Sample Negative Case

“It is part of American national gospel that the end never justifies the means, and yet it is undeniable that the end- stopping the war with Japan- was the immediate result of brutal means”

Because I agree with Thomas Powers [The Atlantic Monthly, July 1995] I negate the resolution: **Resolved: The use of Atomic bombs by the United States on Japan in 1945 was morally justified.**

I will address definitions with the affirmative arguments.

The value I will uphold in today’s debate will be **Moral legitimacy**. Morality is a complex issue that has many facets. In today’s resolution we are asked to weigh the morality of a government action. To do this we must evaluate the moral requirements of a legitimate government. Quote Here. As the primary obligation of government, legitimacy is the ultimate factor concerning a governments moral duties. A government transgression of morality is a transgression of its legitimacy.

The criteria to weigh the values in today’s debate will be**Nye’s Moral Development Theory**. Of course as delineated by the resolution we are asked to outline the realm of morality. Every action can be traced back to three relevant moral considerations. Joseph Nye outlines these in his book Nuclear ethics [1986, p. 20]. “Motives, means and consequences are all important. Careful appraisal of facts and weighing of uncertainties along all three dimensions are critical to good moral reasoning.” Elimination of any level of this analysis will result in an incomplete moral assessment. I will present three contentions, each of which cover a different aspect of the definition of morality.

This leads us to the first negative contention, that **The motives for dropping the atomic bombs were immoral**. By examining the purpose of war we can conclude that war is only moral when it is waged in self defense. Japan’s fate in World War II had already been decided and thus an examination of the atomic bombings reveals that they were acts of aggression. The United States sought military gain behind the pretense that the bombs were necessary to win the war. Kazuhiko Hagiwara, Griffin University [ November 25, 1994] states that “dropping the bomb was an exercise in overkill designed to give the U.S. leverage over the allied countries …the intent was not really to win a war with Japan, a war in which the outcome had already been decided.” The bombs were used in part to give a post-war advantage to the military. Another concern is raised when vengeance and racism are calculated. While minute, their motivation is also immoral. Under the mask that the bombs were required to end the war, the U.S.’s waged a war to gain political power and revenge.

My second contention will prove that**the means used to end the war were not morally justified**. Life is a value held by almost all moral philosophers and I think we can logically accept that wanton destruction of life is contrary to moral practice. Much has been said about the possible loss of life an invasion of Japan would have required, but this ignores the other options that were available. First I must clarify that Japan was no longer fighting a war of aggression. Their only hope was to prevent an alien nation from invading their country. Richard Rhodes, war expert, [The Atomic Bomb; voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1989, p.24] observed that, “The bombs were authorized not because the Japanese refused to surrender, but because they refused to surrender unconditionally” Allowing the Japanese to retain their emperor would have resulted in surrender and the adverting of excessive death. Examining the situation further we learn that other alternatives could have prevented the immense loss of life. First, let us consider that a demonstration of the new weapon along with more warning could have forestalled the actual destruction. And finally, we need to asses why the second bomb was dropped just three short days after the first. The primary reason given is that it was necessary to expedite surrender. This is a means to military necessity, and totally without moral considerations.

This leads us to the third contention that**the consequences of the Atomic bombs were immoral**. While I can’t argue that the end of the war wasn’t a good thing, I must contend that it cannot come at two high a cost. As I have already examined there were other less drastic measures available, but since the action was taken anyway, we must examine the immoralities that resulted. The first moral objection arises from the method of death. Toxins such as gas have been morally criticized because they attack indiscriminately and caused unreasonable suffering. This same argument can be applied to radiation

The second and strongest moral objection to the atomic bombings is the unjust death of innocent civilians. Almost all just war theorists agree that the the purpose of a just war is to protect the innocent. Thus a morally justified war must be restricted to combatants who have consented to the risk of death. Michael Walzer [Just and UnjustWar, 1978, p. 156} states that “civilians have a right to something more …if saving
civilian lives means risking soldier’s lives, the risk must be accepted.” There is no moral compromise with the intended death of the innocent. Sometimes civilian lives are lost accidentally and this is accepted, but in the case of the atomic bombs, the death was deliberate and foreseen. The consequences of the atomic bombs cast a shadow of immorality that deny legitimacy.