

PROMPT:

“Many historians argue that the construction and use of the atomic bomb by the United States was unnecessary, that America would have won WW II without deploying nuclear weapons. Consequently, the development of the atomic bomb was more of an attempt to aspire to global dominance than to win WW II.”

Validate or refute the statement.

PRE-CONTEXTUALIZATION

The United States entered the 20th a middling, relatively effective military force. In the face of growing European tensions that led to World War I, the United States found itself unprepared. After the war, America re-embraced her Washingtonian and Monroe Doctrine traditions of isolation and neutrality, and consequently set about shrinking the size of her military. By the outset of World War II, America featured a second-rate military that could take on the power and might of with the German *Wehrmacht* or Japanese Imperial *Kaigun*. For this reason, FDR’s reception of a letter written by physicist Albert Einstein, which alerted Roosevelt to Germany’s desire to develop an atomic weapon, was of extreme concern. Many historians claim that America’s construction and use of the atomic bomb against Japan was an immoral act design to establish the US as a world post-war power more than win the war. However, Einstein’s letter alerting FDR of the progress of the German atomic weapons project, the depleted state of the US military in the face of far superior adversaries, and the overriding fear that either Germany or their ally Japan may acquire such a weapon before the United States all contributed to the decision to develop an atomic weapon. Due to her unique physical, industrial, and intellectual resources the decision to build an atomic bomb, by no means a certainty in 1942, was as much of a defense weapon as an offensive one, a weapon built in a race that the United States could not afford to lose.

POST-CONTEXTUALIZATION

The United States’ development and deployment of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were deemed appropriate with regard to the numbers of American lives which were at risk should an invasion of the Japanese homeland be necessary to end the war. America’s possession of the bomb after the war elevated her to lone superpower status, but for only as long as she was the sole possessor of the weapon. The eventual development of a Soviet bomb levelled the nuclear playing field, and provided the basis for Cold War diplomacy for both the United States and the Soviets. The ongoing paranoia, inherent with a nuclear arms race, guided American and Soviet actions throughout the latter 1940s through the 1980s and effected the thinking and attitudes of an entire generation of young Americans and Russians, most of whom merely wanted a means of survival among the threat of Armageddon.