

Take Home, Open Book, Examination Lesson Plan on Mass Casualties

And Making Decisions About War

THE QUESTION: Was it within the range of acceptable ethical decisions for the U.S. to use atomic bombs to kill hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians for the following purposes: (a) ending the war quickly thereby reducing Allied military casualties and Japanese military and civilian casualties; (b) ending the war fast enough to keep the Russians from having a role in the occupation of Japan; and (c) countering the numerical superiority of the Red Army in Europe by making Stalin understand that we had a military weapon of unparalleled destructiveness and the will to use it?

Use the factual description in Handout #2 and the ethical analysis contained in Handout #3. Assess the importance and legitimacy of the three U.S. policy goals.

1. List at least five major types of stakeholders in the decision to attack Japan with atomic weapons and, for each, describe the values implicated by the decision:
2. For each of the possible alternatives set out below: (i) describe how it would affect the stakeholders and their values, (ii) apply four ethical tests: the Golden Rule, the Six Pillars of Character (not all apply), the Rule of Universality, and the Rule of the Most Honoring Choice; and (iii) discuss its effectiveness in meeting U.S. goals, based on the information in Handout #2.
 - A. Attempting a demonstration of the bomb before using it on densely populated areas;
 - B. Using the bomb on primarily military targets only but acknowledging that there will be some civilian casualties;
 - C. Not using the bomb until the full effect of the Russian declaration of War and invasion had been fully felt;
 - D. Allowing the policy of strategic bombing and blockade to proceed and, if the Japanese didn't surrender by mid-October, demonstrating an atomic bomb, followed up by using the remaining bombs (by that time it would have been 6 or 7) for the dual purpose of forcing a surrender or preparing for an invasion; (note that the Russians would have had a greater chance to participate in the occupation of Japan as time went on);

- E. Using atomic bombs immediately on urban areas with warning;
- F. Using atomic bombs immediately on civilian targets without warning and
- G. Not using atomic bombs at all because it kills indiscriminately over a broad area even though it meant that the U.S. would have to invade losing 100,000 soldiers and sailors and killing hundreds of thousands if not millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians.

3. Based upon the analysis contained in Section 2, answer the question.

You will be graded on mastery of the content of Handout #2, the quality of your logical analysis, how well you use the ethical analysis in Handout #3, grammar and punctuation. If you respond with a handwritten paper, you will be graded on penmanship. Estimated time for the test is 2.5 hours.

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