

The College Board
Advanced Placement Examination

AMERICAN HISTORY
SECTION II

(Suggested writing time—40 minutes)

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-H and your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. In your essay, you should strive to support your conclusion both by citing key pieces of evidence from the documents and by drawing on your knowledge of the period.

1. The United States decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima was a diplomatic move calculated to intimidate the Soviet Union in the post-Second World War era rather than a strictly military measure designed to force Japan's unconditional surrender.

Evaluate this statement using the documents and your knowledge of the military and diplomatic history of the years 1944 through 1947.

Document A

Source: Memorandum for Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson (1945)

The principal political, moral, and military objective of the United States in the summer of 1945 was the prompt and complete surrender of Japan. Only the complete destruction of her military power could open the way to lasting peace. . . .

In the middle of July, 1945, the intelligence section of the War Department General Staff estimated Japanese military strength as follows: in the home islands, slightly under 1,000,000; in Korea, Manchuria, China proper, and Formosa, slightly over 1,000,000; in French Indochina, Thailand, and Burma, over 100,000; in the East Indies area, including the Philippines, over 500,000; in the Japanese Pacific Islands, over 100,000. The total strength of the Japanese forces was estimated at about 3,000,000 men. These estimates later proved to be in very close agreement with official Japanese figures. . . .

As we understood it in July, there was a very strong possibility that the Japanese government might demonstrate open resistance to the end, to all the extent of the War. Even under the condition, in such an event, the Allies would be faced with the prospect of the task of destroying an armed force of five million men and five thousand suicide aircraft, belonging to a race which has already amply demonstrated its ability to fight literally to the death.

The strategic plans of our armed forces for the defeat of Japan, as they stood in July, had been prepared without reliance upon the atomic bomb, which had not yet been tested in New Mexico. We were planning an intensified aerial attack, and greatly intensified strategic air bombing, through the summer and early fall, to be followed in November-1 by an invasion of the southern island of Kyushu. This would be followed in turn by an invasion of the main island of Honshu in the spring of 1946. The total U.S. military and naval force involved in this grand design was of the order of 5,000,000 men; if all these indirectly concerned are included, it was larger still.

We estimated that if we should be forced to carry this plan to its conclusion, the major fighting would not end until the latter part of 1946, or the earliest. I was informed that such operations might be expected to cost over a million casualties, to American forces alone.

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1988 Dbq Atomic Bomb Document Analysis

JR Anderson



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