THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DECISIVENESS: THE REAL CALCULUS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS-USE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 2016

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ABSTRACT

While no state has yet to strike an enemy with its nuclear arsenal after 1945, political science still fails to adequately explain the significant and peculiar variation in *advocacy* among leaders for using nuclear weapons, particularly in settings where nuclear retaliation is not plausible. Prevailing literature has claimed that outside of nuclear deterrence, leaders have been restrained by either a normative taboo proscribing nuclear weapons-use (NWU), or otherwise by the conviction that long-term consequences would be unacceptable. This dissertation argues instead that leaders' advocacy levels for NWU are chiefly determined by decisiveness - the extent that leaders believe the escalation can decisively resolve the conflict on favorable terms, or prevent a major strategic loss. Decisive NWU would be expected to promote the state's relative power, demonstrating its competence, capabilities, and resolve in defeating the enemy and stewarding the international order. Conversely, indecisive NWU would be expected to signal ineptitude, with immediate consequences, undermining the state's deterrent credibility and unraveling its coalitional security arrangements. This dissertation process-traces decision-making through three case studies derived from archival work to show that both civilian and military leaders struggle to find an effective and efficient use of their nuclear arsenal, relative to existing conventional alternatives, and that such disappointing lessons are incorporated into the state's nuclear doctrine to become assumptions for future decision-making.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The dissertation-writing process is rarely straightforward. The process better resembles a motley sequence of insights and frustrations, certainties and ambiguities. I am indebted to many faculty, family, interlocutors, and institutions that were there in various phases to help me finish worthwhile work.

Several faculty played essential roles in helping me complete this work. Foremost, I thank my committee chair, Robert Pape, for advising me scholastically and professionally throughout the bulk of the dissertation process. As well, I am grateful to Paul Staniland and Charles Lipson for providing me several rounds of reviews, critiques and perspectives that made the work reach a caliber worth reading. In addition to my committee, I would like to thank John Padgett for fundamentally changing the way I think about the nature of the world and how to study it; even though his influence is not obvious in this particular project, it has shaped the general lens through which I evaluate future projects. Finally, I also thank Eric Oliver for important insights and intellectual growth, as well as John Mearsheimer for clear and productive critiques at several points of the dissertation.

Family-wise, I thank my sister Elaine McDermott and her husband Harry McDermott, who provided tremendous emotional support, as well even economic help whenever crises arosee. I have a hunch I am not the only Ph.D. student to have lived a summer or two in his sister‘s RV. Also, I thank my brother Daniel Golden and his wife Carrie Golden for always beaming with resolve and optimism about my program, which helped fuel me through the toughest parts of it. Additionally, I am so thankful to David Loveless, Patty Loveless, and Allison “Ally” Loveless, my surrogate family, who gave me unconditional love and encouragement throughout the first several years of the program. And, I am deeply grateful to Katelin Loveless who loved me and supported me as her husband for several years through the process. She provided the mountains of affection, support, and validation that a person requires to navigate the dissertation-writing process and emerge intact.

Additionally, several fellow students were important in the development of this project.

Foremost, I am grateful to David Benson who went far beyond the expectations of a helpful friend by reading multiple drafts, and regularly shared best practices regarding dissertation-writing and professionalization. I also thank John Stevenson, Keven Ruby, Chad Levinson, Morgan Kaplan, Mariya Grinberg, Kevin Weng, and Amanda Blair who all offered their support and numerous insights along the way.

Generous funding was provided by the University of Chicago's Division of Social Sciences and its Mellon Dissertation-Year Fellowship, and made my participation in the Ph.D. program possible. And finally, I thank Kathy Anderson, the administrator for the Political Science department, for providing the unparalleled expertise that connected me to funding and faculty, while meeting critical deadlines.

CHAPTER 1

THE MEANING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS-USE ADVOCACY

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation examines the dynamics of decision-making around nuclear weapons-use (NWU). It asks what factors best explain when key decision-makers will advocate for, or against, NWU. The puzzling observation is that since their first demonstration in 1945, no nuclear weapons have ever been detonated against any adversary. For up to 70 years, numerous governments who were chronically engaged in conflict have, for some reason, refrained from employing an entire class of weaponry. Even Thomas Schelling, Nobel-laureate and pioneer of nuclear strategy, was "astonished" that no state had yet to detonate a nuclear weapon in anger.[1] However, nuclear weapons were certainly considered valuable by certain states; major nuclear programs were initiated, innovations accumulated, stockpiles ballooned, and numerous military doctrines integrated them. And yet, non-use by all nuclear states has been the outcome. This has led some scholars to conclude that there is some persistent factor(s) categorically restraining states from using nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, scholarship on the determinants of nuclear restraint has stagnated. The main reason is methodological: while scholars have advanced several plausible explanations of non-use, there is simply no scientific way to evaluate any hypotheses whose supposed outcome never varies. Regarding NWU, the only observation is non-use. Thus, while scholars can each marshal evidence and rationales to support their theories, there has been no empirical way to falsify them. This impasse has led to both low confidence about existing explanations as well as a general pessimism regarding further research.

This dissertation makes a methodological intervention to further develop our knowledge on nuclear weapons decision-making: instead of evaluating the determinants of non-use,

1. Thomas C. Schelling, "An Astonishing Sixty Years: The Legacy Of Hiroshima" [in en], *American Economic Review* 96, no. 4 (2006): p. 4, doi:10.1257/aer.96.4.929.

it evaluates the determinants of *advocacy* for NWU. While it is true that no occurrences of NWU have been observed since 1945, levels of advocacy among leaders for using their nuclear weapons have varied greatly over the last 70 years, ranging from stern protestation to strident enthusiasm. Surprisingly, current scholarship fails to explain such significant and peculiar variation, particularly where nuclear retaliation is not plausible. By operationalizing the dependent variable in the form of advocacy, I make the question of restraint (a.k.a insufficient advocacy) amenable to falsification, and can finally compare the explanatory power of alternative theories. This methodological intervention enables renewed inquiry into the puzzle of NWU restraint.

Thus, the proper research question is, what factors best explain when key decision-makers will advocate for, or against, nuclear weapons-use against the enemy? Certainly, while the relationship between advocacy and action is neither automatic or direct, the significant amount of variation of advocacy observed within and between cases, as well as between different decision-makers, is scientifically tractable. Discovering the main determinants of NWU advocacy would deliver a new and powerful lens to see why it has yet to be sufficient to lead a government to employ them, as well as see under what conditions we should expect advocacy among key leaders to lead to NWU.

1.1.1 Accepted Wisdom: Deterrence

The accepted wisdom is that advocacy for NWU is regulated either by a sobering logic of nuclear deterrence, or by a moral repugnance in the form of a nuclear taboo. It is reasonable to accept that deterrence is sufficient to prevent advocacy for NWU against a nuclear enemy.[2] Even though a nuclear-armed government may want to use their arsenal to achieve political goals, certain adversaries can threaten unacceptable damage through

2. Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail And Nuclear Balance* [in en] (Washington, D.C.: Brookings: Institution, 1987).

nuclear-retaliation.[3] It appears that the mutual vulnerability implied from a robust nuclear second-strike capability dissuades nuclear adversaries from using their arsenal in anger.[4] Moreover, leaders may choose to refrain from detonating small battlefield nuclear weapons against nuclear adversaries for fear that it may result in retaliatory cycles and runaway escalation.[5] Thus, under the conditions of mutual deterrence, the real value of a nuclear arsenal stems from its potential and not its application.[6]

However, in many cases, mutual deterrence does not apply and cannot adequately explain many decisions for nuclear non-use. First, the logic of deterrence cannot seem to explain restraint against a non-nuclear adversary, particularly when that adversary lacks a credible nuclear security sponsor. Whenever a nuclear-armed government faces military failure and no risk of nuclear reprisal, nuclear deterrence cannot account for non-use. One peculiar example is the US-Vietnam War. From 1965-1973, the U.S. conducted and ultimately lost a brutal 10-year commitment against a non-nuclear adversary. The costs to the U.S. were significant. The U.S. lost nearly 59,000 lives and spent nearly a trillion dollars, indexed to 2003 USD.[7] Pivotal U.S. leaders did consider NWU several times through the war. And, the U.S. was not shy about their willingness to punish the Vietnamese. Over the course of the conflict, Vietnam lost a staggering 330,000-882,000 lives.[8]

Moreover, the logic of deterrence cannot explain why nuclear-armed governments have allowed aggressive enemies to become nuclear states. In several cases, leaders of nuclear states

3. Robert McNamara, *"Mutual Deterrence" Speech, Secretary of Defense* [in en] (San Francisco, September 18, 1967), `http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Deterrence/Deterrence.shtml`; Paul K. Huth, "Detterance and International Cconflict: Empirical Findings And Theoretical Debates." [in en], *Annual Review Of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 25–48, doi:`10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.25`.

4. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning Of The Nuclear Revolution* [in en] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance Of Terror" [in en], *Foreign Affairs* 37, no. 2 (1959): 211, doi:`10.2307/20029345`.

5. Herman Kahn, *On Escalation* [in en] (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1965).

6. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms And Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

7. Total does not include long-term veterans' benefits and interest on the debt.

8. Estimates range approximately from 791,000 to 3.1 million deaths Samuel Preston Hirschman Charles and Vu Manh Loi, "Vietnamese Casualties During The American War: A New Estimate" [in en], *Population And Development Review* 21, no. 4 (1995): 783, doi:`10.2307/2137774`.

have determined an enemy to be a) interested in harming or defeating them; b) irrational, meaning that enemy leaders are insensitive to costs or risks; c) on the verge of becoming nuclear-armed; and d) susceptible to a counter-proliferation attack. Two prominent examples are the U.S. assessing China in 1964, and India assessing Pakistan in 1994. But, even though the threats seemed dire and undeterrable, and prevention possible, governments chose restraint.

When nuclear deterrence does not apply, nuclear weapons may have several worthy uses. Fundamentally, they may help win battles. They may also be employed during windows of opportunity to stop an enemy from getting the bomb. Further, they may help nimbly conclude war against enemies who lack a nuclear deterrent. So, why then has the entire class of nuclear explosives, some weapons as small as artillery shells, been categorically withheld?[9]

1.1.2 Accepted Wisdom: Taboo

Outside of mutual deterrence, the conventional wisdom explaining nuclear non-use is that decision-makers are constrained by a normative "taboo" against nuclear weapons.[10] The taboo explanation deemphasizes material calculations of costs and benefits and argues instead that long-standing moral principles of proportionality and discrimination have instilled a moral injunction against using nuclear weapons.[11] According to the taboo explanation, nuclear weapons-use may have once briefly been viewed as legitimate but due to domestic opinion, world opinion, and the personal moral convictions of leaders, nuclear use has become widely seen as abhorrent and illegitimate.[12] As a consequence, the taboo reinforces

9. The "Davy Crockett" nuclear mortar, for example, was incredibly small, even compared to some conventional mortar alternatives.

10. The most sophisticated advocate is Nina Nina Tannenwald, "Stigmatizing The Bomb: Origins Of The Nuclear Taboo." [in en], *International Security29* 4 (2005): 5–49, doi:10.1162/isec.2005.29.4.5; Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* [in en] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

11. Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* [in en] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 25.

12. Ibid., p. 45.

widespread revulsion around the existence as well as the prospective application of nuclear weapons. Proponents argue that after their initial demonstration, moral qualms against the deliberate use of nuclear weapons has become "unthinkable."[13]

There are several reasons to accept the taboo explanation of nuclear non-use. First, it is true that citizens of early nuclear states indeed demonstrated an aversion to the use of nuclear weapons against the enemy. Second, some decision-makers in the early nuclear age who sought to fully integrate nuclear weapons with conventional arsenals were known to refer to a "tabu" among the public that leaders could have to circumvent.[14] Third, it does seem that as decades passed wherein leadership, particularly military leadership, decreasingly considered NWU until perhaps their application was effectively "unthinkable."

But with a deeper look, these three reasons supporting the taboo explanation fail to survive scrutiny. First, if aversion to nuclear weapons among the public was driven by the scale of harm they could render, then aversion should generally correlate with their potential for devastation. However, public aversion to nuclear weapons has actually decreased since the end of the Cold War. Recent research has shown that in the U.S., Americans are much more sanguine about detonating nuclear weapons upon enemies than they were 25 years ago, provided that the risk of nuclear reprisal is low.[15] Instead of some moral injunction against nuclear weapons, this trend suggests that aversion is driven much more by the angst of devastating retaliation. Without the grand Communist arsenal looming over U.S. military decisions, that fear among the public has receded.

Second, while early leaders acknowledged the public's aversion to nuclear weapons-use and dubbed it a taboo does not mean that the aversion is akin to actual social taboos. A

13. Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, p. 11.

14. For example, see discussions between U.S. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles, detailed in chapter four.

15. Scott Sagan Press Daryl and Benjamin Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence On Taboos, Traditions, And The Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons.," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 188–206, doi:10.1017/s0003055412000597.

taboo is a classification wherein a community finds some activity abhorrent and forbids it altogether.[16] But, behaviors around nuclear weapons are not at all comparable those around social taboos. For starters, individuals do not threaten to act out a taboo on others in order to coerce them. And yet, leaders have threatened nuclear strikes many times. Additionally, most individuals do not believe that if a taboo is broken by someone that the taboo will crumble; on the contrary, the expectation is that society will severely punish the offender and reinforce the rule. And yet, leaders and scholars alike fear that a single nuclear detonation would dissolve the taboo. It is strange to imagine that a something with the status of taboo could be so fragile. Consequently, scholars who make the nuclear taboo analogy mistakenly import all the assumptions about social taboos to the effect of obscuring the real decision processes at play.

Third, while it is true that leaders do not seem to consider using nuclear weapons in contemporary conflicts as much, it does not follow that non-use stems from a normative constraint. If it did, we would expect a fairly similar trend of non-consideration develop among civilian and military leaders over time. But we do not. In fact, military leaders have tended to show higher advocacy for nuclear weapons-use early in their state's nuclear history but then appear much less enthusiastic over time. In contrast, civilian leaders have tended to show a less predictable pattern of advocacy, fluctuating with other factors like public opinion and transformative security crises. For example, after the shock of September 11th, members of the Bush Administration advocated for a higher integration and consideration of tactical nuclear weapons for conducting operations and for denying the WMD capabilities of enemies. Military leaders were not nearly as enthusiastic. A nuclear taboo does not tell why these advocacy trends would behave this way. Something else is at work.

16. Common and recurring examples include cannibalism, incest, murder.

1.1.3 Accepted Wisdom: Tradition

Taboo is not the only explanation for nuclear restraint in non-deterrence settings; there is a nascent alternative explanation called Tradition. It argues that leaders have restrained themselves from employing nuclear weapons because they have calculated the long-term costs relative to the short-term benefits and found the benefits to be inadequate.[17] The tradition explanation emphasizes the long-term cost of setting an international precedent of nuclear weapons-use. In the decision calculus, the potential consequences of nuclear use would be that in the future, other nuclear states may feel free to use them against the homeland, its troops, or allies.[18] The assumption is that nuclear non-use is a norm that it depends on, and maintained by, reciprocity; it functions only until reciprocity is broken.[19]

The Tradition explanation is both reasonable and consistent with how leaders assess other means of military conduct. However, in its current form, the Tradition explanation is woefully undertheorized. First, it is not designed to tell us under what conditions, if any, we should expect leaders to break tradition and advocate the employment of nuclear weapons. Second, Tradition presumes that non-use is a fragile convention; after setting the precedent with one detonation, the convention is poised to collapse. However, it is not obvious that first-use would lead to a higher probability of nuclear weapons-use by others or a meaningful change in proliferation patterns. In fact, it is possible that major international actors would severely ostracize the nuclear first-user and redouble efforts to prevent trendsetting.[20] Using existing theory, it is simply hard to know what to expect. Third, contemporary leaders

17. For Tradition's primary advocates, see Scott D. Sagan, "Realist Perspectives On Ethical Norms And Weapons Of Mass Destruction." [in en], *Ethics And Weapons Of Mass Destruction*, 2007, 73–95, doi:10.1017/cbo9780511606861.005; T.V. Paul, *The Tradition Of Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons* [in en] (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Security Studies, 2009).

18. Sagan, "Realist Perspectives On Ethical Norms And Weapons Of Mass Destruction."; Paul, *The Tradition Of Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons*.

19. Ward Thomas, *The Ethics Of Destruction: Norms and Force in International Politics* [in en] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

20. For a fuller discussion of this possible response to NWU, see George H. Quester, *Nuclear First Strike: Consequences of a Broken Taboo* [in en] (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), ch. 2.

do often demonstrate nuclear non-consideration in otherwise relevant security environments. The current Tradition explanation only refers to a calculus of short-term benefits versus long-term costs and is not designed to explain trends in consideration. It is clear that that Tradition needs to be seriously developed to appropriately explain the fuller patterns of nuclear weapons-use advocacy.

We need a theory that not only explains the observed nuclear restraint, but also the conditions under which we should expect nuclear weapons-use. That theory needs to illuminate the decision-making process and identify whether a state's regime-type or relative power position play any important role in that process. Finally, the theory needs to be able to better explain the long-term patterns of advocacy between military and civilian leaders. The current conventional wisdom fails to accomplish these needs.

1.2 My Theory: Decisiveness

There is a simpler and more powerful explanation of NWU advocacy patterns. I argue that leaders readily consider any relevant weapons, including nuclear weapons, and will advocate NWU to the extent that they believe the escalation would be decisive. Decisiveness is an important military concept, first formalized by Clausewitz and broadly adopted by modern military doctrines.[21] A decisive military action is one that exploits one or more critical vulnerabilities to the enemys critical requirements he needs to wage an effective war.[22] In war planning, decision-makers first identify the enemys source of power (customarily known as his center of gravity), which furnishes his critical capabilities employed in the theater of conflict. Decision-makers then identify the critical requirements the enemy must sustain to enable those capabilities.

A successful, decisive action is one that targets a critical vulnerability to those requirements and either destroys, dislocates, disintegrates, or isolates those requirements to the

21. Carl Von Clausewitz, *Guide to Tactics*, trans. Colonel James John Graham (2011), pp. 595-6.

22. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (2012 (1832)), paragraphs 156-188a, p. 269-273.

extent that the enemys center of gravity is disabled and can no longer thwart the states strategic goal in the theater of conflict.[23] A leader will advocate for NWU to the extent he believes it will either a) be decisive in a way that existing conventional alternatives cannot, or b) prevent a decisive action by the enemy in a way that conventional alternatives cannot.

Leaders' advocacy for NWU depends on decisiveness for the following three reasons. First, any military operation that can induce a major strategic pivot in the form of gain, or in preventing a major strategic loss, is considered incredibly valuable. A leader is very sensitive to whether and when such opportunities arise, and will assess to what extent the introduction of nuclear weapons could enable such opportunities. Second, in the theater of conflict, a leader will assess the immediate military value of NWU by how well it can neutralize or destroy decisive targets, relative to conventional strikes. If a leader believes that NWU would provide no peculiar value over the existing conventional arsenal for prospective operations, there is no reason to expect him to advocate NWU.

Third, whenever a leader believes NWU could provide a peculiar military value over existing conventional options, he will assess how NWU would immediately affect his state‘s relative power in the international order. Regarding the state‘s relative military capabilities, a leader will assess whether NWU would deplete its nuclear stockpile enough to undermine the presumed deterrent value of the stockpile. Additionally, if the state enjoys a general conventional military advantage, a leader will assess whether NWU would impair that advantage afterward. Regarding strategic alliances, a leader will assess whether and how NWU will alter the state‘s existing alliance arrangements and commitments. States, friends, rivals, and enemies alike, monitor the nuclear state‘s conduct of war in order to (re)assess the nuclear state's competence, capabilities, and commitments to shared national interests. Any surprising or escalatory actions by the nuclear state are expected to induce reassessments. This reassessment of a state‘s“reputation for stewardship” in the international order can be either

23. For an example of continued doctrinal reliance on Clausewitzian decisiveness, see U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), III-26, p. 104.

positive or negative for the nuclear state, entailing prospects of balancing, bandwagoning, galvanizing commitments or courting abandonment by other states.

1.2.1 Expectations of the Theory

In most cases, leaders will advocate against using nuclear weapons because those weapons are simply inferior, relative to existing conventional alternatives. Moreover, they will determine that NWU is rarely decisive, and that non-decisive escalation entails substantial and unacceptable short-term consequences. Particularly, leaders ought to conclude that non-decisive escalation from NWU would force allies to critically question the competence of the nuclear state in stewarding the existing international order, and substantially increase the risk that other states either exit to revise.

On the other hand, if NWU is determined to be decisive in a way that existing conventional alternatives are not, leaders will expect NWU to promote the state‘s relative power, demonstrating resolve and capability in defeating the enemy and galvanizing its role in securing the international order. Essentially, to the extent that NWU would be decisive in securing vital interests, leaders will advocate for it. Conversely, to the extent that leaders expect NWU to be indecisive, leaders will expect it to unravel their relative power by revealing that the state lacks the capability and prudence to effectively broker peace and predictability.

1.2.2 The Role of Military Doctrine

Conclusions that leaders derive about utility are not simply discarded and forgotten at the end of each conflict; they are generally incorporated into the military doctrine as lessons for future assessments. That doctrine provides its leaders the framework to identify and then deploy its capabilities in pursuit of national interests. Oftentimes, the hard-won (and disappointing) conclusions about the value of nuclear weapons are incorporated into the state‘s nuclear doctrine and treated as ‘givens‘ for future crisis planning, particularly for

military leaders. Consequently, in later cases where leaders less frequently discuss NWU, the logic of decisiveness is still operating because the doctrine has been adapted to reflect the nuclear realities. In effect, non-consideration in later scenarios stems from mature doctrine, not moral qualms.

My theory expects that early in a state's nuclear capability, military leaders will be enthusiastic about how the new weapon can aid them in deterring and winning wars. Military leaders tend to assume military doctrinal validity more readily than civilian leaders; thus, as doctrine evolves and stabilizes around the disappointing prospect of NWU, military leaders will become less enthusiastic about novel applications of nuclear weapons. Unless the crisis-at-hand resembles the narrow scope of appropriate conditions, leaders will not waste time seriously considering inferior weapons. It should not be surprising. Taboo scholars would first need to demonstrate that normative moral constraints played the key role in forging those doctrinal conditions of use, independent of the material calculus. Moreover, those scholars would need to somehow be able to explain the non-symmetric patterns of advocacy between civilian and military leaders over time.

1.2.3 Better Than Existing Explanations

My Decisiveness theory is superior to existing explanations in two crucial ways. First, not only does Decisiveness better and more simply explain the variation of advocacy among leaders, including restraint, its mechanism is also analytically prior to both Tradition and Taboo. While not totally irrelevant, we simply do not need to consider either long-term consequences or moral taboos into the calculus to aptly explain the record of NWU advocacy. The Tradition explanation emphasizes leaders' "prudent" restraint due to unacceptable long-term consequences. But, I will show that the immediate effect is what determines NWU advocacy. While leaders may ponder consequences to the long shadow of the future, those concerns acknowledge that such consequences derive from whether NWU against the enemy now is decisive. Moreover, I show that no nuclear taboo is needed to explain the patterns of

NWU advocacy. In fact, any moral qualms around violating norms of proportional harm or of distinguishing soldiers from civilians play no decisive role in determining whether leaders will want to use nuclear weapons. My theory argues that any non-consideration by leaders for NWU can be completely explained merely by leaders‘ mature observance of the state‘s evolved nuclear doctrine. To varying degrees, aversion to NWU exists; but, it will be shown that aversion, from both the public and from leadership alike, stems from the expected security consequences that the instance of indecisive NWU would entail.

Second, unlike existing theories, Decisiveness also explains the decision-making process that led to our only historical example of actual NWU, namely the U.S. striking Japan in World War II. Existing theories exclude this initial incident of NWU, relying on it as the demonstration that underscored the peculiar nature of NWU; it was effectively an aberration that taught leaders of the illegitimacy of NWU. Consequently, those theories do not and cannot account for patterns of NWU advocacy during WWII; otherwise, the actual use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki would disconfirm them. However, Decisiveness uniquely can explain the patterns of NWU advocacy during WWII, as well those patterns in all subsequent cases. At the time, U.S. leaders who advocated for NWU against Japan believed that doing so would be decisive in inducing the enemy's unconditional surrender. Though several assessments made after the war would determine that the introduction of nuclear weapons was not decisive, U.S. leaders had believed so at the time of decision.[24] Post-war empirical assessments provided the basis for future decision-making about the utility of nuclear weapons in the pursuit of the national interest.

24. For more on who advocated for NWU against Japan and why, see Gal Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (Vintage Books, 1996); Barton J. Bernstein Gar Alperovitz Robert L. Messer, "Marshall, Truman, and the Decision to Drop the Bomb," *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991): 204–221; Barton J. Bernstein, "Understanding the Atomic Bomb and the Japanese Surrender: Missed Opportunities, Little-Known Near Disasters, and Modern Memory," *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 2 (1995): 227273.

1.3 Method and Evidence

The goal of this dissertation is to present a theory that explains patterns of advocacy around nuclear weapons-use (NWU) and to test it against the decision-making record in three important cases. In order to best test the theory, a case study should pass five criteria: First, the case involves a nuclear state facing a non-nuclear enemy. Second, the nuclear state ultimately fails in its main strategic goals. Third, the conflict needs to be long enough to have numerous observations of decisions on nuclear weapons-use. Fourth, there needs to be good available data. Finally, include a case that provides an alternative nuclear state, to help control for a regime and its history. This dissertation will time-slice each phase along major phases of the conflict, and then process-trace the decisions around nuclear weapons-use.

The three cases analyzed in this dissertation are: the US-Korean War (1950-1953); the US-Vietnam War (1965-1973); and the Soviet-Afghanistan (1980-1988). The Korean War case is the first major conflict for the U.S. after World War II and serves as the best case to demonstrate the mechanisms at work. The Vietnam War case occurs nearly a generation later, once the taboo is expected to be much stronger, and serves as a hard case for my theory. Moreover, the first two cases are American, meaning that we can consider a trajectory of decisions across time. Finally, the Soviet-Afghan War allows us to rule out omitted variables that may arise from keeping the U.S. as the nuclear actor. Moreover, the regime of the Soviet Union is often presumed to be more bellicose than democratic states, and may underscore different elements of decision on NWU. Combined, this set of cases test the theory and adequately compares its explanatory power to the current conventional wisdom.

US-Korean War: 1950-1953: As the communist takeover in Korea threatened the immediate security of Japan and to shift the global military balance, the U.S. sought to intervene. U.S. leaders believed that if communist aggression was left unchecked, their victories would lead to a cascade of communist regimes elsewhere. Over three years, the U.S. lost over 180,000 lives, while over two million Koreans were killed or wounded. The U.S. no longer had a nuclear monopoly but still enjoyed nuclear superiority nonetheless. The end result of

the war of attrition was an armistice around the 38th parallel that continues to plague the region today. The U.S. failed to achieve crucial regional strategy objectives and struggled to cope with the outcome for a generation to follow.

US-Vietnam War: 1965-1973: The U.S. and it allies sought to halt the alarming encroachment of communism in Indochina. In order to protect the fragile democratic regime in South Vietnam, the U.S. engage gradual aerial bombardment, troop deployments, and diplomatic overtures to Hanoi. Similar to the US-Korean War, leaders feared that failure to stop the spread of communism in Vietnam would have a 'domino effect' on the region and imperil the U.S. and allies. In the course of the war, leaders faced chronic military challenges with enemy supply routes and sieges that nuclear weapons may have ameliorated. The U.S. did not fear nuclear retaliation. The end result was U.S. withdrawal followed by the complete collapse of South Vietnam to communist invasion.

Soviet-Afghanistan War: 1979-1989: The USSR committed itself to propping up the new pro-communist government against rebellion and external subversion. Over the nine-year campaign, the Soviets lost over 15 thousand troops and killed between 850,000-1.5 million Afghanis. Despite the rampant costs of conducting the war, the Soviets never used any of their nuclear weapons arsenal to carry out its operations. In fact, Soviet leaders never even considered their role or application in the war. And yet, the USSR did not fear nuclear retaliation from its enemies. The end result of their devastating war was Soviet withdrawal with an inadequate political settlement, leaving the Kabul government to its foregone collapse two years later. The cost of the war effort is argued to have increased the speed at which the Soviet Union itself collapsed.

1.3.1 Findings

As the empirical chapters of this dissertation will show, the results across the cases are striking. First, the evidence shows early in a state's nuclear capability, leaders exhibit serious and sustained consideration for how to use their nuclear weapons to their advantage.

They toil to find effective or efficient utility in specific operations, but fail repeatedly to do so. Eventually, the prospect of NWU is abandoned. Second, even though leaders search and fail to find relative utility in using nuclear weapons for the particular target sets in question, they do determine which conditions and which instances would greatly benefit from NWU, relative to alternatives. Those conditions include: massed enemy troops who hold a conventional advantage and credibly threaten to change the tide of war, air bases that need to be destroyed quickly, and fortified command and control targets.

Third, the evidence shows that leaders care deeply about how NWU could immediately affect the state's relative power. The cases show persistent questioning about how NWU will influence existing alliance relationships, and how it will influence the state's ability to cultivate the existing international order. In most instances, leaders determine that NWU would not have any decisive results in concluding the war on favorable terms, and acknowledge how non-decisive use would almost certainly harm their relative power status. In the U.S. case, leaders are shown to be highly concerned with upholding their part of the international "constitutional bargain." The legitimacy of a constitutional hegemon rests on its ability to keep the international order more certain and less volatile, in part by brokering relationships in good faith. Leaders determine that non-decisive NWU would certainly undermine that legitimacy.

Fourth, the evidence shows that many of the conclusions that civilian and military leaders toiled to find in such stressful and complex decision environments, are adopted as hard-won lessons. For the most part, after the conflict in question, those lessons get quickly incorporated into nuclear doctrine. And, the pattern emerges that lessons learned are considered much less seriously in the future. Evolving doctrine indeed provides the blueprint and becomes a set of assumptions for subsequent engagements. It is also shown that military leaders show more deference to those lessons than civilian leaders who are less steeped in the doctrine. Thus, while it is true that more recent conflicts have involved an effective non-evaluation of nuclear weapons, it is because military doctrine has soberly enshrined

the conditions for effective use, and the current conflicts simply do remotely resemble those conditions.

Finally, what we do not observe is any significant concern for moral qualms or violating taboos when considering NWU. At some points, we do see strong concern for arousing an adverse U.S. and Asian public with first-use. However, the evidence demonstrates that leaders expect that most public outcry in the U.S. depended on the presumption that NWU would make the future world less safe or certain. To the extent that the public felt no risk a nuclear retaliation, they demonstrated higher permissiveness.

1.4 Significance of this Research

Expert scholarship on explaining advocacy for nuclear weapons-use (NWU) is important for both theoretical and policy reasons. Disconcertingly, some scholars and policymakers presume that nuclear weapons advocacy is no longer a meaningful part of the contemporary international security environment and therefore not very important. They are wrong for at least three reasons.

First, we need to have a clearer understanding of key leaders‘ motivations, concerns, and exigencies that cobble together into a decision about use. By doing so, we will better understand what factors truly guide military and political minds around nuclear weapons, whether it be strategic calculation, moral qualms, tactical opportunities, habit, or some constellation of them all. If it can be shown that my theory best explains advocacy for NWU, then my contribution entails numerous implications for nuclear strategy, weapons systems development, and crisis dynamics involving a nuclear state.

Second, if we determine instead that the patterns of nuclear non-use are based on a coincidence of factors, habit or moral caprice, then we need to readdress why the military does not employ advanced, potentially superior instruments to complete relevant missions. If the basis for the doctrine that has led to categorical non-use is unsound, it ought to be

abandoned and the doctrine revised.[25]

Third, by fully understanding the contours of logic around NWU, we may better predict how forthcoming innovations of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will be developed, incorporated, and used. As the new technologies of harm arrive, policymakers and scholars alike will want immediate guidance on expected patterns of WMD advocacy. To the extent that their properties resemble those that are involved with nuclear weapons, we will be able to generalize the lessons from this dissertation to emerging weapons. Currently, we do not have definitive insight on any of these issues. This project develops that insight.

1.5 Summary and Roadmap

To summarize, nuclear weapons-use is almost always a relatively poor choice in achieving operational or strategic objectives. Existing conventional alternatives are nearly always as good or better. Second, NWU that leads to no decisive military or political result is expected to have major negative consequences on the short-term relative power status of the nuclear state. The risk of abandonment and/or external balancing is serious and real. A decisive employment of NWU against the enemy is expected to galvanize relative power, demonstrating resolve, capability, and expertise to allies and enemies alike. It may take leaders time to converge on these two security facts but eventually, this fact gets built into the state‘s nuclear doctrine and serves as the basis for future considerations. In this light, the observation of nuclear non-use should not be so surprising; it turns out that NWU would rarely be decisive in war. That said, though the scope of utility for NWU is narrow, it is real; leaders will advocate if the conditions of decisiveness exist, and leaders will avoid providing those same opportunities for any nuclear enemies.

The dissertation proceeds as follows: In chapter two, I fully present the theory and compare it to existing alternative explanations for NWU advocacy. Thereafter, I detail the

25. Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, “The Nukes We Need: Preserving The American Deterrent.” [in en], *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (2009): 39–51.

research design and methodology that will operationalize the competing explanations, and then how to apply them to the available data. Thereafter, chapters four through six will present the evidence of the key cases in chronological order. Chapter seven will summarize and conclude the dissertation, and elaborate on the lessons learned as well as identify the next logical steps in research.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS-USE ADVOCACY

2.1 Advocacy: The Variable that Matters

Until now, scholars have tried to explain the non-use of nuclear weapons. However, since no instances of nuclear weapons-use (NWU) has occurred since 1945, there is no way to even correlate changes between it to any proposed explanatory variables. In a scientific sense, it is a dead-end. Existing explanations of non-use have been essentially well-researched, reasonable stories, but ultimately unfalsifiable. Explaining why a state did not employ its arsenal aims to account for unwieldy observations of non-action, resulting from some coalescence of leaders' preferences, channeled through some command-and-control framework. The phenomenon of actual NWU is not scientifically tractable.[1]

These previous scholars missed the real phenomenon of interest: how much key leaders *advocated* for, or against, NWU. Variation in advocacy is what really matters. Intriguingly, advocacy for NWU has varied dramatically, among and between leaders over time, and existing theories of restraint cannot account for that variance. And yet, advocacy is really what previous theories of nuclear weapons non-use have sought to explain, but lacking a way to be operationalized. Through the lens of advocacy, non-use is just one instance of insufficient advocacy.

Thus, what best explains when leaders will advocate for, or against, using their nuclear arsenal to strike their enemy? After the initial demonstration of nuclear weapons-use (NWU) in 1945, why has advocacy never been enough for a government to actually employ them, particularly when the enemy could not credibly threaten nuclear retaliation? Outside of retaliation, are there specific conditions under which a government should be expected to use any of its nuclear weapons? And finally, do civilian leaders show systematically different

1. John F. Kennedy himself remarked that "The essence of ultimate decision remains impenetrable to the observer - often, indeed, to the decider himself." See Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd (Pearson, 1999), p. 2.

advocacy patterns than civilian leaders through decision process?

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, it presents the existing literature regarding nuclear weapons non-use. This literature essentially comprises three explanations of restraint: nuclear deterrence, the nuclear taboo, and tradition. Second, after presenting the existing literature on nuclear restraint, and their collective inadequacy in explaining how and when leaders advocacy for NWU, this chapter presents my theory of Decisiveness. Third, it formalizes each theory. It operationalizes the variables of interest, namely the dependent variable (DV) of NWU advocacy, and the independent variable (IV) of assessed war situations. It details each theory's mechanism of action, and the theories' differing predictions about when leaders should or should not advocate for NWU. Fourth, it details the research design, method, and empirical approach used to evaluate each theory. The chapter ends by summarizing Decisiveness, its predictions, and key advantages over existing explanations of NWU.

2.2 The Collective Failure of Existing Explanations

Since the first atomic detonation, countless great minds have toiled to surmise the value of nuclear weapons-use.[2] Hitherto, scholarship has focused on the puzzle of why nuclear states have practiced categorical non-use. The current body of literature provides two types of explanations: consequentialist, wherein decisions are determined by cost/benefit calculations, or normative, wherein decision are determined by deference to shared standards.

2. A nuclear weapon refers any instrument that employs nuclear energy to cause an explosion when detonated, and designed to cause damage and/or harm. Thus, a nuclear weapon must have a nuclear reaction cause its blast. Given this criteria, radiological weapons that lack a nuclear reaction such as "dirty bombs" do not count as nuclear weapons. Furthermore, in this project, the nuclear weapons-use (NWU) refers to a deliberate detonation of a set of nuclear weapons upon enemy forces, populations, or industry. This definition excludes three types of nuclear detonations. First, it excludes nuclear weapons testing. While patterns of testing may correlate to the likelihood of use by a given government, there are numerous other factors that may drive tests. Such factors include pure scientific inquiry for viability as well as a demonstration of capabilities. Second, the definition excludes accidents. Thankfully, we have no observations of accidental nuclear detonations. Finally, the definition excludes the tacit coercive and diplomatic value that comes from possessing nuclear weapons. While bargaining in the shadow of possession could be construed as a form of use, it pertains to a different set of goals, dynamics and logic than NWU by detonation.

Theories of Nuclear Weapons Non-Use
Nuclear Deterrence: Retaliation would bring unacceptable damage
Nuclear Taboo: Moral revulsion has made strong norms of constraint
Tradition: Calculations identify unacceptable long-term costs

Table 2.1: Existing theories of nuclear weapons non-use.

Unfortunately, the value of both types of existing explanations is undermined by what they are hoping to explain, namely non-use. Non-use is by definition, a constant. When the phenomenon of interest has no variance, it is impossible in any scientific sense to falsify hypotheses about what influences it. The collective failure of existing explanations about non-use is plain: without variation, there is no way to even correlate relationships among apparent determinants and therefore no way to disconfirm one hypothesis in favor of another. The body of literature is little more than evidence-rich stories - plausible accounts of nuclear restraint. Ultimately, there is no way to distinguish normative decision mechanisms from consequentialist ones.

Beyond the literature's collective failure of non-falsifiability, each existing explanation suffers its own significant shortcomings. This section details those explanations and their shortcomings – the consequentialist decision theories of nuclear deterrence and tradition, and the normative theory of nuclear taboo.

2.2.1 The Inadequacy of Nuclear Deterrence

Nuclear deterrence theorists argue that the international system enjoys nuclear non-use because nuclear rivals can retaliate with an unacceptable scale of harm.[3] When both states' nuclear arsenals are presumed to be able to survive a preventive strike, a first-use of nuclear weapons is expected to imply mutually-assured destruction.[4] Thus, the scale of costs, the uncertainties about runaway escalation, and assured second-strike capabilities deter mutually

3. Schelling, *Arms And Influence*, p. 14.

4. Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance Of Terror."

The Inadequacy of Nuclear Deterrence
1. Does not explain advocacy levels in cases that lack risk of nuclear retaliation.
2. Does not explain advocacy levels of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons.
3. Does not explain advocacy levels against belligerent, non-nuclear states attacking nuclear states.

Table 2.2: Explanatory shortcomings of nuclear deterrence.

vulnerable rivals from initiating use.[5] Due to the potentially massive costs of miscalculation, technology failures, or inflexible standard operating procedures, mutual vulnerability imposes a strong rationalizing influence on decision-makers, ensuring their prudence.[6] Consequently, even less than utterly credible nuclear threats serve as effective deterrents.

Shortcomings

Nuclear deterrence is the major explanation of nuclear restraint. In the shadow of the Cold War, existential fears of nuclear war led to painstaking developments of deterrence logic. However, the logic of deterrence inadequately explains patterns of NWU advocacy in three important ways.

First and foremost, there are numerous cases where a nuclear-armed state could have employed nuclear weapons without a credible fear of nuclear retaliation. For example, the U.S. has fought several non-nuclear enemies that lacked a nuclear ally credibly willing to retaliate. Several U.S. examples include the 1955 and 1958 Quemoy and Matsu crises, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War. Non-use in these security environments did not seem to emanate from deterrence concerns. Beyond numerous U.S. examples, intriguing cases of restraint in environments that lacked credible fears of nuclear retaliation include Israel versus Egypt in 1973, as well as China versus Vietnam in 1978.

Additionally, nuclear states have yet to use nuclear strikes to prevent supposedly "ir-

5. For a full treatment of mutual vulnerability, see Jervis, *The Meaning Of The Nuclear Revolution.*

6. See Waltz in Scott Douglas Sagan and Kenneth N.Waltz, *The Spread Of Nuclear Weapons* [in en] (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2013).

rational" enemies from acquiring nuclear weapons. At numerous times over the last half-century, nuclear-armed states have perceived certain enemies to be irrational actors, referring to an insensitivity to costs and risks in the pursuit of ambitious strategic goals. Instead, the irrational enemy is supposedly guided by a righteous ideology. Oftentimes, leaders who believe that an irrational enemy is close to acquiring a nuclear arsenal will regard the emerging threat as existential. Since an irrational enemy apparently cannot be deterred; it must be stopped.

Indeed, this scenario where leaders of a nuclear-armed state believe that an irrational, undeterrable enemy is about to acquire nuclear weapons - and that denial through preventive nuclear strikes is possible - has occurred numerous times. For example, many U.S. decision-makers head believed that China would use the bomb if they acquired the capability and that a nuclear China would be a grave Communist threat to U.S. allies in the region.[7] Furthermore, the U.S. did not expect that NWU would induce nuclear retaliation by the Soviet Union. And yet, the U.S. refrained from nuclear use to prevent China's nuclear capability in 1964. Additionally, many leaders within India perceived a similar existential threat with regard to Pakistan in 1998 but refrained from nuclear use.[8] And, yet, each time, leaders refrained from using any nuclear weapons to deny their enemies.

Second, nuclear deterrence may not explain non-use of low- yield battlefield nuclear weapons like artillery. A tactical nuclear attack refers to "the use of nuclear weapons by land, sea, or air forces against opposing forces, supporting installations or facilities, in support of operations that contribute to the accomplishment of a military mission of limited scope, or in support of the military commander's scheme of maneuver, usually limited to the area of military operations."[9] Despite the massive development of tactical nuclear artillery and even

7. Robert Johnson and Walt Rostow, "Implications Of A Chinese Communist Nuclear Capability," in *U.S. National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Central Foreign Policy Files* (Washington, D.C: U.S. National Archives, 1964); "Probable Consequences of Certain US Action With Respect To Vietnam and Laos" [in en], *Department of State, Office of the Historian. Web* (Washington), Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vietnam, I (May 25, 1964).

8. Jack I. Garvey, *Nuclear Weapons Counterproliferation* [in en] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

9. Amy Woolf, *Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons* [in en], U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research

small gun ammunition, none have ever been detonated on the battlefield. In fact, for some operations, low-yield tactical nuclear weapons have been recognized to be relatively more effective than higher-yield conventional weapons.[10] Examples include digging artillery tubes out of fortified sites, attacking mass troop formations, flattening bases, destroying bridges, tunnels, airfields, and perhaps even establishing radioactive 'hot' zones.[11]

In deterrence logic, nuclear-armed enemies may avoid tactical battlefield detonations because they fear that it could lead to runaway escalation.[12] Theorists wondered if there existed any clear escalation thresholds between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons; if not, then any use could be extremely risky.[13] However, the basis for this concern has been contested both theoretically and empirically.[14] It does not seem that fears of runaway escalation explain the non-use of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons in battlefields that lack any immediate retaliation in-kind.

Third, though not common, non-nuclear states have been known to initiate conflict with nuclear states. Examples include conventionally inferior enemies like Argentina against the U.K., or near conventional peers like Egypt against Israel (1973). These non-nuclear states had some confidence that nuclear weapons would not be used against them. Deterrence theories are not great at explaining the basis of this confidence.

In sum, several nuclear-armed governments have faced scenarios where NWU could have provided military advantages without any credible fear of nuclear retaliation. And yet,

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Service, RL32572, 2009.

10. Stephen D. Biddle and Peter Feaver, *Battlefield Nuclear Weapons: Issues and Options* (MD: University Press of America, 1989).

11. Ibid.

12. Richard Ned Lebow, "Clausewitz And Nuclear Crisis Stability." [in en], *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (1988): 81, doi:10.2307/2151142.

13. Herman Kahn, *Thinking About The Unthinkable In The 1980s* (New York: Simon / Schuster, 1984), For factors that would keep such a war limited, see; Robert Endicott Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge To American Strategy* (Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

14. Pp. 76-8 of Sagan and N.Waltz, *The Spread Of Nuclear Weapons*; Jeffrey Arthur Larsen and Kerry M.Kartchner, *On Limited Nuclear War In The 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2014); Poly Holdorf, "Limited War in the 21st Century," in *A Collection of Papers from the 2010 Nuclear Scholars*, ed. Mark Jannson (CSIS: Washington DC, 2010), 137–149.

those governments chose against use. In these conditions, the rationale cannot result from deterrence logic. Moreover, while oftentimes deterrence logic can be a sufficient explanation for non-use in appropriate environments, it may occlude other important logics still operating underneath. In order to reveal them, the dissertation's case selection will exclude conflicts where nuclear deterrence seemed to exist.

2.2.2 The Inadequacy of the Nuclear Taboo

When the Cold War ended, the tight bipolarity that oriented competition among nuclear superpowers ended with it. Nuclear governments faced a new security environment, which renewed considerations of what drives their existing nuclear doctrine. A major new line of research on patterns of nuclear restraint emerged that revolve around non-material explanations. Early important scholarship in this program argued that the categorical non-use of nuclear weapons emanated primarily from an emerging "taboo" that proscribed them.[15] The taboo explanation deemphasized material factors and argued instead that long-standing moral principles of proportionality and discrimination cultivated a moral injunction against using nuclear weapons.[16]

According to the taboo explanation, nuclear weapons-use was once seen as legitimate but due to domestic opinion, world opinion, and the personal moral convictions of leaders, nuclear use has become widely seen as abhorrent and illegitimate.[17] As a consequence, the ensuing taboo fuels a virtuous feedback loop that reinforces widespread revulsion around the existence and prospective application of nuclear weapons. The seventy years of aversion since their initial demonstration have made the deliberate detonation "unthinkable."[18] The

15. The most sophisticated advocate is Nina Tannenwald, "Stigmatizing The Bomb: Origins Of The Nuclear Taboo."; Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*.

16. Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, p. 25.

17. Ibid., p. 45.

18. Ibid., p. 11.

taboo explanation makes an important theoretical pivot from previous thinking. In lieu of fairly permanent material imperatives for state security, the taboo explanation privileges the social identities of states and their leaders and argue that national interests are derivative to state identity. Taboo scholars argue that "Actors conform to, and reproduce norms in order to validate social identities; it is in the process of validating identities that interests are constituted.[19] "Consequently, the nuclear taboo takes a life of its own and becomes an "exogenously given constraint on decision-making."[20] Tannenwald, the leading nuclear taboo researcher argues that while deterrence and calculated prudence are valid explanations of non-use, a nuclear taboo captures more of the evidence.[21]

Shortcomings

For all its reasonableness, the taboo explanation for nuclear non-use has both theoretical and empirical shortcomings. Theoretically, the taboo explanation fails to connect much of the norms literature to the relationships between sovereign governments. Specifically, several of the mechanisms known to induce behavioral norms are not expected to exist between states. Consequently, the theory has no way to suggest how the taboo might or might not evolve over time. Empirically, the taboo explanation does not adequately explain why military planners advocated NWU more readily and intensely than civilian planners in the first 50 years but flipped in the last 20.[22] Additionally, it does not help us understand why advocacy or ambivalence for NWU in (at least US) public opinion and legal authorities has meaningfully increased since the end of the Cold War.

First, there is no way to understand variation in intensity of norm. The argument that

19. Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, p. 47. See also Wendt 1999, ch. 6.

20. Ibid., p. 45.

21. Ibid., p. 54.

22. Theo Farrell, "Nuclear Non-Use: Constructing A Cold War History." [in en], *Review Of International Studies36* 4 (2010): 819–829, doi:10.1017/s0260210510001294.

The Inadequacy of the Nuclear Taboo
1. No way to understand variation in the intensity of the norm.
2. No way to understand selection in some norms and not others.
3. Doesn't resolve how early norm adopters can compete against opportunists.
4. Moral considerations could be an effect or a cover-up instead of a cause.
5. Little or no apparent effect on military planners.
6. Advocacy or permission for NWU appears to be on the rise.

Table 2.3: Explanatory shortcomings of a nuclear taboo.

government leaders and their public conform to and reproduce norms fails to tell us how the outcome could be anything but a fairly linear trend toward utter conformity. While some have described mechanisms for norm adherence, few (if any) are present between states.[23] The cause of variance in how much different leaders follow norms is required for a useful normative theory.

Second, there is no way to understand selection in some norms and not others. The taboo explanation currently does not give much help in understanding what actions become prohibited and which ones do not. Their main selection variables may be the levels of proportionality and discrimination (though this is not made explicit). Still, we do not have a systematic way to answer why leaders morally prohibit, say, nuclear artillery and not napalm fire-bombing. Tannenwald mentions that unique features of nuclear weapons mattered, i.e. size, destructive power, and radiation, but it is not clear how the potential scale of assault translates into prohibition.

Third, it does not resolve how early norm adopters can compete against opportunists. In a competitive security environment, governments who morally abide by norms may place their nation in grave danger. Until a pattern of rule adherence is adopted by all major powers, moral motives can leave a nation vulnerable to opportunistic rivals. This explanation does not help us understand how a competitive security environment permits entrepreneurs of moral norms that directly limited their own relative capabilities.

23. Mechanisms of norm-building include domination and punishment, internalization, social proof, and punishing those who fail to punish (metanorms). See for example Robert M. Axelrod, *The Complexity Of Cooperation* [in en] (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Fourth, methodologically, moral concerns could just as likely be an effect or justification instead of a cause. Tannenwald (2008) provides numerous examples of "taboo talk" and moralizing about the question of nuclear use. However, a major methodological problem is being able to determine whether moral concerns cause restraint or if moral concerns and restraint are both caused by a confounding factor. Sincere moral justifications tend to arise as *post hoc* justifications for their behaviors.[24] But more importantly, public moral justification can be insincere ways to justify cold analytic assessments to domestic constituents. At any rate, it is crucial to critically determine when "taboo talk" is a cause, effect, symptom, or cover-up.

Fifth, the taboo explanation fails to answer at least two empirical trends around NWU advocacy. First, no taboo seemed to operate on military planners at least through the Cold War.[25] Moreover, with civilian planners, levels of advocacy seem to switch by administration, not by some observance of a transcendent taboo. For example, the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) is a quadrennial review of U.S. nuclear forces undertaken by the Department of Defense. It is designed to determine the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security strategy.[26] The 2002 NPR sought to integrate conventional and nuke assets in a unified strike force, as well as requiring the Pentagon to plan extensive contingency plans for the use of nuclear weapons for seven countries.[27] It even promotes the implementation of nuclear "bunker busters" for battlefield operations.[28] Then, the following NPR released in 2010 under a new administration reversed many of the previous prescriptions.[29] It even ruled out nuclear

24. See for example Selin Kesebir, Haidt, and Jonathan, *Morality* [in pl], ed. Susan Fiske and Daniel Gilbert (Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 2010), 797–832.

25. Theo Farrell, *The Norms Of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* [in en] (Boulder, Colo: L. Rienner Publishers, 2005), p. 39; Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic Of Accidental Nuclear War* [in en] (Washington D.C: The Brookings institution, 1993).

26. U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, Submitted to Congress on 31 December 2001 (Arlington: Princeton University Press, 2002).

27. Ibid., pp.45-8.

28. Ibid., pp. 50-3.

29. Ibid.

attacks against non-nuclear states, though it ominously excluded its enemies Iran and North Korea.[30] This frenetic posturing from the world's leading nuclear power cannot be explained by taboo explanation.

The poor explanatory fit of the nuclear taboo to evidence extends beyond executive preferences. The taboo explanation argues that one major source of executive constraint on NWU is an atomic aversion by domestic public opinion. However, in 2010 Press, Sagan, and Valentino found that public aversion to NWU is quite weak. Instead of viewing NWU as unthinkable, attitudes were shown to be driven mostly by considerations of military utility.[31] In fact, the public's willingness to employ nuclear weapons dramatically increased when they appeared to be more effective than conventional weapons in destroying important targets.[32]

In sum, the taboo explanation states that state decision-makers have come to be constrained by a strong, generalized normative prohibition against NWU. The taproot of this emerging taboo is a set of moral qualms and revulsion determined by assumed disproportionate and indiscriminate nature on NWU. However, the taboo explanation suffers from numerous theoretical and empirical shortcomings. It does not provide a convincing logic on how the taboo could develop or dissolve over time. Furthermore, some important observations on the shifting patterns of NWU advocacy among both decision-makers and the public alike do not corroborate a nuclear taboo.

2.2.3 The Inadequacy of Tradition

In general, the realist school of thought rejects the argument that entrenched moral norms constrain (or perhaps even ought to constrain) the strategic considerations of international

30. U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*.

31. Press and Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence On Taboos, Traditions, And The Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons."

32. Ibid., p. 198.

political leaders.[33] While deterrence theory is the dominant realist explanation for nuclear non-use between nuclear rivals, some have suggested an additional strategic logic dubbed "Tradition."[34] The Tradition explanation argues that nuclear states have categorically refrained from using nuclear weapons because leaders have calculated the long-term risks of setting a precedent of NWU and found virtually any short-term benefit to be lacking. In the decision calculus, the potential consequences of nuclear use would be that in the future, other nuclear states may feel free to use them against U.S. homeland, its troops, or allies.[35] The assumption is that nuclear non-use is a "convention–dependent" norm that is maintained by reciprocity; it functions until reciprocity is broken.[36]

Shortcomings

On its own, Tradition is not really a complete alternative explanation of nuclear weapons non-use; it acknowledges that norms of restraint shape decision-making possibilities, but argues that strategic prudence is the basis of those norms. Unfortunately, it is seriously undertheorized and currently inadequate to be a viable strategic explanation of non-use. Moreover, Tradition lacks the explicit empirical support needed to displace Taboo as the prevailing explanation of non-use.

To become a proper theoretical alternative to the Nuclear Taboo, it would need to account for three additional dynamics. First, it would need to provide a logic for when a government may break tradition. Even though it suggests a reasonable account for why we observe norms around nuclear non-use, tradition does not answer under what circumstances we should expect NWU by a given government. A theory that explains patterns of NWU needs

33. For a nice discussion of realpolitik, see Jonathan No Haslam, *Virtue Like Necessity* [in en] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

34. Sagan, "Realist Perspectives On Ethical Norms And Weapons Of Mass Destruction."; Ward Thomas, "Norms And Security: The Case Of International Assassination" [in en], *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 105–133, doi:10.1162/016228800560408.

35. Sagan, "Realist Perspectives On Ethical Norms And Weapons Of Mass Destruction."

36. Thomas, *The Ethics Of Destruction: Norms and Force in International Politics.*

The Inadequacy of Tradition
1. No theory for understanding when a government may break tradition.
2. No theory for how the power of a precedent changes over time.
3. Leaders often demonstrate non-calculation in relevant environments.

Table 2.4: Explanatory shortcomings of a tradition of non-use.

to provide conditions that ought to vary the effect, even if there are no current empirical cases of that effect. In its current form, tradition fails to explain any variance. It selects a value of the dependent variable, nuclear weapons non-use, and provides an answer to that value. In doing so, it misses an opportunity to answer the most pivotal question of all: when should we expect NWU?

Second, it would need to provide a logic for how the power of a precedent strengthens or weakens over time. Beyond lacking variance of the dependent variable, tradition under-theorizes variation of its independent variable, namely the strength of a precedent. In the international arena, we simply do not know what ought to make a specific tradition strong, nor do we understand what degree of violation to the tradition counts as a precedent. A generous reading of this explanation might assume that tradition refers to a Schelling focal point.[37] In bargaining situations, a focal point is "each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do."[38] Perhaps weapon classes can serve as a threshold that acts as a focal point in bargaining. But, these are just speculations on how to address the shortcoming, and will have to be improved on tradition's behalf.

Finally, we do not adequately understand why breaking a strong nuclear tradition is supposed to imply the collapse of it; at this stage of theoretical development, Tradition fails to tell us how precedence-setting will affect the dependent variable (i.e. NWU), only that it ought to affect it. Specifically, the Tradition explanation does not provide a convincing rationale for why setting a precedent would lead to increased use. It could increase use, but it could also galvanize nuclear states of the perils of nuclear weapons use and make the

37. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy Of Conflict* [in en] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

38. Ibid., pp. 44-5.

violator a global pariah.[39] Either way, we do not really have a good idea of the actual effect of the precedent and how it changes the decision calculus for either nuclear or non-nuclear leaders, allies or rivals.

2.3 What Best Explains NWU Advocacy: Decisiveness

There is a simpler theory of NWU advocacy. The Decisiveness theory of NWU argues that leaders readily consider any relevant weapons to secure vital interests, including nuclear weapons. Due to the special military properties of nuclear weapons, leaders will advocate NWU to the extent that it would deliver a major strategic pivot, either by decisively resolving the conflict on favorable terms, or preventing a decisive resolution by the enemy. Observations of nuclear weapons restraint (that is to say, insufficient advocacy) during war is due to leaders acknowledging that their nuclear strike options are generally inferior to their existing conventional alternatives. An ineffective demonstration of NWU would signal incompetence to other states, and entails numerous consequences to the nuclear state's deterrence credibility, alliance commitments, and brokering power in the international order. However, if a nuclear state were to find that NWU could decisively induce military or political victory or prevent major defeat, leaders will advocate for NWU. This section will first present the assumptions of strategic thinking on NWU. Thereafter, it will propose the resulting strategic logic for NWU, detailing the special properties of nuclear weapons that distinguish them from conventional weapons. Once the theory is developed, all competing theories will be operationalized and evaluated with the empirical record in chapter three.

2.3.1 Definition: What Counts as a Decisive Action

In order to understand what makes a military action 'decisive,' it is essential to acknowledge the military concept of the "Center of Gravity" and how it orients campaign planning.

39. For discussion, see Quester, *Nuclear First Strike: Consequences of a Broken Taboo.*

Conceptualized by Clausewitz and widely adopted by modern military doctrines, A Center of Gravity (COG) is "the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act" and deemed critical to accomplish one's objectives in the theater of conflict.[40] Strategic military planners tend to identify a single COG, and the critical capabilities it confers to wage effective war in the theater of conflict.[41]

Once planners have identified the enemy's COG and the critical capabilities it provides, they assess what the enemy critically requires to enable those capabilities.[42] Critical requirements are the conditions, resources, and means that enable a critical capability to become fully operational.[43] If those requirements include any critical vulnerabilities, planners will search for any available means to destroy, dislocate, disintegrate, or isolate those critical requirements through them.[44] Known as 'decisive points,' effective action on these available vulnerabilities are designed to deny the enemy of his critical requirements, disable the enemys COG and achieve a long-term disruption of its operational capability.[45] Often, decisive

40. Clausewitz further called the Center of Gravity the "hub of all power and movement" and is the point against which all our energies should be directed Von Clausewitz, *Guide to Tactics*, pp. 595-6.

41. For example, the U.S. Army asserts that the center of gravity in a counterinsurgency is the protection of the population that hosts it. See U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Department of the Army, 2011).

42. For example, if the enemys critical capability is a certain deployed army division, its critical requirements may include, minimal personnel force numbers, freedom of movement, and crucial supply lines.

43. Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning*, II-2.

44. For more on defeat mechanisms, see Eado Hecht, "Defeat Mechanisms: The Rationale Behind the Strategy," *Infinity Journal* 4 (2 2014): 24–30.

45. U.S. Joint Command defines a decisive point as "a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows a commander to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contributes materially to achieving success (e.g., creating a desired effect, achieving an objective). Decisive points can greatly influence the outcome of an action. Decisive points can be physical in nature, such as a constricted sea lane, a hill, a town, WMD material cache or facility, or an air base; but they could include other elements such as command posts, critical boundaries, airspace, or communications and/or intelligence nodes. In some cases, specific key events also may be decisive points, such as attainment of air or maritime superiority, commitment of the adversarys reserve, opening a supply route during humanitarian operations, or gaining the trust of a key leader. In still other cases, decisive points may have a larger systemic impact and, when acted on, can substantially affect the adversary's information, financial, economic, or social systems. When dealing with an irregular threat, commanders and their staffs should consider how actions against decisive points will affect not only the enemy, but also the relevant population and their behavior and relationships with enemy and friendly forces, and the resultant impact on stability in the area or region of interest." Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning*, III-26, p. 104.

points may not exist. Thus, a successful, decisive action is one that exploits a critical vulnerability, disabling the COG, and denying the enemy the means to thwart the state's strategy in the theater of conflict.

Offensively, a leader will advocate for NWU to the extent that it can exploit the enemy's critical vulnerabilities in ways existing conventional alternatives cannot. Defensively, a leader will advocate for NWU to the extent that it can prevent the imminent exploitation by the enemy of the state's critical vulnerabilities in ways existing conventional alternatives cannot.

2.3.2 Assumptions: Strategic Thinking

The theory assumes that three basic principles of strategic thinking are operating throughout the decision-making process. First, major strategic pivots are considered very important: any military operation that can induce a major strategic pivot in the form of gain, or in preventing a major strategic loss, is considered incredibly valuable. A leader is very sensitive to whether and when such opportunities arise, and will assess to what extent the introduction of nuclear weapons could enable such opportunities.

Second, new weapons are introduced only when they are expected to deliver better outcomes than what is currently being deployed: In the theater of conflict, a leader will assess the short-term military value of NWU, according to how well the weapons can neutralize or destroy important enemy targets. Like any weapon option, if a leader believes that NWU would provide no extra value over the conventional arsenal for the military's prospective operations, there is no reason to expect him to advocate NWU.

Third, a leader will assess how any proposed military escalation would affect the state's relative power and position in the international order. Regarding capabilities, a leader will assess whether NWU would deplete its nuclear stockpile enough to undermine the deterrent value of the stockpile. Moreover, if the state enjoys a conventional military advantage, a leader will assess whether NWU would somehow impair that advantage afterward. Regarding alliances, a leader will assess whether NWU will alter the state's alliance arrangements

and commitments. States monitor the nuclear state's conduct of war in order to (re)assess its competence, capabilities, and commitments to shared national interests. Any surprising or escalatory actions by the nuclear state are expected to induce reassessments. This re-assessment of a state's "reputation for stewardship" can be either positive or negative for the nuclear state, entailing prospects of balancing, bandwagoning, galvanizing commitments or abandonment by other states.

2.3.3 Propositions: What Makes Nuclear Weapons Special

Nuclear weapons have several special properties that that establish their peculiar value in war. First, nuclear weapons have the potential for considerable destructive yields. To the extent that a state needs to inflict massive harm, nuclear weapons are exceptional. Second, nuclear weapons have special blast properties that make them useful for penetrating fortified structures and mountainous terrain. To the extent that leaders seek 'bunker busting' potential, nuclear weapons can be very useful. Third, the detonation of nuclear weapons includes radiological effects on the target area, that can create anti-personnel and anti-civilian environments. In war, this effect can be beneficial, creating zones of avoidance to interdict enemy troops or supply lines. On the other hand, such zones can impair the nuclear state's own troop movement and maneuver through the terrain. Additionally, leaders face a longer-term issue of how to manage the affected zone after the war. The area is not viable to be an industrial or population center. And, the effects continue for sometime after detonation, sometimes years, which is likely to include diplomatic problems with the target country and may impair the prospects of reconciliation.[46]

In addition to these peculiar aspects, the use of nuclear weapons harbors a special risk of escalation. Escalation refers to "the increase in the intensity or scope of a conflict considered

46. While this cost seems sufficiently prohibitive, it is important to note that the only known use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not prevent the U.S. and Japan from developing a robust relationship of security and economic cooperation immediately after the war.

significant by one or more participants."[47] Escalation is managed by establishing and clarifying thresholds of conduct, focal points that rival leaders mutually ascertain and are mostly determined pre-war or pre-crisis.[48] The clearest thresholds serve as "firebreaks" that signal to disputants what constitutes escalation and identifies whether a state has demonstrated resolve by breaking them.

Some thresholds are much clearer and more stable than others. Regarding weapons systems, there are two types of thresholds: interval and class. Interval thresholds are distinctions along a range of values. For example, a stockpile of 1-20 nuclear warheads may suggest strategic instability with incentives for rivals to strike the nascent arsenal. A stockpile of 21-100 would be more stable. The limitation of interval thresholds is that it is hard to mutually recognize a clear signal of proliferation escalation between 20 and 21. In a pinch, an interval threshold may be passed, but the subtlety casts ambiguity about whether conflict has escalated. Furthermore, it is harder for all strategists to settle on the intervals because it is easier to perceive their exact designations as arbitrary. Class thresholds, on the other hand, are conceptual categories based on family resemblance of objects. Objects are classified within a hierarchy of subcategories.[49]

Under most conditions, leaders place a premium on classifier thresholds like "nuclear" weapons.[50] Nuclear weapons are particularly special in part because the objects within the class have such a large yield range. And, since interval thresholds are less clear and more fragile, leaders worry about the increased escalation volatility after the firebreak is violated.[51]

47. Forrest E. et. al. Morgan, *Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation In The 21St Century* [in en] (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2008), p. 8.

48. Schelling, *The Strategy Of Conflict*; Schelling, *Arms And Influence*; Kahn, *Thinking About The Unthinkable In The 1980s*, Of course for this reason, revisionist states will try to blur thresholds in order to obscure escalation signals, also known as 'salami tactics.' Schelling 1960.

49. An example: "Bomb" is distinguished from ballistics but share the category explosive aerial weapons. Other examples include "countervalue target," "space" as a potential domain for conflict, and "nuclear weapons."

50. The primary exception is the relatively weak, revisionist power who aims to escalate without signaling so.

51. See Kahn, *On Escalation*, . This is precisely why some strategists fear the conventionalization of

The upshot is that if one chooses to cross the nuclear firebreak, the action needs to resolve conflict quickly. Any means that could resolve a conflict in short order (including nuclear weapons) and bring victory is a very attractive option. Its use not only settles a conflict on favorable terms, but it can save tremendous blood and treasure, all the while energizing a triumphant public. Thus, in any conflict where leaders lack high confidence in winning the conventional war decisively, they will consider whether NWU can prove decisive instead. The foolhardy choice is passing the nuclear escalation threshold without confidence in how the war gets resolved.

2.3.4 Inference: The Resulting NWU Calculus

Given the strategic assumptions and the aspects that make nuclear weapons different, Strategic Decisiveness predicts that the degree of advocacy for NWU depends on how decisive it will be resolving a war on favorable terms, or otherwise prevent a major strategic loss. Decisive NWU would be expected to promote the state's relative power, demonstrating its competence, capabilities, and resolve in defeating the enemy and stewarding the international order. In other words, to the extent that NWU would be decisive, leaders will advocate for it. Conversely, indecisive NWU would be expected to signal the opposite, with immediate consequences, potentially unraveling the state's relative power.

Operational and Strategic Logics

In the short-term, there are both operational and strategic effects involving nuclear weapons. Operational benefits refer to the potential for weapons from the existing nuclear arsenal to neutralize or destroy key targets, relative to the potential from conventional alternatives. Operational costs refer to the potential destruction of collateral assets and bystanders, as well as likely changes to terrain conditions that would impede movement and maneuver of land forces. Strategic benefits refer the potential to shift the tide of war decisively in one's

low-yield tactical nuclear weapons. See for example, Jervis 1989.

favor. Strategic costs refer to the risk of expanding the scope of the current war, inviting powerful opponents to enter on behalf of the enemy, in defense or retaliation.

At the operational level, advocacy for NWU is determined by how well it will achieve battlefield goals in a given phase of conflict, relative to existing alternative means. Once in conflict, military and civilian leadership alike seek victory and will use the best tools to achieve it effectively and efficiently. In many cases, certain existing weapons are better suited than others toward achieving military objectives; decision-makers will opt for the most cost-effective, time-effective, and doctrine-consistent means to do so. When considering tactical options, leaders will avoid any alternatives that may vitiate their overriding strategic goals.

Strategically, decision-makers can consider limited nuclear strikes on an enemy under three basic circumstances: offense, defense, and prevention. Offensively, decision-makers will calculate how well nuclear strikes could rapidly deliver a major pivot to the war, relative to alternative operations, with the intention to bring victory. To the extent that decision-makers believe NWU will bring about a nimble and decisive conclusion to the war, they are more likely to use them. Defensively, decision-makers will calculate how well NWU could defeat overwhelming conventional forces attacking their vital interests and assets, including amassed friendly troops. To the extent that decision-makers believe that their own conventional forces are incapable of interdicting an invasion on either their homeland or that of an ally, the more likely they will advocate NWU. Preventatively, decision-makers will calculate how well NWU can prevent an attack on vital interests with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). To the extent that a nuclear strike on an enemy will prevent an imminent WMD attack on vital interests, the more likely they are to advocate NWU.

Thus, when considering these strategic goals, decision-makers weigh the relative effectiveness of all credible military options. Once a military conflict has begun, leaders want to win, limit the costs to winning, and prevent introducing major limitations to their conduct of future conflicts. Leaders carefully ascertain thresholds that will escalate a limited war and consider whether it reduces their confidence in victory. Because an initial use of nuclear

weapons is a novel action in the current strategic environment, decision-makers assume that it will be widely perceived as a qualitative escalation in conflict. Consequently, the strategic victory logic most heavily weighs how decisively NWU will resolve and conclude the conflict.

Unstable regimes that fear existential collapse from war will advocate NWU more easily.[52] Leaders still calculate the utility of NWU and must find that it would decisively prevent overrun. But, it does not need to expect decisive military or political victory. In such circumstances, the unstable state is not evaluating questions of relative power, either for itself or for its allies are subordinate to defense of the state; in war, these states have a lower threshold for NWU.

The Grand Strategic Logic

Decision-makers are preoccupied with ensuring their state‘s security in an uncertain world; unless the war is existential in scope, state leaders tend to privilege the pursuit of relative power over victory in any specific conflict, including the current one. Using nuclear weapons against an enemy can have numerous, immediate effects on the nuclear state‘s relative power. The major security components of a state‘s relative power are its own military capabilities (internal force), its system of allies (external force) versus rivals, and an accurate and confident appraisal of the security environment (information flows). NWU can positively affect each of these components, and the level of advocacy for NWU is mainly determined by how leaders expect it will alter the state's relative power.[53][54]

52. A regime is stable to the extent that it a) faces no rivals in administration or in enforcement over the territory it governs; b) has a legal mechanism for predictable succession; and c) provides a safe exit for the outgoing leadership.

53. The IR literature is rich with discussions of relative power. For relative power considerations between nuclear rivals, see Frederick Dunn Sherwood Brodie Bernard and Arnold Wolfers, *The Absolute Weapon* [in en] (Harcourt, Brace: Books for Libraries Press, 1946); Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance Of Terror”; Kahn, *On Escalation*; Schelling, *Arms And Influence*.

54. For discussions of NWU on long-term consequences, independent of deterrence dynamics, see Sagan, “Realist Perspectives On Ethical Norms And Weapons Of Mass Destruction.”; Paul, *The Tradition Of Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons*.

How NWU Affects Military Capabilities

Nuclear weapons-use can affect the value of a state's military capabilities in two ways. First, NWU can deplete the state's total stockpile; if a state's stockpile is small, depleting it through NWU can undermine its deterrence and increase its vulnerability to any nuclear rivals. For states with a large nuclear stockpile, depletion from NWU is not a meaningful risk. Second and more importantly, any novel application of weapons including NWU will lead allies and enemies to reassess the that state's military capabilities. Assessment is reality: Shifting assessments alone can shift patterns of balancing, bandwagoning, and buckpassing by other states.[55]

If NWU is decisive, other states will acknowledge that the nuclear state's military capabilities are credible and that its leaders know how to secure its interests with them. However, if NWU is not decisive, allies and enemies will likely demote the value of the nuclear state's capabilities and see that state's ability to secure its interests as less credible. This can be particularly worrisome for allies who share those interests and rely on the state to pursue them competently.Moreover, nuclear weapons currently a enjoy a kind of mystique where planners have less confidence about the assessed utility of nuclear arsenals. Non-decisive NWU removes the mystique, and may demonstrate that there is nothing so game-changing from limited nuclear strikes.

How NWU Affects the International Order

The nature of the international order establishes the basic imperatives for survival and prosperity for states. Modern leaders will typically perceive their state to be embedded in an international order regulated by either a balance of power or a constitutional hegemony.[56]

55. For how inaccurate assessments of power by allies and rivals can lead to war, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes Of War* [in en] (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), ch. 2.

56. For discussions on the balance of power, and constitutional hegemony, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins Of Alliances* [in en] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politic* [in en] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); G.John Ikenberry and Ward Thomas, "The Ethics Of Destruction: Norms And Force In International Relations." [in en], *Foreign Affairs* 80, no.

To the extent that the international order corresponds to a balance of power, decision-makers want to optimize the means to balance internally (military buildup) and externally (alliances).[57] Internal balancing refers to increasing one's own military capabilities to manage international threats. NWU may impair the state's internal balancing potential by driving its rivals to incorporate nuclear weapons into their own battlefield doctrine, thereby undermining any conventional advantage the initiator may have.

Additionally, NWU can affect the state's external balancing potential. External balancing refers to countervailing an emerging threat by either increasing the state's international allies or by credibly increasing the commitments from existing ones. If NWU is decisive, allies are expected to acknowledge the nuclear state's capabilities and resolve, increasing their confidence that the alliance best safeguards their continued security. Moreover, if NWU is decisive, enemies will likely hesitate to risk entering future crises with the nuclear state. However, if NWU is not decisive, the effects are reversed. Non-decisive NWU demonstrates that the state is willing to eschew the spirit of treaties around nuclear non-use while failing to secure its interests. Non-decisive NWU is expected to destabilize the existing alliance structure against its favor. Moreover, leaders expect that non-decisive use to empower and embolden domestic coalitions of opposition, making domestic policy partnerships for difficult. Finally, enemies are certain to adjust their nuclear doctrine to manage the more belligerent strategic landscape. The enemy's emergent alliance system is likely to galvanize against their shared threat.

Alternatively, if the international order corresponds to a constitutional hegemony, then decision-makers within that order want the hegemon to credibly nurture institutional arrangements, broker in good faith, and keep commitments.[58] Decision-makers carefully eval-

6 (2001): 175, doi:10.2307/20050347; Francis Fukuyama, *The End Of History And The Last Man* [in en] (New York: Free Press, 1992).

57. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory Of International Politics* [in en] (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1979).

58. For the constitutional bargain, see G.John Ikenberry, *After Victory: : Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* [in en] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), ch. 1-2; David A. Lake, *Hierarchy In International Relations* [in en] (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

uate how a military action may affect the hegemon's capacity to sustain international order.

How NWU Affects Future Decision-Making

The continued security of the state depends on the ability to make good decisions. Decision-makers want ample confidence in knowing the risks, alternatives, and consequences involved in their decision calculus around threats and strategic partnerships. Likewise, they abhor factors that impair that confidence. Many military executives are trained to define the variables that impair such confidence: strategic volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity (VUAC); to the extent that a strategy or action meaningfully increases the VUAC of the decision environment, decision-makers will consider it a serious cost to bear.[59]

Non-decisive NWU may increase strategic VUAC in at least three ways. First, after the willingness to employ nuclear weapons has been demonstrated, the new environment has fewer clear thresholds to limit escalation. Put formally, NWU may increase the volatility of future crises. This simply means that for any action, the variance of possible outcomes grows; the upshot is that volatility makes any full sequence of actions and reactions tough to predict. Second, NWU may increase the complexity of the environment by adding the number of international nuclear aspirants. Such proliferation prospects make good decision-making harder and the environment more prone to catastrophe. Third, NWU is likely to impel rivals and enemies to change their military doctrines and force structures to cope with the emerging strategic landscape. Multiple adjustments introduce both strategic ambiguity and complexity.

In sum, NWU can affect relative capabilities, deterrent power, alliance commitments, assessments of competence and credibility, and the predictability of the strategic environment. Decisive NWU to defeat a threat and secure a vital interest is expected to benefit most of these dimensions, while indecisive NWU is expected to harm them.

59. See core curricula from the National Defense University, particularly the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy (formerly known as Industrial College of the Armed Forces) and the National War College.

2.4 How to Evaluate Competing Theories of Advocacy

Under the changing conditions of war, what best explains when key decision-makers will advocate for, or against, nuclear weapons-use (NWU) against their enemy? Beyond explaining patterns of advocacy, a compelling theory ought to also make clear predictions about why advocacy has yet to be sufficient for a government to employ nuclear weapons, as well as under which conditions leaders would advocate NWU enough to lead to use. Additionally, the answer ought to provide a clear prediction about how military versus civilian leaders may demonstrate different preferences during the decision process.

No theory can explain a phenomenon under all circumstances, and any good theory clarifies that scope of applicability at the outset. Scope conditions for a research question are qualifying statements that define the circumstances in which a theory is applicable.[60] Observations that fall outside of the scope conditions may or may not be explainable by the theory; such observations simply cannot help verify or falsify competing explanations.[61] This dissertation evaluates NWU advocacy within three scope conditions: no deterrence, strategic failure, and after the initial demonstration in 1945. Importantly, selecting cases that fit this scope enables control for nuclear deterrence, a key and presumably overriding explanation of restraint.

After 1945

The nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II demonstrated the impressive force of the atom to the world. It is excluded for two reasons. First, atomic weapon effects had not been demonstrated or well-understood until after the bombing. In fact, the actual damage wrought was nearly seven times greater than the military had previ-

60. Bernard P. Cohen, *Developing Sociological Knowledge* (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1989); Henry A.and Bernard P.Cohen Walker, "Scope Statements: Imperatives For Evaluating Theory" [in en], *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 3 (1985): 288, doi:10.2307/2095540.

61. Cohen, *Developing Sociological Knowledge*, p. 89.

ously estimated.[62] Second, at the time, the atomic weapon was basically considered a bigger bomb; the conventionalized assumption of the new weapon essentially led to a non-decision for use; once completed, the atomic bombs were immediately deployed. Civilian leadership under Truman may have had little intervention capacities, and consequently, would make that case a poor fit for answering the research question.

Strategic Failure

Perhaps the most perplexing cases of nuclear non-use are those where the nuclear power sought central interest, and yet ultimately failed to achieve its basic objective. Cases where the nuclear-armed power triumphed may not provide the proper "stress tests" for nuclear weapons consideration. Thus, this project will only examine conditions where the nuclear power could have used nuclear weapons, opted not to do so, and lost their war effort. This condition would exclude cases like the 1991 Gulf War between the Allied Forces (led by the U.S.) and Iraq. Again, this does not mean that the logic offered here is absent in conflicts where the nuclear-armed power prevailed, but it means that alternative explanations suffice.

Nuclear Deterrence is not Credible

For cases between mutually vulnerable nuclear rivals, theories of nuclear deterrence can provide a perfectly adequate and perhaps even overriding explanation for instances of non-advocacy. Thus, in order to control for the logic of nuclear deterrence, the dissertation only evaluates the theories with data where there is zero or negligible threat of nuclear retaliation by the enemy or a nuclear sponsor. This condition would exclude cases like, say, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This does not necessarily mean that the decision logic offered here is absent under such deterrence conditions, but it means we may have an exceedingly difficult time determining it.

62. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War* [in en] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.87.

While each case involves a target state that lacks the direct ability for nuclear retaliation, there may be a risk that NWU against the target state would compel a nuclear security sponsor to retaliate in-kind on the target's behalf. If the nuclear state leader believes that NWU could plausibly lead to nuclear retaliation by a nuclear power ally of the enemy, it would be sufficient for him to practice strategic inhibition.

Due to the considerable scale of destruction of nuclear retaliation, leaders will evaluate the value of any major military interventions under the specter of an unacceptable nuclear reprisal. Nuclear weapons first-use is no exception. Advocacy for the military action will depend in part on the credibility of retaliatory threat of what Herman Kahn called "controlled nuclear retaliation" on vulnerable targets.[63] An act of nuclear reprisal would underscore a failure of extended deterrence, and signify a willingness to escalate toward general war. To effectively test the competing theories of NWU advocacy, the Nuclear Taboo and Strategic Decisiveness, the case cannot include a credible threat of nuclear retaliation perceived by leaders.

When considering military escalations like NWU, a leader ought to consider how likely would NWU trigger a nuclear reprisal by a third-party nuclear sponsor. That likelihood depends on the credibility of such a threat. The credibility of a threat to retaliate is a function of the states national interest, capabilities, and resolve.

- National Interest. Herman Kahn identified three types of deterrence settings based on the degree of interest at stake.[64] Type I deterrence, the most vital interests, referred to preventing direct attacks on sovereign territory. Type II deterrence referred to preventing nuclear or major conventional attacks on allies.[65] Finally, Type III deterrence, the least vital of interests, referred to preventing attacks on third parties other than allies. The best cases to test the competing theories are Type III settings where estimates of

63. Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* [in en] (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 232.

64. Ibid., p. 232, 281.

65. Ibid., p. 282.

nuclear retaliation are least credible.

- Capabilities. Credibility of controlled nuclear retaliation also depends on capably a patron state could deliver on a threat. This nuclear capability is primarily determined by the size of the weapons stockpile (i.e. retaliation would not undermine Type I deterrence), and delivery (i.e. vulnerable targets are available, given existing delivery technology and enemy defense systems). The best cases to test the competing theories are those where capabilities are in question.

- Resolve. The credibility of a threat of nuclear retaliation depends on how committed the enemy is to following through on it. While some suggest that this is solely a function of national interest, the degree of commitment may depend on whether or not the commitment was made explicit. If the potential nuclear patron makes an explicit threat to retaliate, it has implicated its reputation and consequently may be more committed to retaliate to NWU. Moreover, the state can demonstrate resolve by introducing commitment thresholds (e.g. trip-wire tactics) into the theater of conflict.[66] Otherwise, its resolve is solely a function of its interests, and the implicit threat is less credible than the explicit one. The best cases then to test the competing theories are those where no nuclear sponsor has made an explicit threat to retaliate in-kind to a nuclear threat, and even better if it has no explicit security commitment to the target state.

To the extent that a nuclear security sponsor aimed to deter aggression, each selected case is, by definition, an instance of extended general deterrence failure.[67] The limited wars in question were not stopped. The question moves to how credible is the immediate deterrence, wherein a conventional war is in progress and there is some kind of risk that NWU would be something special that compels the sponsor to also escalate in-kind.

66. Schelling, *The Strategy Of Conflict*.

67. Huth, "Detterance and International Cconflict: Empirical Findings And Theoretical Debates.," pp. 25-48.

Each selected case matches the first and third criteria for low threat credibility very well. First, to the extent that there is a risk at all, each case is characterized as a Type III deterrence scenario. Second, each case lacked an explicit commitment by a nuclear adversary to retaliate in-kind to NWU against the target state. In each case the potential nuclear security sponsor refrained from introducing automatic "trip-wire" commitment thresholds into the target state. In terms of capabilities, while early nuclear states lacked adequate delivery systems and stockpiles for credible nuclear retaliation, later nuclear retaliators run the major risk of converting a Type III scenario into a Type I scenario.

Empirically, if a leader's advocacy for NWU was constrained by a fear of nuclear retaliation, what would it look like? The evidence should show within the case that as the credibility of a retaliatory threat increased, NWU advocacy should decrease. Moreover, in the documents that record deliberations over whether to employ nuclear weapons, the evidence should at minimum, show concern for retaliation in-kind by a nuclear security sponsor. All communications and research that raise this issue have been included in the analysis of each case.

2.4.1 Constructing the Dependent Variable: NWU Advocacy

The dependent variable (DV) is the degree of advocacy for nuclear weapons-use (NWU) among the state's key decision-makers. This DV needs a constructed range of values that unambiguously distinguishes observations, designed in a way to aptly evaluate the competing theories. Additionally, the set of DV indicators - each decision-maker - needs to be clearly identified, and their data easy to compile and segment for analysis. To test the competing explanations, the DV construct needs to be able to identify all possible observations and distinguish them a theoretically significant way. Below are the resulting DV values.

0. Opposition without Calculation. The leader rejects NWU as an option against the enemy. The leader does not refer to any potential benefits of NWU, and thus no explicit cost-benefit consideration is made. The leader demonstrates no condition where NWU is a viable

DV: NWU Advocacy Level
0. Opposition without calculation
1. Unsure/Ambivalent
2. Conditionality
3. Active support

Table 2.5: Dependent variable values.

military option. This excludes considering conditions outside the scope of the dissertation question, i.e. nuclear retaliation, nuclear preemption, or general nuclear war.

1. Unsure/Ambivalent. The leader participates or otherwise inquires about the value of NWU. However, the observation does not state or imply the leader's conditions of support or opposition. An observation of this type implies that he either a) has conditions under which he would advocate NWU that are unstated, or that b) he has yet to conclude what those conditions may be. While these are distinct observations, neither help illuminate any theory at work; consequently, combining these two types does not introduce any measurement problems.

2. Conditionality. The leader demonstrates that there are plausible conditions under which he advocates the use of nuclear weapons. There are two types of conditionality observations. A leader may declare support if a certain war condition or set of war conditions is met. Alternatively, a leader may declare opposition due to an unmet war condition or set of war conditions.

3. Active support. The leader explicitly supports the use of nuclear weapons in the current military situation.

DV Indicators and Segmentation

Prior to gathering the evidence for a case, each case study identifies the set of relevant executives that would bear on the question of NWU. For example, for the US-Korean War, the civilian leaders are the Presidents, Secretaries of State and Defense, Directors of Policy Planning, and the Chair of the Atomic Energy Commission. The military leaders are the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, the U.N. Supreme Commanders, and the Field Commanders. The organizations are the National Security Council and the Policy Planning Staff. The positions selected to be the DV indicators are justified in each case study.

Observations of advocacy by a leader is retrieved from two sources. First, private statements made by the decision-maker in question and his office are applied. This data is gathered from primary, secondary, and recollection sources. This includes personal diaries and taped recordings among leaders. Second, private statements by the leader that are associated with any specific actions they make in pursuit of their preferences (e.g. privately deploying nuclear ballistics to the theater of operations). In cases where data have multiple sources or multiple observations of advocacy, each source will be recorded as its own observation.

Furthermore, the DV values can be usefully compiled and segmented in three ways. First, the DV values can be segmented by each leader within a particular case. Second, they can be segmented by military versus civilian leadership. And finally, these segmentations can be compiled for between-case considerations. Each segmentation will allow for assessing multiple assertions from each theory.

2.4.2 The Independent Variable: Assessed War Situation

The independent variable (IV) is the war situation that leaders assess. In each case, the war situations vary greatly. Throughout, leaders assess the emerging situation and the plausible war situations that could follow. Many of those conditions are theoretically plausible situations where nuclear weapons could be considered. Each theory predicts different patterns of NWU advocacy, given the changing war situation.

Constructing IV Values

The IV construct needs to be able to capture all possible assessed war situations under which the question of NWU could reasonably be considered. Below are the resulting IV values.

IV: Assessed War Situation
Tactical opportunity: Battlefield
Strategic opportunity: Denial
Strategic opportunity: Punishment
Break stalemate: Escalation
Prevent strategic loss
Forestall major defeat

Table 2.6: Independent variable values.

A) Tactical opportunity: Leaders assess whether particular enemy targets a battlefield operation would be more successfully destroyed with nuclear weapons, relative to existing conventional alternatives. Alternatively, leaders may assess whether the introduction of nuclear weapons would make otherwise unavailable targets available for new operations.

B) Strategic opportunity through Denial. Leaders assess whether they can deny the enemy a military victory by striking some set of counterforce targets with nuclear weapons.

C) Strategic opportunity through Punishment. Leaders assess whether they can sufficiently punish the enemy by striking some set of countervalue targets with nuclear weapons.

D) Break stalemate: Leaders assess whether they can favorably break a military stalemate with the enemy by military escalation involving nuclear weapons, and induce a major strategic pivot in the war.

E) Prevent strategic loss. Leaders assess options in the face of a potential loss that has major strategic implications in the war, and whether nuclear weapons would play a role.

F) Forestall major defeat. Leaders assess what to do in the face of a nimble major defeat, and whether nuclear weapons would play a role to alter the outcome.

2.5 Theory Predictions

Explanations of nuclear weapons-use advocacy are divided into a normative theory and a consequentialist theory. Nuclear Taboo represents the normative theory and Strategic Decisiveness represents the consequentialist theory. Each asserts a different mechanism to best

Nuclear Taboo: Predicted Patterns of NWU Advocacy	
Tactical opportunity	Oppose
Strategic opportunity: Denial	Oppose
Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Oppose
Break stalemate: Escalate	Oppose
Prevent strategic loss	Oppose
Forestall major defeat	Unsure

Table 2.7: Taboo: Predictions of NWU advocacy for each war assessment.

explain patterns of advocacy for NWU, given the assessed war situation. This section describes each theory and their predictions on the relationship between assessed war conditions and NWU advocacy.

2.5.1 Nuclear Taboo

Given the assessed war situation (IV), Taboo says that NWU advocacy will vary very little. And, advocacy will correspond with the increase in devastation that NWU could entail by declining monotonically over time. Moral qualms against NWU has cultivated a norm, and that norm forecloses any serious considerations in the future. That means that the situation in war should not really increase degree of advocacy. Non-use is the result of sustained moral aversion to breaking norms on harm being too great.

2.5.2 Strategic Decisiveness

Given the assessed war situation (IV), Decisiveness says advocacy varies in systematic ways. The greatest factors that drives patterns of advocacy are big strategic opportunities in war. Battlefield opportunities to hit special target is a factor and can induce mild advocacy but never sufficient to lead to strong advocacy. The history of non-use is the result of nuclear weapons being poor weapon choices that will guarantee non-decisive effects. Details of this lesson are baked into doctrine, regulating future decisions.

Decisiveness: Predicted Patterns of NWU Advocacy	
Tactical opportunity	Oppose
Strategic opportunity: Denial	Conditionality
Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Conditionality
Break stalemate: Escalate	Oppose
Prevent strategic loss	Conditionality
Forestall major defeat	Active support

Table 2.8: Decisiveness: Predictions of NWU advocacy for each war assessment.

2.6 Choosing the Best Method

This section first identifies the methodological constraints involved in testing the theories. It then argues for a case study method that uses a process-tracing approach toward identifying observations. Thereafter, it details the choices for data indicators, sources, and my procedure for coding. Finally, the section will highlight all main sources for potential bias, and my proposed effort to attenuate them.

Evaluating the theories of NWU advocacy faces three empirical constraints. First, only observational data is available. It is simply not plausible to experimentally simulate the decision-making conditions of war and get reliable measurements of advocacy. Second, there is not enough data to conduct quantitative analyses and make any kind of inferences. Given the scope conditions, there are not many remaining historical scenarios to answer the question. Third, the sources of data about the decision-making process may be biased. Some sources may operate under a mission that privileges advocacy or non-advocacy, leading to biased, organizational preferences. Additionally, certain observations may have had specific audiences in mind, and their intent may have been less than authentic. Moreover, some sources may offer many observations of advocacy patterns, while other equally important sources offered less. Ultimately, not all observations are completely comparable.

Methods Constraints
Observational data only
Potential bias in data sources
Small-n observations

Table 2.9: Constraints to available methods for testing.

2.6.1 Case Study and Process-Tracing

Given the methodological constraints, this project uses comparative case and process-tracing methods. Case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially within the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."[68] The potential uses for good case studies are descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory analyses.[69] It is best suited to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken; how they were implemented; and with what results.[70] By comparing data-rich cases, good case study research can corroborate and privilege one logic over others, but may also falsify one or more alternatives.[71]

A major limitation of small-n case studies is that the research lacks systematic control of observations to consider partial correlations.[72] Lijphart (1970) argued that one could minimize this inherent weakness by a) increasing number of cases; b) reducing number of variables considered; c) find highly comparable cases; and/or d) construct relatively simple theories with few variables. As a consequence, methodologists have developed process tracing in order to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are

68. Robert K. Yin, "The Case Study Crisis: Some Answers" [in en], *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1981): 58, doi:10.2307/2392599.

69. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

70. Yin, "The Case Study Crisis: Some Answers," See Schramm, "Notes on Case Studies of Instructional Media," 1971 in.

71. Arend Lijphart, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy In Comparative Research." [in en], *Comparative Political Studies* 8, no. 2 (1975): 158–177; Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, "The Logic Of Comparative Social Inquiry." [in pt], *The American Political Science Review* 64, no. 4 (1970): 1255, doi:10.2307/1958372.

72. Arend Lijphart, ""Comparative Politics And The Comparative Method"" [in en], *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (1971): p. 684, doi:10.2307/1955513.

DV	Level of advocacy for NWU
Scope	After 1945, no nuclear retaliation, strategic failure

Table 2.10: Dependent variable and empirical scope.

translated into outcomes.[73] Here, the decision-making process is the center of investigation and involves a systematic attempt to reconstruct both the actor‘s definitions of the situation as well as develop a theory of action.[74]

Process tracing has become a key method of within-case analysis.[75] Today, it is considered a strong pattern model of explanation for qualitative data, and can be used to decisively describe political phenomena, identify causal relationships, as well as evaluate causal claims.[76] [][]kaplan1964a[Also see,][p. 211]george2005a[][]collier2011a By tracing the causal process from each logic's independent variable, through the available logics, to the dependent variable, I should be able to rule out potential intervening variables and omitted variables.[77] In order to process-trace each case, I will identify the major executive decision points and organize them into chronologically discrete intervals.

2.6.2 Data Collection and Sources

Thanks to a nearly full digitalization of declassified and non-classified governmental documents over the last few years, archival research for American politics has become much more straightforward. For American political data, I will be collecting primary data from eight main sources:

73. Alexander George, McKeown, and Tim, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational decision Making," in *Advances in Information Processing in Organization*, ed. Smith Richard and Robert Coulam (Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, 1985), p. 85.

74. Ibid., p. 36-7.

75. Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2nd, ed. David Collier and Henry Brady (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 237–242.

76. For the pattern model of explanation Paul Diesing, *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971).

77. Andrew Bennett, *Condemned To Repetition?* [In en] (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 132.

- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA is an independent governmental agency tasked with gathering and preserving government records, including, including all presidential proclamations and declassified correspondence.

- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Directives Library. This library stores all declassified and non-classified documents, correspondence, and assessments from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Library. This library records and stores all previously unreleased information from the U.S. government that has been fully or partially disclosed through FOIA petitioning. This includes all declassified documents from the National Intelligence Council.

- The American Presidency Project. This archive funded by the University of California at Santa Barbara has consolidated, coded, and organized all Messages and Papers of the Presidents, and contains thousands of other documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary, election debates, and much more.

- Office of the Secretary of Defense Library. Maintained by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, this archive organizes all documents, including memoranda, through the Secretary of Defense that are non-classified or have been declassified.

- Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS). Maintained by the U.S. State Department's Office of the Historian, FRUS archives all official documentary record of major U.S. foreign policy decisions as well as all significant diplomatic activity.

- The National Security Archive. Maintained by George Washington University, this project combines assertive FOIA requests and declassified documents with scholastic inquiry.

- Presidential Recordings Program. Maintained by the University of Virginia, the Miller Center archive has transcribed over 5,000 hours of secretly recorded meetings and

telephone conversations conducted by presidents between 1940 and 1973. Additionally, the Miller Center has transcribed all recorded speeches and daily diary entries made by U.S. presidents.

These sources, combined with voluminous secondary sources for each case ought to give an ample body of data. While there will surely be some archival overlap among the sources above, the sources also provide a nice range in order to increase confidence in the findings. Regarding content search queries, there are hundreds of thousands of documents from these archives. Fortunately, nearly all of them have been digitized, annotated, and indexed. Thus, I will be able to filter documents according to relevant key words. Each case chapter will have their own set of keyword searches, and will be made explicit. Not surprisingly, "nuclear" is a great example of a document content filter that I will be employing.

2.6.3 Avoiding Bias

Case study can never compile 100 percent of data to guarantee a bias-free set of evidence. That said, my search and collection procedure needs to to be maximally-free of bias. That goal includes three observations:

- Biased sources. Recognize which organizational sources may have a built-in bias. Acknowledge and attempt to balance with countervailing sources. For example, though the JCS documents are an important source of evidence, they are less likely to document all moral reluctance regarding an action. A countervailing source could be personal diaries where moral trepidation would most likely be written.

- Incompleteness. Recognize systematically incomplete data. Such bias is most likely to result from continued classification of documents. Under many circumstances, this problem could be severe. However, the moral thesis involved justifications least likely to remain classified; it is both non-strategic in nature and would promote an image of leadership benevolence. In fact, the uncertain world thesis is the hardest prove because

bureaus are obliged to feign certainty and prognosticate even when their confidence in the analysis is very low. Bureaus are incentivized to predict the strategic future even when prediction is unavailable.

- Unevenness. Recognize that some sources may provide a lot of data and some may provide very little, but that volume does not necessarily imply importance. Sources need to be weighted accordingly.For example, three reports organized by the Secretary of Defense and the Chair of the JCS for the President could be more significant that 70 memos between local commanders.

2.7 Case Selection

There are always trade-offs on case selection for a dissertation.[78] The ideal cases are data-rich, involve extreme values on the independent variables and/or dependent variable, exhibit large within-case variance, and imply a divergence of predictions made of the case by competing theories. Additionally, ideal cases are relevant to current policy problems, are prototypical of case background conditions, and maximally appropriate for controlled comparisons.[79] The first round of cases I use to evaluate the theories are the US-Korean War (1950-1953), the US-Vietnam War (1965-1973), and The Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989). Each case satisfies the scope conditions: It occurs after the initial demonstration in 1945; the nuclear state is in conflict with a non-nuclear adversary that lacks a credible nuclear security sponsor; and the nuclear state lost, failing to achieve key objectives regarding a pivotal geostrategic interest. Moreover, the chosen case studies each serve a different empirical purpose: one to mostly clearly demonstrate mechanisms, one hard case, and one with a very different nuclear state making the decisions.

78. Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods For Students Of Political Science* [in en] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 77-8.

79. Ibid., pp. 78-80.

U.S-Korean War

First, the U.S-Korean War occurs early in nuclear age and provides the best insight in viewing the underlying mechanisms of decision. This case has ample primary data and has the most explicit internal deliberations about the scope of value for the nascent arsenal. It also provides the precedents for the emerging U.S. nuclear doctrine that serves as the assumptions for future considerations. The case occurs after 1945, and the U.S. ultimately failed to unite Korea.

Regarding whether there existed a credible risk of nuclear retaliation, the only potential nuclear retaliator was the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union had made overtures to protect Communism, it had made no explicit nuclear commitment of extend nuclear deterrence to the Communist regime in Korea. Moreover, during the case period, the Soviet Union lacked major nuclear capabilities, and would not reach anything close to parity with the U.S. until the several years after the war.[80] Moreover, the Soviets could not even conduct their first nuclear air drop until mid-1951. Thereafter, they did have the capabilities to either strike the vulnerable Strategic Air Command base in the United Kingdom or the U.S. air base in Japan with their small arsenal; this served as some constraint on Eisenhower but the constraint was definitely not overriding.[81] Thermonuclear weapons did not exist throughout this case.[82]

In fact, in this respect, the U.S. Korean War is an excellent test of correlating threat credibility with NWU advocacy. At the beginning of the war, the Soviet Union had virtually no nuclear deterrent, particularly no Type III deterrent power. By the end of the war, the Soviet nuclear capability has rapidly improved. However, as the case study will detail, U.S.

80. A year into the conflict in 1951, the Soviets possessed only 25 nuclear weapons while the U.S. had over 450. For more on this major asymmetry, see Nathan Jennings, "Nuclear Weapons and the Korean War: A Precarious Beginning for the Tradition of Non-Use" [in en], *Small Wars Journal* 10, no. 11 (November 4, 2014).

81. Memorandum of Conversation, December 1, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, p. 1279; Record of Department of State-JCS meeting, February 13, 1951, FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII, p. 177.

82. The first weaponized nuclear test was by the U.S. in Operation Castle Bravo, 1951.

willingness to escalate (with nuclear weapons) increased significantly over the course of the war. In fact, by 1953, NWU had become an integral part of the general policy of escalation. War expansion would at minimum include nuclear strikes on airbases in Manchuria, where such weapons may actually be effective. The correlation of Soviet nuclear capabilities and U.S. NWU advocacy was actually inverse, the opposite of what a credible fear of nuclear retaliation would expect.[83]

U.S-Vietnam War

Second, the US-Vietnam War serves as a hard case to evaluate my theory. It is a generation later, the supposed Taboo has had a good deal of time to develop, and the U.S. appears to hold a significant conventional advantage against the adversary. And, the U.S. failed in their key strategic objective of securing South Vietnam from military defeat and Communist rule.

Regarding whether there existed a credible risk of nuclear retaliation, the two potential retaliators were the Soviet Union and China. China had just developed remedial nuclear capabilities in 1964, but still had only a minuscule stockpile suitable for minimal deterrence. China's most credible deterrent threat was still a massive conventional expansion. The case will show that most U.S. were prepared to meet a massive Chinese conventional escalation with NWU. With regards to the likelihood of Soviet intervention, U.S. had less certainty, particularly in the period preceding the war. However, the case shows that the expectation of nuclear retaliation to U.S. strikes in Vietnam were remote. Moreover, if the fear existed and overrode NWU advocacy, evidence should not show any significant increases in advocacy when the assessed war situation changes. However, NWU advocacy does vary meaningfully through the case, and the chapter details those patterns.

83. For an authoritative review of this shift, see Marc Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy And The Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954." [in en], *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1988), doi:10.2307/2538735.

Soviet-Afghan War

Finally, the Soviet-Afghan War allows theoretical consideration while controlling for omitted variables embedded in the selecting the United States (U.S.). Regime-type effects, decision-making authority, alliance relationships, etc. can be contrasted so that findings cannot be falsely attributed to something peculiar to the United States.

In Afghanistan, the only plausible nuclear retaliator to the Soviet Union was the U.S. This case is curious because even though the credibility of a nuclear retaliation by the U.S. to Soviet NWU in Afghanistan is very low, Soviet leaders indicated some paranoia about American enthusiasm for nuclear attacks. The U.S. had made no direct security commitments to Afghanistan; at best, it was a Type III deterrence setting. And, the U.S. had not introduced any commitment mechanisms or thresholds to deter major Soviet escalation in the region. The case acknowledges that certain Soviet leaders assumed that the U.S. wanted an opportunity to have a nuclear escalation, the case study is structured to best evaluate other drivers of NWU advocacy for the period.

2.8 Summary

This chapter asks what best determines patterns of advocacy for NWU among key decision-makers, and why since 1945 it has yet to be strong enough to lead to actual NWU. After demonstrating the significance of this question, it introduced the theories that scholars currently use to explain 70 years of non-use, namely nuclear deterrence, the nuclear taboo, and tradition. Since existing theories try to explain non-use, the chapter details how none can be tested or falsified, relegating them to evidence-based stories. Moreover, the chapter highlights numerous additional shortcomings of each existing theory.

Once the inadequacy of existing theories were established, the chapter offered the theory of Decisiveness on NWU advocacy. It argued that key leaders are not constrained by taboos or traditions; instead, they advocate for NWU to the extent that it can achieve pivotal

strategic goals better than existing conventional options. After defining the meaning of decisive actions, detailing basic strategic assumptions, and the special properties of nuclear weapons, it hypothesized how the key determinant of advocacy is decisiveness. It then provided the rationale for how the indecisive use of nuclear weapons has numerous short-term consequences to both the continued conduct of the war as well as the nuclear state's relative power. It argued that any major lessons from decision-making around NWU are integrated into the state's nuclear doctrine and treated as baseline assumptions in future nuclear considerations. Observations of nuclear non-consideration in contemporary crises reflect how leaders have previously concluded the extremely limited military utility in NWU.

After offering the theory of Decisiveness for NWU advocacy, the chapter develops the research design and scope, and operationalizes the variables needed to evaluate the theories' hypotheses. It identifies the empirical constraints and asserts that process-tracing through crucial case studies will be the best method for testing and analysis. Finally, it selects the first set of cases that will serve as the empirical foundation for this dissertation. The next chapter begins the empirical part of the dissertation, with the US-Korean War.

CHAPTER 3

THE US-KOREAN WAR

3.1 Overview of the Case

United States (U.S.) leaders continuously refrained from using nuclear weapons in the Korean War (1950-1953) because they believed doing so would be militarily ineffective, and would consequently endanger their allies enough to dissolve the critical collective security arrangement amidst the Soviet threat. Since U.S. leaders believed that the future of American security absolutely required a favorable global military balance against Communism, the security and cooperation of Western European allies were vital. Free world leaders believed that non-decisive nuclear weapons-use (NWU) would undermine the nuclear deterrent in Europe and invite general war. Thus, to the extent that leaders believed NWU to be non-decisive in producing military or political victories, they advocated against it. The case also demonstrates that as the fear of losing relative power subsides, the willingness to use nuclear weapons increases.

This chapter is organized into six parts. First, it provides an historical context and overview of the case. Second, it elaborates the nuclear state's command structure and authorization protocol for NWU. It also identifies the specific actors that filled each meaningful role in that command structure. Third, it outlines the strategic goals of the nuclear state regarding the theater of conflict, in this case the United States in Korea. Fourth, it outlines the US' basic nuclear doctrine, leading up to the case. Fifth, it details what the theory predicts about NWU advocacy patterns through different phases of the war. Fifth, it describes the data on decision-making in each phase of the case, and then process-traces how the conditions of the war determined leaders' level of advocacy. Each phase includes a subsection summarizing the civilian and military advocacy levels therein. Finally, it will summarize the findings and evaluate the competing theories on NWU advocacy.

3.2 Historical Context

The Korean War (June 25th, 1950 - July 27th, 1953) had confirmed the worst fears of American leaders about the inherent threat of Communism. By 1950, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense had accepted that Communism was a "fanatic faith antithetical to our own and looking to impose absolute authority over the rest of the world."[1] Stalin's Soviet Union appeared committed to extending its Communist sphere of influence, and undermine the basic security of the U.S. and its capitalist allies. If the Soviet sphere of influence were allowed to grow, U.S. leadership believed the Soviet Union would become so powerful that eventually no coalition of nations could balance against it.[2] Essentially, Communism, championed by the Soviet Union, was deemed an existential threat to the future of free society.

The U.S. would determine that the best grand strategy for long-term survival would be a containment "policy of calculated and gradual coercion" against Soviet ambitions.[3] Truman had already set U.S. foreign policy on track to contain Soviet expansionism via economic and logistical support to Western allies, Greece, and Turkey.[4] However, in order to deter or repel Soviet invasions and maintain global commitments, the U.S. was dangerously inadequate militarily and required two-to-three years to develop capabilities.[5] Once the Soviet Union shocked the world by ending the US' nuclear monopoly in 1949, U.S. leaders grimly envisioned a long and dire arms race that could easily end in general war. Certainly, when Mao's rebellion drove the Chinese nationalists off the mainland and established a Communist regime

1. *NSC-68: United States Objectives And Programs For National Security* (Independence, MO, April 14, 1950), Analysis, I. Background of the Present Crisis.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Analysis, IV. The Underlying Conflict in the Realm of Ideas and Values between the U.S. Purpose and the Kremlin Design, A. Nature of Conflict.

4. For excellent scholastic consideration of Truman's speech and emerging Truman Doctrine, see Denise M. Bostdorff, *Proclaiming The Truman Doctrine* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008).

5. For the authoritative analysis of this window of vulnerability, see Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy And The Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954.," p. 12.

in China, the US' existential threat seemed globally ascendant.

Inadvertently, Korea ended up at the crux of the emerging existential rivalry. At the conclusion of World War II, the Soviets had driven out the Japanese from North Korea, while the U.S. had quickly seized the south in order to prevent a full Korean overrun. The superpowers agreed to divide Korea temporarily at the 38th parallel until a unified Korean government could be established. In 1946, Kim-il Sung organized a Stalinist Communist government in the north, while exiled nationalist Syngman Rhee returned to set up a rival government in the south. Each had fervent ambitions to unify Korea under his own regime. Through 1949-1950, Kim ardently requested Stalin for permission to invade the South.

In January of 1950, Secretary of State Acheson made a strategic blunder by omitting Korea from of America's declared Far East Defense Perimeter.[6] The omission resulted from a major miscalculation of the intentions of Communist rivals. Combined with the US' apparent unwillingness to save Nationalist China, Mao, Kim, and Stalin all believed that U.S. would not defend South Korea against a nimble invasion.[7] Once Stalin relented and allowed Kim to invade, the U.S. and allies were shocked by the belligerence and audaciousness. The invasion of Korea confirmed to U.S. leaders that the future of the free world depended on checking Communist aggression anywhere.[8] Moreover, leaders feared that if Korea became a Communist bastion, then the fragile post-war Japan would be unacceptably vulnerable to attack and subversion. On June 25th, under the aegis of the United Nations, the U.S. moved decisively, if haphazardly, to intervene on behalf of the South.

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6. Acheson's Speech to the National Press Club, 12 January 1950. For an analysis of the speech and the role it played into Communist decision-making, see James Matray, "Dean Acheson's Press Club Speech Reexamined" [in en], *The journaltitle Of Conflict Studies* 22, no. 1 (2002): 28–55.

7. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* [in en] (Princeton, N.J: Princeton Univ. Pr, 1990), pp. 27-8.

8. Ibid., p. 35. This would later be referred to as "Domino Theory" applied to Southeast Asia, described publicly by Eisenhower, "President Eisenhower's News Conference, April 7, 1954, Public Papers of the Presidents, 1954, p. 382.

3.2.1 Why the Case is a Great Fit

The Korean War is an excellent candidate for evaluating the theory. First, by the time of the war, the U.S. had amassed approximately 300 atomic bombs and was embarking on producing tactical nuclear munitions.[9] Neither North Korea or China had atomic capabilities. The Soviet Union did have a nascent arsenal so special attention will be paid to the fear of Soviet nuclear reprisal. That said, because the Americans had so many more bombs and the Soviets still lacked effective means of delivery, it is often argued that the Korean War was fought under a continued American nuclear monopoly.[10] Relatedly, the Korean War started before the advent of thermonuclear weapons, which were at least 40 times stronger than their predecessors.[11] This meant the many military and civilian leaders alike saw atomic war as something that could be waged and won.

Second, the U.S. paid dearly for waging war and failed to achieve their strategic ambitions. After nearly three years of bloody combat in a seemingly remote part of the world, the U.S. accrued approximately 33,000 deaths and over 105,000 wounded personnel.[12] The South Korean allies suffered gravely and accrued approximately 415,000 combined military and civilian deaths and over 429,000 wounded.[13] Moreover, the U.S. was not shy about dispensing havoc; the costs upon the enemy were catastrophic. Beyond the decimation of all North Korean cities, the combined death toll of North Koreans and Chinese exceeded 1.5 million.[14] The willingness of the U.S. to cause such devastation highlights the puzzle of nuclear non-use.

Third, in terms of data collection and analysis, the Korean War has undergone a thorough document declassification. Basically all relevant material is now available. Any remaining

9. FRUS, 1950, Vol. I, p. 170

10. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* [in en] (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), ch. 3.

11. Samuel Gladston and Philip Dolan, *The Effects Of Nuclear Weapons* [in en], technical report (United States Department Of Defense, 1977).

12. David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter America and the Korean War* [in en] (New York: Hyperion Books, 2008), pp. 12-3.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 27.

classified documents appear to only have tactical relevance; there appear to be no remaining documents on decision-making at the top echelon, at least about the question of NWU.

3.3 The Decision-Makers

In the United States, only the President can authorize the use of nuclear weapons. This section describes the nature and limits of that authority as well as the structure and influence of his principal advisers.

3.3.1 Who Makes the Decision

Nuclear weapons are the first technology of harm where the military requires approval by civilian leadership in order to implement. Since the *McMahon Act of 1946*, all development, management, and applications of nuclear energy would fall exclusively under civilian authority.[15] the Act created "a system that made atomic weapons a separate part of the nation's arsenal, with the President of the United States the sole authority over their use."[16] Moreover, it established the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) to regulate all matters of atomic energy, including weapons. Section 6 of the act required the Atomic Energy Commission to develop nuclear weapons "only to the extent that the express consent and direction of the President of the United States has been obtained," and used "as he deems necessary in the interest of national defense."[17] While the President had the sole authority to employ atomic weapons, the act obliged him to consult the Chair of the AEC first. The chair could inform other relevant parties but was ultimately required to comply with presidential directives. During the Korean War, Gordon Dean served as Chair of the AEC.[18]

15. McMahon Act is also known as the *Atomic Energy Act of 1946. Pub. L* [in es], 1946, 755–775.

16. Garry Bomb Wills, *Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State* [in en] (New York: Penguin Press, 2010).

17. David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins Of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons And American Strategy, 1945-1960." [in en], *International Security* 7, no. 4 (1983): pp. 67-8. doi:10.2307/2626731.

18. The significance of the AEC would decrease steadily beginning in 1954 during the Eisenhower Administration. For example, the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 allowed the Pentagon to manufacture weapons and

3.3.2 Who Advises Him

The President heavily relies on both civilian and military advisers on the question of NWU. During this period, there are three civilian offices and two agencies that principally influence the President: Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, National Security Adviser. and the National Security Council (NSC). Under President Truman, the Secretary of State was Dean Acheson, serving from January 1949 through January 1953. As well, Truman had three Secretaries of Defense during the Korean War, briefly Louis Johnson until September 1950, George Marshall until September 1951, and then Robert Lovitt through January 1953. Under President Eisenhower, the Secretary of State was John Foster Dulles, serving from January 1953 through the end of the war. Throughout the war, his Secretary of Defense was Charles Wilson.

In addition to specific offices, two civilian agencies influenced the President and his staff. First, the State Department had established the PPS to be the principal mechanism of strategic policy analysis and advice for the Secretary of State. During the Truman Administration, the influential Policy Planning Staff (PPS) Director was Paul Nitze. Under Eisenhower during the war, the PPS Director was Robert Bowie. Second, the National Security Act of 1947 created the NSC to advise the President on integrating domestic, foreign and military policy into a coherent national security platform.[19] At the same time, the National Military Establishment was renamed as the Department of Defense. The purpose was to unify the Army, Navy, and Air Force into a federated structure. Through both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, the basic NSC procedure was to evaluate drafts written primarily by the PPS, submit to the President for approval, and once approved,

weapons components. That same year, nuclear weapons were dispersed around the United States and abroad to assure their greater safety from Soviet attack and their operational readiness. Additionally, once thermonuclear weapons had been created, Eisenhower ordered that only these new and more powerful weapons, with yields of more than 600 kilotons, would require the AEC to maintain custody of the capsule that contains fissionable material. For more, see Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians*, pp. 163-164.

19. *The National Security Act of 1947, Pub* [in en], 1947, amended August 10, 1949, to ensure their subordination to the Secretary of Defense.

Summary of Key Decision-Makers		
Position	Name	Term
Civilian		
President	Harry Truman	April 1945 - Jan. 1953
President	Dwight Eisenhower	Jan 1953 - Jan 1961
Secretary of State	Dean Acheson	Jan. 1949 - Jan. 1953
Secretary of State	John Dulles	Jan 1953 - Apr. 1959
Secretary of Defense	Louis Johnson	Mar. 1949 - Sept. 1950
Secretary of Defense	George Marshall	Sept. 1950 - Sept. 1951
Secretary of Defense	Robert Lovett	Sept. 1951 - Jan. 1953
Secretary of Defense	Charles Wilson	Jan 1953 - Oct. 1957
Director of Policy Planning	Paul Nitze	May 1950 - Jan. 1953
Director of Policy Planning	Robert Bowie	Jan. 1953 - Jan. 1957
Chair of AEC	Gordon Dean	May 1950 - June 1953
Military		
Chair of JCS	Omar Bradley	Aug. 1949 - Aug. 1953
U.N. Commander	Douglas MacArthur	June 1950 - Apr. 1951
U.N. Commander	Matthew Ridgway	Apr. 1951 - May 1952
Field Commander	Walton Walker	June 1950 - Dec. 1950
Field Commander	Matthew Ridgway	Dec. 1950 - Apr. 1951
Field Commander	James Van Fleet	Apr. 1951 - Mar 1953

Table 3.1: Key U.S. decision-makers through the Korean War 1950-1953.

implement. Occasionally, the President could directly request the NSC to appraise national security risks and make recommendations to him. Notably, Truman was agnostic about the effectiveness of the NSC due to its early bureaucratic bloat and range of staff loyalties to the Administration.[20] Consequently, while he took NSC products seriously, Truman more often relied on direct interactions with his cabinet and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In the military realm, the President, his Secretary of Defense and the NSC confer with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The JCS are a body senior military advisers that at the time comprised the Army and Air Force chiefs of staff, the chief of naval operations, and the chief of staff to the commander-in-chief. JCS activity is convened and regulated by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) who often acts as the principal voice on the JCS' collective counsel. While the JCS serves as the principal military body to advise the

20. Anna Kasten Nelson, "President Truman And The Evolution Of The National Security Council" [in en], *The journaltitle Of American History* 72, no. 2 (1985): pp. 360-378, doi:10.2307/1903380.

President on U.S. international security, its purview is subordinate to the Department of Defense. Finally, the JCS evaluates the information sent by a theater's field commanders and takes their operational requests into serious consideration. The United Nations (U.N.) Commander was established to oversee U.N. military efforts in Korea.[21] This position was first held by the daring and famous General Douglas MacArthur from the onset of the war until April 1950 when Truman relieved him of duty. MacArthur was replaced by General Matthew Ridgway from April 1951 through the conclusion of the war. In addition to the U.N. Supreme Commander, the JCS evaluated requests from the Field Commander in Korea (i.e. the general of the Eighth U.S. Army). The Korean War had three field commanders, namely Walton Walker until December 1950, Ridgway through April 1951 until his promotion to U.N. Commander, and finally James Van Fleet through the signing of the armistice.

3.4 Goals of the Nuclear State

3.4.1 Grand Strategic Goals

Leaders perceived the Communist ideology, championed by the might of the Soviet Union, as the critical threat to the security and long-term prosperity of the United States. To most, the Soviet Union was a ruthless, calculating enemy bent on world domination. If Stalin could shift the global military balance enough in his favor, U.S. leaders feared that in the short run, their vulnerable European allies would likely face communist subjugation. In the long-run, the isolated U.S. risked devolving into a garrisoned security state in order to survive. The Soviet Union and its sphere of influence appeared to constitute an existential threat to the vital interests of the U.S.

However, in 1950, U.S. leaders greatly feared great power war. Not only did general war

21. U.N. Security Council Resolution S/RES/83: Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea, adopted on July 7, 1950, recommended that members that provide military forces and support to South Korea "make such forces and other assistance available to a unified command under the United States of America".

Goals of the Nuclear State	
Grand Strategic	Secure a favorable global military balance while avoiding general war: Contain Communist expansion.
East Asia	Provide security assurances to allies: Japan, South Korea, and Chinese nationalists in Formosa.
Korea	Repel North Korean invasion while avoiding expanding the war. Diplomatic unification of Korea under anti-communist regime.

Table 3.2: Strategic Goals of the United States.

with the Soviet goliath portend terrible costs, but the U.S. and allies did not have a clear material advantage; it may not win.[22] Instead of aggression, the U.S. pursued a policy of containment: Frustrate the expansionist efforts of the Soviet Communism by economically, logistically, and militarily supporting those states in the 'free world' who were at risk of subversion. Containment required two grand strategic goals. First, it implied a massive buildup of military capabilities, including a vast development of its nuclear arsenal. The costs involved were hotly debated at the Congressional level until the North Korean invasion removed any doubt of the threat. Second, containment called for a "rapid progress toward the closer association of the free countries, in harmony with the concept of the United Nations."[23] An unwavering partnership among allies was vital to uphold a favorable global military balance.

3.4.2 Regional Goals: East Asia

Consistent with U.S. grand strategy, U.S. leaders provided security assurances to its free world allies in Asia: Japan, South Korea, and Chinese nationalists in Formosa. Particularly, the alliance with Japan offered the U.S. a fantastic basing opportunity in order to project American power in Asia. The North Korean invasion had removed all doubt about the communist threat to U.S. interests in the region and their willingness to subvert non-Communist

22. The authoritative account is Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy And The Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954.," pp. 12-14.

23. *NSC-68: United States Objectives And Programs For National Security*, IX. Possible Courses of Action.

regimes by bald, brute force. Losing Korea to communism would entail two risks to U.S. interests. Foremost, it would demonstrate the value of military belligerence to communist leaders. U.S. leaders believed that if they allowed communist regimes anywhere to expand or consolidate power by force, it would set a precedent of acquiescence and guarantee a cascade of belligerence. This could not be allowed. Second, losing Korea would put Japan in even greater danger of communist force. With the recent communist triumph of Mao in China, it appeared that the region was nimbly turning 'Red.'

3.4.3 Immediate Goals: Korea

Given the North Korean invasion, the United States had three immediate, interrelated goals. First, repel Kim-il Sung's invasion and prevent the collapse of the South Korean government. Second, coordinate the defense of Korea with allies under the aegis of a unified opposition in the form of the United Nations, led by the United States. Third, deter the Soviet Union or China from directly entering the war in defense of Kim. In tandem to these goals, the U.S. wanted to promote the unification of Korea under the South's nationalist regime through diplomatic means, and insulate it against future communist subversion.

3.5 What the Theories Predict

3.5.1 Nuclear Taboo

Taboo predicts that NWU advocacy will be low and ought to vary very little as the assessed war situation in Korea changes. Moral qualms engender a powerful norm about NWU and that norm ought to foreclose serious consideration. The emerging taboo makes decision-making fairly insensitive to changes in the war situation, exempting perhaps in the prospect of nuclear retaliation or general war. Non-use is the result of sustained moral aversion to breaking the emerging norm regarding nuclear harm being too great.

Predicted Patterns of Nuclear Weapons-Use Advocacy		
IV: Assessed War Situation	Nuclear Taboo	Decisiveness
Tactical opportunity	Oppose	Oppose
Strategic opportunity: Denial	Oppose	Conditional
Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Oppose	Conditional
Break Stalemate	Oppose	Oppose
Prevent strategic loss	Oppose	Conditional
Forestall major defeat	Unsure	Active support

Table 3.3: Predicted Patterns of Nuclear Weapons-Use Advocacy.

3.5.2 Strategic Decisiveness

Decisiveness predicts that NWU advocacy will vary in systematic ways as the assessed war situation changes. It expects that U.S. leaders will advocate for NWU to the extent that it would either solve a pivotal strategic problem in ways that existing conventional weapons cannot. Evidence from Korea ought to show that U.S. leaders will try – and fail – to find utility for nuclear weapons in their military operations, relative to existing conventional alternatives. For operations where NWU offers unique and decisive military value (e.g. striking massed enemy troops or airbases, or preventing conventional overrun), U.S. leaders will advocate to incorporate them into planning and use. Any restraint on NWU advocacy will come from either perceptions of military ineffectiveness or from credible threats of abandonment from allies.

Evidence ought to further show that leaders will emphasize the immediate effects of decisive versus non-decisive military outcomes from NWU on relative power. Non-decisive NWU would call into question the military and strategic competence of the U.S., and states will not rely upon an incompetent power to steward their international order. In terms of internal balancing, non-decisive NWU would reduce the deterrent value of the nuclear arsenal. It would demonstrate that limited nuclear strikes can be endured and overcome, demystifying the contours of what NWU can and cannot do.

In terms of external balancing, non-decisive NWU would be perceived to diminish the deterrent value for allies and perhaps even invite the enemy to match escalation and retaliate

against vulnerable allies, particularly those from where U.S. projects military power overseas (e.g. the United Kingdom and Japan). In this period, U.S. leaders depend heavily on their Western European alliances in order to sustain a favorable global military balance against the Soviet sphere of influence. Allies are expected to cooperate only so as long as their own security is not imperiled by U.S. NWU. Combined, non-decisive NWU would undermine the crucial nuclear deterrent that seemed to stave off a Soviet conquest of Western Europe as well as make certain allies a prime target for reprisal.

In terms of the institutional post-war order, non-decisive NWU would be perceived to demonstrate incompetence, misaligned national interests, and flippant deal-breaking. U.S. leaders are expected to care deeply about its strategic role of stewarding this order. Thus, we should expect to see that even the credible threat of irresponsible NWU could be adequate for allies to distance its association to the U.S., and abandon the collective security arrangement in favor of a European-only coalition.

3.6 Phases of Decision

The case of the Korean War has been divided into five key phases, distinguished according to either major pivots in the nature of the conflict or in changes in leadership that would meaningfully alter decision-making. The phases are (1) The onset of war by North Korea, (2) The entry of China in support of North Korea, (3) The expectation by U.S. leaders of major Chinese escalation, (4) A protracted military stalemate, and (5) The introduction of the Eisenhower Administration. Time-slicing the data according to these phase shifts allows us to identify key variables, their role in shifting advocacy, and allows for clearer comparisons among them. For each phase, the chapter provides the historical narrative, describe the data, and process-trace the relationships from between NWU assessments and leaders' associated levels of advocacy for NWU.

3.6.1 Onset of War: 1950

The first phase begins with the surprise North Korean invasion of the South and through the near conquest of North Korea by U.N. forces (June 25 – October 31, 1950). The dynamics of this decision-making period pivot once U.S. leaders discover that China has entered the war. First, this section describes the documented considerations during this phase. Second, it highlights relevant formal reports on NWU during this period. Finally, it assesses the overall levels of advocacy among key decision-makers.

North Korean Invasion

On June 25, Kim il-Sung's North Korean army shocked the U.S. and allies by invading the South. Within days, the surprised and poorly equipped South Korean troops were in full retreat. It appeared that North Korea might militarily control the entire peninsula in a mere three weeks.[24] At the time, many U.S. leaders believed that Kim was acting as a Soviet puppet; North Korea's invasion then implied Stalin's willingness to conquer non-Communist neighbors by brute force.[25] It was also feared that the invasion could simply be a Soviet gambit to draw out sizable U.S. forces and leave Europe vulnerable to military domination.[26] Consequently, it was never in question to U.S. leaders that the communist invasion in Korea must be repelled.[27] But at the same time, U.S. leaders deeply feared triggering a general war.[28] The outcome was that Korea would be waged as a sort of limited war, avoiding major escalations that would trigger a general war, in the pursuit of modest aims. Though in the wake of World War II, the notion of conducting a limited war was

24. Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter America and the Korean War*, p. 39.

25. Ibid., p. 40-1.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy And The Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954.," p. 21.

something that U.S. leaders found repugnant.[29]

Even on the first day of the invasion, Truman demonstrated his willingness to employ nuclear weapons. Considering the plausibility that a US-led intervention would incite Soviet air reprisal, Truman asked Hoyt Vandenberg, the U.S. Air Force General of the Joint Chiefs, if it were possible to disable Soviet air bases in the Far East. Vandenberg replied that it could be done but only with the use of atomic weapons. Truman wasted no time in issuing a presidential order to prepare for that contingency.[30] If Soviet airpower in the Far East needed to be nullified and nuclear weapons were the only way to accomplish it, Truman was quite willing to do so. What remained then was assessing the likelihood of direct Soviet military intervention in Korea.

US Intervention

The buildup to intervention was quick, if haphazard. Two days later on June 27th, the United Nations (U.N.) authorized military action in Korea. On June 30th, MacArthur and the JCS determined that U.S. air power and the naval power would be inadequate to repel the invasion and that ground forces would be required. Truman promptly approved deployment. Ill-prepared divisions of the Eighth Army were deployed within days. U.S. forces under the aegis of the U.N. encountered the enemy on July 5th. The initial fighting was brutal and U.S. forces were woefully inadequate. In fact, in the first week, North Korea had effectively destroyed two U.S. regiments. At least three thousand were killed, wounded, or otherwise missing-in-action.[31] The gruesome beginning led leaders to fear losing hold on Korea and perhaps even the Taiwan Strait altogether.

On July 7th, MacArthur was appointed to be Supreme Commander of U.N. Forces. Al-

29. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1950-1963* [in en] (Of: George F. Kennan, 1973), p. 95.

30. *Memo of Conversation, June 25, 1950* [in en], Washington, pp. 159-160.

31. Malcom MacMillan Craig, *The Truman Administration And Non-Use Of The Atomic Bomb During The Korean War* [in en] (Victoria University, January 2009), p. 21.

most immediately MacArthur requested over 20 atomic weapons for tactical use.[32] General Omar Bradley, the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) suggested authorizing the request. The Assistant Chief of Staff agreed. The JCS concluded that they would support him employing the weapons if the outcome would be decisive; however, they doubted that MacArthur would use the same criteria for use.[33] Even so, the JCS believed that the outcome would not be decisive; targets were not appropriate for atomic blasts, world opinion would shift considerably at the gross misuse, and since the situation was stabilizing, atomic escalation was no longer necessary.[34]

That said, the JCS did issue the confidential order that if a large number of enemy forces were to invade and threaten to overrun U.N. forces, the U.S. would retaliate by using atomic weapons on Chinese bases in Manchuria. On July 13th, amidst concerns that Korea would be lost, Army Chief of Staff J. Lawton Collins, Vandenberg, and MacArthur devised plans to preposition equipped atomic bomber for use in Korea.[35] Consistent with Truman's contingency order, Strategic Air Command (SAC) added 10 B-29s configured for atomic weapons to the area.[36] The JCS were supportive because it fit Truman's request while preventing MacArthur from having operational autonomy with the arsenal.

All the while, Truman's civilian advisers were deeply divided on the tactical role of atomic weapons in Korea.[37] On July 15, the State Department's Policy Planning Staff released their first major evaluation called, "The Question of U.S. Use of Atomic Bombs in Korea."[38] It

32. Craig, *The Truman Administration And Non-Use Of The Atomic Bomb During The Korean War*, p. 32.

33. James F.and Robert J. Watson Schnabel, "The Joint Chiefs Of Staff And National Policy 1951-1953, Volume III, The Korean War: Part Two" [in en], *Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center*, 1998, pp. 185-6.

34. B. Cummings, "On The Strategy And Morality Of American Nuclear Policy In Korea, 1950 To The Present" [in en], *Social Science Japan Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998): p. 58, doi:10.1093/ssjj/1.1.57.

35. Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy In Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), p. 56-7.

36. "Minutes of MacArthur-Collins-Vandenberg conference" [in en], *RG* 319 (July 13, 1950): NA.

37. Carlton Savage, "The Question of U.S. Use of Atomic Bombs in Korea, July 15, 1950" [in en], *Policy Planning Staff* (NARA) 1947, no. RG59 (1950).

38. Carleton Savage, "Questions to be Considered Regarding Possible U.S. Use of the Atomic Bomb to

concluded that the atomic bomb ought to be used if four conditions hold. First, the Soviets or Chinese overtly entered the war, Second, the use of the atomic weapons would be decisive in completing their objective. Third, completing that objective would not meaningfully deplete the nuclear arsenal. Fourth, targets would not subject non-combatants to gratuitous destruction.[39] Moreover, it argued that the U.S. public would actually support NWU if targets were military in nature and effective in outcome.[40] This assessment would be echoed by most leaders for the remainder of the war.

Just two days later, Brian McMahon, the Congressional Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE) and a major advocate of atomic weapons use, forcefully argued that the weapons were totally unsuited for the battlefield conditions in Korea. "I see in the Korean situation you have troops widely dispersed. The atom bomb is primarily a weapon to strike at the sources of power or at troops that would be so massed as to furnish a target."[41] Given McMahon's long-held and vocal advocacy for a robust nuclear arsenal, his grim appraisal was very telling of the prospect for effective nuclear weapons-use.[42] However, the rationale of the State Department and Congressional authorities on atomic weapons did not persuade all civilian decision-makers. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson readily approved any JCS proposal that involved nuclear deployments. Even on July 30th, Johnson made an impassioned case to Truman for using nuclear weapons.[43]

Counter Chinese Communist Aggression in Korea, November 9, 1950" [in en], Collection, No. NP00070 Nuclear Non-Proliferation (1950).

39. Savage, "Questions to be Considered Regarding Possible U.S. Use of the Atomic Bomb to Counter Chinese Communist Aggression in Korea, November 9, 1950," pp. 1-2.

40. Ibid.

41. McMahon, 1950, p. 371.

42. Doris M. Condit, *History Of The Office Of The Secretary Of Defense* [in en] (Washington: Office, 1988), p. 84.

43. Johnson, Day Schedule, July 30, 1950, in Steven E. Miller Lynn-Jones Sean M. and Stephen Van Evera, *Nuclear Diplomacy And Crisis Management* [in en] (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990), p. 127.

From Retreat to Offensive: Pusan Perimeter and Inchon

By August 4th, U.N. forces consolidated their position behind the Pusan Perimeter and secured their foothold on peninsula. For the next six weeks, the North Koreans launched one assault after another, including several rounds of brutal fighting along the vulnerable areas of the Naktong River. U.N. forces faced a daily fear of being overrun. But U.N. forces held. On August 31st, at the Naktong Bulge, a significant North Korean offensive was repelled, deeply frustrating Kim and his communist patrons.

September 15th marked a dramatic turning point in the war for the U.N. forces. MacArthur carried out a masterful amphibious invasion at Inchon, well behind the line of control along the Pusan Perimeter. The invasion yielded a decisive victory over the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) and led directly to the recapture of Seoul, the South Korean capital, two weeks later. A glowing strategic reversal followed as U.N. forces pushed the NKPA back north. Early in October, the U.N. passed a resolution that essentially permitted the invasion into North Korea, endangering Kim's entire regime.[44] Amidst such a successful advance and North Korean routing, questions of NWU were moot and discussion quieted. MacArthur and envisioned a unified Korea within grasp and pushed toward the Yalu, despite repeated requests from both the Joint Chiefs and Washington. Most decision-makers feared that the imposing U.N. forces abutting the Chinese border would force China to enter the war. However, MacArthur was sure the Chinese would not enter the war. He argued forcefully with the JCS and Washington that China would not dare directly opposing U.N. forces and even made a personal appeal to Truman at Wake Island about Chinese intentions. The advance continued apace and on October 20th, U.N. forces captured Pyongyang, the North Korean capital.

44. United Nations Security Council Resolution 83, *S/RES/83*.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Onset of War: 1950				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1950	President Truman	Strategic opportunity: Denial	NWU on Soviet air bases if Soviets intervene with air power	Conditional
1950	U.N. Supreme Commander MacArthur	Tactical opportunity	Conventionalize and employ	Active support
1950	JCS	Tactical opportunity	NWU, if decisive, but it would not be	Conditional
1950	JCS	Prevent strategic loss	NWU if mass troops threaten overrun, strike Chinese bases in Manchuria	Conditional
1950	Army Chief of Staff Lawton	Forestall major defeat	Preposition atomic air power in Korea	Conditional
1950	Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg	Forestall major defeat	Preposition atomic air power in Korea	Conditional
1950	Policy Planning Staff	Prevent strategic loss	NWU if decisive, not gratuitous	Conditional
1950	Sec. Defense Johnson	Tactical opportunity	Conventionalize and employ	Active support

Table 3.4: NWU Advocacy in Korea: Onset of War: 1950.

Summary of Findings: Onset

The initial phase of the U.S-Korean War was characterized by deep uncertainty from U.S. leaders about the full scope of the developing war. This unraveling security situation poised leaders to evaluate the full range of methods to protect vital interests, including how nuclear weapons may be employed. On the first day, astonished U.S. leaders could not determine whether or not the invasion was part of a larger Soviet plot of global belligerence. In fact, the fear that the Korean invasion was a gambit to divert crucial military resources from Europe had permeated U.S. thinking.[45] With the high uncertainty about the scope of the unfolding invasion, in case that the Soviets mobilized, Truman demonstrated quick willingness to use atomic weapons on relevant Soviet air bases in order to neutralize military threats. General Vandenberg had informed him that atomic strikes were the only way to destroy relevant Soviet air bases. Lacking either enthusiasm or reluctance, Truman prepared to meet a military objective with the right tools.

In this period, the JCS generally lacked advocacy for using atomic weapons, primarily because battlefield conditions did not suggest atomic weapons would be optimal weapons

45. See for example, CIA Intelligence Memorandum 302 'Consequences of the Korean Incident', July 8, 1950, pp. 1-7

to employ. Their reasons for lacking advocacy were complementary. First, strategically, they feared depleting the small atomic arsenal that they believed deterred the Soviet Union from invading Western Europe.[46] The industrial power of East Asia was nothing compared to Europe; in terms of global military balance, losing Korea was trivial. Losing any of industrial Europe to the Soviet Union however could be catastrophic. Second, tactically, they believed that Korea had few enemy targets that privileged the use of atomic weaponry. The combination implied that NWU in Korea would lead to non-decisive outcomes, demonstrate the ineffectiveness of atomic weapons in achieving strategic objectives, and thereby seriously erode their general deterrence value. Unless the Soviets introduced air power or the Chinese led a massive invasion, there was simply too little value in atomic weapons.

The main exception in terms of military advocacy was from the U.N. Supreme Commander General Douglas MacArthur. With a deep belief that neither the Chinese or Soviets would enter the war or retaliate, MacArthur was a strong advocate of using all available weapons. Consequently, he beseeched the JCS for access to atomic weapons for tactical use. Bradley, the JCS Chairman, suggested giving access to him. For pragmatic reasons, the JCS was in favor of giving atomic weapons over to military control; however, they did not trust that MacArthur would heed their criteria of decisiveness for NWU, and thus were forced to reject his request.

On the civilian end, leaders were divided. Secretary of Defense Johnson, who was unpopular with both the JCS and the State Department, relied on atomic weapons to handle numerous military issues, including both deterrence and offense.[47] Johnson readily approved any JCS proposal that involved nuclear deployments. Secretary of State Acheson, his political foil, was preoccupied with galvanizing the collective security arrangement with European allies. While not squeamish about decisive use of atomic bombings, he repeatedly empha-

46. NSC-76 U.S. National Security Council, "U.S. Courses of Action in the Event Soviet Forces Enter Korean Hostilities," in *Truman Papers* (June 25, 1950).

47. Keith D.and David L. Roll Louis McFarland, *Johnson And The Arming Of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 208-215.

sized how NWU "would frighten our allies to death."[48] His restraint emanated from the allies' (quite probable) pleas to him that NWU would lead to a Soviet attack in Western Europe.[49] As one of the architects of NSC-68, he was very sensitive to European security as an extension of U.S. security.

It was the influential Policy Planning Staff who outlined the four basic conditions for worthwhile NWU, that would be acknowledged and echoed by decision-makers for the remainder of the war. They argued that NWU would be worthwhile if the Soviets or Chinese overtly entered the war, Second, the use of the atomic weapons would be decisive in completing their objective. Third, completing that objective would not meaningfully deplete the nuclear arsenal. Fourth, targets would not subject non-combatants to gratuitous destruction. All four conditions were simply never met.

After the success of the U.N. Inchon landing and the subsequent routing of North Korean forces, the U.S. had an offensive momentum, and the question of introducing escalatory weapons in this phase became moot. Until China's military entry, discussion on NWU ground to a halt. No one seriously sought to destabilize nuclear deterrence in Europe and potentially incite retaliation while U.N. forces in Korea were on a seemingly clear path to victory.

3.6.2 China Enters the War: 1950-1951

China's entry into the Korean War signified a significant pivot in how the war would be fought and what was at stake. The second phase of decision-making on NWU takes place between China's direct military engagement with U.N. forces up to when U.S. leaders began to suspect a dramatic escalation by the enemy (November 1, 1950 – April 6, 1951).

Little did the U.S. know that China had already started pouring troops into North Korea in late October. Once U.N. forces had advanced north of Pyongyang into Unsan, China was

48. Quoted in, Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail And Nuclear Balance*, p. 37.

49. Ibid.

obliged to repel them. MacArthur had seriously miscalculated China's intentions and was certain it would not enter the war. Despite reports to the contrary, he insisted to the Joint Chiefs and to Washington that China has stayed its hand, despite numerous reports to the contrary. MacArthur's cognitive dissonance led to U.N. forces to press north, stumbling into a relatively well-armed and well-positioned enemy. U.N. forces were repeatedly mauled, routed, and sent into retreat. This shocking and rapid shift in the war triggered a full reconsideration of using the atomic weapons in Korea.

On November 4th, the Policy Planning Staff under Nitze considered whether to make tactical use of nuclear weapons in Korea. They determined that the tactical use of atomic weapons could destroy some targets, but that the viable target-set was very small.[50] Using them would have no decisive military outcome. Moreover, the level of collateral damage would likely rouse Asian opinion against the U.S. and threaten to foreclose future diplomatic overtures. Most alarmingly, NWU that was not decisive may actually induce direct Soviet engagement. In accordance with this appraisal, the National Security Council (NSC) tentatively pursued a limited war by neither entering a general war with China. Incidentally, MacArthur furiously protested and sought to expand the war.[51]

Four days later, the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs submitted a lengthy memorandum to the NSC that had similar conclusions as the PPS, and expanded on the diplomatic consequences of NWU. It is included here since the NSC began a renewed analysis the day following this memo to them and surely included it as intelligence.[52] First, it concurred that atomic weapons ought to be used if they could yield decisive military results that could not be done conventionally. However, atomic weapons could not be decisive unless used on a wide scale, and committing a level of resources that would make it nearly impossible to

50. *Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze)* [in en], Washington, November 1950.

51. FRUS 1950, Vol. 7, pp. 1242-1249; see also William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 211-214.

52. NSC, "Questions to be considered regarding possible U.S. use of the atomic bomb to counter Chinese Communist aggression in Korea.", Nov 9, 1950, Retrieved from Digital National Security Archive.

withdraw in order to fight in another theater (presumably Europe). Moreover, if atomic weapons were used and were not decisive, the U.S. would appear callous, irresponsible, and incapable of sustaining international order, relative to the Soviets; it would lose its moral position as the leader of the free world. Simply put, non-decisive use would be disastrous.

That said, the U.S. would not allow China to push U.N. forces off the peninsula under any circumstance. On November 20th, Collins and the Joint Chiefs began making contingency plans to use atomic weapons in Korea if China militarily pursued complete U.N. withdrawal. The JCS believed that China would not try to push the U.N. out of South Korea, but wanted to be prepared. Once the ground war stabilized, Air Force Intelligence and Collins (generally major advocates of NWU) advised the JCS to postpone further planning because there was no longer a need.

Shortly after the more sanguine assessment, Truman made a major public statement (almost certainly a gaff) on American willingness to using atomic weapons and who has the authority to employ them. The statement falsely suggested a level of nuclear belligerence that alarmed the public and allies alike, and is worth presenting in detail.

On November 30, Truman held a news conference on the future of Korea. In a follow-up to Truman's stated resolve to use all means to conclude the war, a reporter asked if that would include the atomic bomb. Truman replied, "There has always been active consideration of its use. I don't want to see it used. It is a terrible weapon and it should not be used on innocent men, women and children, who have nothing whatever to do with this military aggression - that happens when it's used." Members of the press recognized that Truman might have exaggerated and asked to clarify. He went on to say that atomic weapons "always have been" actively considered because "it's one of our weapons." After claiming that there was no major distinction between atomic and conventional weapons in war, Truman was asked by reporters if atomic weapons would be employed against military or civilian targets. Truman quipped that "It is a matter that the military people will have to decide. I am not a military authority that passes on these things." A stunned reporter followed-up by asking

if the U.S. would only use the atomic bomb with U.N. authorization. Truman replied, "No, it does not mean that at all. The action against Communist China depends on the action of the U.N. The military commander in the field will have charge of the use of weapons, as he always has."

Thus, in the span of 10 minutes, Truman claimed that U.S. leadership saw no real distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, that the U.S. was willing to use them without the consent of allies, that the military had the ongoing authority to employ them, that he would not obstruct that decision, and that the reckless cowboy MacArthur was currently the primary decision-maker. In reality, this was quite inaccurate and later the same day the White House issued a clarification, stating that "Only the president can authorize use for the atomic bomb, and no such authorization has been given." However, the shocking, if inaccurate, information had done its damage and allies scrambled to get assurances that the U.S. would act in the interest of the full free world.[53] Specifically, Western European allies were afraid that the U.S. would trigger another general war that would leave their home in ruin.

In this regard, the United Kingdom had the most to fear from American belligerence against China. The U.S. was highly dependent on airbases in the U.K. and those bases were considered highly vulnerable to air, and specifically atomic, attacks.[54] If the U.S. escalated toward general war against the Communists, the Soviets would clearly seek to neutralize U.K. bases early on. The upshot was that the U.K. was a primary target for potentially catastrophic bombardment, should war break out.[55] Not surprisingly then, the morning after Truman's astounding conference, the British ambassador Holmes relayed his government's fear of the atom bomb setting off general atomic war in Europe.[56] Immediately thereafter,

53. Truman Public Papers, 1950, pp. 725-8.

54. "Memorandum for the President, December 12, 1950, MNSC, reel 1" [in en], in *Trachtenberg, Marc. History And Strategy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991).

55. When Truman had alluded that nukes were being considered, PM Attlee promptly traveled to Washington to gain assurances against NWU.

56. Telegram. The Charg in the United Kingdom (Holmes) to the Secretary of State. London, December

U.K. Prime Minister Attlee flew to Washington to stem escalation and secure British safety. France too, detailed its fears to Acheson. The U.S. ambassador to France relayed that Britain and France perceive themselves to be the main moderating influence on U.S. interests in East Asia. Due to unique "geographic and psychological factors, the U.S. might decide much more lightly about war and peace."[57]

There was some additional concern that Western allies would categorically oppose NWU because their publics viewed atomic weapons as inherently immoral. In February, the Office of Intelligence Research (OIR) published a top secret "Survey of Western European Opinion on the Atom Bomb as an Immoral Weapon." It indicated that Western Europeans strongly opposed the use of the atomic bomb. However, it found that the main reason that opinion tended to describe NWU in moral terms was because Europeans feared widespread and indiscriminate destruction in a global war that they expected would follow.[58]

All said, during the Truman-Attlee Talks, the U.S. refused to make any restricting commitments on NWU but realized "the dire consequences for all... and our great sense of responsibility. We are, indeed, trustees for the future of the world in this respect."[59] All the while, MacArthur wanted no operational constraints to conduct the war, including access to nuclear weapons. On December 9th, he requested full discretion to use atomic bombs in Korea. Without receiving a clear response either Washington or the Joint Chiefs, MacArthur made a more specific request for 26 atomic bombs to strike a set of "retardation targets."[60] Six days later, a frustrated MacArthur sent another communique to ask for access. Finally near the end of January, Army Chief of Staff Collins, along with Vandenberg, rebuffed

1, 19503 p.m. 711.5611/12150.

57. "The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State" [in en], *Department of State, Office of the Historian. Web* (Washington), Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, III (September 21, 1950).

58. U.S. Office of Intelligence Research, "Survey of Western European Opinion on the Atom Bomb as an Immoral Weapon, February 13, 1951," 1951,

59. *Memorandum for the Record by the Ambassador at Large, Jessup* [in en], Washington, December 7, 1950, Excerpt From Meeting Between the President and Prime Minister in the Cabinet Room of the White House.

60. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950*, pp. 748-749.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: China Enters the War: 1950				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1950	Policy Planning Staff	Tactical opportunity	Non-decisive would cause Asian anger, possible Soviet intervention	Conditional
1950	State Department - Far Eastern Affairs	Tactical opportunity	NWU if decisive, but not	Conditional
1950	JCS	Forestall major defeat	NWU in Korea if China militarily pursued complete U.N. withdrawal	Conditional
1950	MacArthur	Tactical opportunity	Request to strike retardation targets	Active support

Table 3.5: NWU Advocacy in Korea: China Enters the War: 1950.

MacArthur's request. They reported that the situation and morale of U.N. troops was much better than what MacArthur had warned. Although the situation in Korea "remained serious," it was "no longer critical."[61] They highlighted that American grand strategy prioritized the defense of Western Europe over the Far East.[62]

The stabilization of the war would hold through the Spring of 1951. In fact, in March, the Chinese had overextended their supply lines and U.N. forces were again on the offensive. Current efforts seemed ample, expansion by the Chinese unlikely, and atomic weapons unnecessary.[63]

Summary of Findings: China Enters the War

With the introduction of the formidable Chinese army, U.S. leaders toiled over how to make use of the atomic arsenal. Despite Truman's disconcerting news conference and despite the introduction of a more dangerous enemy, almost no U.S. decision-makers (MacArthur was the exception) seriously advocated NWU at this time.

Military leaders hoped to make good tactical use of the bomb in Korea. However, the nature of the enemy and terrain foreclosed any effective application of atomic weapons. The terrain was rugged and mountainous, the Chinese and North Korean troops maneuvered in

61. Craig, *The Truman Administration And Non-Use Of The Atomic Bomb During The Korean War*, p. 61.

62. Ibid., p. 62.

63. Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War*, p. 151.

small units, and the front was over 200 miles long.[64] Under these conditions, Army and Air Force experts persuaded the JCS that the utility of tactical NWU was minuscule.[65] They concluded that atomic weapons would only be used tactically to prevent a military disaster against large land units or to protect a major evacuation operation.[66]

Strategically, the JCS was perhaps just was concerned with how such indecisive results would almost surely critically diminish both the material and psychological deterrence that atomic weapons provided in Western Europe. Materially, they acknowledged that NWU would squander bombs from the preciously small arsenal to the extent that they could no longer neutralize a Soviet invasion.[67]p. 19-20blair1987a Psychologically, they feared that NWU that failed to achieve major objectives against relatively weak enemies would change the cost calculus of Soviet leaders and embolden them to dismiss atomic threats. Not surprisingly, they expected that NWU under such conditions would sour and disrupt U.S. relations with Western allies. Since the U.S. relied heavily on the tenuous collective security arrangement, the JCS opted not to toy with any wayward tactical applications of atomic weapons.

Of course, U.N. Commander General MacArthur and his team continued to have a very different vision of NWU. Despite the strategic goals of Washington and the Joint Chiefs, MacArthur continued to pursue his quest to unify Korea and he believed atomic weapons should be used. In addition to his repeated requests to the JCS for access, he even planned an operation to "sever Korea from Manchuria by laying a field of radioactive wastes - the by-products of atomic manufacture - across all the major lines of enemy supply."[68] The JCS

64. Experts' belief in the utility of TNW in Korea had narrowed, mainly due to uncertainty of the value of air-burst weapons against small units of enemy forces.

65. Bolte to Collins, December 3, 1950, comments on JCS 2173/2, Operations Division.

66. Senator Taft, who was a big advocate of using the atomic arsenal, argued forcefully against using them in Korea: "I think it would be a tragic error to use it against China, and I don't believe it would be successful in a land war operating over a 200-mile front. If we use it and it fails, we would be inviting Russian Aggression in Europe." Not a useful tactical weapon in Korea. See Robert Taft to Basil Brewer, Letter, December 6, 1950, in Wunderlin, The Papers of Robert A. Taft, Vol. 4: 1949-1953, Kent (OH), p. 221. See also Taft, CRS, 82nd Congress, 1st Session (82/1), January 5, 1951, Vol. 97, Pt. 1, p. 61-2.

67. **p**.

68. Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* [in en] (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 384.

would not accede.

In this phase, civilian leaders and bureaus converged on essentially the same conclusions as military leaders. The State Department recommended NWU if the outcome could be decisive and that outcome was not attainable with existing deployed conventional weapons. However, both the State Department's Policy Planning Staff under Nitze and its Far East Affairs division concluded that NWU would not be decisive, the target-set size in Korea was abysmally small, and could only wide scale use had any chance achieving any major goals. Since wide scale use would cause major collateral damage while simultaneously deplete the European nuclear deterrent for limited gains, the State Department, the PPS, and the NSC had virtually no advocacy for use in Korea at the time. NWU by the U.S. would appear callous, irresponsible, and incapable of stewarding international order, relative to the Soviets.

3.6.3 Expectation of Escalation: 1951

At the beginning of April 1951, U.S. intelligence suggested a massive Chinese buildup of air power and ground forces. This possibility launched U.S. decision-makers into a nimble and urgent reassessment of atomic weapons-use in Korea. This short, third phase of decision-making on NWU reflects the anticipation of major escalation by the enemy (April 5, 1951, through the end of June 1951).

For nearly a year, U.S. decision-makers had toiled over the utility of atomic weapons in Korea. They found limited utility unless the war were to be expanded to include massed enemy troops or airfields into the target-set. When intelligence suggested that China was amassing a major ground offensive north of the border simultaneously while the Soviets staged three divisions in Manchuria and submarines around Vladivostok and Sakhalin, the sufficient conditions for NWU seemed to be developing.[69] The U.S. and allies fretted to keep the war limited, but if it were to expand into a general war, that war would be won.

69. FRUS 1951, Vol. 7. p. 317, Memorandum, "The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Offices," April 9, 1951.

Without conferring with Washington, MacArthur declared to Beijing that the U.N. could quickly abandon its 'tolerant effort' to keep the war limited.[70] Senior civilian leaders were furious and the JCS were likewise disapproving; however, they knew they could not deny the remark without suggesting that the U.N. Supreme Commander was acting of his own political accord. Truman was advised to sustain ambiguity about Washington's advocacy.[71]

And yet, leaders ensured that they would be ready to handle enemy escalation if it comes. On April 5th, the JCS ordered that if either China committed new mass forces for the ground war or if Chinese bombers attacked U.N. forces, the U.S. would immediately retaliate with atomic bombings. The next day, Truman approved the Joint Chiefs' recommendations and met with Gordon Dean, Chair of the Atomic Energy Commission to transfer nine fully operational atomic-armed bombers to military custody in Guam. Truman informed Dean of the "extremely serious" development of the Chinese massing on the border.[72] Dean complied with the authorization, and Truman assured him that he would consult with the NSC's atomic committee before using them.[73]

Truman accepted the strategic concepts advocated by the JCS but would only authorize them if MacArthur would be relieved of duty. MacArthur's increasing public insubordination called into question the atomic command and control structure; he simply could not be trusted to abide by Washington's strategic restraint.[74] MacArthur was relieved of command as U.N. Commander on April 10th and promptly replaced by Ridgway.

The nuclear-configured bombers were indeed moved to Guam. On May 7th, Strategic

70. FRUS, Vol 7, Korea and China, pp. 254, 263-6.

71. Dean Acheson, *Present At The Creation* [in en] (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 668-9.

72. Dean, diary, April 6, 1951, in Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry Truman: Off The Record* [in en] (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 210.

73. Dean, diary, April, 6, 1951, in Roger Anders, *Forging The Atomic Shield* [in en] (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 137.

74. MacArthur wrote a letter that implied that Washington misunderstood the global strategic significance of Korea and claimed there was no substitute for victory. He had the letter read publicly. U.S. Congress, "Senate 82d Congress, 2d session," *FRUS* (Washington), Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951:pp. 298-299.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Expectation of Escalation: 1951				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1951	JCS	Prevent strategic loss	If either China committed new mass forces for the ground war or if Chinese bombers attacked U.N. forces	Conditional
1951	President Truman	Prevent strategic loss	If either China committed new mass forces for the ground war or if Chinese bombers attacked U.N. forces	Conditional

Table 3.6: NWU Advocacy in Korea: Expectation of Escalation: 1951.

Air Command sent its team to Tokyo to detail plans for atomic strikes.[75] The bombers in Guam had even logged training time for an atomic mission.[76] Concurrently, Ridgway was given a directive authorizing him to launch atomic strikes in retaliation against any major air attack originating outside of Korea.[77] The U.S. refused to succumb to escalation and was poised to respond with atomic reprisal.

But, the Chinese nor the Soviets escalated, and conditions stabilized. All major Chinese offenses with their existing troop deployment were each repulsed and the U.N. had established a reliable line of resistance. By the end of the month, the nuclear-equipped bombers stationed in Guam were redeployed home.[78]

Summary of Findings: Expected Escalation

This short phase has few new observations of advocacy, but a commitment to and correspondence with advocacy observed in previous phases. In previous phases, leaders advocated more strongly for NWU if China were to mass a new wave of troops for invasion. Consistent

75. Thomas S. Power, "2, 1951, item B-10856/2; LeMay to Major General" [in es], in *LeMay papers*, 020755Z, Box B-197 (May 7, 1951).

76. Schnabel, "The Joint Chiefs Of Staff And National Policy 1951-1953, Volume III, The Korean War: Part Two"; Graham A. Cosmas, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1960-1968* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 2009), pp. 488-9. See also FRUS 1951, Vol. 7, Korea, pp. 386-7, 394-8.

77. Schnabel, "The Joint Chiefs Of Staff And National Policy 1951-1953, Volume III, The Korean War: Part Two," p. 398.

78. Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During The Korean War" [in en], *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1988): p. 78, doi:10.2307/2538736.

with that prescription, the more leaders perceived major Chinese escalation, the more they advocated and prepared for NWU. During this period, Truman had penned in his private diary, "I've worked for peace for five years and six months and it looks like World War III is here. I hope not – but we must meet whatever comes – and we will.[79]

In this phase, neither Washington or the Joint Chiefs wanted to do anything that roused the USSR to retaliate. They both believed that escalation through NWU without decisive results, combined with the current level of U.S. military, would seriously risk igniting a global conventional war the U.S. still may not win. Army Chief of Staff Collins stated, "Since the U.S. is not now prepared to engage in global and will not be ready before 1 June 1952, we should take all honorable means to avoid any action that is likely to bring Russia into open conflict with the U.S. prior to that date."[80] Acheson expressed similar views to Secretary of Defense Marshall, wanting to avoid any "risk of extending the Korean conflict to other areas and even into general war at a time when are not ready to risk general war."[81]

The reluctance shared during this period limited the applications of NWU to responses to escalation, and not escalation itself. The JCS ordered that if indeed China either committed new mass forces for the ground war or if Chinese bombers attacked U.N. forces, the U.S. would immediately retaliate with neutralizing atomic strikes. Truman approved, on the condition that MacArthur was relieved and the nuclear command-and-control structure would be faithfully preserved. In fact, the move to place Ridgway as U.N. Commander at this moment and not others strongly suggests the seriousness that Truman and the JCS had in pursuing conditional atomic strikes. They wanted atomic weapons deployed and ready to neutralize major threats, but did not believe MacArthur would be an obedient steward of them.[82] His relief at this time allowed Washington and the Joint Chiefs to devise and

79. Truman, quoted in Ferrell, *Harry Truman: Off The Record*, p. 204.

80. JCS 2118/9, Jan 12, 1951. In Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy And The Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954."

81. *Acheson to Marshall* [in en], Washington, February 23, 1951.

82. This argument is also made in Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During The Korean War," pp. 77-79.

conduct concrete plans that involved atomic weapons. And indeed, on April 28th, on the condition that any massed air attacks came from outside Korea to strike U.N. forces, the JCS ordered Ridgway to inform them, expect to respond with atomic strikes, but to await approval before launch.[83]

In sum, Washington and the Joint Chiefs had determined the conditions for effective atomic use. As those conditions neared, leaders took preparatory steps in a manner consistent with the expectation of NWU. Truman galvanized the command-and-control structure by putting an obedient Ridgway in charge. Atomic-armed bombers were sent to the theater. As it became clear that the sufficient conditions established for NWU were not going to be met, Truman deescalated.

3.6.4 The Stalemate: 1951–1952

From July 1951 through the end of Truman's term in December 1952, little changed in Korea. U.N. and Communist forces battled through an ongoing stalemate near the 38th parallel. However, though the nature of the war was constant, U.S. leadership was still toiling to understand the ultimate role of nuclear weapons in limited wars like Korea. Fears loomed that the armistice negotiations were actually a stalling ploy by the Communists while they prepared for a devastating offensive, so the question was still deemed deeply relevant.[84] This section summarizes the apparent lessons learned up to Eisenhower's presidency (July 1951-December 1953).

Foremost in this period, the Joint Chiefs sought empirical evidence on the viability of NWU in Korea and how they may concretely be used. In October 1951, the JCS ordered Far East Command, in collaboration with Strategic Air Command, to conduct a nuclear strike simulation with dummy atomic bombs. Code-named Operation Hudson Harbor, the

83. JCS to CINCFE (Ridgway), May 1, 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol. 7, p. 396.

84. JSSC and the Department of State, "United States Position on Considerations Under Which the United States Will Accept War and on Atomic Warfare" August 3, 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol. 1, pp. 866-874. At the time, the JSSC was the senior advisory board reporting to the JCS.

exercise sought to determine how the use of existing atomic bombs could be leveraged to achieve existing targeting objectives and support ground troop operations.[85]

Four sorties of B-29s from Okinawa tested the effectiveness by carrying out the operation in Korea and led to a dismal conclusion: the currently available atomic arsenal would be almost totally ineffective in achieving objectives, and provide virtually no advantage to conventional bombing.[86] The principal reason atomic strikes would be ineffective even against massed communist troops was that intelligence had no capacity to identify adequate concentrations of the enemy in a timely manner.[87] Commanders also could not establish a worthwhile set of atomic targets in Korea.[88] This was a staggering conclusion coming from the atomic enthusiasts of the U.S. Air Force (USAF); those who wanted to employ nuclear weapons could not must a military justification to do so.

Six months later, the USAF released a major study that followed Hudson Harbor on the use of atomic weapons in Korea. It grimly concluded that atomic weapons-use in Korea would be disastrous. Because Korea provided no suitable target-set, NWU would fail to bring any decisive results.[89] This failure would seriously diminish Soviet respect for U.S. capabilities, crippling the influence of U.S. deterrence. Such a development in the perceived global military balance would have major negative psychological effects on the morale of non-communist nations.[90] Atomic bombing had no military value in Korea and threatened to shift threat perceptions enough to invite global war.

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85. Did the groundbreaking research to discover Operation Hudson Harbor and believed it was a tactic to scare the enemy into brokering peace. Ten years later, Crane would uncover more documents to determine that it was purely to test feasibility of tactical support in ground operations. In fact, the missions were carefully crafted to appear conventional Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950*, See also Crane, 2000.

86. Crane in Donald W.and James Irving Matray Boose, *The Ashgate Research Companion To The Korean War* [in en] (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 177-8.

87. Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War* [in en] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 105.

88. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy In Korea, 1950-1953*, p. 71.

89. Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, pp. 134-136.

90. USAF Staff Study on the Use of Atomic Weapons in Korea, "Inclosure "A", Discussion", RG341, May 23, 1952, p. 4.

3.6.5 Eisenhower Takes Office: 1952–1953

Through 1952, Eisenhower campaigned on bringing victory in Korea and ending the war, winning the election by a wide margin. This section describes and assesses the Eisenhower administration's approach to incorporating atomic weapons into the Korean War. This phase of decision-making on NWU allows analysis on how replacing Truman with a more outspoken atomic advocate that is Eisenhower to see how dynamics change. The period spans from Eisenhower's election to the presidency in November 1952 through the conclusion of the war May 1953.

Notably in the background, Eisenhower was elected in the shadow of a major change to nuclear weapons decision-making. On November 1st, the U.S. successfully test its first thermonuclear bomb, "Ivy Mike." The massive hydrogen blast yield was 750 times more powerful than Hiroshima's "Little Boy." Once fully weaponized, the possible scale of damage from escalating into general war would soon be truly catastrophic.

As president-elect, on December 2nd, Eisenhower went to Korea to discuss the war directly with new U.N. Supreme Commander Mark Clark and Army Field Commander James Van Fleet. The Korean commanders presented Eisenhower with impressive plans to escalate for military victory.[91] The plans included the incorporation of Chinese Nationalist forces as well as atomic weapons. Eisenhower, however, did not share their enthusiasm for the proposal.

U.N. Commander Clark still sought the capacity and authority to deploy atomic weapons. However, through February, Clark's repeated requests for nuclear-configured bombers and bombs were denied.[92] Fervent debate continued and fell mostly along inter-service factions. In discussing Op-Plan 8-52, the Air Force and Navy representatives argued that atomic bombing might sufficiently pressure China to broker an armistice on terms more favorable to

91. Carter Malkasian, *The Korean War* [in en] (New York: Rosen Pub, 2009), pp. 80-1.

92. CINCFE to JCS 090933Z, Feb. 9, 1953, sec. 122; CSUSA (Chief of Staff U.S. Army Collins) to CINCFE, DA 93097, Feb 10 1953; JCS 931744, to CINCFE, 182204Z, Feb 18, 1953.

the West. The Army, represented by Collins, argued that only a concerted front that included major ground offenses could yield victory. JCS Air Staff argued to the Chairman that if it is decided to escalate operations, atomic weapons ought to be used to neutralize Chinese air power near the border before the U.N. makes any ground offensive.[93] For them, atomic weapons could be superior because it would prevent dispersal, spare a good number of U.S. troops, and shorten the vulnerability of SAC bombers. For its part, the NSC also considered Kaesong in North Korea to be a potential target, but Secretary of State Dulles worried about dealing with the public's inhibition around NWU on such a non-decisive target.[94]

On March 27th, a joint Department of State-Joint Chiefs cost-benefit analysis on NWU concluded that not only were atomic weapons not tactically effective in Korea but that U.S. positions on the peninsula were highly vulnerable to atomic strikes by the enemy.[95] Hence, atomic escalation would be a strategic blunder. Moreover, the meeting also reemphasized that allies would be furious if the U.S. employed atomic weapons and they were not decisive.

Perhaps the most telling discussion by the Joint Chiefs on which theory best explains advocacy for NWU occurred later on the same day, March 27th; it is worth exploring in some detail. During the discussion, Chairman Bradley pointed out that a lot of Army senior staffers want to test atomic effectiveness in combat conditions. Nitze outlined the basic cost-benefit analysis of NWU in Korea, stating:

> The [consultant's] question was why should the State Department object to their use in Korea. We replied that there was no unshakable policy barrier to use of atomic weapons, but the real question was whether the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. We had to assess whether or not atomic weapons could be effective under Korean conditions. If they were not effective, we would have to be concerned with the question as to whether this would not depreciate the value of our stockpile. We had to weigh the political difficulties with our allies, which would arise from employment of atomic weapons, and these difficulties would be magnified if the weapons were not in fact effective.

93. Memorandum from Robert Lee (Major General of USAF to General White. Top secret, Subject: Your forthcoming discussion with CINCFE on Korea, Digital National Security Archive, Feb 20, 1953.

94. Memorandum of Discussion at the 131st Meeting of the National Security Council Wednesday, FRUS, February 11 1953.

95. JCS, "Substance of discussions," Top Secret, Digital National Security Archive, March 27 1953.

Army Chief of Staff Collins noted a justified concern for atomic reprisal by the enemy on vulnerable U.S. targets in Pusan and Inchon. He then added his pragmatism by arguing:

> Personally, I am very skeptical about the value of using atomic weapons tactically in Korea. The Communists are dug into positions of depth over a front of 150 miles, and they are thoroughly dug in. Our tests last week proved that men can be very close to the explosion and not be hurt if they are well dug in. I personally think that if we are considering using other weapons in Korea, we should think carefully about using gas rather than tactical atomic weapons. Gas can be effective in just such a situation. Mustard gas is heavy, it sinks, and it is deadly.

Nitze supported the use of chemical ammunition, provided that some cover-up was included to avoid bothersome political protests by allies.

This detailed discussion demonstrates three crucial conclusions that Nitze, his PPS, and the JCS believed. First, NWU in Korea has negative military utility. Not only does Korea lack effective targets, but NWU would depreciate the critical value of the limited nuclear stockpile. Given the considerable vulnerability of U.S. troops to atomic reprisal in Pusan, ineffective escalation invites disaster. Second, the degree of support or opposition from allies depended on how likely NWU would be decisive, not based on some moral constant. Third, there is no moral crisis to NWU. Skepticism about the utility of tactical nuclear weapons even led Collins to recommend using mustard gas instead. Nitze concurred, suggest the value of covering up the action.

Eisenhower himself was rather enthusiastic about NWU, provided it could serve major military ends in concluding the war. On March 31, he instigated questions with the NSC about NWU. He admitted that there were not many good targets, but felt that NWU would be worth it if it would achieve a substantial victory over Communist forces and move the line of control as north as Pyongyang.[96] In fact, Eisenhower was persistently irritated about the assessments that NWU would not be effective in Korea.[97] Dulles concurred with Eisenhower. Moreover, they both acknowledge that the allies had fear around NWU because Europe

96. Foot, *The Wrong War*, . 205.

97. Memorandum of Discussion at the 144th Meeting of the National Security Council, FRU.S., May 13, 1953.

would be the battleground for atomic war, and agreed that they would have to ensure that the 'tabu' was destroyed.[98] Finally, the President and his staff felt somewhat constrained by the risk of Soviet retaliation on vulnerable Japanese targets.[99] Eisenhower would later note in his memoirs that he would have used atomic weapons if the military situation called for it; he noted however how he believed it would have created a strong tension between the U.S. and its allies.[100]

As the details of the truce were being brokered, Eisenhower finally authorized the transfer of complete and assembled atomic weapons to the military for deployment overseas. Both the Departments of State and Defense supported the transfer, even though Dean of the AEC opposed it.[101] However, based on the order, it appears to be part of an emerging posture in the administration's long-term regional strategy and not for brinksmanship in Korea.[102]

In a last major assessment of the possible courses of action in Korea, the NSC detailed the military and political advantages and disadvantages of NWU. NSC-147 concluded that advocacy totally depended on its ability to achieve military victory.[103] Militarily, if NWU were decisive, the U.S. would enjoy at least three consequences. First, it would neutralize the communist threat in Korea more quickly and cheaply than with conventional weapons alone. Second, it would curtail Chinese capacity to pursue aggression in Korea or anywhere else in the region. Third, NWU would demonstrate the deterrent value of atomic weapons to the Soviets in either limited or general war. It also argues that if NWU achieved military victory or brought a political settlement, or if it prevented a U.N. military disaster, it would

98. FRUS 1952-4, vol. 15, 826-7.

99. Memorandum of Discussion at the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council Wednesday, FRUS, May 20, 1953.

100. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate For Change, 1953 - 1956* [in en] (New York: New: American Library, 1965), p. 180.

101. Memorandum for the Secretary of state, Subject: Transfer of custody of atomic weapons, Digital National Security Archive, April 30 1953.

102. On April 28 1953 When Eisenhower was presented with contingency planning for transferring nukes to military custody, he concluded that there was no immediate reason and sent the issue back to NSC special subcommittee for further study. FRUS, 1952-4, Vol. 15, Korea, p. 947.

103. NSC-147 in FRU.S., 1952-1954, Korea, pp. 721-937.

be politically advantageous.

However, if NWU would not yield military victory or bring about a favorable political settlement, it would be very costly in terms of security and the global military . First, militarily, a non-decisive use of atomic weapons would likely change perceptions about the threat of atomic arsenals and reduce their general deterrent value. Second, and relatedly, NWU would meaningfully reduce the U.S. nuclear stockpile, thereby decreasing its capacity to sustain deterrence in Europe. Third, any operation involving NWU to end the war must expand its target set outside Korea; a non-decisive attack would likely set a precedent for atomic reprisal by the Soviets. Critically, U.N. forces and installations in the region, along with Japanese targets were much more vulnerable to atomic strikes than any communist targets. For obvious reasons, the political consequences would be dire.

On May 23rd, the NSC concluded that if the war expanded or if the armistice breaks down, atomic weapons would be used to the extent needed to bring a quick victory.[104] They noted that allies would be convinced of 'even the most dramatic action' if the war could be won quickly. Such courses of action would not have to be pursued, however. On July 27th, the armistice agreement was signed, ending the war. The U.S. would continue to evaluate lessons about the viability of NWU and make contingency plans in case the Communists violated the armistice and renewed hostilities.

Summary of Findings: Eisenhower

The Eisenhower Administration is well known for intimating nuclear threats in order to coerce the enemy to conclude the war. In fact, in hindsight, Eisenhower and Dulles believed that those threats were the reason the Chinese and North Koreans signed the armistice when they did.[105] It is clear that Eisenhower famously considered atomic weapons to being akin

104. *Memorandum, Summary of the 145th meeting of the National Security Council* [in en], 15, Washington, May 20, 1953.

105. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies Of Containment* [in en] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 145-8.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Eisenhower Takes Office: 1952				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1952	U.N. Supreme Commander Clark	Breakstalemate	Part of larger strategy for victory	Active support
1952	Army Field Commander Van Fleet	Break stalemate	Part of larger strategy for victory	Active support
1953	Sec. State Dulles	Break stalemate	NWU on Kaesong but public inhibition	Unsure
1953	JCS	Break stalemate	Not tactically effective; vulnerable U.S. positions	Oppose
1953	Dept. State	Break stalemate	Not tactically effective. Vulnerable U.S positions; Angry allies	Oppose
1953	Nitze	Strategic opportunity: Denial	If decisive, quick victory	Conditional
1953	Army Chief of Staff Collins	Tactical opportunity	NWU if effective, but it is not. Use gas instead	Conditional
1953	President Eisenhower	Strategic opportunity: Denial	NWU for a strategic victory	Conditional
1953	Sec. State Dulles	Strategic opportunity: Denial	NWU for a strategic victory	Conditional
1953	NSC	Strategic opportunity: Denial	NWU if decisive	Conditional

Table 3.7: NWU Advocacy in Korea: Eisenhower Takes Office: 1952.

to any military tool, later remarking that would be used "exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else."[106] And yet, atomic weapons were not detonated upon the enemy. The lack of military utility and the effects of indecisive NWU provide the best explanation.

Military commanders in the theater of conflict strongly advocated for escalation that involved atomic weapons. U.N. Supreme Commander Mark Clark and Army Field Commander James Van Fleet prescriptions to Eisenhower included atomic bombings as part of an elaborate escalation to bring military victory. But back among the JCS, Collins' advocacy actually declined, after years of failing to find a proper application of the atomic arsenal. In a meaningful if slow shift, Collins actually advocated against Clark and Van Fleet's plans because he believed NWU would need to include meaning ground war escalation too. More importantly though, Collins knew atomic weapons could not be effective in Korea; instead, he advocated using poisonous gas. Clearly, Collins and the JCS had no moral qualms about violating norms on using weapons of mass destruction or about causing massive harm. That said, the JCS concurred with the Air Force staff that if the U.S. escalated the war, seek a quick victory involving atomic weapons. In May, the JCS even beseeched Dulles and the

106. Gaddis, *Strategies Of Containment*, pp. 146.

State Department that if they were planning on incorporating atomic weapons, use them to the scale to ensure victory and no less.[107]

Civilian leadership diverged somewhat. In private meetings, Nitze assessed NWU as an explicit cost-benefit analysis. He did not like the significant risk of depreciating the value of the atomic arsenal that seemed to be the only thing deterrence the Soviets in the West. Nitze also did not want to create an alliance crisis by using atomic weapons indecisively. If, however, NWU could yield a direct military victory, Nitze supported it. The National Security Council agreed. They produced NSC-147, concluding that their level of NWU advocacy depended on its ability to achieve military victory. Dulles too, was open to NWU if it were militarily effective; however, he vocalized the constraints that public inhibition and anger would bring if NWU did not yield decisive military and political results in Korea.

3.6.6 Aftermath: Lessons Learned

After the armistice was reached, U.S. leadership had time to digest the lessons learned from the war on the emerging nuclear doctrine. This brief section will describe the new grand strategy that resulted from the experience of the Korean War, and role of NWU in it.

Amidst a global military threat and a hemorrhaging defense budget, Eisenhower convened a think-tank in the summer of 1953 to take the lessons, nuclear and non-nuclear, of the post-War era and forge a new grand strategy. this "Project Solarium" led to a coherent national strategy directive known as NSC 162/2. This document would inform U.S. strategy and its nuclear weapons implications to the end of the Cold War. Its most sobering conclusion to managing the Soviet threat with a limited budget was that the U.S. absolutely needed its great power allies. Not only did the U.S. require the economic resources and materiel of the world's highly industrialized non-communist states, it needed their cooperation for foreign basing. "The loss of major allies by subversion, divisive tactics, or the growth of

107. *Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)* [in en], Washington, May 20, 1952.

neutralist attitudes, would seriously affect the security of the United States... Policies must be designed to retain cooperation with allies, to seek to win the friendship and cooperation in the presently uncommitted areas in the world."[108] The extent to which the national security directive would court allies was significant. It stated that "Allies must be genuinely convinced that our strategy is one of collective security. The alliance must be rooted in a strong feeling of a community of interest and firm confidence in the steadiness and wisdom of U.S. leadership."[109]

NSC 162/2 had numerous directives and implications for the NWU. Beyond its well-known deterrence prescription for massive retaliation in case of atomic attack, it conventionalized nuclear weapons so that they would be "available for use as other munitions."[110] That said, going forward, every decision about NWU would seriously weigh how it influence the loyalty of allies to the critical collective security arrangement. Dulles was stark in his assessment; if the U.S. used atomic weapons without allied consultation and the effect did not help quickly conclude a war, allies find alternative security arrangements. "The resources of the free world would then no longer be in a common fund to be drawn for collective security, and the balance of world power, military and economic, would doubtless shift rapidly to our great disadvantage."[111] Consequently, the significant regard for allies effectively foreclosed any choice for NWU unless leaders expected decisive results.

As for Korea immediately after the war, U.S. leaders were not shy about their interest to use nuclear weapons if possible. The Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense basically agreed that "in the event that Communists re-initiate hostilities in Korea, the best course of action which can be undertaken immediately to achieve primary U.S. military objectives

108. U.S. National Security Council, "Paper No. 162/2 (NSC 162/2): Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary, S/S-NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 162," Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Top Secret (Washington, October 30, 1953), Sections 35b and 36.

109. Ibid., Sections 36a.

110. Ibid., p. 39. b.1.

111. *Dulles Memorandum* [in en], Washington, September 6, 1953, pp. 457-460. Dulles said this line of thinking initiated here ended with Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' speech of December 1953.

[would include] employing atomic weapons, conduct large-scale air operations against targets in China, Manchuria and Korea."[112] It was still understood that Korea still had no targets amenable to atomic strike; renewed hostilities required expansion to China.[113] Of course, allies were still terrified of Soviet retaliation and pressed nuclear restraint. The British recognized they were the principal target of a Soviet offensive or retaliation, and thereby demanded consultation before NWU. U.S. leaders took the credible British fears seriously.[114]

3.7 Evaluating the Theories

3.7.1 Evidence for Nuclear Taboo

In this early phase of the nuclear age, there is very little evidence that leaders had moral qualms about using atomic weapons against the enemy. Additionally, there is little evidence that the moral qualms of the public constrained decision-making. There is some moral talk by both American and Allied publics about NWU but evidence shows that any public opprobrium at this time was derived from the fear of retaliation and general war. This is a reasonable anxiety that stems from credible evaluation of the international security environment, not some trepidation about causing harm or committing injustice. Finally, international norms against weapons seemed to have no influence at all. Even as late as 1953, central civilian and military leaders spoke casually about the effective application of using gas, relative to atomic weapons against the enemy and devised how to use it with minimal blowback. Whatever normative or moral inhibitions existed, they did not influence actual decisions on whether to use nuclear weapons.

112. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson): Courses of Action in Korea," in *Department of State, Office of the Historian. Web*, vol. 1952-1954, Korea, 15, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, November 27, 1953).

113. Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State, *Memorandum from the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State, December 3, 1953: Courses of Action in Korea*, 15, Washington, 1953.

114. *Memorandum for the Record by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup)* [in en], Washington, December 6, 1953.

3.7.2 Evidence for Strategic Decisiveness

Relative to alternative theories, the body of evidence through the Korean War strongly support the Strategic Decisiveness theory of decision-making on NWU. Throughout the war, most leaders demonstrated that they were interested in using atomic weapons if they could only find a good military use for them that the existing conventional arsenal could not. Conversely, due to alliance ramifications and fear of general conventional war, most leaders opposed NWU if they could not find a decisive application for it.

Moreover, evidence shows that the military value of NWU was repeatedly assessed and repeatedly found to be very narrow. Every assessment, military and civilian alike, found that existing atomic weapons had almost no utility in the Korean War. Leaders concluded rather quickly that the goals of the U.S. combined with the specific military conditions inside Korea basically foreclosed the possibility of viable NWU. Air burst atomic weapons that comprised the existing arsenal were poor choices for the small and nimble enemy forces maneuvering through the rugged and mountainous terrain along the 200+ mile front. More valuable targets like Chinese or Soviet airbases were available outside of Korea, but those targets never became direct threats to neutralize. The U.S. was in fact prepared to use atomic weapons, in case such direct threats arose.

Finally, the evidence shows that leaders believed that NWU without decisive military outcomes would unravel U.S. relative power. Throughout the case, key allies opposed U.S. NWU and anxiously intervened several times to plead for restraint. Amidst the tenuous global military balance, U.S. leaders considered their collective security arrangement with allies fundamental. Evidence shows that they cared deeply about the credible fears of allies, who expected non-decisive NWU could bring general war to Europe. Contrary to existing assumptions about the nature of allies' strong opposition, the evidence demonstrated that their opposition is tethered to the risk of disastrous reprisal or even invasion by the Soviet Union. However, several U.S. assessments argued that if NWU could be decisive that allies would actually accede to the act afterward. In sum, we observed nuclear non-use because

leaders failed to find any decisive application of nuclear weapons throughout the war.

The most anomalous observations from this case were those of 'Active Support' by certain leaders for battlefield operations. Such advocacy was most notably observed by U.N Commander MacArthur, U.N. Commander Clark, and Secretary of Defense Johnson. Neither theory explains these observations particularly well. The most reasonable explanation is that assessments during the early nuclear age were still uneven and the set of implications (good and bad) of NWU were still poorly acknowledged.

CHAPTER 4

THE US-VIETNAM WAR

4.1 Overview of the Case

The United States (U.S.) did not employ nuclear weapons during the Vietnam War (1965-1973) because its leaders failed to ever identify a decisive application for them. Numerous U.S. leaders toiled to find a good use for tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam, but repeatedly determined those weapons to be militarily ineffective. Moreover, leaders determined that non-decisive nuclear weapons-use (NWU) would invite retaliation, expand the war, demonstrate incompetence, undermine strategic alliances, and set a precedent for haphazard NWU. Advocacy through the war depended on decisive use: to the extent that leaders perceived a military opportunity to decisively end the war on favorable terms, their advocacy for NWU increased. Concern about long-term consequences played a subordinate but present factor in decision-making. Moral qualms had virtually no role in how much or little most leaders advocated NWU.

This chapter is organized into seven sections. First, it provides an historical context and overview of the case. Second, it identifies the specific actors that occupied each meaningful role, and then elaborates the nuclear state's nuclear weapons command structure. Third, it outlines the strategic goals of the nuclear state regarding the theater of conflict, in this case the United States in Vietnam. Fourth, it details what each theory predicts about NWU advocacy patterns through each phase of the war. Fifth, it outlines the US' basic nuclear doctrine that has developed leading up to the case. Sixth, it process-traces the data on decision-making in each phase, and compiles it to compare the explanatory power of each theory. Each phase includes a subsection summarizing the civilian and military advocacy levels therein. Finally, the chapter summarizes the findings across the phases of the war.

4.2 Historical Context

US involvement in Vietnam began as a support role to bolster French colonial rule after World War II. An indigenous, anti-colonial, Communist movement rebelled against French authority and drove them out of the country. Fear of Communist dominion in Indochina led U.S. leaders to aid the fragile and oppressive anti-Communist regime. The US-Vietnam War (March 1965 to June 1973) resulted from an American commitment to contain Communism in Indochina, turning a pre-industrial, jungled country into a supposed decisive battleground for the Cold War.[1] This section summarizes the precursors and conditions that made the case possible.

Since the 1850s, the French had colonized Indochina, despite vigorous indigenous resistance. French colonial rule was fairly secure and able to thwart chronic resistance movements until World War II when authority shifted from Vichy France to the Japanese. Poor administration of governance and devastating famine in the mid-1940s bolstered the Viet Minh nationalist opposition, ultimately leading to the 1945 August Revolution where opposition leader Ho Chi Minh declared revolutionary independence from all foreign rule. Major powers advocated continued French authority and tried to broker political agreements between the Viet Minh and France. Once France ousted Viet Minh from Hanoi by force, the Viet Minh launch an ideologically Communist guerrilla war.

The Viet Minh struggled to make progress until it garnered aid from the Mao's revolutionary China in 1949. Mao shared weapons, supplies, expertise, and laborers to Ho Chi Minh, and in 1950 the Soviet Union and China recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In response, the United States and the United Kingdom recognized the anti-Communist French state of Vietnam in the south out of Saigon. By 1954, resolved to repel Communist expansion through Indochina, the U.S. had supplied over 300,000 small arms and financed

1. June 1973 serves as a reasonable month to mark the end of the war due to the U.S. Senate passing the Case-Church Amendment that prohibited further military intervention against any resumption of North Vietnamese aggression.

80% of the cost of the French military effort.[2] U.S. leaders considered providing American troops for direct intervention but concluded that the political risks outweighed the benefits.[3]

French involvement effectively ended in 1954 after a comprehensive defeat by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. French withdrawal gave independence to Vietnam as well as Cambodia and Laos. With the French gone, the political struggle to unify the country began in earnest. The Communists under Ho Chi Minh has secured the North and had significantly infiltrated the south. The south was controlled by the nationalist, autocratic, Catholic government of Ngo Dinh Diem. In 1955, Diem instituted a brutal anti-Communist campaign, which further alienated the local populace. Fearing any increase in Communist influence, Eisenhower pledged continued support for Diem, though his administration acknowledged that it was because they simply had no alternative.

In 1959, Hanoi approved a "people's war" on the South. The insurgency in the south continued to gain momentum and in December 1960, the Viet Cong established itself formally to oppose Saigon and liberate the south from American imperialism. Viet Cong troops continued to grow in size and spread through Indochina. Although U.S. leadership changed in 1960 with Kennedy assuming the presidency, the new administration fully accepted Eisenhower's domino theory of Communism and the obligation to prevent it. Kennedy faced simultaneous crises, first with the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the effective loss of influence with the government in Laos. Kennedy publicly stated that "Now we have a problem making our power credible, and Vietnam looks like the place."[4]

Diem's control over the south continued to deteriorate. In November of 1963, with the tacit support of the U.S. State Department and the CIA, Diem was overthrown in a military coup. The growth of Communist influence continued apace and by the end of 1964, there

2. Howard Zinn, *A People's History Of The United States* [in en] (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), pp. 471-2.

3. Spencer Tucker, *Vietnam* [in en] (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 76-7.

4. Denise Bostdorff and Steven Goldzwig, "Idealism And Pragmatism In American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Case Of John F. Kennedy And Vietnam" [in en], *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1994): p 515.

were over 100,000 Viet Cong in the south.[5] The trajectory of influence was unacceptable to the U.S. In November of 1964, two incidents involving North Vietnamese vessels and a U.S. ship propelled the U.S. Congress to authorize President Johnson to assist any Southeast Asian country that faced Communist aggression.[6] The first U.S. troops landed in Vietnam in March of 1965.

4.2.1 Why the Case is a Great Fit

The U.S. military engagement in Vietnam fits the empirical puzzle of nuclear non-use well. First, the U.S. was a robust nuclear state with a wide array of nuclear weapons tailored for battlefield operations, defense, and deterrence. Second, U.S. leadership did not seriously fear nuclear retaliation from its enemies if leaders decided to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam. Third, the U.S. lost; not only did they lose the war, they ultimately failed in their political objectives in the area. This case should provide excellent insight into the factors driving the decisions over NWU and evaluate the theories of nuclear non-use.

An additional boon of the US-Vietnam case is that document declassification has been quite thorough. Far beyond the full declassification of the Pentagon Papers in 2011, basically all relevant material is now available. Any remaining classified documents appear to only have tactical relevance; there appear to be no remaining documents on decision-making at the top echelon, at least about the question of NWU.[7]

5. William M. Hammond, "Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962-1968," (Washington, D.C), 1996, p. 582.

6. For more on the Tonkin Gulf incidents, see Edwin E. Moise, *Tonkin Gulf And The Escalation Of The Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

7. Probably the most prominent document that remains classified is the 500+ page RAND analysis on tactical nuclear weapons-use in Vietnam operations, called Project: Oregon Trail (1965). However, the principle findings of that document were discussed in a later analysis by the JASON group (1966), now declassified. See F.J. et. al Dyson, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Southeast Asia, Study S-266* [in en], technical report, No. 1289, Box 37 (Washington, D.C.: Jason Division, Institute of Defense Analyses, 1966).

4.3 The Decision-Makers

4.3.1 Who Makes the Decision

In the United States, only the President can authorize the use of nuclear weapons. From the beginning of the Vietnam War until January 1969 the President was Lyndon Johnson. After Johnson, the President was Richard Nixon through the end of the case period.

4.3.2 Who Advises Him

The President heavily relies on both civilian and military advisers on the question of NWU. During this period, in the civilian realm, there are three executive offices that principally advise the President: the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Adviser. Under President Johnson, The Secretary of State was Dean Rusk, serving even before Johnson's Administration from January 1961 through January 1969. His Secretary of Defense was Robert McNamara from January 1961 to February 1968, and briefly Clark Clifford from March 1968 to January 1969. Johnson's National Security Advisor was McGeorge Bundy from January 1961 to February 1966, and Walt Rostow from April 1966 to January 1969. Once Nixon assumes the Presidency, The Secretary of State becomes William Rogers from January 1969 through September 1973. His Secretary of Defense is Marvin Laird from January 1969 to January 1973. However, Nixon's most influential adviser was his National Adviser, Henry Kissinger who served from January 1969 through November 1973. Kissinger opinion was so important to Nixon (and later, President Ford), he is still the only person to simultaneously hold the office of National Security Adviser and Secretary of State from September 1973 to November 1975.

In the military realm, the President, his National Security Adviser and his Secretaries confer with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The JCS are a body senior military advisers that at the time comprised the Army and Air Force chiefs of staff, the chief of naval operations, and the chief of staff to the commander-in-chief. JCS activity is convened and regulated

Summary of Key Decision-Makers		
Position	Name	Term
Civilian		
President	Lyndon Johnson	Nov 1963 - Jan 1969
President	Richard Nixon	Jan 1969 - Aug 1974
Secretary of State	Dean Rusk	Jan 1961 - Jan 1969
Secretary of State	William Rogers	Jan 1969 - Sept 1973
Secretary of Defense	Robert McNamara	Jan 1961 - Feb 1968
Secretary of Defense	Clark Clifford	Mar 1968 - Jan 1969
Secretary of Defense	Melvin Laird	Jan 1969 - Jan 1973
National Security Adviser	McGeorge Bundy	Jan 1961 - Feb 1966
National Security Adviser	Walt Rostow	Apr 1966 - Jan 1969
National Security Adviser	Henry Kissinger	Jan 1969 - Nov 1973
Miltary		
Chairman of JCS	Earl Wheeler	July 1964 - July 1970
Chairman of JCS	Thomas Moorer	July 1970 - July 1974
Regional Commander	Ulysses Grant Sharp	June 1964 - July 1968
Regional Commander	John McCain Sr	July 1968 - Sept 1972
Field Commander	William Westmoreland	1964 - 1968
Field Commander	Creighton Adams	1968 - 1972
Field Commander	Frederick Weyand	1972 - 1973

Table 4.1: Key U.S. decision-makers through the Vietnam War 1965-1973.

by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) who often acts as the principal voice on the JCS' collective counsel. While the JCS serves as the principal military body to advise the President on U.S. international security, its purview is subordinate to the Department of Defense. Finally, the JCS evaluates the information sent by a theater's field commanders and takes their operational requests into serious consideration. From July 1964 through July 1970, Earl Wheeler served as the Chairman. From July 1970 through the end of the war, the Chairman was Thomas Moorer.

The military's unified combatant command for the region is the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM). Its regional commander is known as the Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Command (CINCPAC), who reports to the Secretary of Defense. Through July 1968, the CINCPAC was Admiral Ulysses Grant Sharp. Thereafter, the CINCPAC was John McCain Sr.

Finally, within Vietnam itself, military decisions and efforts were conducted through the joint service command of the Department of Defense known as the Military Assistance

Command, Vietnam (MACV). The field commander was known as the Commanding General (COMUSMACV). During case period, there were three generals who sequentially served as COMUSMACV: William Westmoreland through 1968, Creighton Adams through 1972, and Frederick Weyand through 1973.

4.4 Goals of the Nuclear State

4.4.1 Grand Strategic Goals

The U.S. continued its post-war grand strategy of containing Communism, particularly its peer competitor, the Soviet Union. Its leaders continued operating with the assumption of Eisenhower's (and Kennedy's) domino theory of Communism, arguing that if any country were to assume a Communist regime, its neighboring countries would also be highly susceptible to becoming Communist. The grand strategic inference was that it was unacceptable to allow countries in important regions to adopt Communism; failure to do so implied a dangerous expansion of enemy power and influence. Such an unfavorable shift in the global military balance could not occur.

4.4.2 Regional Goals: Southeast Asia

After the Korean War, The U.S. faced three seemingly intractable issues on East Asian security. First, U.S. leadership unanimously perceived their Communist containment strategy in the region to be vital, and were utterly committed to upholding it. However, the military also knew that U.S. forces could not stop a major Communist Chinese invasion without relying on nuclear weapons. Moreover, U.S. leaders believed that the American public would fiercely oppose another failure like Korea; if the U.S. militarily engaged a Communist threat in pursuit of containment or rollback, it had to commit and triumph.

Much to the angst of U.S. leaders, it appeared that Communism was sweeping inexorably through Indochina. In response, the U.S. would pursue policies to support anti-Communist

Goals of the Nuclear State	
Grand Strategic	Secure a favorable global military balance while avoiding general war: Contain Communist expansion.
Southeast Asia	Prevent Communist expansion and regime subversion. Bolster regimes friendly to Western security arrangements.
Vietnam	Repel infiltration of Viet Cong from South Vietnam. Stabilize Saigon regime while brokering favorable political resolution with the North.

Table 4.2: Strategic Goals of the United States.

regimes in any country at risk of Communist subversion. While many of the anti-Communist regimes in question were cruel, violent, oppressive, and dismissive of civil liberties, chagrined U.S. leaders considered their survival crucial to U.S. security.

4.4.3 Immediate Goals: Vietnam

US leaders refused to allow Vietnam to unite under Communist rule. Diplomatically, the U.S. sought to unify Vietnam under the authority of the nationalist South Vietnamese government out of Saigon. Since the mid-1950s, the U.S. had provided aid, expertise, and a few military forces to Saigon in the pursuit of repelling the Viet Cong infiltration into the South. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, the U.S. embarked on a direct combat role in the protection of the South Vietnamese regime. The intention was to stave off the Viet Cong until a favorable political solution could be reached.

4.5 What the Theories Predict

Given an assessed war situation, each theory predicts a different pattern of NWU advocacy.

4.5.1 Nuclear Taboo

Taboo predicts that NWU advocacy will be low and ought to vary very little as the assessed war situation in Vietnam changes. By the time of the Vietnam War, the scale of potential harm by the nuclear arsenal is so high that moral aversion ought to regulate decision-making

Predicted Patterns of Nuclear Weapons-Use Advocacy		
IV: Assessed War Situation	Nuclear Taboo	Decisiveness
Tactical opportunity	Oppose	Oppose
Strategic opportunity: Denial	Oppose	Conditional
Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Oppose	Conditional
Break Stalemate	Oppose	Oppose
Prevent strategic loss	Oppose	Conditional
Forestall major defeat	Unsure	Active support

Table 4.3: Predicted Patterns of Nuclear Weapons-Use Advocacy.

and foreclose any serious consideration. This nuclear taboo makes decision-making fairly insensitive to changes in the war situation, exempting perhaps nuclear retaliation and general war. In other words, there should not be battlefield conditions in Vietnam that would increase a leader's standard of advocacy for NWU. Moreover, justifications by leaders about why the state should not use any nuclear weapons ought to involve mentions of either categorical illegitimacy of the method or at least perceptions that NWU implies a special callousness by the nuclear state. The observation of non-use is the result of unacceptable levels of moral aversion to breaking norms of nuclear restraint.

4.5.2 Strategic Decisiveness

Decisiveness predicts that NWU advocacy will vary in systematic ways as the assessed war situation changes. It expects that U.S. leaders will advocate for NWU if and only if it would solve a major strategic military problem in ways that existing conventional alternatives cannot, either by coercing the enemy to broker for peace on terms favorable to the U.S., or to the extent that it would prevent a major strategic failure.

Evidence from Vietnam ought to show that U.S. leaders will try – and fail – to find utility for nuclear weapons in their military operations, relative to existing conventional alternatives. For operations where NWU offers unique and decisive military value (e.g. striking massed enemy troops or airbases, preventing overrun), U.S. leaders will advocate to incorporate them into planning and use. Limits on NWU advocacy will come from either perceptions of

military ineffectiveness or from a perceived credible threat of abandonment from allies.

Evidence ought to further show that leaders will privilege the immediate costs of non-decisive military outcomes from NWU on relative power. Non-decisive NWU would call into question the military and strategic competence of the U.S., and states will not rely upon an incompetent power to steward their international order. In terms of internal balancing, non-decisive NWU would reduce the deterrent value of the nuclear arsenal. It would demonstrate that limited nuclear strikes can be endured and overcome, demystifying the contours of what NWU can and cannot do.

In terms of external balancing, leaders ought to estimate that non-decisive NWU would diminish the deterrent value for allies and perhaps even invite the enemy to match escalation and retaliate against vulnerable allies, particularly those from where U.S. projects military power overseas (e.g. the United Kingdom and Japan). Even in this period, U.S. leaders still depend heavily on their Western European alliances in order to sustain a favorable global military balance against the Soviet sphere of influence. Allies are expected to cooperate only so as long as their own security is not imperiled by U.S. NWU. Combined, non-decisive NWU would undermine the crucial nuclear deterrent that seemed to stave off a Soviet conquest of Western Europe as well as make certain allies a prime target for reprisal.

In terms of the institutional post-war order, non-decisive NWU would demonstrate incompetence, misaligned national interests, and flippant deal-breaking. U.S. leaders are expected to care deeply about its strategic role of stewarding this order. Thus, we should expect to see that even a credible threat by the U.S. of irresponsible NWU could be adequate for allies to distance its association to the U.S., and rescind their commitment to the US-led collective security arrangement in favor of a European-only coalition.

4.6 Existing Nuclear Doctrine

In the time between the Korean War and the Vietnam War, the U.S. had worked fervently to maximize the value of its accumulating and diverse nuclear arsenal. The doctrine that

developed in that time played a guiding role in decision-making through the Vietnam War. This section details the key doctrinal developments and major events that influenced it between the U.S. wars.

From 1954 through at least 1960, the U.S. military pursued a major conventionalization of nuclear weapons. The Army in particular sought to remove the nuclear-conventional distinction altogether. Congressional committees observed and acknowledged this integration. The first study was the 1954 Easterbrook Committee, which determined that, "It is to be considered that nuclear weapons are now a part of the battlefield as much as automatic weapons and tactical airpower... It is desired to eliminate the existing inconsistency between "atomic" and "nonatomic" unit of instruction... in that atomic considerations are not stressed except in selected atomic units of instruction or atomic section of units."[8] Subsequent studies had very similar conclusions.[9] In August of 1956, the Commander of the U.S. Continental Army Command (CONARC) put out a directive that ordered all combat arms branch schools "to depict atomic warfare as the typical and to treat non-atomic warfare as a modification of the typical."[10] And, although the process of nuclear-conventional integration had stagnated by 1961, no planners or policymakers had changed nuclear doctrine. Conventionalization was the norm.[11]

4.6.1 Nuclear Estimates in Asia: 1958

During this period of conventionalization, the US' main security organizations developed two documents that would guide nuclear decision-making regarding Southeast Asia: the National Intelligence Estimate of 1958, and the Report on Limited War of 1958 and 1960. Both would set the set the basic assumptions of the value on nuclear weapons as the Vietnam

8. Robert A. Doughty, "The Evolution Of US Army Tactical Doctrine" [in en], *Army Command and General Staff College* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan), 1979, p. 5.

9. Education Survey Commission (1956) and the Clow Committee (1956).

10. Doughty, "The Evolution Of US Army Tactical Doctrine," p. 17.

11. Ibid.

War unfolded.

The most important document anticipating NWU in Vietnam is the July 1958 National Intelligence Estimate, requested by the National Security Council (NSC) and developed by the both the Departments of State and Defense as well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).[12] The previously Top Secret analysis was called, "Sino-Soviet and Free World Reactions to U.S. Use of Nuclear Weapons in Limited Wars in the Far East." It asked two strategic questions: First, would U.S. NWU in the Far East lead to nuclear reprisal by enemies? Second, how would NWU alter the attitudes of allies and enemies?[13]

In general, the report determined that NWU on China or Korea entailed a grave risk that Communists would retaliate in-kind and in-proportion against the U.S. Additionally, Communists probably believed that localized nuclear use would not necessarily lead to an expansion of hostilities into general war.[14] Thus, their retaliation would be proportional in order to limit risks to general war, most likely by providing weapons to China or North Korea for an explicit target set. In the case of Southeast Asia - including Vietnam - however, the response would be much less likely.[15] Nuclear reprisal was still possible, though unlikely, and would mostly likely target U.S. bases in the area to minimize the additional risk of general war. That said, possible reactions range from abrupt termination of conflict or seeking negotiations, through continuing the fight with conventional forces to replying in-kind. Thus, in 1958, while nuclear retaliation was possible with central states like China or Korea, it was believed that NWU in Vietnam would unlikely invite nuclear retaliation.

As for political repercussions, world reactions would vary widely. On one hand, many allies would be impressed and encouraged by the prompt U.S. resistance to Communist

12. National Intelligence Council, "Sino-Soviet and Free World Reactions to U.S. Use of Nuclear Weapons in Limited Wars in the Far East," *National Intelligence Estimate*, July 22, 1958, Requested by NSC, prepared by Departments of State and Defense with the JCS.

13. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

14. This assessment would turn out to be incorrect. See chapter 6 ibid., for Soviet perceptions on nuclear escalation.

15. Ibid., p. 14.

aggression. On the other hand, NWU could arouse widespread fear of general war and would tend to obscure Communist responsibility for initiating hostilities.

Finally, the U.S. could be condemned by world popular opinion, especially in Asia. If nuclear weapons were used in South Vietnam, it may be perceived as a special callousness toward Asians. Civilian leaders should expect widespread adverse emotional reaction to U.S. use of nuclear weapons that may constrain other political agendas. Moreover, Japan would probably no longer allow U.S. use of bases on its territory. The intensity of this reaction would depend on the scale of casualties. However, if NWU led to a quick victory without large casualties, any repugnance would be largely offset by confidence in U.S. deterrent power.[16] Their conclusion is simple: "We believe that the adverse reactions would overshadow the favorable effects in most countries."[17]

4.6.2 Reports on Limited War: 1958 and 1960

First published in 1958 and updated in 1960, the Department of Defense (DoD) developed an explicit doctrine on the conduct of limited war in the nuclear age. The advantages of nuclear weapons and their best applications were well-discussed. However, it made two caveats that would regulate DoD thinking around Vietnam. The first caveat was tactical, arguing that "...there are some important forms of limited war, such as guerrilla operations, in which nuclear weapons appear to be of little value. In...guerrilla-type conflict, there is almost no basis for expecting atomic weapons to be effective even in a limited military sense." The second caveat was strategic, arguing that the "...use of nuclear weapons by U.S. forces will almost certainly reduce the deterrent position of our forces to an entirely, unacceptable status, taking into account the probable verdict of world opinion, the propaganda advantages so developed for the Soviet position and the likely consequent alienation of otherwise friendly areas."

16. National Intelligence Council, "Sino-Soviet and Free World Reactions to U.S. Use of Nuclear Weapons in Limited Wars in the Far East," pp. 5-6.

17. Ibid., p. 2.

4.6.3 Anxious Allies

In addition to the explicit doctrinal developments, two nuclear events occurred that altered the sensitivity of allies to NWU. Relative to U.S. decision-makers, European allies seemed to harbor a nuclear "allergy." This gap in sensitivity should not be surprising; the most likely stage for NWU was their homeland, not the U.S. Hyper-concerned about the consequences of escalation, several allies tried to temper U.S. nuclear conventionalization. The two nuclear events that induced widespread European anxieties were the Castle Bravo test in 1954, and the military simulation named "Carte Blanche" in 1955.

In March 1954, the U.S. tested the world's first dry fuel hydrogen bomb. Codenamed "Castle Bravo," the test was intended to yield a 5-6 megaton explosion. However, the nuclear scientists missed an important fusion calculation and grossly underestimated the size of the explosion. "Bravo" yielded 14.8 megatons, nearly three times the expectation. In addition, the detonation created a significant amount of accidental radiological contamination. The effects were detected around the world. Right or wrong, the test suggested that scientists and leaders alike may not be in full control. Since European allies relied on the U.S. for sustaining a predictable security environment, "Bravo" caused a wave of fear from allies.

"Carte Blanche" was a 1955 NATO war game designed to simulate the exchange of tactical nuclear weapons in a future European conflict with the Warsaw Pact. It was a six-day exercise involving the free play of tactical nuclear weapons on airfields and massed troops. The result was 355 detonations in Western Germany, the Low Countries, and Northern France and 5.2 million immediate civilian casualties. The simulation horrified affected allies. Since escalation dynamics had to be confidently theorized, European leaders became very anxious about prospect of a spiraling nuclear exchange on the continent.

In effect, in order to uphold the tenuous balance of power, the U.S. coveted their alliances against the encroaching Communist wave. To maintain control over the post-war order, U.S. leaders took the allies' anxieties into serious consideration.

4.6.4 Summary

This period between wars helps evaluate the theoretical debate in three ways. First, the security establishment toiled on the calculus of NWU in limited war settings. And, while there was some concern about retaliation in-kind by the Soviet Union, it was seen as unlikely outside of China or perhaps Korea. Second, there were some suggestions of moral qualms and an outcry of public opinion. However, it was made explicit that if NWU could yield a quick victory without gratuitous casualties, any repugnance would be offset by confidence in US' deterrent power. In other words, most negative global reactions that could undermine U.S. security depended on how decisive NWU would be in war. Third, it was presumed that NWU would be ineffective, even in a limited military capacity, in limited guerrilla war settings. The inference is that there existed a rationale of NWU restraint based on the logic of decisiveness before the war in Vietnam even began. It would regulate the debate over NWU during the war.

4.7 Phases of Decision

4.7.1 Leadup 1963-1964

There were actually numerous considerations of how viable NWU could be in Vietnam prior to 1965, mostly by the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The DOD concluded that NWU would not be decisive in achieving U.S. goals. The JCS and Field Commander Taylor argued that nuclear weapons ought to be used if China launches a major invasion on behalf of Hanoi. Additionally, in this time, the military would generally more cavalier about the prospect of NWU and argued that such weapons should be used if conventional weapons could not achieve objectives. National Security Adviser Bundy agreed with the JCS that nuclear weapons could be judiciously used without retaliation. This section details the data of the period.

At the end of 1963, the DOD determined that if tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) were

used against invading forces in North Vietnam and adjacent areas in China, there was still a good possibility that conventional campaign would continue; that is to say NWU would not be decisive.[18] Additionally, democratic allies could face domestic pressure if TNW were used in China. That said, public hostility could be limited somewhat if the attacks were explicitly limited and selective.[19]

In January 1964, McNamara asked if and how the U.S. could counter a land invasion with air and naval responses only (from conventional ordnance to selective use of TNW). In March, JCS said that TNW would have a "far greater probability" of causing the enemy to desist aggression. "In initiating actions against the DRV there must be a readiness and willingness... to follow through with the appropriate contingency plans to counter DRV/CHICOM reaction." Air and sea attacks alone could not be counted on to halt them.[20] In a similar discussion with McNamara and Ambassador Lodge, Admiral Felt (Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Command) responded emphatically that there was no possible way stop the Communists on the ground without the use of TNW, and that it was essential that the commanders be given the freedom to use these as they had been assumed according to existing contingency plans.[21] He said that without nuclear weapons the ground forces requirement was and has always been completely out of reach, McNamara agreed that NWU was preferable to large U.S. ground troop commitment.[22] In fact, no civilian leader explicitly rejected the assertion that if war broke out, it should be nuclear.[23] General Taylor, however, was somewhat more

18. DOD, "Tentative Decision of Intent" Nov. 1963.

19. "Discussion of action against the North" [in en], vol. 1964-1968, Vietnam, I, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, April 18, 1964).

20. JCS 2343/326-5 - Vietnam (Feb 1964), found in James A. Shannon, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, 2000).

21. "Probable Consequences of Certain US Action With Respect To Vietnam and Laos," See also Pentagon Papers, *Evolution of the War*, IV C2 A Feb- Jun 1964, p. 32.

22. "In order to carry out any commitment against any substantial Chinese attack, we would have to use nuclear weapons... and this is to be preferred over the introduction of large numbers of U.S. soldiers." quoted in Paul, *The Tradition Of Non-Use Of Nuclear Weapons*, ch. 3.

23. Daniel Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* [in en] (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 70.

doubtful as to whether TNW were required in 1964, but believed that any ground war with China over should involve nuclear weapons.[24]

In April, U.S. leaders worked assiduously to evaluate extended military action in Vietnam. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, his assistant Bundy, General Wheeler and Ambassador Lodge had extended correspondence about the possible use of nuclear weapons.[25] Rusk highlighted that the recent Sino-Soviet split increased the uncertainty over whether the Soviets would intervene. He also acknowledged Chiang Kai Chek's change in opinion; previously he had supported NWU in unpopulated areas, but now he strongly expressed opposition to any employment.[26] Bundy suggested that limited NWU for interdiction in sparsely-populated areas could prevent Soviet involvement or Sino-Korean reprisal.

Campaign Commitments

Johnson had come to adopt certain domestic commitments on NWU. On the campaign trail, Goldwater was touting the conventionalization of nuclear weapons. Johnson's campaign strategy was to cast Goldwater's position as radical and dangerous. Regardless of Johnson's mixed sentiments on NWU, his campaign primed supporters against Goldwater's nuclear agenda. In May, Johnson made his point in full relief,

> Make no mistake. There is no such thing as a conventional nuclear weapon. For 19 peril-filled years, no nation has loosed the atom against another. To do so now is a political decision of the highest order. And, it would lead us down an uncertain path of blows and counterblows whose outcome none may know. No President of the United States can divest himself of the responsibility for such a decision.

By early June, the JCS and the Administration jointly identified U.S. strategic interests in Vietnam. They determined that the U.S. could not tolerate the loss of southeast Asia

24. Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers.*

25. See for example, William Bundy (Assistant Sec. of State, in *Discussion of Possible Extended Action in Relation to Vietnam (Memo for the Record of M. Bandy)* [in en], NSF, CF-VN, 7, Box, 3, April 27, 1964.

26. See cable between Rusk and Chek U.S. House of Representatives, *Pentagon Papers: Evolution of the War, 1961-1963, Section IV.c.2.a: Committee on Armed Services, Study Prepared by the Department of Defense* (Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 70.

to Communism. But, it needed to avoid a major land war. They determined that if clear signals of coercion and preparation were not heeded by North Vietnam, the U.S. would use selected and graduated military force to aid the South. The JCS approved CINPAC OPLAN 38-64 to achieve U.S objectives. [27] Therein, the plan explicitly states that, "it will take every effort to carry out plan conventionally. But U.S. forces have the capability to use nuclear munitions on a highly selective basis if necessary to accomplish the mission."

All the while, Goldwater's campaign tried to paint Johnson and McNamara as liars on their position regarding NWU. The Administration replied that no nuclear action was seriously considered because of "all the world repercussions" that would follow.[28] This declaration was strategically important because Johnson was in the midst of pursuing a broader nuclear security environment: Building on JFK's nuclear test ban treaty, containing the arms race, negotiating a nonproliferation treaty, and initiating strategic arms limitation talks.[29]

Ball Memo

In the leadup to the invasion of Vietnam, perhaps the most famous memo that discussed the calculus of NWU came from the desk of the new Under-Secretary of State, George Ball. In October of 1964, Ball gave a thorough dissent on NWU to counter some of the otherwise enthusiastic debate among planners. While the role of Under-Secretary of State is not strictly used for measuring NWU advocacy, its contents are nonetheless worth relaying in some detail.

The memo sought to answer the question: "If the conflict stalemated on land and particularly if the Chinese intervened, would the U.S. be likely to resort to the use of at least tactical nuclear weapons?"[30] He noted that Americans would not again tolerate the

27. JCS, "CINPAC OPLAN 38-64: Military operations to terminate aggression in Southeast Asia."

28. "Johnson Conversation with George Reedy on Aug 12" [in en], in *Tape: WH6408.18, Conversation 4899* (Miller Center, 1964).

29. "Probable Consequences of Certain US Action With Respect To Vietnam and Laos."

30. *Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Ball to Johnson, February 13, 1965* [in en], Washington,

frustrations and anxieties that resulted from our nuclear abstention in Korea. By 1964, battlefield nuclear ordnance was waiting to be used.

He argued that most people do not recognize the distinction between tactical versus strategic nuclear weapons.[31] He further believed it would undermine nuclear deterrence, in part because it would liberate the Soviet Union from nuclear restraint in their conflicts. The victims of Soviet NWU would ultimately blame the U.S. for justifying NWU on the battlefield.

Additionally, Ball expected NWU to have a dramatic effect on alliance relationships. The Soviets would build a narrative of U.S racial discrimination against Asians. Every nation would be shocked. With regard to non-aligned countries and developing countries under U.S. defense arrangements, NWU would result in a loss of "prestige." Finally, at the end of his dissent, he invoked the added danger to national pride among citizens. The effects could be guilt as well as resentment against its government.[32]

His conclusion to McNamara, Rusk and the JCS was biting,

> The consequences of all this cannot be overstated. For the past four years we have been making slow but perceptible progress toward a new era of relations between the two centers of power in this mid-20th century world. But the first use of the bomb by the United States would destroy all this. It would set us back to the tense and suspicious days before the Cuban Missile Crisis. Prospects for disarmament and other measures for lowering the general level of world anxiety would be destroyed.unknown1965a

All the while, the Joint Chiefs advocated plans and contingencies that taunted a Chinese invasion - and requiring nuclear strikes in response. U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC) and Admiral Sharp were also in support.[33] William Bundy, McNamara, and the President "were shocked by the almost cavalier way the chiefs... referred to, and accepted the risk of, the

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section F.

31. *Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Ball to Johnson, February 13, 1965*, p. 28.

32. Ibid., pp. 31-2.

33. Nitze memorandum for McNamara, 11 May, 1963, FRU.S., 1961-1964, XXII, pgs 367-8. Also, see Jones, After Hiroshima: The United States, Race and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945-1965, chapter 9 for details.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Leadup 1963-1964				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1963	Dept. of Defense	Tactical Opportunity	Tactical use not Decisive	Conditional
1964	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Prevent strategic loss	If land invasion, needed to prevent overrun.	Conditional
1964	Sec. Defense McNamara	Prevent strategic loss	If land invasion, needed to prevent overrun.	Unsure
1964	PCOM Commander Felt	Prevent strategic loss	If land invasion, needed to prevent overrun.	Conditional
1964	Admiral Lodge	Prevent strategic loss	If land invasion, needed to prevent overrun.	Conditional
1964	Gen. Taylor	Prevent strategic loss	If land invasion, NWU	Conditional
1964	NSA Bundy	Tactical opportunity	Interdiction in sparse areas is possible	Unsure
1964	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Prevent strategic loss	If Chinese invasion, NWU	Conditional

Table 4.4: NWU Advocacy in Vietnam: Leadup 1963-1964.

possible use of nuclear weapons."[34] But, back then nuclear contingencies in any large-scale plan was still commonplace.[35]

Summary of findings: Leadup

In the leadup to direct military engagement, most discussion of NWU revolved around the mass entry of China into the theater of conflict. Most leaders presumed who discussed NWU presumed the arsenal would be used against a Chinese invasion, mainly because it was deemed the best way to prevent a conventional overrun by the Communists. Additionally, in this period, there is no obvious distinction between military and civilian leaders on advocacy. Finally, at the beginning of this period, tactical NWU was conditionally advocated, if it would decisively change the status of the war, but it was determined that it would not. This inaugurates the trend in this case of decreasing enthusiasm for tactical NWU until leaders simply oppose it as an effective option.

34. Notes of 508th meeting of the NSC, 22 January 1963, FRU.S., 1961-1963, VIII, pg 462, n. 6; Presidential news conference, 1 August 1963, The Public Papers of JFK, pg. 616.

35. Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, ch. 2.

4.7.2 Operation Rolling Thunder 1965-1968

In the first formal phase of the war, the potential for NWU was considered numerously by the DOD, the JCS, and the CIA alike. The DOD and JCS each concluded that appropriate targets were simply not available. Both the DOD and the CIA detailed how NWU would be non-decisive and how non-decisive use would be poor policy. The CIA argued that such NWU would elicit a revulsion from setting a precedent and frighten allies. Additionally, the JCS noted that such NWU would entail a risk of escalation but would nonetheless be essential to stopping large-scale aggression. Secretary of Defense McNamara argued that he preferred a conventional approach but would advocate NWU if conventional approaches would not work. He expected that non-decisive use would expand the war, and feared what that expansion would look like. This section details the evidence of the period. This section details the observations from 1965-1968.

In February, Johnson authorized a gradual and sustained aerial bombardment against North Vietnam, code-named Rolling Thunder. The expectation was that selective and controlled pressure, coupled with diplomatic overtures, would compel Hanoi to broker peace. By mid-1965 however, the JCS, COMUSMACV (the joint service command of the DOD to Vietnam), and CINCPAC mutually knew that the current troop deployment was not going to be enough and that a long war was in store.[36]

Military planners and some civilian leaders began asking the role of nuclear weapons in the effort. Seymour Deitchman, head of the DOD program of research and development for Southeast Asia operations, recalled that military planners involved in operations talked regularly about employing "a few nukes" in strategic locations like supply routes on the Laos border.[37] McNamara was far less sanguine about NWU, but still saw them as a viable

36. Cosmas, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1960-1968*, ch. 22.

37. On February 25, 2003, Peter Hayes conducted an email interview with Mr. Deitchman on his account of the JASON reports in 1966. In the Defense Department in the 1960s he established and exercised general oversight of the DOD program of R&D support for Southeast Asia operations, and then he managed such programs at the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA).

option if other instruments failed. In a briefing to U.S. reporters on NWU, McNamara remarked that, "We would use nuclear weapons only after fully applying non-nuclear arsenal. In other words, if 100 planes couldn't take out a target, we wouldn't necessarily go to nuclear weapons; we would try 200 planes, and so on. But 'inhibitions' on using nuclear weapons are NOT overwhelming...It would be giant step...We'd use whatever weapons we felt necessary to achieve our objective, recognizing that one must offset against the price and the price includes all psychological, propaganda factors etc...[It is] inconceivable under current circumstances that nuclear weapons would provide a net gain against the terrific price that would be paid. NOT inconceivable that the price would be paid in some future circumstance."[38]

Around the same time, McNamara, veteran National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, and Johnson's non-proliferation architect Llewellyn Thompson drafted a memo to the President that reaffirming strategic positions derived from 1958. It clarified that the DOD did not believe there would be a military requirement for nuclear weapons; nonetheless, any U.S. confrontation with Chinese ground forces would induce vigorous debate about NWU. In the end, they conclude that, "To use nuclear weapons against the Chinese would obviously raise the most profound political problems. Not only would their use generate probably irresistible pressures for major Soviet involvement, but the United States would be vulnerable to the charge that it was willing to use nuclear weapons against non-whites only."[39]

In October, McNamara simultaneously acknowledged the continued debate over tactical NWU in Vietnam versus the poor understanding of the role and implications of theater nuclear forces in the Far East.[40] McNamara told the President that the JCS had no analysis presently available that detailed relevant military consideration involved in employing

38. Quote found in David E Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy and Johnson and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 2000), p. 432.

39. *Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Ball to Johnson, February 13, 1965*, p. 5.

40. Robert McNamara, *Memorandum from McNamara to Johnson: Theater Nuclear Forces. To better understand tactical nuclear war and its requirements*, 1965.

tactical nukes.[41] Though he recommended formal analysis, he warned about the general propensity of TNW to escalate. "To have to choose between the extremes of inaction and nuclear war in a crisis would impose severe strains on the unity of the alliance. Actual resort to nuclear weapons, even if the original intent were to use them in a highly restrained way, would entail high risks of escalation to a theater-wide nuclear war."[42] Combined with McNamara's previous statements about the intervention in Vietnam, this suggests that McNamara feared using TNW against a nuclear adversary but was open to using them in important operations against non-nuclear enemies.

DOD and JCS Nuclear Doctrine

The same month, the Department of Defense explicitly outlined their five concepts for theater nuclear weapons as force structure objectives.[43] Two of the concepts pertained to the Vietnam question. First, the DOD developed the dynamics of short tactical nuclear battle. Interestingly, it warned that, "...the possibility of such use with the attendant collateral damage and incentives to further escalation would be a destabilizing influence in tactical nuclear war." Moreover, at the time, deficiencies in target acquisition would make it difficult to rely on low-yield nuclear weapons. This problem would be acute in heavy air defense environments. Consequently, commanders of tactical nuclear war would be compelled "to resort to terrain fire with large yield weapons in place of discrete, aimed fire with low-yield weapons."[44] Also the lack of good target information may also tend to increase the level of violence once begun.[45]

Second, a unilateral tactical nuclear campaign "could enable defeat of the enemy without

41. McNamara, *Memorandum from McNamara to Johnson*, fn 2, pg 8.

42. Ibid., p. 12.

43. Robert McNamara, *Memorandum from McNamara to Johnson: Theater Nuclear Forces, October 1965*, Washington D.C., 1965.

44. Ibid., p. 12.

45. Ibid., p. 13.

having to escalate higher, but there are several major uncertainties... Another problem in tactical nuclear war is that as the battle lengthens, the incentives to disregard constraints on yields, depth of strike and permissible collateral damage will be strengthened by unsolved problems of target acquisition, movement of the front, and growing importance of targets in the communications zone."

Crucially, the doctrinal document outlines "Theater Nuclear Warfare in the Far East." It also acknowledges that they do not yet understand the implications of tactical NWU in the Far East, mainly because they have mostly studied the European theater. Moreover, the DOD and the JCS commissioned RAND to do a massive 700-page assessment and simulation series on conducting Vietnam, called Project Oregon. It is still fully classified, It was clearly considered important because McNamara and the JCS provided the results to other researchers as a basis for additional analysis.[46] On the question of tactical NWU, results concluded that,

> Although choke points in the limited road net in this region would be good nuclear targets, there are not many other attractive nuclear targets in the area. Considering the vulnerability of our relatively few airbases in the region, we might be giving up our superiority in nonnuclear air power if we escalated the war by striking the airfields of an enemy who even had a few nuclear weapons, unless we achieve virtually complete effectiveness in our initial strikes. Furthermore, the forested terrain in Southeast Asia and the enemy propensity for light equipment, dispersion, infiltration, camouflage, and night movement could reduce considerably the advantages normally expected in employing nuclear weapons against ground forces.[47]

CIA on NWU in Vietnam: 1966

In March 1966, The Office on National Estimates released a grand report titled, "Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Vietnam War," and is the primary analysis that is consistent with the nuclear taboo explanation of NWU advocacy.[48] The report argued that first-use of nuclear

46. The best example is the 1966 JASON Project, declassified in 2003.

47. McNamara, *Memorandum from McNamara to Johnson*, p. 30.

48. Office of National Estimates, *Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Vietnam War, March 18, 1966*, technical report, FOIA 0001166479 (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1966).

weapons would cause a dramatic and legitimate reaction by allies and public opinion. It says the "Use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. in the Vietnam war would be one of the most important events of modern history. World reactions would be affected to some extent by the circumstances in which the U.S. resorted to their use, and the targets attacked. But almost independent of these factors would be a widespread and fundamental revulsion that the U.S. had broken the 20-year taboo on the use of nuclear weapons." In fact, it later states that, "In the field of international affairs probably no more universal opinion than that which hold the use of nuclear weapons to be abhorrent. Any use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. in the Vietnam war would be viewed as among the most fearful and fateful events on modern history."[49]

Though Tannenwald never refers to this document, it clearly uses language consistent with her overall thesis. However, since the term "taboo" gets used so flexibly in this era, it is crucial to examine why the report expects widespread revulsion and considers it so important. The analysis frets about three basic themes: Condemnation for making the world less predictable and more dangerous, failure on NWU to repel Chinese ambitions, and deterioration of US' relationship with Japan.

Foremost, the report argued that first-use in Vietnam would induce widespread fear and anger for its transformative effect on international relations. "Most friends of the U.S. would condemn it for having dragged the world into a new and terrible phase of history."[50] The main reason for this new phase is that it "would send a wave of fear and anger through most of the informed world. The general feeling would be that, once the taboo had been broken, there would remain no effective barrier to expanded use of such weapons." It also expects that security imperatives would drive prospective rivals to try to acquire nuclear weapons; such horizontal proliferation would make the future strategic environment much

49. National Estimates, *Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Vietnam War, March 18, 1966*, p. 5.

50. Ibid., p. 6.

less predictable and almost certainly more dangerous.[51]

Second, the report argued that NWU was unlikely to conclude the war. "In the event that the use of nuclear weapons so alarmed the DRV as to lead it to wish to quit the war, the Chinese involvement and presence would probably have foreclosed this option. The could end the war only if Peking concurred."[52] If NWU could compel China to precipitously end its ambitions in Southeast Asia, nuclear weapons employment may be worthwhile. The report stipulated that "If the tactical use of nuclear weapons succeeded in turning back the Chinese and helped lead to a quick and advantageous settlement in Vietnam, there would be many gains for the U.S. to set against the losses mentioned above. 'Nothing succeeds like success,' and many would forgive the U.S. once the danger receded. Asian allies would feel much more secure against Chinese encroachments."[53] However, if the U.S. employed "nuclear weapons with some persistence and still failed to turn the Chinese or bring a quick end to the war, the results would be serious indeed."

Third, the report argued that NWU would have mixed effects with allies, depending on the circumstances of use. In fact,

> Many [allies] would not care, particularly if the danger to themselves were remote. There are governments however which, whatever their public pronouncements on the subject, would in the light of their particular national interest be glad to see China's pursuits undermined. Also, there are individuals and governments would consider the U.S. weak if it allowed substantial numbers of armed forces to be destroyed with attempting to save them by NWU. And some would consider the U.S. foolish to accept defeat or even compromises without recourse to NWU.[54]

The main exception would be Japan, who would likely experience "intense agitation." NWU would risk the U.S. basing relationship with Japan, undercutting its Pacific containment imperative. The report does note that a very limited use of tactical nuclear weapons

51. National Estimates, *Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Vietnam War, March 18, 1966*, p. 7.

52. Ibid., p. 11.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

specifically in the immediate battlefield would induce much less aversion among "sophisticated circles."[55] But, most citizens would not appreciate the distinction. The report suggests that after NWU, U.S. leadership would likely lose some domestic public support that could constrain policy prerogatives in Vietnam.

In sum, this report that places great importance on the concept of a nuclear taboo locates that revulsion around transforming the world into something more dangerous and less predictable. In addition to the relative power consequences of NWU, the report argues that nuclear weapons in Vietnam would fail to bring a decisive strategic victory and that failure would have grim repercussions. Finally, allies would be supportive only to the extent that the world was made safer and more predictable; since NWU is unlikely to do that, it would entail calamity with existing relationships.

JCS Record of Decision

In January of 1967, the JCS formalized their position on the role of theater tactical nuclear weapons.[56] Their principle concern was whether limited NWU with against a nuclear adversary would escalate and under what conditions. The Record concluded that,

> Once the "firebreak" between nuclear and nonnuclear is breached with the first nuclear weapon, escalatory pressures will rise... In sum, it is impossible to predict with confidence the course of a limited nuclear war. The danger of escalation once the "firebreak" between nonnuclear and nuclear war has been crossed, and the damage if escalation occurs, caution us against relying on our ability to limit nuclear war and against investing large resources in nuclear capabilities that are important only if the war actually remains limited. Our posture and doctrine should be designed...to reduce incentives for enemy escalation and provide inducements for him to observe restraint.[57]

With regard to NWU in Asia and non-nuclear adversaries, the Record identifies "major constraints" that suggest the U.S. could only rely on nuclear weapons to deter or defend

55. National Estimates, *Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Vietnam War, March 18, 1966*, p. 8.

56. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the President - Record of Decision, January 6, 1967: Subject: Theater Nuclear Forces*, technical report (1967).

57. Ibid., p. 6.

against very large-scale aggression.[58] It then goes into detail about certain atomic munitions would risk escalation by blurring the nuclear-nonnuclear demarcation and how to make them more usable.[59]

JASON Report

Though not part of decision-making structure on NWU, the JASON Defense Advisory Council was a fairly influential think tank that conducted possibly the most thorough analysis of the strategic calculus of tactical NWU in Southeast Asia.[60] After key scientists involved with JASON overhead "a lot of loose talk" among military planners and the Administration about NWU in Vietnam, they offered analysis to McNamara as part of a larger study and he agreed. McNamara later acknowledged reading the sobering 50-page analysis. It concluded that "the use of tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) in Southeast Asia would offer the U.S. no decisive military if the use remained unilateral, and it would have strongly adverse military effects if the enemy were able to use TNW in reply."

The report greatly details how bridges, airfields and missile sites make good TNW targets, but troops can only be targeted if they massed in large, concentrated formations. It then shows how conventional ordnance is effective. Moreover, the use of TNW in Southeast Asia would greatly increase the risk of nuclear guerrilla operations in other parts of the world. But most importantly, the report states that,

> Even if massive retaliation did not result, U.S. first use of TNW in Vietnam would have many serious long-range effects. The most important of these is probably crossing the nuclear threshold...Abstention from the use of any NW is universally recognized as a political and psychological threshold, however rational or irrational the distinction between nuclear and nonnuclear may be. Crossing it may greatly weaken the barriers to proliferation and general use of nuclear weapons. This would be to the ultimate disadvantage of the U.S, even if it did not increase the probability of strategic war.[61]

58. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the President - Record of Decision, January 6, 1967*, p. 11.

59. Ibid., p. 16.

60. Dyson, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Southeast Asia, Study S-266.*

61. Ibid., p. 50.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Rolling Thunder 1965-1968				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1965	Sec. State McNamara	Tactical opportunity	If conventional was not enough but NWU would, escalate	Conditional
1965	Sec. State McNamara	Tactical opportunity	Soviet involvement, callous	Opposition
1965	NSA Bundy	Tactical opportunity	Soviet involvement, callous	Opposition
1965	Sec. State McNamara	Tactical opportunity	Alliance effects, escalation	Opposition
1965	Dept. Defense	Tactical opportunity	Decisiveness	Opposition
1965	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Tactical opportunity	Decisiveness	Opposition
1966	Central Intelligence Agency	Tactical opportunity	Taboo, Tradition, Decisiveness	Opposition
1967	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Prevent strategic loss	Decisiveness	Conditional

Table 4.5: NWU Advocacy in Vietnam: Rolling Thunder 1965-1968.

Thus, while military planners involved in Rolling Thunder talked regularly about supply interdiction via "dropping a few nukes" on strategic locations such as the Mu Gia pass through the mountainous barrier along the North Vietnamese-Laotian border, thorough analysis found such ambitions to be unrealistic.[62]

Summary of findings: Rolling Thunder

Due to the nature of military engagement in Vietnam, most considerations of NWU was about their tactical value. There was some early conditional support of tactical NWU, even if they were non-decisive, which does not fit any of the theory's predictions. But, all military assessments concluded that non-decisive use of nuclear weapons had minuscule value in the conduct of the war. It was during this period that opposition solidified around the tactical application of nuclear weapons due to logic that the Decisiveness theory would predict; it would no longer be a question for serious consideration. During Rolling Thunder, McNamara's position on NWU either evolved, or, he had a stated position that was not equivalent to his private one.

62. On February 25, 2003, Peter Hayes conducted an email interview with Mr. Deitchman on his account of the JASON reports in 1966. In the Defense Department in the 1960s he established and exercised general oversight of the DOD program of R&D support for Southeast Asia operations, and then he managed such programs at the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA).

4.7.3 The Tet Offensive 1968

At the end of January 1968, North Vietnamese forces shocked both U.S. leaders and citizens by launching a major coordinated military campaign against command and control centers throughout South Vietnam.[63] Known as the Tet Offensive, it was, by far, the largest campaign implemented by either side since the war began.[64] The spectacular scale of the assaults and their level of coordination against the South induced immediate doubt into the viability of Rolling Thunder's overall strategy of attrition against the Communists.[65]

It was during this offensive that U.S. leaders came the closest to using nuclear weapons in Vietnam, during the long battle for Khe Sanh. Though North Vietnamese attacks had begun on the strategically significant combat base at Khe Sanh since January 21st, the attacks evolved into a full siege by January 30th. The Vietcong offensive of approximately 20,000 fighters trapped approximately 5000 Marines stationed at the combat base until the U.S. conducted massive aerial bombardment to defend it.[66] Numerous U.S. leaders wondered if they were witnessing a scenario like France's fateful battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, where a victorious Vietnamese siege had precipitated the French disengagement from Indochina.[67]

On February 1, General Wheeler, chairman of the JCS, sent a memo to Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp, the U.S. commander in the Pacific, raising the question of "whether tactical nuclear weapons should be used" if the situation in Khe Sanh became as desperate as Dien Bien Phu (where the question of tactical NWU had also been considered). Wheeler did not consider the situation to be so desperate, but nonetheless asked Sharp and Westmoreland to determine a) whether there were useful targets in the area vulnerable to nuclear strikes; b) whether concrete contingency nuclear planning was needed; and c) ascertain the main pros and cons of tactical NWU. The next day, Sharp confirmed to Wheeler that they had

63. James R. Arnold, *Tet Offensive 1968* [in en] (London: Osprey, 1990), ch. 1.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. See Operation Niagara ibid., ch. 3.

67. Ibid.

exchanged views on the questions. They concurred with Wheeler that at present the situation did not indicate any serious risk of defeat. That said, "military prudence alone requires that we do some detailed planning" for nuclear contingencies. Plans were already "well underway" in Okinawa under the codename "Fracture Jaw."[68] Westmoreland took early enthusiasm to the plan and it became a topic of discussion for weeks. But as conditions at Khe Sanh improved, Westmoreland lost interest.[69][70]

On February 3, after hearing the details about nuclear contingency planning, Johnson was upset that the enemy might force him to use nuclear weapons on them.[71] That same day, the JCS conveyed their view to the President. Westmoreland's view was clear:

> The use of tactical nuclear weapons should not be required in the present situation in view of the authority to use COFRAM. However, should the situation in the DMZ area change dramatically, we should be prepared to introduce weapons of greater effectiveness against massed forces. Under such circumstances, I visualize that either tactical nuclear weapons or chemical agents would be active candidates for employment.[72]

The U.S. never used nuclear weapons at Khe Sanh, instead conducting most intense conventional bombing campaign in the history of warfare.[73] After the end of the siege at Khe Sanh, Westmoreland denounced the choice to not seriously consider NWU, arguing that it could have driven the Communists to immediately capitulate.[74]

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68. CINPAC to CJCS 020208Z, Feb. 28, found in Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 1960-1968*, vol. 3 (Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat, 1970).

69. Cosmas, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1960-1968*, pp. 142-3.

70. CM-2944-68; Msg, Westmoreland MAC 01586 to Wheeler info Sharp, 3 Feb, 68; Westmoreland Message Files, Feb 68 CMH. Msgs Wheeler JCS 01154 to Sharp and Westmoreland, 1 Feb, 68. Wheeler JCS 01272 to Westmoreland, info Sharp, 3 Feb, 68; Wheeler JCS 01678 to Sharp info Westmoreland, 10 Feb 68; Westmoreland MAC 01900 and MAC 02007 to Cushman, 10, 12 Feb 68; Westmoreland MAC 01902 to Sharp, 10 Feb 68; Sharp to Wheeler info Westmoreland, 2 Feb 68; Sharp to Westmoreland et al 6 and 12 Feb 68. All in Westmoreland Message Files, Feb 68, in Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2007), p. 72.

71. Hammond, "Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962-1968," ch. 15.

72. Ibid.

73. The U.S. dropped more than 75K tons of explosives on a five-square mile area over nine weeks.

74. See FRUS, 1968, p. 418. See also William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* [in en] (N.Y: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 235-6.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Tet Offensive 1968				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1968	General Westmoreland	Prevent strategic loss	Prevent overrun	Conditional
1968	General Wheeler	Prevent strategic loss	Prevent overrun	Conditional
1968	Admiral Sharp	Prevent strategic loss	Prevent overrun	Conditional
1968	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Prevent strategic loss	Prevent overrun	Conditional
1968	President Johnson	Prevent strategic loss	Prevent overrun	Conditional

Table 4.6: NWU Advocacy in Vietnam: Tet Offensive 1968.

Summary of findings: Tet Offensive

In this phase, nuclear weapons were specifically and seriously considered for preventing a conventional overrun at Khe Sanh. Leaders who deliberated on the question all preferred NWU over having a major strategic failure. Even President Johnson who had campaigned hard as a leader of nuclear restraint was willing to use them. His anger that the Vietnamese might force him to use nuclear weapons demonstrates that he acknowledged the costs and would use them to prevent the loss of Khe Sanh nonetheless.

4.7.4 Nixon and Operation Duck Hook 1969

The new President Richard Nixon was obsessed with winning the war. In September of 1969, he assigned his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and his team to work out a top secret option to cause a "savage decisive blow" against North Vietnam.[75] Code-named Duck Hook, the study proposed measures for major military escalation. Nixon told Kissinger to "start without any preconceptions at all" and to design the plan for "maximum impact on the enemy's military capability" in order to "force a rapid conclusion to the war."[76] The basic objective would be to coerce Hanoi by using a fine balance between inflicting "unacceptable damage to their society" and bringing about "the total destruction of the country or the

75. Quoted in Jeffrey P. Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* [in en] (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 158-176.

76. National Security Archive, *Nixon White House Considered Nuclear Options Against North Vietnam, Declassified Documents Reveal Nuclear Weapons, the Vietnam War, and the "Nuclear Taboo": National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book*, technical report (2006).

regime, which would invite major outside intervention [by the USSR or the PRC]."[77] NWU options were discussed as an option several times. In fact, according to Nixon's Chief of Staff and confidante Bob Haldeman, Kissinger had lobbied for nuclear options in both the spring and fall of 1969.[78] Planners built in contingencies for Nixon to use tactical nuclear weapons in the midst of the operation if necessary.[79]

But, the ambitious new President and his team ran into the wall of a mature U.S. nuclear doctrine, and consequently only lukewarm support from the JCS.[80] Ultimately, most of Duck Hook was never conducted. The main reason was that planning determined it would require a three-to-six month campaign, and that "to attempt this course and fail would be catastrophic." [81]

No "decisive blow" was possible. In the end, Kissinger himself did not support the operation, in part due to lengthy memos from NSC staff opposing the escalation and arguing that the operation would not work.[82] Nixon narrowly abandoned most of the plan because of his ambivalence about the operation's military efficacy, and to a lesser extent, his ability to maintain the three-to-six months of public and Congressional support that Duck Hook required.[83] Nixon eventually pulled the plug on the prospective operation sometime between

77. Henry Kissinger, "Memorandum, with attachments, Kissinger to Nixon: Subject: Contingency Military Operations Against North Vietnam, , October 2, 1969" [in en], Top Secret-Sensitive Eyes Only, *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book* 2 (1969).

78. Kissinger, "Memorandum, with attachments, Kissinger to Nixon"; H.R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries* [in en] (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1994), p. 83.

79. Memorandum from Tony Lake and to Captain [Rembrandt] Robinson Roger Morris NSC Staff, "Subject: Draft Memorandum to the President on Contingency Study, 29 September 1969," vol. 4, Sep 69-Nov 69, box 74. Top Secret.

80. Willard Webb, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, 2002), pp. 136-137.

81. Source: Folder 2: Top Secret/Sensitive Vietnam Contingency Planning, HAK, October 2, 1969 [2 of 2], box 89, [except for 2E and 2F, which are in folder 6, box 122], NSC Files: Subject Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

82. Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price Of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* [in en] (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 128, p. 165, and p. 164; Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* [in en] (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*.

83. Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 155-6. Morris was an NSC staffer who resigned in 1970 over the secret bombing of Cambodia.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: Duck Hook 1969				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1969	President Nixon	Break stalemate	Decisiveness	Conditional
1969	NSA Kissinger	Break stalemate	Decisiveness	Conditional
1969	National Security Council	Break stalemate	Decisiveness	Conditional
1969	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Break stalemate	Decisiveness	Conditional

Table 4.7: NWU Advocacy in Vietnam: Duck Hook 1969.

October 2nd and October 6th.

Summary of findings: Nixon and Duck Hook

The new civilian leadership was markedly more belligerent than its predecessor and the military establishment. Previous theories of nuclear restraint cannot explain this shift. The theory of Decisiveness can; Nixon sought a major military escalation if it could precipitate an end to the war. His administration had yet to learn the same lessons as the military and prior leadership had on the lackluster value of nuclear weapons. The military was predictably much less enthusiastic about the viability of such an escalation, and once the new civilian leadership came to the same conclusions, their hopes were dispelled.

4.7.5 After 1969

In 1969, the JCS provided a telling doctrinal clarification on NWU.[84] Now that the array of strategic costs from NWU in Southeast Asia was better understood, and that many of those costs remained fairly constant, it stated that the true purpose of theater nuclear weapons is to deter limited nuclear war. Now, "Tactical weapons are not a substitute for conventional forces. If we are losing a conventional war... we have a nuclear option to counter the advance, but we cannot count on... limiting further escalation if we initially succeed."

As for the conditions of use in Vietnam, it is, "Unlikely we would need to consider using

84. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the President: Tentative Record of Decision, January 15, 1969: Review of Theater Nuclear Forces* [in en], technical report, FOIA 5USC552 (1969).

nuclear weapons in Asia unless the Chinese use them first or assist their allies with massive land forces and we cannot possibly hold conventionally. Even under the latter circumstances, we must carefully weigh the objectives to the use of nuclear weapons against the net military benefits we might gain. Now that China has some nuclear capability, we cannot expect to use nuclear weapons in Asia without retaliation." The document goes on to compare the tactical benefits of specific munitions to their strategic costs.[85]

At this point, it was the President who had become more bellicose that military leaders on NWU in Vietnam. U.S. nuclear doctrine had updated but the civilian leadership was still grasping to resolve the failing war by any means. In May of 1972 during a renewed offensive by the North Vietnamese, Nixon told his staff, "We're going to do it. I'm going to destroy the goddamn country, believe me, I mean destroy it if necessary. And let me say, even the nuclear weapons if necessary. It isn't necessary. But, you know, what I mean is, what shows you the extent to which I'm willing to go. By a nuclear weapon, I mean that we will bomb the living bejeezus out of North Vietnam and then if anybody interferes we will threaten the nuclear weapons."[86]

The following week, he told Kissinger, "I'd rather use the bomb. Have you got that ready?" Kissinger suggested that nuclear weapons would be "too much." Nixon replied, "A nuclear bomb, does that bother you?...I just want you to think big, Henry, for Christ's sake! The only place where you and I disagree is with regard to the bombing. You're so goddamned concerned about civilians, and I don't give a damn. I don't care." To which Kissinger defended himself, "I'm concerned about the civilians because I don't want the world to be mobilized against you as a butcher..." While the President had little moral compunction, Kissinger acknowledged an outcry that would result from such carnage, and advised Nixon of the consequences. Nixon later continued with his staff, "We're going to cream them. This is not in anger or anything. This old business, that I'm petulant, that's

85. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the President: Tentative Record of Decision, January 15, 1969*, pp. 5-9.

86. Quote found in Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, p. 428.

Observations of NWU Advocacy: After 1969				
Year	Leader/Organization	Situation	Concern	Advocacy
1972	President Nixon	Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Decisiveness	Active support
1972	President Nixon	Strategic opportunty: Punishment	Decisiveness	Active support
1972	NSA Kissinger	Strategic opportunity: Punishment	Decisiveness, Taboo	Opposition

Table 4.8: NWU Advocacy in Vietnam: After 1969.

all bullshit. I should have done it long ago, I just didn't follow my instincts... For once, we've got to use the maximum power of this country."[87] Nixon finally relented to Kissinger's counsel.

Summary of findings: After 1969

In this final phase of the war, Nixon demonstrated an astonishing enthusiasm to use nuclear weapons. Nixon proposed a punishment strategy of NWU to try to get Hanoi to capitulate. His support however, was tempered by his national security confidante, Kissinger for both taboo and decisiveness reasons. This is the last time that any U.S. leader would actively support NWU for the purpose of strategic punishment.

4.8 Evaluating the Theories

The body of evidence through the US-Vietnam War strongly supports the Decisiveness theory of decision-making on NWU, relative to existing theories. Similar to the findings of the US-Korean War, key leaders demonstrated that they were interested in using atomic weapons if they could only find a powerful military use for them that their existing conventional arsenal could not. Moreover, the closer that battlefield conditions approximated those where Decisiveness would predict advocacy, in this case preventing overrun at Khe Sanh, the more

87. Quote found in Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, p. 429.

leaders generally advocated NWU. And, alternatively, most leaders opposed NWU if they could not find a decisive application for it. Conditional advocacy for NWU was the standard.

4.8.1 Evidence for Nuclear Taboo

Simply put, apart from a few observations, there is little evidence that moral revulsion or a prohibitive norm played any significant role in decision-making on NWU. We observe that civilian and military leaders alike gave sustained consideration about the practical applications of nuclear weapons to specific operations throughout the war. In fact, while one of the architects of the JASON think tank personally believed nuclear weapons would be "immoral folly," he noted that such arguments had very little value with actual decision-makers.[88] Categorical opposition was nowhere to be found.

Through months of high-stakes deliberation, leaders developed rather specific conditions for justified nuclear weapons-use, and those conditions did not emphasize minimizing moral costs. Moreover, throughout internal deliberations, leaders basically never offered moral justifications as sufficient conditions for nuclear non-use. The closest approximation is that leaders were highly concerned about their reputation with key allies. However, that reputation stemmed from the US' demonstrated resolve to keep the strategic environment as safe as predictable as the era allowed. At the time, leaders and citizens fretted about the transformative effect of NWU and how it would undermine a coherent and predictable international order.

There are two points where moral qualms seemed to play some role in decision-making. First, several leaders believed Asian publics would revile NWU in Vietnam so much was because it could imply a racial callousness by whites against Asians. The general fervor of this "bully" designation and the consideration leaders paid to it does not fit the other logics. This may be an example of racialized public taboo that had some constraining force

88. Robert Gomer, "What is JASON?," 2007, `http://%20nautilus.org/%20essentially-annihilated/%20what-is-jason-author-robert-gomer`.

on NWU. Second, in 1972, we observed Kissinger's admonition to Nixon about causing disproportionate harm through punishment. He tried to convince Nixon of the strategic reasons we would not want to be deemed a "butcher."

4.8.2 Evidence for Strategic Decisiveness

The evidence for decisiveness is overwhelming. There are three aspects of decisiveness that emerges from the evidence: a) tactical NWU would not be effective; b) non-effective NWU has many short-term consequences; and c) if NWU could bring a decisive strategic improvement to the war effort, advocacy increased.

First, like the US- Korean War, leaders demonstrated early interest in how nuclear weapons could be employed to win. However, leaders grudgingly acknowledged that the military value of NWU was very narrow. Repeatedly, leaders inquired whether NWU would aid in certain battlefield operations; each time, they determined that tactical nuclear weapons would be a relatively poor alternative to other deployed munitions for the operations in question. Robert Gomer of the JASON group identified the tactical problem bluntly, saying "The Viet Cong were widely dispersed, [but] our troops were concentrated in encampments designed to minimize the perimeters which had to be defended so that we, rather than the VC were extremely vulnerable to attack by small nuclear weapons."[89] The Report on Limited War (1960) had already determined the relative tactical inferiority of nuclear weapons to handle numerous operations in which they were considered.

In a retrospective, Dean Rusk had aptly identified the reason advocacy was begrudgingly low: "From a purely tactical point of view, there was no way to control the fallout from such weapons; it could have spread eastward to Japan and the Philippines or westward to China and the Soviet Union. More important, there weren't any nuclear targets in North Vietnam. We could have destroyed Hanoi and Haiphong with conventional weapons had we so desired.

89. Gomer, "What is JASON?."

But we tried to conduct the war without deliberating attacking civilian populations."[90]

Second, leaders believed that NWU without decisive military outcomes would unravel U.S. relative power. The evidence shows chronic and serious evaluations about the direct effects of NWU on U.S. relative power. Leaders ask whether NWU will decisively end a conflict on favorable terms. In the case of Vietnam, the answer was always no. In terms of relative power, leaders were preoccupied with how NWU will a) undermine key alliance relationships, and b) preventing the future from getting less predictable but more dangerous. Like the Korean War case, key allies, who expected non-decisive NWU could bring general war to Europe, opposed U.S. NWU and anxiously intervened several times to plead for nuclear restraint. U.S. leaders were shown to be highly concerned with upholding their part of the international "constitutional bargain." The legitimacy of a constitutional hegemon rests on its ability to keep the order more certain and less volatile, in part by brokering relations in good faith. While evidence here is also consistent with Tradition's explanation of non-use, the Decisiveness theory of advocacy better explains the full body of data.

Third, to the extent that leaders perceived that NWU could bring a dramatic strategic improvement to the war, the more they would advocate it. As the situation in Khe Sanh appeared more dire, and that leaders believed NWU would prevent a major loss there, they supported NWU. Leaders ultimately did not press for them because nuclear weapons were deemed not necessary to repel the siege. They were right.

90. Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It* [in is] (New York: Penguin, 1991), p. 457.

CHAPTER 5

THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

5.1 Overview of the Case

This chapter examines the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) and asks which theory of nuclear weapons-use (NWU) advocacy best explains Soviet decision-making. It finds that Strategic Strategic Decisiveness best explains Soviet logic. Leaders of the Soviet Union (USSR) never considered nuclear weapons in their Afghanistan War primarily because they had long determined that such weapons had no military utility outside of general war. Secondarily, the USSR was arduously pursuing a stabilized nuclear deterrence setting with their enemy, the United States; Soviet leadership acknowledged that using their nuclear arsenal indecisively outside of defense would unravel the hard-won arms control treaties they had brokered. Combined with their perceived massive conventional advantage, the Soviets never seriously considered battlefield NWU outside of war plans against Western European forces (NATO), and to a much lesser extent, the Chinese. In the case of Afghanistan, the USSR had the limited objectives of reestablishing basic security and control, and empowering the ailing socialist regime to better govern the country. Their intervention into Afghanistan was intended to be simple and quick, but ultimately they became mired in a complex crisis of state authority that led them through a long and painful misadventure.

Moreover, the research in this chapter fails to find evidence for the Taboo explanation, and finds considerable evidence that disconfirms the relevance of any international norms in regulating Soviet decision-making. Normative taboos on weapons of mass destruction played no role in their decision for nuclear restraint. The USSR was not only willing to invade a country, garnering the condemnation of many international actors and bringing unprecedented devastation to the country; they even employed chemical weapons in some of their operations, demonstrating what little effect that international norms against WMD had on their actions.

This chapter is organized into six parts. First, it provides the historical context and an overview of the case. Second, it elaborates the nuclear state's command structure and protocol for NWU. It also identifies the specific actors that filled each meaningful role in that command structure. Third, it outlines the strategic goals of the nuclear state regarding the theater of conflict, in this case the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Fourth, it details what each theory predicts about NWU advocacy patterns through different phases of the war. Fifth, it reviews the evolution of Soviet nuclear doctrine up to the case in question. Sixth, it examines the evidence on decision-making in each phase of the case, and then process-traces how the conditions of the war drove leaders' level of advocacy. Finally, it will summarize the findings and evaluate the theory relative to existing explanations on NWU.

5.2 Historical context

The Soviet-Afghan War (December 24th, 1979 - February 15th, 1989) occurred during a fast-moving and volatile period of the international political landscape. For over 30 years, the USSR and had feared general war with the capitalist-military juggernaut that is the United States and sought a favorable global military balance with it and its allies. At the same time, the USSR was committed to the success of emerging socialist movements worldwide. Known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, the USSR had declared it would intervene economically, diplomatically, and even militarily to protect any socialist regime from hostile capitalist subversion.[1] In a global environment where spheres of influence had major geostrategic implications, each contested government seemed to entail a US-Soviet rivalry. This Cold War commitment sometimes led Soviet foreign policy to secure unsustainable socialist regimes in countries where the economic system or social base could not support them.

1. Leonid Brezhnev, Speech given at Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party on November 13, 1968. The speech sought to retroactively justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968 that quashed the Prague Spring, along with earlier Soviet military interventions, such as the invasion of Hungary in 1956. "When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries."

Several political events were transpiring in rapid succession that introduced uncertainty and anxiety about the regional strategic environment. In 1979 alone, events include the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, a military coup in Iraq, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the collapse of the socialist-sympathetic Ecevit government in Turkey. The period of detente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union had stalled and every perceived foreign policy issue had seemed framed as a zero-sum rivalry with the U.S. Early in 1979, NATO had announced plans to deploy the Pershing II nuclear missiles to West Germany. This was considered an extremely provocative act against the spirit of detente; at that range, Soviets would have virtually no warning of missile launch, and the Pershing II could destroy hard targets like command and control bunkers and most underground silos.[2] Simultaneously, prompted by the continuing military buildup of Warsaw Pact states, NATO begin pursuing a "double track" of nuclear diplomacy with the USSR. NATO would offer to broker an agreement on the mutual limitation of medium-range ballistic missiles, while simultaneously threat to deploy a massive increase in the same weapons should an agreement fail to be reached.[3]

5.2.1 Soviet-Afghanistan Relations

The Soviet Union had brokered normal, friendly relations with Afghanistan since 1960. In 1965, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a democratic Marxist-Leninist party was established. Its two factions, Khalq and Parcham, were based mostly along local ethnic lines and sought different degrees of association with the Soviet Union. The Khalq group were more military and revolutionary as the mode of socialist change; the Parcham group were relatively more moderate and sought Soviet diplomatic and economic patronage more explicitly. In July 1973, Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud along with the Communist elements of the state's officer corps overthrew the monarchy headed by his cousin in a bloody

2. The missiles were eventually deployed on schedule in 1983.

3. NATO, Ministerial Communique, Special Meeting of Foreign and Defense Ministers Brussels, June 1979.

coup, and installed himself as the first President of Afghanistan. He ruled for five years until he was overthrown by the Soviet-trained leadership of the PDPA.

Known as the Saur Revolution, the PDPA established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), and elected Taraki as the DRA's General Secretary and Karmal as his Deputy, installing a duo who would immediately emphasize the ideological-ethnic schism of the party. Taraki and Karmal quickly implemented a series of radical socialist reforms to empower the poor rural populace from the economically entrenched landed elite. The radical reforms of land redistribution, universal education, and expanded socio-political rights for women disrupted long-standing economic and authority relationships as well as local mores, alienating multiple social bases and fomenting rebellion. Additionally, domestic food production collapsed under the haphazard redistribution scheme. In July Taraki and his Khalqist ally Amin relieved most Parchamis from government and sent Karmal abroad. The regime dealt with even modest dissent ruthlessly, purging between 10 to 27 thousand people.[4] During this time, the DRA had established an agreement with the USSR to include over 400 Soviet military advisers. On December 5th, they entered a Friendship Treaty with the USSR, offering economic and military assistance when requested.[5]

5.2.2 Why the Case is a Good Fit

At first glance, the Soviet-Afghan War is ostensibly not a great fit to test the theory. The main reason is that there is no actual variation in levels of advocacy for NWU throughout the case. In fact, the interesting observation is that the question of NWU does not even seem to be introduced among Soviet military or political leadership. This also creates methodological barriers to making strong inferences, which are addressed below. That said, there are three reasons why the Soviet-Afghan War is important to evaluate the theory. First, the

4. Lyakhovskiy, Aleksandr, "Inside the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and Seizure of Kabul," Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #51, January 2007.

5. General and Russian Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 10.

dissertation needs to consider the theory of NWU advocacy with a non-US case. Relying on U.S. cases only risks allowing domestic-level omitted variables to bias the findings and reduce our confidence in generalizing beyond U.S. decision-making. There are at least three variables that will be valuable to control. First, to varying degrees, U.S. leaders had to consider an influential domestic public opinion. This often amounted to limits to how much blood, treasure, and bellicosity the state could use to carry out its foreign policy. The Soviet leadership faced no serious decision-making restraint from its domestic public, implying a greater freedom of action. Second, the U.S. is the only state that actually detonated nuclear weapons upon an enemy. This potentially demonstrates a willingness that may not be typical of NWU calculations. Third, the U.S. did not enjoy the same level of conventional military advantage as the USSR in pursuing their strategic interests. Therefore, it is possible that the U.S. would more readily rely on nuclear weapons in war to neutralize conventional shortcomings. Combined, evaluating the theory with the Soviet Union will help give broader insight into the core calculus of nuclear weapons decision-making.

Beyond the need to consider a non-US case, the Soviet-Afghan War still fits the basic criteria for evaluating the theory of nuclear weapons advocacy. First, it is an instance of a nuclear state conducting war against a non-nuclear enemy. Second, the case was costly for the nuclear state. According to the Soviet General Staff retrospective, the USSR had suffered over 14,000 deaths, and another 55,000 wounded.[6] Combined with dramatic trade embargoes and economic mismanagement, the Soviets suffered with what Gorbachev described as their long "bleeding wound."[7]

Third, the Soviets demonstrated a significant willingness (perhaps even ease) to cause harm to the target population. Their combined campaigns killed approximately 1.25 mil-

6. Central Intelligence Agency, "The Costs of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan, February" [in en], FOIA 0000499320 (January 1987), released 2000.

7. Mikhail Gorbachev, "Minutes of Gorbachev's Meeting with CC CPSU Secretaries" [in en], *Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, Fond* 89 (March 15, 1985).

lion Afghans (9% of the population).[8] Moreover, over 5.5 million more Afghans were made refugees (One-third of the prewar population), mostly fleeing to either Pakistan or Iran.[9] In fact, at the time, half of all refugees in the world were Afghan.[10] Among those who stayed, 1.2 million Afghans were made disabled (a combination of mujahideen, government troops and noncombatants) and 3 million more were maimed or wounded (primarily noncombatants).[11]

Fourth, the Soviets demonstrated a willingness to use weapons of mass destruction in the form of chemical weapons in Afghanistan. Not only did Soviets bring a large contingent of chem warfare specialists into the country but there is considerable evidence that the Soviets used mustard gas, nerve agents, and later trichothecene mycotoxins ('yellow rain') at least.[12]

CIA, Use of toxins and other lethal chemicals in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan, CIA Special NIE, 2 February 1982. The Soviets halted use because it proved ineffective against the well-embedded forces, and shifted instead to mass bombings with incendiaries.[13] Fifth and crucially, even though the Soviet leadership viewed a compliant Afghanistan as a significant geostrategic interest and feared NATO encirclement should they lose, they failed nonetheless. This highlights the question of why a fuller range of available weapons were not utilized to secure victory.

At minimum, this case provides an excellent lens to evaluate the evolution of how Soviets viewed both the value and liability of using nuclear weapons to achieve their military objectives. Since the Soviet-Afghan War was their last military campaign before their collapse, the strategic and military decisions were made in light of decades of evolved nuclear doctrine.

8. Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble* [in en] (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), pp. 21-2.

9. Sandy Gall, *Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation* [in en] (London: Bodley Head, 1988), p. 3.

10. Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers Of God* [in nl] (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 11.

11. Lester Grau, "The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired In The Mountains." [in en], *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004): ch. 1.

12. Stuart Schwartzstein, "Chemical Warfare In Afghanistan: An Independent Assessment." [in pt], *World* 145, no. 3 (1983): 267–272; Albert J. Mauroni, *Chemical And Biological Warfare* [in en] (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2007).

13. Anthony H.and Abraham R.Wagner Cordesman, "The Lessons Of Modern War: The Afghan And Falklands Conflicts (Lessons" [in en], *Of Modern War* (Boulder, Colo.) Vol. III). (1990): pp. 214-218.

Though this case has a great deal of available data, it is more methodologically challenging that the U.S. cases in previous chapters. Data sources include open literature, material from once-secret archives, and a supple amount of personal interviews by major political actors from the period. That said, relative to U.S. cases, declassification of documents from the 1970s and 1980s is not systematic. Thus, the uneven archival access for the period of the Soviet-Afghanistan War decreases the confidence that we have a total anatomy of Soviet decision-making throughout the war. But, between the recently declassified documents, numerous memoirs, oral accounts, and additional collateral from the Gorbachev Foundation, great insight on decision-making can be revealed.

5.3 The Decision-Makers

In the Soviet Union, authorization to employ nuclear weapons can come from either the General Secretary, the Defense Minister, or the Chief of the General Staff.[14] That said, direct control of authorization codes rest with the General Staff and can plan and initiate NWU with or without political authorization.[15] This section describes the main Soviet decision-makers on their Afghan War generally, and then specifically those who decide NWU during this period.

5.3.1 Who Decides on Afghanistan

In practice, the Politburo served as the executive body of the Soviet Union. At the head was the General Secretary who often usually exercised final authority over the politics of the state. Leading up to and during the Afghan War, Leonid Brezhnev was the General Secretary, until his death in November 1982. He was replaced by Yuri Andropov until his own death in February 1984, serving only 14 months. In April, Andropov was replaced by

14. Federation of Atomic Scientists, "Strategic Command and Control - Soviet Union," August 2011, `http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/c3i/`.

15. Ibid.

Konstantin Chernenko until his death in March 1985, serving only 11 months. It is now better known that each of these ailing men were effectively invalid during their tenure as General Secretary. Even Brezhnev was no longer considered competent by his peers by 1975.[16] Beginning in 1976 after his heart attack, Brezhnev basically "ceased to work;" when he stopped working, so did the Politburo.[17] Finally, Mikhail Gorbachev served as General Secretary through the end of the war.

The remaining members of the Politburo jockeyed for influence. During this case, three members dominated Soviet foreign policy: Andrei Gromyko (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Dmitriy Ustinov (Minister of Defense), and Yuri Andropov (Head of KGB and later General Secretary).[18] In the case of Afghanistan, the Politburo had created the Special Commission of the Politburo on Afghanistan, which was comprised of Gromyko, Ustinov, Andropov, and Boris Ponomarev. Since Ponomarev lacked Politburo authority, executive decisions were made by the troika of Gromyko, Andropov, and Ustinov. During the case, the Politburo never took any actions contrary to the troika's recommendations.

5.3.2 Who Advises the Troika

The Politburo generally, and the Commission troika specifically, received military recommendations from the General Staff. The Soviet General Staff functioned as the main commanding and supervising body of the Soviet Armed Forces. During the Afghanistan case, Nikolai Ogarkov served as Chief of the General Staff, until the end of 1984 when he was replaced by the influential Deputy Chief of General Staff, Sergey Akhromeyev. In regards to nuclear weapons deployment and use, the General Staff also had the authority to act independently

16. Sergei Akhromeyev and Georgi Kornienko, *Glazami Marshals I Diplomata (Through The Eyes Of A Marshal And A Diplomat)* [in en] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya, 1992), pp. 22-23.

17. Ibid.

18. A fourth politburo member, Mikhail Suslov, was also prominent in general foreign policy, but was not associated to decision-making on Afghanistan. See Artemy Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal." [in en], *Journal Of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (2009): pp. 46-73, doi:10.1162/jcws.2009.11.4.46.

Summary of Key Decision-Makers		
Position	Name	Term
Civilian		
General Secretary	Leonid Brezhnev	Oct. 1964 - Nov. 1982
General Secretary	Yuri Andropov	Nov. 1982 - Feb. 1984
General Secretary	Konstantin Chernenko	Feb. 1984 - Mar. 1985
General Secretary	Mikhail Gorbachev	Mar. 1985 - Aug. 1991
Minister of Defense	Dmitriy Ustinov	July 1976 - Dec. 1984
Minister of Defense	Sergei Sokolov	Dec. 1984 - May 1987
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Andrei Gromyko	Feb. 1957 - July 1985
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Eduard Shevardnadze	July 1985 - Dec. 1990
Military		
Chief of General Staff	Nikolai Ogarkov	Jan 1977 - Sept. 1984
Chief of General Staff	Sergey Akhromeyev	Sept. 1984 - Nov. 1988

Table 5.1: Key Soviet decision-makers through the Afghan War 1979-1989.

of the Politburo. The result was that, unlike the cases involving the U.S., many actors had access to using the nuclear weapons arsenal.

5.4 Goals of the Nuclear State

5.4.1 Grand Strategic Goals

Soviet leaders perceived the capitalist system, championed by the military power of the United States, as the critical threat to the security and long-term prosperity of the Soviet Union as well as the proletariat it sought to liberate. In order to defend against aggressive capitalist imperialism, Soviet leaders were primarily concerned with maintaining a favorable military balance with the United States, and a favorable theater balance in Asia and Europe.[19] Likewise, Soviets were preoccupied with deterring a nuclear first-strike from a bellicose U.S. Concurrently, the Communist ideology heavily guided Soviet grand strategy. As the arrogate leader of the global socialist movement, Soviet leaders vowed to protect socialist revolutions globally, as well as diplomatically and economically promote future socialist

19. Jonathan Adelman, "The Evolution Of Soviet Military Doctrine, 1945-1984." [in en], *Air University Review* 36 (1985): pp. 24-35.

Goals of the Nuclear State	
Grand Strategic	Secure a favorable global military balance while avoiding general war: Defend against capitalist imperialism.
Central Asia	Provide security assurances to socialist allies. Prevent strategic encirclement from the U.S. and NATO.
Afghanistan	Secure a stable friendly, socialist DRA regime. Defeat DRA resistance, consolidate the state.

Table 5.2: Strategic Goals of the Soviet Union.

regimes. Known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, Soviet leaders by the 1980s came to adopt a vast patron-client network with socialist regimes worldwide; their support for socialist guerrilla insurgencies in the Third World became an integral feature of Soviet grand strategy.[20]

Combining Communist ideology and military might with their geostrategic predicament, Soviet leaders sought a credible collective defense arrangement to defend from the aggressive capitalistic encirclement by U.S. and NATO. They established the Warsaw Pact with communist Central and Eastern Europe and maintained at all costs it as a vital interest. Additionally, any state within the Soviet sphere of influence that seemed to be in violation of core socialist ideas pronounced by the Soviet Communist Party, leaders believe it necessary to intervene. The perceived alternative was allowing U.S. subversion to enter and destabilize basic Soviet national security.

5.4.2 Regional Goals: Central Asia

Soviet leaders persistently perceived a zero-sum relationship between U.S. and Soviet relationships in the region.[21] Consistent with Soviet grand strategy, leaders feared capitalist military encirclement and believed that only stable socialist regimes could fend of such external subversion.[22] Andropov repeatedly observed in the Politburo this perception throughout

20. Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal.," p. 70.

21. Bennett, *Condemned To Repetition?*, pp. 198-203.

22. Cold War International History Project, "Document six: Soviet Policy in Afghanistan, 1979," Cot. 2, *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (1993): p. 74.

the 1980s in the region, "We are fighting against American Imperialism. That's why we cannot back off."[23] With the collapse of the pro-US Iranian regime in 1979, Soviets expected the U.S. to assert its influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan and develop favorable relationships with their regimes. Of course, if the U.S. could broker security assurances with those regimes, then the USSR would face the risk of having American bases or short-range nuclear missile systems that they could not easily repel.[24]

5.4.3 Immediate Goals: Afghanistan

The USSR sought a friendly, stable socialist regime in Afghanistan. However, the ailing socialist regime of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) had virtually no control outside of the cities, faced common military mutinies, and employed a draconian domestic platform that was spiraling the country into civil war. Thus, the Soviets sought to empower the legitimacy of the DRA regime by unifying the party, improve relations with the masses, and lead the Afghan people through the path of socialist reform.[25]

A necessary condition to promoting the DRA regime was to stabilize the security situation within the country and provide security from external forces.[26] Early on, the Soviets had sent over a thousand military and economic advisers to guide DRA leadership. However, the security situation continued to deteriorate. Soviet leadership was divided about using direct military intervention to aid the DRA. In April of 1979 the Politburo saw the danger, declaring, "It is clear that due to the internal nature of the anti-governmental opposition,

23. Cold War International History Project, "Politburo meeting, 10 March 1983," *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (1993): p.410. See other instances, p. 75, on March 10 1983, "Andropov March 1983: "The problem is not Pakistan's position. It is American imperialism that is giving us a fight. . . we cannot retreat.".

24. Odd Arne Westad, "Concerning the Situation in 'A:' New Russian Evidence on the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," *CWIHP Bulletin* 8/9 (1996): 128–132.

25. U.S.S.R. Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "Top Secret Special Papers, No. P149/XIU, Memorandum on protocol number 149 of the meeting of the politburo. April 12, 1979," *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (1993): p. 68.

26. Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal.," p. 71.

the use of Soviet troops in repressing the Afghan counterrevolution would seriously damage the international authority of the USSR and would set back the process of disarmament."[27] By December, the position had changed among the main foreign policy decision-makers; in accordance with the DRA's persistent requests and the existing Friendship Treaty, the Soviets intervened militarily.

5.5 What the Theories Predict

In the Soviet- Afghan case, at no point did Soviet leadership actively support nuclear weapons- use in Afghanistan. Moreover, the evidence shows that no Soviet leaders even seriously and openly deliberated over the topic of nuclear weapons in Afghanistan. This poses a methodological challenge. At first glance, this non-consideration could suggest that the normative prohibition was so strong that NWU had simply become "unthinkable." However, both the normative theory and the strategic theory can lead unthinkability is also consistent with the alternative explanations if the conditions of conflict had no use for anything from the nuclear arsenal. So, instead of tracking movement in advocacy through the war, this section will distinguish what each theory would predict about Soviet decision-making through the Afghanistan War. It will become clear that each theory entails corollary motives and decisions that will help shed light on which theory provides the best explanation.

5.5.1 Nuclear Taboo

The Taboo theory argues that international norms that stem from moral qualms have an independent, constraining effect on the decision-making patterns on NWU. In the case of the Soviet-Afghan War, it would predict that Soviet leaders will acknowledge the existence of international norms proscribing such weapons, and seek alternatives to the conduct their military operations. Moreover, since moral qualms in foreign policy stem from causing

27. Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal.," p. 68.

disproportionate, gratuitous, or indiscriminate harm to achieve national goals, the Taboo theory would predict that as the cause for such qualms rise, explicit concern ought to emerge in the course of decision-making. Even better, those concerns ought to suggest restraint on decisions of continued conduct. Disconfirming evidence would show that Soviet leaders acknowledge strong international norms on weapons of mass destruction and dismiss them in pursuit of immediate goals. The less vital those goals, the more disconfirming the evidence.

5.5.2 Strategic Decisiveness

The Decisiveness theory of NWU advocacy predicts that advocacy levels primarily depend on how decisive NWU would be in achieving major military or political goals. In the case of Afghanistan, Soviet leaders will advocate NWU to the extent that it would solve a major strategic problem, either by directly coercing the enemy to broker for peace on terms favorable to the Soviet Union or to prevent a pivotal strategic failure.

Evidence ought to show that leaders conclude that the military value of NWU is very narrow. By the time of the case, Soviet decision-makers should fail to find much utility in nuclear weapons to achieve operational objectives, relative to existing conventional alternatives. If there any operations where NWU would offer unique and decisive military value (e.g. striking massed enemy troops or airbases, preventing overrun) while preserving or improving vital interests, Soviet leaders will advocate to incorporate them into planning.

Additionally, evidence ought to show leaders believing that NWU without decisive military outcomes unravels Soviet relative power. Great power leaders are preoccupied with avoiding a vulnerable position in the global military balance; Soviet leaders are fearful of encirclement by U.S. and NATO, and their level of NWU advocacy will depend on its consequences for sustaining credible alliances and expanding its sphere of influence. Allies within the Warsaw Pact will remain loyal mainly because they lack political autonomy from the Soviet Union. A decisive use of nuclear weapons would demonstrate Soviet capabilities and resolve, and wisdom in how to achieve their goals; allies would cooperate as long as their

own basic security is not imperiled by Soviet NWU.

However, non-decisive use of nuclear weapons imperils allies and partners in at least three ways. First, it would show grave irresponsibility, eschewing the overall sentiment of arms control to pursue objectives and fail. It would demonstrate a Soviet inability to steward a political order, and instead, introduce massive uncertainty into the status of global security and the future of war-fighting. Second, non-decisive NWU in Afghanistan would show that nuclear strikes can be endured and overcome. It would embolden opponents who seek vital interests in relation to the USSR. Third, non-decisive NWU would abrogate the spirit of detente-related agreements without achieving major objectives; this would suggest to other states that the USSR does not broker in good faith, making future agreements of any significance harder to secure.

Combined, the non-decisive NWU would undermine the crucial nuclear deterrent that seemed to stop major U.S. belligerence. Socialist and non-aligned states outside of the Warsaw Pact would move to balance with the U.S., the custodian of the more staid and predictable political order. In the case of Afghanistan, the theory would predict non-advocacy throughout the war.

Finally, evidence should fail to find normative or moral inhibitions on NWU. The theory predicts that Soviet leadership would demonstrate little concern for harm caused to the enemy in achieving their objectives. Further, it would predict that leaders would use the most effective tools to pursue the national interest, independent of any taboo effects. Any restraint on NWU advocacy will come from a lack of military utility, from a credible perception of losing relative power, or from the credible belief that it would directly make major war with the U.S. more likely, but not from moral qualms or norm adherence.

5.6 Existing Nuclear Doctrine

Nuclear decision-making throughout the Soviet-Afghan War were deeply informed by the beliefs and lessons on the nuclear doctrine that had developed over the previous decades.

The war takes place after 30 years of deep consideration about the full role and implications of nuclear weapons. By the time of their Afghan War, the Soviets had made three fundamental conclusions about the applicability of nuclear weapons. First, nuclear weapons had very limited military utility. Second, they would never intend to make a first strike. Third, the U.S. had aggressive nuclear intentions. This section will describe how Soviet nuclear doctrine came to these conclusions and how it guided levels of advocacy in the case.[28]

The Soviets defined military doctrine as "a system of guided principles and scientifically substantiated views of the CPSU and Soviet government on the essence, character and modes of fighting a war which may be forced... as well as the military developments, training and preparing the Armed Forces and the nation to crush an Aggressor."[29] In a general military sense, after World War II and with the exception of Khrushchev, Soviet leaders showed great caution and conservatism in international crises and conflicts.[30] There was definitely a high priority on maintaining its empire, intervening in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), and pressuring General Vojtech Jaruzelski into imposing martial law in Poland in 1981. However, these interventions suggested little risk of military confrontation with U.S. or NATO. In fact, Afghanistan in 1979 serves as the only example where the Soviets actually

28. Regarding data sources and data limitations about Soviet military doctrine: Beyond official documents, there are three types of sources used to piece together Soviet nuclear doctrine. The first type is oral accounts from the main decision-makers provided after the collapse of the USSR. Most are taken from extensive interviews conducted by BDM. Oral histories are prone to distortions by the passage of time and selective recall. That said, the full set of interviews provide data that is in some ways better than the written record because the interviewer can get elaboration on "why" one choice was taken and not another. The second type is military lectures for officers. The best source is the Voroshilov Lectures, the top secret transcripts stolen from the Soviet General Academy Armed Forces from 1973-1975, later published by National Defense University 1990. The General Staff is considered the strategic "brain" of the army, and the primary influence on the official formulation of the military components for Soviet doctrine. Graduates include: Ogarkov, Akhromeyev, and Varennikov. Moreover, "The lecture materials seem to represent a valid reflection of doctrine not only in the mid-1970s but at least up until the mid-1980s" NDU, pg. 11. Finally, the third type is major ideas that spring from the secret Soviet military journal, Voyennaya Mysl "Military Thought." Each issue of the journal was marked, "Only for Generals, Admirals, and Officers of the Soviet Army and Navy." These journal provide a fantastic account and evolution of military theorizing within the Soviet military establishment.

29. Marshal Ogarkov, quoted in Jeffrey D. McCausland, "Soviet Short-Range Nuclear Forces And Doctrine," in *Comparative Strategy 5*, vol. 3 (1985), p. 5, doi:10.1080/01495938508402694.

30. Adelman, "The Evolution Of Soviet Military Doctrine, 1945-1984."

employed force outside of the Warsaw Pact after 1945.[31]

In the case of Afghanistan, any use of nuclear weapons would have been tactical (or 'non-strategic' in Soviet doctrine) in nature. The Soviets defined non-strategic nuclear weapons as those used, "by land, sea or air forces against opposing forces, supporting installations or facilities, in support of operations that contribute to the accomplishment of a military mission of limited scope, or in support of a military commander's scheme of maneuver, usually limited to the area of military operations."[32]

5.6.1 Little Military Utility

By the early 1970s, military leadership had concluded that such weapons simply had very limited military utility.[33] Though the political leadership instructed the general staff to plan for war with tactical nuclear weapons, the General Staff had concluded that those weapons had little value in combat operations.[34] Even the ostensibly cavalier Ogarkov both before and after his tenure as the head of the General Staff was skeptical of any tactical use of nuclear weapons; instead, he sought conventional technological advancement.[35] Part of the reason was that Soviet military doctrine utilized their vast conventional superiority; military planners recognized that any nuclear contamination on the battlefield would limit their troop movement and maneuver.[36] Moreover, electromagnetic pulses were expected to interfere with basic command, control, and communication that would impair Soviet operations more

31. Adelman, "The Evolution Of Soviet Military Doctrine, 1945-1984.," p. 79.

32. U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms: 08 November 2010, as amended through 15 October 2015* (2015), p. 521.

33. Akhromeyev in Ellis M. Mishulovich Hines John G. and John F. Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, technical report (Washington, D.C.: McLean: BDM Federal, 1995), pp. 5-6.

34. Vitaly Tsygichko, *Soviet Use of Mathematical Methods to Support Strategic Decision Making: A Model of Strategic Operations* [in en] (1993).

35. Michael MccGwire, *Military Objectives In Soviet Foreign Policy* [in en] (Washington, D.C.: Brookings: Institution, 1987), ch. 2.

36. Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Engaging The Enemy* [in en] (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 44-8.

relative to the enemy.[37] Because of this conclusion, after 1972 political leaders did not participate in a single military exercise that involved nuclear weapons.[38] During the case period, the opinions of the General Staff were very important on the conduct of war, if not the decisions to enter it. In fact, most of the time when General Staff proposals were not adopted were when they conflicted with existing policies of disarmament and the relaxation of international tensions.[39]

5.6.2 No First-Use Policy

Second, the Soviets privately and later publicly established a "no first-use" policy.[40] After the fall of the Soviet Union, major officers admitted that at no point since 1960 did the USSR intended to initiate the employment of nuclear weapons.[41] In 1960, Khrushchev decided to emphasize nuclear deterrence over nuclear war-fighting. From 1974 on, the Soviet military had been guided by direct instructions from the Central Committee of CPSU not to employ nuclear weapons first, preempting the official declaration by Brezhnev six years later.[42]

The Soviet rejection of nuclear first-use was considered quite serious and was based on decades of early research about the lack of benefits resulting from it.[43] In fact, the post-Cold War testimony of Soviet experts and decisionmakers all concur that first strike was at no

37. Marten, *Engaging The Enemy*, pp. 36-39.

38. Ackromeyev in Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, p. 6; Varennikov on p. 11.

39. Ibid.

40. It appears that only advocate of first-use under certain conditions was Andrei Grechko, Minister of Defense from 1967-1976. See U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Nuclear Doctrine: Concepts of Intercontinental and Theater War, May 5, 1973," Top Secret. FOIA 0000268107 (1973).

41. Akhromeyev interview Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, p. 5.

42. Quoted in Raymond L. Garthoff, "Introduction: US Considerations of Soviet Military Thinking.," in *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials From the Soviet General Staff Academy*, ed. Ghulam D. Wardak (Washington, DC: National Defence University Press, 1989), p. 13. Grechko, the only convinced 'first-striker' died in spring 1976. Also, First official declaration of non-first use was by Brezhnev at the Second Special Session of U.N. GA June 15, 1982.

43. Danilevich interview, Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, p. 19; *Military Thought*, January 1975, p. 66.

point part of Soviet military doctrine.[44] The "no first-use" policy derived from four factors. First and primarily, as noted above, the scope of military utility was deemed to be very narrow. Second, Soviet leadership was certain that the U.S. was inherently aggressive and chronically preparing for a viable first strike.[45] Leaders feared that the U.S. was waiting for a strategic misstep to pounce. Third, at least into the 1980s, Soviet leaders and theorists rejected US/NATO theories about controllable nuclear escalation; instead, most believed that any use against the other would lead to full strategic response.[46]

Intra-war bargaining ran counter to general Soviet doctrine.[47] Fourth, by 1968, the Defense Ministry and the General Staff concluded that the USSR would almost certainly lose a nuclear war with the U.S., even if it launched a first strike. Consequences of a nuclear exchange with the U.S. would be catastrophic, and entail U.S. domination in the aftermath. Based on the BDM interviews, although Soviet ideology had insisted that survival was possible, no one in the leadership actually believed it. Combined, NWU in an unfavorable and unstable strategic environment suggested incredible risks that would require decisive results to implement. By 1981, in private, the General Staff declared flatly that any "nuclear use would be catastrophic."[48]

5.6.3 Strategy Only Toward NATO

Third, Soviet planners oriented their entire nuclear strategic concept around the threat of the U.S. and NATO, and only later of China. In fact, the basic evolution of their nuclear doctrine

44. Document 3, document 4 Ellis M. Mishulovich Hines John G. and John F. Shull, *Stockholm Roundtable: Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, technical report (Washington, D.C.: McLean: BDM Federal, 1995), pp. 33-5, p. 65.

45. Ibid.

46. General Danilevich interview Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, pp. 8-9.

47. Fritz Ermarth, "Contrasts In American And Soviet Strategic Thought." [in en], *International Security* 3, no. 2 (1978): p. 149.

48. Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, In 1981, the General Staff concluded that "nuclear use would be catastrophic." See Danilevich interview in[pp.23-26.

was essentially a succession of reactionary adaptations to NATO's nuclear developments.[49] To this end, the Soviets developed a robust tactical nuclear arsenal to conduct strategic operations in the theater of combat and to reinforce Soviet conventional units in their large scale operations.[50] While the General Staff had found the utility for nuclear weapons in combat operations to be quite limited, the Politburo nonetheless ordered military planners to include tactical nuclear weapons. However, though the directive was ceremonially heeded, no detailed plans were ever developed or implemented.[51] By the late 1970s, tens of thousands of tactical nuclear weapons had been deployed at nearly 600 Soviet bases, nearly all distributed to manage a NATO or Chinese threat.[52] And, Soviet ground forces in the European theater had been training with available atomic weapons since 1954.[53]

Even with such a vast and varied nuclear arsenal, no Soviet leaders or even military experts had discussed NWU against a non-nuclear enemy.[54] This is perhaps most likely due to the USSR's tremendous conventional advantage combined with the impairments that NWU would impose on the movement and maneuver involved in their strategic offensive concept.

Pursuit of arms control

Since the 1960s, Soviet leaders acknowledge that the USSR could not achieve both quantitative and qualitative nuclear superiority against the U.S. With the staggering cost of

49. McCausland, "Soviet Short-Range Nuclear Forces And Doctrine," pp. 14-7.

50. Ivan Safranchuk, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons in the Modern World: A Russian Perspective," in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emergent Threats in an Evolving Security*, ed. Alistair Millar and Brian Alexander (Nebraska: Potomac Books, 2003), p. 53.

51. Hines and Shull, *Soviet Intensions 1965-1985. Vol II. Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, pp. 43-4.

52. Joshua Handler, "The 1991-1992 PNIs and the Elimination, Storage, and Security of Tactical Nuclear Weapons.," in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emergent Threats in an Evolving Security Environment* (Nebraska: Potomac Books, 2003), p. 31.

53. Deputy Minister of Defense noted in an article *Voyenniy Vestnik*, 1977.

54. There are a few articles in journal by military theorists in *Voyenniy Vestnik*, but nothing significant.

maintaining parity in a spiraling arms race, the Sino-Soviet split, and the lessons of risk from the Cuban missile crisis, Soviet leaders pursued arms control measures. After brokering the multilateral Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT 1968), Soviets pursued bilateral agreements with the U.S. to stabilize vertical proliferation and defense. These agreements include the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (SALT I, ABM 1972).[55] Concurrent with the leadup to the Afghanistan War, Soviet diplomats were also pursuing SALT II, which was intended to add limits to nuclear delivery systems as well as certain mutual restrictions on strategic deployment.

How Nuclear Weapons Could Have Been Effective

Theoretically, certain non-strategic nuclear weapons could have aided Soviet forces in meeting important operational goals against the enemy in Afghanistan. Interestingly, tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) were conspicuously excluded from existing and developing arms control treaties. In combating the Mujahideen, the Soviets encountered two target types with which TNWs may have been relatively more effective to apply than conventional alternatives: the underground tunnel systems, and the remote Mujahideen supply depots.

First, the Mujahideen heavily relied on vast systems of underground tunnels called Karez used for collecting groundwater and transferring water to irrigation points. These tunnels were far larger, extensive, and elaborate than what the Vietcong employed during the US-Vietnam war.[56] Beyond logistical purposes, the Mujahideen used the Karez systems to successfully break direct contact with Soviet forces and withdraw. They were utilized throughout the war. Soviets would typically deal with Karez entry points with concussion grenades, mass incendiaries, and chemical weapons.[57] However, this required personnel to

55. SALT I and the ABM Treaty: (May 1972) limited strategic missile defenses to 200 and later to 100, and capped ICBM and SLBM forces. Moratorium on silos.

56. Lester Grau and Ali Ahmad Jalali, "Underground Combat: Stereophonic Blasting, Tunnel Rats And The Soviet-Afghan War" [in en], *Foreign Military Studies Office*, 1998,

57. For a thorough discussion of the Soviet methods of dealing with the tunnel systems in Afghanistan, see ibid.

discover, cordon, and clear entry points one by one; Soviet troops struggled to degrade the Karez systems throughout the war.

The Soviets could have employed certain TNWs to destroy Karez subsystems around areas of Mujahideen dominion. Some nuclear 'bunker busters' are designed to demolish underground systems, tunnels, and other choke-points for Mujahideen movement. Such nuclear weapons have far less radiation fallout effects than other nuclear weapons, and subsurface bursts were expected to produce little to no climatic effects.

Second, by 1982 the Mujahideen began establishing a series of major supply depots and supply points. Most of these depots were built in remote and inaccessible areas like Tora, Zhawar and the Shahikot Valley where existing Soviet methods had great difficulty engaging.[58] But, at least they provided the Soviets valuable and fixed assets to target. In theory, the Soviet forces could have effectively destroyed these critical logistical hubs in otherwise sparsely populated areas.

Before the USSR's foray into Afghanistan, the General Staff had established a set of circumstances where NWU were deemed appropriate and efficient in a given theater to achieve objectives.[59] They were to:

1. Destroy enemy nuke delivery systems in the theater of operations.
2. Destroy massed enemy armed groupings in concentration and deployment areas, mobilization areas, staging areas of airborne units.
3. Disrupt enemy governmental and higher-level control systems.
4. Destroy military-economic base.
5. Destroy enemy communication routes, major railroads, and airfields.[60]

The implication is that though the war in Afghanistan provided target sets that may have more effectively dealt with by NWU, it would need some renewed appraisal of existing

58. Grau and Jalali, "Underground Combat: Stereophonic Blasting, Tunnel Rats And The Soviet-Afghan War."

59. See Garthoff, "Introduction: US Considerations of Soviet Military Thinking.," pp. 269-270.

60. *Ibid.*

doctrine. Since the intervention in Afghanistan was unique in Soviet military history, it did at least provide the impetus for innovation and reconsideration.

5.7 Phases of Decision

5.7.1 Prelude to War: 1979

Through the Saur Revolution, the state continued to lose military and administrative control of the country. The sweeping reforms had not only upended local traditions and authority structures, they disrupted the economy in ways that crippled the rural poor that were intended to benefit. In March 1979, a series of spontaneous protests in the city of Herat developed into a local popular uprising and included a mutiny of local Afghan army troops. Several Soviet advisers to the DRA were killed, leading to the first serious consideration of Soviet intervention to reinstate security.[61]

On March 7th, the Politburo began secret deliberations on the question of military intervention. It seemed clear that Afghanistan lacked many of the prerequisites needed for transitioning to proper socialism at that time, including having a receptive populace. Andropov asserted that, "...we can suppress a revolution in Afghanistan only with the aid of our bayonets, and that is for us entirely inadmissible. We cannot take such a risk."[62]

The experienced statesman Gromyko immediately considered the international ramifications, particularly on the nuclear balance with the U.S., "All that we have done in recent years with such efforts in terms of dtente, arms reduction, and much more - all that would be thrown back...All the non-aligned countries will be against us. In a word, serious consequences are to be expected from such an action...and our relations with Western countries, particularly the [Federated Republic of Germany] would be spoiled."[63] Kosygin felt the same

61. Mark Urban, *War In Afghanistan* [in en] (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 30.

62. "Zasedanie Politburo TsK KPSS 7 Marta 1979 goda," pp. 70-1; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente And Confrontation* [in en] (Washington, D.C.: Brookings: Institution, 1994), p. 993.

63. Bennett, *Condemned To Repetition?*, p. 185.

way.[64]

Taraki beseeched Soviet leadership to deploy soldiers from other socialist countries to Afghanistan in order to reassert essential control. Invoking their recently brokered bilateral Friendship Treaty, Taraki reached out personally to Brezhnev for military support. But, on March 17th, on a day when the sympathetic Brezhnev was conspicuously absent from proceedings, the Troika convinced the Politburo against direct military intervention in Afghanistan.[65] After the Soviet decision against military intervention, the security situation continued to unravel, severe repression tactics by the DRA increased, and PDPA infighting simmered. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) persistently called on Amin and Taraki to end the repressions and enforce the rule of law, but they were not heeded.[66]

On September 10th, Taraki traveled to the USSR in order to meet personally with a sympathetic Brezhnev. Full details of the meeting are not available, but historians deduce that Brezhnev directed Taraki to remove the draconian Amin from power.[67] The Soviets viewed Amin as the architect for the foundering Saur Revolution and worried about his continued leadership within the DRA government.[68] On September 14th, the attempt on Amin's life backfired and Amin had Taraki murdered. This event left Soviet leaders with a most unfavorable situation: Not only was an unwieldy Amin along with his personal cadre of loyalists in control of the state, but Amin also understood that the Soviets had a role in the attempt to assassinate him.[69] And, the resistance had taken control of 23 or the 28

64. Bennett, *Condemned To Repetition?*, pp. 185-7.

65. Vladimir Snegirev, *The Dead End: The Road to Afghanistan: National Security Archive: Electronic Briefing Book No. 396* (2012), p. 4.

66. Ibid., p. 70.

67. Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* [in en] (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 203.

68. Charles Sullivan, "The Kremlin and the Soviet Invasion Of Afghanistan In Retrospect, 1979" [in de], *Washington Review Of Turkish And Eurasian Affairs*, 2011, `http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/afghanistan-soviet-union/.`.

69. Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics*, p. 200.

provinces in the country.[70]

Neither the declining security situation or the murder of Taraki were sufficient to the USSR into intervention. Then, new information developed that suggested that Amin was making political conciliation with the West.[71] There was even some speculation he was no less than a CIA plant.[72] Given the Politburo's general distrust of Amin combined with the risk that Amin may align toward the U.S. prompted Soviet leaders into renewed debate over intervention. The geostrategic cost of Amin's political realignment was not permissible.

In early December, Soviet leaders revisited the question of intervention. The Troika of Ustinov, Andropov, and Gromyko reversed their previous position and sought to introduce force in order to secure the ailing socialist regime.[73] They modeled the decision on the Soviet experience in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and believed that once deployed, the Soviet Army would garner a quick, decisive victory.[74] They also agreed that the regime could survive only if Amin were removed from power and moderate Babrak Karmal replaced him as the Head of State.[75] Even though the Troika dominated foreign policy, there were critics who made final attempts to prevent Soviet invasion. Valentin Varennikov, who was at the time the Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Main Operational Directorate, and Chief of Staff Nikolai Ogarkov attempted to convince the Ustinov not to invade. They invited a sympathetic Akhromeyev, the General of the Army and the head of the operational group for initial invasion, to attend the meetings and help persuade the Troika.[76] Ogarkov was chiefly concerned with the consequences to the

70. Sullivan, "The Kremlin and the Soviet Invasion Of Afghanistan In Retrospect, 1979," p. 7.

71. "Personal memorandum Andropov to Brezhnev, December 1, 1979" [in en], in *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRF* (1979).

72. Garthoff, *Detente And Confrontation*, p. 1046.

73. Troika members and roles: Chairman of KGB Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, Minister of Defense Dmitriy Fedorovich Ustinov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko.

74. Aleksandr Lyakhovsky, "Inside the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the Seizure of Kabul December 1979," *Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #51*, 2007, p. 14.

75. Ibid., p. 15.

76. Ibid., p. 16.

balance of power, predicting that, "We would align the entire Islamic East against us and suffer political damage around the world."[77] Andropov reasserted Politburo authority over the General Staff by yelling, "Focus on military affairs! Leave policymaking to us, the Party, and Leonid Ilyich!"[78]

Politburo leaders actually did not expect the intervention to meaningfully alter its relationship with the U.S. At the onset, when Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin argued that military action in Afghanistan could induce a total disruption to the relationship with the U.S., Brezhnev dismissively said, "Do not worry, Anatoly, we will end this war in three to four weeks."[79] It is clear that the principal foreign policymakers deeply misunderstood the nature of the crisis and how international actors, particularly the U.S., would respond. Prior to invasion, the Troika did not even think it could be classified as a limited war.

5.7.2 Onset of War: 1979-1980

The first phase of the war begins from the entry of the 40th Division of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan December 24th 1979 and ends when Afghan resistance movements begin to organize into guerrilla warfare in the beginning of March 1980. The first goal of the Soviet military was to occupy key locations and pacify the insurrection elements among the locals and mutinous army members. The second goal was to inoculate Afghanistan from external aggression.[80] With a vast conventional advantage, Soviet forces applied their familiar strategy of nimble offensive, and the full capture of command and control assets. Thus, in this phase, given both existing Soviet nuclear doctrine and the potential additional

77. Sullivan, "The Kremlin and the Soviet Invasion Of Afghanistan In Retrospect, 1979," p. 47.

78. Ibid., pp. 47-8.

79. Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," p. 185.

80. The Soviet negotiating position is best captured in this quote by Brezhnev in Pravda: "The only task set to the Soviet contingents is to assist the Afghans in repulsing the aggression from outside. They will be fully withdrawn from Afghanistan once the causes that made the Afghan leadership request their introduction disappear." ibid., p. 198.

uses of nuclear weapons in Afghanistan, there was no apparent need to consider NWU.

Aims and Constraints

In this phase, the Soviets had limited operational aims. After entry and the capture of major government centers, the Soviets were directed to station garrisons and secure all bases. The majority of Soviet personnel and the equipment brought into the country were used to safeguard regime centers and lines of communication (LOC). Nearly 35% of forces were committed to LOC.[81] Additionally, the Soviets faced several impediments in the pursuit of their goals. Crucially, the Soviet Army was neither trained nor outfitted to conduct war in a place like Afghanistan. Geographically, the highway network was decisively underdeveloped, with 75% of roads being dirt. Afghanistan lacked any rail system. And, the landscape was dominated by a rugged, mountainous terrain. Economically, there was no military industry, meaning that it could not domestically support military operations or combat by a large contingent of forces for any sustained amount of time. As the General Staff would put simply, "The conduct of classic military operations and combat, using existing regulations and manuals of the Soviet Armed Forces, was practically impossible in light of the extremely difficult physical and geographic conditions."[82] Finally, in terms of coordination with the Afghan Army, the persistent cycles of purges, repressions, and forced conscription of youth by Amin's regime were deeply detrimental to the effectiveness, cohesion, and resolve of domestic troops.[83]

Basic Timeline

On December 24th, the Soviets deployed the 40th Army along with Spetsnaz special forces and Soviet airborne forces, staged a coup on the unsuspecting Amin, and promptly installed

81. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* [in en], ed. Lester W. Grau (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2002), pp. 7-8.

82. Ibid., p. 5.

83. Ibid., p. 16.

the socialist moderate Karmal. The operation itself was considered masterfully executed. After the operation, military leadership recommended withdrawal.[84] In a national radio address on the 28th, Karmal was declared the new president of the DRA. Resistance continued apace and on Jan 1, 1980, revolts in Kandahar left dozens of Soviet citizens and troops butchered. Within a couple weeks, the main body of the 40th Army was fully stationed in Afghanistan; the force was comprised about approximately 80,000 troops, 1,800 tanks, and 2,000 armored fighting vehicles.[85] Additionally, the air force made nearly 4,000 flights into Kabul alone.[86] The Soviets successfully took command of Afghanistan's major urban centers, military bases, and strategic posts.[87]

Rebellion continued to spread. Even in a defensive posture, Soviet forces found itself fighting urban uprisings and several tribal armies, including some former Afghan Army troops. On February 21st, mass protests of the occupation in Kabul was violently repressed with hundreds killed and thousands arrested and later killed. A similar scenario occurred in Shindand around the same time.[88] Forces of rebellion mostly engaged the Soviets in the open. They were of course no match; Soviet artillery and airpower decimated any direct opposition. By the end of the first phase, total Soviet forces exceeded 100,000 personnel.

Miscalculation: U.S. and International Response

U.S. leaders were shocked by the Soviet invasion. Many considered the intervention to be geostrategic bid to establish warm water ports. The American condemnation and response was swift: President Carter immediately halted the massive exports of grain and high tech-

84. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, p. 21.

85. Robert Fisk, *The Great War For Civilisation* [in en] (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), pp. 4041, p. 12; Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost.*

86. Fisk, *The Great War For Civilisation*, pp. 40-4.

87. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, p. 18.

88. roy Olivier, *Islam And Resistance In Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 86-92.

nology goods sent to the Soviet Union.[89] Additionally, the Administration heavily curtailed Soviet fishing rights in U.S. waters.[90] As a symbolic demonstration, Carter declared that the U.S. would no longer participate in the 1980 Summer Olympics to be held in Moscow. Finally, the Administration blocked the resubmission of SALT II Treaty to Congress. Strategically, the U.S. took the implications of Soviet move seriously. Within a month of the invasion, Carter revised U.S. grand strategy to include willingness and resolve to use military force to secure interests in the Middle East.[91] Underscoring the geostrategic presumption of Soviet involvement, he proclaimed, "Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[92]

Additionally, the invasion induced a move to balance against the USSR and prevent any geostrategic gains. The U.S., China, Australia, the U.K., Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia began covertly coordinating and channeling aid to beleaguered opposition groups in Afghanistan. Even though in this phase, only the U.S. had made seriously diplomatic overtures, the remaining world opinion clearly opposed the Soviet adventure. Just as Ogarkov had warned, the Islamic Conference of 34 states called for, "the immediate, urgent and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops." Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution, echoing the same protest.[93]

89. Tanner, Stephen, Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban, 2002, pp. 235-236.

90. Olivier, *Islam And Resistance In Afghanistan.*

91. Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress, January 23, 1980," in *Presidential Documents: Administration of Jimmy Carter*, vol. 16 (1980), 4.

92. Ibid.

93. United Nations Security Council, "Resolution S/RES/462: International peace and security, January 9, 1980" (1980).

5.7.3 Phase I Advocacy Summary

Through the first phase, advocacy for the application of nuclear weapons in the theater of strategic operations was nil. With the essentially defensive goals of garrisoning strategic sites, securing the LOC, and propping the existing socialist regime, there existed no military or strategic application for nuclear weapons.

5.7.4 Active Combat: 1980-1985

The second and longest phase of the war begins when the Afghan resistance groups noticeably adopted a guerrilla strategy against the Soviet occupation (March 1980) through their transition out of active combat (April 1985). This phase is dominated by active Soviet combat, colossal harm to the Afghan population, covert support of the opposition by states balancing against the USSR, and the eventual recognition by the Soviet military that a military victory was not possible.

By March, opposition groups had learned the painful consequences of direct engagement with the impressive Soviet Army. The resistance reorganized according to a guerrilla strategy. The Mujahideen moved their forces into the mountains, making the full application of modern combat equipment impossible. Moreover, they integrated into local populations, making them hard to distinguish. When caught into combat with Soviet forces, the Mujahideen would use close combat tactics in order to nullify the effective use of Soviet aircraft and artillery. Moreover, utilizing guerrilla warfare in a vast, rugged, underdeveloped terrain prevented airpower from effectively supporting ground forces. Also, the application of tanks, along with other armored vehicles, were essentially bound to the pitifully sparse road network in the country.

New Soviet Aims

The basic defensive posture the Soviets had initiated could not be sustained; the government could not administer any authority or security throughout the vast majority of the country. The Soviets converted their strategy to be the primary security apparatus of the country and adopted an active combat role to quell the Mujahideen. Furthermore, they believed that they needed to destroy the link between the Mujahideen resistance and the local populace; they opted to conduct massive bombing and strafing operations to degrade Mujahideen capacity and drive the populace out of the countryside. The basic aim was to suffocate the supply lines of the enemy, destroy its forces, and achieve military victory that would force a political solution on favorable terms to the regime.

Basic Timeline

In March, the Soviets began major sweeps of hostile valley regions. They began to learn that the strategy of the resistance had changed in their initial push through the Paktia province that resulted in the loss of a full Soviet battalion. Soviet leadership secretly reassessed the timeline of their occupation, acknowledging that their military presence would be required for a long time, perhaps years.[94] Fairly quickly, the 40th Army was reinforced with the 201st motorized rifle division along with two motorized regiments. This included over 600 tanks, 4,400 infantry fighting vehicles, 500 aircraft, and over 500 artillery weapons.[95] In this phase the overall size of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan reached 81,800, where 75% were combat personnel.[96] Though this force was intended to support the 300,000 man Afghan Army, the Soviets conducted nearly all forward operations.

Concurrently, numerous major states escalated their covert support to the resistance

94. Memo, CPSU Politburo Commission on Afghanistan, 10 March, 1980, found in Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal."

95. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, pp. 25-6.

96. Ibid., p. 30.

movements against Soviet domination. The powers, included the United States, China, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, coordinated their balancing posture against the Soviet Union by funneling arms and aid through Pakistan.[97] The Soviets found it nearly impossible to stop the flows of arms and aid through incredibly rugged Khyber Pass, and relied mostly on small operations with their Spetsnaz special forces to impair flows.

As early as September 1980, the nature of the resistance and the unstoppable supply flows led Ogarkov, Varennikov, and Akhromeyev to insist secretly that no military solution was available.[98] However, the Troika and the Politburo that they dominated disagreed. Massive bombing and strafing campaigns uprooted large swaths of the population. Between 1980 and 1985, the Soviet campaigns killed over 1 million Afghans, forcing another 5.5 million Afghans into neighboring countries as refugees, and internally displacing another 1.2 million.[99] They decimated herds of livestock and agriculture. The countryside was blanketed with mines. Basically every Afghan family was ravaged.

Finally, in February of 1981, Akhromeyev, Sokolov, Varennikov at least convinced Ustinov that a military victory was not available, and that it would be in the Soviet interest to find a political and diplomatic solution without military victory.[100] Akhromeyev persisted, "This is a war against the Afghan people... [and] we have lost that war. We lost that war a long time ago." Sokolov, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, agreed.[101] They successfully beseeched Ustinov to report to the Politburo. But, the prominent view of the Politburo was

97. Pakistan distributed aid to only seven major represented political factions. All were patently Islamic. Thus, any tribal groups had to affiliate with one of these factions to receive necessary aid, Pakistan favored the most extreme groups and distributed accordingly. Undermined traditional authority of tribal and village leaders.

98. Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making And The Soviet War In Afghanistan: From Intervention To Withdrawal.," pp. 46-73.

99. Gall, *Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation*; Kaplan, *Soldiers Of God*, p. 3 and p. 11.

100. Diego Cordovez and Selig S.Harrison, *Out Of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of Soviet Withdrawal* [in en] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 65.

101. V.A. Merimskii, "Afghanistan: Uroki i vivody," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal No. 1, January 1994, p. 29.

to pursue a military solution first, and Ustinov's appeal was not even put on the agenda.[102] Thus, the imploration led to no real change in strategy or in the conduct of the war.

Early in 1982, Andropov began to advocate for U.N. mediation as a diplomatic and political path to resolution.[103] Though Gromyko was reluctant, untrusting of an international political process, he did not oppose it outright.[104] Negotiations began and would make considerable progress by the time of Andropov's death in 1984.

Militarily, the Soviets determined that the only decisive action to take against the Mujahideen was to decimate their new regional bases and supply depots. The Soviets began major operations against them with limited success. All the while, the Soviet Army carried out intense combat around the main highway network and wherever possible along the border with Pakistan. And yet, the armed resistance only grew in size and capabilities. In 1983, the Mujahideen were approximately 45,000 in size; only two years later that size was over 150,000.[105] They controlled all main agriculture, and dominated the Karez system.

Although Soviet leadership was pursuing diplomatic solutions through the U.N., combat only increased in scale and scope. In fact, 1985 was the most intense year of the war. The main reason the Soviets refused to extricate themselves from the country is no clear: they believed that their departure implied U.S. influence or even domination in the country. Although no military solution appeared available, giving Afghanistan to the U.S. was not acceptable. In March 10, 1983, Andropov repeatedly noted to the Politburo, "We are fighting here against U.S. imperialism, which knows very well that it has lost its position in this region. For this reason we cannot retreat."[106]

With respect to Afghanistan, there is practically no documentation available from the

102. Ustinov, quoted in Cordovez and S.Harrison, *Out Of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of Soviet Withdrawal*, p. 65.

103. Ibid., pp. 91-2.

104. Ibid.

105. Russian General Staff, p. 30.

106. "Meeting of the Politburo," March 10, 1983, Fond 89, Perechen 14, Dokument 29.

brief interregnum of Chernenko. However, there are no observable policy changes to note anyway; it appears that in the case of Afghanistan, it was a period of non-decision.

5.7.5 Phase II Advocacy Summary

Despite a couple plausible uses for nuclear weapons in this phase, the Soviets did not seriously consider the introduction of them into operations in Afghanistan. The principle reason is that the Soviets believed non-decisive use would induce major nuclear retaliation by the apparently bellicose U.S. This section summarizes the reasoning and consequence of this widespread belief among the Soviet High Command.

First, most Soviet leaders believed that the U.S. was planning a nuclear first-strike and was merely waiting for a worthy window of opportunity.[107] Introducing battlefield nuclear weapons in Afghanistan could establish a plausible justification for the U.S. to neutralize the Soviet threat. According to Soviet perceptions, the U.S. had demonstrated great nuclear bellicosity against the Soviet Union leading up to and during the Afghanistan War. The U.S. had announced the planned NATO deployment of short-range nuclear Pershing II missiles in West Germany, the coercive "dual-track" of arms control, the largest peacetime defense spending in U.S. history, the apparently destabilizing introduction of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), and the eventual designation of the USSR as the "Evil Empire."[108] Moreover, Soviets believed that certain U.S. and NATO exercises were actual preparations or a ruse for nuclear attack.[109]

[110] In 1983 in particular, the U.S. conducted a major simulation called Able Archer that

107. Ben Fisher, "A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare (An Intelligence Monograph)" [in en], *Langley: Central Intelligence Agency*, 1997,

108. The Soviets had recently initiated "RYaN," a military intelligence gathering program on contingency plans. Initiated in May 1981 by Andropov (while chairman of KGB).

109. .

110. For fantastic insight on the NATO exercise Able Archer and Soviet perceptions, see the recently declassified The Soviet "War Scare", President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Report, February 15, 1990, Released October 24, 2015, available through the National Security Archive.

involved actual mobilization and procedures of NATO's command, control, and communication expected from nuclear war. In response, the Soviets prepped their strategic nuclear arsenal and even placed their airbases in East Germany and Poland on high alert until the exercise had concluded.[111]

Second, the existing Soviet nuclear deployment was organized around complementing high-intensity war occurring on the plains of northern European or northern China; integration into the Afghanistan theater would require sustained deliberation and redeployments. Since both existing Soviet nuclear doctrine and current target sets in Afghanistan suggested no role for nuclear weapons, there was no impetus to begin such involved procedures for implementation. The benefits were far too narrow for Soviet leaders to invest such time into a novel application for nuclear weapons. And given the apparently bellicose U.S., the risks and costs were profound. Consequently, the Soviets pursued military strategies of anti-escalation; they were afraid of expanding the scope of the conflict.

Essentially, given the limited aims and the insistence to keep the scope of conflict as narrow as possible, the benefits of NWU were far too small compared to the risks and costs of serious consideration. Combined with the presumption of narrow military utility by Soviet military leaders, along with having no decisive targets in the plausible nuclear target set in Afghanistan, no leaders considered NWU. Non-consideration did not stem from moral qualms or a normative taboo, but because the immediate risks to the national interest foreclosed it.

5.7.6 From Support to Reconciliation: 1985-1989

From April 1985 through February 1989, Soviet strategy changed to extricate its presence from Afghanistan. It consists of two military phases; between April 1985 and January 1987, Soviet military strategy converted from its primary active combat role to that of supporting the Afghan Army through airpower, artillery, and engineer subunits. Additionally, Soviet

111. Ibid.

special forces continued to stifle the flow of weapons and ammunition from Pakistan. From January 1987 through February 1989, Soviet forces adopted a garrison strategy while it worked to broker political reconciliation in Afghanistan. Throughout this period, Soviets conducted iterated and ordered stages of troop withdrawals. Since there were no serious offensive target sets nor any risk of overrun throughout , NWU was not applicable or considered. This subsection provides a brief overview of the events entailed in the Soviet exit from Afghanistan.

Once the political leadership changed, the Politburo began having the first open deliberations on the war. General Varennikov, who was now leading the Defense Ministry's Operational Group for Afghanistan, submitted a report to the Politburo concluding that military successes had no long-term effect on the growing Afghan opposition.[112] In June 1985, Gorbachev acknowledged that a more nimble withdrawal was necessary. He also sought to withdraw slowly in order to sustain a maximally stable setting for political and diplomatic processes. In October, he secured Politburo support for withdrawal.[113] Soviet leadership guided the Afghan government to take the lead in internal security. The Afghan government reorganized their force structure somewhat while meeting and coordinating with local tribe leaders. The military adopted policies of full religious freedom and improved protocols for handling desertion.[114]

In March 1986, Karmal was forced to share power with a KGB selected candidate, Mohammed Najibullah. And a few months later, the CPSU withdrew support for Karmal altogether, fully backing Najibullah and making him the President of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, numerous Mujahideen groups continued their resistance, often demonstrating that the DRA forces could still not conduct defense alone. In several operations in Logar, Kandahar, and Paktia, Soviet forces supported the Afghan Army by providing air support and covering

112. Varennikov's personal archive, found in Aleksandr Lyakhovsky, *Tragedy and Valor of Afghan* (Moscow: Iskon, 1995), pp. 513-4.

113. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, pp. 37-39.

114. Ibid., pp. 39-41.

their flanks and rear.

Gorbachev was insistent on signaling that the USSR was serious about de-escalation and withdrawal from Afghanistan. In July, Gorbachev announced the "Afghanization" of the war and withdrew nearly 15,000 troops as a symbolic gesture.[115] The changes in Soviet force commitments proved to the ruling party in Afghanistan that the Soviet had no military solution, and drove the PDPA to conduct and emergency session on how to pursue national reconciliation. Beginning January 1987, the Soviet Union ardently promoted Afghan national reconciliation.[116] A temporary ceasefire was declared and Soviets halted all offensive operations, fighting only in defense against Mujahideen attacks. The only exception was the large Operation Magistral in the Paktia province, where Soviets employed over five divisions to get critical supplied to the besieged Khost. Concurrently, the Soviets and the U.S. worked diplomatically to broker a treaty between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

On April 14, 1988, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the Geneva Accords, with the Soviet Union and the United States cosigning as guarantors. Much to Soviet relief, the treaty provided a diplomatic conclusion and an opportunity to fully withdraw. Pakistan continued to provide covert support to the Mujahideen, contravening the treaty, but the Soviets followed their commitment and withdrew the last of their forces on February 15, 1989.

5.8 Evaluating the Theories

This particular case faced an empirical problem: there is no observable variation on the phenomenon that needs to be explained, that is levels of advocacy for NWU. If this case were evaluated in the same manner as the previous cases, no scientific inferences about the competing theories could be made. Instead, this chapter has examined all corollaries to the competing theories to determine which theory is more consistent with the available evidence.

115. Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan* [in en] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 277.

116. Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, pp. 27-8.

5.8.1 Evidence for Nuclear Taboo

A thorough review of the case with the data available strongly disconfirms the Nuclear Taboo theory of NWU advocacy. While there is no direct reference by leaders about a nuclear taboo or whether to heed one, evidence shows incredible lack of moral qualms and an utter dismissal of international norms against harm or weapons of mass destruction. There is no positive evidence for a Taboo at play, but significant disconfirming evidence.

First, Soviet leadership pursued a massive and systematic policy of killing civilians, showing an incredible willingness to cause harm to the population and violate international norms in the course of doing so. Whole villages of people were made extinct. They targeted Afghan populations to pry the Mujahideen from any local support, and destroyed basic infrastructure and agriculture, killing 9% of the population (1.25 million), physically disabling 8% more (1.2 million), maiming or wounding 20% more (3 million), and forced a full third of the population to flee the country (5.5 million).[117] As one Soviet officer recalled, "We were ordered by our officers that when we attack a village, not one person must be left alive to tell the tale. If we refuse to carry out these orders, we get it in the neck ourselves."[118] Aerial bombardments were used regularly for deliberate punishment on entire villages who were suspected of ever aiding guerrillas.[119] Air power was the main cause of civilian casualties, accounting for 46% of all deaths.[120] Soviet population "relocation" strategies were a deliberate part of the Soviet counterinsurgency.[121] The Soviet strategy included no destinations for the millions of villages - Relocation effectively meant depopulation. Strikingly, the Soviets had no POW camps, and rarely took prisoners.[122]

117. Feifer, *The Great Gamble*; Gall, *Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation*.

118. R.J. Rummel, *Lethal Politics* [in en] (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), pp. 47-57.

119. Noted by Alexander Rutskoi, former vice president of Russia under Yeltsin, and fighter pilot during the Afghanistan War. In Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians In War* [in en] (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2012).

120. Ibid., p. 221.

121. Ibid.

122. Rummel, *Lethal Politics*.

Finally, not only did the Soviet commit incredible harm, they also ignored supposed international norms on the prohibition of chemical weapons. Scholarship and policymakers alike have long regarded the taboo over chemical weapons-use.[123] Soviet forces did not use the taboo weapons haphazardly; they applied them discriminately in situations where they provided a utility that conventional weapons could not. This strongly suggests that leaders were not constrained by some international norm, but by the decisive value of the weapon in achieving key objectives, relative to alternatives. While the supposed nuclear taboo has its own genealogy, there is no reason to think that it is operating when proven alternative explanations can account for patterns of NWU advocacy. Moreover, evidence suggests that the Soviets did not believe a credible norm on NWU existed with other great powers either; throughout the case, they operated on the assumption that other nuclear states (particularly the US) were enthusiastic to use them if a window of opportunity permitted it. They simply did not believe that a normative taboo had any role in nuclear decision-making.

5.8.2 Evidence for Strategic Decisiveness

The available evidence is totally compatible with the Strategic Decisiveness theory. Throughout the war, Soviet leaders remained consistent to their military doctrine on the effective conditions for NWU, and those conditions are few. This section reviews the expectation of the theories to the evidence throughout the Soviet-Afghan War, and then discusses why Decisiveness better explains decision-making on NWU better that the alternative theories.

First, evidence shows the military value of NWU is very narrow. A review of the Soviet nuclear doctrine that had developed over the previous 30 years, along with extensive interviews with several military elites, showed that virtually all leaders found little utility in the application of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Since the early 1970's the Soviet military found that non-strategic nuclear weapons could not yield decisive outcomes, and whose util-

123. For a great overview, see Richard Price, "A Genealogy Of The Chemical Weapons Taboo" [in en], *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (1995): 73-103, doi:10.1017/s0020818300001582.

ity was in support of conventional invasion on a large front against massed troops, vulnerable command and control targets, and airfields. Doctrinal integration was based solely on the assumption that war would be on the Northern European plain, or more remotely on the Chinese border. And, since military leaders determined rather quickly that there was no military solution available in Afghanistan, the indecisive use of nuclear weapons was very likely to diminish favorable outcomes in the pursuit of brokering a political solution.

Second, evidence shows that leaders believed NWU without decisive military outcomes unravels Soviet relative power. If the USSR had escalated the scope of weaponry to include nuclear weapons in Afghanistan and failed to achieve decisive results, at least three factors would have diminished Soviet relative power. First, NWU would have derailed existing and developing arms control arrangements with the U.S. and other nuclear powers. Consequently, the U.S. would have been expected to renew massive nuclear weapons buildup at a rate that would clearly outpace the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders believed that quantitative nuclear superiority was the only way to uphold international stability against U.S. belligerence. The shift in internal balancing by the U.S. would likely have been significant. Second, non-decisive NWU would likely demonstrate to non-aligned states that the USSR is not a capable or predictable custodian of a secure and durable world order. Consequently, non-aligned states would almost certainly balance with NATO against the Communist bloc. Likewise, it would signal to socialist allies that the Soviet Union cannot provide credible support for their regimes, should they fall into crisis. Third, it would demonstrate to anti-Communist resistance movements globally that the USSR cannot quell opposition, even with the infamous nuclear arsenal. It would show that groups can resist and successfully withstand the Soviet juggernaut.

There is some evidence that Soviet leaders cared very much about cultivating the nuclear arms control treaties with the U.S. And, they demonstrated concern for inciting arms races in regions of national interest. However, any discussion about nuclear weapons always emphasized immediate consequences: retaliation and loss of cohesion with allies. The "tradition"

on non-use we observe stems directly from mere adherence to a mature doctrine defining a very limited scope of military usefulness. The best explanation of nuclear non-use and non-advocacy is that any military utility of NWU is immediately outweighed by short-term military costs and the degradation of relative power. No references to taboos or norms are needed to explain restraint.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Summary

This dissertation asked what best explains when leaders advocate for or against nuclear weapons-use (NWU) and why that advocacy has yet to be sufficient to strike an enemy since 1945. In chapter two, It outlined the prevailing theories of nuclear weapons non-use - Taboo and Tradition, and found them both to be inadequate. Moreover, it identified how these existing theories sought to explain a phenomenon that does not actually occur, nuclear strikes, relegating those theories to being mere reasonable yet unfalsifiable stories. Thereafter, the dissertation offered the methodological intervention by examining the determinants of advocacy instead of NWU, a phenomenon that varies significantly within and between wars among leaders of nuclear states. While advocacy for NWU does not directly imply action, it was examined to demonstrate the peculiar determinants that make NWU more or less desirable among decision-makers, and point to which conditions may actually be sufficient for action.

The dissertation then offered an alternative theory of NWU advocacy called Decisiveness, which elaborated the peculiar calculus of NWU, and hypothesized what factors best drive advocacy. It argued that leaders would advocate for using its nuclear arsenal to the extent it could unambiguously solve a major military dilemma in ways existing conventional alternatives could not. The logic detailed how NWU itself did not imply any immediate shifts in relative power, i.e. capabilities or alliance commitments, but instead depended on how decisively NWU achieved major military objectives against the enemy. This theory stands in stark contrast to existing normative explanations of nuclear restraint, which suggest that advocacy is determined by an aversion from leaders and publics alike to causing such harm.

The theory of Decisiveness was shown to be superior to previous theories in several ways. First, it effectively explained the shifting patterns of advocacy in ways that existing theories

of restraint could not. Moreover, unlike previous theories, it made concrete hypotheses about when advocacy levels would be sufficient to get NWU. The theory is superior to Taboo because it does not need to introduce an additional layer of intersubjective norms or morality on top of an established strategic calculus to explain the phenomenon of non-use. Additionally, it is superior to Tradition because it identifies more immediate causes that adequately explain advocacy patterns, highlighting Tradition's subordinate role in NWU advocacy.

After the dissertation elaborated the theory of Decisiveness, it considered evidence from three crucial cases. Empirical chapters four, five, and six showed how the theory of Decisiveness better explains patterns of advocacy among leaders regarding NWU than the previous theories. The evidence revealed how early in the nuclear age, leaders toiled to find a militarily effective application of nuclear weapons to their operations, relative to existing conventional options, but persistently failed to find it. Additionally, leaders avoided haphazard applications of nuclear weapons because non-decisive use entailed several direct consequences to the state's relative power. Leaders did determine which conditions would make operational NWU worthwhile, but those conditions persistently failed to materialize. However, as war conditions more closely approximated those predetermined for worthwhile NWU, the more advocacy increased. It was shown that those lessons were integrated into the nuclear state's military doctrine, which serves as a framework for future military decision-making. Thus, the basis of non-consideration of NWU in the contemporary era stems not from taboo but from mature nuclear doctrine that shows when nuclear weapons are useful, and those scenarios have not occurred.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Implications for Scholarship

The findings in this dissertation on how leader evaluate the value of NWU has at least two implications for the scholarship on international relations (IR) theory. First, with regards to nuclear weapons decision-making, selecting advocacy as the dependent variable instead of NWU itself has provided IR something novel and promising to study. Arguments about the determinants of nuclear restraint have remained inconclusive, and the research program laid dormant. For this dissertation, advocacy was operationalized in a manner to explicitly test existing theories along with the new theory offered herein; thus, future research may alter how to operationalize advocacy in ways most amenable to their particular research questions. The main point is that the extent to which relevant leaders want to use nuclear weapons under certain situations tells us an incredible amount about what drives the value of NWU, and provides the best inferences about when we should expect action.

Second, we have explained more political phenomena in international relations with the simpler materialist paradigm. while the social constructivist paradigm in international relations continues to make its promise of explaining change and evolution in political order and preferences, it does not actually help to understand advocacy patterns among leaders on whether to use nuclear weapons against an enemy. In fact, relying on this still inchoate constructivist paradigm to explain NWU advocacy trends has obfuscated a simpler explanation. The materialist, rationalist paradigm adequately accounts for the evolving relationship between man and the bomb. Nuclear weapons non-use is often cited as the quintessential example of international norms having an independent effect on decision-making behavior. This dissertation has called that argument into doubt. With regard to standards of behavior around weapons of mass destruction, social constructivists still face the burden of developing and demonstrating relevance of their paradigm.

More specifically, while norms play a significant role in regulating human behavior, nor-

mative theories that emphasize the role of moral revulsion in high-value strategic decision-making are not convincing here. It is notable that some previous research has convincingly showed how moral imperatives may sometimes shift foreign policy orientations of governments.[1] However, the findings in this dissertation serve as another example of how moral concerns are generally a convenience; to the extent that vital national interests are at risk, expedience wins the day.[2]

6.2.2 Implications for Policy

The findings in this dissertation about NWU advocacy entail several essential policy implications. First, given that leaders do not appear to be constrained by some moral taboo proscribing NWU, their advocacy will instead depend on the shifting costs, benefits, and risks of use. Nuclear weapons are not just relics resigned to general deterrence; anything that meaningfully alters the calculus is expected to renew consideration of how to utilize a state's nuclear arsenal. Four factors can spur reconsideration and increased advocacy for NWU. First, if the threat level of losing a vital interest increases to the extent that success through conventional means is ambiguous, leaders will look for solutions that fall outside standard military conduct, including nuclear strikes. Second, if the nuclear state faces a shift from a conventional advantage to a disadvantage against the enemy in war, its leaders will reconsider how its nuclear arsenal can stop the shift and stave off the increased risk of defeat. Third, technological innovations related to a state's nuclear arsenal can meaningfully change the calculus of NWU and renew debate. Particularly, offensive innovations in the form of delivery systems can matter a great deal. To the extent that new delivery systems can increase the speed, guile, precision, payload, and radiological spread of nuclear strikes, nuclear weapons would become much more viable in achieving decisive outcomes in military operations. Fourth, if battlefield conditions provide a decisive operational opportunity to strike

1. For example, Pape and Kaufmann, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action," 1999.

2. For a great demonstration of this contingent commitment to moral concerns, see Downes, *Targeting Civilians In War*.

where nuclear weapons offer a peculiar advantage, leaders are likely to reconsider NWU. This reevaluation will be limited to the current deployment of the nuclear arsenal. More than likely, several viable opportunities would need to arise to instigate relevant deployments before direct decisions of NWU are made.

The converse policy implication is that any state ought to avoid providing its nuclear enemy with conditions that simmer NWU advocacy. Threatwise, a state ought to expect NWU dynamics to shift as the nuclear state faces an emerging loss of control over a vital interest, or in its conventional advantage. Opportunity-wise, a state ought to expect that if the nuclear state acquires a meaningful technological improvement, or alternatively has a novel and decisive opportunity, it is disposed to reconsider and use its nuclear arsenal.

6.2.3 Implications for Future Weapons Innovations

The research developed here on NWU advocacy may also have implications for predicting advocacy patterns for other weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Specifically, leaders may want better predictive power when other states get new WMD innovations. This research suggests that moral qualms nor qualms play much role in decision-making around technologies of harm. Whether leaders will implement new WMD on the battlefield will depend instead on they can decisively shift the tide of war in the state's favor. The military advantage of each WMD will be unique; chemical weapons for example can handle operational tasks that nuclear weapons cannot. That said, to the extent that the WMD in question provides a distinct value in achieving important objectives, the calculus detailed herein is likely to apply. Thus, leaders can extrapolate decision-making prerogatives from the theory of Decisiveness and apply accordingly to new WMD innovations.

6.3 Next Steps

This dissertation has set the path for future research in numerous ways. First, in order to increase confidence in the theory's validity and explanatory power, additional research could try to replicate the findings herein through additional empirical tests. While the three case studies used in this dissertation provided excellent data on decision-making around NWU, each was situated in a specific time and place; more cases could help our confidence that omitted variables are not exhibiting any meaningful effect on advocacy patterns. Possible candidate cases for further testing include the Sino-Soviet conflict (1969), the Yom-Kippur War (1973), and the Sino-Vietnamese War (1979). Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to examine cases between young nuclear states where mutual deterrence theoretically applies but may demonstrate the logic of decisiveness nonetheless. An excellent candidate for this kind of testing is the India-Pakistan Kargil War (1999).

Additionally, the cases selected in this dissertation could be segmented in useful ways to further test the theory. For example, this research could divide the Korean War into two cases, one that examines the U.S. versus China, and one that examines the U.S. versus the Soviet Union. Escalation risks existed between each adversary, but the opportunities and risks of NWU on each were meaningfully different. It is reasonable to expect that NWU advocacy would reflect this in systematic ways, and could provide finer-grained tests for Strategic Decisiveness. Another case selection option would be to revisit "windows of opportunity" wherein the nuclear state could deny an enemy of acquiring nuclear capability. To the extent that nuclear weapons could be employed to foreclose such capabilities from a serious enemy, leaders may demonstrate interesting patterns of advocacy for NWU. Possible cases include the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1949, and India and Pakistan in 1998.

Second, scholarship could extend the theory of NWU advocacy to manage more variables. At least two developments are relevant. First, it would useful to understand how aspects of a nuclear state's regime influence the calculus of NWU. Specifically, there are three aspects that may reasonably advocacy patterns: type, age, and stability. Regime stability could be

evaluated according to confidence in three basic factors: control, succession, and safe exit. A "stable" regime would be one that a) faces no rivals in administration or in enforcement over the territory it governs; b) has a legal mechanism for predictable succession; and c) provides a safe exit for the outgoing leadership. Given variations in regime stability, it is reasonable to imagine that the more fragile the governing regime the less likely its executives will privilege effects on their relative power.

Additionally, a regime's type, the architecture by which leaders capture, hold, and apply authority to commit a state to action, may influence NWU decision-making in several important ways. First, regime type implies different distributions of decision-making authority; checks are certain leaders'' prerogatives may influence advocacy patterns as well as how advocacy translates into action. Second, regime type often implies differing probabilities of losing office as well as what the consequences of losing office entail; this feature may influence a leader's willingness to accept risk in ways that significantly alters his calculus on NWU under certain situations.

Finally, a regime's age may influence the maturity of its military doctrine. Important lessons that mature regimes have incorporated into their doctrine may not be found in the young regime's doctrine. Moreover, a nascent regime may have peculiar levels of resolve and risk acceptance as it tries to consolidate its authority in the international order.

Besides regime attributes, it would also be important for future research to theorize whether great powers versus non-great powers have meaningfully different calculuses on NWU. It is reasonable to imagine that great powers would be acutely driven by cultivating an international order that best secures their national interests; alternatively, parochial states may have special incentives to deconstruct or otherwise revise the existing international order to advantage them. Furthermore, it is also plausible that non-great powers may enjoy security assurances by great power partners that offset motives for NWU.

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