplessness the more convinced he became of the hopelessness of our position."[93] Suzuki himself told U.S. Air Force interrogators that the fire-bombing of the cities by B-29s had been his main concern, but if this were so he should have advocated surrender in March, not August.[94]

Further evidence of their primary focus on the military situation is that the government never sacrificed military requirements to offset the miseries being inflicted on the populace. While Japanese leaders frequently indicated their sympathy for the hardships suffered by the general population in public and private, they did not hesitate to shift burdens more heavily to civilians when military requirements were unfulfilled. For example, Japanese leaders were well aware that food shortages had caused per-capita consumption to decline well below 2000 calories per day during 1945, but they nonetheless ordered massive quantities to be stockpiled for the military to use in defending the homeland.[95]

Prior to July 1944, when both civilian and military vulnerability was nil, the civilian leadership did not favor surrender. Some senior statesmen like Konoye, Kido, and Shigemitsu had growing doubts about Japan's military position in 1942 and 1943, and by the spring of 1944 had come to believe that Japan could not ultimately win a war of attrition against the United States. A principal factor in this change was a secret study completed in February 1944 by Rear Admiral Sokichi Takagi, which showed that air, fleet, and merchant marine losses had led to inescapable difficulties in acquiring

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93. Toshikazu Kase, *Journey to the Missouri* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 148.
94. Suzuki said, "It seemed to me unavoidable that in the long run Japan would be almost destroyed by air attack so that merely on the basis of the B-29s alone I was convinced that Japan should sue for peace." Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 756.
95. Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 196; USSBS, *Japan's Decision to Surrender;* Saburo Hayaski and Alvin Coox, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Quantico, Va.: The Marine Corps Association, 1959), p. 155.

essential imported materials.[96] Despite this, these leaders had no concrete plans for surrender; instead, they spoke and behaved as ardent supporters of continuing the war.

Following the loss of the Marianas in July 1944, several senior statesmen called for Tojo's resignation, leading to the cabinet's fall on July 18. By this point, some individual civilians had come to favor limited surrender, but the civilians as a group still did not take action toward ending the war. Lord Kido, for example, suggested that the new government should consider concessions, but only ones that would provide some measure of victory for Japan; in particular, Japan would retain Manchuria.[97] Shigemitsu, the new foreign minister, suggested approaching the Soviet Union concerning mediation of a limited surrender, but the cabinet rejected this on the grounds that excessive concessions would be required. However, Koiso, the new premier, favored seeking a decisive victory in battle prior to opening negotiations.[98]

The successive increases in civilian vulnerability due to the escalations in the bombing in November 1944 and March 1945 had no apparent effect on the views of civilian leaders. For instance, during March the major topic among the leaders was the prospect for a separate peace with China, not the devastation caused by the fire bombings. The negotiations fell through because the Chinese demanded that Japan withdraw from China, open separate negotiations over Manchuria, and make peace with the United States and Britain.[99] There was still no consensus among the civilian leadership in favor of any form of surrender.[100]

The civilian leadership first accepted the idea of limited surrender when Okinawa was invaded in April 1945, raising Japan's military vulnerability from low to medium. The Koiso cabinet fell, and was replaced by a new government that represented a compromise between civilians who wanted to end the war and the Army who wanted to fight to the bitter end. With Suzuki as premier to satisfy the Army and the dovish Togo as foreign min-

96. Takagi concluded that Japan could not possibly win the war and therefore should seek a compromise peace. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender,* pp. 7–26.
97. Kido recorded these thoughts in his diary in January 1944, but did not act on them until the fall of the government in July 1944. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish,* pp. 30–31.
98. Ibid., pp. 33–38.
99. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender,* pp. 53–54.
100. One reason Konoye did not want to surrender was that he feared a leftist revolution in the aftermath of defeat. He thought that the lower and middle ranks of the Army had been infiltrated by communist sympathizers who would use surrender as an excuse to revolt. Kido thought Konoye's fears exaggerated, although not wholly without foundation. It appears that there was never any evidence of actual leftist penetration into the Army. See ibid., p. 50.

ister, the new government's policy was to prepare for a tenacious defense of the home islands while simultaneously exploring opportunities to obtain peace on acceptable terms. Togo, supported by Kido and Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai, advocated approaching the Soviet Union for mediation and offering substantial concessions, including all of Manchuria. Suzuki went along, but supported Army demands that the primary objective should be obtaining Soviet aid rather than exploring surrender terms. Suzuki's more hawkish position may have been accounted for by his belief that Japan could continue to fight two or three more years.[101]

In June, when Okinawa fell and communications with the mainland became impossible, the civilians began to accept the idea of flexible surrender. They preferred to drop efforts to gain Soviet assistance and to concentrate on getting Soviet mediation for terms other than unconditional surrender.[102] Kido was willing to pursue peace through mediation regardless of the price Japan would have to pay.[103] Togo got Suzuki and Yonai to agree to send Konoye as a special emissary to Moscow. Konoye agreed to go to Moscow despite the risk of assassination by military diehards, and was instructed by Togo to "try for anything at all short of unconditional surrender."[104] However, the civilian leaders had not yet reached the point of accepting immediate unconditional surrender, as evidenced by the unanimous rejection by the Japanese government of the Potsdam Proclamation.

The final straws, which led to acceptance of immediate surrender, were the dropping of the atomic bomb on August 6 and the Soviet attack on August 9, which raised both civilian and military vulnerability to very high levels. Immediately after learning about Hiroshima, Togo asked Suzuki to convene an emergency meeting of the Supreme War Council, and also went to the emperor to advocate accepting unconditional surrender.[105] Suzuki, however, did not come around to this viewpoint until the Soviet attack on August 9. Informed that Manchuria would be quickly overrun, Suzuki replied, "Is the Kwantung Army that weak? Then the game is up."[106] While Kido and Konoye supported the decision to surrender, there is no evidence

101. Togo personally thought any hope of Soviet assistance was a chimera. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, pp. 48, 50–54; Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 86–89.
102. Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pp. 257–260.
103. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 88, fn 33.
104. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, pp. 76–78.
105. The meeting was not held, because the military representatives refused to attend. Ibid., p. 237.
106. Quoted in ibid., p. 226.

as to exactly when they came to this view. Thus, for this final change in civilian views, it is impossible to determine whether military or civilian vulnerability had the greatest impact.

EMPEROR. The emperor's views on surrender were dominated by military vulnerability, although his final shift to immediate surrender was triggered by the atomic bomb.

Prior to February 1945, the emperor took no role in trying to end the war. He was described afterwards by major Japanese officials as having been largely uninformed, but since they had powerful incentives to protect the emperor's reputation, it is not clear whether these reports represent the truth or whether they were intended to mask the emperor's actual support for the war.

During February 1945, the emperor held a series of meetings with senior Japanese statesmen about Japan's war situation and plans for the future. Although several advised him that the situation was serious, no one recommended surrender. The emperor took no action in response to the advice other than commissioning a study of Japan's military capabilities by Admiral Hasegawa.[107]

The first change in the emperor's position occurred in June, when he came to favor flexible surrender. As late as a cabinet conference on June 8, the emperor was still committed to waging a decisive battle on the home islands. However, when the emperor received Hasegawa's report on June 12, he was shocked by its contents. Not only was production low as a result of inadequate facilities and a shortage of raw materials, but also much of what did roll off the assembly line was defective. Morale was sufficiently high to continue, but basic capabilities were not. As a result, the final battles would fail. Army Chief of Staff Umezu also presented an appraisal which, although concluding that the final battles would be victorious, detailed at length Japan's abundant military weaknesses.

Following these revelations, on June 20 the emperor told Togo that the reports from Hasegawa and Umezu had convinced him that the military's preparations, in both China and Japan, were so inadequate as to make it necessary to end the war without delay. On June 22, the emperor suddenly summoned the key cabinet officials and personally opened the proceedings by declaring that it was necessary to consider means other than the Army's

107. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 43–50.

strategy to end the war.[108] Since the emperor did not explicitly discuss possible surrender terms, it is difficult to say whether his position at this stage is best described as limited or flexible surrender. However, one piece of evidence points to the more conciliatory position. On July 7, he suggested to Suzuki that the government send a special envoy to Moscow, probably knowing that Togo and Konoye intended that the envoy seek any terms short of unconditional surrender.[109]

The second and final change in the emperor's views was caused by the Hiroshima bomb, which increased Japan's civilian vulnerability. Kido reports that when the emperor received the first reports, he said, "Under these circumstances, we must bow to the inevitable. No matter what happens to my safety, we must put an end to this war as speedily as possible so that this tragedy will not be repeated." The emperor also sent Togo to ask Suzuki to secure a prompt end to the war.[110]

While the atomic bomb was the catalyst of the emperor's decision, his statement to the cabinet meeting at which surrender was decided on the night of August 9–10 stressed Japan's military vulnerability. He said:

I cannot bear to see my innocent people suffer any longer. Ending the war is the only way to restore world peace and to relieve the nation from the terrible distress with which it is burdened.

I was told by those advocating a continuation of hostilities that by June, new divisions would be placed in fortified positions at Kujukurihama so that they would be ready for the invader when he sought to land. It is now August and the fortifications still have not been completed. Even the equipment for the divisions which are to fight is insufficient and reportedly will not be adequate until after the middle of September. Furthermore, the promised increase in the production of aircraft has not progressed in accordance with expectations.

There are those who say that the key to national survival lies in a decisive battle in the homeland. The experience of the past, however, shows that there has always been a discrepancy between plans and performance. I do not believe that the discrepancy in the case of Kujukurihama can be rectified. Since this is the shape of things, how can we repel the invaders?[111]

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108. Ibid., pp. 117–119.
109. As of mid-June, Kido had arranged for Togo to report directly to the emperor. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, pp. 234–236.
110. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 152; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 237.
111. Kujukuri is near Tokyo, on the Boso Peninsula. The most detailed reconstructions of the emperor's speech are nearly identical. See Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 175; Thomas M. Coffee, *Imperial Tragedy: Japan in World War II, the First Days and the Last* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1970), p. 354.

Thus, the emperor's argument was that, because defense of the homeland was hopeless, Japan was compelled to surrender to avoid pointless losses.

MILITARY. The views of senior military leaders, the most important group in the surrender decision, were completely determined by military vulnerability. Army leaders were extremely resistant to any form of surrender. They did not accept even limited surrender prior to the fall of Okinawa in June 1945, and accepted immediate surrender only after the Russian attack on August 9.

Of the two services, the Army was dominant, and almost unanimous in its views from War Minister General Korechika Anami and Chief of Staff General Umezu on down. Some junior officers were, if anything, even more committed to refusing surrender.[112] On the other hand, the Navy was divided. Some Navy leaders such as Chief of Staff Admiral Soemu Toyoda consistently supported the Army line. Others, such as Admiral Yonai, supported the more dovish civilian line, although they based their arguments for surrender entirely on Japan's military situation.[113] The Navy, given its basic political weakness and internal divisions, could play no organized role in opposition to the Army's no-surrender policy.

Until June 1945, the Army opposed any form of surrender. When the new government was being formed in April, the Army vetoed the more peace-oriented Konoye as premier in favor of Suzuki and even then demanded guarantees that the cabinet would continue to prosecute the war fully if any overtures were made to the Soviets. The Army also agreed to an approach to the Soviets only on condition that the objective would be obtaining military aid, not diplomatic mediation.

After Okinawa fell in June 1945, the Army relaxed its formerly irreconcilable commitment to avoid surrender at all costs, and accepted limited surrender. The Army agreed to permit overtures to the Soviets to seek peace, but Anami insisted that since Japan was still holding most of the territory it had conquered, it had not lost the war and peace terms had to reflect that fact.[114] Similarly, both Togo, a strong supporter of surrender, and Toyoda, a strong obstacle to surrender, testified that by the end of July no one (including Umezu and Anami) was opposed to the Potsdam terms providing certain additional terms were attached.[115]

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112. Senior leaders feared insubordination in case of surrender.
113. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 159–165.
114. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 78.
115. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 161.

When Japan's military vulnerability became very high following the Soviet attack on Manchuria, the Army's commitment to Ketsu-Go finally evaporated. Army and pro-war Navy officials had recognized the weakness of Japan's resource base for some time.[116] This, however, did not influence their views on surrender until the Soviet entry, after which the military chose not to veto the surrender. Prior to August 9, the Army led the cabinet to reject the Potsdam Proclamation. When Suzuki called a cabinet meeting on August 8 to discuss reports of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, it had to be cancelled because the Army representatives claimed to have had "more pressing business." The next day, after the Soviet invasion had begun although before the Nagasaki bombing had occurred, the Army agreed to a special meeting of the Supreme War Council.[117]

Even at this point, Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda all argued that Japan should not surrender without certain conditions. However, following a direct plea from the emperor, they no longer blocked the civilians' efforts to make peace, which they had the power to do. Anami could simply have refused to endorse the emperor's decision since, under the Meiji constitution, cabinet decisions required unanimous consent. Alternatively, Anami could have resigned, which would have dissolved the government, effectively vetoing the decision for surrender, because a new government could not be formed without the Army's approval of a new war minister.[118]

In comparison to the Soviet entry, the atomic bomb had little or no impact on the Army's position. First, the Army initially denied that the Hiroshima blast had been an atomic bomb. Second, they went to great lengths to downplay its importance. When Togo raised it as an argument for surrender on August 7, Anami explicitly rejected it. Finally, the Army vigorously argued that minor civilian defense measures could offset the bomb's effects. Interviewed after the war, Toyoda said, "I believe the Russian participation in the war against Japan rather than the atom bombs did more to hasten the surrender."[119] Similarly, Army Vice-Chief of Staff Torashiro Kawabe said, "Since Tokyo was not directly affected by the bombing, the full force of the

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116. As early as April 1945, both the army and navy chiefs of staff expressed deep concern over Japan's lack of oil, believing that stocks would last only until June 1945. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 121–122.
117. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 257. News of the Nagasaki bombing arrived during the meeting.
118. Makoto Iokibe, "Japan Meets the United States for the Second Time," *Daedalus*, Vol. 119 (Summer 1990), pp. 97–98.
119. John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936–1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 807.

shock was not felt. . . . In comparison, the Soviet entry into the war was a great shock when it actually came. . . . It gave us all the more severe shock and alarm because we had been in constant fear [that] the vast Red Army forces in Europe were now being turned against us."[120]

OUTCOME

Japan's leaders made the decision to surrender on the night of August 9–10. Following Suzuki's abortive attempt to meet the previous day, the Supreme War Council met on August 9, but could not reach a consensus. A cabinet meeting that same afternoon also reached no result. To break the deadlock, an imperial conference was held at midnight, at which the emperor expressed his desire that the Allied terms, as contained in the Potsdam Proclamation, be accepted immediately. Finally, the cabinet met again and agreed at 4 a.m. to accept the Allied terms, subject to the one condition that the imperial institution would be retained.

The American response, received by the Japanese on August 12, contained no promise to retain the emperor, but the government accepted it anyway on August 14. Concerned about the possibility of a coup by diehard officers, Anami, Umezu, and the third highest ranking officer, General Kenji Doihara, ordered their principal subordinates to pledge that "the Army will act in obedience to the Imperial decision to the last."[121] Nonetheless, on August 14 a group of Army officers did attempt a coup, aiming to subvert negotiations entirely and fight to the bitter end. The plotters assassinated the commander of the palace guard division and attempted to seize the palace and the Tokyo radio station, but were stopped by loyal troops. Approached by the plotters for his support during the coup, Anami committed suicide instead. The emperor's speech announcing surrender was broadcast to the country at noon on August 15.[122]

SUMMARY

Table 2 summarizes the changes in Japan's civilian and military vulnerability and the corresponding changes in the policy preferences of the major groups of the Japanese leadership.[123]

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120. Quoted in Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 226.
121. Ibid., pp. 273–274.
122. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, pp. 259–278; Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 189–227.
123. I thank Chaim Kaufmann for helping me to design this table and for educating me on a host of methodological issues involved in testing theories in single cases. On these issues, see

Table 2. Changes in Japan's Vulnerabilities and Leaders' Surrender Policies.

		Vulnerability		Leaders		
Date	**Event**	**Civ**	**Mil**	**Civs**	**Emp**	**Army**
>7/44		nil	nil	ns	ns	ns
7/44	Marianas fall, first bombing (6/44)	low	low	ns[a]	ns	ns
11/44	Bombing from Marianas	med	low	ns	ns	ns
3/45	Massive fire raids	high	low	ns	ns	ns
4/45	Okinawa invaded	high	med	ls	ns	ns
6/45	Okinawa falls	high	high	fs	fs	ls
8/6/45	Hiroshima	vh	high	is[b]	is	ls
8/9/45	Soviet attack	vh	vh	is	is	is[c]

KEY: ns = no surrender; ls = limited surrender; fs = flexible surrender, is = immediate surrender.
[a]Tojo's government fell and Shigemitsu sought Soviet mediation.
[b]Some civilians (e.g., Togo) advocated immediate surrender, while others (e.g., Suzuki) did not do so until August 9.
[c]Army leaders still wanted some conditions for surrender, but abandoned them in obedience to the emperor's request.

Table 2 shows that changes in views about surrender were much more often associated with increases in military vulnerability than in civilian vulnerability. Of three changes in Japanese civilian leaders' attitudes, only one corresponded to a change in civilian vulnerability (the atomic bomb) and even that instance affected the views of only some civilian officials. Of the two changes in the emperor's position, one was caused by military vulnerability and the other by civilian vulnerability (the atomic bomb). Of the two changes in the Army's position, both were associated with increases in military vulnerability, not civilian vulnerability. Thus, of seven major instances where leadership groups altered their views on surrender, at most two could be accounted for by nuclear civilian vulnerability, and none by civilian vulnerability to conventional attack.

Because of the dominance of the Army in Japanese decision making, military vulnerability actually played an even more decisive role in the decision

Kaufmann, "Deterrence and Rationality in International Crises" (New York: Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990), and "Out of the Lab and into the Archives: A Method for Testing Psychological Models of Foreign Policy Decision Making in Historical Cases" (unpublished manuscript, 1993).

to surrender than the table depicts. The Army paid absolutely no attention to civilian vulnerability, even after the atomic bomb. Further, an extremely high level of military vulnerability was required to persuade Army leaders to accept surrender, as evidenced by the fact that even after the Russian attack and clear indications that Japan could not defend itself, some officers attempted to overthrow the government rather than obey the surrender decision. Most important, the Army's consent was absolutely necessary for any decision to surrender, both because of the constitutional requirement for the war minister's agreement and because of the Army's monopoly on force in domestic politics.

In contrast to the impact of increasing military vulnerability, the escalations in costs and risks to the population hardly mattered in Japanese decision making. If civilian vulnerability had mattered, Japanese leaders should have moved rapidly to end the war when the massive and devastating incendiary raids began in March 1945. In fact, the final crisis that led to Japan's surrender did not come until five months later, by which time nearly all of its major cities lay in ruins. In addition, Japan's military plans for the defense of her home islands entailed even greater hardships for the civilian population: in the event of invasion, the Army was to take control over the railways and so give precedence to the transportation of troops over the shipment of supplies to the civilian population. Thus, Japan's defense measures were undertaken in the knowledge that local inhabitants in the coastal areas would suffer great hardship.[124]

Altogether, this means that the U.S. coercive strategies that were decisive in Japan's decision to surrender were interdiction and invasion, not the Schelling or Douhet bombing strategies. Japanese leaders made their decision based not on risks or costs to civilians but rather on the vulnerability of Japan's home islands to an impending American invasion. Only as Japanese leaders came to doubt that their strategy for defending the homeland would succeed, did they choose surrender prior to invasion over the costs of continuing the war.

Alternative Explanations

Four major alternative explanations of Japan's decision to surrender are worth considering: the atomic bomb, the conventional fire-bombing of Japanese

124. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 148.

cities, the emperor's intervention to demand that the government make peace, and reduction in American demands to permit Japan to retain the imperial institution.

ATOMIC BOMB

The most widely accepted explanation of Japan's surrender is atomic coercion. To avoid the prospects of many more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis, so the argument runs, the Japanese agreed to accept American terms for ending the war.

The key problem with this argument is that it focuses excessively on identifying the immediate catalyst which led Japanese decision-makers to accept the Potsdam Proclamation on August 9, as if preceding events mattered hardly at all. In effect, the atomic argument is limited to explaining the *timing* of surrender as if explaining this outcome were equivalent to explaining the larger issue of why coercion succeeded.

First, Japan's decision to surrender was the result of a gradual process, and not an overnight decision. All three major leadership groups gradually shifted their views in several stages from April 1945 onwards, although at somewhat different rates. No one suddenly altered his position from no surrender to immediate surrender after the atomic bombing. All groups had demonstrated their willingness to accept at least some forms of surrender before the bombs were dropped.

Second, regardless of the pace of Japanese decision making, the atomic bomb did little to increase the vulnerability of Japan's civilian population. By August 6, over 800,000 Japanese civilians had already been killed and more than 20 million rendered homeless. Sixty-four of Japan's 66 largest cities had already been so thoroughly burned out that LeMay's B-29s had begun to rub out the country's smaller cities and towns.[125]

Third, the atomic bombings were not decisive even in the timing of the surrender. Hiroshima did bring the emperor and some civilian leaders to favor immediate surrender, but did not influence the Army. The Army refused to attend a meeting called after Hiroshima to discuss surrender. Had the civilians tried to surrender at this point, senior military leaders would

125. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson said shortly after the war that, "Had the war continued until the projected invasion date of November 1, 1945, additional fire raids would have been more destructive of life and property than the limited number of atomic raids which we could have executed in the same time period." Quoted in Mountcastle, "Trial by Fire," p. 222.

likely have supported a coup.[126] However, the next day, after the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, senior military leaders did agree to attend surrender discussions.[127] While Army leaders arguing against surrender contended either that no atomic bomb had been dropped or that, if it had, it was of little significance, none ever tried to argue that defeat in Manchuria was irrelevant to Japan's prospects for defense. Thus, the timing of surrender was determined by the Soviet attack and not by the atomic bomb.[128]

CONVENTIONAL BOMBING

The second most common argument, originally made by the Strategic Bombing Survey, is that the conventional fire-bombing of Japanese cities was the main cause of Japan's surrender:

> 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 Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.[129]

This explanation is composed of two parts, one resting on a Douhet-type morale argument and the second on interdiction. The first is that strategic bombing depressed Japanese morale, putting irresistible pressure on Japanese leaders to surrender. Bernard Brodie argues that the rain of death that fell on Japan compelled a mood of urgency that "hastened the end of the war and sufficed to make invasion unnecessary."[130] The second is that strategic bombing destroyed much of Japan's economy, making it impossible for Japan to continue fighting and so hastening surrender.[131]

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126. The Army had considered a coup as early as April, intending to replace Suzuki with Anami. At an imperial conference on April 5, 1945, Tojo threatened an army coup d'état if Japan accepted unconditional surrender, which, according to Kido, succeeded in preventing explicit discussion of peace moves. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 60–61; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 260.

127. Feis's contention that the Nagasaki bomb hastened the surrender is refuted by the fact that the Army had already agreed to discuss surrender before the bombing occurred. Feis, *The Atomic Bomb*, p. 200.

128. While the evidence shows that the Soviet invasion and not the atomic bomb was decisive in this case, the fact that the invasion occurred just two days after Hiroshima means that we cannot know whether additional time to reflect on the awesome nature of nuclear attack would have moved Japanese army leaders, or whether additional bombs (had they been available) could have produced a decisive collapse of Japanese society.

129. USSBS, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*, p. 13.

130. Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 141.

131. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy*, p. 2.

Neither of the causal connections claimed in these two arguments actually occurred. While strategic bombing did inflict tremendous suffering on civilians, it did not affect the calculations of Japanese leaders. Conversely, while the collapse of Japan's war economy did hasten the surrender, strategic bombing was not responsible.

The morale argument rests on Douhet's theory that inflicting extreme civilian costs causes publics to rise up against their own governments to demand peace at nearly any price. If this model could succeed anywhere, it should have been in Japan. Sixty-four cities were subjected to urban area saturation tactics, with an average of 43 percent of each burned to the ground. Over two-thirds of Japan's civilian population experienced air raids, while more than one-third had bombs fall in their residential neighborhood.[132] Compared to Germany, despite the smaller tonnage of bombs dropped, the heavy use of incendiaries against Japan's crowded wooden cities resulted in vastly heavier casualties; 900,000 Japanese civilians (1.2 percent of the population) were killed by bombing compared to 330,000 Germans (.5 percent of the population).[133]

While bombing did depress individuals' spirits, it failed to stimulate, and indeed impeded, collective political action against the government. Nearly everyone considered air-raid protection and post-raid services inadequate. According to the Strategic Bombing Survey, 67 percent of those who experienced bombing felt intense fright and fear of death. Most believed they were better off after the surrender than during the war.[134]

Despite the brutal suffering, however, the social and political fabric of Japan did not unravel. There were no mass demonstrations against the government, nor any other form of popular political activity. Civil disobedience was insignificant. The labor absenteeism rate between January and August 1945 was approximately 8 percent, the same rate as estimated for the United States during a similar period. The only organized opposition was from underground communists, who remained numerically insignificant throughout the war. Far from acting collectively against the government,

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132. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 34.
133. Japanese casualty figures are from USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 1; Japanese population estimated at 73 million in 1940 from USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy*, p. 98. German casualties are reported in USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1947), p. 7; German population estimated at 67 million in 1939: USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1945), p. 202.
134. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, pp. 35, 38, 41.

bombing made people "more and more obsessed with finding individual solutions to their own severe and urgent personal problems."[135]

There are three reasons why public feeling did not directly influence Japanese political calculations to any important degree. First, Japan was an oligarchical society in which the leaders did not feel compelled to respond to popular concerns. Although Japanese leaders frequently indicated their sympathy for the hardships suffered by the general population, they never sacrificed military requirements to relieve popular misery. For example, Japanese leaders were well aware of the suffering caused by severe food and fuel shortages, but nevertheless appropriated much of Japan's dwindling food stocks and all available fuel for the military to use in defending the homeland.[136]

Second, the government controlled information. By controlling education, the media, and religion, the state could indoctrinate the population to sacrifice for national goals and to believe in the evil nature of their enemies. In 1945, more than two-thirds of the population expected enslavement and starvation or even annihilation if Japan were to lose the war. When the populace heard the emperor's surrender announcement, a majority of the population was stunned and dismayed and only a relatively small minority later admitted to being relieved that the war was over.[137]

Third, the state anticipated dissent and subversion and took active measures against them. As the war went on, greater resources were allocated to instruments of repression. While the personnel of Japan's civil police declined, the military police rose from 1400 in 1937 to 24,000 in 1945 and, by acquiring a reputation for brutality, created an atmosphere of passivity.[138]

In fact, the movement of Japan's leaders toward surrender can hardly be called urgent. During the period of greatest suffering, March to July 1945, the maneuvers of the peace party were tentative and extremely restrained. Even the first atomic attack did not cause the Supreme War Council to meet;[139] in contrast, the Soviet invasion on August 9 triggered a meeting within hours.

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135. Just 325 individuals were prosecuted for anti-war declarations during 1945, twice the 1944 level but still a trivial number. Ibid., pp. 65, 236–237, 249.
136. Hayaski and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 155; and Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 196.
137. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, pp. 150 ff.; Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, pp. 138–140.
138. USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale*, p. 117.
139. Stephen Harper, *Miracle of Deliverance: The Case for the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (New York: Stein & Day, 1986), p. 128.

The second of the two arguments is that the incendiary campaign against Japan's cities contributed significantly to Japan's economic problems. Although proponents of this argument admit that the blockade was responsible for the greater part of Japan's economic collapse, they contend that strategic air attack did contribute in an important way. The key argument is that, by destroying many thousands of the small cottage industries that constituted a feeder system, air bombardment counteracted the dispersal of Japanese war production. Second, as a result of incendiary attacks against Japan's cities, approximately 8.5 million people fled to the countryside, diminishing Japan's industrial labor pool.[140] Finally, just as the war was ending, bombers were turning to attacks against the transportation infrastructure of Japan, principally her railroads. These attacks would have destroyed her ability not only to move military resources, but also to distribute food to her scattered population.[141]

The fundamental problem with this argument is that once the main industries began to go quiet for lack of imported raw materials, the feeder system hardly mattered. The decline of Japan's warmaking powers started before she was subjected to the main weight of the bombing attack that began in March 1945. With stockpiles of key raw materials such as oil, rubber, and bauxite virtually exhausted, production was rapidly running down to zero, regardless of remaining industrial capacity. Unbombed factories simply sat unused.[142] To be sure, incendiary raids burned the physical structures of urban plants, big and small. Bombing, as Michael Sherry put it, "simply made the rubble of Japan's war economy bounce."[143]

IMPERIAL INTERVENTION

The third alternative explanation focuses on the emperor's intervention. Traditionally, the emperor was not expected to participate in policy decisions,

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140. B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p. 691.
141. USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy*, pp. 63–64.
142. Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, p. 107.
143. Sherry, *Rise of American Air Power*, p. 286. Even if incendiary bombing had begun before the blockade wrecked Japan's economy, it might not have weakened Japan's military forces appreciably. A 1944 Air Staff Study predicted that burning out all of the housing in the commercial and residential areas of Japan's largest cities would reduce Japan's total manufacturing output by only 15 percent, and front-line military strength hardly at all, because the damage would be diffused over so many industries that no important category of military production would be crippled. Air Intelligence Division, "Economic Effects of Successful Area Attacks on Six Japanese Cities," K118.04-2 (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: United States Air Force Historical Research Agency, 1944) pp. 1–3.

and Hirohito's actions in August were the only direct political interventions of his reign. Nonetheless, Japanese society invested the emperor with such enormous prestige that it would be virtually impossible for anyone to refuse his directly expressed wish. This power was not unlimited; as long as the government remained united on continuation of the war, there was little scope for the emperor to act. But, once the government became deeply divided in April 1945, the emperor could have demanded surrender at virtually any point, and those who favored continuing the war could not have been able to resist him. Thus, according to this view, surrender occurred when it did because the emperor chose to intervene then.[144] An implication of this argument is that had he intervened at any earlier point, Japan would have surrendered at that point. Thus, the emperor's decisions *not* to intervene in July 1944 or early 1945 were responsible for the prolongation of the war.

This argument overstates the emperor's actual power. Many in the military had no compunction about defying the emperor.[145] The August plotters planned to establish an old-style shogunate system, under which the Army would exercise all real power in the name of a figurehead. Had the emperor attempted to force through a surrender decision before the Army chiefs were prepared to accept it, the Army quite likely would have attempted to seize power.[146] In direct opposition to the expressed will of the emperor, however, it is uncertain whether they could have succeeded.

A greater problem with this argument is that the difference between the concerns that influenced the emperor's thinking and those that influenced

144. Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender*, pp. 199–200; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 279.

145. One school at the Army General Staff college taught that if a man believes that the emperor's decision is incorrect, he can still be loyal to the throne even though he does not obey, because the chief goal is preservation of the imperial system for posterity, not reflexive obedience to the reigning emperor. In fact, Toyoda said that "apart from the intervention of Soviet Russia, it is difficult for me to say [if] at any time prior to the actual termination of the war, the emperor had issued a rescript terminating the war, the Navy would have been willing to say that is not a mistake, because so long as one feels there is any chance left, it is very difficult to say that the time to quit [has come]." Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 210 fn 2; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 279.

146. The Army had seized power before. On February 26, 1936, a group of junior officers succeeded in overturning civilian authority and murdering the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and other ministers and high ranking officials. The plot succeeded largely because senior army leaders supported the rebels and welcomed the removal of civilians who opposed a more vigorous foreign policy and bigger military budgets. That plot stands in contrast to the August 1945 coup, which failed mainly because senior army leaders chose not to support it. When Anami, who was to have become the new head of state, committed suicide on August 14, he decapitated the conspiracy. For details on the Army's coup activities, see Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 211 n4; Kazuo Kawai, "Militarist Activity between Japan's Two Surrender Decisions," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 22 (November 1953), pp. 383–389.

Army leaders was not great, because both were significantly affected by Japan's increasing military vulnerability. Only in June 1945 did the emperor become persuaded that the Army's strategy would not succeed and, accordingly, at that point he first requested the government to seek means of ending the war. Not until August, when he was persuaded both that the war was lost and that continuation would involve horrendous costs, did he intervene in a governmental decision. Thus, while it may be possible that imperial intervention could have ended the war slightly earlier, there is no evidence that such an intervention was ever likely.

Imperial intervention apparently did have a small effect on the timing of the decision of August 9. In two meetings earlier that day, the Army chiefs refused to relax their conditions for negotiations, but after the emperor's plea for peace, Anami assented to the cabinet decision to surrender. Had the emperor not intervened, it might have taken an even greater demonstration of Japan's military vulnerability to persuade the Army to give in. Surrender might have come days later as the import of the disasters in Manchuria and at Nagasaki had time to sink in, or not until weeks later when invasion appeared imminent, or not at all; we cannot know.

REDUCTION IN AMERICAN DEMANDS

The last alternative explanation for the change in Japan's position on surrender focuses on a supposed change in American demands, namely an assurance that the imperial institution would be preserved. According to this view, the Japanese would not have consented to surrender without this concession.[147]

This argument misstates the facts. Although indeed the emperor was not deposed, prior to the surrender the United States never communicated to the Japanese any such assurance, either publically or through covert channels.

A group of Truman's civilian advisers, led by Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Grew, recommended that Truman publicly interpret the unconditional surrender doctrine to permit retention of the Japanese emperor.[148] Grew

147. "The evidence shows that the final decision for or against a last-ditch battle did not hinge on the atomic bomb or any other military consideration. It was a political matter. . . . That choice was governed by the political payment on which the Japanese insisted and had to insist—the retention of the Emperor." Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender*, pp. 204–205.

148. Grew was supported in this view by Henry Stimson, James Forrestal, and William Phillips as well as by some sectors of military intelligence. For details, see Ellis Zacharias, *Secret Missions* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1946), pp. 342–350; Alexander Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1949), pp. 60, 93, 227–291; Cline, *Washington Command*

argued that if such a statement were issued "the hands of the Emperor and his peace-minded advisors would be greatly strengthened in the face of the intransigent militarists."[149]

The principal resistance to such a concession came from those who advocated extensive social engineering for Japan, including Harry Hopkins, Dean Acheson, Archibald MacLeish, and the State Department as a whole. Acheson and MacLeish argued that a separation between the imperial institution and Japanese militarism could not be made, since the institution of the emperor was closely associated with "the current coalition of militarists, industrialists, large land owners and officer holders."[150]

The critical decision on the position of the emperor was made at the Potsdam Conference. The new secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, cast the deciding vote against a public reassurance on the retention of the emperor. He took the view that any public statement by the Allies on the emperor's position could be detrimental to one of the various competing factions in Japan.[151] Thus, the Potsdam declaration, Article 12, said, "The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government."[152]

Even after the Japanese message of August 10 accepting the Potsdam Proclamation on condition that the imperial institution be spared, the American position did not change.[153] Despite this discouraging response, on August 15 Japan surrendered anyway.[154]

Post, pp. 341–345; and Brian L. Villa, "The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Proclamation," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (June 1976), p. 71.

149. Joseph Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), pp. 1421–1422.

150. Villa, "U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Proclamation," p. 89.

151. On this matter, Byrnes apparently followed the advice of former Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who contended: "We did not want to come out against the institution [of the emperor] lest this give the Japanese militarists live coals to blow upon. . . . Nor did we wish to come out for the institution lest this discourage whatever popular movement there might be in Japan to erase it." Giovannitti and Freed, *Decision to Drop the Bomb*, p. 220.

152. Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, p. 487.

153. The United States responded: "With regard to the Japanese Government's message accepting the terms of the Potsdam proclamation but containing the statement, 'with the understanding that the said declaration does not compromise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler,' our position is as follows: . . . The ultimate form of government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people." Kirby, *Surrender of Japan*, pp. 184, 211–212, 488.

154. Even if the United States had offered assurances concerning the emperor, there is no reason to believe that this would have affected the Japanese decision. The divisions within the Supreme War Council over whether to surrender did not turn on the position of the emperor. Prior to

Conclusions

The principal cause of Japan's surrender was the ability of the United States to increase the military vulnerability of Japan's home islands, persuading Japanese leaders that defense of the homeland was highly unlikely to succeed. The key military factor causing this effect was the sea blockade, which crippled Japan's ability to produce and equip the forces necessary to execute its strategy. The most important factor accounting for the timing of surrender was the Soviet attack against Manchuria, largely because it persuaded previously adamant Army leaders that the homeland could not be defended.

Contrary to the assertion of the Strategic Bombing Survey that bombing was so effective that even if there had been no atomic bomb, Soviet attack, or planned American invasion, surrender would have occurred at nearly the same time, in actuality the naval blockade, invasion threat, and Soviet attack ensured that surrender would have occurred at precisely the same time even if there had been no strategic bombing campaign.

The end of World War II in the Pacific offers students of coercion three major lessons. First, while strategic air power is capable of inflicting widespread terror and death on civilian societies, such terror bombing is not effective in coercing governments to abandon highly valued territorial goals. Second, while strategic air power may be effective when used for interdiction, the success of this strategy depends greatly on careful and detailed understanding of the enemy's specific economic and military weaknesses. Finally, successful coercion depends on a credible threat to capture the specific territories which the opponent is asked to surrender. In the Japanese case, this meant that it took the prospect of successful invasion of the home islands to bring about surrender.

If terror bombing was ever going to work, it should have worked against Japan. Despite tremendous damage, the population learned to live under bombing and the government was not influenced at all. Conventional munitions, even under the optimal conditions that prevailed in 1945, cannot

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August 14 both hawks and doves assumed that any acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration would be conditional on retention of the emperor. Suzuki, Togo, and Yonai favored acceptance subject to this one condition, while Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda would accept it only with three additional provisos: (1) that Allied forces not occupy the home islands, (2) that Japan would disarm and demobilize her forces herself, and (3) that Japan would prosecute her own war criminals. Only on August 14 did the Supreme War Council—unanimously—agree to drop all conditions. Thus, a declaration by the United States on the position of the emperor would not have altered the position or the influence of either faction.

damage a modern society so rapidly as to shock it into collapse. Future strategic planners should learn from this that "morale" or terror bombing, under whatever name, is not only immoral but futile.

Strategic air power could have contributed to ending the war if it had been used appropriately. To do this, however, air planners would have had to understand where Japan's true vulnerabilities lay. Precision bombing of industry and fire bombing were both ineffective, because Japan's main weakness was neither her manufacturing base nor morale, but her extreme dependence on imported raw materials. Once cut off from her sources of supply, Japan's industrial capacity and the population's morale became irrelevant. The naval blockade was so effective precisely because it concentrated on this weak link.

If concentrated against this same weakness, strategic air power could have made a significant contribution, principally through aerial mining of key shipping lanes. Aerial mines were actually more effective than submarines during the last four months of the war, accounting for 50 percent of all tonnage sunk during that period.[155] Rather than waiting until the end of March 1945, B-29s should have begun mining operations as early as possible (by June 1944 from China and November 1944 from the Marianas). If B-29s could have caused Japan's oil imports to cease earlier than March 1945, this would have hastened the collapse of Japan's war effort by the same amount of time.

General purpose forces could also have been better used to bring about the surrender of Japan. What counted in the minds of Japanese leaders was the threat of invasion of the home islands. Accordingly, once the United States had completed the destruction of the Japanese Navy at the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944 and had decimated Japan's merchant fleet, the most effective coercive strategy would have been preparation for the earliest possible invasion of the home islands; other objectives, such as consolidation of the Philippines, no longer mattered. This means that the invasions of Luzon (January 1945) and Iwo Jima (February) were unnecessary, and that the thousands of lives lost in these operations could have been spared.[156]

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155. Hezlet, *The Submarine and Sea Power*, pp. 221–222.

156. Iwo Jima–based aircraft flew some missions in support of the invasion of Okinawa, but the main air support was supplied by aircraft carriers. While Iwo Jima was useful as a base for fighters that escorted B-29s on raids against heavily defended Japanese cities, mining missions would have been flown against offshore areas and shipping lanes to the west and south of the home islands where air defenses were minimal or non-existent.

The best choice would have been to go straight to Okinawa, the gateway to Kyushu and the other home islands.

Most of all, the Japanese case shows that strategic air power is limited not by the capabilities of the attacker, but by the vulnerabilities of the target. In the coercion of Japan, the instruments that mattered were naval power, tactical air power, and land power. Properly used strategic air power could have made a noticeable contribution, but could not have been decisive.