

Demystifying the Atomic Bomb: US Strategic Bombing Survey Goes to Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Atsuko Shigesawa

第二次世界大戦直後の日本で戦略爆撃の効果を分析した米戦略爆撃調査団（USSBS）は、1946年7月に発表した報告書で「原爆投下がなくとも...恐らく1945年11月1日には、そして同12月31日には確実に、日本は降伏していただろう」と結論づけた。以来、それは日本の降伏に原爆投下は必要なかった証拠として活動家やジャーナリスト、修正主義史観の歴史家によって引用されてきた。一方、1995年には二人の歴史家が、USSBSが根拠とする日本人指導者の尋問記録を検証し、結論はこれらの証拠に基づいておらず信用できないと指摘した。USSBSの15調査部門のうち5部門は被爆地で原爆の影響を調査している。それはその結論に何らかの影響を与えたのだろうか。本博士論文は各部門の調査を検証し、USSBSがその結論を裏付けるのに被爆地での調査を利用した可能性があることを明らかにした。また、原爆投下をめぐる異なる言説が対立する中で、その動きがより強化された可能性についても論じた。

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to explore how the studies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) intertwine with its “early-surrender” conclusion, which argued that the atomic bombings of the two cities were indecisive in forcing Japan to surrender. Two of the three reports from USSBS Chairman’s Office—*The Summary Report* and *Japan’s Struggle to End the War*—contain the conclusion, which reads: “...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.”

Since the reports’ publications in July 1946, the conclusion has been embraced by the so-called revisionist historians as evidence that supports their assertion that the atomic bomb was not necessary to end the war. In the meantime, even orthodox historians rarely reviewed it critically, partly because of the Survey’s prestige as a Presidential commission. This changed in 1995 when two historians published articles that cast doubts on the credibility of the conclusion.

In their articles, Robert P. Newman and Barton J. Bernstein argue, respectively, that the conclusion is unreliable and should not be trusted since it was probably determined against substantive evidence to the contrary; e.g., the evidence the Survey had collected and claimed their conclusion was based upon—interrogations of Japanese leaders. They assert that Paul H. Nitze, Vice Chairman of the Survey in the Pacific, who was the principal author of *The Summary Report*, had already arrived at the conclusion by the time he had landed in Japan.

By examining the preliminary and final reports of the USSBS divisions that studied in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this dissertation seeks to determine if and how these studies contributed to the formation of the conclusion. This research suggests that the eight reports by the five USSBS study divisions—Physical Damage Division (PDD), Urban Areas Division (UAD), Civilian Defense Division (CDD) and the Medical Division, as well as the Moral Division—did not directly contribute to the formation of such a hypothesis, as the conclusion was likely preconceived, as the preceding studies asserted. However, with their counterfactual elements, they were used to support the conclusion. Because these reports provided bases for *The Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, a report from the USSBS Chairman's Office, which was released before two other Chairman's reports, they thus paved the way for the conclusion to appear consistent and to better fit in the reports.

In postwar America, two conflicting schools of thought in regard to the atomic bomb appeared immediately after its first use—one that saw the atomic bomb as a revolutionary weapon that ended the war and the other that deemed the new weapon as indeed powerful, but ultimately just another bomb. The USSBS counterfactual represented the latter, which was often pronounced by military officials who, for example, feared that the new weapon might compromise their share of conventional forces. This research also sheds light on the competition between *The Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* and the one

by the Manhattan Engineer District (MED), the latter of which represented the former school, to hold a contested terrain over the narrative of the atomic bomb.

By excavating and weaving together mostly archival papers, this study illuminates the transitions that took place in the United States in a brief period after the war, before the country started to embrace the new weapon.