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Seventy years after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings which claimed over one hundred and thirty thousand lives in Hiroshima and another sixty five thousand in Nagasaki, questions continue to arise as to whether the United States as a nation was justified in the dropping of the nuclear bombs on Japan. Then president of the United States of America, in one of his speeches in 1945, clearly pointed out that the power of the nuclear bomb was understood before its use on Japan. Truman further stated the fact that such a weapon was one of the most terrible things the world had discovered, hence, his decision to use such a weapon on Japan had not come easy to him (Donohue, 2010). Regardless of his speech, the destructive power of the bombs as well as the subsequent death of innocent citizens continue to prompt questions on the justification of Truman's decision. In this literature we discuss Truman's decisions to drop the bombs and what other alternative decisions were available to him.

American historian, Samuel Walker purports that history has in some way highlighted a false dichotomy which posits that the United States simply without consideration of the consequences, chose to save the lives of Americans as well as cost when it came to making critical decisions on the use of nuclear weapons on the Japanese. Walker establishes in his book "Prompt and Utter destruction" that such historical claim fails to see the complex situation that prompted Truman's decision.

One of the key factors behind Truman's decision to use nuclear weapons against the Japanese was the fact that a majority of the nation's stakeholders wanted the war ended as quickly as possible and with the most minimal of United States casualties. The objective of winning the war at the lowest possible cost was at the top of Truman's priorities. Hence, contrary to what history tells of Truman's decision, the then president of the most powerful country in the

world was simply looking for the most effective way to end the war and not a way to simply test bombs.

A lack of incentives not to make use of the nuclear bombs presents another key reason for Truman's decision. By 1945, the bombings of innocent civilians across the world had come to be perceived as an established practice in times of war. Repeated bombings in Tokyo prior to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing had yielded no fruit in compelling the Japanese to surrender. Only the Nuclear bombing could convince the Japanese military leadership of the United States technological superiority as well as the futility of continued resistance. Rather than continue to send troops into Japan, it was cost efficient to use the bombs.

Many factors on the other hand point to other options that were available to Truman. In the summer of 1945, there were distinct changing dynamics within Japan. The cost and casualties of the war had already begun to take a significant toll on not just the military but also on the country's domestic infrastructure. The Japanese chief cabinet secretary had openly pronounced that shipping, communication, transportation and industry had been so significantly affected by the war (Donohue, 2010). As such, it was inevitable that the country would grind to a virtual standstill if the war continued till the end of the year. Truman had the possibility to play the war till the end of the year. The declining situation in Japan would have produced a similar decision of surrender.

An alternative Truman had, was the idea of modifying the unconditional surrender agreement presented to Japan. By the mid 1945's, there were already divisions within the Supreme Council of Japan on ways to end the war. The largest fraction of the division held the desire that the surrender agreement would include the possibility of retaining Japan's national policy by allowing Emperor Hirohito to remain on his throne. A message from Japan's foreign

minister to the Japanese ambassador to the Soviet Union which was intercepted by the U.S military clearly revealed that Japan was ready to surrender. The only impediment to the said surrender was the insistence of the unconditional surrender clause.

Apart from other alternatives, the use of the nuclear bomb on Japan did equally come with varying variables. There was the notion that the bombs only be used to neutralize specific military targets. Civilians within close proximity to such target zones would be warned prior to the dropping of the bombs. Another alternative on using the bomb was presented to Truman. This alternative suggested that an outside test or demonstration of the bomb be conducted. This was aimed at ensuring that the Japanese witness the destructive capability of the bomb and superior technology of the Americans. Truman and his advisors however believed that a demonstration of any sort would not be sufficient to bring the Japanese to surrender. Truman was worried that any warning or demonstration of any sort would undermine the strength and position of the United States if the weapons failed to function appropriately.

Truman did have alternatives to his decision. However after weighing all the variables, he took the path that afforded him lower cost, a faster end to the war and minimal U.S casualties.

In the first years of the cold war, the Truman administration led a strong policy of containment in a bid to counter perceived aggression (Costa, 1998). There is a significant claim that these economic, political and military oriented policies were implemented based on three strategic reasons.

The first, was to maintain or in other words, preserve the sustainability and stability of the international arena. The second, was aimed at the consistency of maintenance of the balance of power, and the third was deemed to garner support in expressing the disapproval of non-democratic regimes, significantly totalitarian regimes.

A significant aim of Truman's containment policy was to strategically block or contain Soviet expansions. The policy is said to be a primary U.S foreign policy lifted from the Truman Doctrine of 1947 up on till the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Toward the latter part of 1946, the emergence of significant disparities could be witnessed between the West and the Soviet Union as regards post war fates of Germany and major parts of Eastern Europe. Americans held on to the opinion that the soviets were bent on dominating a larger part of the European continent in a manner that was reminiscent t that of the German Nazi's. The containment policy, which was focused on the notion that America would take responsibility for defending nations from communist aggression, first assumed concrete structure as a substantial economic relief package and military aid to Turkey and Greece, two nations perceived to have been under the threat of Soviet expansionist tendencies.

Truman's containment policy was implemented in two major ways. The first was via military means and the other was implemented via economic or diplomatic means. Military

operations was used in ending communist insurgencies in countries such as Vietnam. The military strategy of the containment policy was equally used in the threat of military force during the Cuban missile crisis, as well as within the Korean War. Economic and diplomatic strategies contained within the Truman containment policy has been used to aid countries in Western Europe. Diplomatic strategies have also been used to pressure such countries to take sides with the United States against the Soviet counterparts in a bid to curtailing and subsequently ending the evils propagated by totalitarian and communist entities.

The United States of America also implemented the containment policy via the notion of the “collective security structure” proposed to Western Europe. This notion is actually responsible for the birth of “NATO”. By consistently playing the “An attack on one is an attack on all” philosophy, Western European countries were compelled to form an alliance that would bridge them from Soviet domination.

A clear example of the implementation of the Truman containment policy in 1947 was the sending of over 400 million dollars to Greece to prop up the country’s ailing financial situation. Truman held the strong opinion that if Greece did not get the bail out, the Greek government would collapse and open doors to communist rule. More specifically, Truman was worried of the domino effect the communist takeover of Greece would have on neighboring countries and the rest of the Western world.

The Korean War was another example where Truman’s containment policy was implemented between in the 1950s. North Korean troops had surged into South Korea via the border, triggering a major confrontation between propagators of communism and forces of the then, non-communist nations. It was the first time Truman’s containment policy would be implemented outside an initial Asian defense perimeter. America intervened and a ceasefire was brokered. The

major aim of America's intervention was to mitigate the communist orientation of North Korea from overwhelming the south. Till date, American troops remain stationed in South Korea.

The Truman administration in the period of the implementation of the containment policies were significantly influenced by the balance of power considerations than any other elements under its radar. In light of the nation's perceived external threats between the periods of 1947 to 1954, it had become inevitable and paramount that America pursue these policies.

Truman's perception of the Soviets as being highly motivated towards world domination further propagated the implementation of the containment policy across many spheres and facets (Costa, 1998).

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