

Saltzman Lecture Report  
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*Distinguishing Between Hiroshima and Nagasaki*  
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Dr. Campbell Craig's remarks focused on the third chapter of his new book, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (co-authored with Sergey Radchenko), which draws a distinction between the strategic decision to drop nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Craig argued that the decision to bomb Hiroshima was made in order to end World War II, whereas the decision to bomb Nagasaki was intended to intimidate Russia, in a first move of the emerging Cold War. According to Craig, President Truman was under domestic pressure to bomb Hiroshima because invading the Japanese mainland would cost too many American lives. Hence, the bombing was the only means to end the war.

On the other hand, the bombing of Nagasaki cannot be justified by a desire to bring the conflict to an end. Nor can the bombing be justified by a desire to avert a full-scale invasion because it would have been much more sensible to deal with these two issues diplomatically after the first atomic bomb was dropped. The fact that Truman tried to send a message to the Russians by bombing Nagasaki, noted Craig, is evidenced by the urgency with which Nagasaki was attacked—which left no time

for the Japanese to formulate a diplomatic response.

Several factors can be considered when arguing that, whereas the Hiroshima bombing was the last act of World War II, the Nagasaki bombing was the first act of the Cold War. First, Truman resisted voices in his administration that suggested that the terms of unconditional surrender be modified to accommodate a symbolic leadership role for the Japanese emperor. Intelligence hinted that Japan might have accepted surrender had the United States been slightly less rigid, but Truman chose to keep the terms in place. Craig also referenced Tsoyoshi Hasegawa, who argues that some advisers specifically opposed this adjustment of policy in order to avoid an early surrender and to be given the opportunity to use the bomb. Furthermore, Truman expressed regret after the bombing of Hiroshima. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that he would have delayed the second bombing and waited for surrender had Russia not been a factor to be taken into consideration—especially given the fact that the planned amphibious invasion of Japan was scheduled to occur several months later.

However, because of the impending Russian intervention in Japan, Truman did not merely want a Japanese surrender; instead, he wanted a quick Japanese

surrender. This also helps explain the decision to accept the emperor as a figurehead position, even as Japan was certain to accept unconditional surrender. Craig contends that all of these factors indicate that, while the decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima was taken in order to avoid a potentially deathly situation for American soldiers, the decision to bomb Nagasaki was a first move in the emerging Cold War between the United States and Russia.