Winged Defiance: The Air Force and Preventive Nuclear War in the Early Cold War

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines a continuum of insubordination in the Air Force during the early Cold War. After World War II, a coterie of top generals in the Air Force embraced a view held by a minority in American government and the public, which believed that the United States should conduct a preventive war against the Soviet Union before it could develop its own nuclear arsenal. This strategy contradicted the stated national security policies of President Harry S. Truman and his successor, President Dwight D. Eisenhower. This influential circle of Air Force leaders undermined presidential policy by drafting preventive war plans, lobbying the civilian leadership in the executive branch for preventive war, and indoctrinating senior field grade officers at the Air War College in preventive war thinking and strategies.

Previous accounts of preventive war activity in the Air Force centered about the Air War College and its first commandant, General Orvil Anderson. In 1950, General Anderson disparaged President Truman and urged for preventive war against the Soviet Union in an interview to a local news reporter. Syndicated newspapers reprinted General Anderson’s remarks, and the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, relieved General Anderson from his command of the Air War College. The traditional interpretation views General Anderson’s firing as the termination of preventive war discourse and activity in the Air Force.
Examining senior leaders’ private and public remarks, declassified transcripts from Air Force commanders’ conferences in the early 1950s, and student essays from the Air War College, I show that the preventive war behavior persisted in the Air Force long after General Vandenberg relieved General Anderson in 1950. The culmination of the preventive war movement came in 1954, when a preventive war strategy called Project Control, devised by the Air War College and sponsored by Air Force Headquarters, stalled before State Department opposition. After Project Control’s failure, Air Force Chief of Staff General Nathan F. Twining finally began to direct the service to develop air power strategies that supported President Eisenhower’s nuclear policy of massive retaliation.

The preventive war episode in the Air Force demonstrates an extreme example of the potential for the military bureaucracy to regulate and undermine the Constitutional authority of the president to determine national security policy. That this behavior was considered normal implies that active steps must be taken to ensure proper civilian control over the military. I argue that three prominent theories of civil-military relations—Samuel Huntington’s objective control, Morris Janowitz’s constabulary theory, and Peter Feaver’s agency theory—are notable contributions to U.S. civil-military relations; however, none of these approaches could have solved the breakdown in civil-military relations that allowed preventive war advocates in the Air Force to pursue their plans for nearly a decade. My concept for civilian control over the military proposes a
more active role by defense and service secretaries and their civilian subordinates to monitor the military for evidence of insubordinate behavior. As demonstrated by the Air Force’s preventive war episode, by the time military leaders make public outbursts against civilian policy, efforts may already be underway within the military to usurp those policies. I hold that the civilian leaders in the Department of Defense are responsible for investigating and correcting such behavior. Additionally, effective civilian control over the military requires liberal military education programs in order to help all military professionals to understand and accept the political limitations on the use of force.
Dedication

To the professionals in uniform who took an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States, against all enemies, both foreign and domestic.” May we fulfill our obligation to defend the nation against domestic enemies by first examining our own actions.
Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... xi

1. Introduction—The Dilemma of Cold War Security ............................................................ 1

1.1 The Air Force and Preventive War ................................................................. 3

1.2 Historiography ............................................................................................................. 24

1.3 An Overview .................................................................................................................. 32

1.4 Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 35

2. To Independence and Beyond: Making the Case for Strategic Bombardment .......... 37

2.1 World War II: Justifying the Independent Service .................................................. 42

2.2 Post World War II: Reducing the Force ................................................................. 45

2.3 Unification and Independence .................................................................................... 48

2.4 Roles and Mission ........................................................................................................ 53

2.5 Resolving the Service Budgets, 1948 ........................................................................ 59

2.6 The Fight Over the B-36 ........................................................................................ 61

2.7 Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 73

3. The Air Force and Preventive War During the Truman Presidency ....................... 76

3.1 Early Calls for Preventive War, 1945-1947 ................................................................. 82

3.2 Amplifying the Rhetoric, 1947-1948 .......................................................................... 91

3.3 A Shrinking Window of Opportunity: The Soviet Bomb ...................................... 101

3.4 Reprimand .................................................................................................................... 112
3.5 The Air Force, Undeterred, 1951-1953 .......................................................... 119
3.6 Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 124

4. President Eisenhower, the Air Force, and the Demise of Preventive War ....... 127
4.1 A New Administration Renews Hopes for Offensive War ......................... 133
4.2 The New Look Presents Old Obstacles to Preventive War ....................... 137
4.3 Negative Progress at the Air University: The Air Power Historian .......... 163
4.4 Parry and Hit Back With Everything You Have: The Air Force Gets Behind
Massive Retaliation ......................................................................................... 166
4.5 Conclusion .................................................................................................. 169

5. Education Versus Indoctrination: The Air War College and Student Papers,
1951..172
5.1 Similarities: Military Power and Collective Security .............................. 180
5.2 Contrasting Views of the Cold War: Ideology Versus Aggression .......... 183
5.3 Naval War College Solutions—Revitalize, Inform, Unify, Protect .......... 188
5.4 Air War College Solutions—Amass and Employ ...................................... 193
5.5 Exchange Students from Other Services .................................................. 207
5.6 Explaining the Dogmatic View at the Air War College: Institutional Culture 210
5.7 Conclusion: .................................................................................................. 215

6. Asserting Civilian Control Over the Military: A Preventive Approach ......... 217
6.1 U.S. Civil-Military Relations Theory: Huntington, Janowitz, and Feaver.... 219
6.2 Confronting the Air Force’s Preventive War Behavior with Existing Civil-
Military Theory ............................................................................................... 224
6.3 Preventive Control of the Military: An External Mechanism for Effective Civilian
Control ............................................................................................................ 228
7. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 243

7.1 Consequences of Preventive Thinking..................................................................... 248
7.2 The Role of Society in Civil-Military Relations ....................................................... 250
7.3 Contemporary Implications of Preventive War....................................................... 252
7.4 Conclusion.................................................................................................................... 256

References .................................................................................................................................. 260

Biography ................................................................................................................................... 292
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While expressing my deepest thanks to these people, I accept full responsibility for any shortcomings in this dissertation. The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely mine, and do not represent the views of the Air University, the United States Air Force, the Department of Defense, or any other U.S. government agency.
1. Introduction—The Dilemma of Cold War Security

The library at the Air University stands at the center of Academic Circle on Maxwell Air Force Base, in Montgomery, Alabama. It is surrounded by the schools it serves, including the Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and the senior institution in the Air Force’s Professional Military Education system, the Air War College.

Several old desks sit in between the shelves of periodicals on the library’s second floor. Given their design and condition, these wooden desks could easily be relics from the 1950s or 1960s. On one of these desks, someone once etched with a knife, “Nuke em til they glow.” Next to these words, another scrawled the reply, “If they don’t nuke you first.”

This conversation etched into the desk represents both belief and behavior. The reply reflects the belief that throughout much of the Cold War the United States was vulnerable to a Soviet first strike with atomic or thermonuclear weapons. Such an attack might prove catastrophic, leaving the United States unable to respond and beaten before any counter-strike could be launched. The behavior, simple vandalism, reflected a mild case of defiance and disregard for authority.

In the first decade of the Cold War, the United States Air Force expressed the same belief with more pronounced defiance and disregard for the president. Air Force leaders argued for preventive war but President Harry Truman and his successor,
President Dwight Eisenhower, denounced preventive war. Nevertheless, the Air Force persisted with this approach, even after one of its prominent leaders was punished for insubordination.

The Air Force’s continued defiance after being punished was a breakdown in civil-military relations that until this project has not yet fully been explored. The field of civil-military relations examines how senior civilian and military leaders resolve major differences of opinion on issues such as national security and military operations. Underpinning civil-military studies is the belief that, as in the case of the early Cold War, fundamental differences often exist between soldiers, who are squarely focused on the threat to the state, and civilian leaders, who are focused on the myriad political, economic, and social issues that must temper the use of military power.\(^1\)

Ultimately, if there can be no agreement between civilian leaders and the military, the soldier must recognize the civilian’s authority by complying with his or her direction. In the United States, one expects military leaders to offer their opinions during a period of discussion, but ultimately the soldier must support the policies directed by the commander-in-chief. As political scientist Peter Feaver noted, “In a democracy, civilians have the right to be wrong. Civilian political leaders have the right to ask for things in the national security realm that are ultimately not conducive to good

national security.”

2 This point is critical, because as we approach the twentieth anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we are likely to conclude that Truman and Eisenhower were right not to strike first. Of course, we would likely draw the opposite conclusion if today the United States was an extension of the Soviet empire. Yet if the Air Force cannot be faulted for fearing that a retaliation policy would fail to protect the United States, the service must be faulted for carrying that conviction beyond the bounds of subordination to the president.

Winged Defiance: The Air Force and Preventive Nuclear Attack in the Early Cold War examines that behavior, and, in doing so, poses several new questions. Why did the Air Force leadership so fanatically choose to emphasize a strategy based upon preventive war? How did the Air Force institutionalize this belief before and after Truman punished several outspoken advocates of preventive war in August 1950? How did punishment by the president of those in favor of preventive war affect the Air Force’s advocacy of its position outside of the Air Force?

1.1 The Air Force and Preventive War

Only eight months after the United States ended World War II by striking Japan with two atomic bombs, Winston Churchill spoke of the Iron Curtain spreading across Europe: “Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern

Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and are all subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

Truman’s response was to buttress economically and militarily those nations in Europe and elsewhere that might next fall behind the Iron Curtain. The Cold War was underway.

To protect itself and Western Europe, the United States turned to the instrument of national power that might halt Soviet aggression without drastically expanding the size of the military or its budget in what was hoped to be the period of peace and recovery following the Second World War. Airpower—nuclear airpower—became the centerpiece of the U.S. national security strategy.

In May 1948, the lead story in Newsweek Magazine showcased the new long-range bombers that would soon make that strategy possible. General George C. Kenney, the first commander of Strategic Air Command explained how his giant planes would “lead the attack” should war come with the Soviet Union. Yet the article closed with a section entitled, “The Big If:"

Whether the Russians could also hit back at American cities is questionable. The probability is that, if Russia seized Alaska or Greenland, it could successfully bomb the United States, but owing to the inefficiency of its bombers and bomber crews, the operation would be extremely costly. Even without such bases the Russians could make suicide missions to Pacific Coast cities, sending bombers

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over from Siberia without any thought of their returning. Under present circumstances such missions would have little more that propaganda value. Only sustained bombing can be effective. But if the Russians develop the atom bomb, they might wreak havoc to match that visited on them.  

The “Big If” was the eventuality that the Soviet Union would level the playing field by developing its own atomic bombs. Strategic Air Command’s supreme advantage in war with the Soviet Union was temporary. All seemed to recognize that the period of a U.S. monopoly of atomic power was fleeting. 

Timing thus played a central role in the national security calculus. President Truman, the State Department, the American public and most in the Defense Department viewed this temporary advantage as a period to build sufficient strategic bombers and bombs to sufficiently meet future demands for deterrence in the coming period of shared atomic weaponry. 

Yet many hawks in the United States believed the solution to this conundrum was to strike at the Soviet Union with atomic or thermonuclear bombs before they could “nuke us first.” Those with this view argued for preventive war, which, unlike a policy of preemptive war, gave no consideration to the likelihood of an enemy attack. As Bernard Brodie explained in his 1959 classic, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, preemptive war implied that an attack was imminent: “The distinguishing characteristic of the idea, which has

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5 U.S. intelligence experts predicted that the Soviet Union would not detonate an atomic bomb until the mid-1950s; thus, Americans in and out of government were shocked when Truman acknowledged in September 1949 that the Soviet’s had successfully tested their own weapon one month before. See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: a new history* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 35.
been called “preemptive attack,” is that it envisages a strategic attack by the United States upon the Soviet Union *only after* the latter has already set in motion its own strategic attack, but *before* that attack is consummated and preferably before it gets well under way."^6 But proponents of preventive war wanted to strike—without direct provocation—the Soviet Union with atomic or thermonuclear weapons in order to *eliminate* its capacity to amass and launch strikes against the United States *at some point in the future.*

Preventive wars had long preceded the development of the atomic bomb. In 1672, Louis XIV attacked the Dutch in order to protect Prussia from the changing balance of power in Europe. Nearly one century later, Prussia’s Frederick II credited Louis XIV for his own preventive action in the Seven Year’s War against the Austrian, Russian, and French armies.\(^7\) In the years before World War I, soldiers and statesmen in several European nations discussed the possibility of preventive war against potential enemies, especially as these adversaries increased their own military power. David G. Herrmann examined the preventive war arguments preceding World War I, including those of Austrian Chief of Staff Conrad von Hotzendorf and Chief of the German Staff Helmuth von Moltke. He argued that while Conrad’s recommendation for preventive war in 1906 and von Moltke’s in 1911 did not come to fruition, World War I was in fact a

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preventive war, “undertaken primarily by Austria-Hungary and Germany but also to an extent by the Entente powers,” who “became resigned to risking an immediate war with a rival collation they believed would only grow stronger in the future.” The preventive war arguments made in the early Cold War followed the same logic.

Truman and Eisenhower were the first of a succession of Cold War presidents who viewed preemptive attack as a viable component of national security policy, but neither president supported preventive war. Truman observed, “I have always been opposed even to the thought of such a war. There is nothing more foolish than to think that war can be stopped by war. You don’t ‘prevent’ anything by war except peace.” In early 1954, a group from the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented President Dwight D. Eisenhower with a plan to strike the Soviet Union before it could develop its own thermonuclear arsenal, but the president rejected it. That August, responding at the White House to the question of preventive war, Eisenhower stated, “A preventive war, to my mind, is an impossibility today. How could you have one if one of its features would be several cities lying in ruins, several cities where many, many thousands of

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people would be dead and injured and mangled, the transportation systems destroyed, sanitation implements and systems all gone? That isn’t preventive war; that is war.”¹⁰

The Air Force’s view was greatly complicated by three close-held beliefs. The first was the conviction that the Air Force was solely responsible for the solving the problem of potential Soviet aggression. In 1948, President Truman had charged the newly independent service with protecting the United States from enemy attack.¹¹ On 4 April 1949, representatives of the United States and Western European nations signed the North Atlantic Treaty Charter, which declared that an armed attack against any member would be deemed an attack on all. Thus, the United States now bore the burden of defending an economically and militarily war-weakened Western Europe. However, the armies of the United States and its West European allies were too small to blunt an advance by the Soviet Red Army. Thus, Air Force leadership viewed their service as solely responsible for protecting the West from Soviet aggression.

The second belief that shaped the Air Force’s position on national security vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was its complete faith in the weapon that freed the service from the Army: the long-range bomber. Since the early 1920s, the Army Air Corps campaigned

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for independence on the grounds that strategic bombardment was a potential war-
winner and a capability best exploited when not tied to an army’s ground campaign. In
the 1930s, the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field developed the industrial fabric
theory by which strategic bombardment could destroy key “nodes,”—such as oil
refineries or ball-bearing plants—that would paralyze an enemy’s ability to wage war.
In both the European and Pacific theaters during World War II, this approach may have
been overly optimistic. 12 Nonetheless, a favorable interpretation of the bomber’s
contribution to Allied victory prevailed in the years immediately following the war. The
United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), commissioned by President Truman
and directed by distinguished civilians, made two most agreeable proclamations for air
advocates: “Enemy planes enjoying control of the sky over one’s head can be as
disastrous to one’s country as its occupation by physical invasion;” and, “Within a
department of common defense which provides unity of command and is itself oriented
toward air and new weapons, the Survey believes that, in addition to the Army and the
Navy, there should be an equal and coordinate position for a third establishment.” 13

With this final arrow in its quiver, the Air Force had fought for and won independence
in 1947. Yet the Air Force’s unflappable trust in strategic attack was a blessing and a

12 Michael S. Sherry, Preparing for the next war : American plans for postwar defense, 1941-45, Yale historical
13 United States Strategic Bombing Survey—Summary Report (Pacific War), Washington, D.C., 1 July 1946, 110-
curse. “The bomber always gets through” was a theme that secured the Air Force’s independence; however, it also complicated the security dilemma, for the Soviet Union would soon develop its own bombers. Wouldn’t their bombers also always get through?

A final belief held by airmen was that war with the Soviet Union was inevitable. This idea may have reflected Huntington’s assertion that the nature of the profession of arms caused the typical officer to believe in the “ultimate inevitability of war;” however, the national discourse during the period supported this position. For example, in his famous telegram from Moscow in 1949, State Department diplomat George Kennan warned, “We have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with [the] US there can be no permanent modus vivendi[,] that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.”14 Air Force senior leaders frequently spoke of the inevitability of war with the Soviet Union.

These beliefs—that the Air Force bore the sole responsibility for protecting the United States and Western Europe, that enemy bombers could not be stopped, and that war was inevitable—made it difficult for airmen to comprehend the utility of a

deterrence or second-strike strategy. Retaliation was seen as a paper tiger, because following an unexpected Soviet attack with atomic weapons, there would be no American bombers with which to retaliate. Concluding that defending the United States under such circumstances was an impossible task, the Air Force elected instead to destroy Soviet military power before it could be built or launched. In short, the Air Force argued for an unprovoked offensive strike—a preventive war.

Of course, Truman, Eisenhower, and others who denounced preventive war hoped that the threat of retaliation would prevent nuclear war in the first place. Thus, while they may have shared the belief that the Air Force bore the brunt of the nation’s defense, and that bombers might always get through, they did not believe that war with the Soviet Union was a fait accompli.

Preventive war advocates thought this approach was ignorant and unacceptably risky. Hawks, including senior airmen, continually invoked references to Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack on 7 December 1941 was nearly decisive for the United States in the Pacific, despite Japan’s use of propeller-driven airplanes and conventional munitions. Such an attack would be even more catastrophic in the jet and nuclear age. General Kenney cautioned in 1947, “This is no time for us to shut our eyes and close our ears and wait for a newer and more terrible Pearl Harbor to wake us up.”15

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Kenney’s view believed any second-strike policy implicitly accepted such a fate.

Airmen claimed an American policy of deterrence based upon the threat of retaliation was a strategy based upon hope. In the atomic age, this was as good as conceding the future of the United States to the Soviets.

A significant number of senior leaders in the Air Force favored preventive war. I argue that none were more influential than Henry “Hap” Arnold; the “Father of the Air Force” privately and publicly urged for preventive war against the Soviet Union up until his death in 1950. Arnold’s deputy, General Ira C. Eaker, and his successor as Chief of Staff, General Carl Spaatz, also supported preventive war and campaigned for it both before and after they retired from the Air Force. The first commander of Strategic Air Command, General George C. Kenney, and his replacement, General Curtis E. LeMay, also supported preventive war. Significantly, Kenney left SAC in 1948 to command the Air University, where he was joined with the strongest advocate of a strike-first policy, Major General Orvil Anderson. As Commandant of the Air War College, General Anderson was the most vocal proponent of preventive war and coincidentally the harshest critic of the Truman Administration. Even General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, who became the second Chief of Staff of the Air Force in 1948, and was described by his biographer as politically savvy and moderate, fueled the fire for
preventive war. Perhaps the most surprising advocate was the first Secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, who was named to the post by President Truman, a long-time friend and fellow Missourian.

Following the revelation that the Soviet Union had detonated an atomic bomb in August 1949, the Air Force stepped up its plea for offensive action. A crescendo came in August of 1950, when the war college commandant denounced Truman’s containment policy in an interview with a local reporter. General Anderson’s timing could not have been worse. Only a week before, Truman had scolded Navy Secretary Francis P. Matthews for advocating preventive war in a speech in Boston. And two days before Anderson’s comments were aired, Truman had directed General Douglas MacArthur to withdraw an alarmist statement concerning Formosa (Taiwan) that MacArthur had sent to the annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Truman had endured enough

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16 Biographer Philip Meilinger wrote of Vandenberg, “The total wars of an earlier era were passing; limited wars of circumscribed objectives fought with restrained means were now in the ascendancy. Vandenberg realized this change in the nature of war.” This observation is consistent with Vandenberg’s many public speeches. Yet in private, Vandenberg went further to reveal his own predilection for preventive war. For example, Vandenberg suggested to the Air War College in 1950 that offensive action be taken “at some relatively near date—say 1952, 1953, or 1954.” Vandenberg cited the difficulty in advancing this minority view: “First, how to get more people to see things in light of what we believe to be the truth; second, how to accomplish the maximum amount in spite of disagreement and opposition.”; Phillip S. Meilinger, Hoyt S. Vandenberg: The Life of a General, Air Force History and Museums Program (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

17 At a dinner in April 1948, Symington suggested to Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower and White House Counsel Clark Clifford that Truman deliver an ultimatum to Stalin: “Open up your country and we’ll open ours, bases, everything. Otherwise, evacuate the following cities by July 20 because we’re going to destroy them.” Symington recalled, “We had the bomb; they didn’t. So Stalin couldn’t have said no.” Flora Lewis, “The Education of a Senator,” The Atlantic 228, no. 6 (December 1971): 59.
dissent. Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg promptly relieved Anderson from his post at the Air War College.

Clearly, President Truman used punishment in late 1950 as a means of controlling the insubordinate behavior of his outspoken critics in the Defense Department. The admonishment of Secretary Matthews, the rebuke of General MacArthur and the firing of General Anderson served notice to those in uniform. The period of questioning and contesting the administration’s position on offensive action, including the use of atomic weapons and preventive war, was over.

Peter Feaver considered punishment in his examination of civil-military relations. In Armed Servants, Feaver characterized the way military leaders support the executive branch’s policies as working or shirking. By “shirking”, Feaver did not mean laziness, but rather dissenting action. He claimed that on most occasions the military works, i.e. supports, the direction determined by the president. In those circumstances when the military chooses to shirk—or resist—directives, the president has punishment as a tool to correct errant behavior and force compliance with his or her guidance. Feaver called this model agency theory, explaining, “The military decides whether to obey in this way, based on military expectations of whether shirking will be detected and, if so, whether civilians will punish them for it.”

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18 Feaver, Armed servants: agency, oversight, and civil-military relations: 3.
Was Truman’s punishment of Secretary Matthews, General MacArthur, and General Orvil Anderson effective? For punishment to work, one would have to observe not necessarily a change of mind from the agents involved (i.e. those in the Air Force who supported preventive war), but rather a clear change of behavior. In other words, proponents of preventive war could no longer be acting on their position.

This certainly was not the case at the Air War College. Instead, a series of alarming events suggest that the Air Force continued to defy its commander-in-chief not only by supporting the rhetoric of preventive war, but by developing and recommending operational plans that centered on first-strike actions. In this dissertation, I present evidence that points to a continuance of outright defiance and insubordination. Although these acts occurred at Maxwell Air Force Base, they had either implicit or explicit endorsement of the Air Force senior leadership.

For example, General Anderson returned to lecture at the Air War College, where he spoke about preventive war, in February 1951—only five months after he was relieved as commander of the college for the very same practice. Additionally, in 1953 the Air War College began a study called Project Control, which purportedly attempted to analyze how air power might be used to compel an enemy nation into activities congruent with U.S. national interests. In actuality, my research suggests that Project Control was an advocacy platform for preventive war. The Project received strong
support from the Air Staff, who presented the concepts to an unenthusiastic joint committee.

In another act of defiance, the Air Force in 1953 established the Air Force Historical Foundation, a non-profit and independent organization that nonetheless took up residence at Maxwell Air Force Base. The foundation’s stated purpose was to augment the official Air Force Historical agencies “by sponsoring activities in which the Air Force cannot engage because of budgetary, legal, or policy restrictions.” General Anderson, now retired, returned to Maxwell as the foundation’s first executive director. From this position, Anderson supervised the printing of the foundation’s quarterly journal, the *Air Power Historian*, which, from its inception, included editorials and articles calling for preventive war.

Given such disregard for President Truman’s position after the firing of Anderson, one realizes that punishment is not a perfectly reliable tool for gaining control of wanton behavior. This episode suggests that the Air Force’s response to punishment was not like that of a little child, but rather like that of a teenager, who, after being given a curfew for coming home late on Friday night, sneaks out the window to rally late with friends on Saturday.

The analogy of the unrepentant teen may help one to consider how the Air Force thought that its behavior would be tolerated or productive. One important consideration in this story is the understanding that the Air Force earned its
independence on precisely the same kind of defiance. Beginning with the outspoken air
power advocate General Billy Mitchell, Army Air Corps leaders repeatedly protested
and fought for independence over the cries of insubordination from the Army.

Recalling the push for independence, General Pete Quesada, the first Commander of
Tactical Air Command spoke of the defiance of Army Air Force’s senior leadership:

There was an informal group that was kind of managing this effort. It consisted
of Spaatz, of course. It consisted of Eaker, of course, who was his deputy. It
consisted of Fred Anderson….Spaatz, Eaker, Anderson, [Gen Laurence] Norstad,
and Quesada, they were kind of an informal group that was trying to manage, in
a Machiavellian way, the establishment of a separate air force. To bend the ear of
various senators and bend the ear of various military types, to set the stage for
our ambition of a separate air force. Then later on Vandenberg joined it. But the
fellows that were most active in it and it was informal but nevertheless effective
was Fred Anderson,…Norstad, Eaker, Spaatz, and in my small way Quesada,
and we used to do all kind of dirty tricks.19

Evidently, Quesada felt that Army Air Corps leaders’ “Machiavellian” methods and
“dirty tricks” had been necessary in order to secure independence for the Air Force.

Additionally, during the first decade of the Cold War, the Air Force clamored for more
than an equal share of the defense budget. Airmen publicly protested that the United
States needed an air force “in being” rather than one on the books to be built after
American factories were destroyed by Soviet atom bombs. Any proportional budget,
they insisted, should be in comparison to the Soviet atomic threat, not Army and Navy
appropriations. On both issues—independence and budget—the Air Force won by
being outspoken and critical. The teenager had learned that steady, defiant pressure has

K239.0512-838, p. 30.
its rewards. Apparently, several senior Air Force leaders believed a similar approach might work to force the adoption of a first-strike policy.

The pattern of defiance concerning the preventive war movement in the Air Force touches upon a major theme throughout this dissertation: The Air Force, as part of the national security bureaucracy, attempted to regulate national security policy, even though the U.S. Constitution authorizes the president to govern national security policy. Charles E. Neu referred to this behavior in an essay for The New American State: Bureaucracies and Policies since World War II, edited by Louis Galambos. Addressing the National Military Establishment during the Eisenhower presidency, Neu stated,

More and more, then, national security policy was centered in the hands of civilian and military bureaucrats, and the power of the president to make and enforce policy was restricted. His power was, to be sure, less dramatically circumscribed than in domestic affairs, but the organizational constraints were increasing. Eisenhower responded to this development by seeking, with limited success, to master the national security bureaucracy. 20

I argue that Neu’s description of the National Military Establishment’s behavior under President Eisenhower matches that of the Air Force’s under President Truman; furthermore, like President Eisenhower, President Truman attempted to master the bureaucracy, such as when he fired General Anderson from the war college, and, subsequently, General Douglas MacArthur from command of United Nations’ forces in Korea. The preventive war episode demonstrates the extreme lengths to which the

military bureaucracy can usurp presidential authority, but it also indicates, as Neu suggested, that bureaucratic regulation regularly contradicts and challenges the national security policies of the Commander-in-Chief.

Some might view the Air Force’s behavior after 1950 as mild or “under the radar.” Yet there were consequences to this display of insolence besides defense dollars spent chasing a policy that had already been denounced by the president. One ramification was that U.S. advocates of preventive war might validate a first-strike option for the Soviet Union. Historian Mark Trachtenberg wrote concerning earlier thoughts on preventive war, “The fact that this kind of thinking was not limited to the lunatic fringe had important implications. Chief among them was the idea that if serious Americans supported the strategy, then the Soviets, if they were in a position to pull it off, might also find a preventive war policy very attractive.”

Secondly, the Air Force not only blamed the presidents for what it considered a weak foreign policy, but it also held in contempt the majority of the American public who disagreed with preventive war. Acting on its contempt, I will show that the Air Force considered a propaganda campaign as a means to inform or condition American

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society where it would finally accept an offensive strategy. Some of this behavior seems rather mild; for example, one Air Force general opined, “If the average man knew that just by digging himself a homemade shelter he could have a very good chance of surviving an attack right in his own area, I believe he would have a stronger will to support the use of force and we would have a lesser probability of being attacked.”

Yet other efforts were far more manipulative.

For example, two theses submitted by Air War College student in 1948 were titled “The Problem of Educating the American People to the Point Where They Will Sanction Striking the First Blow When War Is Imminent.” In 1952, at the Air Force Senior Leader’s Conference at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, Chief of Staff Hoyt S. Vandenberg and other senior Air Force brass discussed an information campaign designed to win over the American people to the realities of Soviet aggression and the need for an offensive strategy. Airmen recognized that public opposition to preventive war had played a key role in shaping President Truman’s policy. Thus, they hoped to influence public opinion in favor of a first-strike policy, in the hope that a majority of

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23 By imminent, these authors mean before the Soviet Union has fully built its own atomic stockpile; thus, these officers argued for preventive war, not preemption. Col James A. DeMarco, “The Problem of Educating the American People to the Point Where They Will Sanction Striking the First Blow When War is Imminent,” Special Collections, Air University Library, Montgomery AL. Col Charles B. Westover, “The Problem of Educating the American People to the Point Where They Will Sanction Striking the First Blow When War is Imminent,” Special Collections, Air University Library, Montgomery AL.
Americans would call upon Truman to adopt an offensive approach towards the Soviet Union.

A final consequence of the Air Force’s display of insolence towards Truman and Eisenhower concerns those airmen in the ranks who were about to become the Air Force’s next senior leaders. The insistence on preventive war directly challenged the Air University’s primary mission of educating officers, at a time when unbiased education was badly needed in order to come to terms with the implications of war in the nuclear age. In *The American Way of War*, Russell Weigley convincingly argued that the introduction of nuclear weapons brought about a revolution in American strategy. No longer could the United States employ the grand strategy of annihilation—destroying the enemy’s potential to make war. Rather, in an effort to prevent escalation and the use of nuclear weapons, the United States must shift to attrition as its grand strategy. Weigley explained how the United States came fought with this need for change on the Korean peninsula:

Nevertheless, and despite much that was reminiscent of World War II in the response to the Korean crisis, by 1952 the Truman administration and its military commanders were at last making basic intellectual adjustments to the strategic revolution ushered in by nuclear weapons.24

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Weigley’s favorable assessment of the military’s enlightenment is too broad-brushed. The Air Force leadership was not yet on board; neither was the future leadership of the Air Force.

To prove this point, I examine how students at the Air War College interpreted the national security environment during this period. For the first time, I compare student papers submitted by the Naval and Air War College classes in 1951 to understand whether the institutionalization of a preventive war policy influenced the thinking of the service’s future leaders. Both groups wrote theses that addressed U.S. national security and the Cold War. The Naval War College papers predominantly took a nuanced approach in which they viewed the early Cold War as a problem of competing ideologies and economic systems. In their view, the Soviet Union was not responsible for every hot spot around the world. Naval students recommended a program that balanced the myriad instruments of national power: economic support, diplomacy, pro-democratic information, as well as a defensive military posture that joined the United States and its allies. This approach was consistent with Truman’s containment policy. The balance expressed by these students is noteworthy; four-fifths of Naval War College students believed that economic power was of equal or greater importance than military power in security U.S. national interests.

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25 Sixty three papers addressing U.S. national security from the Air War College Class of 1951 are archived at the Air University Library; the Naval War College archives include fifty-seven papers on the same topic that were submitted by Naval War College students in 1951.
The Air War College students were as narrow-minded on national security as the Naval students were nuanced. Half of those attending the Air War College viewed military power as the only effective implement for U.S. national security. They blamed the Soviet Union for every conflict around the world, especially in Korea. Three quarters of the students called for offensive strategic bombardment. Thirty-six of fifty-seven called for preventive strikes against the Soviet Union or China.

I argue that the narrow-mindedness exhibited by students at the Air War College resulted from the school being tasked with two missions during the early Cold War. On one hand, the Air War College existed to educate officers who were about to fill the service’s senior ranks. In this regard, the Air War College resembled the Army, Navy, and National War Colleges. However, unlike its sister schools, Air Force leaders in the mid-1940s also charged the Air War College with developing official doctrine for the entire service. The Air War College, struggling to reconcile its two missions, focused on official doctrine rather than education. As a result, the school claimed to broaden its students and enable them to think independently, but in fact the students were repeatedly exposed to Air Force dogma, including that of preventive war. The Air War College, the zenith of professional military education for airmen, chose to indoctrinate rather than educate its students. In doing so, the school failed to give its students—the future leaders of the Air Force—an opportunity to objectively consider changes in strategy that were made necessary by the nuclear age.
1.2 Historiography

Scholarship in civil-military relations, early Cold War strategy and the rearming of the United States after World War II, and biographies of key leaders during the period have not adequately addressed the preventive war movement in the Air Force at the outset of the Cold War. In the late 1950s, historians and political scientists began to write about civil military relations against the backdrop of the previous ten years. Alfred Vagts’ *Defense and Diplomacy: The Soldier and the Conduct of Foreign Relations* focused on European civil-military relations from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of World War I. However, this large and important work included a chapter on preventive war, where Vagts elaborated on public figures and those in uniform who espoused a strike-first strategy immediately after World War II. Vagts noted Generals Arnold, Eaker, and Kenney as preventive war advocates, and he also referred to one article in the *Air University Quarterly Review* in 1948 that called for such a strategy. Vagts provided a robust discussion of the philosophy of preventive war, and he argued compellingly that “The Truman Administration allowed more liberty of speech and discussion to the military advocates of preventive action than is usually deemed good for the conduct of foreign affairs.” Vagts’ characterization of Truman as overly permissive of dissent from within the Department of Defense has been echoed in recent works. Regarding the Air Force and preventive war, however, his treatment was incomplete in scope and time. Vagts identified only a fraction of the airmen who
supported preventive war, and his account ended in 1948, two years before the chief of staff relieved Anderson.26

*The Soldier and the State* is cemented in the canon of civil-military scholarship. Published in 1957, Samuel Huntington sought a method for effective control of the military by the executive branch of government in an era of rapid military-industrial growth, standing forces, and nuclear weapons. Huntington argued for *objective* control of the military: The armed services must remain independent from civil society and free from political interaction in order to remain a lethal and professional force.

Huntington’s work was a direct response to actions such as those of the Air Force in the previous decade, including the Air Force’s push for a larger share of the budget and its role in the B-36/supercarrier debate that led to the Revolt of the Admirals in 1949. Yet he made only passing reference to preventive war, observing, “The military man normally opposes reckless, aggressive, belligerent action. If war with a particular power is inevitable at a later date with decreased chances of success, the military man may favor ‘preventive war’ in order to safeguard national security.”27 Huntington did not elaborate any further on the subject of preventive war, nor did he note the Air Force’s insubordination regarding the matter in the early 1950s.

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27 Huntington, *The soldier and the state; the theory and politics of civil-military relations*: 69.
Morris Janowitz’s wrote *The Professional Soldier*, published in 1960, as a response to Huntington. Janowitz professed that isolating the officer corps from American society, as Huntington proposed, would create a widening divide between civilian and military philosophies regarding national security and the use of military force. He argued that such a divergence of views would endanger U.S. national security in the nuclear age. Janowitz preferred a *constabulary force*—an educated military that reflected a cross section of American society.

Janowitz viewed the military as heterogeneous; officers were a mix of absolutists (realists), and pragmatists (liberals). The idea of the constabulary force was to move the officer corps away from absolutism and closer to the pragmatic views of civilian society in the United States. Janowitz correctly identified the realists in the Air Force as archetypical absolutists. Yet he explained that the absolutist behavior of the Air Force was best expressed by those in Strategic Air Command who were “committed to the massive retaliation outlook.”28 Thus he somewhat missed the mark in his characterization of airmen during the early 1950s. The absolutists in the Air Force preferred preventive war, not massive retaliation.

Works on early Cold War strategy and U.S. rearmament after World War II also have overlooked the preventive war phenomenon in the Air Force. Bernard Brodie was intimately familiar with the preventive war attitude at the Air War College in its early

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28 Morris Janowitz, *The professional soldier, a social and political portrait* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), 316.
years. Having lectured annually at Maxwell since 1947, he told the war college in 1952, “It is now over five years since I began to have the pleasure of visiting this place annually, and I remember that the arguments I am hearing now I was hearing then, only with even more vigor.” Yet in his seminal work on the rise of air power in the nuclear era, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, Brodie explained in passing the Air War College’s position that culminated in the relief of General Anderson in 1950.

In the late 1960s, a group of scholars refuted the historians of the previous decade who exclusively blamed the Soviet Union for creating Cold War tensions. These revisionists argued that capitalism and American economic needs forged a militarized U.S. national security policy. In *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966*, Walter LaFeber faulted American militarism for tackling the Soviet issue alone, rather than sharing the burden for European security with other NATO countries. He also criticized the United States’ belief that the Cold War was a military problem to be solved primarily with military force; this, he argued, led to runaway budgets and the rise of the military-industrial complex. Yet for his strong argument against militarized thinking, he did not mention any discussion of preventive war.

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In 1972, John Lewis Gaddis wrote the first of a series of histories that divided the blame for Cold War antagonism between both the United States and the Soviet Union. Gaddis concluded, “The Cold War grew out of a complicated interaction of external and internal developments inside both the United States and the Soviet Union.” In explaining the heightened fears in the United States as a result of Soviet posturing in the late 1940s, Gaddis referred to advisors in the Truman Administration such as Clark Clifford who at times advocated an aggressive approach towards the Soviet Union. However, the author made no mention of preventive war.\(^{33}\)

Several other key works from the 1980s on U.S. national security and the Cold War also overlooked the Air Force and its preference for preventive war. In Strategies of Containment, Gaddis described preventive war as a “morally repugnant” approach that was rejected by Truman’s containment strategists, and only considered briefly before being rejected by President Eisenhower.\(^{34}\) The 1986 edition of Makers of Modern Strategy included a well-reviewed essay by Laurence Freeman titled “The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists.” Freeman claimed that any discussion regarding preventive war before the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear capability “need not detain us

\(^{33}\) Gaddis, 361.

because it was only an option early in the 1950s and does not seem to have been seriously considered at that time.”35 This study demonstrates otherwise.

In an aptly titled article in 1983, “The Origins of Overkill,” David Alan Rosenberg presented a fresh interpretation of national security strategy from 1945 to 1960, supported by the release of formerly classified documents in the early 1980s. Rosenberg made two significant claims that bear great relevance to this study of preventive thinking in the Air Force: First, preventive war discussions routinely took place in U.S. government during the early Cold War; and, second, the bureaucracy within the U.S. government influenced the aggressive stance towards the Soviet Union and, ultimately, the excessive U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. In short, Rosenberg claimed that the period represented a “failure of regulation.” Rosenberg’s article was very informative and helpful in the development of this project’s thesis. However, while he noted, “Preventive war was implicit in some of the major policy deliberations of the time,” he did not substantially address the preventive war activity in the Air Force.36

In 1988, historian Mark Trachtenberg discussed the significance of preventive war during the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies in a superb article entitled “A ‘Wasting Asset’: American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954.”

Trachtenberg explained that while preventive war “never came close” to being implemented, Winston Churchill, U.S. senators, strategists at RAND, supported the concept. He also observed, “The real heart of preventive war thinking at this time, however, lay within the U.S. Air Force.” Trachtenberg named Generals Kenney, LeMay, Twining, and Anderson as proponents of preventive strikes. He also briefly described Anderson’s public comments and firing. However, Trachtenberg’s account stopped with Anderson’s firing in 1950. Trachtenberg’s incomplete treatment of Anderson and other airmen suggested that Truman’s punishment was effective and ended the Air Force’s activity on the issue of preventive war.\textsuperscript{37}

Scott Silverstone’s 2007 \textit{Preventive War and American Democracy} examined preventive war discourse in the United States from the outset of the Cold War through the end of President George W. Bush’s second term. Silverstone addressed General Anderson’s outburst and his firing from the Air War College, and he reviewed the comments of Generals Vandenberg and Spaatz, made in the aftermath of the affair, that denounced preventive war. Yet these were merely the public statements of the two generals. As I will demonstrate in this study, privately, both men pushed for preventive war.\textsuperscript{38}


\textsuperscript{38} Silverstone, \textit{Preventive War and American Democracy}. 
Other excellent studies that address elements of the Air Force and U.S. civil-military relations in the early Cold War either fail to address preventive war in the Air Force altogether, or gloss over incidents such as General Anderson’s firing from the Air War College. These include *The Origins of U.S. Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1953* by Samuel R. Williamson, Jr. and Steven L. Reardon, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, also by Steven Reardon, *Building a Strategic Air Force* by Walton S. Moody, and *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960* by Robert F. Futrell.39

Finally, biographies of Air Force generals and civilian secretaries do not address the role of their subjects in the preventive war episode. Two of Hap Arnold’s biographers painted the general as a stubborn and outspoken man in the few years between his retirement and his death; yet they both overlooked General Arnold’s influential remarks and activity in support of preventive war during that time.40 Biographies of Generals Spaatz, Eaker, Vandenberg, also overlook each general’s preventive war activity.41

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This review of the existing literature reveals that none has explained the Air Force’s insubordination after the Chief of Staff relieved Anderson of command of the Air War College. Furthermore, while many correctly assert that General Anderson was the strongest and most outspoken advocate of preventive war, none have adequately connected the activity at the Air War College with senior Air Force leadership. Also, none have explained how the doctrine of preventive war shaped student thinking at the Air War College. I argue that much of the story behind the Air Force and preventive war begins, not ends, with General Anderson’s firing in the late summer of 1950. This dissertation, therefore, is the first thorough examination of the preventive war movement in the Air Force.

1.3 An Overview

Chapter One provides some background to this study. In the five years after World War II, U.S. efforts to reduce military expenditure and strength were thwarted by the perceived threat of Soviet aggression. During this period, Air Force leaders tussled with Navy and Army brass over budgets, roles and missions. This chapter demonstrates that in these contests, Air Force leaders adopted the successful blueprint of championing strategic bombardment that had worked before 1945 to justify an

independent air service; however, by 1950, senior airmen also realized that there were limits to what nuclear bombardment could do to stop Soviet aggression. In addition to secondary sources such as Futrell’s *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine* and the *Official Histories of the Office of the Secretary of Defense*, this chapter also includes relevant primary sources, such as the testimony of Air Force leaders in hearings before Congress and correspondence between Air Force generals concerning roles and missions.

Chapter Two examines the Air Force case for preventive war during the Truman presidency. Advocates of preventive war in the Air Force included Stuart Symington, the first Secretary of the Air Force, the first two Chiefs of Staff, the first two commanders of Strategic Air Command, and, of course, General Orvil Anderson, the first commandant of the Air War College. Chapter Two examines closely the case for preventive war at the Air University, including the astounding steps taken to promote the policy even after Anderson was relieved in September 1950. Furthermore, I examine the discussion of top generals at the commanders’ conference in 1952, in which the Chief of Staff of the Air Force pushed for preventive war plans to be war-gamed and distributed to bomb wings throughout Strategic Air Command.

In Chapter Three, I address the Air Force and preventive war in the first term of President Eisenhower. I argue that the actual climax of the Air Force preventive war movement occurred in late 1954. When the State Department dismissed the Air War College’s Project Control as an obvious attempt to push another preventive war strategy,
the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Nathan F. Twining, acknowledged that the Air Force would have to develop a retaliatory strategy that fit within President Eisenhower’s nuclear weapons policy. At this point, the Air Force finally began to develop meaningful initiatives in support of massive retaliation.

Chapter Five considers how the Air University’s focus on preventive war shaped the thoughts of its students concerning U.S. national security. By comparing essays on national security and military policy written in 1951 by students at the Air and Naval War Colleges, I argue that the Air War College indoctrinated its students on its preferred strategy of preventive war, while the Naval War College educated its students to broadly and independently think about strategy and policy. Part of the problem at the Air War College was that senior Air Force leaders intended the school to develop strategy and doctrine for the service as well as educate senior field grade officers; this dual-mission approach mirrored the Air Corps Tactical School of the 1930s, which Air Force leaders touted despite similar problems blending education with formulating strategy.

Chapter Six discusses existing U.S. civil-military relations theory and offers a new approach in light of the preventive war episode in the Air Force. Samuel Huntington’s objective control, Morris Janowitz’s constabulary theory, and Peter Feaver’s agency theory are notable contributions to U.S. civil-military relations; however, I argue that none of these approaches could have solved the breakdown in
civil-military relations that prompted the preventive war activity in the Air Force. My concept for civilian control over the military mirrors modern preventive medicine, and assumes that the military is “at risk” for undermining presidential policy. Preventive control thus empowers civilian authorities to actively monitor the military for evidence of insubordinate behavior, and to establish liberal military education programs in order help military professionals to understand and accept political limits on the use of force.

1.4 Conclusion

Writing about the early Cold War in 1960, historian Michael Howard eloquently observed:

The military virtues of expedition and decisiveness are less important than the ability to consider fully every relevant factor before coming to decisions which, without necessarily ever being put to the test of war, will determine the shape of the armed services and the military capacity of the nation for perhaps decades to come. Such decisions can be made only by the authority on whom lies the burden of ultimate responsibility in all other areas of national life….In the United States, it is an executive checked by a fully informed and jealous legislature. To these authorities the information on which their decisions are to be based must always be freely available. To locate the ultimate authority for defense anywhere save with the civil sovereign authority is to create another, and far more effective, sovereign power; and were that to happen neither Britain nor the United States would be likely to survive—as democracies or as anything else.42

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If, as Howard stated, military expediency must be tempered by the relevant factors that contextualize a national security crisis, then it follows that military leaders must always be prepared to have their plans shaped by the civilian leader. In the early 1950s, the United States Air Force refused to have its concept of a preventive war with the Soviet Union overruled by the first two Cold War presidents, even after military leaders received punishment for insubordination on the issue. In refusing, the service failed to work within the framework of U.S. civil-military relations. In addition, the Air Force may have jeopardized the U.S. national security position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. By fully disclosing this insubordination on the part of the United States Air Force, I hope not only to complete the history of a seminal moment in the early Cold War, but also to stimulate discussion in order to prevent similar acts of insubordination from happening in the future.
2. To Independence and Beyond: Making the Case for Strategic Bombardment

3 September 1946 marked the inception of the Air University at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. U.S. Army Air Forces’ officers and civilian leaders in attendance had reason to be excited. With the establishment of the university’s two colleges, the Air War College and the Air Command and Staff College, the air arm of the Army now had professional military schools to match those of the Army and the Navy. The founding of the two schools suggested that the Army Air Forces would soon win independence as a separate service.

As one of the distinguished speakers at the opening of the Air University, General Carl Spaatz, the Chief of Staff of the Army Air Forces, indicated that the independent Air Force of tomorrow would retain the air service’s past focus on strategic bombardment. General Spaatz encouraged the students in attendance to avoid “traditionalism, rigidity of thought and doctrine.” Yet he also insisted that one tradition—that of strategic bombardment—needed to be carried forward:

Much that has been learned during the past war is of permanent value. I think particularly of such matters as the priceless traditions of air leadership. Out of those lessons grew one of the proudest traditions of the Army Air Forces—that no bombing attack was ever turned back by enemy action. Such lessons and such tradition must be preserved and passed on to those who are yet to join the Air Force of the future.¹

¹ Muir S. Fairchild, "Address of Welcome to Students, Air War College, and Air Command and Staff School," (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Force Historical Research Agency, 1946). (General Spaatz’s remarks at the opening ceremony are included in the transcript of General Fairchild’s speech).
Since 1919, the obsession with strategic bombardment in the Army’s air arm had grown from interest in establishing an independent air service as much as developing an effective strategy for war in the air age. Beginning with General William “Billy” Mitchell after World War I, and followed by theorists at the Air Corps Tactical School in the 1930s, air pioneers, leaders, and strategists viewed strategic bombardment as the best demonstration of air power conducted independently of land and sea forces; accordingly, they believed that an effective bombing strategy would demonstrate the need for an independent air force. Walter Millis explained this phenomenon in *Arms and Men*:

> As the official history of the Air Force puts it, the three “paramount trends” in Army aviation between 1919 and 1939 were: “the effort to establish an independent air force; the development of a doctrine of strategic bombardment, and the search for a heavy bomber by which that doctrine could be applied.” The order in which these aims are stated may seem curious, but is doubtless accurate. Independent power and authority came first; to attain the goal it was next necessary to develop a “doctrine” which would make it militarily valid; finally, with the doctrine established, it was necessary to invent a weapon which would justify the strategy. This was a reversal of what one might suppose to be the logical development of military policy but it is probable that military policies have always been made in this order, to a greater extent than is popularly recognized.\(^2\)

Whether or not military organizations routinely fashion policy to serve their own interests is a provocative question, and Millis’ suggestion deserves further examination.

In any case, the dependent air arm of the Army profited tremendously from this

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approach; at the time of General Spaatz’s comments at the Air University, he was only
nine months away from becoming the first Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

This chapter examines the case for strategic bombardment in the Army Air
Forces, and, subsequently, the Air Force, after 1945. As Spaatz recommended in his
speech at Maxwell Field, the post-war air force continued to stress the importance of
strategic bombardment, though it now had new goals—money and missions. Again,
this approach proved to be very effective. Few air power advocates could have
imagined that the new service would be awarded primary responsibility for deterring
Soviet aggression by 1952, which meant receiving half of the defense budget and control
of all atomic weapons. This chapter examines how in the five years after World War II,
Air Force leaders touted the merits of strategic bombardment to achieve these gains. It
will show that hearings in Washington over unification, service functions, and budgets
played as important a role in determining the Air Force’s future as events in Eastern
Europe, Berlin, and Korea.

Several brilliant histories have already addressed aspects of Air Force leaders’
rhetoric after World War II. In *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, Tammi Davis Biddle
examined the U.S. and British arguments for strategic bombardment leading up to
World War II, and showed that bombing operations in the war fell short of the
advocates’ expectations. Biddle identified several overstated claims put forth by bomber
advocates, including unrealistic projections about survivability and accuracy.
Concluding her examination, she briefly addressed the post-war period: “Once again, airmen emphasized the strategic bombing missions, stressing it as the justification for service autonomy and downplaying other more modest and cooperative roles for aircraft, however important they may be.”  

Michael’s Sherry’s study of strategic bombing through World War II has obvious implications for the post-war period; he argued in *The Rise of American Air Power* that the issues and assumptions that informed nuclear bombing strategy after World War II followed those that had shaped U.S. strategic bombing theory in the three decades before the atom bomb. Several of Sherry’s assumptions that carried over from the early air age to the nuclear age resonate in this chapter’s examination of the Air Force’s fight for funding and missions after World War II; these include the supremacy of offense over defense, air power as a means to intimidate, and efforts to present air power as a means to avoid war, rather than to fight it.  

Finally, Gian P. Gentile dedicated a chapter in *How Effective is Strategic Bombing* to examine how the biased U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Reports produced after World War II impacted the arguments of the Air Force and the Navy as the services fought for favorable concessions in the postwar defense establishment. Gentile claimed that the nuclear weapon posed a challenge for the Air Force because its destructive capacity

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challenged the service’s claims for a large fleet of strategic bombers.\footnote{Gian P. Gentile, How Effective is Strategic Bombing? Lessons Learned from World War II to Kosovo (New York: New York University Press, 2001).} I argue the opposite; the atomic bomb fueled Air Force leaders arguments for a large fleet of strategic bombers in the late 1940s. Gentile’s examination of the bombing surveys and their use by the Air Force and the Navy is otherwise excellent, and informs the discussion that follows here.

Influenced by these important interpretations, this chapter examines senior Air Force leaders’ testimony in key hearings during the period and makes two claims: First, as Air Force leaders pushed the merits of strategic bombardment in the early Cold War, they repeated three key themes: (1) Aircraft are most effective when used to strike targets of strategic importance, and not in support of land and sea forces; (2) at least part of a fleet of bombers will always penetrate enemy territory and reach its target; and (3) only a standing fleet of state-of-the-art long-range bombers, loaded with atomic bombs, provides a meaningful deterrent to Soviet aggression. Secondly, just as World War II tested the claims of bomber advocates in the “conventional air age,” the Cold War tested and refuted several of the exaggerated claims regarding strategic bombardment in the nuclear age. As the 1940s came to a close, Air Force leaders began to recognize that strategic bombardment offered no panacea in the existing national security dilemma.
2.1 World War II: Justifying the Independent Service

Before the end of World War II, Army Air Force leadership seemed determined to get in writing an account of war in the European and Pacific theaters that painted the best possible interpretation of strategic bombardment. In 1944, Army Air Force leaders persuaded Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to establish a committee to survey the impact of strategic bombardment in the European theater during the war. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) was the brainchild of USAAF General Muir S. Fairchild, who occupied a position on the influential Joint Strategic Survey Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Fairchild and General Henry “Hap” Arnold, the Army Air Forces Chief of Staff, hoped that a joint—and, therefore, unbiased—study of strategic bombardment in Europe would validate their service’s independence. Franklin D’Olier served as the chairman of the Survey. Eleven other prominent civilians also served as officers of the Survey, including John K. Galbraith, Paul H. Nitze, and George W. Ball. The European Bombing Survey, based in London, employed over 1100 people and sent teams to bombed cities throughout Germany to determine the effects of air campaigns. In an attempt to retrieve information immediately after raids were conducted, survey

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teams moved perilously close to forward lines, resulting in numerous casualties, including four killed.8

The AAF generals were somewhat disappointed with the survey, which found that all of the components of Allied air power, and not just the strategic bombing campaigns, were decisive in bringing about the fall of Germany:

Allied air power was decisive in the war in Western Europe. Hindsight inevitably suggests that it might have been employed differently or better in some respects. Nevertheless, it was decisive. In the air, its victory was complete. At sea, its contribution, combined with naval power, brought an end to the enemy’s greatest naval threat—the U-boat; on land, it helped turn the tide overwhelmingly in favor of Allied ground forces. Its power and superiority made possible the success of the invasion. It brought the economy which sustained the enemy’s armed forces to virtual collapse, although the full effects of this collapse had not reached the enemy’s front lines when they were overrun by Allied forces. It brought home to the German people the full impact of modern war with all its horror and suffering. Its imprint on the German nation will be lasting.9

The survey lauded the collective efforts of USAAF, Navy, and Allied tactical and strategic aircraft, rather than only the long-range bombers, as Fairchild and Arnold had hoped. These findings did not champion USAAF bombers as a force that exclusively weakened the Axis Powers’ ability to conduct war. As historian Bernard C. Nalty observed, “Airpower, the Strategic Bombing Survey revealed, had not lived up to the expectations of prophets like [Italian airpower theorist Giulio] Douhet or Mitchell, who expected a bolt from the blue that destroyed some vital industry and rendered the

9 Ibid.
enemy powerless to resist, even though his army and navy remained intact.”

Frustrated with the findings in the European report, Army Air Forces leaders determined to shape more favorably any USSBS findings in the Pacific.

Two weeks after the atomic strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, President Truman authorized the USSBS to examine the air war in the Pacific. From the outset, the Pacific study sparked a bitter disagreement between uniformed representatives of the Army Air Forces and the Navy. Representing the Army Air Forces, Major General Orvil Anderson drafted a report which historian Tammi Davis Biddle described as an “unabashed propaganda tract claiming that air power dominated both naval forces and ground forces.” In the Navy’s report, Admiral Ralph Oftsie, a carrier pilot, emphasized the role of carrier aviation in winning the battle at Midway and the amphibious assaults that provided island basing for long-range bombers to operate against mainland Japan. Anderson and Oftsie were so pitted against each other on the report that they nearly came to blows one evening in their quarters. Chairman D’Olier and the civilian officers of the USSBS did not want to get in the middle of the squabble, and elected instead to publish each service’s document as a sub-report representing the naval and air divisions of the survey. Still, the Summary Report made one assertion that

10 Nalty, "Victory over Japan," 323.
12 Ibid.
would serve Air Force leaders with an argument for strategic bombardment for years to come:

The experience of the Pacific war supports the findings of the Survey in Europe that heavy, sustained and accurate attack against carefully selected targets is required to produce decisive results when attacking an enemy’s sustaining resources. It further supports the findings in Germany that no nation can long survive the free exploitation of air weapons over its homeland. For the future it is important to grasp the fact that enemy planes enjoying control of the sky over one’s head can be as disastrous to one’s country as its occupation by physical invasion.14

The USSBS Pacific Summary Report claimed that strategic bombardment had been decisive, in both theaters during World War II. Air power zealots had influenced and won a major piece of evidence to support their claims for independence and their subsequent push for service gains.

2.2 Post World War II: Reducing the Force

Immediately following victory in Japan, President Truman’s first order of business was cutting wartime budgets and reducing the size of the military. This was in keeping with the desire of most Americans, who expected the United States after victory in World War II to return to peacetime levels of military expenditure. In October 1945, President Truman proposed a military establishment based upon a small, active force, supported by a larger reserve component, and augmented by a program to provide

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universal military training (UMT) to male U.S. citizens. In 1946, he proposed further reductions to defense spending; the military budget would be appropriated after all other agencies’ budgets were submitted, so as not to allow the federal budget to exceed a pre-determined ceiling. In any case, the military was not to receive any more than one-third of the federal total. Under these stringent guidelines, policymakers slashed the military budget for 1947 to $14 billion, just one-third of the previous year’s budget of $42 billion. The cuts were sweeping; by the end of official demobilization, twenty-two months following victory in Japan, the military shrank from 12 million to 1.6 million troops.

Throughout this period, senior leaders in the War and Navy Departments resisted the military reduction, not only because of the obvious implications on their services, but also because the drawdown seemed to be at odds with growing national security concerns after World War II. Following President Truman’s announcement in 1945 for a reduced force backed by UMT training, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson complained that demobilization would drain the military forces necessary to stabilize occupied territories. Others feared that UMT would not provide an adequate force to

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16 Ibid., 12.
deter an enemy from launching a surprise attack such as the Japanese had done at Pearl Harbor.  

These protests reflected growing concern in the military and in U.S. government for Soviet aggression in Europe and the Middle East during this period. In his famous speech given at Fulton, Missouri on 5 March 1946, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill described the “iron curtain” falling across Europe:

Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and are all subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

By early 1946, Truman and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee had refused Joseph Stalin parts of Turkey, and had protested Stalin’s continued occupation of Iran to the United Nations. In February, Truman received the famous “long telegram” from diplomat George Kennan, recommending a policy of containment towards Soviet expansion. On 12 March 1947, President Truman asked the Congress for $400 million dollars in relief to Greece and Turkey. This was the first installment of the Truman

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20 The Truman administration approached containment predominantly with the application of U.S. military and economic power. Kennan biographer John Lukacs noted, “The aim was political and social, not military: to diminish whatever danger may have existed of communism there taking advantage of desperation or chaos.” John Lukacs, *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). 83.
Doctrine, which grew to provide $17 billion over the next five years.\textsuperscript{22} Henceforth, the United States would show more backbone in resisting the spread of the Soviet empire.

While the Army Air Forces leadership shared these national security concerns, they first needed to address the implications of a military drawdown on their push for independence. The post-war drawdown was particularly painful for Generals Hap Arnold and Carl Spaatz; in the sixteen months following the atomic bombing of Japan, the Army Air Forces declined from 218 flying groups to only fifty-two. Despite the growing Soviet threat, the air component during this period had a total of thirteen atomic bombs, which could only be dropped from the one unit of B-29s—the same group that bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.\textsuperscript{23} The future of the independent air service depended in large part on how well senior air leaders could fight and win impending budget and mission battles.

\section*{2.3 Unification and Independence}

To fight for an independent air force in during the period of declining military expenditure, Army Air Force leaders would argue for a fleet of modern aircraft, equipped with atomic bombs. Upon Truman’s request to review service requirements immediately after victory in the Pacific, General Arnold ordered his staff to prepare a

\textsuperscript{22} Rearden, \textit{The Formative Years}, 1947-1950, 1: 11.

postwar organization plan for air forces.\textsuperscript{24} The Air Staff produced a plan that emphasized strategic bombardment and facilitated the establishment of an independent force. Their plan called for a giant standing air force of 500,000 airmen and seventy combat air groups, of which a majority would be comprised of heavy bomber aircraft. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the plan in its entirety, except that they authorized only 400,000 airmen for the seventy groups. Still, this was a victory for the air service, which now had on paper as much manpower as the post-war Army and Navy. The Army Air Forces obtained parity at least in terms of size of forces, and had done so by advocating strategic air forces; parity by way of independence would soon follow.\textsuperscript{25}

On 19 December 1945, President Truman called for Congress to pass legislation that would create an independent air force and join all three departments under a single defense department. Truman’s call for unification gave particular endorsement to the importance of air power in the present age: “Air power has been developed to a point where its responsibilities are equal to those of land and sea power, and its contribution to our strategic planning is great.”\textsuperscript{26} General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had recently succeeded General Marshall as Army Chief of Staff, agreed with the president, and announced his support of unification and an independent air component.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Herman S. Wolk, “Roots of Strategic Deterrence,” \textit{Airpower Historian}, no. Fall (1972): 139.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 140.
However, the plans for unification floundered, primarily due to the Navy’s aversion to reorganization. In the first place, the Navy did not want its secretary to lose direct access to the president; this would happen if the service chiefs were subordinated to a secretary of defense. Furthermore, the Navy did not want an equal air component absorbing its share of a diminished defense budget. The Senate Military Affairs Committee drafted a unification bill in May, but naval officials opposed the measure, claiming that an independent air force would eventually try to take control of naval aviation. On 14 January 1947, the president’s naval aide, Captain James H. Foskett, submitted to Truman a memorandum in which he expressed his service’s “real apprehension” concerning the proposed unification of the armed forces. Foskett attached a report with the memorandum that outlined multiple occasions where AAF leaders such as Spaatz questioned the need for a navy at all. The report stated, “For twenty-five years the Navy has been faced in one form or the other with the attempt of the Army Air Forces to take control of all aviation.”

Yet only two weeks after Foskett forwarded the memorandum to Truman, Navy Secretary James Forrestal and Army Secretary Robert Patterson reached a compromise and forwarded a draft bill to the president for consideration. Their draft left several minor issues unresolved, but it included Truman’s primary goals, including a defense

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secretary, and three separate services, headed by civilian secretaries and subordinate military chiefs. On 27 February 1947, Truman sent a draft bill for the National Security Act to Congress.

In testimony before the Armed Services Committee, General Spaatz highlighted the significance of modern airpower and the susceptibility of the United States to attacks from enemy long-range bombers. The general asserted that the technical era of air power and atomic energy had moved the country from an era of invulnerability into one where the country could be attacked at any time. The chief pointed out that in World War II, the allies gave the United States two years to produce the machinery of war before the country actually engaged in fighting; in the atomic age, however, this luxury of time would not exist. Therefore, the machinery of war would have to be in place in order to serve as a deterrent against enemy attack: “Our capability for prompt and decisive air retaliation must be instantaneous.” Spaatz called for a built and fielded air force, a force-in-being, rather than one on paper that had yet to be produced. Moreover, he reinforced the singular role that air power would play in defending the nation from enemy aggression. Spaatz expanded further on this point during the question-and-answer period that followed his prepared statement. When questioned as to whether there would be tangible advantages to creating a separate air service, Spaatz stated that

31 National Defense Establishment (Unification of the Armed Services), Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Eightieth Congress, First Session, March-May 1947 1947, 117.
the new department would be completely responsible for defending against long-range air attacks and striking enemy nations with its own strategic forces.

Following three months of hearings, the bill moved quickly to become law. The Senate approved an amended version of the president’s bill in early June; the House of Representatives did the same in early July. After three weeks of resolution in committees, both houses approved the bill, and President Truman signed the National Security Act into law on 26 July 1947.32 On the same day, he nominated Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal to be the first Secretary of Defense.33 The act created a National Military Establishment, comprised of Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Each department was to be directed by a civilian secretary, appointed by the president. The service departments fell under the authority and control of the Secretary of Defense. However, the law included an important provision: It stipulated that each secretary could present to the President or the Director of the Budget any report or recommendation after informing the Secretary of Defense.34 Within a year of the National Security Act becoming law, the Air Force would take advantage of this important provision.

Airmen had won the twenty-eight year battle for independence that had begun with Billy Mitchell. Like Mitchell, Secretary Symington and General Spaatz waged a

34 National Security Act; Title II: The National Military Establishment, Section 202.
campaign against the Navy, and touted strategic bombardment in its fight for the U.S. Air Force. They could not rest on their laurels; the issue of service independence was resolved, but questions of money and missions loomed ahead.

2.4 Roles and Mission

President Truman’s appointment of a commission to examine national air policy one week before he signed the National Security Act into law signaled that if the issue of an independent service for air was put to rest, the issue of air power’s role in national defense, including which services should perform those missions, was very much in question. Accordingly, Air Force leaders approached the commission with the same fervor and methodology that had served to win independence. President Truman appointed Thomas K. Finletter, a lawyer and most recently an economic advisor to the Secretary of State, to chair the Air Policy Commission. Like Finletter, three of the remaining four members—newspaper publisher Palmer Hoyt, businessman and engineer John McCone, and investment banker Arthur D. Whiteside—had no experience concerning aviation matters. Only one commission appointee, George P. Baker, had an aviation background, having served previously as the Vice Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board.35 The board heard the testimony of over 150 witnesses in the three

months, including Air Force leaders who advocated for the primacy of strategic bombardment in the air age, and senior Navy officials who refuted such claims.

Speaking first on behalf of the Air Force, Chief of Staff General Carl Spaatz described the national security situation as one where the Soviet Union could only harm the United States and the world by using long-range bombers. He believed that only a superior strategic bomber fleet could defend against the Soviet air threat. Spaatz began his remarks by describing a “power for peace” that would offer strong support to the country and to the United Nations. He quickly turned to the Soviet threat—the “only effective adversary discernable in the foreseeable future.” The Chief noted a continuous effort by the Soviets to develop advanced, long-range bombers. They had acquired two American B-29 bombers in 1944, most recently had obtained German bomber experts for their own research and development, and even had attempted to contract with an American supplier of aircraft wheels, brakes, and tires. Worse, Spaatz warned, the Soviet bombers would soon be loaded with atomic weapons. Using a globe, the chief of staff demonstrated how any future adversary could fly long-range strikes over the Arctic in order to destroy the industrial centers of the United States. He observed, “From all of this we conclude that more than ever before will our best defense lie in a quick and paralyzing retaliatory strike.” Spaatz urged the adoption of the 70-wing bomber force as recommended by the Air Staff in late 1945. Furthermore, He
emphasized that the wings needed to be comprised of modern, state-of-the-art bombers; the B-17s and B-29s of World War II would not suffice.\textsuperscript{36}

Stuart Symington’s testimony echoed Spaatz’s comments; however, the Air Force Secretary also emphasized the preeminence of air forces over land and sea forces in the atomic age. Like Spaatz, Symington noted that U.S. industry would be vulnerable to air attack in the atomic age. The only defense, he believed, was an established, superior air force, an air force-in-being—one that was built and fielded, not one that could be built at some future time, and would therefore be vulnerable to enemy air attack. Symington lamented, “The 70 group program was conceived over a year ago as an expression of this minimum. We have not achieved it, and are now shooting at 55 groups by 1 January 48.”\textsuperscript{37} Despite insisting that the Air Force was just one part of a defense team, he observed, “I feel, naturally, that the tasks which the Air Force is called upon to perform are such, in light of the probable nature of future war, as to require an exceedingly high priority, if the political independence and territorial integrity of the United States are to be maintained in the face of any possible challenges.”\textsuperscript{38} This was a theme often expressed by Symington and the uniformed Air Force leaders from this point forward: The Air Force was not fighting for a disproportionate share of the defense budget; rather, the service was tasked with the primary responsibility for

\textsuperscript{36} Unclassified Testimony Before the President’s Air Policy Commission, 15 September - 3 December 1947, 2344.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 2518.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 2519.
defending the nation and Western Europe, and simply needed the appropriate minimum air forces to deliver on that responsibility.

Russian émigré, air pioneer, and USAF Major Alexander DeSeversky focused his testimony on the decreasing relevance of ground and naval forces, and the need for an airpower force-in-being. DeSeversky, a Russian naval aviator and ace during World War I, was serving as a naval attaché in the United States during the Russian Revolution; he decided to remain and become a U.S. citizen. DeSeversky quickly became affiliated with the Army Air Corps, where he joined General William “Billy” Mitchell in advocating independent air power.

At the Finletter Commission hearings, De Seversky bluntly announced that land and sea power no longer held the same importance that each did prior to entering the age of flight:

A strategic military force is one which is self-sustained in its own medium, regardless of its base; capable of assuming control of its medium while denying it to the adversary. By thus assuming freedom of action in its own medium, it can bring about the end of hostilities through the direct application of force upon the enemy’s means to wage war.

That is why armies in the past were strategic forces on land, and navies on the high seas. Today, when neither of them can maintain a battle under hostile skies, they have ceased to be strategic forces and become auxiliaries to Air Power. I am aware that this revolutionary fact is not easy to acknowledge; it cuts
too sharply across traditional thinking and sentimental loyalties. But it is a fact that must be faced if we are to survive under the changed conditions.³⁹

Having denounced land and sea forces, De Seversky proclaimed that only airpower—specifically Air Force long-range airpower—could “bring about the end of hostilities” in the present age. He testified that overseas bases and aircraft carriers equipped with medium-range bombers were vulnerable and, therefore, unsuitable for national defense. Only strategic bombers, launched from bases within the United States, could be protected and have the means to strike at an enemy on the other side of the world. On this point, De Seversky claimed that the existing seventy-group proposal was insufficient, if it were to be armed with aging bombers, rather than advanced aircraft with global reach. In closing, De Seversky reiterated Symington’s plea for a disproportionate share of the budget. Earlier in the hearings, Admiral Nimitz had described the defense department as a three-legged stool; each needed to be supported (i.e. funded) in order to support a complete national defense posture. De Seversky rejected the admiral’s analogy, and suggested instead that national defense rested primarily on air power. He quipped, “Real teamwork means that the player best able to do a certain job be given clear field to do it.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., 2611-12.
⁴⁰ Ibid., 2621.
The President’s Air Policy Commission report, *Survival in the Air Age*, published on 1 January 48, echoed the sentiments of the air power enthusiasts who testified. The report conceded that while its members believed that peace and national security were synonymous in the atomic age, the only means of safeguarding a nation was to equip itself with a military force so menacing that an adversary would not dare to attack. Moreover, this modern force would have to control the skies: “Our military security must be based upon air power.”41 Accordingly, the report called for increasing the existing fifty-five group Air Force to the seventy groups proposed by the airmen who testified. This would establish a modern fleet of 12,400 planes, including seventy groups of fighters to defend the United States and seventy groups of bombers to strike back at enemy targets. The report noted, “This force [700 aircraft] of heavy bombers seems minute as compared with the 14,400 bombers of the United States Air Force and the Royal Air Force committed to combat in the European theater during the war.” The commission urged this force to be in place by January 1953, at which point it expected the Soviet Union to have the atomic bomb, and long-range aircraft to deliver them.42 Opponents, especially in the Army and Navy, believed that the report trusted too heavily in air power to defend the United States. The other services’ leaders also argued that any increase in defense spending for the Air Force would need to be matched by

42 Ibid., 19.
proportional increases for the Army and the Navy, because the Air Force bombers being
developed would have to stopover at forward bases in order to strike the Soviet Union;
these bases could only be secured by land and sea power.43

The Finletter Report had immediate consequences for the budget battles in 1948.
Within weeks of the Finletter Report’s release, the Republican majority in Congress
produced its own study of air power, and used both reports to argue for the seventy-
group Air Force. Armed with the report from the President’s own commission, which
championed strategic bombardment and recommended seventy groups as well,
Secretary Symington and General Spaatz allied with the Congress to win funding.

2.5 Resolving the Service Budgets, 1948

President Truman deliberately timed the release of the Finletter Commission
Report to follow his presentation to Congress of the FY 1949 budget, which cut roughly
half of what the Joint Chiefs had requested as the minimum necessary to meet national
security demands. Truman’s FY 1947 budget split $13 billion between the Army and
Navy departments. In FY 1948, three services shared just over $10 billion.44 Now,
Truman proposed that the Army, Navy, and Air Force share a slightly smaller total, $9.8
billion.45

44 Office of Management and Budget, "Composition of Outlays: 1940-2009, online, Internet, available from
45 “The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1949,” (Washington:
Sharing the view of Army and Navy leadership, Secretary of Defense Forrestal testified before Senate Armed Services Committee that increasing the Air Force by fifteen groups would incur increased defense spending for the other services; he estimated this total to be between between $15 billion and $18 billion. The Senate Armed Services Committee asked Secretary Forrestal to back up his figures; on 3 April, Forrestal returned to the committee with a revised estimate of $14 billion.46

Days later, Secretary Symington and General Spaatz joined Secretary Forrestal in a closed session of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the outcome of which was an immediate recommendation to the White House for seventy air groups. The committee chairman, Senator Chan Gurney said only of the session, “Questions were presented bluntly and frank answers were demanded and given.”47 Yet clearly the Air Force leadership contradicted the views of Secretary Forrestal in the closed-door session. A New York Times editorial observed, “In going directly to Congress to plead for a program larger than that recommended by Defense Secretary Forrestal, the Air Force leaders are exercising a prerogative under unification that hardly was expected to be used so soon.”48 With congressional support, the Air Force won nearly $2.3 billion of $3.2 billion earmarked for new aircraft. In effect, President Truman settled for a FY 1949 budget of

46 Hansen W. Baldwin, "Forrestal Backs Air Force Figure," The New York Times, 4 April 1948.
$13 billion, 3$ billion more than he proposed. The revised budget included provision to expand the Air Force to 70 groups.

### 2.6 The Fight Over the B-36

As 1949 approached, Air Force leaders expected that impending budget cuts would produce a fierce battle between the services over their prized programs. For months, the Navy had been developing an enormous aircraft carrier that could hold medium bombers capable of delivering atomic bombs. Simultaneously, the Air Force had advocated the B-36 Peacemaker bomber, which was larger than any bomber to date and capable of flying intercontinental distances with multiple atomic bombs. In November 1948, Secretary Symington wrote an “eyes only” letter to Hap Arnold and asked him to attend a meeting in Washington D.C. with senior Air Force leaders. In addition to Symington and Chief of Staff Vandenberg, the meeting would include former AAF leaders Spaatz, Eaker, and Doolittle. The ailing Arnold replied that he was unable to attend; however, he fully supported the effort to plan for a unified Air Force effort towards the press, the administration, and the Congress in 1949. Arnold agreed with Symington that the following year would be critical in light of the “yardstick” that would be applied to service budgets. General Arnold stated that the U.S. could not match the Soviet Army, and the Navy could do no damage to the U.S.S.R. except to damage its coastline. Yet Secretary of Defense Forrestal continued his “dollar for dollar appropriation method, even though the whole future existence of the US might depend
on the air arm being developed to a strength necessary to keep Russia in line.” Arnold believed that a showdown with the Navy over the B-36 and strategic bombing was about to begin. The USAF, he insisted, must go “all out” on the B-36.49

Senior Air Force leaders turned to a longstanding supporter of the Air Force at Reader’s Digest. William Bradford Huie had written extensively in favor of independence for the Army Air Forces during World War II.50 In January, Huie claimed that the B-36 was essential to defending the United States: “For the first time in our history we have a real first line of defense: an organization of minutemen, not ready to defend in the classic sense of repelling an invasion, but ready to defend as the boxer does—by smashing his attacker over the heart.”51 Huie advocated the B-36, as Air Force leaders had hoped; however, in doing so, Huie proposed offensive action as a means to defend the United States. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, the conceptualization of bombers for offensive action rather than as a deterrent force became one of the primary tenets of the preventive war advocates during this period.

Throughout the spring of 1949, the Air Force and the Navy fought publicly and bitterly over the “supercarrier” and the B-36. At a conference in Key West in May, Secretary Forrestal tried unsuccessfully to bring the services to agreement on roles and missions. The meeting provided direction for the size of the Marine Corps and air

defense of the United States, and it even authorized the Navy’s first supercarrier, the 80,000-ton *United States*. But the chiefs failed to find any agreement on the overall defense budget, the issue that mattered most. 52 Given the constraints of the federal budget, Forrestal realized that he could not support the funding of the Air Force and the Navy’s pet projects. Frustrated and impotent under the framework of the National Security Act, Secretary Forrestal resigned. Within weeks he was dead from an apparent suicide.

Forrestal’s replacement, Louis Johnson, immediately put the issue of defense appropriations to a vote by the Joint Chiefs, and in so doing, touched off a firestorm of protest from the losing service. The Army sided with the Air Force, and by a vote of two-to-one, the chiefs approved the B-36 over the supercarrier. On 23 April 1948—within one month of taking office, and five days after the keel of the *USS United States* was laid—Johnson canceled the Navy program.53 Three days later, Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan resigned in protest.

In May, a civilian assistant to a Navy undersecretary leaked an anonymous document that accused the Air Force of corruption while negotiating contracts to build the B-36. Secretary of Defense Johnson downplayed the accusation in his graduation address at the National War College in late June:

The cancellation of construction plans for a naval supercarrier has been twisted into a charge of persecution against the navy. Some partisans of that service have exaggerated this action and have represented it as part of a conspiracy either to sink the Navy’s air arm or to reduce the Navy to a second-class role....In their campaign of terror against further unification of the armed forces, they have roused false issues without the substance of truth.54

Despite the defense secretary’s attempts to shrug off the matter, the Navy’s accusations against the Air Force created a stir in Washington. The Navy’s accusations against the B-36 concerned an order made by the first commander of Strategic Air Command, General George C. Kenney, who recommended to the head of the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC), General Nathan Twining, that procurement of the B-36 be halted based upon the poor performance of a prototype aircraft in tests. Actually, much of the problem had to do with the prototype’s substandard engines, which the contractor had upgraded; thus, production continued. Yet Kenney’s initial order to halt production gave critics in the Navy the ammunition they needed to criticize the program, at least privately.55 The issue prompted hearings before the House Armed Services Committee in the fall of 1949. A string of Air Force witnesses defended the capabilities of the B-36 and the acquisition process for the new bomber. Most of these Air Force senior leaders testified concerning the technical aspects of the B-36 and the process by which the aircraft was developed and purchased. These officers included present and past Strategic Air Command leaders General Curtis LeMay and George Kenney, and AFMC

On 19 August 1949, members of the House Armed Services Committee heard the testimony in San Francisco of former Army Air Forces Commander General Henry “Hap” Arnold, who was too ill to travel to Washington, D.C. for the hearings. When asked to specify what kind of military power was most effective, Arnold stated, “The Air Force today plus the atomic bomb in my opinion is the combination, the winning combination, for maintaining peace throughout the world today.”\textsuperscript{56} A discussion ensued concerning whether the Defense Department was spending its money on the best possible programs for national security. Arnold called for an evaluation of each weapon comprising the U.S. arsenal. Those that did not fit the demands of modern warfare should be thrown out, he insisted, adding, “We can’t continue with covered wagons and Mississippi River gunboats.”\textsuperscript{57} On this issue, however, he reminded the committee of the absolute necessity for the long-range atomic bomber.

In his defense of the B-36 and strategic bombardment, Secretary Symington accused the Navy of preferring antiquated combat methods, whereby too much blood would be spilled on both sides: “If it is preferable to engage in a war of attrition, one

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 382.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 384.
American life for one enemy life, then we are wrong. That is not our way. That is not
the way in which the mass slaughter of American youth in an invasion of Japan was
avoided.” The secretary suggested that atomic strikes would either make any surface
warfare either easier or unnecessary. Symington concluded by stating his hope that if
any good was to come from the hearings, air power must finally be freed from the
“shackles” of being tied to surface warfare, and be recognized as an equal and
independent partner of the Army and Navy.

Instead of defending the B-36 and those involved with the aircraft’s
development, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force’s new Chief of Staff, opened
his testimony in strong support of strategic bombardment as a primary means of
defense. General Vandenberg testified that a significant quantity of atomic bombs and
long-range delivery aircraft could effectively “check the aggressive designs of Soviet
leaders who recognize no restraint other than force.” Vandenberg also pointed out that
other governments and societies depended upon the long-range strength of the United
States for their own protection. The general believed that such strength was found in a
robust fleet of intercontinental bombers. He testified that the Joint Chiefs were all in
agreement that the first priority of the United States was establishing a force capable of
delivering the atomic bomb. Vandenberg concluded with an emotional appeal: “I
cannot believe that this concept of strategic defense can be under attack by this

58 Ibid., 216.
committee. Therefore, it remains for us to examine the conduct and motives of men and
the capabilities of a machine." 59 The general finally turned to the defense of Secretary
Symington, those airmen involved with the B-36 program, and the aircraft itself.

Ironically, as Vandenberg offered his support once again for strategic bombing,
he also hinted at the dilemma posed by a strategy that would deter immediate
aggression while allowing the Soviet Union to build its own arsenal of strategic
bombers. When asked if the presently funded, forty-eight group air force was sufficient
for national defense, Vandenberg admitted that no number of bombers could completely
safeguard the United States, because “the same capability exists in an enemy as exists in
our own forces in that a bombing attack, once launched, will never fail to reach its target.
By that I do not mean that perhaps all of the aircraft will get there, but once launched, it
will reach its target.” 60 Vandenberg publicly acknowledged the predicament that would
continue to frustrate the Air Force for years to come. The Air Force believed that long-
range atomic bombers could best halt Soviet aggression, but there remained the question
as to what would happen when the Soviets had their own arsenal.

In his testimony concerning the B-36, former Chief of Staff General Spaatz also
alluded to the dilemma raised by his successor. Spaatz reiterated the great threat posed
by the Soviet Army, and argued for applying the industrial power of the United States to

59 Ibid., 170.
60 Ibid., 192.
not only provide forces that could defeat an enemy, but also to deter the Soviets from starting a war in the first place. However, Spaatz believed that such a deterrent force was only useful as long as an aggressor could not match the United States with equal firepower. Therefore, he called for an immediate rearming of Europe, “in advance of the time when Russia will have intercontinental bombers and atomic bombs.”  

Spaatz, like Vandenberg, strongly supported a modern fleet of atomic bombers like the B-36. However, like Vandenberg, he also believed that the atomic advantage was temporal, and would vanish when the Soviets had developed their own aircraft and atomic weapons.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and an Army officer, General Omar Bradley gave a powerful and unbiased endorsement to the B-36 program and also to strategic bombardment. Bradley gave high priority to strategic bombing because the Defense Department was unable to field a force big enough to stop the Soviet Army in the early stages of war. He also believed that the atomic bomb had already demonstrated an ability to deter aggression against the United States and Europe. Bradley dismissed charges that the Navy had suffered disproportionate cuts to its systems; the Navy had lost only three of eleven carriers, while the Air Force lost twenty-two of seventy air groups. Bradley even reminded the committee that the atomic tests in the Pacific had demonstrated the vulnerability of naval vessels to atomic strikes.

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61 Ibid., 388-9.
Concluding his remarks, General Bradley scolded the Navy Department for its behavior: “This is no the time for ‘fancy dans’ who won’t hit the line with all they have on every play, unless they can call the signals.”62 This accusation was one-sided, if not unfair; the Air Force had appealed to Congress when it did not get the funding for seventy groups.

General Bradley’s support for strategic bombardment and his contempt for the Navy over the B-36 controversy put an end to the investigation. Wrapping up its hearings before the end of August, the House Armed Services Committee found no evidence of foul play by Air Force leadership or civilian officials concerning the B-36. The investigation committee recommended only that the civilian assistant who authored the document be fired.63 The matter seemed closed. But in September, Naval officer and aviator Captain John G. Crommelin invited reporters to his home, where he declared that Secretary of Defense Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to eliminate the Navy.64 His statements reopened the debate. The House Armed Services Committee, which was hoping to return to the problem of the stalemate between the services concerning the 1950 budget, now was forced to revisit the decision to cancel the USS United States in favor of the B-36.

A swarm of Naval officers and civilian experts spoke against the B-36, offering technical data to prove that the aircraft was susceptible to enemy fighter aircraft,
especially at high altitude, and required fighter escort, something the Air Force could not provide over such long ranges. Concluding that the supercarrier, not the B-36, was the program capable of performing long-range atomic strike, Chief of Naval Operations Louis Denfield struck out in testimony at Navy Secretary Francis Matthews, who at this point believed that his department was on the losing end of the fight, and chose not to protest the carrier’s cancellation.

Secretary Symington and Chief Vandenberg focused their testimony on the suitability of strategic bombardment as a means to deter Soviet aggression. Symington, citing the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, claimed that bombing raids against Germany shortened the war in Europe. He also viewed bombing as a viable alternative to sending masses of U.S. soldiers to their deaths in war:

Even if we wanted to, which surely we don’t, we can’t swap the life of one of ours for each soldier of the many millions under arms in the totalitarian states. American soldiers are not cogs in a dictator’s machine; their lives are precious; and it has never been part of our military tradition or our national philosophy to expose them carelessly even in war.

So let’s continue to concentrate on America’s greatest asset, quality of product, superior weapons capable of development and mass production in our system of free economy—weapons like the B-36 with its intercontinental

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65 Ibid., 416.
bomiting range without refueling and other modern bombers and planes with their projected intercontinental range with refueling. 67

This point—that air power was a suitable substitute for the senseless death of American soldiers—was not only held by Air Force leaders, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well, Symington insisted.

While Secretary Symington reiterated his strong appeal for long-range atomic bombers, as he did in previous testimony, he also hinted at another weakness in using the threat of reprisal attacks to deter enemy aggression. Symington closed by expressing his regret that these hearings may have provided the Soviet Union with key technical specifications for the B-36. Symington stated, “We have now given the military leaders of any aggressor nation a further advantage in developing their strategic plan by telling them so much about our own. I say further because, in this atomic age, the aggressor always has the great advantage of initiative.” 68 By “advantage of initiative,” Symington meant that before launching a full-scale offensive, an adversary might choose first to strike his enemy’s strategic bomber bases, so as to mitigate the threat of retaliation. Here, like Spaatz and Vandenberg two months before, the Air Force secretary tacitly acknowledged a weakness in the strategy that dominated his service’s approach to the Cold War.

67 Ibid., 401.
68 Ibid., 407.
General Vandenberg echoed his secretary’s appeal for intercontinental bombers such as the B-36. He attempted to frame strategic bombardment as a joint concept for war, not an Air Force approach. He contended that strategic bombardment originally was an Army Air Forces concept, not an invention of the independent Air Force. Vandenberg reminded the committee that strategic bombers were national weapons, placed under the executive authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—not the Air Force—who had the authority to execute Strategic Air Command missions. In addition these arguments, he also suggested that standing down the existing bomber fleet would upset those in Europe who believe that nuclear deterrence was working to restrain the Soviets. Furthermore, while he believed that ultimately wars “must be concluded on the ground,” the atomic bomb provided a meaningful counterbalance to massive enemy ground forces. Lastly, he reminded the representatives that no AAF bombing mission in World War II, once launched, failed to reach its target.69

The final report of the House Armed Services Committee upheld Secretary Johnson’s original decision to fund the B-36 and cancel the supercarrier. The Navy suffered additional fallout from the incident; Secretary Matthews replaced Admiral Denfield for contradicting him in the hearings, and the Navy reprimanded the outspoken Captain Crommelin and placed him on indefinite furlough until his early retirement. The “Revolt of the Admirals” was over. Truman was determined to

69 Vandenberg, 453-457.
eradicate any further opposition; he wrote to Congressman Overton Brooks, “We finally succeeded in getting a Unification Act that will enable us to have Unification and as soon as we get the cry babies in the niches where they belong, we will have no more trouble.” President Truman’s comment reflected his exhaustion concerning the B-36 controversy, the roles and missions battles, and the budget squabbles between the services.

2.7 Conclusion

Throughout the hearings for independence, military expenditure, and roles and missions after World War II, the Air Force emerged as the big winner. To do so, its leaders voiced a steady message emphasizing the strategic significance of long-range bombers when used against the war-making capability of the enemy, the resilience of the bomber to get through to its target, and the absolute need for a fleet-in-being comprised of the newest and best available intercontinental atomic bombers. Yet, as this campaign for airpower bought the Air Force a lead role in deterring Soviet aggression and defending the United States and the West, senior airmen began to recognize that the U.S. nuclear bomber fleet was not the panacea for Soviet aggression as they had claimed during in the years after World War II. The U.S. strategic bombardment monopoly did

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not prevent Soviet intervention in Berlin, nor did it stall the Soviet expansion into Eastern European countries.

In July 1949, Vandenberg issued a letter to all major commanders with the subject heading, “Priority in Preparation for Atomic Warfare.” Vandenberg emphasized the importance of the service’s ability to drop the atomic bomb, and instructed his major commanders to review all programs, projects, and policies to ensure that all echelons of the Air Force supported this most important function of the service.71 In August 1949, as Symington and Vandenberg were championing their service’s strategic bomber forces before Congress, the Soviet Union detonated its own atomic bomb. President Truman, who announced the development first to his cabinet and then to the nation on 24 September, stated that the Soviet atom bomb implied no immediate change in national security strategy. A *New York Times* commentary stated, “The news was expected to give added weight to the Air Force strategists who contend that another war would be fought with massive, strategic air power, with the atomic bomb as the supreme weapon, and that the main avenues to the targets would be over the North Pole.”72 One month after the president’s announcement, Chief of Staff Vandenberg wrote a follow-up memorandum to General LeMay at Strategic Air Command. Referencing his July message that emphasized atomic warfare, Vandenberg now wrote, “The recent evidence

of an atomic explosion in the U.S.S.R. emphasizes the necessity of accelerating action throughout the Air Force to implement the policy announced in the referenced letter.”73

For five years, the air service had successfully argued that strategic bombardment was the only effective deterrent to Soviet aggression in the Cold War. Now, only months after the first Soviet atomic detonation, the Air Force seemed to be preparing for the inevitability of nuclear war.

3. The Air Force and Preventive War During the Truman Presidency

“We are only defending ourselves, albeit we are doing it by taking the war to the enemy.”

Major General Orvil Anderson
December, 1949

In June 1950, at a National Security Council Consultants meeting, George Kennan suggested that it might be best for the United States if the Soviet Union stumbled into war with the U.S. before the Soviets could fully develop its own nuclear strike force.¹ Kennan’s admission was profound; the architect of President Truman’s national security strategy recognized that the Soviet atomic weapons program, which had begun with a successful detonation ten months before, increased the risks involved with his theory of containment. Once the Soviet Union developed a nuclear arsenal that could threaten or destroy the United States, containment could guarantee neither the halt of communist expansion nor U.S. immunity from Soviet nuclear attack. Ultimately, containment left the security of the United States to chance.

Those who favored preventive war during this period believed that a decisive act against the Soviet Union would serve the interest of the United States and its allies better than the gamble of containment. A sizable minority in the United States held this view. Historian Mark Trachtenberg found in a Gallup poll from 1950 that fifteen percent of Americans surveyed supported a preventive war against the Soviet Union. He observed, “The idea that the United States had to take some action before its nuclear edge was neutralized was by no means limited to the lunatic fringe.” Trachtenberg also noted that the loudest cries for preventive war came from within the Air Force.

The introduction to this dissertation reviewed the existing scholarship concerning the Air Force and preventive war during the early Cold War. To date, most accounts have cited a handful of comments put forth by prominent generals such as Curtis LeMay and Hap Arnold, or established as the focus of inquiry the firing of General Orvil Anderson from the Air War College. Yet, these accounts dealt only with the events or statements that caught the attention of the public. These histories settle on the same narrative: Several Air Force leaders favored preventive war; one in particular, General Anderson, created a stir with his public cry for preventive war at the Air War College; and, Anderson’s firing effectively ended any meaningful preventive war activity in the Air Force.

\[\text{Trachtenberg, “A ‘Wasting Asset,” 7.}\]
\[\text{The exception to this narrative is Tammi Davis Biddle’s examination of Project Control at the Air War College early in President Eisenhower’s first term: Tami Davis Biddle, ‘Handling the Soviet Threat: ‘Project}\]
A deeper examination of private statements, correspondence, and official transcripts from the early Cold War uncovers a defiant and persistent preventive war movement in the Air Force that far exceeded previous accounts. A coterie of influential airmen used their positions to act as a pressure group to promote preventive war in the Air Force and in the executive and legislative branches of government. This circle of Air Force senior leaders included a succession of service chiefs, deputies, and even Truman’s own civilian appointee, Air Force Secretary Stuart Symington.

A major finding of this study is that the Air Force continued to push for preventive war long after Anderson’s firing, in part because Anderson was only one of a handful of senior airmen who favored preventive war. In fact, one preventive war advocate that has gone unrecognized until now was the Air Force Chief of Staff who fired General Anderson, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg. Historians regard General Vandenberg as a voice of reason and political savvy during the period; yet, Vandenberg privately pushed offensive war plans after he fired Anderson. Thus, the Anderson affair was hardly the culmination of preventive war activity in the Air Force; rather, it was the most significant indication of what was going on beneath the surface of the service.

Control’ and the Debate on American Strategy in the Early Cold War Years,” Journal of Strategic Studies 12, no. 3 (September 1989). However, Biddle viewed the project as an isolated bubbling up of discontent towards existing national security policy. Chapter Three offers a new interpretation of Project Control: the Air Force’s preventive war advocates presented Project Control to the other military branches and to other departments in the U.S. government as a continuation of their effort to win a preventive war strategy.

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The evidence for this fresh interpretation of the early Air Force comes primarily from documents at the Air Force Historical Research Agency and the Library of Congress. Official correspondence and memoranda among senior officers, civilians, Air University leadership, and Air War College faculty demonstrate this senior circle of general who supported preventive war. Additionally, transcripts of public and private lectures and speeches delivered by Air Force leaders during this period uncover the scope of the preventive war argument in the service. The Air War College lecture transcripts are particularly useful, as the college granted academic freedom to its lecturers, and at the time marked lecture transcripts as either restricted or classified; thus, speakers felt comfortable in expressing honest opinions and dissent towards official policy. One previously unexplored source is the Top Secret transcript from the 1952 Air Force Commander’s Conference at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, that points to the continuation of preventive war planning long after Truman disallowed any such discussion in 1950. Finally, the Air Force Historical Research Agency conducted interviews in the 1970s and early 1980s with many of the civilians and officers who led the Air Force during the early Cold War. These transcripts capture recollections of events two to three decades previously, but serve to express how these leaders understood and felt about key events described here.

In the 1940s, the Air Force could not have conducted the decisive preventive war that these airmen proposed. As Harry R. Borowski convincingly argued in A Hollow
Threat, “the United States monopoly in atomic weapons did not automatically translate into a powerful and effective military tool.”4 Only a handful of atomic bombs existed in the late 1940s, and the B-29 group that bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki constituted the only atomic bomber fleet until B-50s and B-48s began to arrive at SAC bases in 1949. The Air Force had neither the atomic stockpile nor the delivery vehicles to credibly threaten the Soviet Union with nuclear war. In 1952, Bernard Brodie commented on the absurdity of arguments from within the Air Force for a preventive war before 1950:

> Whether we have the capabilities now to destroy the Soviet military force without suffering any like or comparable retribution is perhaps debatable, but one thing I am quite certain of: We did not have it five years ago, and we didn’t have it four years ago or three years ago. Had we struck then we would have bruised them and little more.”

The preventive war advocates were as unrealistic about the true capability of U.S. atomic air forces in the 1940s as they were unrealistic about President Truman ever approving a preventive war.

Why did these airmen insist on preventive war, when in reality such an action was far-fetched, both politically and militarily? Primarily, calls for preventive war resulted from a false dilemma that eliminated any approach to national security other than offensive action against the Soviet Union. This chapter will show how the preventive war advocates continually emphasized the inevitability of a shooting war

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with the Soviet Union. The only question in these airmen’s minds was which nation
would start the hot war; either the United States could initiate preventive strikes while it
held the atomic monopoly, or it could allow the Soviet Union to develop its own atomic
arsenal that it would eventually use in a surprise attack against the United States.

Truman, and most politicians, military officers, and Americans refuted the inevitability
of war with the Soviet Union. Yet the Air Force leaders that urged preventive war
continually argued that the majority had mistakenly adopted a policy that would only
lead to the annihilation of the United States.

The preventive war strategy put forth by these airmen typically took one of two
forms. At times, the airmen proposed an ultimatum, whereby Truman or a designated
representative would inform the Soviet Union that it had a fixed period of time to grant
certain concessions to the United States. These concessions ranged from open access to
military bases and atomic weapons programs, to the government’s complete
relinquishing of communist control over the Soviet Union. Should the Soviets choose
not to comply with these steps within the allotted time, the United States would strike
with atomic bombs. On other occasions, the preventive war airmen advocated that the
U.S. simply launch surprise attacks on the Soviet Union. In this case, these airmen
preferred not to directly strike cities, but instead chose militarily significant targets such
as bomber bases or sites of Russian atomic bomb development or production.
It would be an overreach to claim that the Air Force pushed for preventive war during the early Cold War. Certainly, the group of top-level officers who supported preventive war had sufficient control of the Air Force to influence the service with its agenda. Additionally, the official Air Force war plans and efforts to sway the Congress and the president demonstrate the power of this group within the Air Force. However, several Air Force generals spoke either against preventive war or in support of Truman’s containment policy during this period. Moreover, this project found no polling data to indicate at any time what percentage of airmen favored preventive war.

Therefore, the remainder of this dissertation will use the term “preventive war airmen” to speak of those in the service who advocated preventive war. While the proper noun “Airman” describes the most junior enlisted rank in the Air Force, the common term “airman” traditionally has applied to all officers and enlisted personnel who serve in air forces. This latter definition applies to the concept of preventive war airmen, in an attempt to include those mid-grade officers who demonstrated as much agency in the push for preventive as did those who acted from the highest positions in the service.

3.1 Early Calls for Preventive War, 1945-1947

In September 1945 the United States Strategic Bombing Survey published its report on the impact of strategic bombing in the European Theater. In the closing pages
of its summary report, the European team addressed the significance of the atomic bomb:

Speed, range, and striking power of the air weapons of the future, as indicated by the signposts of the war in Europe must specifically be reckoned with in any plans for increased security and strength. The combination of the atomic bomb with remote control projectiles of ocean-spanning range stands as a possibility which is awesome and frightful to contemplate.\(^6\)

These remarks may seem out of place, given that no atomic strikes had taken place in the European theater; however, they reflected the authors’ concern for the great challenges posed by the post-war national security environment. The Pacific Summary Report, which the USSBS released early in the summer of 1946, stated that preventing war should be the “ultimate end” of a national defense program; however, the authors also believed that the threat of immediate retaliation should dissuade an adversary of the United States to strike first.\(^7\)

These comments reflected the concern of the authors, who, like other Americans, recognized that for the first time, the United States was vulnerable to attack. As Samuel Huntington observed in 1957, World War II marked the transition of U.S. national security policy from the era where physical protection of the nation was a starting assumption to the period where it was the objective.\(^8\) And once adversaries developed

their own atomic bombs, guided missiles or other “ocean-spanning” carriages, protecting the United States would become much more difficult.

Whereas both USSBS summary reports warned of the threat posed by future atomic warfare, the Air Force sub-report, “Air Campaigns of the Pacific War” made a startling proclamation in which it declared offensive strikes against a future military threat to be a defensive act:

An enlightened American public will appreciate that, to be effective, defense of the Nation must be extended in space and time. We fully understand, today, that we will be defending ourselves if our forces are attempting to destroy enemy forces which are already raining weapons of destruction down upon our heads. We must appreciate, further, that it is still defensive action, and not aggression, if we intercept and destroy and enemy force en route to our Nation, bent upon our destruction. Still further, we must recognize that an overt act of war has been committed by an enemy when that enemy builds a military force intended for our eventual destruction, and that the destruction of that force before it can be launched or employed is defensive action and not aggression. If we adhere to the old concept that an overt act by an enemy nation can be only the actual delivery of the first military blow of the war, we invite disaster as a result of the decisiveness of that first blow. As a Nation, we must understand that an overt act of war has been committed long before the delivery of that first blow and that the earlier such an overt act is recognized the more effective the defenses may be.9

Here, the sub-report argued that the devastating effects of a first strike with weapons of mass destruction blurred the distinction between fending off attacks, preempting an impending attack, and preventing the possibility of a future attack. By this logic, the

sub-report argued, preventive war should be viewed as a defensive measure. For the next decade, proponents of preventive war would repeatedly make this claim.

This verbiage in the sub-report showed the bias of the survey’s senior Air Force advisor, General Orvil Anderson. Anderson, who had viciously fought with his Navy counterpart to see that the Pacific report touted strategic bombardment, had already begun to express his thoughts on preventive war before publishing the USSBS sub-report. In an interview in August 1945 for an Eighth Air Force Office of History project concerning strategic bombers in Europe, Anderson first expressed his thoughts on preventive war.

Maybe we will get away from war. I can visualize keeping the Chase National Bank safe from robbery, just by taking the proper precautions, and I can visualize preventing war on the globe by taking proper precautions. We should never fight a war again. It should always be in the form of a slap, never in the form of that type of war which has just devastated Germany. It can be prevented. But in order for it to be prevented, two things are necessary in the United States: (1) The military echelon must be converted to that as our policy. (2) The political echelon in our two Houses must have enough concept [sic] to see the soundness of it and say, “We’ll ride with you.” The Congress has to accept the military in its demands from year to year. 10

Despite Anderson’s awkward language in this statement, two points are clear. First, Anderson believed that the United States should prevent future war by “slapping” an adversary before it can wage war; second, he acknowledged that preventive war did not reflect the existing policy of the United States.

This, the first of General Anderson’s statements concerning preventive war discovered in this project, introduces his grammatical style and hyperbole that typified many of his subsequent comments concerning preventive war. His unscripted, off-the-cuff remarks regularly lacked organization and lucidity. Additionally, he routinely exaggerated claims or used ill-fitting analogies to support his argument. In this case, Anderson’s comparison of preventive war to the safeguarding of a bank was ridiculous; preventive war would be more analogous to conducting raids on would-be bank robbers and jailing them (an equally improbable action). Yet despite his unrefined language and penchant for ill-suited analogies, the Air Force regarded Anderson as one of its most dynamic personalities and speakers, and would soon vault him into a position from which he would further make such claims for preventive war.

Within six months of Anderson’s first call for preventive strikes, the top commanders of the Army Air Corps expressed their own support for preventive war. At a press conference in January, General Hap Arnold, the Chief of the Army Air Corps, stated that the only defense against atomic bombs was to “hit it before it starts.” He continued, “I don’t like the word ‘defense.’ We should shoot to insure the security of the Americas.”11 In congressional testimony in February, as he prepared to retire from military service, Arnold called for the United States to “capitalize” on the atomic bomb, and again repeated his idea that destroying enemy bombers before they could launch

against the United States provided the only meaningful national defense in the atomic age.\(^{12}\) Arnold’s deputy and Chief of the Air Staff, General Ira Eaker, echoed his commander the following November. General Eaker told the audience at the National Air Reserve Association convention that the United States must be prepared to strike first in the atomic age. He added, “If we are to prevent the launching of atom bombs, guided missiles, or super-rockets against our industrial establishments, we must have a force ready to destroy these weapons at their source before they are launched. The only such weapon we have in the United States today is our long-range bomber force.”\(^{13}\) Arnold and Eaker seemed to deliberately avoid references to the Soviet Union while making these assertions for preventive war. When a reporter followed up Arnold’s statement to the press with a question about Stalin’s activities, he demurred, saying that air force planning should be based on the mission assigned, not the activities of other countries.\(^{14}\)

The sympathetic views towards preventive war expressed by General Arnold and General Eaker suggest the priority of the decision to place General Anderson in charge of the Air War College in 1946. The archival research conducted for this project discovered no letter or written orders that demonstrate that Army Air Force leaders appointed General Anderson as the first Air War College commandant because of his


\(^{14}\)
views concerning preventive war. Yet Generals Arnold and Eaker were close with General Anderson. As General Arnold prepared to leave the Army Air Forces in 1946, General Eaker wrote General Anderson to see if he would contribute towards a special retirement gift. Eaker intended the gift to come from a very small circle of senior Army Air Force generals. He wrote to General Anderson in a personal tone, remarking to Anderson that “General Arnold includes you among his most valued friends and advisors.” Given their friendship with Anderson, it is unlikely that Arnold and Eaker were unaware of Anderson’s sympathetic views towards preventive war; Anderson had expressed his views plainly in the Pacific theater USSBS sub-report. Again, this evidence does not conclusively prove that the Army Air Forces’ top two generals placed Anderson in command of the Air University because of his shared belief in preventive war. The point is that all three men were close, and each had publicly stated his advocacy for preventive war in the months leading up to Anderson’s appointment.

Anderson’s selection as the first Air War College commandant must also be viewed in light of the two missions assigned to the school at its founding. The first commander of the Air University, General Muir S. Fairchild, established the Air War College as the service’s senior military school but also as its center for official strategy and doctrine. General Fairchild had graduated from the Air Corps Tactical School in

1935, and had remained on the faculty until 1939, ultimately serving as the Director of Air Tactics and Strategy. During that time, ACTS had produced the “industrial fabric theory,” whereby bombers targeted key nodes of enemy war production. Eighth Air Force had employed this strategy to some success in its targeting of critical German industries such as oil. Fairchild believed that ACTS had successfully blended military education with strategy development, and he held similar intentions for the Air War College. In September 1946, General Fairchild told the inaugural class that the Air University symbolized a reopening of the Air Corps Tactical School “on a finer and larger scale.” Furthermore, he regarded the Air War College as “the apex of the total structure” that would focus its efforts on “planning and original thinking.”

Anderson’s appointment to the war college thus gave him the opportunity to influence Air Force strategy and doctrine as well as officer education.

Fairchild appeared to recognize that tasking the Air War College with educating senior officers and developing service strategy created competing missions for the school. He admitted in 1947, “It seems to me that there are two aspects in the Air War

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17 In an interview in 1975, when asked if senior leaders had originally designed the Air War College to be a think tank for airpower strategy, General Ira C. Eaker replied, “Oh, yes. Of course, that was one of the early intentions of Fairchild because he had been acquainted with the old Air Corps Tactical School, which was half school and half apprenticeship or laboratory for trying out new air tactics and strategy.” In 1947, Eaker served as Chief of the Air Staff. Ira C. Eaker, “U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview with Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker,” in *Oral Histories* (Montgomery, AL: Air Force Historical Research Agency, 1975), 602.
College, and one is the education and improvement of the student body, and the other is the matter of guidance in thoughts and creation of concepts and doctrines; and it is very difficult to say which is the more important.” Yet Fairchild adamantly believed that the Air War College should provide strategic direction to the rest of the service: “This is the one place in the Air Force where people have time to think and where it is their only job to think. Therefore, it seems to me that the progress of the Air War College will not only permeate and dominate the instruction in the lower schools, but also should, in all likelihood, influence the whole thought of the AAF.”

A letter from General Fairchild to aviation pioneer Alexander DeSeversky provides an early example of the War College’s focus on strategic planning. In April 1948, General Fairchild invited DeSeversky to participate in the strategy program at the Air War College. General Fairchild noted that the program would run for the last three months of the school year, and would have students “develop a school war plan that would provide for the security of the United States for the next several years to come.”

Additionally, the Air War College established at this time its Special Projects Division, designed to supervise strategy development for the service. This division would play an instrumental role in the preventive war movement over the next five years.

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19 Ibid.
3.2 Amplifying the Rhetoric, 1947-1948

Once General Anderson completed his work with the Strategic Bombing Survey and arrived at the Air War College, he asserted himself over every aspect of the war college program. Air Force regulation authorized the commandant to “have direct supervision of the school and be responsible for all matters of instruction and administration therein;” however, Anderson’s involvement exceeded his responsibilities as commandant.21 He personally directed the method of instruction and syllabus for each course.22 In 1947, the first edition of the official history of the Air University noted, “General Anderson alone could establish premises and ground rules for operation of this new air school. The handful of instructors and the administrative staff relied almost entirely on his personal direction and guidance.”23 Anderson personally approved every element of the course schedule.24 A biographer called Anderson the “focal point of the War College…its heart and soul.”25

Archival research uncovered no lecture transcripts from Anderson’s first two years at the Air War College; however, proof of his influence on strategic thought at the

23 Air University History, 29 November 1945 to 30 June 1947, Air University Archives, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.
institution is apparent in the obsession with preventive war displayed by the officers on the faculty. Time and time again, Air War College instructors made the case for preventive war.

One of the earliest examples of preventive war preaching from the Air War College involved an unlikely audience: senior flight surgeons from across the service. In November 1947, Colonel James F. Whisenand lectured on “Basic Concepts of Air Power” to the Senior Flight Surgeon’s Class at Randolph Field in Texas. Whisenand echoed the rhetoric of his service’s senior leaders and the view of his commandant: In the atomic age, the risk of enemy attack and the consequence of such a strike mandated that action be taken beforehand.

This line of reasoning inevitably leads to the conclusion that modern weapons—whose speed and range have eliminated the defense of SPACE, and therefore TIME, upon which this nation has relied for years—that these modern weapons, with firepower approaching the absolute, can more effectively be disposed of, or countered, before they are built than after. In other words, no defensive course of action short of destruction of the roots of an enemy’s military power, appears capable of providing absolute defense.26

The audience—Army Air Force flight surgeons—is not particularly important here; this was just one of many requests for a war college speaker put forth by any number of service groups or programs, and this practice continues today. However, what is significant is that in representing the Air War College on the subject of “Basic Concepts of Air Power,” to an audience as generic as flight surgeons, Whisenand lectured on the

imperative of preventive war. The rest of this chapter and the next will show that the Air War College repeatedly accepted invitations to speak outside of the Air University in order to promote preventive war, as Whisenand did on this occasion.

Other officers from the Air War College defended preventive war in the *Air University Quarterly Review*. General Fairchild established the publication in 1947, and intended the quarterly to be the means of distributing airpower doctrine to the entire service. He stated in an official memorandum:

> This journal of Air Power will not be just another news-magazine, nor is it intended as a periodical of interest only to the Air University. Rather, it will be a professional publication in the highest sense of the word and will reflect not only the high scholastic standards and educational accomplishments of the Air University, but also—and more important, perhaps—the best professional thought concerning global concepts and doctrines of air strategy and tactics.²⁷

By Fairchild’s own admission, the *AU Quarterly Review*’s purpose would not be to illuminate diverse and competing views concerning the application of air power; rather, it would promote only *the best professional thought*. When he arrived at Maxwell Field in 1946 to establish the Air University, Fairchild had stated that the Air War College would exist in part to generate the best ideas in strategy and doctrine for the service. Now, with the journal, he established the means to distribute those “best ideas” throughout the service. Accordingly, from its outset, the *AU Quarterly Review* predominantly expressed the ideas developed at the Air War College.

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In the second edition of the journal, Colonel Dale O. Smith wrote an essay to advance the concept of one-way combat. In World War II, crews had employed their aircraft up to the limit of the aircraft’s combat radius, so that they had the means to recover at home station or at least at a forward base. But Smith observed that the service would not have a bomber with the combat radius “to strike vital Eurasian targets and return to their points of take-off” until the B-36 became operational in 1949. Using his concept of one-way air attack, bomber pilots would strike targets at an aircraft’s maximum range by flying beyond its combat radius, releasing weapons, and ejecting or ditching just prior to running the aircraft out of fuel. Smith’s concept of one-way combat represented a new and extreme air tactic, especially for the aircrew, but it followed directly from the strategy of preventive war. He argued that the United States could not wait until the B-36 arrived to strike first at the Soviet Union: “We must strike in force as quickly as we can, else our enemy will beat us to the punch. And an atomic-bomb punch might well be the knockout blow.” Smith expressed little emotion for the victims of a U.S. preventive war, but focused instead on the opportunity for victory:

The [enemy] nation will be dead, without industry, communications, transportation, fuel or government. After the crushing atomic blow, small targets may be attacked conventionally as mopping-up exercises. The main issue will not be in doubt.  

Here, in one of the earliest calls for preventive war from out of the Air War College, Colonel Smith expressed several of the key preventive war themes: the inevitability of

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28 Dale O. Smith, "One-Way Combat," *Air University Quarterly Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1947).
war, the supreme fear of enemy atomic attack, and the belief in unconstrained military power.

The winter 1947 edition of the *AU Quarterly Review* included more articles favoring preventive war. General Fairchild, the Air University Commander, wrote a guarded editorial in which he did not explicitly identify the Soviet threat or pronounce his support for preventive war. However, he suggested that a surprise attack of three atom bombs could destroy Washington D.C., and render the United States incapable of functioning as a nation. He also feared that the United States might join Babylon, Egypt, and Greece, as former great nations that sat idle while enemy states grew strong enough to destroy them.\(^2^9\) In the same edition, Air War College instructor Colonel Louis Coira contended that the constitutional authority of the president to authorize force before Congress declared war had critical implications in the atomic age: “If commitment of the nation’s armed forces in an offensive-defensive effort is required, [the president] must be prepared to accept the responsibility for issuing the order. In no other way can the security of this nation be maintained in this age of advanced military technology.”\(^3^0\)

Considering that General Fairchild established the *Quarterly Review* to publicize the best of Air Force strategy and doctrine, it is clear from Coira’s article and the others printed in 1947 that the Air University considered preventive war to be its dominant strategy.


In late 1947, at the urging of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, President Truman reconsidered his position against a first strike, but ultimately stood firm on using atom bombs to retaliate only. His decision followed a report summarizing the findings of the Bikini Islands nuclear tests. The report concluded that the ability of modern weapons to destroy large populations and communities should prompt national leaders to consider preventive strikes as the only viable means of defense. In December, the Joint Chiefs called attention to the section of the report addressing preventive war, and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal forwarded the report in December to President Truman with a letter in which he recommended that the cabinet be prepared to recommend offensive strikes as a means of thwarting and defending against future aggression.31 President Truman did not change his policy at this time.

In May, General Fairchild relinquished command of the Air University. Before leaving, General Fairchild drafted a commendation letter for General Anderson, which stated, “Your clear, straightforward thinking and the critical appraisal which you have brought to bear, not only upon past concepts and doctrines but in the creation of new and advanced thinking, will profoundly affect the future course of our service.”32 Yet primarily, General Anderson had infused the war college faculty and the scholarly journal of the Air Force with preventive war dogma, rather than facilitating broad

thinking concerning national security. Evidently, he did so with the full support of his immediate leadership, and expressed the view shared by many ranking airmen.

Anderson’s new boss, General George C. Kenney, arrived at the Air War College after turning over the direction of Strategic Air Command to General Curtis E. LeMay. Kenney shared the outgoing Air University commander’s views concerning preventive war. In the Review’s spring 1949 editorial, Kenney expressed his disdain for waiting for the Soviets to act.

The Balance of Power thesis no longer furnishes a solution [to the problem of Soviet aggression]. Formerly, before either of two antagonists of approximately equal potential strength could gain the decision over the other, enough time elapsed to permit sufficient mobilization on the part of the nation attacked to prevent a quick victory on the part of the aggressor. Today, with the power of modern weapons multiplied many times over anything previously known, the advantage clearly lies with the aggressor who launches an all-out surprise attack. We cannot dismiss the possibility that a nation might be forced to capitulate within a short time after the beginning of the assault, before it had time to even start an operation of retaliation.33

Like his predecessor, General Kenney avoided direct calls for preventive war, yet presented arguments that led the reader to that one military strategy.

Airmen also argued for preventive war in other professional military journals. In the May-June edition of Ordnance magazine, Major John Driscoll attacked what he viewed as the outdated thinking of the majority in the U.S. military, which held that airpower is most effective in support of ground forces. “It is amazing that in this day and age efforts are still being made to shackle this long-range striking arm solely to the

tactical patterns established at Cannae and Gettysburg.” Driscoll argued that such thinking obscured the reach and the lethality of bomber aircraft, which the bombing campaigns during World War II had already demonstrated. Turning to future wars, he snidely observed that the threat of surprise atomic attack meant that the United States could no longer afford to adhere to the “Marquis of Queensbury rules.” He proposed destroying “enemy A-bombs in the nest—on the production line and on the airfields...The long range strategic striking force affords the one hope of stemming the tide of sustained enemy air attack.”

Influenced by bellicose senior airmen, Air Force Secretary Stuart Symington privately urged that offensive action be taken against the Soviet Union in the Spring of 1948. Symington recalled the incident for an article in The Atlantic magazine in 1971. The secretary recalled that he had hosted a dinner in 1948 for Army Chief of Staff General Dwight Eisenhower and Truman advisor Clark Clifford. Symington suggested that President Truman send Eisenhower to Stalin with an ultimatum: “He should tell Stalin, “Open up your country, and we’ll open up ours, bases, everything. Otherwise, evacuate the following cities by July 20 because we’re going to destroy them. We had the bomb; they didn’t. So Stalin couldn’t have said no.” That the Air Force secretary would make such a proposal is incredible, given that President Truman had specifically refuted any

offensive atomic strikes the previous December. Secretary Symington’s proposal demonstrated his indifference to presidential policy and his complete adoption of the Air Force’s case for offensive action against the Soviet Union.

In June, the preventive war zealots in the Air Force capitalized on Secretary Symington’s sympathy for an aggressive military strategy. Colonel Whisenand sent a provocative speech, intended for Secretary Symington to deliver to President Truman or to Congress, to the secretary’s senior Air Force Assistant, Brigadier General J.B. Montgomery. Whisenand, who had addressed the flight surgeons at Randolph Field in 1947, now served as the Chief of the Special Projects Division at the Air War College. The secretary’s assistant had a strong affiliation with General Anderson; General Montgomery had served with General Anderson on the United States Strategic Bombing Survey from November 1944 until August 1946. While this study uncovered no evidence that Secretary Symington delivered any portion of Whisenand’s speech, the proposal is, nonetheless, significant. It demonstrates collaboration between the Air War College and the Air Force headquarters in Washington D.C. on the matter of preventive war, and it also demonstrates the desire of the preventive war advocates to influence the president or the legislature.

In the speech, Whisenand attributed the lack of regard for preventive war at the
top echelons of the other services to the stalemate over missions and service budgets.
Whisenand wrote that service squabbles for equipment and missions obscured the
impossibility of defending against air attack, or taking the initiative against such a
threat. The speech declared, “A surprise attack in force against this nation, with mass
destruction weapons, could be decisive. This factor establishes requirements for a
positive intelligence as to potential enemy capabilities and intentions, and the
development of a force and a strategy capable of destroying a potentially decisive
enemy force before that force can be effectively employed against us.” The colonel
designed the Symington speech to break two stalemates—one between the services, and
the other between advocates and opponents of preventive war. Whisenand proposed
that Symington deliver the speech, then forward to “a trustworthy newspaper man” at
the New York Times. He suggested, “In some respects, the paper might have more
impact if delivered by the Secretary than by the Chief of Staff, the Secretary being a
civilian and less likely, in the public eye, to be prejudiced.” 38  Despite Secretary
Symington’s support for preventive war, this move by the Air War College was
audacious, especially considering that Col Whisenand recommended the Secretary
deliver the brief to either the President or the Congress, i.e. whichever audience the

38 ———, "Special Report of the Sec. of the Air Force to the President & the Congress of the U.S., 1948," in
Personal Collection of Orvil A. Anderson (Montgomery, AL: Air Force Historical Research Agency, 8 June
1948), 19.
secretary thought would respond best to the preventive war proposal. Though nothing apparently came from the speech, the proposal also demonstrates the preventive war airmen’s hold on the Air Force by 1948.

The Air Force’s preventive war enthusiasts made considerable progress in the three years after their service had ushered in the nuclear age. They established a foothold at the Air University, convinced their service secretary of the need for preventive war, and began to spread their dogma throughout the Air Force. During this period, the preventive war advocates stated that action needed to be taken before the Soviet Union could develop its own bomb. That ominous milestone would pass sooner than expected.

3.3 **A Shrinking Window of Opportunity: The Soviet Bomb**

The detonation of the Soviet atomic bomb in August 1949 and North Korea’s invasion of South Korea in June 1950 amplified the Air Force plea for an offensive strategy towards the Soviet Union. U.S. intelligence experts had expected that the Soviet Union would not acquire its own atomic bomb until six to eight years after the detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Soviets detonated their first weapon in half of that time, to the alarm of the West. The Soviet test vaporized four more years of cushion while the Soviets developed their own atomic technology. Now, all that remained was a shrinking window of opportunity while the Soviets fielded their atomic

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arsenal and long-range bombers. The North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950 exacerbated the problem. Many in the Air Force, including Secretary Symington, believed that the Soviet Union directed North Korean aggression.⁴⁰ In fact, the Soviet Union did not order or even encourage North Korea to invade South Korea. Rather, Stalin offered no objection to Kim Il-sung’s plans to invade South Korea, in large part because Secretary of State Dan Acheson had stated in January 1950 that the U.S. defensive perimeter did not extend to South Korea.⁴¹ Nonetheless, while the period of American atomic superiority decreased, Soviet aggression appeared to increase. Preventive war advocates believed that the time to act—with an overt act—had come.

General Anderson’s fervent speeches before the Air War College class of 1950 expressed his fear that the Truman Administration’s inaction would soon result in the Soviets reaching atomic parity with the United States. In September 1949, Anderson told the students that U.S. policy represented wishful thinking by the Truman administration, which, believing that a democracy never starts war, falsely hoped that the situation would not get worse. By not striking the Soviet Union, Anderson believed that the United States acted like one who refused to kill a lion or bear cub until the animal had become fully grown, dangerous, and nearly impossible to destroy. He added, “We wish that it would be solved without resort to arms, therefore we stand by

⁴¹ Gaddis Cold War 42
and observe the growth, observe the ever-increasing menace of that growth, and continue to wish in the process of doing this.”

In this lecture, General Anderson expressed concern that his condemnation of the administration might have repercussions; in his own words, he might be moving “out on to thin ice.” Implicit in this comment is the general’s recognition that he could be punished, but also that his comments were insubordinate towards the commander-in-chief and the civilian authorities who shared Truman’s perspective.

Later that month, General Anderson spoke again to the Air War College. Despite being scheduled to speak on the subject of strategic thinking during World War II, he took the opportunity to once again promote his thoughts on prevention in the post-war era. General Anderson criticized the current defense budget for the wasteful procurement of tactical aircraft. A war college student asked the general how he would spend the money. Anderson replied that the budget should only fund those programs that could immediately take action against the Soviet Union. Yet such programs were diluted by other “cancerous structures,” funded because the national leadership did not recognize the imperative of immediate, offensive action. Anderson ridiculed those who were too cowardly to strike:

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43 Ibid., 7.
Probably they would even consider it a crime—on an individual scale I wonder sometimes if they’d take the initiative to prevent rape because that’s all this is in substance, it’s just a bigger rape—would we be justified in knocking the bird on his fanny before he had committed the crime if we were convinced that he was going to, granted the opportunity, and hold it on the grounds that we are too moral to hit him before he has committed the deed? I can’t reason with that type of man.44

As seen by the general’s extraordinary metaphor of rape, Anderson’s logic had spiraled out of control. Ironically, any attempt to prevent rape in civil society would require ridiculous or draconian measures; thus, the metaphor has more relevance for those who might have argued against preventive war, not for it. In any case, Anderson had grown more impatient with those who would wait for the Soviet Union to field an atomic force and strike.

Anderson followed suit with similar comments in a lecture he presented in March 1950. Anderson blasted those interested in procuring tactical aircraft and systems other than strategic bombers and atomic bombs. The general felt that the existing national security strategy employed antiquated, World War II-era concepts that failed to address the modern security dilemma. Army and Navy planners wanted fighter planes to defend American skies from Soviet bomber attacks, and close air support aircraft to support a ground invasion of Europe and the Soviet Union. This, he argued, emulated Britain’s defense against the Luftwaffe and the Allied invasion of France. The strategy worked for England in World War II but was rendered obsolete by the technology of the

atomic age. In the question-and-answer period that followed, one student asked General Anderson what strategy he would employ to counter the Soviet Union. The general stated that he had tried to refrain from voicing his opinion in order to give students an opportunity to develop their own ideas; however, in response to this question, the general did not hesitate to offer his opinion: “Now when I go out to another audience, then I have no hesitation to tell them how we ought to fight this damn war. So let me speak to another audience.” He proceeded, unrestrained:

We ought to get the man to begin with. We ought to shed these, I’ll say, almost ludicrous impediments that we have imposed upon us and begin to talk sense. We ought to know that wars don’t start from overt acts, and if we understand that, then we begin to see the problem and we see that we can’t sell all of time [sic] and all the initiative over to the enemy and expect to survive. If we are going to fight this war with some acceptability of success we’ll now recognize that we are in it. The reason we are losing, the reason the chips are going against us so bad is because we are spoofing ourselves that we don’t know we are in it. See we are calling it a “cold war.” We are in a decisive conflict right now and it demands dynamic action.\textsuperscript{45}

Anderson’s claim that wars don’t start with easily recognizable, “overt” acts hearkened back to his Pacific Theater USSBS sub-report, when he claimed that an enemy building atomic weapons with the intent of harming the United States had already committed an overt act.

In an article for the Winter 1949 edition of the \textit{Air University Quarterly Review}, General Anderson urged preventive war while toning down his criticism of the Truman

Administration. Anderson rebuffed those who considered offensive atomic strikes immoral, by claiming a long-term benefit that outweighed the short-term horror:

If we permit ourselves to become mesmerized with this humanity aspect, we can place ourselves in position to lose a war, because we will have failed to exploit the power of modern science in our own defense. A longer-term view of humanity would undoubtedly recognize that humanity is best served by the survival, rather than by the destruction, of Western civilization. An informed viewpoint will also recognize that the survival of Western civilization will depend in large measure upon the utilization of those weapons in our arsenal in which we are superior—chief among which is our scientific and technological potential.  

Evident in Anderson’s argument is the false dilemma routinely expressed by preventive war advocates during the period, who believed that if preventive strikes were not launched against the Soviet Union, the United States—or the Western world, in this case—would be destroyed. Given such a dilemma, Anderson argued, preventive war was not only the only viable option, but it also was a defensive strategy:

The whole issue of morality as applied to warfare engaged in by peace-loving people must be considered against a backdrop of war aims. Traditionally the United States will fight only if her security or the security of other peace-loving peoples is threatened. We have no aggressive intentions toward any other power. If we had such intentions, we would be subject to censure before world opinion as being unnecessarily brutal to use weapons of mass destruction in accomplishing our aims. If, however, our position as a champion of the dignity of man and human rights were threatened by a totalitarian power which has indicated it has no such standards, we would clearly be at fault if we did not use the key means at our disposal to defend ourselves. We are only defending ourselves, albeit we are doing it by taking the war to the enemy.”

On this occasion, as on so many others, Anderson justified preventive war; however, perhaps because his article’s readership would extend beyond the lecture hall at the Air

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47 Ibid.
War College, this time he did not directly criticize President Truman. Anderson had admitted in lectures at the Air War College that he had pushed the limits of reasonable dissent. The typically outspoken Anderson chose here to avoid directly faulting the Commander-in-Chief.

General Anderson’s momentary control of his enraged style found favor with Secretary Symington and the Air Force’s public affairs office. Secretary Symington ordered 1500 copies of “Air Power and Morality” to be distributed across the service. Additionally, the Air Force Directorate of Public Relations in Washington D.C. recommended General Anderson’s article to field commanders and public information officers, in a March 1950 circulation. Anderson’s article, the circulation observed, “presents fundamentals which if fully understood would clarify thought on [the] present security problem.” In April, the Air Force Association, an unofficial mouthpiece for the service, reprinted “Air Warfare and Morality” in Air Force magazine. The support for General Anderson’s article by Secretary Symington and the air staff in Washington D.C. in the Spring of 1950 is particularly noteworthy, considering that six months later, senior airmen would claim that General Anderson’s outbursts against the Truman Administration did not reflect a view shared by the rest of the Air Force.

Anderson’s was the second article that *Air Force* magazine printed in early 1950 that was sympathetic to preventive war arguments. In March, the magazine led with an article entitled “Strike One City.” While the article did not go so far as to recommend offensive action against the Soviet Union, it explained that no suitable defense against atomic attack existed: “Even if we spend a hundred percent of our defense budget on means of intercepting enemy attacks we still would be vulnerable.” The author further observed that retaliatory strikes following the destruction of a number of American cities would offer “minimum comfort.” In closing, the article cited an Air Force general responsible for the defense of the United States, who admitted that it would invite disaster to concentrate on defensive measures during this time. The article cleverly led the reader to one conclusion—the impracticability of any strategy other than preventive war—without stating such a position outright. Evidently, the magazine’s editors intended such articles to influence the readership without appearing to directly refute policy.50

By the summer of 1950, the *Air University Quarterly Review* returned to printing more explicit arguments for preventive war. In the June quarterly, Colonel Dale O. Smith criticized those who held to the aphorism “We won’t fight unless attacked,” yet at the same time recognized that war with the Soviet Union was highly probable. He warned, “To thus reject the reality of war because of its universal distaste will in no way

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solve the problem it presents.” Embracing the false dilemma argument, Smith urged that the nation accept war’s imminence, and suggested that war posed a lesser evil than allowing the United States to suffer a similar fate as the 15 million Russians who were enslaved by the Soviet regime. The editors of the Air University Quarterly Review awarded Smith’s essay, “National Schizophrenia,” with the title, “Prize Editorial.”51

These articles published in the first six months of 1950 coincided with a series of speeches by Secretary Symington, in which he complained about the lack of protection from Soviet bombers. In February, Secretary Symington told the graduating class at Baylor University that Americans must not shrug off the Communist threat in the air-atomic age: “Waco is but an 18 hour flight from Moscow for the bombers we know Russia is now producing in quantity.”52 On 12 April, Symington told the Chamber of Commerce in Macon, Georgia: “Never before has any potential enemy possessed the military means to deal, in a single, swift, surprise attack a possible devastating blow, a blow which would make the farms and factories and front yards of America one gigantic battlefield.”53

That same month, Secretary Symington resigned. Symington felt frustrated and impotent in getting a larger budget for the Air Force, and he did not wish to battle with President Truman any longer. According to Symington’s biographer, the president felt

at odds with Symington over Air Force funding and strategy but still felt fondness towards his fellow Missourian. Truman offered Symington the chair of the National Security Resources Board; Symington accepted.54 Truman replaced Symington with Thomas K. Finletter, who had chaired the President’s Air Policy Commission in 1947. From the outset, Finletter was unpopular with airmen as Secretary of the Air Force; he lacked the personality and leadership skills of his predecessor.55 The Assistant Vice Chief of Staff recalled years later that the rapport established by Symington with the Air Force fell apart under Finletter.56

Secretary Finletter had one other strike against him with Air Force brass: He opposed preventive war. Less than one month after taking office, Finletter spoke to the class of 1950 at the Air War College:

I believe that preventive war is not a possible policy for the United States government to carry out at this time....Anybody who advocates a preventing war...is simply taking the easiest way and is not willing to face up to the tremendously difficult political and military things we have to do. I think that the American people want their military leaders and their political leaders to work themselves out of this mess in some way which is consistent with the spirit and the creed of the American people.57

55 Olson, Stuart Symington: A Life: 203.
That Finletter addressed the subject of preventive war at the war college so soon after becoming secretary suggests that he either knew beforehand about the discourse concerning preventive war in the Air Force, or he ascertained such in his first few weeks on the job. In any case, airmen could no longer expect support from their secretary concerning preventive war.

In May, General Vandenberg picked up where Secretary Symington left off, and publicly pushed for offensive action against the Soviet Union. Vandenberg told an audience at an Armed Forces Day event in Detroit that their city was now “on the front line of combat.” The Chief of Staff continued:

For many years now the only dependable defense against bullets has been more and better bullets and projectiles. It has always been easier to stop these weapons at their source than to try to block or intercept them after they are fired. The same is true of the air weapon. The most dependable way to stop an air attack is to stop it before it leaves the ground. The sources of an enemy’s long-range planes can now be reached only by our strategic bombing force.

Our most effective defense against a strategic offensive against us is our own strategic defensive ability. By strategic defense, I mean the employment of our strategic air forces to destroy, at its source, an enemy’s ability to attack.58

In this speech, General Vandenberg pointed out how much easier it would be to launch preventive strikes than to defend or absorb a Soviet attack. The Chief of Staff may have taken talking points from General Anderson’s “Air Power and Morality;” he too attempted to paint preventive war as a defensive act, and he never actually used the

term “preventive war.” General Vandenberg’s comments defied his new service secretary as well as President Truman.

Also in the summer of 1950, General Curtis LeMay proposed attacking North Korea with incendiary bombs as a response to the war on the Korean peninsula. The Pentagon had not specifically asked the head of Strategic Air Command for a Korean strategy. LeMay recounted his proposal during an interview conducted in 1972: “Since nobody asked us anything we kind of slipped under the door with the idea that maybe if we used SAC on four or five of the biggest cities in North Korea with incendiaries, not with atomic weapons like we did against the Japanese, to knock out some of the industrial strength what there was up there and maybe they would get the idea and stop the thing in the early stages.” LeMay hoped that incendiary bombing would be less controversial than atomic bombing, but Pentagon officials responded that any such plan would kill non-combatants and was, therefore, unacceptable. LeMay’s proposal epitomized the service’s unrestrained aggression in the summer of 1950. Weeks later, the cries for preventive war reached a crescendo, and were, at least temporarily, stifled.

### 3.4 Reprimand

A series of public statements by hawkish defense officials drew the ire of President Truman in the late summer of 1950. On August 24th, Secretary of the Navy

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Francis P. Matthews contradicted the Truman Administration, when, in a speech in Boston, he declared that the United States ought to be prepared to strike first against rival nations in order to achieve peace.60 Twenty-four hours later, General Douglas MacArthur delivered a statement to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in which he argued for U.S. control of Formosa (Taiwan), in order to guarantee access to all of the Far East and eastern Soviet Union for strategic bombardment. Truman rebuked his naval secretary and his commander in the Pacific. On both occasions, he reinforced his policy that no strategic attack would be launched by the United States in the Far East or anywhere else without first being attacked.61

Less than one week later, syndicated columnist Drew Pearson put into motion a course of events that brought General Anderson national attention, scrutiny, and removal from command by the Air Force Chief of Staff. Pearson accused General Anderson of speaking at the Kiwanis Club in Montgomery in favor of preventive war against Russia. In addition, he accused the commandant of trying “to indoctrinate students with the idea of an immediate attack.”62

Allen Rankin, a local reporter for the Montgomery Advertiser, saw Pearson’s article the day before it was to be printed in national syndication, and contacted General

Anderson for comment. Anderson spent that day in his quarters recovering from dental surgery, may have been medicated, and later refuted Rankin’s claim that he spoke on record with the reporter. Nonetheless, Anderson’s extensive comments were printed the following day in the Advertiser. Rather than deny the charges put forth by Pearson, Anderson indignantly defended his position in favor of striking first:

Give me the order to do it, and I can break up Russia’s five A-bomb nests in a week! And when I went up to Christ, I think I could explain to him why I wanted to do it now before it’s too late. I think I could explain to Him that I had saved civilization!...At the Air War College here sometimes we have to speak rather tersely. Now that our technology has produced the A-bomb, it is unrealistic to assume that it won’t be used—and used first by someone—either by us or by Russia. If we let the enemy choose this time and place of attack, then—our back is broken.

In effect, Anderson validated the accusations put forth by Pearson. His comments were contentious towards the Truman administration, and in the wake of Secretary Matthews and General MacArthur’s criticisms, his timing was awful. The Office at Maxwell Air Force Base sent a priority message to the Air Force Director of Public Relations, claiming that Rankin distorted Anderson’s views and the practice at the Air War College. The message also indicated that the general would prepare a statement for release by the Air

63 Press, 'MacArthur 'Directed' to Withdraw Message on Formosa to V.F.W.."
Force headquarters. General Vandenberg did not wait for Anderson’s formal rebuttal; he suspended the general on 1 September.

Documents suggest that Vandenberg acted alone when he relieved Anderson, but he did so regretfully. In early October, Vandenberg directed Anderson to Washington, D.C., to discuss Anderson’s future. Anderson wished to remain at the war college; Vandenburg offered him instead an inferior command in Wichita Falls, Texas. Anderson declined, and chose instead to retire. Secretary Finletter, who clearly did not support General Anderson’s hawkish position, said of the incident that he had no role whatsoever, and that General Vandenberg handled the entire matter. General Vandenberg’s executive officer commented that the situation deeply troubled Vandenberg, who admired General Anderson and regretted taking punitive action.

Despite his relief of command, Anderson’s comments and dismissal created a storm of inquiry regarding the focus on preventive war at the Air War College. The New York Times reported that Anderson had lectured each class in detail, for three or four hours, on specifics for a preventive war against the Soviet Union using strategic

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bombers and nuclear weapons (this accusation is validated by the Anderson lecture transcripts on record at the Air Force Historical Research Agency). The reporter further suggested that Anderson had exceeded his mandate of educating senior officers:

“Students have been left with impression that General Anderson had gone beyond what might have started out as a theoretical—tactical exercise into an outright personal espousal of such a war.” 70 True or not, the accusations jeopardized the legitimacy of the fledgling senior Air Force school.

Retired Air Force Chief of Staff, General Carl “Tooey” Spaatz, provided damage control for the Anderson affair from his editor’s desk at *Newsweek*. Two weeks after Vandenburg relieved Anderson, Spaatz authored an editorial in which he challenged the validity of preventive war:

> It has been frequently said of late that the theory of preventive war is to “do unto others what you fear they will do unto you—but do it first.” This is the thinking of the weak and fearful. It is gangster reasoning, and we are certainly not a trigger-happy nation. The United States and its allies of the free world are too strong in military potential, and too potent in moral force, to resort to such action. If we are forced into another world war it will be the direct result of continued aggression by Russia and her satellites. 71

Besides discounting the validity of preventive nuclear strikes, Spaatz denounced any suggestion that the Air War College “taught or explored” such doctrine, adding that he had personally ordered “that the subject was not even to be discussed, either at the Air


71 Stevens, “General Removed Over War Speech.”
War College or anywhere else in the Air Force,” while he was Chief of Staff. Spaatz was either ignorant or deceitful in his editorial; airmen and senior Air Force leadership regularly discussed preventive war, at the war college and across the service. Nonetheless, Spaatz’s editorial seemed to quell the firestorm surrounding the issue; the media and the American public appeared to be satisfied with Spaatz’s response, and quickly lost interest in the issue of the learning environment at the Air War College.

President Truman and General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reiterated the administration’s policy of atomic retaliation after Anderson’s dismissal. The day after Vandenberg suspended Anderson, President Truman delivered a report to the nation on the Korean War. In the address, Truman flatly stated: “We do not believe in aggressive or preventive war. Such war is the weapon of dictators, not of free democratic countries like the United States. We are arming only for defense against aggression. Even though Communist imperialism does not believe in peace, it can be discouraged from new aggression if we and other free peoples are strong, determined, and united.” In October, Combat Forces Journal and Reader’s Digest simultaneously printed an article outlining U.S. military policy by General Omar Bradley. Bradley conceded that soldiers could see “strategic perils” overlooked by civilians; therefore, military voices ought to be heard in the forming of national strategy. Yet the chairman

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emphasized the subordination of military policy to national policy: “The military policy which supports our foreign policy and our national objectives must be in harmony with both.” Echoing Truman, Bradley also spoke unequivocally on the impermissibility of preventive war: “By every means at our command we seek peace. We will not provoke a war against anybody. And we will not wage a preventive war even against an archenemy.”74

Thus in the fall of 1950, the Truman Administration appeared to have put its foot down on any further discussion of preventive war. The reprimands of Secretary Matthews, General MacArthur, and General Anderson, followed by firm statements on national security policy by the president and his senior military officer made clear that there could be no further public questioning of Truman’s defensive policy rather than preventive war. Historian Alfred Vagts claimed that Truman allowed too much dissent and discussion on preventive action during his presidency.75 His assessment may be fair for the period prior to General Anderson’s firing, not after. In the wake of the Anderson affair, the Air Force and the rest of the Department of Defense should have understood that the Truman Administration’s national security policy precluded preventive war; furthermore, the President would no longer entertain discussion or outbursts on the subject.

However, the recalcitrant service seemed to interpret General Anderson’s as a warning not to express any more *public opposition* to presidential policy. From this point forward, the preventive war airmen muffled their opposition to President Truman, but continued to quietly promote and plan for preventive strikes.

### 3.5 The Air Force, Undeterred, 1951-1953

General Anderson’s surprising return to the Air War College stage seven times as a guest lecturer in 1951 dispelled the possibility that the Air Force had conceded the national security strategy to the Truman Administration. In February, only six months after Vandenberg suspended Anderson as commandant, and one month after Anderson retired from active duty service, Anderson addressed the Air War College on the subject of campaigns in Europe during World War II. As with his lectures while serving as commandant, Anderson could not refrain from protesting Truman’s policies towards the Soviet Union, stating, “I fear, personally, I fear the course of action to which we are committed. I think it’s just carrying us right on to greater assurance of early collapse or great failures—or great cost.”

Anderson lectured on six more occasions in 1950. In September, Anderson spoke again at the war college with his typical vitriol for the current U.S. policy:

> There is only one place where you can have a victory in this one. That’s in the Kremlin. We’re saying well we shouldn’t drop a bomb on the enemy lest it be

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precipitate. This man won’t be precipitated into war. He’s too much of a realist and he doesn’t respond to name-calling terms at all. His formula is when he can, he will.77

Anderson’s insubordination towards the Truman Administration is less shocking than that of the Air War College, which continued to provide a platform for General Anderson to express his opposition to official policy.

Senior Air Force generals discussed at length their insistence upon an offensive strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union when they met at the Fall 1952 commander’s conference at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. The conference took place over three days in October, and covered a range of topics, including personnel, manning, basing, aircraft, weapons systems, and plans. Secretary Finletter attended some of the conference, but missed a key session on military strategy in which the top generals in the service discussed controversial war plans. The generals met in a closed-door session, and officials marked conference transcripts as Top Secret. Attendees were at liberty to speak freely, which they did.

The strategy discussion focused on a “military concept” briefed to the generals by the Air Force Director of Plans, General Robert M. Lee. In his opening remarks, General Lee observed, “This [concept] is not new. For many years leading thinkers in

the Air Force have been putting out the gospel very similar to what is to be presented today.” Lee began with a detailed overview of the Soviet threat, the constraints on the military budget and the U.S. economy, and the threat posed by the rapidly expanding Soviet atomic air force. To answer this threat, Lee’s strategy had Air Force bombers launch atomic strikes against targets in the Soviet Union. In his exposition, General Lee made no mention of the fact that President Truman had ruled out preventive war, although he acknowledged that the policy of the U.S. and its allies had been “to avoid general war.” Lee believed that the air offensive would avoid general war, by making it impossible for the Soviet Union to launch an offensive either into Western Europe or against the United States.78

Before concluding the presentation, General Lee made a revelation that seems startling given Truman’s policy at that time: The Air Staff was about to finish a version of this plan, to be executed against the Soviet Union in 1956, when the Air Force reached its full component of 143 wings: “The mission contained in this plan is to accomplish the military defeat of the USSR and her Satellites primarily by air neutralization of the Soviet war making potential to a degree which will permit the accomplishment of the U.S. national war objectives.” Here, Lee captured the essence of preventive war; the plan would “neutralize” the enemy’s “war making potential,” before it had the

opportunity to be brought to bear against the United States. Lee noted that the Air Force Council, which General Vandenberg had established in 1951 to relieve him of some of his decision and policy-making responsibilities, had already reviewed and approved the plan.79 Lee intended to pursue detailed development of the plan, including war-gaming, then issue specific guidance to operational Air Force units.

In the discussion that followed General Lee’s presentation, Air Force brass debated whether such a plan could be effectively implemented, given the contrary views held by the president and the majority of Americans. General Charles P. Cabell served as a military attaché to the United Nations in at the time of the conference, and thus may have held a more politically nuanced view than his peers at the conference. He observed, “One of the premises of this concept seems to be that a decision should be made now in the design of the military structure that would design one either to go after the heart of the problem or one to go after the peripheral type of action. I question that it is within the present authority of the military to make such a decision and attempt so to design the course to fulfill the results determined by whichever way the decision goes.”

General Vandenberg responded emphatically in favor of the war plan:

Well, I don’t agree with that for this reason. The only way that responsible people in government are going to get the facts on the situation is to have a recommendation from the military as to which plan in the end is going to enable us to avoid total annihilation.

79 Ibid.
If we go on the peripheral plan and militarily that is unsound, we have lost the war before we start. Therefore, it would appear to me that the Air Force, in particular, has a very definite obligation of presenting the military view as we see it on one or other concept and we ought to try and prove, it appears to me, the one that we believe to be the concept that will prevent total annihilation. We ought to try and push that one because if we don’t, somebody without a knowledge of all the facts and because of the economic and political factors, will force us into the other one and we who have the responsibility of recommending to the top civilians in government what military policies should be carried out would certainly have fallen short from our job if we didn’t select and push the one that we believe is going to prevent total annihilation. I think we have to do that. That’s our job as military advisors.  

Three times in his reply, General Vandenberg stated that anything other than direct (i.e. preventive) action would result in the annihilation of the United States. Again, General Vandenberg argued for preventive war using the false dilemma that inaction now spelled destruction later. He also framed his argument in terms of offering military advice; however, President Truman had already heard multiple arguments for preventive war, and refused to accept the premise of such a strategy. In any case, this discussion did not concern further efforts to advise the President on the need for a preventive war; it addressed whether the Air Staff should war-game preventive war plans and distribute instructions to SAC bomb wings.

General Vandenberg’s comments prompted a discussion amongst the generals in which they advocated conditioning the American public and the civilian leadership to adopt a more aggressive position towards the Soviet Union. General Cabell commented that perhaps General Vandenberg misunderstood his previous comment, then added, “I  

80 Ibid., 60.
do not feel that we should keep quiet, but I do mean our efforts should be devoted
toward the conditioning of the national structure to make up its mind and face up to the
consequences of one or the other rather than working in our own structure to try short
of that to force a solution on the military level.” General Otto Weyland, the commander
of the Far East Air Forces, agreed. “The basic concept that you have recommended and
which, of course, is very sound is that we assume the initiative, which of course goes
under the business of conditioning the United States and other countries to assume that.
When the western world will be prepared to take that initiative—and it is a hell of a big
step—remains to be seen.”81

The transcripts from the 1952 Commander’s Conference reveal that preventive
war thinking persisted across the senior ranks in the Air Force long after General
Anderson’s firing in 1950. Airmen were cautious not to speak publicly on the matter and
receive additional punishment, yet they drafted preventive war plans and even
discussed how to influence thinking in the American public and civilian leadership.

3.6 Conclusion

In May 1953, as General Vandenberg prepared to retire from the Air Force, the
outgoing Chief of Staff told the war college to continue working to influence decision
making in Washington, but he recognized that that airmen would continue to confront
opposition to aggressive air strategies. Vandenberg conceded that civilian leaders

81 Ibid., 61.
would not support offensive strikes against North Korea or China, thus airmen should
not develop “back room solutions” that ignored political realities. The outgoing Chief of
Staff assessed the understanding of politicians about modern air power to be poor: “We
find through the Staffs in Washington, through the Congressional Committees, even the
highest places in Washington believe that they understand Air Power, they realize how
it should be utilized, and they know how they should fight the next war. I claim we
haven’t even begun to scratch the surface.” He also expressed that the window of
opportunity for preventive war against the Soviet Union had passed for now, but could
be regained with the development of future weapons: “The problem comes now as to
how and what direction to we start the development of air power to insure that that
which we are about to lose gets back on the same footing that we had two years ago.”
Vandenberg’s speech thus veered back and forth: On one hand, he advised that airmen
considered political constraint when developing air plans; on the other, he denounced
the ignorance of civilians regarding modern air power, and urged a return to the U.S.
Air Force’s strategic advantage which might permit preventive war. In its ambivalence,
Vandenberg’s parting words reflected his tenure as Chief of Staff; he fired General
Anderson but supported his views on preventive war, and struggled to see a path
forward for the Air Force given President Truman’s policy.

The calls for preventive war in the Air Force during the Truman Administration
were prevalent and persistent. The Air Force continued to lobby for preventive war
long after Anderson left the commandant’s office at the Air War College. General Anderson took the fall for his insubordinate behavior, but his peers revered him and regarded him as brilliant. General Anderson’s prominent role in advocating preventive war and his subsequent dramatic and public demise may actually have obscured the role of more significant contributors to the Air Force’s thinking in the early Cold War. General Hap Arnold’s great influence on the Army Air Forces clearly shaped the understanding of his disciples who led the Air Force during the Truman Administration. Secretary Symington’s decision to take the Air Force view, rather than institute the policy of the president, strongly influenced the culture of thinking in the Air Force. Even General Vandenberg deserves consideration as a primary agent in the preventive war debate during the period.

Having established that the Air Force continued to plan for and promote preventive action after General Anderson left the Air War College in September 1950, one realizes that the general’s firing was not the climactic event described in other historical interpretations. Shortly after Vandenberg left Washington D.C., so too did President Truman. President-elect Eisenhower offered new possibilities for the Air Force to promote its preventive war strategy. The Air Force hoped that the former Supreme Allied Commander and Army Chief of Staff would be more amenable to an aggressive policy concerning the Soviet Union.
4. President Eisenhower, the Air Force, and the Demise of Preventive War

The present Administration, in seven years, has squandered the unprecedented power and prestige which were ours at the close of World War II.

In that time, more than 500 million non-Russian people of fifteen different countries have been absorbed into the power sphere of Communist Russia, which proceeds confidently with its plan for world conquest.

We charge that the leaders of the Administration in power lost the peace so dearly earned by World War II.

The moral incentives and hopes for a better world which sustained us through World War II were betrayed, and this has given Communist Russia a military and propaganda initiative which, if unstayed, will destroy us.

…They profess to be following a defensive policy of “containment” of Russian Communism which has not contained it.

Excerpt from the 1952 Republican Party Platform¹

Amid the clamor by the right wing in the United States for a national security policy more assertive than containment, General Dwight D. Eisenhower won the Republican nomination for president in July 1952. As the Eisenhower campaign took aim at its opponent, Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, it seized conservative claims that

Democrats were either weak against communism or supported it. Eisenhower’s running mate, Richard Nixon, delivered most of the rhetorical jabs towards Stevenson, and scored points for the ticket by claiming that Stevenson shared outgoing Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s views on national security.²

Eisenhower’s decision to leave such attacks to his running mate may have had more to do with personal conviction than political convention, as the presidential candidate actually shared most of Truman’s views concerning national security, and knew that the U.S. could do little more than contain the advancement of communism. As Melvyn P. Leffler stated in *A Preponderance of Power*, “Truman was right when he insisted that the Republican candidate supported all his major initiatives;” these included Truman’s approach to the Korea peninsula or problems elsewhere on the periphery of communism’s influence.³ Yet if Eisenhower permitted such rhetoric because it served his campaign, he would have to reconcile the expectation of hawks for him to take an aggressive position as president with his own less radical views.

Preventive war zealots in the Air Force had every reason to applaud the Eisenhower campaign’s indictment of President Truman’s containment policy. As the new archival evidence demonstrated in Chapter 2, preventive war airmen had occupied key leadership positions in the Air Force, and had persisted with calls for preventive

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war after General Anderson’s firing from the War College in 1950. The private and public statements from this circle of Air Force leaders in the Pentagon, Strategic Air Command, and at the Air University, demonstrate that the air service had disregarded presidential policy in shaping the service’s military strategy.

Yet while these airmen had defied presidential directives to make offensive war plans, they had not won President Truman’s approval to launch a preventive war against the Soviet Union. The Air Force had sold the idea of preventive war to Air Force Secretary Stuart Symington—a presidential appointee, but the service had not convinced President Truman or any of his defense secretaries to strike first. Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg had remarked in October 1952 that the military had to recommend preventive war to its civilian authorities, for only preventive war could “avoid total annihilation” of the United States. But President Truman and his defense secretaries—James V. Forrestal, Louis A. Johnson, George C. Marshall, and Robert A. Lovett—disagreed with the Air Force on this point; the Truman Administration believed that only a second strike policy would safeguard the United States and serve its containment strategy.

Truman’s refusal to consider an offensive nuclear strike effectively ended any opportunity to conduct a preventive war before the Soviet Union developed its own atomic weapons. By the end of 1952—just three years after the first successful Soviet

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4 “Commander’s Conference, Volume 1, Eglin Air Force Base, 15-17 October 1952,” 60.
atomic weapons test—the Soviet Union had fielded an estimated fifty atomic bombs. The period of the U.S. atomic monopoly had ended.

Furthermore, as President Truman prepared to leave the White House, the Cold War advanced into the age of hydrogen bombs and jet aircraft. In March, as the NSC subcommittee warned of the consequence of a Soviet attack, the U.S. successfully detonated its largest thermonuclear bomb to date, with a fifteen-megaton yield—750 times the blast of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Five months later, the Soviets would detonate their own hydrogen bomb. This leap in nuclear firepower from kilotons of TNT to megatons added to the fears concerning a potential Soviet attack: During the Truman presidency, a Soviet first strike with atom bombs could have severely damaged Washington D.C., New York, or other major U.S. cities. By the end of Eisenhower’s first term, a surprise Soviet nuclear attack could have obliterated the United States.

The preventive war airmen hoped that President Eisenhower would exhibit a stronger sense of urgency regarding the threat posed by the Soviet Union than did his predecessor. Preventive war airmen also may have been hopeful in Eisenhower’s choice of John Foster Dulles for Secretary of State. Dulles had been a vocal critic of Truman’s policy of containment, and favored a bolder stand against the growth of communism.}

\[\text{Gaddis, The Cold War: A New History: 64.}\]

Two questions remained: Would Eisenhower be more amenable to preventive war than was his predecessor? Secondly, how feasible would preventive war be once the Soviet Union matched the United States with nuclear weapons? Determined to find out, the Air Force launched a comprehensive case for preventive war in 1954, which it called Project Control. The officer behind the project and the preventive war airmen who pushed it claimed that it provided a revolutionary means to influence the behavior of adversaries, especially the Soviet Union. In fact, Project Control was a repackaging of preventive war, and officials in other governmental departments recognized it as such.

Ultimately, Project Control failed to win over the State Department, and stalled before reaching the President. Like Truman, Eisenhower stated during his first term that preventive war was a nonstarter. As a result, the Air Force slowly distanced itself from preventive war thinking, and embraced a military approach that fit within the parameters of Eisenhower’s national security strategy.

Tammi Davis Biddle’s excellent study of Project Control in 1989 described the genesis of the program at the Air War College, the peddling of the program to the Air Force, the other services and departments in the executive branch, and the obstacles in winning approval with the State Department. Moreover, Biddle explained how Project Control reflected the service’s frustration with existing national security policy. She
correctly observed that Project Control reflected the desire of those in the Air Force who wished to act militarily before American strategic superiority dissolved.\footnote{Biddle, "Handling the Soviet Threat: 'Project Control' and the Debate on American Strategy in the Early Cold War Years," 293.}

Yet Biddle’s examination of Project Control viewed the study as an isolated bubbling-up of discontent at the Air War College, three years after the school’s last flare-up—when General Anderson publicly challenged the president’s nuclear policy. The new evidence presented in Chapter 2—particularly, General Vandenberg’s advocacy for preventive war plans in 1952—suggests a continuum of preventive war activity between Anderson’s firing and Project Control. In fact, General Vandenberg endorsed Project Control in his last months as Chief of Staff. Project Control did not appear suddenly at the outset of Eisenhower’s presidency, but evolved from prior Air Force lobbying for preventive war. Project Control was the next effort in the Air Force’s insistence for preventive war.

This chapter examines President Eisenhower’s first term, the failure of Project Control, and the Air Force’s subsequent shift in military strategy from preventive war to Massive Retaliation. For the first time, I connect the Air Force’s Project Control with the preventive war movement in the Air Force during the Truman presidency. Unlike past scholarship, which viewed the Anderson affair and Project Control as two distinct events, I demonstrate the continuum of effort within the Air Force to change national
policy towards offensive action. Moreover, no scholar has pursued the consequences of
the failed Project Control. Using transcripts from speeches and records from the 1956
Air Force Commander’s Call, this chapter follows the gradual abandonment of
preventive war thinking in the Air Force and its ultimate embrace of retaliation for its
military policy.

4.1 A New Administration Renews Hopes for Offensive War

In early 1953, Colonel Raymond S. Sleeper, an instructor at the Air War College,
developed an idea that he thought might make preventive war palatable for the civilian
leaders in Washington D.C. In an early memorandum, Sleeper defined the goal of the
project: “To clearly emphasize that we cannot abide by political concepts of
containment and retaliation, lest we risk our very survival.” Sleeper lamented that the
other services had “decisively defeated” Chief of Staff Vandenberg’s efforts to make this
point to civilian leaders. He concluded that the Air Staff needed a “dynamic new plan”
to convince officials outside of the Air Force of the need for offensive action. He
believed that his concept of “air control” would serve this purpose.

Essentially, air control used the threat of nuclear air strikes to compel an
adversary to agree to any number of U.S. terms. Sleeper proposed two phases of an air
control campaign: The first phase, called “air persuasion,” involved what Sleeper called
“the active employment of the deterrent power of U.S. air forces.” This amounted to an
ultimatum against an enemy state. If the enemy government chose not to agree to U.S.
demands, then the Air Force would move into the second phase, labeled the “air pressure” phase. Here, Sleeper called for “progressive destruction” of the enemy, beginning with nuclear strikes. In short, air control offered another plan for preventive war.

Project Control’s appeal for preventive war airmen may have been that it provided the first opportunity to put a preventive war strategy in front of the new president; however, Colonel Sleeper went to great lengths to argue that air control offered an attractive alternative to previous versions of preventive war. Unlike earlier inflexible and apocalyptic preventive war strategies that sought the complete destruction of either the Soviet military or the government, air control sought “to change the enemy will and persuade him through air pressure to accept our terms.” Sleeper’s assessment was partially correct; earlier preventive war strategies had called either for a massive surprise attack on the Soviet Union, or they had proposed ruinous demands—such as the stepping down of the communist government in Moscow—backed by the threat of nuclear strikes. Sleeper believed that these previous strategies failed not because they advocated the first use of nuclear weapons, but because they sought either complete capitulation or destruction of the enemy. Air Control offered a means to demand less draconian concessions. It also gave the administration the flexibility to

employ nuclear weapons in an array of circumstances, rather than simply for winning World War III.

Yet Sleeper was naïve in thinking that air control was a completely different approach that would serve the needs of the Eisenhower Administration. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in the late 1940s Air Force Secretary Symington and others had proposed that the administration deliver an ultimatum to the Kremlin backed by the threat of nuclear strikes. Yet, others had tried Sleeper’s concept of persuasion (threat) followed by pressure (nuclear strikes)—and failed. Thus, only one question remained: Would the Eisenhower Administration adopt a first-use policy concerning nuclear weapons, whether packaged as an air control strategy, or otherwise?

Powerful preventive war airmen hoped so, and thus gave Project Control their full support. In early January 1953, Colonel Sleeper briefed senior Air Force leaders on his proposal, now called Project Control, in Washington, D.C. In February, Air Force Chief of Staff General Vandenberg ordered in writing that the Air War College conduct a detailed study of the air control of Russia. The service’s War Plans Division chimed in with its full support of the project. The headquarters offered to the war college advisors from the Air Staff and help with the project from RAND. One Air Force

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10 Lewis, "The Education of a Senator."
general noted, “This thing could actually influence National Policy. It could change our whole national strategy.”13 This, of course, had been the Air Force’s goal since the late 1940s.

Other activities in support of Project Control through August 1953 demonstrated the full-scale support for the study in the Air Force. In May, Sleeper established an advisory panel of eleven military and academic advisors for the project. This group of volunteers included Russian and international studies experts from Harvard and M.I.T., but also the chiefs of the Air Force Operations and Intelligence Directorates. Sleeper also invited Air Force Lieutenant General Charles Cabel, the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.14 In June, Sleeper asked Air Force headquarters for an additional 100 staffers, civilian academics, and sister-service representatives to augment the war college team, at a cost to the Air Force of nearly $220,000. The Air Staff was unable to fulfill this request; however, the Air Force’s Human Resources Research Institute offered $100,000 to hire the academic consultants, and the commandant of the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell offered active-duty personnel. By the time the project began its research in the fall of 1953, it was evident that the Air Force was all-in.15

4.2 The New Look Presents Old Obstacles to Preventive War

The first two years of the Eisenhower presidency were marked by the end of the Korean War and increased U.S. influence against communism in multiple regions around the world, both covertly and openly. The end of the Korean War in July 1953 left the Eisenhower Administration wary of China and resolute to defend Taiwan. In August 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency led the revolt against the democratically elected government in Iran; Mohammad Shah Reza Phlavi, the Shah of Iran, would remain in power with the support of the United States until 1979. In June 1954, the CIA supported the anti-communist coup in Guatemala. Three months later, the United States joined the South East Asia Treaty Organization with Australia, Great Britain, and non-communist countries in Southeast Asia. As historian James T. Patterson noted, the Korean War “accelerated the process of globalization of the Cold War.”16 In early 1954, as Project Control examined the application of air control against the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower revealed to the country his “New Look” for national security strategy for the Cold War. Since his inauguration, Eisenhower’s National Security Council had evaluated existing security policy in light of the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal, the challenges posed by other communist countries such as North Korea and

China, and the spiraling costs associated of defense and intervention. In 1953, the United States spent $50 billion on defense, and half again on non-military spending.\(^{17}\)

In October 1953, the president approved NSC-162/2, which emphasized nuclear weapons rather than land-based, conventional forces, as a means to provide affordable security. Militarily speaking, the policy corresponded with the ongoing buildup of jet bombers in Strategic Air Command that had begun during the Truman presidency, and, like Truman, Eisenhower believed that the bomber fleet could stop an invasion of Western Europe by the Soviet Army. Massive Retaliation also offered domestic benefits: Its focus on nuclear air power saved the cost of extensive land and naval forces, which could be used instead to support Eisenhower’s goal of increasing the American standard of living.\(^{18}\)

On 12 January 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced the president’s policy in an address to the Council on Foreign Relations:

The basic decision [of the National Security Council] was as I indicated to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate instantly by means and at places of our choosing. And now the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff can shape our military establishment to fit what is our policy instead of having to try to be ready to meet the enemy’s many choices. And that permits of a selection of military means instead of a multiplication of means. And as a result it is now possible to get, and to share, more security at less cost.\(^{19}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 236.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 287-89.

Secretary Dulles implied that under this program, the United States would have fewer military units to respond to various contingencies around the world; however, the threat of a response with “great and instantaneous power” ought to keep aggression against the United States in check. President Eisenhower’s “Massive Retaliation” strategy had obvious implications for the Air Force. In effect, Massive Retaliation reduced the conventional surface forces available to fight limited wars, and relied more heavily on nuclear air forces to safeguard the United States. The immediate benefit of Massive Retaliation was the continuation of funding established by the Truman Administration for Strategic Air Command. For the foreseeable future, in terms of funding and missions, the Air Force would remain the preeminent service.

But the downside for the Air Force was inherent in the word “Retaliation.” Secretary Dulles clearly stated that the backbone of the new national security policy would be to use military force in response to enemy aggression. Massive Retaliation increased the nation’s reliance on nuclear airpower, but it seemed to close the door on any possibility of an offensive strike using nuclear weapons. The Air Force was adamant that any second-strike strategy was weak, and offered the nation no meaningful chance of survival in the nuclear age. As Colonel Sleeper had written in 1953, Project Control would be “a first step to perform a surgical operation on our
national grand strategy and quietly remove the stifling concept of retaliation.”

Now, before Project Control could be presented around Washington D.C., President Eisenhower had adopted a second-strike position identical to President Truman’s.

By the spring of 1954, voices outside the Air Force questioned the preventive war airmen’s position on strategy in light of Eisenhower’s Massive Retaliation policy. In April, a pair of military instructors from the Air War College delivered a series of lectures over two days to the officers at the Naval War College on airpower, military strategy, and national security. In their lectures, they advocated the same preventive war strategy against the Soviet Union. Colonel John B. McPherson presented his concept for war against the Soviet Union ten years in the future. He declared that the U.S. should take the initiative, and “attack with the full nuclear capability of our offensive air forces” against the Soviet Air Force, missile sites, military headquarters, government centers, railroad facilities, and Soviet oil and aircraft industries. In the question and answer period, students discredited the inevitability of nuclear war, the morality of killing millions of Soviets, and McPherson’s preventive war strategy that contradicted “the political aims of the world.” Several observations can be drawn from this episode at the Naval War College. First, the Air War College still supported preventive war strongly enough at this time to send out to another service’s war college

20Sleeper, “Staff Study.”
a team to speak on the subject, four months after the Eisenhower Administration formally announced its policy of Massive Retaliation. Secondly, the Naval War College students who asked questions predominantly rebutted the Air Force officers’ case for preventive war, offensive-minded strategies, or aggression towards the Soviet Union. Their objection was not rooted in service parochialism; on the contrary, their complaint was that preventive strikes would never achieve long-term national interests or promote democracy in the nations attacked by the United States.

Back at the Air War College, prominent civilian lecturers expressed their disapproval of preventive war. In May, Hansen Baldwin, the military editor to the *New York Times*, addressed the officers on foreign policy, public opinion, and military strategy. He established the subordination of military strategy to policy: “Strategy is the handmaiden of policy and not vice versa.” He also decried preventive war. Offensive nuclear strikes, designed “to blast Moscow and Leningrad off the map,” would frustrate political objectives, he warned, adding, “We are not likely to build a more stable world on a heap of ruins.”

Dr. Hans Morgenthau also visited the Air War College in May, and echoed Baldwin’s remarks concerning the supremacy of policy. Moreover, he derided any thought of an offensive strike using nuclear weapons. Morgenthau argued that a nuclear offensive would lead to “universal destruction,”

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rather than any meaningful political end.23 Yet Baldwin and Morgenthau’s efforts in the
lecture hall seemed to have little impact on the preventive war airmen at the Air War
College, especially in the planning rooms where Project Control moved forward. The
war college, like the Air Force, had for years ignored the subordination of military
strategy to political policy, and instead had insisted that the latter should accept the
merits of the former. Airmen had not yet accepted military strategy’s “handmaiden”
role.

Thus, despite arguments against preventive war from outside the Air Force, the
Project Control team continued with its research. In June, Colonel Sleeper’s team
completed the Project Control reports. These papers included studies of how air control
might have been applied against Germany and Japan in World War II. The team also
offered a solution for the existing Indo-China problem. The bulk of Project Control’s
written findings addressed the Soviet Union.

The Project Control team showed no mercy toward the Soviet Union. The
project’s report on the strategic atomic offensive adopted old preventive war arguments:
one should redefine an act of aggression in the nuclear age to include deploying any
weapons of mass destruction; the outbreak of hostilities would determine the outcome
of any future wars; and, retaliation would not work after the United States had suffered

23 Hans J. Morgenthau, "Problem of Integrating the Factors of National Strategy (Lecture to Air War
a debilitating blow.24 Thus, while the report claimed to control the Soviet Union by making demands backed by the threat of nuclear strikes, it did so by launching from the outset atomic strikes on Soviet bomber and submarine bases, in order to “insure the security of the United States and her allies.”25 If the Soviets did not accept all of the demands put forth by the United States, then the Air Force would continue with atomic strikes on military industry, fuel production and storage, other industry and government centers. The report seemed indifferent with regard to civilian casualties, observing, “Although a broadcast of warnings to civilian populations to leave the vicinity of all military installations might have a favorable effect, the element of surprise which is so important precludes any such action in the initial attack.”26 The Soviet report blurred the lines between Sleeper’s air persuasion and air pressure phases; nuclear strikes and high civilian casualties characterized both. Here, as in previous arguments, preventive war airmen simply glossed over international law in their push for offensive strikes.

In May, Sleeper presented Project Control to the Air Force Commander’s Conference at Eglin Air Force Base. According to Sleeper, all present were impressed. As Biddle observed, “The briefing at Eglin gave Project Control the boost it needed to reach wider audiences.” Air Force Secretary Talbott proposed that Sleeper immediately

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25 Ibid., 6-7.
26 Ibid., 19.
brief President Eisenhower on Project Control. Chief of Staff General Twining and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations discussed whether to carry the brief up to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or to go through the service secretaries. Within weeks, Sleeper began a series of briefings for senior government officials outside of the Air Force.

Colonel Sleeper’s Project Control elicited mixed reviews with audiences from the Joint Staff, OSD, and other federal departments. Initially, Sleeper fared quite well. He briefed a group on 19 May that included uniformed and civilian representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Operations Coordinating Board, which was part of the National Security Council that President Eisenhower had established in 1953. The OSD and OCB representatives approved of the idea of Project Control, and one three-star Marine Corps general on the OSD staff asked to take the briefing immediately to his supervisor, an Assistant Secretary of Defense. In June, the colonel met with Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson. According to the minutes from the session, Mr. Wilson agreed with his subordinate Defense Department officials that Air Control was feasible, “but that the essential element which is lacking is the political decision to proceed.”

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enthusiasm towards Project Control. The agency’s first civilian director, Allen W.
Dulles, stated in his 20 July meeting with Sleeper that he would like to carry the briefing
to his brother John at the State Department for consideration. A brigadier general on the
CIA staff observed that the general plan agreed with thinking inside the CIA, and that
the agency could definitely participate in several of the schemes outlined by Sleeper.30

However, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles never received the brief on Project
Control, and senior State Department officials who did hear Sleeper’s presentation on 25
August tore emphatically denounced it. Robert M. Bowie, the Director and Department
Representative on the NSC Planning Board, flatly stated that Project Control was
“simply another version of preventive war,” which the United States would be forced
into, if the Soviet Union refused to comply with the demands expressed by the
administration during Sleeper’s persuasion phase.31 The State Department’s animosity
towards Project Control would prove to be an insurmountable hurdle for this version of
preventive war.

Colonel Sleeper’s briefing tour in Washington D.C. ended with two Project
Control presentations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur W.
Radford. Admiral Radford liked the concept of Air Control, but felt that its adoption

30 Raymond S. Sleeper, "Memorandum for Record, Subject: Project Control Briefing of Mr. Allen Dulles and
31 G.V. Davis, "Memorandum for Record, Subject: Project Control Presentation to Personnel of the
Department of State," in A History of Project Control (Montgomery, AL: Air Force Historical Research
Agency, 3 September 1954).
would depend on the reaction of the State Department and “principal U.S. allies.”32 The Chairman’s assessment provided a fitting summary on the project’s accomplishments through the summer months. Project Control had won for the Air Force a larger audience for its preventive war strategy. Furthermore, the project had found favor with several top government officials, including the CIA Director, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, one might expect CIA and defense officials to embrace an offensive strategy towards the Soviet Union; furthermore, each of these officials unequivocally stated that Project Control’s future would depend upon the support of the State Department, which loathed the idea. Ultimately, Project Control stalled following the State Department briefing in the summer of 1954, without ever making its way to the President for consideration.

Eisenhower never heard Sleeper’s Project Control briefing, but his statement to the press in mid-August concerning preventive war provided those who supported the concept of Air Control with an authoritative declaration against preventive war. On 11 August, NBC’s chief White House correspondent, Ray L. Scherer, asked the president to comment on the “increasing suggestions that we should embark on a preventive war with the Communist world.” President Eisenhower was firm in his response:

All of us have heard this term “preventive war” since the earliest days of Hitler. I recall that is about the first time I heard it. In this day and time, if we believe for one second that nuclear fission and fusion, that type of weapon, would be used in such a war—what is a preventive war?

I would say a preventive war, if the words mean anything, is to wage some sort of quick police action in order that you might avoid a terrific cataclysm of destruction later.

A preventive war, to my mind, is an impossibility today. How could you have one if one of its features would be several cities lying in ruins, several cities where many, many thousands of people would be dead and injured and mangled, the transportation systems destroyed, sanitation implements and systems all gone? That isn’t preventive war; that is war.

I don’t believe there is such a thing; and, frankly, I wouldn’t even listen to anyone seriously that came in and talked about such a thing.33

In this public disapproval of preventive war, President Eisenhower put forth a strong and vivid picture of the destruction and the inhumanity of preventive war, and closed with an irrefutable resolve not to consider such a strategy. Eisenhower, the great military commander, who had promised to strengthen the nation’s resolve in the Cold War, did not believe that an offensive nuclear strategy would demonstrate U.S. resolve towards the Soviet Union. The second Cold War president, like the first, would not even discuss the possibility of preventive war.

The repercussions of Eisenhower’s statement seemed to instantly affect the senior ranks of the Air Force. On 20 August, General Twining addressed the Air Force Association Symposium in Omaha, Nebraska. Twining lamented that the United States

had granted its enemies the advantage of a first strike, yet conceded that a nuclear
counterattack was “the stated policy of our Government.” Twining concluded, “We
have no choice but to rely primarily on our ability to counter-attack against the deep
roots of enemy strength with weapons of concentrated power. This we can do and this
we must be prepared to do, without hesitation, if an enemy moves against us.” His
remarks were astounding, given his previous stance on preventive war and his
endorsement of Project Control. Up to this point, General Twining had emulated his
predecessor, General Vandenberg; he had been careful not to publicly refute his
president’s policies, but he refused to publicly state that any retaliatory policy could
adequately protect the United States from annihilation. On this occasion, General
Twining stated that nuclear retaliation could be made to work, and he even went so far
as to envision retaliation as a preventive measure: “We must continue to convince the
Communist enemy that we will strike back as fast as we can and as hard as we can. We
must continue to count on our capability for a massive counterattack to keep him in
check and to prevent another war.” The 20 August speech to the Air Force Association
marked a turning point for Air Force Chiefs of Staff. Before it, chiefs had stated that
only preventive war could prevent the annihilation of the United States. Here, General
Twining associated massive retaliation with the word “prevent,” when he said that a
massive counterattack could prevent another war.
After retiring from the military in 1960, General Twining made several statements that demonstrate that he never actually changed his mind concerning preventive war.³⁴ In 1961, Twining addressed the National Association of Insurance Agents, and stated that during his last years in military service he recognized a “great deficiency” in the American public and in government regarding the seriousness of the threat to the nation’s existence posed by communism. In 1964, Twining addressed the Air Force Historical Foundation, and stated that the United States was weak on foreign policy, because of “our unwillingness to act when the United States’ interests require action.” Twining’s book, Neither Liberty Nor Safety, published in 1966, urged the U.S. to go on the offensive against communism: “Without initiative, the best one can do is to hold one’s own. With the power of initiative, the opposition can be destroyed.” While Twining rejected retaliation, he kept it to himself after Project Control failed, at least until he retired from military service.

Former Air Force Secretary Finletter, an outspoken critic of preventive war since becoming Truman’s Secretary of the Air Force in 1950, refuted preventive war and supported Massive Retaliation in a pair of articles for Atlantic magazine. In September

Finletter argued first that no president—past, present, or future—would ever initiate a preventive war, and added that preventive war would fail:

“No first, or sneak, atomic attack by the Russians or by us, even before the Russians have their absolute power, can knock out wholly the other side’s ability to strike back, unless the victim has been careless in his defensive preparations, which the Russians have not. The proponents of preventive war must therefore understand that if we take their advice we will have atomic bombs on American cities now, and in increasing numbers from now on, as well as on Russian targets.”35

The only solution, Finletter argued, was to disperse a massive fleet of bombers equipped with hydrogen bombs, designed to survive the Soviet attack and retaliate with devastating force. In his second article, Finletter criticized the existing DoD budget process, which split each dollar between the three service departments. For Massive Retaliation to work, he wrote, the Secretary of Defense needed to assume responsibility from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the DoD budget. This would ensure that long-range nuclear bombers would be fully funded. Finletter concluded, “Now the danger is too great and too immediate for us to allow anything—attachments to past methods, respect for Service traditions, or anything else—to interfere with our having the kind of military force-in-being which may prevent World War III.”36 Finletter believed that a giant and dispersed strategic air force would deter Soviet aggression, and thus prevent war, simply by making it impossible for any surprise Soviet attack to eliminate the threat of a staggering U.S. retaliation.

Despite the influence of the Chief and former Secretary in support of Massive Retaliation, General Anderson was unmoved, and protested the change in strategic direction. General Anderson lectured at the Air War College in late September, where he reiterated that the only alternative to preventive action was defeat and “to become serfs or the slaves of the Communistic system.”

Anderson also petitioned for Project Control in his remarks (the retired general repeatedly had collaborated with Project Control planners in the fall of 1953). Referring to Air Control in his lecture, Anderson observed, “It is the most efficient vehicle today, with its fire, to insure that a nation or an opposition, once put on its nest, can be kept on its nest.”

Ironically, the month before General Anderson petitioned for Project Control, the project ran into additional trouble in the most unlikely place—the Air War College. In August, a war game backfired when the war college team representing the Soviet Union failed to accept political demands during the persuasion phase of Air Control, but instead launched a surprise nuclear attack against the United States. In fact, the war game demonstrated the dangers of posing an ultimatum to a nuclear power such as the Soviet Union. Unwilling to concede the inherent problem with the concept of air control, the Air University and the Air Force Headquarters attempted to pass off the war

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39 Anderson, "The Conduct of War (Lecture to the National War College)," 16.
game’s findings. In any case, Project Control’s main concern was that it could not progress to the National Security Council after stalling out before the State Department.

Officially, the Project Control continued until General Twining ordered its termination in March 1955. Twining credited Project control for stimulating “forward thinking in the formulation of national policy measures dealing with international communism.” However, Sleeper’s intended purpose was not to stimulate thinking; he and his service desired a changed national security policy as a result of his thinking. They did not get it.  

In late 1954, a series of lectures at the Air University echoed the call for change in Air Force strategy. In October, the new Vice Commandant of the Air War College, Brigadier General Stanley F. Giffin, lectured the war college students on a “Concept for Future Wars.” At first, Giffin sounded like a proponent for preventive war, warning that the United States was steadily losing its “virtually absolute capability of destroying any nation” with each new Soviet hydrogen bomb fielded. The Soviets would reach nuclear parity with the United States by 1960, Giffin feared, adding, “General LeMay could fix the Russian clock within a month starting tomorrow.” Yet General Giffin abruptly changed course in his lecture. He declared it impractical for either side to attack population centers with hydrogen bombs, even when the objective is a legitimate

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military target. He also offered the Korean conflict as proof that the Soviet Union and the United States could fight limited wars without escalating the conflict into a nuclear exchange. Next, Giffin proposed three improvements to make Massive Retaliation operationally viable; these imperatives would need to be in place before the Soviet Union could become an equal nuclear power. First, the United States needed to be prepared to launch “an absolutely crushing nuclear attack” in a moment’s notice; second, the U.S. must have the best possible active and passive air defenses; and third, the Defense Department and Western allies must field separate forces for conducting limited wars.42 Finally, Giffin suggested a presidential policy statement to support his three-pronged approach:

The President might, for example, at such point in time as this course had become desirable, publicly announce that the United States did not intend in war to utilize nuclear weapons where such use would bring significant destruction upon urban areas, except in retaliation against the nuclear destruction of urban areas in the West. He might add, then, that we would visit unlimited nuclear destruction upon all enemy urban areas if any significant nuclear destruction were visited upon any urban areas of the West. Finally, he might add that he asked for no similar assurance on the part of the communists, whose word whether written or oral was completely worthless, although he would be perfectly willing to deposit a written announcement on the part of the United States with the United Nations or elsewhere.43

Here was Giffin’s last recommendation for ensuring the success of Eisenhower’s national security strategy. The Vice Commandant stated that Massive Retaliation needed to be adequately protective for the U.S., catastrophic for an attacker’s civilians as

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42 Ibid., 14.
43 Ibid.
well military, complemented with forces for limited wars, and backed by the President’s unwavering commitment to unleash the retaliatory fury of his attacked nation. General Giffin outlined tangible steps that the Air Force needed to take to improve the president’s national security policy. This represented another significant moment in the transition inside the Air Force from preventive war to Massive Retaliation.

Paul Nitze delivered the harshest indictment of General Anderson and preventive war in a lecture at the Air War College in October 1954. Nitze cited Carl von Clausewitz, who had expressed the authority of politics over strategy during periods of war and peace. Nitze likened national security to a chess game, in which pawns represented military action and queens represented actions by the head-of-state. He concluded, “One can never move a pawn without considering what would happen if the enemy were to make a move involving an exchange of queens.” Nitze then addressed General Anderson’s behavior and firing in 1950:

“I know that my good friend, General Orvil Anderson, the first Commandant of this school, who served as my air force advisor when I was Vice Chairman of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, felt that policy was wrong and that the earliest possible exchange of queens would be to our interest. He may have been right or he may have been wrong. It is certain, however, that in our form of government it is the President and the Congress who determine policy in Clausewitz’s meaning of the terms and that this was not policy.”

As Commandant at Air War College, General Anderson had routinely taken the stage to refute those who had lectured in support of the Truman Administration’s policies.

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Here, the State Department Director of Policy Planning for the Truman Administration directly challenged General Anderson’s views. Considering that Anderson had recently lectured against Massive Retaliation at the Air War College, Nitze’s polite but nonetheless scathing indictment of Anderson must have made an impression on the officers in attendance.

In December, Chief of Staff Twining reiterated his support for Massive Retaliation in a speech at the Air War College. Twining told the Air Command and Staff College that the United States should stop, not merely react, to communist aggression, and regain the initiative in the Cold War. However, he flatly refuted preventive war on military and political grounds:

There was a time when we held a monopoly in nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. Today preventive war is impossible—it would no longer prevent. We no longer have monopoly in nuclear weapons or long-range airplanes. It is doubtful that even today we could with one surprise attack completely destroy [the] Soviet ability to attack us.

Unless we could do this 100%, they would retain the capability of possibly destroying such cities as New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and Seattle. Are we likely to invite these consequences as long as there remains any change at all of avoiding this?

I have been speaking only of the military aspects of preventive war. Morally, of course, use of the unprovoked, sneak attack always has been and still is unacceptable to us. Furthermore, the Commander-in-Chief has stated clearly that we would never initiate preventive war.
Certainly we must look elsewhere for an answer to our troubles.\textsuperscript{45}

In this lecture, the Chief of Staff gave two reasons for the impracticability of preventive war. First, preventive war was irrelevant now that the Soviet Union could almost certainly retaliate; secondly preventive war was morally unacceptable. As indicated by General Twining’s in retirement in the early 1960s, he did not actually believe that massive retaliation was a sufficient strategy for U.S. national security; nonetheless, he argued against it, and for massive retaliation.

Thus, a slow but steady change in perspective was taking place in the Air Force. Halfway through President Eisenhower’s first term, Project Control, the service’s strongest external push for preventive war, failed, and the President reiterated his predecessor’s no first-strike policy. Senior Air Force leaders, beginning with the Chief of Staff, finally recognized that the air service needed to formulate a military strategy that fit within the parameters established by the administration’s national security policy. For the remainder of Eisenhower’s first term, the Air Force worked toward that end.

Not all agencies in the Air Force adopted the change in strategic direction at the same pace; perhaps reflecting the views of the officers at the top of each organization, some moved relatively quickly, while others resisted the change. One example of quick

progress towards massive retaliation involved Air Defense Command. In January 1955, the Commander of Continental Air Defense Command, General Benjamin W. Chidlaw, gave a lecture at the Air War College that demonstrated that his command had moved toward massive retaliation in the twelve months since he had last addressed the Air War College. In his previous lecture, Chidlaw, whose command the Air Force charged with defending the United States from air attack, called for improvements in air defense, but ultimately voiced his disappointment in a national strategy based on retaliation, not offensive strikes such as a preventive war. In his address the next year, General Chidlaw praised the Department of Defense for detaching Continental Air Defense Command from the Air Force and declaring it a joint command, reporting directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In support for this new arrangement for his command, he made several references to the importance of a solid defense apparatus to the overall mission of Massive Retaliation. First, he identified air defense as necessary for preservation of survival forces. In doing so, he invoked a play on words: “An adequate warning system can get our strike forces on their way in time to avoid being caught on the ground ‘with our planes down.’” Furthermore, he expressed the marriage between robust air warning and defense systems with retaliatory strikes as the foundation for

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deterrence: “Our air striking arms and our warning and air defense systems constitute the deterents that could prevent the holocaust of World War III—and constitute the survival forces if war comes.”48 Unlike his previous Air War College address, in which he urged air defense because the President refused to adopt a profitable offensive strategy, General Chidlaw now viewed his Continental Air Defense Command as a complement to the SAC bombers that would constitute the retaliatory force. Furthermore, General Chidlaw echoed General Twining’s comments months before, when he agreed that retaliatory strikes could prevent World War III.

Air Force plans did not adapt quickly to the Chief of Staff’s support for Massive Retaliation, however. In February, Colonel W.G Lee, a planner from the Air Force Office of Intelligence, gave to the Air War College students a Top Secret briefing outline objectives for the use of force against the Soviet Union. The Office of Intelligence had collaborated with the Air War College on Project Control. Colonel Lee pointed out that military strategy must support national objectives; however, he also stated that the country’s survival depended on the immediate use of nuclear weapons at the outset of hostilities, and proceeded to outline a three-phase preventive war plan that began with offensive nuclear strikes designed to destroy “weapons of mass destruction.” This phase would be followed by a second wave of attacks to destroy land and naval forces; and finally, a third operation to destroy the industrial base that supplied Soviet

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48 Ibid., 4.
weaponry and “the technology of warfare.” General Twining had turned the rudder of the Air Force in order to change the service’s direction on military strategy. The ship had not yet come about. Like other preventive war airmen, Colonel Lee simply refused to let go of the implications of a Soviet attack, and insisted, “The question of who strikes first is of primary importance.”

Hardened preventive war airmen seemed unable to consider that no country had to attack at all; driven by fear, their failure to consider this possibility resulted in repeated insubordination, first towards the President, and now, towards the Air Force Chief of Staff as well.

On a positive note, the Air War College’s annual presentation to the Army and Naval War College suggested a remarkable change in view since the previous visit. One year after Colonel John McPherson drew the ire of the Naval War College students with the Air War College’s preventive war strategy, the Air War College sent another lecturer to the Army and Naval War Colleges to present a completely different concept for war. Colonel Blaine Campbell told audiences at Leavenworth and Newport that he would outline the current concept for war “generally accepted in the Air War College.” Campbell asserted that any war between the Soviet Union and the United States for the foreseeable future would come about either because the Soviets would choose to launch preventive strikes, or because a peripheral war might escalate the tension between the

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two adversaries. In either case, he surmised, “War will start at the pleasure of the Soviet Union.” In response to a Soviet launch, Campbell stated that the Air War College prescribed a complement of defensive measures and offensive strikes in retaliation.

Essentially, Cambell articulated the strategy spelled out in General Chidlaw’s Massive Retaliation speech at the Air War College in January. He described a U.S. defense apparatus, designed to warn the public and defend the U.S. against attacks on government, industry, and SAC bases. Additionally, SAC would have to be big enough and able to launch in a moment’s notice, in order to ensure that the command could launch a nuclear counter-strike at the direction of the President. Campbell stated, “This combination of defense against enemy air attack and launching the strategic air attack are the first priority tasks which must be performed by our armed forces at the commencement of hostilities.” Campbell’s lecture reflected a complete about-face on the part of the Air War College with regard to military strategy for the Cold War. His presentation for retaliation was straightforward and evidential, and offered no indication as to whether the Air War College instructor actually believed in massive retaliation or not. Nonetheless, here was an Air War College visiting lecture that actually reflected administration policy.

Walter Millis furthered the case for Massive Retaliation in his remarks to the Air War College in late April. Millis, the New York Herald Tribune writer and historian, had edited the Forrestal Diaries in 1951, and was two years away from authoring his study on
the history of mass warfare, *Arms and Men*. At the Air War College, Millis characterized the futility of conflict in the nuclear age and added that it served no national security interests:

> The underlying problem is, I think, at once quite simple and quite extraordinary. It is that all-out, major international war has ceased to be what Clausewitz said it was and what through some 6000 years of recorded history it always has been—that is an instrument of policy...There is no conceivable political or national objective—not even the basic, defensive purpose of preserving unaltered our own way of life—which can be furthered by incinerating half the population of an enemy state in the radiological fires and starving another quarter of them to death in the ensuing chaos. Whatever might survive such a cataclysm, whether in our own country or elsewhere, anything even resembling our present way of life would be a certain victim.

Whereas Paul Nitze had cited Clausewitz as proof that policy trumped military strategy, Millis declared that in the nuclear age, war—at least total war—no longer served political ends at all. Millis left open the possibility for limited, conventional war, in his assessment of Clausewitz, war, and policy. Additionally, if Millis saw no political purpose in nuclear war, he saw a tremendous political advantage to maintaining nuclear weapons; their purpose was to provide the threat of “countervailing mass destructive power” against any other country that might threaten to use weapons of mass

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destruction. While criticizing first-strike nuclear strategies, including preventive war, he agreed with maintaining a U.S. nuclear arsenal for retaliation.52

In his graduation speech to the Air War College class of 1955, the Commandant, General Delmar T. Spivey, acknowledged the change in thinking that had taken place in the Air Force during the officers’ resident studies. When the class had arrived in August 1954, the Air War College and the Air Staff still had high hopes for Project Control. Eleven months later, Spivey, along with other senior leaders in the Air Force, had finally begun to accept the futility in pursuing any preventive war strategy. The commandant displayed a different tone than General Anderson and the Air War College faculty had previously expressed. They had spoken and written with exasperation; on this occasion, Spivey was conciliatory and forward-looking in his comments. In facing the challenges ahead, he stated that each officer would be continually frustrated by “conflicting pressures,” caused by military interests conflicting with civilian limits imposed in a democracy. Spivey admonished,

These frustrations can become overpowering if we fail to accept two facts that our studies here should have made crystal clear. These are, first, military strategy has the sole function of supporting national policy; and second, in a democracy national policy and military strategy are based on many considerations in addition to purely military ones and are, in greater or lesser degree, influenced by public opinion.

General Spivey concluded by praising the learning environment at the college: “You were given the opportunity to enhance your ability to weigh evidence, to determine

52 Ibid.
facts on which to base sound judgments, to develop a basis for critical judgment, and to
lay a foundation upon which you’ll better be able to project your thinking for the
future.” For the first time since 1947, the Air War College leadership seemed to be
 unhinged from the narrowing dogma of preventive war.

4.3 Negative Progress at the Air University: The Air Power Historian

General Spivey’s comments indicated the positive changes that were taking place
at the Air War College and in the Air Force by 1955. Nonetheless, the preventive war
movement had been pervasive in the service, and a few groups simply refused to accept
the change in strategic direction. Ironically, one was a relatively new institution,
founded by Air Force brass just two years before, specifically for advocating preventive
war. In February 1953, Chief of Staff Vandenberg, Newsweek editor General Carl Spaatz,
and other retired and active Air Force generals established the Air Force Historical
Foundation. They named General Orvil Anderson as the foundation’s Executive
Director. In October 1955, the foundation published its first edition of its quarterly
journal, the Air Power Historian.

From the outset, the Air Force Historical Foundation operated in a dubious
relationship with the Air Force. General Anderson explained in an inaugural editorial
that the foundation was an independent, non-profit agency. Nonetheless, its offices

53 D.T. Spivey, “Remarks by the Commandant, Air War College, to the Class of 1955,” (Montgomery, AL: Air
resided on Maxwell Air Force Base, adjacent to the Air University. Moreover, General Anderson gave a shameless explanation for the foundation’s partnership with the Air Force: “Operating closely with the official Air Force Historical programs, it complements those programs by sponsoring activities in which the Air Force cannot engage because of budgetary, legal, or policy restrictions.” In other words, the foundation and its publication would do what the Air Force could not: It would publicly protest what its founders viewed as a weak national security policy towards the Soviet Union.

In the first edition of its journal, the foundation demonstrated its true purpose; to continue to publicize preventive war. In his editorial, Anderson wrote,

The degree to which the Foundation can contribute to more logical and realistic thinking on the current strategic problem facing our military forces will be a measure of its profit. However, in general ‘The Air Power Historian’ is dedicated to the belief that our civilization cannot survive if the people who enjoy its blessings and favors display a horrible weakness of conviction and lack of courage.”

To this end, Anderson stuffed the early editions of the *Air Power Historian* with preventive war propaganda. His January 1956 article, “Provocative Views,” repeated arguments from his war college speeches: the prerogative of the initiative in the nuclear era, the need to decisively counter the Soviet nuclear threat, and his belief that the nuclear bomb is no less humane than the bayonet (“True, it will take a lot of bayonet

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killings to match an atom bomb, but where strategic objective is to be reached a lot of killings is demanded”). In April 1956, Anderson cautioned that giving the initiative to the enemy was tantamount to “wishing beyond the bounds of reason and then using the product of this wishing as a base for solving military problems.” In July, in a glaring demonstration of hypocrisy, General Anderson called for a military plan based upon a factual assessment of enemy capabilities, rather than an unrealistic plan rooted in service bias.

The foundation and its journal blatantly advocated the view that the Air Force had slowly been distancing itself from for over a year, yet no evidence suggests that progressive senior airmen at the Air University or Air Force headquarters attempted to stifle Anderson. In fact, the Air Force encouraged broad membership of its officers in the Air Force Historical Foundation. In the late 1950s, the Air Force conducted fund drives for the foundation. Flag officers over the service’s numbered air forces may even have strong-armed their officers to join the foundation; the Commander of Fifth Air Force, who headed six air divisions in Korea and Japan, ordered the officers in his command to reply personally with their intentions to join the foundation or not.

This study found no explanation for why General Twining allowed the *Air Power Historian* to begin publishing preventive war articles one year after he directed the

service to embrace massive retaliation. One possibility is that the service chief ignored the foundation and its activities out of respect for Generals Vandenberg, Spaatz, Anderson, and the other founders. In any case, between the progressive lectures for Massive Retaliation at the Air University in the mid-1950s and the recalcitrant articles of the Air Power Journal, officers exposed to both during this period should have been thoroughly confused.

4.4 Parry and Hit Back With Everything You Have: The Air Force Gets Behind Massive Retaliation

The strongest evidence that the Air Force had moved beyond preventive war by the end of President Eisenhower’s first term may be found in General Curtis LeMay’s Top Secret strategy briefing at the Air Force Commander’s Conference in 1956. If the 1952 Commanders Conference demonstrated in Chapter Two how strongly senior Air Force leaders disagreed with Truman on strategy, the Commander’s Conference in 1956 revealed a new alignment with Eisenhower’s Massive Retaliation strategy. In January, Chief of Staff Twining and the top Air Force generals met at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. General LeMay, who had recommended offensive atomic strikes against North Korea in 1950, had also told the Air War College days after Eisenhower became president in February 1953, “I don’t believe the eyewash I hear we have to be
struck first.”59 Here at Dayton, three years later, LeMay’s briefing demonstrated that he had finally accepted the political impossibility of preventive war; moreover, he recommended to the other Air Force leaders that the Air Force be properly equipped to make the Soviets doubt the success of their own preventive nuclear strikes.

LeMay believed that the steadily increasing Soviet nuclear arsenal would threaten the existence of the United States before the end of the decade. He cited the Soviet disclosure in mid-1955 of new, long-range bombers, which appeared to have similar performance to the B-52s of his Strategic Air Command. U.S. intelligence estimated that the Soviet Union had already begun to out-produce the United States in bombers, and would have the numerical advantage in long-range strike aircraft by 1958. He subsequently discussed the results of classified war games, which SAC had undertaken to predict the outcome of a future war, initiated with a Soviet nuclear strike against the United States in 1959 or 1960. In each scenario, SAC effectively delivered a damaging but inconsequential counter-blow; the U.S. would have already been destroyed by the initial Soviet volley of hydrogen bombs. LeMay warned, “By 1958 or certainly by 1960, according to intelligence estimates, Russia will for the first time possess the capability of causing unacceptable damage to the United States.”

Furthermore, he still believed that the Soviets would attack once it was to their

advantage to do so. The SAC commander’s intended to alarm those who were comfortable with the present state of the nuclear arms race.

However, General LeMay’s argued to strengthen U.S. retaliatory forces, not to strike first. Echoing the thoughts of past preventive war advocates, he admitted, “We all know that the best way to destroy an enemy air offensive force is to attack it in its most vulnerable situation—on the ground before it is launched.” Yet LeMay also stated: “We basically agree on the requirement to destroy the enemy’s air power in the shortest possible time after the outbreak of hostilities.” With this statement on military action after the outbreak of hostilities, LeMay conceded the initiative to the Soviet Union, leaving retaliation as the only U.S. option. As he had opined before, LeMay believed in offensive firepower, not defensive measures; in this presentation, he specifically dismissed Air Defense Command’s ability to stop the Soviet bombers from reaching their targets on U.S. soil. Yet LeMay prescribed offensive firepower only after the Soviet Union had launched its first wave. LeMay continued: “Unless it remains entirely clear to the Russians that we do have the force with which we can win the decisive phase of the Air Power Battle, we cannot expect to deter aggression for much longer.” Here, in the presence of General Twining, who had initiated from the top of the service a move away from preventive war, the commander of the U.S. nuclear bomber force explained for the first time how his aircraft ought to be employed as a retaliatory force. Massive Retaliation had become the dominant military strategy in the Air Force.
4.5 Conclusion

In the spring of 1956, two of the Air Force’s pioneers returned to the Air University. General George C. Kenney, the first SAC Commander and second Commander of the Air University, spoke at the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Air War College. He questioned whether retaliation was possible after the Soviets launched a well-planned and executed surprise attack: “Our published national strategy is that we will not drop the first bomb or fire the first shot. If the enemy opening surprise attack gains the decision, has our ethical and moral stand been justified in the face of a death toll of a score of millions of our countrymen, the destruction of our civilization, our freedom and our religions, and the enslavement of the survivors under the banner of the hammer and sickle?” One month later, General Ira Eaker spoke at the Air War College. On this occasion, the Hap Arnold protégé and past critic of Truman’s policy was silent on preventive war. General Eaker recommended the further dispersal of SAC bases, a beefing up of Air Defense Command, and increased spending for scientific research for air defenses. Like General Anderson and many former Air Force pioneers, General Kenney still believed that President Eisenhower, like President Truman, had left the fate of the United States in the hands of the Soviet Union. But General Eaker, who had joined Hap Arnold as early as 1946 to call for preventive strikes

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against the Soviet Union, represented the concrete change in military strategy within the Air Force.

With the Eisenhower Administration’s rejection of Project Control, preventive war airmen finally recognized that they would have to submit to national policy. No clear pattern emerged that explains which retired generals would accept the change in strategy. General Kenney did not; General Eaker did. Yet most still in service adopted General Twining’s direction. Progress was deliberate, and, at times, wavered, as evidenced by the service’s support of the Air Force Historical Foundation. Furthermore, airmen still exhibited a Soviet-centric view of the Cold War, as their discussions about massive retaliation failed to bring in questions concerning China and the Far East, the Middle East, Africa and South America. By the end of President Eisenhower’s first term, the Air Force leadership had disbanded with preventive war and had pursued meaningful improvements to its strategic air and defensive forces, in order to strengthen the likelihood of a successful retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union.

The Air University, and the Air War College in particular, did not serve as the intellectual center for the service’s change in strategic thinking during Eisenhower’s first term. The dogmatic approach to military strategy at the Air War College made it unlikely that the school would first develop a concept for air power other than preventive war. Still, the Air War College played a major role in changing the service’s military strategy, for it developed and launched the last great Air Force effort to sell
preventive war to the new president. Project Control reached higher than any previous argument for preventive war, but it fell farther too, in its failure to win over the State Department and, ultimately, the president. Project Control’s demise seems to have triggered in General Twining and others an unqualified realization that preventive war would never succeed. The president would not accept it, and, in any case, its utility would be overcome by Soviet nuclear parity in the late 1950s.

On 26 March 1957, President Eisenhower nominated General Twining to succeed Admiral Radford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was fitting that Twining would be the first Air Force general to serve in the highest uniformed position in the Department of Defense, because he was the first chief to align the service’s Cold War military strategy with national policy. Perhaps General Twining’s greatest contribution to the defense of the United States was to subordinate his own instincts on military strategy to the views of the President. In doing so, Twining enabled the Air Force to finally begin to act like a useful instrument of policy.
5. Education Versus Indoctrination: The Air War College and Student Papers, 1951

From the very beginning the Air War College has recognized that there are many satisfactory solutions to a problem. It has never insisted on an infallible school solution—and it never should. In war there is no school solution. You cannot even depend on solving a problem twice the same way for fear that the enemy will be waiting for you the second time. Our thinking, planning and execution must be flexible, adaptable, logical and simple if we wish to preserve this country of ours against the Red tide which threatens to engulf the whole world.¹

General George C. Kenney, Air University Commander, 1948 to 1953, on the tenth anniversary of the Air War College in March 1956.

The Korean War must have dominated the thoughts of the Air War College class of 1951, if for no other reason than that the war shortened their academic year and nearly caused their studies to be cancelled. Several weeks before the Air War College class was scheduled to begin their year at Maxwell Air Force Base in July 1950, Air Force headquarters directed the Air University to stand down the Air War College. Personnel shortages, due to mobilization for Korea, meant that officers originally selected to attend the school had to temporarily remain at operational assignments. By late 1950, the Air University and the service headquarters agreed that the Air War College would teach an abbreviated, six-month course, beginning in January.

Korea also gave the students their first glimpse at U.S. involvement in limited war during the nuclear age. In November 1950, after Chinese troops had crossed the thirty-eighth parallel and had attacked U.S. and ROK forces, President Truman had declared that the atomic bomb was still an option in Korea. Truman’s pronouncement alarmed leaders in Europe, the commonwealth countries, and at the United Nations. In December, Truman met with British Prime Minister Clement Atlee and softened his position on the atomic bomb in Korea. In January 1951, the United Nations condemned Chinese intervention on the Korean peninsula but also challenged the United States on its aggressive position towards resolving the conflict. President Truman and his advisors had already begun at this time to consider a return to the status quo ante of a divided Korean peninsula along the thirty-eighth parallel. As Russell Weigley observed in The American Way of War, Korean War introduced a major change in military strategy; avoiding escalation in the nuclear age had replaced winning at all costs.

The Air War College ought to have served as the institution to educate senior Air Force officers about the changing nature of strategy in the nuclear age. Instead, as this chapter will demonstrate, it focused on instilling in its students the military solution preferred by its leadership and faculty—preventive war. Chief of Staff General Hoyt

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Vandenberg had fired General Orvil Anderson as the commandant of the war college five months before the class of 1951 arrived at Maxwell Air Force Base; yet, as Chapters Two and Three demonstrated, the preventive war effort continued well beyond General Anderson’s firing, especially at the Air War College. One reason it did so is because of the dual mission at the school—education and strategy development.

As noted in Chapter Two, General Fairchild, the first Air University Commander, had struggled with assigning two missions for the Air War College—the making of official strategy and providing senior field grade officer education. Yet he and Chief of Staff Vandenberg had been determined to pattern the Air War College after the Air Corps Tactical School of the 1930s, which, in their opinion, had successfully blended both responsibilities. Actually, it hadn’t; Tammi Davis Biddle described in *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare* how unbiased education at the Air Corps Tactical School succumbed to a prevailing strategy based upon exaggerated claims for strategic bombardment. Nonetheless, Fairchild tasked the Air War College with doctrine and education. In fact, the 1951 Air War College Curriculum handbook described the mission of the war college in terms of strategy development first, and education second: “The Air War College functions as the doctrinal center in the field of strategy and employment of air power.” Educating senior field grade officers was listed behind

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strategy, as the “academic phase” of the doctrine and strategy mission. This mission statement was prophetic, indeed.

Ostensibly, the Air War College succeeded in mirroring the Army and Naval War Colleges, by providing broad education to its student-officers. Like the Naval and Army War Colleges during the postwar period, the Air War College taught a balanced syllabus that included diplomacy, economics, and information as well as military power. Its lectures and seminars provided the backbone of the school’s program, and students at Maxwell Air Force Base, like those at Newport and Carlisle, heard various speakers, including diplomats, foreign officers, prominent educators, flag officers from other services, and civic leaders. Examining the war colleges in the 1950s, John Masland and Laurence Radway observed, “By and large all of these institutions employ similar instructional methods although the emphasis upon each varies among them.”

Military instructors made up the faculties at the three service colleges during this period; civilian academics did not join the war colleges until the mid-1950s.

The leadership at Maxwell Air Force Base touted the enlightened learning environment of the Air War College in the 1940s and 1950s. General Fairchild welcomed the inaugural class of war college students with the assurance that the university would avoid rigid thinking and “the provision of dogmatic answers to the problems of the

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future.”6 Air University leaders repeated this theme for the next decade as they welcomed the incoming class to Maxwell Air Force Base.7 At the Air War College’s tenth anniversary dinner in 1956, Fairchild’s successor, General George Kenney, praised the college for completing a decade of senior officer education without promoting school solutions or service dogma.8

However, a critical evaluation of the education given at the Air War College at this time requires a comparison between the ideas developed by the students and the rhetoric of the school leadership. Archived student papers from 1951 reveal a discrepancy between the claims of the Air University’s generals and the students’ interpretation of U.S. national security and military strategy. These papers demonstrate not only a strong bias against any form of national power other than military force, but also strong support for preventive war strategies that had been officially rejected by President Truman months before these student began their studies.

The Air University library archives hold sixty-four papers from the Air War College class of 1951 with the same title: “An Analysis of Current U.S. Military Concepts As Related To The National Strategy In Furtherance Of National Objectives.” That this large group of papers covering the same topic exists is fortunate, but also an

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7 Welcome Addresses, 1947 to 1956, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.
oddity for the Air War College. Since the school’s inception in 1947, the norm at the Air War College has been for students to select their own topics for the final research paper. Yet in 1951, nearly half of the 138 students wrote on the same subject. A review of the 1951 Air War College official history offers no explanation for the group writing assignment.9 One possibility may be that the abbreviated program may have prompted the school to recommend a group assignment because of the reduced time for each student to determine a suitable topic for study.

A final possibility may relate to the 1950 scandal. As previously mentioned, the college persisted in defying the Truman Administration on nuclear policy after General Vandenberg fired General Anderson. The school’s leadership may have viewed the group writing assignment as an opportunity to gather evidence against the existing policy and strategy.

Significantly, the Naval War College assigned a group of its students an assignment on national security and strategy; thus, a collection of papers is available for comparison with the Air War College papers. In 1952, the Naval War College offered two elective courses in its senior military education program. Forty-seven of the resident students took the Strategy and Logistics Course, and sixty-six attended the

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9 "Air University History: 1 January 1951 to 30 June 1951,” in Air University Archives (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL).
Those in the Strategy and Tactics course wrote essays with the same title: “The Foreign Policies of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. and Their Effect on the Future World Situation.” The Naval War College archives at Newport contain sixty-one of these papers.

These Air Force and Naval War College essays provide a useful comparison because both addressed national and military strategy during the same period of time. Despite the fact that these students graduated one year apart—the Air War College students in 1951 and the Naval War College students in 1952—the two student bodies completed these assignments within six months of each other. Both groups observed General Vandenberg’s firing of General Anderson in 1950 and President Truman’s firing of General MacArthur in early 1951 before they completed their assignments. Additionally, both assignments required students to recommend a military strategy in light of existing Cold War policy. Air War College students were asked to examine military power with respect to the overall national objectives of the United States. Though the Navy’s Strategy and Tactics course assigned students to address U.S. and Soviet foreign policy, in doing so, the officers specifically addressed U.S. military policy as a subset of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, both groups discussed military power as well as economic, diplomatic, and informational power.

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In general, the Naval War College essays reflected better scholarship than the Air War College papers. They were longer, averaging over fifty pages, roughly twice the length of the Air War College essays. More important, the Naval students presented a more global understanding of U.S. national security policy; whereas the Air War College students focused on Europe and Korea, Naval War College students described U.S. efforts in Turkey, Greece, Iran, the Philippines, Japan, North Africa, and Central and South America. The Naval War College students also topped the Air War College students in describing details of programs such as Point Four and the Marshall Plan, treaties, and other initiatives such as Voice of America broadcasting. Both groups shared the practice of referencing sources from readings assigned as homework in the curriculum. The Air War College curriculum assigned two to three hours worth of reading per night; texts included official State Department releases, journal articles, speech transcripts, and book excerpts. 11 Likewise, the Naval War College cited a similar pool of assigned readings.

A comparison of the papers from both colleges reveals fundamental differences between the groups concerning the cause of the Cold War and the best strategy and national security policy for the United States. Although this project required a careful reading of each of the papers from both colleges, a casual reading of half a dozen of each would likely reveal how diametrically opposed the students were on these issues. One

11“Air University History: 1 January 1951 to 30 June 1951.”
cannot positively ascertain whether the students actually believed what they wrote, yet this is irrelevant; the point is not what the students actually thought, or even that the schools fundamentally disagreed on national security strategy. Ultimately, as this chapter will demonstrate, what matters is that the variance between the schools’ essays demonstrates how strongly the Air War College injected preventive war thinking into its curriculum.

Before addressing the differences between the war colleges’ papers, it is worth noting where the schools agreed. As professional officers, the students at Newport and at Maxwell Air Force Base valued a strong defense, both for the United States and for Western Europe.

5.1 Similarities: Military Power and Collective Security

Both groups of papers reflected the alarm one might expect from military officers in the period following the Soviet detonation of its own atomic bomb in August 1949. The officers advocated a buildup of military power to counteract the Soviet Union’s massive buildup of forces and its emerging atomic weapons program. Most of the Naval War College officers and all of the Air War College students advocated increased military expenditure and buildup. More than half of the authors criticized the slashing of the U.S. military budget and units following victory in Europe and the Pacific. At the Naval War College, one student warned that as long as the Soviet Union pursued foreign policies that opposed to those of the United States, the free world would have to
be prepared to defend itself.\textsuperscript{12} One typical paper observed, “The probability of peace or open war depends upon the extent that we are able to improve our national security through our own re-armament as well as military assistance to the nations willing to join us in opposing the U.S.S.R.”\textsuperscript{13} At the Air War College, several students cited the need to match force with force against the Soviet Union. One student, Colonel Ladson Eskridge, felt that rearmament was necessary because the NATO pact committed the United States to defending Western Europe at a time when Europe lacked the military strength to defend itself.\textsuperscript{14} Several other students shared Eskridge’s outlook.

Colonel Eskridge’s comments concerning U.S. support for NATO touched upon a second theme shared by the papers at both schools: the need for collective security. Students from both schools proclaimed that communist aggression required that the United States collaborate with “free nations” worldwide. Significantly, the Naval War College students viewed collective security as an accepted fact; most at the Air War College felt compelled to explain why the United States had to move away from its tradition of isolationism. As one Air Force student, Colonel L.M. Bivens, explained:

The security and well-being of the United States are now increasingly interpreted as being dependent on two sets of circumstances, neither of which was considered essential in the earlier interpretations. The first is that the strategic

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
frontiers of the United States lie in Central Europe, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and the offshore fringe of Pacific Islands. The second is that the well-being of the United States cannot be separated from the maintenance of peace and the development of well-being throughout the world.¹⁵

Bivens made the case for global cooperation, and showed that he, like others at Maxwell, recognized that the United States no longer could take an isolationist position towards world affairs.

Colonel Bivens’ comment regarding isolationism typified the sentiment of his peers; however, most students at the Air War College displayed a much narrower view of global security than he did. Predominantly, students at Maxwell focused on the mandate of protecting Western Europe from the Soviet Union. Students viewed Western Europe falling under Soviet control as catastrophic. One representative student talked of “preventing Russia from getting Western Europe’s industry;” another observed, “The tremendous productive potential of Western Europe would be of enormous advantage to the Soviet Union.”¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the Naval War College students exhibited a truly global perspective to mutual security, and addressed the needs of weak nations in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America. The disparity between the schools on this point had its roots in fundamentally different perspectives at each college concerning the underlying cause of the Cold War.

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5.2 Contrasting Views of the Cold War: Ideology Versus Aggression

Most field grade officers know that the first task in developing a strategy is to determine the underlying problem; once this question is answered, strategy has a direction. On this fundamental question, the schools differed. The Air War College students predominantly viewed the Cold War as the result of Soviet aggression against neighboring states and the West. They addressed how to “counter the Soviet threat,” achieve “destruction of the Kremlin power,” or “stop Soviet aggression.”¹⁷ Lt Col Robert A. Erdin stated, “Since world domination is the objective of the USSR and the primary national interest of the United States is its own security, the one must inevitably directly oppose the other.”¹⁸ Fifty-six of the sixty-three papers from the Air War College framed the national security discussion in terms of halting Soviet aggression.

Unlike the papers from Maxwell, the Naval War College theses did not blame the Cold War on Soviet aggression; rather, they described the Cold War as the result of competing economic systems and political ideologies. Nearly half of the Navy’s students described the Cold War as an contest between economic systems, and two out

of five students at Newport viewed the Cold War as an ideological struggle caused by
the inherent tension between communism and democracy. Accordingly, the officers at
Newport focused on the threat posed by communism rather than Soviet aggression.

Typical of the sentiment at Newport, a captain called for economic support in addition
to military rearmament “to improve the standard of living in those parts of the world
where it is required, and to prevent depressions and other disruptions of freedom in
order to prevent Communism from bringing about the World Revolution.” Captain
J.W. Gannon called for U.S. political influence in countries not yet held by authoritarian
regimes, in order to keep up faith in democratic principles “in this ideological
struggle.” Commander H.H. Larsen called the Cold War “the battle for men’s minds.”

The divergence between the schools on this key issue—the underlying cause of the Cold
War—provided the impetus for the contrary military strategies expressed in each
school’s student papers.

Unrestrained by a Soviet-centric view of the Cold War, the students at Newport
chose to strengthen, inform, and win over struggling states rather than to defeat or
punish the Soviet Union. The Naval students believed nations vulnerable to
communist influence were not hapless pawns in the Cold War. Naval students broadly

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Situation,” in Naval Historical Collection (Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 1951), 44.
addressed vulnerable states, including Turkey, Greece, South Korea, the Philippines, Japan, and even the Rio Pact countries. Weak as they were, they would still determine their political and economic future, and resist challenges to their sovereignty from either superpower in the Cold War. Captain Eugene McKinney described the United States’ mission as one of promoting security with both existing and potential friends. Two students even acknowledged that nations resisting communism might not want democracy, either. One warned, “We should be careful that we do not split the world into two camps, Russian and democratic.” Therefore, it was enough if a weakened state allied with the United States, even if it did not convert to democracy or capitalism.

For most students at Newport, the view that the Cold War was the result of competing ideologies rather than Soviet aggression also caused them to doubt the inevitability of actual war. One student noted that the presence of two opposing ideologies did not necessarily mean that one must be destroyed. Most believed that Russia was aggressive, but not to the degree where the nation wanted war with the United States. One representative essay observed, “The fact that Russia has backed down in so many instances where force is shown further proves that she does not want

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war now and that positive action on our part will save nations about to be enveloped by the cloak of Communism.”25 Additionally, many felt that the United States did not want to go to war with the Soviet Union, either. One might expect that both schools’ student would have preferred not to have the United States plunge into another major war; to attend either war college in 1951, the officers most likely would have served during World War II. However, only students at the Naval War College expressed this view. One student thought that the United States could win a nuclear war with the Soviets, but would be left with an economy so ruined that victory would be pointless. Elaborating further, he stated, “There can be no winner of a war with modern weapons,” and concluded that U.S. national security could “be obtained in the perfect sense only if war itself is abolished.”26 Likewise, another student at Newport called for rearmament to prevent an immediate shooting war.27 And since the majority believed that neither side wanted military confrontation, sixty-three out of sixty-six students at the Naval War College expected that the Cold War would remain cold.

The Air War College students strongly disagreed with Naval War College officers on this crucial issue. Three fourths of the research papers from the Air War College took the position that war with the Soviet Union was imminent, by which they

meant at the most several years away. As one colonel put it, “All realists know that
World War III has passed the stage of preliminary local skirmishes and may flare up on
a global scale at any moment.”

Many believed that the Soviets were waiting to attack
until they reached parity in atomic firepower with the United States; once this was
achieved, they would strike before the United States had fully rearmed Western Europe.

Typical of the fatalism expressed by Air War College students, one officer observed,
“Our current military strategic concept contains first a prayer that Russia will wait until
we have generated enough strength to either deter war or stand a reasonable chance of
winning one. If this war should start before 1953, it is doubtful if the free nations could
survive.”

Stalin’s contention that communism and capitalism could not co-exist in the
world, enhanced by Soviet hostility in Central Europe and the Soviet atomic program,
forecast the coming of war in the eyes of students at the Air War College.

The dynamic contrast in assumptions regarding the fundamental nature of the
Cold War induced radically different recommendations for U.S. national security
strategy. Naval War College students held a less militarized assessment of the threat
than did those at the Air War College. Accordingly, Navy students also proposed less
militarized solutions than those attending the Air Force’s school.

In Furtherance Of National Objectives,” in Air University Library (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University
Library, 1951), 20.

Furtherance Of National Objectives,” in Air University Library (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University
Library, 1951), 9.
5.3 **Naval War College Solutions—Revitalize, Inform, Unify, Protect**

Since most of the Newport theses viewed the Cold War as an ideological struggle between communism and democracy, it made sense that they viewed military strength as one of several instruments of national power. Most called for forces to deter Soviet aggression in concert with other means such as economic support, information campaigns, and diplomatically supporting vulnerable states in their resistance to communism. W. G. Reifenwrath’s representative essay emphasized economic aid:

“Notwithstanding the importance of defense, the greatest emphasis must be devoted to sound economy in our own nation as well as those of our friends on whom we intend to place reliance.”

Captain R.O. Beer praised the Marshall Plan and Truman’s Point Four policy for rebuilding the world “economically and morally.”

Commander T.S. King agreed, noting that economic aid would “bring the rest of the world into our camp by showing other peoples that democracy is a stronger and happier land in which to live than is a dictatorship of any type.”

A captain from the class described the power of economic support to weak states:

> "Our point four program, if successful, will do more to aid our cause and bring ultimate defeat to the theories and teachings of Communism than all the enterprising programs that this country has ever attempted. By raising the..."

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To industrial level of the underdeveloped countries, we will deliver a most effective blow to Communism. We will give to those people the things that Communists claim can only be achieved by revolution. We can thus avert the cause for the overthrow advocated in the Kremlin. The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and want. They reach their full growth when the hope of a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.\textsuperscript{33}

Remarkably, in this excerpt the officer used military jargon—“ultimate defeat,” “effective blow,” and “avert overthrow”—to discuss economic help for the vulnerable, rather than to describe military force against a protagonist. He championed economic measures above military might as the preferred instrument of national power in the Cold War. However brilliant in his prose, his sentiment echoed the majority at the Naval War College, where four out of five students ranked economic power at least on a par with military power in the struggle against communism.

The students at Newport believed in the power of information. One third of the students called for some type of propaganda campaign as a means of winning the Cold War. One Naval student recommended that the U.S. adopt a successful Soviet tactic and employ its own “propaganda machine to penetrate the Iron Curtain” with pro-democratic information. He advocated an offensive campaign, too; messages sent through the Iron Curtain should foment revolution and promote sabotage by the workers in Soviet-occupied countries of the Eastern bloc, he added.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{34} Bowker, "The Foreign Policies Of The U.S. And The U.S.S.R. And Their Effect On The Future World Situation," 36.
Corps Colonel R.G. Balance proclaimed, “Ideological attack directed against the Communist stronghold, searching out and exploiting every weakness is the soundest hope to drive the terror from the world.”35 Here again, a student employed military terminology to describe a non-military instrument of power. Captain J.W. Gannon took an even less aggressive approach, calling for the U.S. to advocate personal liberty, political freedom, and equality of economic and social opportunity in other nations, in order to maintain the “prestige and influence of the United States.”36

With slightly less zeal, Naval War College students advocated diplomatic power. Two in five students advocated a strong diplomatic program, typically channeled through the United Nations, which they deeply admired. Many believed that by seeking UN opposition to North Korea’s invasion of South Korea, the United States won global approval to resist the North Korean forces that would not have existed had the U.S. chosen to proceed alone. Commander T.R. Vogeley defended the United Nations against critics who argued that the organization lacked any real power to enforce world peace:

An accusation, or criticism, frequently leveled against the United Nations is the charge that it is purely and merely a “debating society” where there is a lot of talk and little action. This “charge” is in all respects true—and fortunately so—except that more than a “little” action results from its debates and discussions. The United Nations is an excellent means whereby world opinion can be informed, or can be mobilized and aroused in the defense of peace; it is this

35 Balance, p. 49.
massed moral force of world opinion which accounts for every United Nations
victory.37

The Naval War College students’ support for the United Nations and diplomacy
represented an extraordinarily enlightened view, given that the authors were senior
officers who had only six years before used military power to fight the Axis powers in
World War II. Many at the school held that the strength of the UN was in its ability to
complement U.S. and allied military power. Captain R.C. Steere observed, “There exists
the United Nations, which is a more effective means than any before it, for mobilizing
the moral judgment of the world and for focusing that judgment upon an aggressor.” 38

With such confidence in economic power, information, and diplomacy through
the United Nations, officers at the Naval War College viewed military strength in a
defensive role, to check Soviet aggression and protect the United States and its allies.
One officer called allied military strength the “shield of power” that would protect
Europe and Asia, while allowing U.S. economic power to produce world stability and

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Situation,” in Naval Historical Collection (Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 1951), 41.
Situation,” in Naval Historical Collection (Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 1951), 53.

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The papers from Newport consistently called for protection or defense of the United States and its allies, and promoted concepts such as a military buildup to prevent war, warding off the threat of open conflict, and mutual security. While they strongly advocated U.S. and allied defenses, these students were vague as to the composition of defensive forces. They touted neither atomic weapons nor naval forces.

One interesting point to take from reading the Naval War College essays concerns preventive war; several of the officers addressed, and ultimately, rejected the strategy. These students did not simply dismiss preventive war out of deference to President Truman, however; rather, they highlighted the unpopularity of preventive war, the violation of international law by conducting such an attack (a point lost on the preventive war airmen) and that a preventive strike might actually provoke the Soviet Union to invade Western Europe with its Red Army. These arguments demonstrate that although the Naval War College students predominantly supported President Truman’s containment strategy, they were willing to consider all military options, including those that the administration forbade.

In general, the papers from the Naval War College in 1951 took a broad view of U.S. national security. The authors considered economic relief, propaganda campaigns and diplomacy to be arrows equally useful as military might in the American quiver.

They preferred military power in a defensive strategy, implicitly because it would not compel the Soviet Union to wage war against the United States.

5.4 Air War College Solutions—Amass and Employ

Believing that Soviet aggression, not communism, was the underlying cause of the Cold War, two thirds of the Air War College students saw military confrontation as inevitable and advocated a national military strategy based exclusively on military power. A handful of Air War College students explicitly rejected non-military instruments of power as ineffective; one officer ignored successful initiatives, such as economic support to Greece and Turkey and Voice of America broadcasts, and declared, “For the past five years the United States has unsuccessfully employed her non-military instruments of power.” Yet most of the students at the Air War College ignored soft power completely, because it didn’t address the problem of Soviet aggression. Military force did.

Half of the Air War College papers called exclusively for the application of armed force; this approach reflected the predominate view at the Air War College that Soviet aggression was the root cause of the existing national security dilemma. Many felt that military power was necessary because the Soviet Union would not respond to any other form of national strength. Echoing his peers, one lieutenant colonel argued

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that the Berlin Airlift demonstrated that Stalin and the Kremlin recognized military power alone, despite the obvious economic implications for the airlift missions that broke the Soviet blockade of West Berlin. Colonel William Adams pronounced, in a style and an attitude reminiscent of General Anderson, “The only language understood today is phrased in terms of existing forces or force potential.” By “force potential,” the colonel either was referring to future military buildup or to preventive war (more will be said about preventive war shortly).

The Air War College students’ predisposition to use military force determined which international organization they chose to endorse. In contrast to the Naval War College students, Air War College officer offered little support for the United Nations. Only three students supported the role of the organization, two students criticized its soft, ineffective power, and most did not address the organization at all. Rather, the majority enthusiastically supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, because it advocated collective security using the combined armed forces of its members.

Air War College students exhibited a narrow view of how the United States should apply military power. With no exceptions, the half of the Air War College papers that called for offensive military power recommended strategic bombardment;

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half of these called specifically for atomic strikes against the Soviet Union. Not one student at Newport advocated naval power in his discussion of strategy and national security.

Many believed that atomic firepower was the only exploitable advantage against the Soviet Union’s formidable Red Army and conventional forces. Colonel Robert Erdin stated that the United States’ major effort should be in strategic bombardment, the one area in which it had overwhelming superiority.43 Others focused on the great destructive capabilities brought about by advances in airpower. Lt Col Thomas McFarland concluded, “The U.S. and its allies are preparing to fight World War III with the strategy and weapons systems employed in the last war….The technological superiority of the U.S. is most evident in the development of aviation, and particularly in long range weapons of mass destruction. The need for capitalizing on this advantage is urgent.”44 Several students viewed airpower as the antidote to spiraling costs associated with protecting the West. Colonel M.B. Cather suggested that with the same industrial effort, the United States could develop truly intercontinental bombers, which would be far cheaper than placing and supplying ground forces at overseas bases.

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around the world.\textsuperscript{45} He wrote that these aircraft should at once be developed and fielded in Strategic Air Command. They could be paid for with the funds that had been allocated to land and sea forces.\textsuperscript{46}

Students’ strong belief in military power, especially strategic bombardment, meant that their essays rejected containment, which in their view usurped U.S. military power and relied too heavily on economic support, diplomacy, and information campaigns. Their objections were threefold: Containment left the United States vulnerable in the era dominated by atomic weapons; it threatened the U.S. economy by fielding massive surface forces and spending too much in foreign aid; and, above all, containment was a defensive strategy, and thus, could never seize from the Soviet Union permanent concessions or changes in its policy towards neighboring states.

Half of the Air War College students believed that containment left the United States unnecessarily vulnerable to a surprise Soviet attack and blamed Truman’s policy first for permitting the Soviet Union to develop its own atomic bomb, and second for allowing the Soviets to build a stockpile of bombs which would be used in a first strike against the United States. Colonel Robert Erdin feared, “The policy of waiting to receive


the first blow is becoming more and more to mean that we are willing to chance receiving a knock-out blow. A sufficient number of A-bombs planted in the ‘right’ places in the United States will render us temporarily impotent and could so affect the populace psychologically that we would be defeated before we could ever build up to retaliate.” 47 Regarding the fear of Soviet attack, Air War College students repeatedly used alarmist rhetoric, and even invoked analogies to Pearl Harbor—noting that a Pearl Harbor attack would be catastrophic in the nuclear age. The Kremlin, therefore, could never be allowed to have the initiative. One student pointed out that the Soviets did not need to match the United States with aircraft and bombs because their ability to strike first would more than offset the U.S. advantage. 48 Another observed, “This country cannot accept a national strategy and military concept based on a ‘calculated risk’ that an enemy, which may have the capability, does not choose to destroy us.” 49 These students demonstrated a solid understanding of containment in their essays, which reflected their studies. They had read Kennan’s long telegram and the transcripts of five speeches made by Dean Acheson. Additionally, Dean Rusk, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, lectured the Air War College class weeks

before the students submitted their papers.50 However, the militarized thinkers at the Air War College believed that containment depended upon the hope that the Soviets would behave, thus the Pearl Harbor analogies: “If we follow the idea of containment which seems to be the track which we are on now and we await another Pearl Harbor before fighting a major war, we will have lost all that we have fought so hard to get. Containment, they believed, was a faulty strategy based upon hope.

Containment also cost too much, and left the United States economically vulnerable, according to a plurality of the Air War College papers. One representative student believed that if the Soviets did not attack in the next few years, the United States would be bankrupted by the cost of extensive economic and military relief programs anyway.51 Colonel Oliver Loomis saw this as purposeful on Stalin’s part: “Indeed, this is part of Russia’s master plan—to increase the cost of our defense to ruinous proportions in hopes we will spend ourselves into disaster.”52 Most at Maxwell Air Force Base addressed the economy in light of military expenditures. These officers believed that the simultaneous build-up of American army, naval, and air forces, in addition to the rearming of Western Europe, extended too far the federal budget. The

50 Tab 73
United States could not do everything called for by containment, including creating a
giant, balanced force.

As often as the Air Force students mentioned the vulnerability of the United
States to initial strikes and an over-burdened economy, there was one more frequent and
stronger objection to containment. Officers at the Air War College wrote that because
containment was a defensive strategy, it could never compel the Soviet Union to relent
in its aggression against other nations: “We should not sit helplessly by, allowing
Russia to pick off one nation after another.”53 Some at Maxwell Air Force Base conceded
that a defensive posture had been necessary while the United States reversed the
demobilization begun after World War II, but this was not a useful strategy once the
United States and its allies could do more than simply defend Western Europe. For
example, one officer supported the present “holding campaign,” but urged, “Sooner or
later we must, if we expect final victory, select a national objective toward which can be
directed an offensive strategy based upon sound principles and policies which, in
themselves, offer the opportunity for successful offensive actions on the part of our
national leaders.”54 Most felt that it would have to be sooner rather than later, before the
U.S. advantage in atomic weapons slipped away, after which time the Soviet Union

Furtherance Of National Objectives,” in Air University Library (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University
Library, 1951), 11.
would every compulsion to strike first: “The very fact that Russia has not moved against the West means that she considers it disadvantageous to do so at this time. It is precisely during a period of disadvantage to Russia that we should make our pressure felt.” Containment was naïvely risky, costly, and ineffective in the dwindling period of time when the West might have its only military advantage.

Three fourths of the Air War College essay writers believed that the United States needed a new offensive strategy. While some called for military force to block Soviet aggression, others thought that Soviet power must be destroyed altogether. Many advocated the use of force to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence and control over weak nations, referring typically to Western European countries and occasionally North Korea. Lieutenant Colonel Norman Markle proposed dropping an atom bomb on a “strategic spot in Manchuria,” but while the target was in China, his objective was to convey a message to Stalin that he must no longer interfere on the Korean peninsula: “We should inform the Kremlin that her hand is called.”

Many officers at the Air War College thought that the threat or the use of offensive force against the Soviet Union would be necessary in order to prevent a succession of Koreas.

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Others applied this concept to the occupied, Eastern Bloc countries. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Keach believed that world peace could not be achieved until NATO forces were strong enough to force Russia out of all of its satellite countries.\(^{57}\) This scheme typically called for the threat of atomic strikes to force a Soviet “retreat” from its neighboring states. Lieutenant Colonel Henry H. Culler explained:

> Such a plan is comparatively simple. If war has not occurred by the time the United States and its allies reach a military posture calculated to be equal or superior to the Soviet military power, our forces should then immediately be deployed to Western Europe, the Middle East, and Far East. At this time our political leaders should start a strategy of increasing political pressure. This should culminate in an ultimatum to Stalin to get out of Europe and withdraw the Red forces to the boundaries of Russia, under threat of an all-out atomic attack on Soviet industry. Failing compliance, the attack should be launched. On the other hand, if he did comply we should follow up with a second demand, again under the threat of atomic penalty, that he and the Politburo step down from power, open the Iron Curtain, and permit establishment of a representative form of government embodying civil liberties and recognizing the dignity of man.\(^{58}\)

Culler’s “nuclear ultimatum” may sound outlandish today, but as I noted in Chapter Two, it reflected (albeit in caricature form) a concept elaborated by the first Air Force Secretary, Stuart Symington, in 1948.

Other students at Maxwell offered the Soviet Union no opportunity to capitulate before a nuclear strike. Colonel Joseph Smith stated that ultimately, Russia would have

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to be defeated in order to secure world peace.\textsuperscript{59} Alarmed by the news that the Soviets successfully tested an atomic bomb in 1949, one lieutenant colonel supported an “all out war” to be commenced before the United States could suffer unacceptable damage.\textsuperscript{60} Colonel Preston Newton urged the nation to crush the Soviet Union and usher in a “Pax Americana.”\textsuperscript{61} Lt Col Hadley Eliker explained, “To be realistic in this fight for ‘The American Way of Life’ the threat of communism as practiced and controlled from Moscow must not be contained—it must be eliminated.”\textsuperscript{62} Thirty-six students at the Air War College proposed initiating an attack against the Soviet Union, either immediately or as soon as rearmament made conditions more suitable for a U.S. victory.

Whether advocating force to halt the future spread of Soviet-sponsored communism, return Soviet control to Russia’s borders, or eliminate Soviet power altogether, forty of the sixty-three students at the Air War College proposed striking or threatening to strike the Soviet Union in some manner. This number stands in stark contrast to the three students at the Naval War College who believed that the U.S.

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should bomb Russia. These proposals also contradicted President Truman, who publicly promised not to attack the Soviet Union without provocation.

Having submitted their papers only two months after President Truman relieved General MacArthur of his command in Korea, a handful the Air War College students expressed concern that they would be seen as insubordinate. Lt Col Erdin favored immediate atomic strikes against the Soviet industrial complex to “bring her to her knees.” Yet, while taking this position and refuting what he saw as the policy of waiting to be struck first, Erdin claimed that he did not seek to oppose the government of the United States. The administration was not wrong, but misinformed, he argued. Military leaders had not been forthright with civilian leaders, thus the administration could not be aware of the severe weaknesses inherent with its containment policy.63 Several others tried to couch their preference for preemptive strikes in rhetoric that would put the blame on the Soviet Union. Lt Col Eliker proposed a strange ultimatum to the Soviets—either retreat within the borders of Russia, or declare war. Apparently, he did not consider that this approach would leave the Soviet Union with the option of doing nothing. Instead, he believed that his scheme paved the way for “the air offensive” only after Soviet action.64 Others dismissed American aggression as an unfortunate result of Soviet activity. Colonel Oliver D. Loomis claimed that an ultimatum that resulted in a

showdown between superpowers must be viewed as a defensive war, not an offensive, preventive war.65

Yet these officers who couched their rhetoric to appease the Truman Administration were in the minority. Many more officers openly criticized the military chiefs, the State Department, the president, and even the American public. Often, these critics voiced their frustration with existing elements of national security policy.

Students attacked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for supporting Truman’s national strategy and for supporting a balanced approach to rearmament. Colonel George Holcomb faulted the Joint Chiefs of Staff for endorsing President Truman’s support for the United Nations, “even though that body has thus far been unable to enforce peace and security in the world.” Holcomb also chided the Joint Chiefs for appeasing every service with a “balanced forces” approach to rearmament, when advances in aircraft and bomb technology obviously favored a buildup of air forces alone.66 Lt Col John O’Connor shared Holcomb’s disdain regarding the Joint Chiefs’ unwillingness to tighten the purse strings on the Army and Navy. He proposed that the Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs be eliminated, leaving final authority on missions and budgets with the Secretary of Defense.\textsuperscript{67}

Students directed even more acrimony towards the State Department than the Joint Chiefs. Colonel Eskridge called the State Department containment policy “ridiculous” and advocated a shift from containment to a policy of dictating terms to the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{68} Lt Col Paul Thackara looked forward to the day when overwhelming military strength would finally allow the United States to engage the Soviet Union unencumbered by the State Department’s “so-called calculated risks.”\textsuperscript{69} U.S. Army Lt Col Norman Markle protested against the State Department’s control over the Defense Department, noting, “The State Department still hopes to win the cold war in the political field of foreign affairs by economic means and by a slow build up of the military, which it can always control and cut down at will.”\textsuperscript{70} Not one paper at the Naval War College expressed such fiery condemnation towards the State Department.

Proponents of offensive strikes openly challenged the thinking of both the administration and the electorate in the United States. Colonel Marvin Zipp


sarcastically chided the U.S. government for favoring a balanced budget over military readiness: “In the United States mobilization is proceeding at a leisurely pace with much deference being shown to the civilian economy.”

Lt Col Robert Belville faulted “U.S. leaders” for not recognizing the singular importance of airpower and “building an adequate air force.” Colonel Preston Newton believed that Truman fired General MacArthur in order to appease the American public, who could not stomach a tougher approach to Soviet aggression. On this point, Newton denounced both the president and the American public. He also railed against the public for its weakness regarding preventive war:

The public still rejects, from a humanitarian standpoint, the effective defense consisting of destruction of the delivery capability of Russia before it can be released. Out the window goes another good concept for which there is a capability, and we must rest with one that is ineffective.

Given his sarcastic rant towards the American public, it may be safe to conclude that Colonel Newton actually believed what he wrote concerning preventive war. He also reiterated a point repeatedly made by General Anderson and others who taught at the Air University, that preventive war was in actuality a defensive strategy. Here we see Anderson’s pervasive influence on the war college. Anderson no longer commanded

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the college in 1951; however, as Chapter Two noted, he had addressed the class of 1951 early in their course of studies.

Colonel Preston joined several other students who suggested a campaign designed to win the American public over to a militarized approach to national security. Preston wrote that as long as politicians were bound to cave in to the “vagaries of public opinion,” the “public must be informed and educated so that some measure of political maturity is attained wherein the policy which best serves the nation’s interest is consistently chosen.”74 Colonel Oliver Loomis explained the imperative of winning public opinion over to a more aggressive stand against the Soviet Union: “And if we begin now to condition public opinion to this concept together with emphasis upon a ‘survival’ war, may we not reduce our two greatest enemies in one operation, Russian Communism and economic disaster resulting from a potential unending armed peace?”75

5.5 Exchange Students from Other Services

Did the students formulate these distinct interpretations of U.S. national security while attending the two colleges, or did they arrive at each school with preconceived notions of national policy, formed perhaps by service bias? The papers of the exchange officers at the Air and Naval War Colleges may help to answer this question. A handful

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74 Ibid., 18.
of students from the Army and the Air Force attended the Naval War College in 1951. Likewise, a group of exchange officers from other services joined the Air Force students at the Air War College that same year. The exchange students’ papers are too few to draw concrete conclusions; however, they tend to show that the students adopted the predominant view of their war college peers.

Two Naval Officers attended the Air War College and authored research papers that are archived at the Air University Library. Both officers more avidly endorsed the primacy of military power than their peers at the Naval War College. Captain John P. Lunger argued that U.S. economic aid routed through the European Recovery Program did not provide Western Europeans with a sense of security. Instead of squandering funds in Europe, he called for an offensive strategy in Western Eurasia, adding that only a military build-up could “mobilize and carry the war back to the enemy.” His colleague, Commander Scott McCuskey, was even more pugnacious:

In conclusion, I wish to repeat that the Navy advocates air power. It is the dominant force in our military structure. I wish also to state that we are proponents of strategic warfare and convinced that an early air offensive should be undertaken by the strategic air command (if it can be accomplished with acceptable basis); however, it must be directed with far greater precision and selectivity than the bombing effort in the last war.\textsuperscript{76}

Had these Naval officers written these essays at Newport, they would have joined only five other students who prescribed offensive strikes against the Soviet Union.

Only one Air Force officer, Colonel G.E. Cranston, wrote an essay for the Strategy and Tactics course at the Naval War College. Cranston was as nuanced in his approach to national security as his classmates at Newport. He supported the United Nations, propaganda efforts, and economic aid to allies. He flatly condemned preventive war as a tactic that reflected “frustration and a lack of understanding of the world we live in.”

This seems to me to be our real danger: To succumb to the natural tendency to fight fire with fire which would mean we would be fighting our enemies’ kind of game. This danger would grow in proportion to the growth of our military strength for the experience of maintaining large military forces in time of peace is a new experience to this nation and we must guard against the tendency to rely too much on this military force for our security.  

Colonel Cranston’s enlightened comments would have been extraordinary had he written them while attending his service’s war college at Maxwell Air Force Base. Writing at Newport, however, he reflected the predominant institutional view.

The Army officers on exchange at the Naval and Air War Colleges likewise supported the institutional view at the colleges towards policy and strategy. Eight Army officers attended the Naval War College, and nine attended the Air War College.

At Newport, the Army officers’ papers exhibited the preference of the majority at the

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78 In 1951, the Army War College students chose their own topics for the end-of-year research paper. Most tackled operational and tactical issues; thus, no body of papers is available to assess institutional thinking on policy and strategy at the Army War College.
school for a broad use of multiple instruments of power. Five students called for some combination of economic, military, and information power. Only two called for offensive strikes against the Soviet Union. Yet the reverse was true at the Air War College: Five Army officers proposed attacking the Soviet Union without provocation, one called exclusively for military power in defense of the United States, and only two believed that military power should complement the other instruments of national power.

The contrast in papers at the Air and Naval War Colleges speaks primarily to a different focus at each school. While it could be argued that the Naval War College essays, which predominantly recommended a balanced approach using multiple instruments of national power, showed more uniformity than the Air War College’s absolutist papers, I argue that the Naval War College’s focus on unbiased education determined its students’ ideas. In contrast, the devotion to preventive war at the Air War College determined the direction of its papers.

5.6 Explaining the Dogmatic View at the Air War College: Institutional Culture

As the Air War College essays demonstrably show the bias for preventive war, it is fair to ask whether the behavior was deliberate or accidental; i.e., did the Air War College unintentionally “poison the well” with preventive war thinking while tackling its mission of developing official Air Force doctrine and strategy, or did the college deliberately push preventive war thinking upon its students? Several indications point
to the latter explanation. In the first place, the college arranged for General Anderson to return within months of his firing to lecture the students; this suggested not only a lack of regard for President Truman, but also continued support for the general’s views. Yet an even more incriminating example of the college’s intentions concerns the instructor guide for a three-week course taught in April that addressed the “Nature of Current World Conflict.” During that time, a typical day at the school began with a lecture, after which the students broke into small seminars to discuss the subject matter. Each night’s reading assignment provided background information on the next day’s lecture. An officer from the faculty led the discussion in each seminar. The instructor guide provided questions for each day’s seminars, that the faculty could use to steer discussion in the seminars.

Several of the questions for seminars in the “Nature of World Conflict” course were leading, and reflected the school’s bias for preventive war. For discussions on “Strategic Concepts and National Objectives,” one question read: “Discuss whether our present military strategic concepts are those best calculated to achieve our national objectives.” Clearly, the question implied a negative answer. In a seminar in which students compared military strategies and tactics of the U.S. and the USSR, instructors asked, “Discuss whether the strategies of the U.S. and the USSR are defensive or offensive in nature?” Towards the end of the course, several discussion questions were blatantly designed to steer discussion towards preventive war. In a course addressing
“Probable Courses of Action of the U.S. and USSR,” (the course title alone was provocative, and implied that war between the two nations was inevitable), the questions included “Discuss whether the USSR could force collapse of our economic structure and achieve communist objectives without recourse to a declared war,” and “What could the U.S. do to take the strategic offensive in the present conflict?” Even without the preventive war overtones, this scripted approach to seminar discussions would have been uninspired, yet with these leading questions, the approach was outrageous. The instructor guides demonstrate a deliberate effort on the part of the Air War College to narrow the thinking of the students towards the school solution.

The Air War College could have benefited from the institutional culture at the Naval War College, which valued and protected the school’s unbiased learning environment. Much of the credit for the school’s unbiased approach belonged to Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, who ended his tenure as the school’s president in 1942. Shortly before leaving Newport, Kalbfus sent a paper to the Secretary of the Navy that he believed would provide fundamental concepts to shape the focus of the Naval War College for years to come.79 He viewed the Naval War College as singularly important; it was the one forum where officers could not only study the elements of war and discuss military topics, but also present and debate disparate views. Furthermore, he

admonished, without an understanding of the fundamentals of war, coupled with experiences and opinions shared by other officers, senior leaders would be equipped only with narrow views from which to consider the conduct of war. Thus, the president advocated an environment where, rather than a downward flow of information, there would be instead the “rubbing of elbows” between the faculty and students, on an equal footing. Kalbfus clearly valued the free exchange of ideas and the liberal academic environment at Newport, and he fought to preserve this positive aspect of the college for future student classes. For the next decade, Naval War College presidents referred to Kalbfus’ educational concepts.

In the late 1940s, two Naval War College presidents pushed for the addition of civilian professors to the Naval War College faculty in an effort to broaden the thinking at Newport. In May 1948, as the war college president, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance asked Navy Secretary Forrestal to approve a civilian faculty member who could lecture on politics, social matters, and naval history, and thus expand the minds of staff and students. Forrestal agreed to create the position; however, the Navy did not fund the chair. Spruance’s successor, Admiral Conolly, asked Navy Secretary Matthews in 1951 to fund the position. Conolly wrote that this professor would provide a broadening view of political science, economics, and other social sciences. The Navy funded the position.

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81 “Staff Study, The United States Naval War College,” 12.
school’s Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History in 1951, but what is significant is that Spruance and Conolly both asked for the position because they believed that a civilian professor would temper the all-military faculty.

With a similar focus on tempering the military program, Admiral Conolly also requested that the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William M. Fechteler, establish a board of consultants for the college. Conolly maintained that civilian oversight would promote the atmosphere of unbiased thinking at the school (he was not clear as to how civilian consultants would accomplish this). Admiral Conolly’s primary interest, however, was to prevent service bias from permeating the academic environment of the Naval War College: “Inquiry into the War College curricula by such a representative group would insure not only a broad contact with responsible civilian opinion concerning the needs of military education but would be a most effective means of insuring that the curricula were neither unduly insular nor wasteful of potential opportunity for the betterment of the Navy and the Nation.”\(^8\) Within Admiral Kalbfus’ ideas and his successors’ requests for civilian faculty and advisors, the Naval War College leadership openly acknowledged that the school was prone to insular thinking and homogenous military influence. The Naval War College class of 1952 wrote nuanced papers; moreover, it did so under the tutelage of a fully military faculty. While

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pushing for civilian faculty, the Naval War College presidents reinforced the culture of unbiased learning at Newport—and, given the quality of the student papers, achieved their goal.

5.7 Conclusion:

It is impossible to discern from these essays what the students at either school actually believed about national security policy and military strategy. It is feasible that the half of the Air War College students who wrote in support of militarized strategies and preventive war did so because this approach offered the fastest path to graduation. Likewise, the possibility exists that the half that wrote on other subjects—including new tactics, logistics and supply issues, and analyses of operations during World War II—may have deliberately avoided having to regurgitate what they viewed as the preventive war rubbish fed to them over the course of the school year at Maxwell. Yet one point remains: In 1951, the Air War College indoctrinated rather than educated. It is hard to imagine that General Kenney could applaud with a straight face the enlightened academic environment of the Air War College on its tenth anniversary, considering that he commanded the Air University from 1948 until 1951, a period that could easily be considered the heyday of dogmatic thinking at Maxwell.

In taking up the preventive war argument, the student papers reflected most of the arguments put forth by the school’s former commander, General Anderson, as they made analogies to Pearl Harbor, and wrote about the shrinking window of opportunity
to strike the Soviet Union, the ignorance of waiting to be attacked, and, above all, that preventive war was a defensive strategy. Like Anderson, they took a Soviet-centric view of the Cold War, ignored international laws concerning human rights and war, and acted out of fear. In short, the students, and the Air War College, were casualties in the preventive war movement.
6. Asserting Civilian Control Over the Military: A Preventive Approach

What is rarely grasped, even by those who are involved, is that both structurally and operationally, the system does not work smoothly much of the time. The military does obey orders and civilians do make the major decisions, but beneath the surface the process consists of continual conflict and struggle for influence, which on occasion blows up and flares into major confrontation, or the appearance of confrontation. Sometimes, even while there appears to be harmony, there is ongoing negotiation, compromise, conflict, and maneuvering, the reality of which makes “civilian control” a far more complicated and less certain business.¹


This is how University of North Carolina Professor Richard Kohn characterized the conflict between soldiers and civilian leaders in the United States when he protested the insubordinate behavior of the military during the presidency of Bill Clinton. He could have been referring to the case for preventive war in the Air Force during the early Cold War. With the exception of General Orvil Anderson’s public gaffe, the preventive war enthusiasts maneuvered “beneath the surface” in order to usurp the commander-in-chief’s authority, established by the Constitution. President Truman’s decision to use atomic weapons only in retaliation, despite the dwindling period of the U.S. monopoly on nuclear weapons, was in all likelihood the most significant national

security decision that the Commander-in-Chief had to make during his presidency.

Although the movement in the Air Force to subvert Truman’s decision represents one of
the most significant breakdowns in civil-military relations, the scope of the preventive
war episode has gone largely unrecognized until now.

How can the United States reduce the likelihood of military dissidence,
especially when it occurs beneath the surface? This question haunts the study of U.S.
civil-military relations. Political scientist Peter Feaver provided the simplest description
of the civil-military dilemma in 2003: “The civil-military problematique is thus a simple
paradox: the very institution created to protect the polity is given sufficient power to
become a threat to the polity.”2 At its extreme, the threat to the polity would be a
military coup d’état and junta; however, many civil-military scholars, including Kohn and
Feaver, believe that a military coup in the United States is highly unlikely.3 The focus in
U.S. civil-military relations, then, is on establishing a framework that reduces military
dissent towards civilian policy, short of a coup. In this dissertation, I have analyzed a
more credible danger in examining a covert attempt by USAF high-ranking officers to
subvert the declared aims of the Commander in Chief. Though perhaps the preventive
war movement in the Air Force fell short of the threat of a coup, it nonetheless provides
an indication of how insubordination in the military’s ranks can undermine U.S. policy.

2 Peter D. Feaver, Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations  (Cambridge, MA: Harvard
3 Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” 15-16; Feaver, Armed Servants: Agency,
Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations: 10-11.
This chapter introduces a new concept for successful civil-military relations, based upon considerations drawn from this examination of the preventive war movement in the early Air Force. This concept questions three prominent theories concerning U.S. civil-military relations: Samuel P. Huntington’s objective control, Morris Janowitz’s constabulary theory, and Peter D. Feaver’s agency theory. Each theorist has contributed significantly to the field of civil-military relations; however, I argue that none of these approaches confronts the lobby for preventive war in the Air Force at the outset of the Cold War. My concept for “preventive control” of the military builds on these theorists and offers an alternative overall strategy for civilian leaders.

6.1 U.S. Civil-Military Relations Theory: Huntington, Janowitz, and Feaver

The Cold War during the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies provided the context for the two competing theories of U.S. civil-military relations. Samuel P. Huntington authored *The Soldier and the State* in 1957. In 1960, Morris Janowitz rebutted Huntington’s theory and offered his own model for civil-military relations in his book entitled *The Professional Soldier*. In 2003, Duke University professor Peter Feaver offered a compelling addition to U.S. civil-military relations theory, when he presented his agency theory in *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*.

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Huntington, a Harvard University political scientist, observed during the 1950s that modern technology, which had made it far easier to travel and connect the economies and societies of the world, also made the United States vulnerable to attack on its own soil. For the first time in American history, U.S. national security was no longer a given in international relations; rather, it was the goal. Huntington began to question how American liberalism could adequately provide for American national security when faced with the strategic environment of the Cold War. In *The Soldier and the State*, he developed a conservative, realist’s approach, while presenting a model that has become a cornerstone, the “normal theory” of civil-military relations.6

In Huntington’s thesis, the officer corps constituted a profession, dedicated to the management of violence, with the state as a client. The corps remained professional, however, only to the extent that it shunned participation in politics and economics, and that it swore not to think independently. Therefore, Huntington insisted that government assert what he called *objective control*, by recognizing military autonomy while rendering officers politically sterile and neutral. The alternative, subjective control, civilianized the force and allowed officers to freely participate in politics, thus destroying its objectivity and professionalism.

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Janowitz, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, held a contrary view of civil-military relations. Expecting that limited war would be the norm throughout the nuclear age, Janowitz believed that professional officers needed to understand and accept the political constraints on the use of force. Specifically, he believed that to successfully lead the profession of arms during the Cold War, military leaders confronted three key challenges: How to balance conventional and nuclear warfare; how to defend weak states that preferred to remain unaligned with either the Communist bloc or the West; and, how to facilitate military participation in future arms control and inspection practices. Taken together, these considerations demonstrated that distinct periods of peace and war had ceased to exist. In effect, the Cold War was the confluence of peace and war, simultaneously. Therefore, senior officers would have to learn how to apply military power in this new and muddled environment.7

To educate officers for this reorientation, Janowitz recommended a military establishment modeled on the civilian police force in American society. He called this the *constabulary force*. Historically, Janowitz observed, the police had been professionals in the management of violence, yet law enforcement typically had focused on keeping the peace, rather than winning victories. This is what Janowitz had in mind for the military:

The constabulary concept provides a continuity with past military experiences and traditions, but it also offers a basis for the radical adaptation of the profession. The military establishment becomes a constabulary force when it is continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seeks viable international relations, rather than victory, because it has incorporated a protective military posture. The constabulary outlook is grounded in, and extends, pragmatic doctrine.\(^8\)

The constabulary force’s focus on the minimum use of force represented a radical departure from the U.S. military’s traditional focus on victory, and Janowitz anticipated that officers in the 1960s would likely spurn his prescription for their profession. Yet the constabulary force was Janowitz’s attempt to position the officer corps for success in the limited wars that would characterize the nuclear age.

Fever viewed Huntington and Janowitz’s theories as foundational but flawed conceptualizations of U.S. civil-military relations; thus, he stated the need for a different approach. Huntington’s objective control failed to explain how the U.S. won the Cold War, because in fact the United States had never traded its liberal tradition for a conservative ideology, which Huntington stated would have to happen in order to survive in the Cold War. Additionally, he considered Huntington’s “professional force” to be a limited means for effective control of the military, because essentially the concept advocated an internal mechanism to determine military behavior; i.e., the military should regulate itself to maintain its professional qualities. Janowitz’s constabulary force was no different, in Feaver’s opinion, because it, too, relied upon the military

\(^8\) Ibid., 418.
profession itself to determine its own conduct vis-à-vis civilian leaders. Feaver argued that a complete framework for civil-military relations must also include external controls, i.e. mechanisms, by which civilians, not the military, determine and shape conduct in the Department of Defense.

Feaver determined that punishment served as a primary external mechanism for civilian control over the U.S. military. Agency theory thus described a simple relationship: The U.S. military would “work” (behave) or “shirk” (actively resist) civilian leaders based on the expectation of receiving punishment for shirking. Traditionally, civilian leaders employed five distinct means to punishment the military for shirking civilian leaders: intrusive monitoring, cutting budgets, charging individuals under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, “extralegal civilian action” such as private admonishment, public rebuke (as when President Truman denounced Navy Secretary Matthews in August 1950), and firing. When Feaver examined the U.S. military’s expectation of punishment during the Cold War, he discovered that the military leaders mainly complied with civilian policy during the period, in large part because civilian leaders more closely monitored behavior within the services.9

6.2 Confronting the Air Force’s Preventive War Behavior with Existing Civil-Military Theory

I contend that each theory—Huntington’s objective control, Janowitz’s constabulary force, and Feaver’s agency theory—could not have prevented the breakdown in civil-military relations that prompted the preventive war activity in the Air Force. Huntington’s approach would have been especially problematic, because objective control describes what actually took place at the Air War College up until 1950; essentially, General Anderson isolated the faculty and students from liberal American thinking; this “professionalism” resulted in absolutism and unrealistically out of touch planning (more on this point later in this chapter). Although Janowitz’s desire to make the officer corps more pragmatic seems to be validated by the preventive war episode, Feaver was essentially right to fault Janowitz, who, like Huntington, provided no means of strong civilian oversight and agency to correct errant military behavior.

Yet Feaver’s focus on punishment as his sole external mechanism would have been inadequate to correct the preventive war movement. While Feaver called for a combination of external and internal measures, by his own admission he sought to “explicitly consider the role punishment plays in U.S. civil-military relations.”10 The preventive war airmen’s behavior reveals two issues with a civil-military framework based upon fear of punishment as the primary means to control errant military behavior.

10 Ibid.
First, punishment is a reactionary means of external control. Obviously, one cannot punish until an infraction is committed. However, in the case of high-stakes insubordination, such as disagreement concerning nuclear weapons, civilian authorities can hardly afford to wait for an officer to commit an act. While General Anderson’s hijacking of the Air War College to promote his unsanctioned strategy was serious enough, acting on it could have had unthinkable consequences if he had been the commander of Strategic Air Command, or perhaps worse, a wing commander of a SAC bomb wing.

In fact, SAC commanders had exhibited a compulsion to act beyond their authority. As noted earlier, on one occasion General LeMay declared his intention to launch retaliatory strikes without presidential approval, in the event of a surprise Soviet nuclear attack. LeMay’s successor at SAC, General Thomas S. Power, may have been even more dangerous and unpredictable. General Power worried his deputy commander, General Lauris Norstadt, who feared that Power was mentally unstable, and yet had the authority to launch the U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Furthermore, had a renegade commander decided to launch unauthorized nuclear strikes, he easily could have done so. The first equipment to safeguard a nuclear weapon from accidental or unauthorized arming did not come until the United States developed Permissive Action

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Links (PALs) for its nuclear weapons in 1962.\textsuperscript{12} The worrisome behavior of Air Force generals and the simplicity of launching nuclear weapons in the 1950s provide an alarming context when one considers rhetoric such as that of Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg, who told senior Air Force leaders at the 1952 commanders’ conference that only preventive war could protect the United States from absolute destruction. Of course, no unauthorized act involving SAC bombers and nuclear weapons occurred during this period, but the possibility of such an occurrence happening raises questions as to the usefulness of punishment as the primary means of determining favorable civil-military relations.

Additionally, the rebuke and dismissals administered by President Truman during the preventive war episode did not accomplish all of its intended goals. In an eight-month period beginning in August 1950, President Truman rebuked or dismissed three prominent figures—Navy Secretary Matthews, General Orvil Anderson, and General Douglas MacArthur—for publicly contradicting the administration’s policy against offensive action towards North Korea, China, or the Soviet Union. On one hand, punishment in these instances may have suppressed public criticism of the President; certainly, after MacArthur’s firing, outcry from within the military against Truman’s policy seems to have ceased. Yet in the case of General Anderson’s firing, the

\textsuperscript{12} Peter Stein and Peter D. Feaver, \textit{Assuring Control of Nuclear Weapons: The Evolution of Permissive Action Links} (Cambridge, Mass: Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, 1987).
commander-in-chief expected more than an end to public protest from within the services. The day after General Vandenberg fired General Anderson, President Truman insisted, “We are arming only for defense against aggression.13 President Truman addressed the nation at this moment, but this remark was directed at preventive war advocates, especially those in the military. His Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, made the same point to the military in October: “The military policy which supports our foreign policy and our national objectives must be in harmony with both.”14 As discussed in Chapter Two, Truman expected that removing Anderson from command would compel the military establishment to get in line behind his defensive strategy for the Cold War. As the evidence in this study demonstrates, the Air Force did not.

Ultimately, Feaver’s framework reduces to identifying noncompliant behavior and punishing the military for it: “The day-to-day business of civil-military relations, then, is a game of strategic interaction, with civilians monitoring their military agents and military agents determining whether to work or shirk based on expectations the agents have about the likely consequences: will shirking be discovered and, if so, will it be punished.”15 Yet the Air Force leadership’s persistent advocacy of preventive war poses an additional question: Will such punishment fix the root problem that is causing

the military to shirk in the first place? As I suggested in my introduction, the behavior of the preventive war airmen as a pressure group seems more to fit the behavior of a rebellious teenager rather than that of an errant infant. In this episode, punishment did nothing to fix the root problem—activity for preventive war under the surface of the Air Force and the ideology that spurned it; thus, the shirking persisted beneath the surface.

The three prominent frameworks for civilian control over the military inadequately addressed the problems inherent in the Air Force during the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies. Although Huntington wanted the military to become more absolutist and less political, and Janowitz desired the opposite—a more liberal and politically savvy officer corps, both relied on the military services to police themselves in order to achieve each author’s concept of a professional force. Feaver’s theory advocated only punishment, which certainly has its place, but is nonetheless a reactionary measure that fails to shape attitudes and behaviors within the military before a civil-military crisis might erupt. This chapter does not purport to present a complete new framework, but it offers a two-stage approach for balancing external and internal mechanisms, upon which others may build. I call this approach “preventive control.”

6.3 Preventive Control of the Military: An External Mechanism for Effective Civilian Control

“Preventive control” is analogous to preventive medicine. The modern medical approach to “at risk” patients involves regular monitoring and testing as well as a
program of lifestyle changes and medicinal therapy. For example, a patient with a
family history of hypertension, once identified, may have his blood pressure or other
indicators checked more regularly than patients without an increased risk of the disease.
In addition to pills, his doctor might also prescribe an exercise and diet regimen
designed to reduce the likelihood of high blood pressure.

To borrow from medical parlance, the military is “at risk” for defying civilian
authority, particularly because the U.S. presidency may change every four years. Brown
University’s Charles E. Neu observed that during the Cold War, “national security
policy was centered in the hands of civilian and military bureaucrats, and the power of
the president to make and enforce policy was restricted.” 16 Neu’s observation matches
Kohn’s description of the military’s continual “struggle for influence” over policy that
continued after the end of the Cold War. In once respect, the four-year election cycle
with a two-term limit has created the potential for fundamental change in long-range
diplomatic and strategic military regimes. Part of the resistance within the military has
been caused by the reversal of course brought about by changing administrations.
Nonetheless, an effective civil-military control framework must accept that activity
within the military to contradict policy is not only likely, but the norm. This may seem
to be a pessimistic view, especially given the author’s own military background, yet it is
also realistic, and, more importantly, provides the proper perspective for a framework

that more actively seeks to ascertain and control the shirking of civilian authority within the services.

Given the proclivity of the military to subvert civilian authority, I argue that U.S. civil-military relations would benefit from a preventive regimen that mirrors what the medical community has been doing for years with at risk patients. The first component is increased monitoring: Civilian authorities must proactively examine the services for any possible subversive behavior. The second component is preventive treatment, including outlook changes: Civilian leaders should inject into professional military education programs designed to broaden military thinking and to foster compliance with stated policy. I argue that this would not turn officers into relativists; the examination of war college papers in Chapter Four indicated that the pragmatic officers at the Naval War College strongly advocated of military power. Moreover, they did so in keeping with national security policy. This should be the goal for the modern officer corps.

The first component—actively monitoring the military for indications of shirking civilian policy—assumes that indicators exist which can inform civilian leaders of dissent within the military before greater acts of insubordination occur. Had civilians closely examined the Air Force in the early Cold War, they would have discovered indications of the preventive war attitude in the Air Force. Even discounting the private speeches at the Air War College, civilian leadership could have taken note of senior
leaders’ public comments and the regular calls for preventive war in the *AU Quarterly Review*. A proactive examination of the Air Force might have led civilian leaders to address the preventive war movement long before General Anderson’s outburst at the Air War College. Furthermore, the General Anderson affair ought to have warned civilian leaders as to the possibility of further preventive war sentiment in the Air Force.

Certainly, General Anderson’s public outburst against President Truman offered civilian leaders a most blatant example of dissent in the ranks of the Air Force. This point may serve future civilian leaders: When senior officers speak out publicly against policy, one should expect that less obvious acts of resistance are already underway beneath the surface of the respective service. In the first place, every flag officer understands full well that any public outburst jeopardizes their future as senior military leaders. General Anderson observed at the war college that his even his private condemnation of President Truman might have career-ending consequences. Second, it is highly unlikely that a senior officer would voice opposition to civilian policymakers unless the officer’s objection was shared by at least a handful of peers. Therefore, when an outburst such as General Anderson’s occurs, civilian leaders would do well to suspect that the comment might be the tip of the iceberg, and look for more evidence by monitoring the service beneath the surface.

Any intrusive monitoring of the military must begin with the civilian leaders appointed to supervise each service—that is, the service secretaries, their civilian
deputies, and their civilian staffs. The first two Air Force secretaries failed in their obligation to address the preventive war movement in the service. Stuart Symington’s culpability on the preventive war issue is not as straightforward as it may seem, for he did nothing wrong by recommending preventive war on behalf of the Air Force to President Truman. Incredible as it may be that the preventive war airmen convinced Secretary Symington of the need for a preventive war against the Soviet Union, the secretary’s informal proposal for preventive war to Truman aide Clark Clifford at dinner in 1948 demonstrated no insubordination towards President Truman; Secretary Symington had an obligation as much as a right to speak plainly to his civilian leadership about the his views and those within the Air Force concerning national security. But Symington crossed the line of appropriate behavior when he distributed throughout the Air Force 1500 copies of General Anderson’s article recommending preventive war, a strategy that contradicted his administration’s policy. The distinction may be subtle, yet Symington was advocating a position in his private comments to Clifford; with the copies of Anderson’s article, he was lobbying against policy within the Air Force. Furthermore, Secretary Symington’s string of speeches before he resigned in 1950 publicly contradicted the President’s position on reserving nuclear weapons for retaliation.

Truman’s complaint against the second Secretary of the Air Force, Thomas K. Finletter, is even more complicated than the criticism of Secretary Symington, since,
throughout his tenure as secretary, Finletter defended containment and the Truman Administration’s decision not to strike first with nuclear weapons. Thus, Finletter seems to have been perfectly in accord with the policies of his commander-in-chief. Yet, Finletter held the secretary’s office during the Anderson affair. General Spaatz’s *Newsweek* editorial may have appeased the inquisitive American public, but it should not have satisfied the top civilian responsible for the behavior of the Air Force. Finletter had to have known that General Vandenberg, his service’s top general, had spoken publicly for preventive war at the Armed Forces Day address in Detroit in May 1950. Other indications of preventive war activity after Anderson’s firing existed as well, including General Anderson’s return to the war college stage, and the preventive war rhetoric in the *Air University Quarterly Review*. Furthermore, the fact that the secretary did not attend the meeting in 1952, when the Chief of Staff and other four-star generals promoted preventive war plans, did not excuse him from the responsibility of knowing what plans the Air Staff developed and intended to send out to fielded units. These clues were not apparent, and would have required a deliberate investigation into the preventive war attitude in the Air Force that prompted the Anderson affair. No such investigation occurred. This is indeed a tough indictment of Secretary Finletter, who, after all, supported the Truman Administration’s foreign policy; however, I contend that the service secretary had the obligation to investigate and monitor behavior within the service, especially concerning an issue as momentous as the use of nuclear weapons.
In addition to actively monitoring the military for dissent, a preventive civilian control framework should infuse into professional military education a focus on broadening officers’ minds and reinforcing their obligation to comply with established civilian policies. Where Feaver advocated the threat of punishment as a primary means of controlling military behavior, I argue that efforts to reduce absolutism within the officer corps would decrease incidents of shirking, and, therefore, the need to punish in the first place. I agree with Kohn on this point, who recommended “sophisticated” studies in civil-military relations for all officer ranks. Additionally, the heavy course load in military subjects at the war colleges and command and staff colleges should be balanced with more studies in international relations, the focus of which should be the limits of civil policy on the use of military force, and the effective use of other instruments of power.

Siding with Janowitz in his disagreement with Huntington over whether the professional force should be militarized or pragmatic, I argue that the preventive war movement in the Air Force reveals great difficulties with Huntington’s concept of militarized professional officers. The preventive war airmen in the early Cold War fit exactly Huntington’s concept of military professionals. These airmen considered war with the Soviets inevitable, viewed offensive military power as the only means to halt Soviet aggression, and seemed unconcerned and undeterred by political limitations to

offensive force, even unprovoked nuclear attacks. Given this perspective, they continually expressed semi-public frustration and resistance towards Truman and Eisenhower’s policies against a U.S. offensive nuclear strike. Janowitz saliently observed that absolutist military thinking would lead to frustration in the officer corps, especially during times of limited war. Yet Huntington seemed more concerned with the possibility that a politically savvy officer corps would become weak concerning the use of military force. For this reason, only the most senior military officers, who regularly interact with statesmen, should try to comprehend policy and limitations of war.

The pragmatists examined in this study—the students at the Naval War College—dispute Huntington’s fears concerning politicized officers. The Navy’s students rejected military power (not just nuclear weaponry) as the primary means of winning the Cold War, but that is not to say that they overlooked the primacy of military power to defend the United States and the West. Actually, nearly all of the Naval War College students who argued for economic, diplomatic, and informational campaigns to curb communist expansion did so only after they recommended increased military buildup in the United States and a rearming of Western Europe. These officers rejected offensive military force, but championed a strong military defense. Janowitz
astutely observed, “Military leaders, whether of the ‘absolutist’ or ‘pragmatic’ school, tend to place great emphasis on military factors in international politics.”

Furthermore, Huntington’s approach to professionalization made it impossible for preventive war airmen to develop a military strategy that served national security policy. Since only the top military officers needed to understand politics, Huntington charged these elite few with developing military strategy: “When required in his executive capacity to make decisions involving both military and political elements, the military man ideally should formulate his military solution first and then alter it as needs be on the advice of his political advisers.” Huntington’s approach failed to consider how difficult this theory might actually be in practice. None of the preventive war strategies put forth during the early Cold War could have been “altered” on the advice of the administration; they would have to have been thrown out completely. Furthermore, Huntington overlooked the fact that the top military officer typically does not formulate military strategy for the service; rather, many subordinate ranks participate in drafting military plans. Thus, junior officers must likewise understand the political limitations imposed on military power. Ultimately, Janowitz’s concept for enlightened thinking in the military was spot on. The great strength of his concept for military professionalism is that he understood that the military would best serve

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national interests during periods of limited war by recognizing the political limitations of military power.

While Janowitz’s end state for the military best serves the needs of United States’ policymakers, Janowitz tasked “military managers,” with the responsibility for establishing and maintaining the constabulary force. The preventive control concept suggests that agency for pragmatic military education should be in the hands of the civilians who control the military.

To instill a liberal education program at the service schools, service secretaries could task the schools’ civilian advisory boards to determine an appropriate amount of courses in political science, international relations, and economics to balance courses in strategy, tactics, joint warfare, and planning. The advisory boards may first require an examination by civilian leaders. Currently, the Air University Board of Visitors is served by equal numbers of senior military leaders and representatives from civilian academia; a liberal academic program may warrant oversight by a higher proportion of civilian scholars.

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20 Janowitz noted, “Military managers will have to prevent the constabulary from being dominated or defined by either the military technologist or the heroic leader…The heroic leaders…tend to thwart the constabulary concept because of their desire to maintain conventional military doctrine and their resistance to assessing the political consequences of limited military actions which do not produce ‘victory.’” Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*: 424-5.

Furthermore, the conflicting missions of the early Air War College—strategy development versus education—seems to indicate that schools with a mission of developing strategy are likely to also develop a “school solution.” The post-World War II Naval War College leadership fiercely guarded the liberal academic environment at the college; as a result, students had a better opportunity to develop a broad conceptualization of the Cold War than the students at the Air War College. Doctrine and strategy are essential components of the military profession, but they should be developed at separate institutions. Today, some Air Force leaders and educators continue to profess that the Air War College is the only facility in the service, with officers from all specialties in the Air Force, who have the time to solve strategic, tactical, organizational, and technological, and personnel-related problems. This concept may serve the Air Force in its efficiency, but as the Air War College of the 1940s demonstrated, it may also cost in terms of educational effectiveness.

Civilian leaders should ensure that policies governing military schools maximize the opportunities for civilians to influence military education and minimize opportunities for senior officers to promote a dogmatic service agenda. To make military schools appear more attractive to civilian academics, Dick Kohn suggested before a House Armed Services subcommittee in 2009 that war colleges and staff schools should offer faculty tenure and opportunities to conduct research in their fields of
experts.\textsuperscript{22} With regard to undue military influence over the service schools, civilian leaders should insist that service schools serve as places for open discussion. Recently, the Army War College drew criticism for suppressing the views of independent military analysts opposed to the military strategy against radical Islam in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{23} Civilian leaders should proactively investigate accusations such as these, to ensure that there is no biased agenda at any military school.

Finally, civilian defense leaders should examine the myriad policies concerning academic freedom at the various service schools. Since 1940, the American Association of University Professors’ code for academic freedom has protected civilian college and university teachers from institutional censorship or discipline for expressing their views in the classroom. Yet the war colleges are not uniform concerning academic freedom; several of the schools’ policies are determined by service regulations, which supersede the AAUP code. The AAUP code states that teachers and professors “should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances.”\textsuperscript{24} Thus the AAUP defines the classroom as public space; speakers cannot be punished by the institution, but their comments are subject to public scrutiny. Currently, the Air War

\textsuperscript{22} Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Twenty Years After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel, 20 May 2009.


College and the Air Command and Staff College are governed by an Air University regulation which declares that any attendee in an academic event is “prohibited from divulging the identity of any particular speaker, whether a guest speaker, faculty member, or student, for the purpose of attributing to that speaker any specific remarks or statements.” This order effectively declares military classrooms and lecture halls private space, and thus affords additional protection to those who speak. I believe that this policy is superfluous, and risks giving military officers who lead the colleges the opportunity to restrict thinking in the classroom or the lecture hall without the opportunity for any public discussion of ideas generated within the school. General Anderson hid behind academic freedom at the Air War College in the early 1940s to poison the learning environment at the War College. A public conversation in early 1949 about the discourse at the Air War College would not have brought about a reprimand against General Anderson, but it might have provided an opportunity for a balanced discussion at the Air War College on U.S. national security. The goal is not to restrict the military’s freedom of speech, as honest military advice may avoid poor decisions concerning the use of force. H.R. McMaster brilliantly demonstrated top U.S. military leaders recognized critical flaws with the strategy in Vietnam, but failed to speak out. Today, as then, officers of all ranks need to be able to express their opinions

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plainly and without fear of consequence. However, the framework for such an environment already exists in the AAUP code.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Richard Kohn suggested several practical solutions to President Clinton’s problem of “Out of Control” behavior in the military in 1994, including a “concerted campaign” by the Secretary of Defense to reassert civilian control, diversifying “attitudes and perspectives” within the officer corps, and teaching civil-military relations “at every level.” Like Feaver, Kohn put the agency back into the hands of the authoritative partner—the civilian leader. Preventive control does exactly that; by monitoring behavior, especially beneath the surface of the military establishment, service secretaries and other civilian leaders can root out potential breakdowns in civilian control. Through its pragmatic education campaign, preventive control also diversifies the officer corps by moving the corps away from a militarized mentality to a more nuanced understanding that is better suited to the restrictions on military power in limited wars. The premise for this proactive approach to civil-military relations is the belief that the military is at risk for insubordinate behavior. Obviously, that is not to suggest that major breakdowns caused by military shirking are commonplace; rather, it seems that military insubordination regularly prompts disruptions in the chain of command, and, occasionally, major disruptive events occur, such as the preventive war episode of the early Cold War. Preventive control addresses both phenomena, by
recognizing the everyday state of affairs in the military bureaucracy, then applying
educational programs to reduce the likelihood of disharmony between politicians and
military officers.
7. Conclusion

There’s been abroad in this land in recent months a whisper that we have somehow lost our greatness, that we do not have the strength to win, without war, the struggles for liberty throughout the world. This is slander, because our country is strong, strong enough to be a peacemaker. It is proud, proud enough to be patient. The whisperers and the detractors, the violent men are wrong. We will remain strong and proud, peaceful and patient, and we will see a day when on this earth all men will walk out of the long tunnels of tyranny into the bright sunshine of freedom.

President Jordan Lyman
From the 1964 Film, “Seven Days in May.”

In 1964, two popular movies characterized fictitious Air Force generals as warmongering zealots. Burt Lancaster starred as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James Matton Scott in “Seven Days in May.” General Scott, with the support of the other Joint Chiefs and several congressmen, attempted to organize a coup d’état, after the President of the United States indicated that he would sign a bilateral nuclear disarmament treaty with the Soviet Union. That same year, Stanley Kubrick released his satire, “Dr. Strangelove.” In it, George C. Scott played the wildly bellicose Air Force Chief of Staff, General Buck Turgidson. After a deranged SAC wing commander launched his nuclear bombers without authorization against the Soviet Union,

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Turgidson expressed to the President his hope that one bomber would reach its target in Russia and start World War III, which the United States, he believed, could win.

Pop culture credits the inspiration for both generals to General Curtis LeMay. In the case of “Seven Days in May,” the attribution to LeMay is factual; one of the co-authors, Fletcher Knebel, stated that he got the idea for the book after interviewing General LeMay, who, off the record, railed President Kennedy’s handling of the Bay of Pigs crisis, and called his Commander-in-Chief a coward.² LeMay may have influenced Stanley Kubrick as well; a New York Times article in 2004 commemorating the fortieth anniversary of “Dr. Strangelove” remarked that “General LeMay’s distrust of civilian authorities, including presidents, was well known among insiders, several of whom Mr. Kubrick interviewed.”

However, General LeMay was not so much a rogue as the highest profile member of a coterie of like-minded officers and planners. While it would have been overreaching to claim in this project that the Air Force supported preventive war, many of its most prominent and influential senior leaders did, and the service reflected their influence during the period, in war plans, senior officer education, and proposals intended for Presidents Truman and Eisenhower. In his “Biographical Tour” of Air Force leaders for the Journal of Military History in 1998, Philip Meilinger provided the

² Bruce Lambert, “Fletcher Knebel, Writer, 81, Dies; Co-Author of ‘Seven Days in May’: [Biography; Obituary (Obit)],” New York Times, 28 February 1993.
historiography for eleven prominent generals who shaped the Air Force after World War II. This study identified eight of those men as preventive war advocates. These included Arnold, the “Father of the Air Force,” and his two adjuncts, the first three Air Force Chiefs of Staff, the first two commanders of Strategic Air Command, and the first Commandant of the Air War College, Orvil Anderson.

For the first time, this project has explored the phenomenon of preventive war thinking in the Air Force during the first decade of the Cold War. With the benefit of previously classified documents and underutilized war college papers and speech transcripts, this study expands the existing literature on the preventive war movement in the Air Force. Four key findings reshape the narrative.

First, preventive war thinking in the air service had begun with the “Father of the Air Force,” General Hap Arnold. None of Arnold’s biographers addressed his calls for preventive war against the Soviet Union, which he had first urged in the months before his retirement in 1946. Yet his repeated advocacy for preventive war, especially in the months between the Soviet atomic test of August 1949 and his death in January 1950, energized his acolytes, Generals Eaker and Spaatz, and the other preventive war zealots in the Air Force.

Second, Major General Orvil Anderson took command of the Air War College in 1946 with the blessing of the top generals in the Air Force, who also advocated preventive war. This casts new light on the previous accounts of the Anderson affair of
1950. In past accounts, Anderson has received a disproportionate share of opprobrium for his preventive war thinking, in part because the studies overlooked preventive war activity in the Air Force outside of the Air War College. Of course, Anderson rightly deserved punishment for his public criticism of President Truman and his nuclear policy. And yet, even with his influence over the war college as its first commandant, Anderson could not have pressed his preventive war ideology at the school as effectively as he did without the implicit support of his superiors, who shared his dogmatic view.

Third, the call for preventive war survived General Vandenberg’s removal of General Anderson from the Air War College in 1950. In fact, preventive war persisted in part because Vandenberg himself believed in the strategy, and pushed for preventive war plans at the commanders’ conference two years after he fired Anderson. This observation also amends the existing literature concerning the Air Force and preventive war. To date, all accounts have viewed the Anderson affair as the climax of the preventive war phenomenon. This study suggests that the actual culmination of the preventive war movement in the Air Force was the failed effort to promote Project Control to other military services and government departments in mid-1954.

Last, when Project Control failed, the Air Force, led by Chief of Staff General Nathan Twining, finally sought a military strategy that supported the Commander-in-Chief and his national security policy towards the Soviet Union. Prior to this moment,
the high-standing Air Force generals who preferred preventive war had usurped any progress within the service towards a strategy that fit with Truman and Eisenhower’s policies concerning nuclear war. The preventive war plans that General Vandenberg promoted at the commander’s conference in 1952 provide the best evidence that the Air Force had not yet begun to develop a military strategy within the parameters established by the administration. This changed in 1954, however; with the demise of Project Control, General Twining subordinated to presidential policy his own bias for preventive war, and demanded an air strategy in keeping with President Eisenhower’s concept of Massive Retaliation. In doing so, General Twining is the unsung hero of the Air Force’s preventive war episode.

Ironically, General Twining is the least celebrated of all of the generals who led the Air Force in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, Hap Arnold and Hoyt Vandenberg have Air Force bases named after them. Education centers at Maxwell Air Force Base bear the names of Ira Eaker, Carl Spaatz, and Curtis LeMay. Each general has at least one published biography. General Twining has no base, no building, and no published biography. This is regrettable, because Twining, the first Air Force Chief of Staff to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, effectively ended a period in which the preventive war ideology dealt significant, negative ramifications to the Air Force and, worse, may have led to catastrophe for the United States.
One might be tempted to downplay the activities of the preventive war advocates in the Air Force. After all, the movement for preventive war failed; Truman and Eisenhower’s civilian appointees over the Defense and State department never seriously considered Project Control or any earlier preventive war strategy. Yet, despite its ultimate failure, the push in the Air Force for preventive war had serious ramifications for the service and U.S. national security.

7.1 Consequences of Preventive Thinking

First, the preventive war advocates forced upon the Air Force a military strategy that was not only unsanctioned, but also farcical in terms of the likelihood of actual success. During Truman’s presidency, the Air Force had neither the atomic stockpile nor the long-range bombers in sufficient quantity to cripple the Soviet Union with a surprise nuclear attack. By Eisenhower’s first term, the Soviet Union had already fielded enough of a strategic bomber force to threaten any U.S. city with a retaliatory nuclear strike, thus preventive war would have been highly problematic at this time as well. The preventive war prophets in the Air Force ignored reality, in terms of political expediency, but also in terms of practical feasibility.

The second consequence was a direct result of the first: The obsession with preventive war in the Air Force delayed any progress towards a viable retaliation strategy. Only after Project Control failed in late 1954 did Chief of Staff Twining concede that preventive war was a nonstarter and direct the Air Force to develop plans...
in support of Massive Retaliation. Up until this time, the Air Force had continued to
discard energy and resources, while developing plans that were derivatives of preventive
war.

Third, the Air Force allowed its dogma to drive a culture of narrow-mindedness
at its highest institution for learning—the Air War College. This may have been
purposeful, given the disposition for preventive war in the senior Air Force ranks and
the sympathetic view held by General Anderson on the subject before he became the
college’s first commandant. Emboldened by the first Air University commander, who
established the war college to educate and to develop military strategy, General
Anderson indoctrinated his subordinates—the faculty first, and the student body
second—to advocate preventive war. His influence outlived his tenure at the institution,
as evidenced by the Air War College essays written in 1951, which strongly advocated
preventive strikes against the Soviet Union.

Last, the preventive war arguments of the most senior Air Force leaders risked
escalating Cold War tensions and perhaps even triggering a nuclear strike. One
possibility was that a general’s bellicose rhetoric might have frightened the Soviet Union
into military action. The Soviets were aware that several generals in the United States
supported offensive military action. For example, at a United Nations conference in
Paris in 1948, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Vishinsky voiced his alarm about
American “war-mongers;” in his long list of antagonists, he included the first
commander of SAC, General George C. Kenney. Had the Soviets seriously feared unsanctioned military action, they might have chosen to attack first. The war game for Project Control in 1954 alludes to this point. There is great irony in the disappointment exhibited at the Air War College in 1954, when its war game for Project Control ended abruptly as the Soviet team, facing a U.S. ultimatum, struck first with nuclear weapons. However, the game’s outcome reinforces the possibility that a nation backed into a corner by a more powerful state may elect to strike first. Given this possibility, the preventive war activity by senior Air Force generals seems to have been risky and foolish, as well as insubordinate.

But the greatest possibility of preventive war rhetoric igniting the Cold War may have existed in the potential for renegade nuclear action by a preventive war airman. As noted in Chapter Five, Air Force commanders had exhibited a compulsion to act beyond their authority. These generals might have prompted a sympathetic commander to do the unthinkable—launch nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union without the approval of the President.

### 7.2 The Role of Society in Civil-Military Relations

This project uncovered an opportunity for future research concerning the role of American society in U.S. civil-military relations. In my research I found a file in the Air

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University library from 1955, which contained a three-page bibliography on the military mind. A cursory review of the sources suggest that there was considerable public discourse on the military mind, perhaps beginning after President Truman fired General MacArthur in 1951. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas authored one of the articles; he wrote “We Have Become Victims of the Military Mind” for Look magazine in March 1952. Douglas stated, “The increasing influence of the military in our thinking and in our affairs is the most ominous aspect of our modern history.”\(^4\) Additionally, several Air Force and Army War College papers in the mid-1950s attempted to defend public attacks against the military mind. Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz disagreed on whether the military should mirror or be distinct from American society; however, neither theorist discussed the role that society plays in fostering military compliance with policy. The bibliography and these student essays raise several exciting new questions. What was the effect of such rhetoric on the military; i.e., did liberal American society in the 1950s serve as a means to check rampant absolutist thinking in the military, and, if so, how? More important, what is the role of American society in promoting civilian control over the military? Finally, Michael Sherry’s In the Shadow of War excellently demonstrated that American society became increasingly militarized in the twentieth century; how did this phenomenon change society’s

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function in U.S. civil-military relations?  

7.3 Contemporary Implications of Preventive War

In the eleven years since the September 11th attacks, the threat of attack by rogue states or terrorist organizations using weapons of mass destruction have brought to the forefront a renewed discourse about the viability of preventive war. As al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks, any action against that network since 2001 could be viewed as retaliatory action, not preventive war; however, President George W. Bush’s announcement of the U.S.-led “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) implied that the United States could target all organizations viewed as perpetrators or sponsors of terrorism; thus, GWOT could be seen as a preventive war against terrorist groups other than al-Qaeda. In 2001, Vice President Richard Cheney authored the one percent doctrine, arguing that enemies posing a WMD threat with a one percent probability of striking at the United States must be treated as if there is a one hundred percent likelihood of attack. Here, the vice president’s rationale carried to the extreme a frequent argument put forth by preventive war advocates, including the airmen under President Truman: In determining whether or not to act, the likelihood of an enemy attack becomes less important as the consequences become more catastrophic. President George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a preventive war; his primary rationale

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5 Michael S. Sherry, In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930’s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
for the invasion was Saddam Hussein’s chemical weapons program that could threaten the United States at some point in the future. President Obama has conducted preventive war as well; his “signature strikes” in Yemen in early 2012 targeted “individuals whose patterns of behavior signal the presumed presence of an important militant or of a plot against the United States, even if the targeted individual’s identity is unknown.” These missions fit the classic definition of preventive war.

Most recently, preventive war debate has addressed the Iranian nuclear weapons program. The Stuxnet computer virus, which penetrated and damaged Iran’s network of uranium centrifuges in June 2010, may be the world’s first preventive strike in the cyber realm (I argue that it was a preventive strike; however, I cannot be certain that it was the first). Israel and the United States, the nations most likely behind Stuxnet, have also threatened kinetic strikes against Iran’s nuclear weapons production facilities.

The preventive war debate of the early Cold War has particular relevance for the present-day Iranian nuclear dilemma. The overtones from Iran’s religious clerics complicate matters for U.S. and Israeli national security experts; some argue that the clerics are much less aggressive than President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; others claim

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that the clerics’ radical Islam is the underlying cause of Iranian aggression towards Israel and the West. Regardless, Iran is a sovereign state, and, as such, it has its own existence at stake should it act irresponsibly, especially with nuclear weapons. In this regard, the threat—or more importantly, the perception of threat—posed by Iran echoes that posed by the Soviet Union towards the United States and the West in the 1940s and 1950s.

University of Illinois professor Paul W. Schroeder drew comparisons between Josef Stalin and Saddam Hussein on the eve of the second gulf war in 2003: “Stalin had nuclear weapons, was a worse sociopath than Hussein and even more paranoid about threats to his reign, and his record of atrocities against his own people was far worse than Hussein’s; yet none of this gave any indication whether or how he would use nuclear weapons in his foreign policy. On that score, he was demonstrably cautious.”

The same could be said of Iran’s leadership today; though President Ahmadinejad called Israel “an insult to humankind” in August 2012, neither he nor the Guardian Council have given as a purpose for Iran’s nuclear weapons program the destruction of Israel. In the early Cold War, a minority of absolutists in the United States argued that the Soviet Union would strike once it had a sufficient nuclear arsenal. These, including the preventive war advocates in the Air Force, made similar calls for action as those who urged war against Iraq in 2003, and those who urge war against Iran today. That the

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Soviet Union never did attack might compel us to ask whether Ahmadinejad’s inflammatory rhetoric matches the actual intentions of the state of Iran concerning nuclear weapons.

Thus, the preventive war movement in the Air Force has implications for contemporary national security issues; it also has significance for civilian control over today’s military. The preventive war phenomenon in the early Air Force demonstrates an extreme example of what nonetheless is typical behavior in the military; that is, the military (or a component within it) routinely attempts to regulate matters that civilian leaders have been authorized by the Constitution to govern. The Constitution authorized Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to govern national security policy; nonetheless, a subset of the military—the preventive war airmen—usurped presidential policy on the use of nuclear weapons in the decade after World War II. This statement is not meant to infer that successful civil-military relations begins with a view of military leaders as conniving or underhanded; rather, it should be seen as a matter-of-fact interpretation of the organization of military professionals. On several occasions in this dissertation, I have compared the behavior in the Air Force after World War II to that of misbehaving teenager. It is in the average teenager’s nature to push back against parents and disobey from time to time; this does not make the teenager inherently flawed or untrustworthy. However, the teenager’s inclination for such occasional behavior requires that a parent balance appropriate monitoring with trust.
U.S. civil-military relations since the creation of the National Military Establishment have tilted towards too much trust and too little monitoring. Existing civil-military theories have erred in the same manner. I do not argue for intrusive monitoring; such an approach would foster distrust between the military and its civilian leaders; worse, it could lead to intrusive actions that thwart the military’s ability to accomplish its missions. However, as I stated in Chapter Six, civilian leaders, beginning with the Secretary of Defense and the service secretaries, have an obligation to examine the military for indications of frustration, resistance, and insubordination. Additionally, liberally educating the officer corps would decrease absolutism and increase pragmatism in the ranks, as Morris Janowitz suggested in 1960. This would reduce frustration and increase the acceptance of political limits imposed on military power. I argue that this approach of actively monitoring and liberally educating—what I call preventive control of the military—would allow military professionals to remain managers of violence, give solid advice on the use of military force, and support the decisions of the Commander-in-Chief—even when they don’t agree.

7.4 Conclusion

Today’s military flying may be inherently dangerous, but it pales in comparison to the risks involved in combat flying during World War I. Accidents caused more fatalities than combat losses, as aircraft made of wood and cloth crashed during takeoff,
landings, and as a result of deadly spins. In 1916, the average life expectancy of a pilot on the Western Front was three weeks.\textsuperscript{10}

In these conditions, Billy Mitchell rose to prominence among U.S. airmen. He was the first American to fly over enemy lines, and by 1918 he commanded all U.S. air units in France.\textsuperscript{11} Victorious in the skies over Western Europe, Mitchell returned to the United States and battled the War and Navy Departments for their lack of vision regarding the potential of air power unfettered from surface forces. Mitchell, court-martialed for insubordination in 1926, resigned his commission and spent his retirement fighting for an independent service until his death in 1936. Thus Mitchell, like the airmen who followed him, defied not only gravity, but also the established authority that opposed his views concerning air power.

Since its inception, the Air Force has relished its bold and daring pioneers, who not only conquered the challenges of flight, but also stood defiant against any that resisted the establishment of an independent air service and the progression of air power. On the eve of service independence, Chief of Staff of the Army Air Forces General Carl Spaatz told the inaugural classes of the Air War College and the Air Command and Staff College in 1946,

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Up until this time we have never had binding, hampering tradition to contend with, except, perhaps, the tradition of nonconformity, of rebellion against the accepted traditional way of doing things, and of vigorous, forward looking thought. That tradition we must resolutely maintain!\textsuperscript{12}

Following the “tradition of nonconformity” first demonstrated by Billy Mitchell, the airmen fought and won independence, sole custody of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and more than half of the Department of Defense budget with its audacious dissidence towards military and political opponents. Subsequently, the Air Force preventive war advocates seemed to believe that they could successfully challenge the stated position of the first two Cold War presidents concerning the use of nuclear weapons. On this monumental issue of national security, the preventive war zealots failed.

This push for preventive war by Air Force advocates may thus be viewed as a triumph and a failure in U.S. civil-military relations. That the first two Commanders-in-Chief in the Cold War proved superior over the preventive war airmen validated the authority vested in the president on military matters. At the same time, for its persistence and the depths to which the airmen involved attempted to usurp policy, the

\textsuperscript{12} Muir S. Fairchild, "Address of Welcome to Students, Air War College, and Air Command and Staff School," (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Force Historical Research Agency, 1946), 55. General Spaatz’s comments are included in the transcript of General Fairchild’s speech.
preventive war episode demonstrated one of the worst breakdowns in civilian control
over the military in United States to date.
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274


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Biography

Edwin H. Redman was born in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1967. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from the United States Air Force Academy in 1989. In 2005, he received his Master’s of Airpower Arts and Science Degree from the Air Force School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. He is a colonel in the United States Air Force, and a command pilot who has flown all of the Air Force’s bomber aircraft.