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Operation Ketsu-Go:

The Decisive Victory

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Honors 230

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December 12, 2017

Introduction

Japan entered World War II knowing they could not win a prolonged war with the United States. Japan did not go into the war with a long term plan, they planned on striking a decisive blow that would lead the US to seek peace. The United States chose instead to fight on and thus the war turned against Japan. The ultimate culmination of Japan's choice to attack the US was the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the end of the war could have been delayed by a multitude of factors causing the Japanese 'Ketsu-Go' operation to come into effect. Ketsu-Go translates to 'Decisive Victory' in Japanese and was a last ditch attempt to defeat the Americans and reach a negotiated peace. Ketsu-Go was the planned defense of mainland Japan and Korea. The Ketsu-Go plan would have prolonged the war and thus caused the deaths of countless Americans and Japanese. The Ketsu-Go operation was not viable in the long-term but if conducted quickly could have led the US to a conditioned peace with Japan.

How the war got here, when was planning started.

The planned Ketsu-Go operation was the culmination of years of fanatical indoctrination and fighting throughout Japan and the Pacific. The idea of an attack to the Japanese homeland was unthinkable to the Japanese right up until the very end of the war. The Doolittle Raid of 1942 on Tokyo had such a large psychological impact for its extremely minor physical impact because of the thought that the Japanese home islands would always be protected from attack

by the divine winds of the Kamikaze.¹ Even in Tokyo after the raid, there was a lack of adequate air raid shelters because of the thought that the homeland would never come under attack. It took a series of drastic defeats throughout the Pacific theater for the Japanese to finally realize that the sacred home islands could ever be under attack and thus needed to be defended.

Decisive battles in the Pacific slowly convinced the Japanese was planners to think of defending the homeland. A stop to Japanese advances at the battle of the Coral Sea, destruction of the main fleet carriers at Midway, the turning point at Guadalcanal, the almost complete destruction of the navy at Leyte and the loss of the Marianas left the Japanese without buffers to protect them.² The Americans could destroy Japanese merchant ships at will, cut off crucial natural resources and were in bomber range of Japan itself. Despite all these defeats, the Japanese did not start planning for Ketsu-Go in earnest until the landings on Okinawa, the knowledge of imminent Russian entry to the war and knowledge of the inevitable defeat of Germany.³ The Japanese published the Ketsu-Go directive on April 8th, 1945⁴ just after the landing of American forces on Okinawa on April 1st. Work on Ketsu-Go became frenzied after an official note from Russia stating that the Neutrality Pact of 1941 could no longer be prolonged,

¹ Ronald H. Spector, Eagle against the Sun : the American War with Japan. (New York, Free Press, 1985), p. 155.

² Ibid., p. 163, 176, 218, 320, 435-440.

³ Mathew Wiser, and Gade, Warren, Strategic Plan Downfall: The Invasion of the Japanese Home Islands. Operation Olympic and Operation Coronet. (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 1999), p. 22-23.

⁴ Douglas MacArthur, Reports of General MacArthur-Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area. (U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1966.), p. 608.

an action that made the invasion of Manchuria an inevitability.⁵ The defeat of Germany on May 7th was the final event that made the Japanese realize that an invasion of the Japanese homeland was imminent and preparations had to be completed as quickly as possible. It was in the late spring and summer that physical preparations took place to defend the home islands and to fight the final decisive victory.

Overall goals of Ketsu-Go

The Japanese started the war in the Pacific with the idea of a decisive victory winning the war. The Japanese captured large swaths of territory throughout Asia and the Pacific with the knowledge that they could not force the US to surrender in a drawn-out conflict. The Japanese planned to concede part of their territorial gains in a conditional peace with the US caused by large amounts of casualties. The Japanese also used the idea of the 'decisive victory' continually throughout the war seeking the final battle that would cause the Americans to seek a conditioned peace. The Japanese truly believed in the idea of a decisive victory because of the Russo-Japanese war decades earlier in which Russia conceded territory to Japan after the defeat at the Tsushima Strait.⁶ Before the Battle of the Philippine Sea Vice-Admiral Ozawa even said "This operation has immense bearing on the fate of the Empire. It is hoped that the forces

⁵ Gar Alperovitz, The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb. (First Vintage Books ed., New York, Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1996.), p. 100.

⁶ Edward J. Drea, In the Service of the Emperor : Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.), p. 172.

will exert their utmost and achieve as magnificent results as in the Battle of Tsushima.”⁷ The idea of a decisive victory also partially stemmed from the idea that American morale was so low that a Japanese victory in battle or even a stalemate could move American public opinion to support a conditioned peace favoring Japan. Japan continued the decisive victory mentality throughout the war despite experiencing defeat after defeat. Admiral Yamamoto was a major promoter of the idea of a decisive victory. Yamamoto had failed to strike a decisive victory at Pearl Harbor and the decisive battle at Midway had resulted in the catastrophic loss of four aircraft carriers.⁸ Admiral Yamamoto was killed in 1943 but the decisive victory mentality he promoted carried on into the Battle of Saipan. Japanese war planners declared that the battle for Saipan would be the decisive victory they needed to win the war.⁹ The decisive battle for Saipan was lost on July 9th, 1944 and the Japanese realized the need for another place to plan a decisive victory. Ketsu-Go became a last ditch attempt at the decisive victory the Japanese high command had been searching for throughout the war. The Big Six hoped that they could inflict enough casualties on the Americans to achieve victory in a conditioned peace. The main concessions Japan hoped to receive were four conditions, first to keep the Emperor and the Kokutai, second that war crimes trials held by the Japanese themselves, third the disarmament of Japanese soldiers by Japanese and fourth, that there would be no allied occupation of Japan. The members of the Big Six pushing the four conditioned offer were Anami, Umezu and Toyoda

⁷ Harold J. Goldberg, D-Day in the Pacific : the Battle of Saipan. (Indiana University Press, 2007.), p. 96-97.

⁸ Gordon W. Prange, Miracle at Midway. (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1982.), p. 396.

⁹ Goldberg, Battle of Saipan, p.90-91.

or the “War Hawks” of the Supreme Council for the Direction of War.¹⁰ The council could only make decisions unanimously so Ketsu-Go would proceed as planned unless the Big Six agreed to the same surrender terms. The Japanese planned Ketsu-Go as an all-out battle of attrition to kill as many American invaders as possible to make the four conditioned offer more attractive. Japan threw every resource they had left into the preparations for Ketsu-Go, pushed what was left of their industrial capacity to the limit and mobilized their entire population in training and preparation. Ketsu-Go would be planned out with the goal of a conditioned peace in mind.

Actual Plans of Ketsu-Go

Ketsu-Go was planned extremely effectively and well informed given Japan's greatly diminished resources. The Japanese correctly guessed where the Americans were planning to land, and even figured out when they would launch the operation down to the month. The Japanese were able to figure out when the American would attack because of merchant fleet chatter increasing in certain areas of the Pacific, and calculated when they would have enough equipment built up to launch an attack.¹¹ Japan poured all of her remaining resources into the defense of the home islands and the citizens of Japan sacrificed everything in order to furnish the army with equipment. Japan also desperately needed more soldiers, to fill the additional need, the armed forces instituted 3 rounds of drafts. Japan expanded conscriptions to men 30 and older, teenagers and those with physical injuries. The mobilizations of the new divisions

¹⁰ Richard B. Frank, and Rogers D. Spotswood Collection, Downfall : the End of the Imperial Japanese Empire. (New York, Random House, 1999.), p. 291.

¹¹ William Craig, The Fall of Japan. (New York, Penguin Books, 1979.), p. 43.

happened in March, May and July in preparation for a fall invasion.¹² The Japanese also drafted civilians to “volunteer” fighting corps but were mainly used for labor and supplying the front-line troops.¹³ Japan transferred top of the line divisions from the Kwatang Army in Manchuria and other outlying territories to bolster the new recruits with battle tested veterans. Many of the troop redeployments from Manchuria and China were stalled by aerial mining and a lack of merchant marine vessels. The Japanese high command directed the brunt of the new troops and supplies to the southern island of Kyushu and to a lesser degree to the Kanto Plain. The Japanese concentrated all of their resources on Kyushu to such an extent that they were betting the outcome of the war on the battle there. The number soldiers on Kyushu exploded in the spring and summer of 1945 to an estimated 900,000 servicemen.¹⁴ The number of divisions on Kyushu totaled 14 with additional smaller brigades in support. The number of total divisions in Japan proper totaled 65 and Japan had around four million soldiers at their disposal as well as 28 million mobilized civilians.¹⁵ The troops on Kyushu were creating formidable dug-in defenses using knowledge gleaned from earlier battles on Okinawa and Iwo Jima. Kyushu was turning into one massive underground beehive waiting for the Americans to strike. The main strategy of Ketsu-Go centered around counter-attacking any American landing and not allowing a beachhead to be formed. The Japanese set up coastal defense units to buy as much time as possible so the bulk of the force held in reserve had time to counterattack. The counter-attack was to be done on-foot and at night because of enemy air superiority and a lack of motor

¹² Wiser, Strategic Plan Downfall, p. 24.

¹³ Frank, Downfall, p. 189.

¹⁴ Edward J. Drea, MacArthur's ULTRA : Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945. (University Press of Kansas, 1992.), p. 222.

¹⁵ MacArthur, Southwest Pacific, p. 630-631.

vehicles.¹⁶ The Japanese went as far as to send intelligence officers to Germany before their defeat to learn as much about the Normandy landings as possible in preparation for Ketsu-Go.¹⁷ The Japanese had created an intricately planned defense to stop the American invasion.

Operation Downfall

The Americans faced the Japanese invaders with a plan of their own. The American invasion of Japan was named Operation Downfall and would be the largest amphibious landing in human history led by General MacArthur's ground forces with Nimitz's navy in support.¹⁸ Downfall consisted of Operation Coronet, the invasion of the Kanto Plain and Operation Olympic, the invasion of Kyushu. The American plan was to land 14 divisions at 3 main landing beaches in Southern Kyushu and to conquer the southern third of the island.¹⁹ The beaches that the American chose to land on were the most heavily defended on Kyushu and they faced the worst numerical ratio of any major landing. Americans expected to outnumber the Japanese defenders significantly but this would obviously not be the case. Optimal invasion ratios are usually 3:1 in the invaders favor and when there is a 1:1 ratio the invaders will face extreme casualties. The Japanese predicted where the invasion would take place in November

¹⁶ Frank, Downfall, p. 169-174.

¹⁷ Mark P. Arens, "V [Marine] Amphibious Corps Planning for Operation *Olympic* and the Role of Intelligence in Support of Planning." <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/arens/> (2 December 2017), Ketsu-Go.

¹⁸ D. M. Giangreco, Hell to Pay Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-47, (Naval Institute Press, 2009.), p. 152.

¹⁹ Douglas MacArthur, Reports of General MacArthur-The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific. (U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1966.), p. 412.

and where the Americans would land. These two advantages would have allowed the Japanese to inflict heavy casualties on the Americans. The one big advantage the Americans had is that Japanese battle procedure called for all troops to attack the main invasion site but the Americans had planned three. The Japanese may have successfully deterred one landing but the other two would have been successful. Once the Americans held Kyushu they planned on using it as a staging base for the invasion of Honshu. The American plan called for the invasion of the Kanto Plain which would have been extremely successful given how heavily the Japanese directed resources to Kyushu. The Americans planned two landings and a pincer move to take Tokyo. Further specific plans for operation Coronet were unfinished when the war ended. The Americans planned to stage various landings throughout Japan until they either surrendered or the whole island was occupied.²⁰ Operation Downfall was planned without full knowledge of the defenses awaiting them but they soon got a clearer picture through intercepted Japanese communications.²¹

Invasion versus blockade

The Americans were initially blind to the huge buildup of Japanese forces on Kyushu due to a lack of spies and intelligence on the island. The Americans however had broken the Japanese military codes and eventually found out about the huge number of divisions being shipped to Kyushu. Initial planning for Operation Olympic assumed that Japan would have no more than six divisions stationed on Kyushu and less than 2,500 aircraft at their disposal.²²

²⁰ Giangreco, Hell to Pay, p. 179-216.

²¹ Drea, ULTRA, p. 204-222.

²² Frank, Downfall, p. 218.

With the new figure of 14 divisions and over 8,000 aircraft stationed in Kyushu, the Americans would have strong reason to reconsider the invasion plan. General MacArthur strongly supported the invasion plan because he wanted to lead the grandest invasion to ever take place. MacArthur's massive ego²³ made leading the massive invasion his number one priority. MacArthur was self-centered and loved media attention which sometimes led to errors in his decision-making.²⁴ MacArthur would have pushed for invasion no matter what odds he was stacked against in order to lead this historic invasion. Other decision makers in the US armed forces however suggested other strategies to defeat Japan, with the most popular of these being Nimitz's continuation of the blockade strategy. The blockade strategy is cited in the work of Revisionist scholars such as Alperovitz as an alternative to dropping the bomb and invasion.²⁵ The blockade strategy involved continuing to block shipping channels into Japan and thus cutting off crucial resources from Japan's outlying bases starving Japan into surrender. With the alternative of blockade available and the greatly increased Japanese build up in the landing areas, Operation Downfall seemed less likely to face Ketsu-Go. The devastating effects of the blockade had already been seen in Japan and would exasperate severe supply shortages for the Ketsu-Go campaign.

²³ William M. Leavitt, General Douglas MacArthur: Supreme Public Administrator of Post-World War II Japan. (*Public Administration Review*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2015), p. 315–324.

²⁴ James F. Dunnigan, and Albert A. Nofi, The Pacific War Encyclopedia. (Facts On File, 1998.), p. 384.

²⁵ Alperovitz, The Decision, p. 327.

Supply Shortages

Ketsu-Go would have been seriously hampered by the dire supply shortages Japan faced. The sinking of most of the merchant marine fleet meant Japan could no longer receive much needed resources from her territories such as coal, oil and rubber. The air mining and bombing campaign also heavily limited transportation within Japan itself, stopping the flow of raw materials to factories.²⁶ The factories themselves were being destroyed along with the workers and their homes. The destruction of the factories and workers lead to greatly diminished output and a critical reduction in war supplies. Not enough guns, bullets or even food was available to supply the troops. The only units with enough food were the ones stationed on Kyushu and even they had only enough for about four months of combat.²⁷ The Japanese concentrated their resources on Kyushu to such an extent that it had around 40% of all of Japan's ammunition in preparation for an invasion.²⁸ Among the nations 65 divisions Japan only had enough ammunition to outfit 30 and enough equipment for 40.²⁹ Japan faced a dire shortage of war supplies and production was slowing due to the heavy bombardment of factories and the complete destruction of shipping routes. Japan planned to compensate for the supply deficiencies with the spirit of the Japanese people.

Nationalism and Religion

The Japanese government had been indoctrinating the Japanese people with nationalistic ideas for decades before the outbreak of war. The fanaticism of the soldiers and

²⁶ MacArthur, Southwest Pacific, p. 615.

²⁷ Frank, Downfall, p. 176.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁹ MacArthur, Southwest Pacific, p. 609-632.

citizens was due to the constant indoctrination throughout everyday life and from an early age. The Japanese state had control over the entire educational system and used it to further their power over the people. Teachers were “reduced to the position of mouthpiece for official propaganda”.³⁰ In schools, time was taken out of each day in order to learn about Nationalism and the importance of the emperor. The Emperor was taught to be descended from the Sun God and was thus divine. Serving the Emperor was taught to be the highest honor and responsibility. The Japanese believed that they were a superior people because they were more virtuous and pure than other races. The Japanese were fighting a war for a new world order and for a peace to enable all nations and races to obtain their rightful place in the world.³¹ The Japanese turned the Shinto faith of Japan into a nationalistic tool. The Emperor even sent directives to the Marianas stating that any civilian who committed suicide on the island rather than surrender would reach the higher spiritual level of the soldiers. The civilians belief in Shinto and nationalism drove them to commit suicide in the thousands and achieve the higher spiritual level the Emperor had promised.³² Tying in religion and nationalism is very dangerous and was what made the Japanese fight so bravely and desperately during the war, they truly believed that death did not matter in battle as long as it was for their emperor and country. Ketsu-Go would turn four million soldiers into 80 million with the civilian population

³⁰ Monbushō and Rogers D. Spotswood Collection, Kokutai No Hongi. Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 39.

³¹ John W. Dower, War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War. (Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 205.

³² David Bergamini, and Mazal Holocaust Collection, Japan's Imperial Conspiracy. (Morrow, 1971), p. 1012-1013.

fighting for the Emperor. Japan did not have enough equipment to supply more than four million with arms and ammunition but the civilians were taught to fight to the death with weapons as crude as bamboo spear and rocks. Fanatical fighting in the Ketsu-Go campaign would have led to extreme casualties on the Japanese side and additional ones on the American. The conditioned fanaticism of the civilians in Japan would extract a large psychological toll on the American invaders and would help the Japanese in their goal to a conditioned peace.

“Special Attacks”

The marriage of Nationalism and Religion led to strategies that Japanese war planners called ‘Tokko’ attacks. These were suicide attacks committed by soldiers and sometimes civilians. ‘Tokko’ attacks were a cornerstone of the Ketsu-Go plan. Japan stockpiled Kamikazes, suicide boats, Koryu and Kairyu suicide submarines, anti-tank suicide squads, and even underwater frogmen strapped with explosives in diving gear in preparation for the invasion.³³

³⁴These Suicide attacks, especially Kamikaze and Anti-tank squads would have had large psychological impacts on the invaders. Suicide attacks already showed their devastating military effectiveness at Okinawa and Iwo Jima. The scale of special attacks in the planning of Ketsu-Go would have led to dramatic casualties especially on unprotected landing craft approaching Kyushu. The Japanese had never used large scale Kamikaze attacks on landing craft but the devastating results of Kamikazes at Okinawa showed their immense potential for destruction. Japanese war planners were absolutely committed to using suicide attacks in massive

³³ Giangreco, *Hell to Pay*, p. 110-11.

³⁴ Arens, “Olympic” Ketsu-Go.

quantities, "If we are prepared to sacrifice 20,000,000 Japanese lives in a special attack effort, victory will be ours", Takijiro Onishi.³⁵ The Japanese had stockpiled about 8,000 planes for Kamikaze operations on American landing craft which would have almost exclusively be used on Kyushu in the first few days of the invasion for dramatic results.³⁶ The suicide operations that would have been used in Ketsu-Go would have had a large impact on US public opinion of the war. However, the Japanese suicide missions could not happen without adequate food supplies.

Food Shortage

As the Ketsu-Go operation was slated to commence Japan was facing an extreme food shortage. Japan had a terrible rice crop in 1945 which reduced much of Japan's main food source. Japan's production of meat, fish and vegetables was in an even worse state with almost none produced.³⁷ Japan's biggest issue is that it could not transport its food to the people and in some cases it was just rotting waiting to be transported. The Japanese merchant fleet was already destroyed which left rail as the only efficient way to move food to places like Tokyo where 97% of rice was imported.³⁸ In 1945 the Japanese people were eating less than 1500 calories a day, about 65% of the minimum for health and work efficiency.³⁹ After the war even with US food imports the people of Tokyo were eating just over 1000 calories a day.⁴⁰ With Japan already starved the reduction of any more food would lead to the complete collapse of

³⁵ Frank, Downfall, p. 311.

³⁶ Drea, Ultra, 222.

³⁷ MacArthur, Southwest Pacific, p. 619.

³⁸ Frank, Downfall, p. 350.

³⁹ MacArthur, Southwest Pacific, p. 619.

⁴⁰ Frank, Downfall, p. 351.

order and the Japanese armies literally starving to death. Ketsu-Go was doomed unless Japan would figure out a way to produce and transport more food. Japan producing and transporting an adequate amount of food seemed unlikely in the face of the sustained American bombing campaign but not impossible. The shortage of food heavily impacted Ketsu-Go's chances of succeeding.

Realistic Chances of Success

The Ketsu-Go Operation was never put into action outside of Korea but scholars have debated if it would have succeeded or failed in achieving a four-conditioned peace. The fighting on Kyushu would have been the bloodiest of the war. It is difficult to estimate casualties but it can be done by looking at similar battles earlier in the war. The battle of Saipan shares similarities with Kyushu in that it was fought in mountainous terrain on Japan's home tuft with the defenders fighting a battle for decisive victory. On Saipan, 71,000 Americans faced 30,000 Japanese defenders suffering 14,000 casualties which is a casualty rate of 20%.⁴¹ On Kyushu the Japanese defenders totaled over 900,000⁴² actually outnumbering the 582,560 US soldiers⁴³ planned to land on the island. Not considering Kamikaze and Naval contributions, using the casualty rate from Saipan, the Americans would have suffered over 116,000 casualties on Kyushu alone. That number would be much higher given the 8,000 Kamikazes on Kyushu. Given the 1.78 American casualties for each Kamikaze sortie on Okinawa⁴⁴, Kamikaze attacks would bring the total up to over 130,00. Given that the US had only suffered about 300,000 casualties

⁴¹ Goldberg, Battle of Saipan, p. 210.

⁴² Frank, Downfall, p. 203.

⁴³ Giangreco, Hell to Pay, p. 179.

⁴⁴ Frank, Downfall, p. 182.

throughout the entire Pacific Theatre⁴⁵, 130,000 casualties in one battle would have been unacceptable. However, the US would already be ready to make peace given the daunting task of invading the rest of Japan. The war weary US public would have been happy to exchange the four conditions outlined by Japan's Big Six for the sparing of well over 130,000 casualties. The chances of the success of Ketsu-Go also hinged on the safety of the Imperial Regalia.

Imperial Regalia

Ketsu-Go was doomed unless the Imperial Regalia could be protected. Emperor said that he had no choice but to, "share with them [The Regalia] whatever fate has in store."⁴⁶ Hirohito was obsessed with keeping the Regalia safe. The Three Imperial Regalia that gave the Emperor justification for ruling are the sword (Kusanagi), the mirror (Yata no Kagami) and the jewel (Yasakani no Magatama). The jewel was located in the Imperial Palace which made it as safe as the Emperor. The other two were not as safe in places away from the direct protection of the Emperor. The mirror was located at the Grand Shrine of Ise which is away from the landing beaches but very vulnerable to American invasion if they were to find out about it. The Grand Shrine was actually partially burned by an incendiary attack during the war but the mirror survived. The sword (Kusanagi) was the most at risk piece of the Regalia at the Great Shrine of Atsuta shrine in the heart of Nagoya and far away from the Emperor.⁴⁷ Nagoya was a very

⁴⁵ Micheal Clodfelter, Warfare and Armed Conflicts : a Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000 (McFarland, 2002.), p. 584.

⁴⁶ Drea, In the Service of the Emperor, p. 206.

⁴⁷ Daniel Clarence Holtom, The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies; with an Account of the Imperial Regalia, (Kyo Bun Kwan, 1928), p. 43.

heavily targeted city by bombers because it housed most of Japan's aircraft production and thus the sword was at a very high risk to be burned or bombed. In the event of an invasion and the activation of Ketsu-Go, the fate of the three regalia would have a large psychological impact on the emperor because they justified his rule. If the Americans invaded and took control of just one of the Regalia, the Emperor would see his legitimacy crumble and surrender would be much more likely.

Soviet Involvement

Surrender also became much more likely with Soviet intervention. The Soviets were the only group to actually experience Ketsu-Go, at least partially, with their invasion of Northern Korea which Japan defined as part of the home islands. By the end of the war the Soviets had already taken Manchuria, Northern Korea, the southern half of Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands.⁴⁸ The Soviets were thrown aback at the savagery of the fighting under Ketsu-Go and especially the anti-tank Tokko squads that would jump under the tanks with explosives to destroy them. The US had an agreement with the Soviets through the Yalta Conference to stop advances past the 38th parallel and Hokkaido.⁴⁹ Had the US not dropped the atomic bomb and been tied up in an invasion of mainland Japan the Soviets most likely would have disregarded the agreement. All of Korea and Northern Japan would have fell to the Soviets. Ketsu-Go would

⁴⁸ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Racing the Enemy : Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 252-274.

⁴⁹ Hasegawa, Racing the Enemy, p. 79.

have far reaching effects for East Asia and possibly lead to a divided Japan half under Communism half under capitalism.

Conclusion

Operation Ketsu-Go was the last desperate attempt by the Japanese to find the decisive victory they had been searching for from the start of the war. The Japanese started preparing for Ketsu-Go at the last minute but they threw everything they had into it. The Japanese gambled most of their resources on defending Kyushu and very effectively did so. The American invasion plan, Downfall was based on incorrect estimations of Japanese defensive preparations but would go ahead as planned due to MacArthur's hunt for glory. The most serious alternative to Downfall was a continuation of the blockade on Japan but a blockade would probably cause the death of more Japanese civilians through starvation than the atomic bombs killed. The blockade had already crippled Japans supplies of military equipment and food which would severely hinder Ketsu-Go. The merging of Nationalism and Religion in addition to the Japanese culture of responsibility to one's family lead to the planned mass suicide attacks in Ketsu-Go. The Imperial Regalia also played an important role in Ketsu-Go's success, without their security the Emperor would be forced to surrender. Had the atomic bombs had never been used, Ketsu-Go would most likely have succeeded in achieving a four-conditioned peace with the United States through a brutal battle of attrition. The American public could not stomach a draw-out bloody war that vastly exceeded casualty estimates. In the unlikely scenario of the Americans continuing with the war, the Japanese resistance would have quickly crumbled after the initial resistance on Kyushu. Japan would have ended up as a divided country, a communist north and

capitalist south, much like Korea today. Ultimately, Ketsu-Go's biggest actual role was justifying the nuclear attacks on civilians to the American public and the world. Ketsu-Go offered a realistic alternative to the bomb that would have been much worse for both sides of the conflict, Japan and the US.

Bibliographic Essay

The sources used throughout this paper offer a wide selection of views on the topic of Ketsu-Go and the ethics of dropping the atomic bombs on Japan. The source most heavily cited in the paper is *Downfall* by Richard Frank. *Downfall* offered a Neo-Orthodox view on the bombings that made the most sense as a complete argument. *Downfall* mentioned many of the other views on the topic but ultimately decided that the atomic bombs were dropped because its alternatives would be more costly. *Downfall* was published in 1999 and offered information not available to earlier researchers. Another heavily cited source in the paper are *The Reports of General MacArthur*. The two reports cited gave extremely useful statistics and facts surrounding the feasibility of Ketsu-Go and the invasion. The reports were not arguing one way or the other, just providing facts but knowing they were from MacArthur were probably a bit skewed in favor of the invasion. These reports were compiled by MacArthur's staff in 1950 in Japan and provide very good details collected just after the war. The two books surprisingly used in the paper were *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb* and *Racing the Enemy*. Both of these books were written from revisionist views but still contributed greatly to the paper. The two revisionist books provided more context for Ketsu-Go along with helpful facts and figures. *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* was published in 1996 right after the controversy of the Smithsonian controversy and *Racing the Enemy* was published in 2005 focusing heavily on the Soviet factor in the decision to surrender. Some books that helped add more Japanese perspective to the issue include *In Service of the Emperor* by Drea, *Kokutai no Hongi* by Monbusho and *The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies* by Holtom. These three books provided interesting explanations of the dynamics between the Emperor and the war which

were crucial to understand to understand Ketsu-Go. Some extremely important sources to complete the argument of the invasion happening despite intelligence of the Japanese build up were the ones concerning General MacArthur. *In Service of the Emperor* is a relatively modern book but *Kokutai No Hongi* was a translation of a guide to indoctrinate the Japanese youth found in 1940 and *The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies* was printed in 1928. The latter two of these book were extremely old but still provided important insight into the Emperors role and Japanese indoctrination strategies. The two more useful sources on MacArthur's personality were *General MacArthur: Supreme Public Administrator of Post-World War II Japan* by Leavitt and *The Pacific War Encyclopedia* by Dunnigan. These sources are both fairly modern with MacArthur being produced in 2015 and the encyclopedia being printed in 1998. The two books included characterizations of MacArthur and selfish and attention seeking and provided examples of his desire for fame clouding his decision making. A source that really helped in understanding the American perceptions of Ketsu-Go was *MacArthur's ULTRA* by Drea, the book went into detail of what the Americans knew about Ketsu-Go and how it influenced decision making. There were many other sources directly cited in the paper and used as background research that helped develop the argument used in this paper. The paper reaches a conclusion that most closely matches the Neo-Orthodoxy of Frank but was created and supported from a wide variety of sources.

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