

BSBMUN IX

Special Committee

Study Guide

Head Chair: Tatiana Chen

Chair: Gabriel Sanchez

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Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Special Committee! We are delighted to have the opportunity to be chairing and cannot stress the importance of the discussions delegates will be holding. Involvement in this committee fosters a better understanding of one of the most crucial moments in history that has completely changed the trajectory of international relations.

We will discuss the creation of Robert J. Oppenheimer's atomic bomb through a variety of lenses to have a well evolved and productive debate. Our Committee will take place July 17, 1945, one day following the Trinity Test. Delegates must only use known information prior to the set date and cannot utilize later information as supporting evidence in the debate. Keep in mind, every delegation is representing a person and must do extensive research of that person's stance and begin discussion arguing their viewpoint.

In this committee, all the big decisions are in the hands of the delegates. The scientists, physicists, philosophers, and political figures must combine their views to reason their final decision of utilizing the atomic bomb as a war weapon.

We have constructed this committee to have even debates with the inclusion of various perspectives and detailed arguments. And since this is a special committee that takes place in the past and has delegations representing human figures. Please keep in mind that while we want you all to have fun, the goal of MUN is to practice diplomacy and find compromise. If any of you have any questions, please feel free to contact us so we can ensure you are well prepared for the conference and ready to have fun!

Sincerely,

Tatiana Chen
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Committee Structure

The procedure of this committee is no different than other historical committees. We will be changing solely the delegations and the formalities.

Every delegation is representing a real life person that was involved in the Manhattan Project, meaning that personal pronouns will be allowed. Delegates do not need to refer to one another as delegates, but as their titles and names. We have equally divided the committee to have 3 stances: in favor, against, and non aligned, meaning it is crucial that you make the right decisions for the entire committee to find compromise. It is expected that all delegations stick to their given roles and are realistic with their stances, but subsequently we trust their interpretation of the discussion to make their own decisions.

As previously mentioned, the procedure remains the same as the original, however keep in mind that we are set to a specific point in time (July 17, 1945), meaning you must not use any events or policies that were created/occured past this date in the committee sessions.

Other than the date, formalities, and delegations, the procedure remains the same with obligatory opening speeches, motioned speakers list, un/moderated caucus, and resolutions with amendments. The voting is set to pass with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority, but can be modified in our committee if motioned with a second.

Topic A:
Discussing the use of the Discovered
Contents of the Manhattan Project

Background Information

The Manhattan Project

The Manhattan Project was a research project that took place during World War II and led to the production of the first nuclear weapons. Leading the project was the United States, working with the United Kingdom and receiving assistance from Canada. Major General Leslie Groves of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversaw the project from 1942 to 1946. Nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer oversaw the Los Alamos Laboratory, which was responsible for the creation of the bombs.

At its core, the project had one primary objective. Develop the atomic bomb, a weapon that potentially held the power to decisively shape the course of the war. The Manhattan Project aimed to build a destructive force powerful enough to end the war by utilizing nuclear fission. It also was not about just developing the first atomic bomb, but making sure they built one before Germany. Its significance went beyond simply the immediate conflict as it marked an important point in history; the dawn of the nuclear age and the commencement of the atomic era, with far-reaching implications for the global balance of power.

Despite its degree of importance, the Manhattan Project was very top-secret. Anything and everything related to the project was concealed under many layers of classification and confidentiality. Information was limited to a strict "need-to-know" basis, and project locations, purpose, and even its code name were intentionally misleading to prevent any form of intelligence leakage. Secrecy extended not only to the scientific and technical aspects of the project but also to the broader understanding of its existence. All those involved were required to take extraordinary precautions to safeguard the knowledge and findings of the project. The classified nature of the Manhattan Project ensured that a very select group of individuals were fully aware of its details, adding to the extraordinary measures taken to protect its secrecy.

The urgency of developing atomic weapons during World War II stemmed from the global conflict's ongoing demands and challenges. The Axis powers posed a formidable threat, and the potential to develop and deploy a weapon of such destructive capability became an opportunity that would provide the United States critical strategic advantage. The Manhattan Project was driven by the pressing need to bring a swift end to the hostilities, thereby saving countless lives. This sense of urgency accelerated the timeline for the development of atomic weapons, making the race to build the atomic bomb a defining feature of this historical period.

Historical Context: World War II

The Manhattan Project took place during World War II, a conflict that took place all over the world from 1939 to 1945. It emerged from a mix of political, ideological, and territorial

disputes, rapidly escalating into a global confrontation of unprecedented proportions. This global conflict had far-reaching implications, and the Manhattan Project played a pivotal role within this turbulent landscape.

It is widely considered that the war began on September 1st, 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland under Adolf Hitler. 2 days later, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany. The Axis powers was a military coalition, led by Nazi Germany, the Empire of Japan, and the Kingdom of Italy. Opposing them were the Allied powers, composed of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union (also known as the “Big Three”).

As previously mentioned, the Manhattan Project played a pivotal role in the overall course of World War II, despite its highly secret nature. While the war raged on multiple fronts, the project focused on developing atomic weapons, with the potential to not only change the direction of the conflict, but to possibly end it altogether. Though shrouded in secrecy, the Manhattan Project contributed significantly to the broader war effort by seeking to give the Allied powers an unprecedented strategic advantage.

The Manhattan Project’s urgency to bring World War II to a swift and decisive conclusion cannot be overstated. The conflict had exacted an enormous toll in terms of human lives and resources. Prolonging the war would only lead to further suffering and destruction. Therefore, there was an undeniable strategic imperative to achieve a rapid resolution to the conflict and restore global stability.

The Trinity Test and its Implications

On July 16th, 1945, the Trinity test was conducted on Alamogordo Bombing Range, a test site located 230 miles South of Los Alamos, New Mexico, United States. The test proved successful as at 5:29 AM, the first ever atomic bomb, named “Gadget”, detonated with around 15 to 20 kilotons of force.

Trinity represented a critical milestone in the Manhattan Project, making it clear now that the development of atomic weapons had reached a new stage. Its successful detonation of “Gadget” meant that using the power of nuclear fission for military purposes was not only achievable but also a possible way of ending the war. This was an extremely pivotal moment not only in the Manhattan Project but in history too, as it marked the start of the Atomic Age.

Despite being a huge technical and scientific feat, the implications of the Trinity test extended beyond that. It presented a significant shift in the global balance of power. The United States, now armed with a revolutionary weapon of mass destruction, gained a massive advantage in the war. The successful test now placed them in a position of strength way beyond any other country in the world, introducing a potential end to the global conflict.

However, the Trinity test also raised serious ethical and moral considerations. The destructive potential that the atomic bomb had posed a challenging dilemma. While its use would offer a means of potentially bringing an end to the conflict, it also raised questions

about the consequences of using such force. The ethical concerns surrounding the deployment of atomic bombs would become a central point of discussion and reflection for those involved in the Manhattan Project.

Timeline of Events

December 19, 1938: Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann discover nuclear fission.

August 2, 1939: Albert Einstein signs letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the potential creation of German atomic weapons being created.

October 21, 1939: Advisory Committee on Uranium is established in the United States after Einstein's warning, guiding early U.S. atomic research, paving the way for the Manhattan Project.

1941: The British send a letter to the United States in regards to the feasibility of atomic bombs initiating the project.

August 13, 1942: Manhattan Project begins in the United States and research facilities are established, most notably, the Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico under the leadership of physicist Robert J. Oppenheimer.

November 1942: The first development of a successful method of splitting isotopes which later will be used to split enriched uranium isotopes for the atomic bomb.

April 12, 1945: President Franklin D. Roosevelt dies and Harry S. Truman becomes president, inheriting the duties Roosevelt had in regards to the atomic bomb

July 16, 1945: In secret, the Trinity Test is successfully held in the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range, New Mexico.

July 17, 1945: Committee start date.

Key Terms

Manhattan Project

Secret research project made by the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada to develop the first atomic weapons.

Nuclear Fission

Physical process in which a nucleus is split into various pieces creating a release of energy that is used for atomic bombs.

Chain Reaction

A self-sustaining reaction in which the products of one reaction event stimulate further reaction events, essential for the functioning of a nuclear bomb.

Uranium-235

Uranium with an unstable nucleus creating a radioactive chain reaction.

Nuclear Fallout

Radioactive particles that are carried into the atmosphere after a nuclear explosion and then settle on the ground, posing significant health risks.

Arms Control

The diplomatic effort to limit the growth, spread, and use of military arms.

Superpower

A nation with the ability to influence global events and project military, economic, and cultural power worldwide. The United States and the Soviet Union became the superpowers after World War II due to their nuclear capabilities.

Yalta Conference

Meeting throughout February 1945 between the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union to discuss post-World War II reorganization, including the division of Germany and plans for the establishment of the United Nations.

Position of Major Blocs and Countries

Harry Truman

Harry S. Truman is the 33rd president of the United States (1945-1953) and only learned about the Manhattan Project upon taking office. After the death of President Roosevelt on April 12th, 1945, and with Truman in office, it is now his job to make the decision on how to end World War II and shape the future. Among other possible means of ending the war, President Truman believes that using the atomic bomb is the best way to prevent further casualties and end the global conflict.

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer is an American physicist and the lead scientific director of the Manhattan Project's Los Alamos Laboratory. Despite being very deeply involved in the project and the one responsible for the research and design of the atomic bomb, he has serious concerns regarding the moral and ethical uses of the atomic bomb as a means of ending the war, as its use will undoubtedly have major consequences for humanity.

Leslie R. Groves

General Leslie R. Groves is the military leader in charge of the Manhattan Project. He played a significant role in selecting the personnel for the development of the atomic bomb and is the one responsible for overseeing the logistics and operations of the top-secret project. He believes that using the bomb is the best course of action, as its use would not only give the United States a strategic advantage but also prevent further casualties.

Niels Bohr

Niels Bohr is a Danish physicist that was brought to work on the Manhattan Project as a consultant and is involved in discussions about the ethical and moral implications of atomic weapons. Bohr strongly believes in the international control and cooperation of nuclear proliferation.

Winston Churchill

Sir Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is an Allied leader and has contributed to the Manhattan Project, albeit indirectly. Despite not being directly involved in the operations of the project, Churchill believes that using the bomb is the best way to end the war and prevent further casualties.

Edward Teller

Edward Teller is a Hungarian American theoretical physicist and plays a significant role in the theoretical division of the Manhattan Project and is working closely with other scientists for the development of the atomic bomb. Despite contemplating profound moral

and ethical dilemmas the use of the bomb raises, he understands the strategic advantage it offers and advocates for its use as a means to end the war.

Klaus Fuchs

Klaus Fuchs is a German theoretical physicist who is involved in the theoretical division of the Manhattan project and development of the atomic bomb. Fuchs was sent to work on the project while in the United Kingdom and is an advocate for the use of the bomb as a means to end the war. However, unbeknownst to the rest of those involved in the Manhattan Project, Fuchs is a Soviet spy, and relays the information he gathers on the development of the atomic bomb back to the Soviet Union.

Questions to Consider

- 1) How should the committee address the unique ethical and moral considerations regarding the use of nuclear weapons in time of war?
- 2) In what ways does the urgency of swiftly ending World War II justify the use of the atomic bombs on Japan?
- 3) How important would the nations' efforts to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons following World War II, should the atomic bomb be used?
- 4) Are there any alternative methods outside the use of nuclear weapons that could bring an end to World War II?
- 5) How can compromise be reached given the varying perspectives on the use of the atomic bomb to achieve global peace and international security?

Further Research

- <https://philarchive.org/archive/MORTTP-7>
 - This is a paper that elaborates on the ethical debate of atomic bombs in comparison to the famous trolley problem. It will provide you a lot of philosophical thinking to consider when debating in the committee.
- <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/key-documents/trinity-test-eyewitnesses/>
 - Quotes what the witnesses of the Trinity Test said which can be used as feasible evidence to any claims you will make.
- <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/trinity-why-it-really-mattered>
 - This article exposes the true importance of the Trinity Test in a futuristic perspective.
- <https://www.nti.org/atomic-pulse/downwind-of-trinity-remembering-the-first-victims-of-the-atomic-bomb/>
 - An article about a more intricate history of the Trinity Test itself.

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