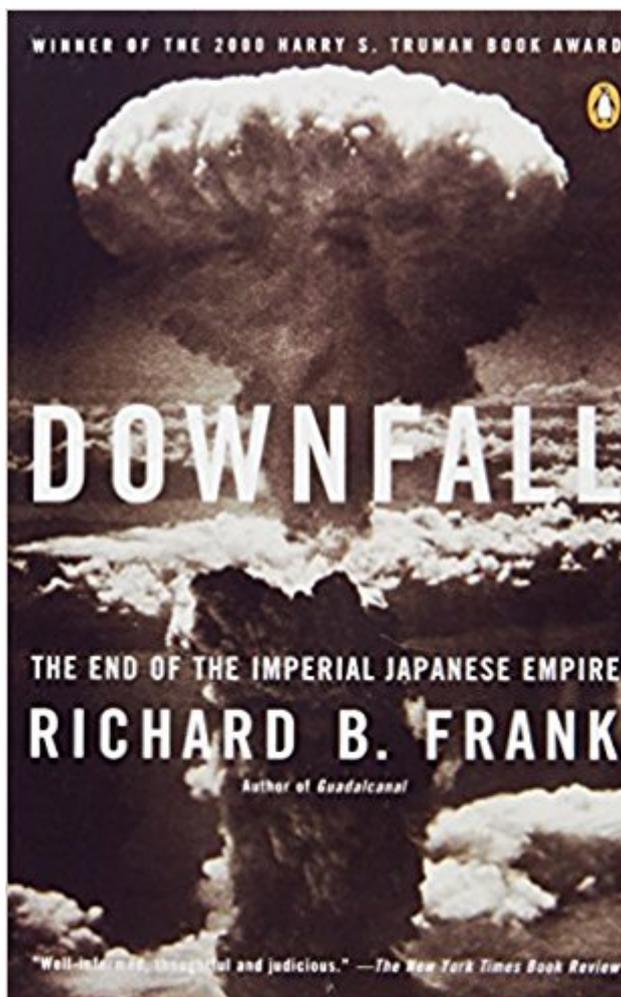


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# Downfall: The End Of The Imperial Japanese Empire



## Synopsis

In a riveting narrative that includes information from newly declassified documents, acclaimed historian Richard B. Frank gives a scrupulously detailed explanation of the critical months leading up to the dropping of the atomic bomb. Frank explains how American leaders learned in the summer of 1945 that their alternate strategy to end the war by invasion had been shattered by the massive Japanese buildup on Kyushu, and that intercepted diplomatic documents also revealed the dismal prospects of negotiation. Here also, for the first time, is a comprehensive account of how Japan's leaders were willing to risk complete annihilation to preserve the nation's existing order. Frank's comprehensive account demolishes long-standing myths with the stark realities of this great historical controversy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire is an impeccably written analysis of the last months of the Pacific War and the unfolding of the American air campaign over Japan. The story opens with a searing description of the fire-bombing of Tokyo in March 1945, which caused more deaths than the atom bomb in Hiroshima. Within five months, Japan's economy was collapsing and the country faced catastrophic starvation. Richard B. Frank coolly analyzes different scenarios for ending the war (Russia waited in the wings). Frank concludes that the emperor and the Japanese military were far from ready to surrender, and that the decision to use the atom bomb probably saved millions of lives, not only Allied but Japanese and other Asian lives, also--perhaps a hundred thousand Chinese were dying each month under Japanese occupation. The effects of the bomb

worked on many levels, even lending faces to the Japanese militarists, who could convince themselves that they were defeated not by a lack of spiritual power but by superior science. Densely documented, intelligently argued, *Downfall* recreates the end of the war from the viewpoints of the principals, giving the book an unusual immediacy. A highly valuable insight into the disintegration of the Japanese Empire, one of the most dramatic episodes of World War II. --John Stevenson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The premise behind this excellent history of the concluding stages of WWII in the Pacific is that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has cast a light so bright that it has blinded historians to many of the political, diplomatic and military realities that existed before August 6, 1945. In his comprehensive study of the last months of WWII, Frank (Guadalcanal) aims to present events "as they were perceived and recorded by American and Japanese participants in 1945Anot years or decades thereafter." In 1945, American strategists developed their plan, "Operation Downfall," for forcing the unconditional surrender of Japan. Japanese leaders, meanwhile, mobilized all available military and civilian resources for a final defense of the homeland. Though they knew the war was lost, Japanese military strategists believed their preparations were sufficient to compel the Allies to offer more generous terms on which the war might end. Frank immerses his readers in the flow of intelligence estimates, battle experience and shifting strategy on both sides. The centerpiece of the book is an exacting and dispassionate examination both of the American decision to use the atomic bomb and of whether Japan would have surrendered absent the bomb. Frank marshals an impressive and complex array of evidence to support his contention that surrender by Japan was by no means imminent in August 1945, and that alternatives to the bomb, such as incendiary bombing, carried no certainty of causing less suffering and fewer deaths than the atomic bomb. In his balanced use of sources and in his tough-minded sensitivity to moral issues, Frank has enriched the debate about the war's conclusion. Agent, Robert Gottlieb of William Morris. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Brilliant, very thorough exposition into the circumstances surrounding the end of WWII in the Pacific. Does a very strong job of framing the decision to use nuclear weapons against both the context of the times and the data that we now know. Avoids getting preachy, just sticks to being authoritative and is impeccably well researched and presented. The modern debate usually ignores most available info, which paints a much bigger picture once considered. Once the full cost of war in

human lives and misery per month is on the table, and once the mood of the American public at that time is properly understood, you start to realize that the question was never going to be 'do we drop the bomb' but how many bombs would have to be dropped before the Japanese surrendered. The author makes a strong point that the Japanese militarists were not going to surrender; they intended to force a decisive battle on Kyushu against the initial American invasion, one that would have, and was designed to, inflict the maximum possible casualties upon the American invaders. Not to win the war! No, just to have a victory that would allow them to negotiate a better peace than the unconditional peace offered by the Allies. The militarists were prepared to consider martyring 20 million of their own citizens just to have the leverage to avoid a wholly unconditional surrender -- and that's no hyperbole. The plans are factual. What's more, although the author doesn't press this point much, there's a lot of evidence that their horrifying plot might have worked. America at that time had absorbed half a million or so casualties and was already crying out for its heroes to come home, and the best and most experienced soldiers from Europe were being sent home and replaced with new recruits. The overall casualties for occupying the Japanese home islands might have easily doubled that figure, and as much as we paint ourselves as resolute, it's pretty easy to see a negotiated peace emerging once the American casualties even got up around 300 or 400k. The debate ends up not being about whether or not to use nuclear bombs, which is largely a modern argument (at the time there was very little argument about using them, and once you read the book you'll understand why. It's about how many it would take. It was whether or not the Americans could induce a full Japanese surrender with using just a couple. It is clear that once the strategists evaluated the Ultra findings about Japanese preparations for invasion, and the projected casualty counts skyrocketed as a result, that the only way American forces would have stormed ashore on Kyushu is after we'd dropped several more nuclear warheads on them. If you want to know more about that, and lots more, pick this book up and read it cover to cover.

If you are one of those people who thinks Truman's use of the atomic bomb was justified in the closing days of WW2 then *Downfall* is a book you should read. In *Downfall* the author eloquently presents a large body of knowledge concerning facts and events transpiring at the end of the war and then he demolishes all arguments made by historical revisionists that say Truman was wrong to use nuclear weapons on Imperial Japan. If you are tired of historical revisionists telling you Truman and the USA are monsters for using such a horrible weapon this book will give you the facts and arguments you will need to lay waste to all those fatuous claims made by the "American is always horrible" crowd. After reading this book you will

understand that the decision to use "the bomb" was not only the only decision Truman could have made, but it was also the right decision. If you are one of those who believes Truman was wrong then I challenge you to read *Downfall* and come back and tell me how you can maintain that belief in view of the facts presented in this book. *Downfall* lays out a convincing argument that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulted in the prompt and decisive ending of the war. That the speedy resolution of WW2 probably saved at least 100,000 American lives and that the war's rapid conclusion might have saved many hundreds of thousands of civilians in Japan and the countries occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army. One thing I learned from *Downfall* concerns the change in conventional bombing strategy made on August 11. The strategic changes were to destroy the transportation network principally the railroad network. Considering the desperate lack of food on the Japanese home islands in 1945 and the extinction of the Japanese merchant marine and fishing fleets, destruction of the rail network would have doomed the residents of Japan's major cities to death by slow starvation. Even with the rail system left intact only drastic effort by MacArthur and the USA staved off extreme food shortages in 1946. If the war had gone on another month or two even Douglas MacArthur might not have been able to stave off starvation on a large scale in an occupied Japan let alone a Japan where the militarists were still in charge in 1946. Make no mistake *Downfall* is a history lesson and like a lot of history it can be dry at times. However, *Downfall* is quite readable maybe not as readable as the WW2 books by Gordon Prange, but probably more accurate. While I consider myself to be more of a dilettante than a historian, I recognize the contribution of this book to lay down the historical record for all future historians. *Downfall* will have an important place on my bookshelf of WW2 histories. If you like reading histories of WW2 then this book should be on your bookshelf too, but put it there only after you read it.

After reading the very gripping account of the final days of the Japanese side of the big war, as told by Richard B. Frank, one will certainly have more sympathy for the decision to drop the bomb. As horrible as it was, and for all of the suffering of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Allied powers had little options but to force an unconditional surrender. To do anything less and to let Japan maintain a military under arms would have been tragically short of victory and would have ensured a continuously erupting firestorm and a continual loss of life. This book shows clearly how Japan was determined to bleed American to death and to force a decision that was less than an American victory. Hundreds of thousands of Americans, and Japanese lived to see the end of the war because of the decision to use the necessary force to end the war.

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