NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

NORMATIVE FACTORS IN U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY

by

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September 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY ***(Leave blank)***	**2. REPORT DATE** September 2016	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE NORMATIVE FACTORS IN U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY			**5. FUNDING NUMBERS** **N/A**
6. AUTHOR(S) Michael W. Preczewski			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER** N/A
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			**10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER** **N/A**
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB protocol number ____N/A____.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

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Today's policymakers must understand the constraining role that norms have on nuclear policy, and that these norms differ in their constraining effects when nuclear policies are broadened beyond just those of nuclear use. Nuclear policies regarding the possession of nuclear weapons are also influenced by norms, but not necessarily in the same way as they are for nuclear use.

14. SUBJECT TERMS nuclear policy, norms, logic-of-consequences, logic-of-appropriateness, tradition of non-use, military utility, cold war, nuclear taboo			**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 111
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UU

NSN 7540–01-280-5500 Standard form 298 (Rev. 2–89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239–18

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NORMATIVE FACTORS IN U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(STRATEGIC STUDIES)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
September 2016**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	anti-ballistic missile
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
ICBM	inter-continental ballistic missile
INF	intermediate nuclear forces
LoA	logic-of-appropriateness
LoC	logic-of-consequence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	national security decision directive
PD	presidential directive
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SANE	National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WMD	weapon of mass destruction

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would foremost like to thank my wife, Betty, for her love and support. I wrote this thesis partially in hopes of creating a less dangerous world for her and our future family in which to live.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Naval Postgraduate School for their tireless efforts at both shaping this thesis and my intellect. I am deeply indebted to Professor Wade Huntley and Professor Daniel Moran for their instruction and guidance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary question of this thesis is: Have norms constrained U.S. nuclear policies, and if so, how? This thesis will examine prevailing attitudes and beliefs concerning nuclear weapons throughout the Cold War and whether those norms limited U.S. nuclear policy, and if those effects were consistent over time. The answers to these questions will then be applied to how norms affected two specific nuclear policies: nuclear use strategies (which will be further divided into "first-use" and "retaliatory-use" of nuclear weapons), and strategies concerning the possession of nuclear weapons (including both the numbers of nuclear weapons and their capabilities). Contemporary academic literature explores how norms constrain the use of nuclear weapons, but fails to draw a distinction between first-use and retaliatory-use. Additionally, further research is needed to determine how the shared expectations for behavior affect policies of possession in addition to policies of use. Nuclear strategies have changed tremendously over time, the effect that norms have on constraining nuclear policy must be understood holistically across a broad range of nuclear use and possession policies.

B. IMPORTANCE

If norms constrain nuclear policy decisions, then that would constitute convincing evidence that American national security strategy is entwined with those norms. Norms, as defined by the scholars in the field of nuclear policy, are considered to be "shared expectations for behavior held by a community of actors"[1] or a "standard of right and wrong."[2] Furthermore, the significance that policymakers place on norms regarding nuclear weapons may change over time.

[1] Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 22.

[2] Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

Today's officials should be able to differentiate how shared expectations of behavior affect nuclear policies, past and present, so that they can better understand the consequences of their policy choices, as well as anticipate the nuclear actions of other states.

International and domestic expectations surrounding nuclear weapons must be understood across a range of nuclear policy options in order to paint an accurate picture of constraints and opportunities for American nuclear strategies. Contemporary normative theories for nuclear use policy over generalize how norms constrain nuclear employment by focusing heavily on policies of first-use (i.e., the first state to use nuclear weapons, when nuclear weapons had not been used by opposing parties). Thus, they fail to address how norms concerning retaliatory-use (i.e., the use of nuclear weapons to thwart an existential threat or in response to the use of a weapon of mass destruction against the state or its allies) may be very different and inconsistent with acceptable behaviors for first-use. This thesis will use historical evidence to show that norms had differential influence on nuclear use and possession policies. Furthermore, contemporary normative literature does not pay adequate attention to normative constraints on nuclear possession and force posture policies. Additional research is needed to determine how norms can have different constraining affects among varying nuclear policies and circumstances.

International norms have not yet prohibited every possible use of nuclear weapons. While generally against the use and possession of nuclear arms, the United Nations General Assembly is justified in addressing the legality of nuclear policies concerning both the use and possession of nuclear arms. Highlighting a distinction between these two policy areas, at the behest of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), a ruling by the International Criminal Court of Justice opinion memo ultimately determined that nuclear weapon use could be justifiable

and legal under certain circumstances.[3] This is evidence that modern expectations of behavior applying to the possession of nuclear weapons may be different, or less influential, than those concerning how those weapons are used. A greater understanding of the constraining effects that norms have on nuclear policy will allow nuclear policymakers to make better-informed decisions regarding American national defense strategies.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

There are numerous potential explanations for how norms have affected U.S. nuclear policies. One hypothesis is that they play little role in constraining or influencing U.S. nuclear use and possession policies. This result will render any differences between the effects that norms had on nuclear use and possession strategies as relatively insignificant.

A second hypothesis is that norms are largely explanatory for constraining U.S. nuclear use and possession policies. If this hypothesis is correct, then further research into how and under what circumstances these norms affect varying nuclear policies would need to be undertaken; such as whether or not the accepted behaviors for nuclear first-use policies are equally constraining for nuclear retaliatory-use plans, as well as for various nuclear possession policies such as numbers of warheads and destructive capability.

If norms are in any way explanatory for constraining U.S. nuclear policies, the relative effects that these norms have on nuclear use policies should be compared to their effect on nuclear possession policies. In this situation, one hypothesis would be that norms are more (or less) explanatory for constraining nuclear use policies than they are for constraining nuclear possession policies. An alternative hypothesis to this would be that norms have an inconsistent explanatory value for nuclear use and possession policies, making an

[3] International Criminal Court of Justice, "Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996," July 8, 1996, http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=498&p1=3&p2=4&case=95&p3=5.

understanding of normative effects very circumstantial. The outcomes of any of these three hypotheses would help fill a gap in knowledge that currently exists in nuclear policy literature.

D. SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT ON NUCLEAR USE AND POSSESSION

Thomas Schelling, an expert on nuclear strategy and arms control, declared that, "The most spectacular event of the past half century is one that did not occur. We have enjoyed sixty years without nuclear weapons exploded in anger."[4] This quote best describes the modern phenomenon of nuclear-armed nations refusing to use nuclear weapons in conflict. There exists large bodies of research and theories that attempt to explain the key variables that have prevented the use of nuclear weapons in anger, and much research exists on how norms factor in to non-use. Some theorists argue that norms are highly explanatory in preventing the use of nuclear weapons, and some that argue that the importance of norms is minimal. Scholars that have explored the explanatory power of norms do not always agree on the value that these variables play in nuclear policymaking.

This literature review will point out where these theorists agree and disagree, highlighting the areas of knowledge that they have overlooked. There are four overall schools of thought on how norms influence state nuclear policy: the logic-of-appropriateness school, the military-utility school, the logic-of-consequences school, and the tradition of non-use school.[5]

1. Logic-of-Appropriateness School

The first school of thought, known as the logic-of-appropriateness (LoA) school," views the constraints placed on the use of nuclear weapons through a

[4] Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 287.

[5] Scott D. Sagan, Daryl G. Press, and Benjamin A. Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 200, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/FINAL_APSR_Atomic_Aversion.pdf.

social-constructivist lens.[6] Theorists in this camp regard state decisions to be motivated by socially constructed ideas on the appropriate or inappropriate use of nuclear arms in certain situations. Ultimately, decision makers base their policies upon their internalized notions of right and wrong. Domestic and international norms contribute greatly to leadership decisions and can constrain their conceptions of appropriate behavior.[7] This school places the explanatory variables of nuclear non-use under constructive notions of norms, and discounts the value of material or realist influences on policymaker decisions.

Within this LoA umbrella is the conclusion that powerful ethical-norms exist against the use of nuclear weapons, so much so that their use has become taboo. Nina Tannenwald's book, *The Nuclear Taboo*, describes this taboo as a "widespread popular revulsion against nuclear weapons and widely held inhibitions on their use."[8] Another scholar, Peter Gizewski, describes the taboo as "absolute and all-encompassing, the prohibition sets all nuclear weapons apart as unique."[9] These authors argue that American policymakers have internalized an understanding that the use of nuclear weapons is abhorrent and inappropriate behavior. The taboo against the use of nuclear weapons in Tannenwald's theory is not separated between first-use or retaliatory-use, instead nuclear employment in any fashion is considered to incur "moral opprobrium or political costs,"[10] The only weakness to the taboo that Tannenwald identifies is regarding nuclear use as a "last resort."[11]

Both Tannenwald and Gizewski claim that the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is closely linked to the United States' refusal to use the weapon

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 8.

[9] Peter Gizewski, "From Winning Weapon to Destroyer of the World: The Nuclear Taboo in International Politics," *International Journal* 51, no. 2 (1968): 397–419, http://doi.org/10.2307/40203121.

[10] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 362.

[11] Ibid., 369.

in the Korean War. Tannenwald does not say that a taboo against nuclear use existed in the early 1950s, only that the foundation of an emerging taboo began in the 1950s. Specifically, she argues that norms were forming against the first-use of nuclear arms.[12] Additionally, she finds evidence that policymaker's decision to refrain from using nuclear weapons in the Vietnam and Gulf Wars was constrained by ethical-normative prohibitions against the use of nuclear weapons. Over time, she argues, norms against the use of nuclear weapons were reinforced so much that the idea of their use today is completely taboo and unthinkable.

Tannenwald argues in her book that, despite America's explicit policies that allow for nuclear use, there is an implicit understanding that their use will never be appropriate. Explicitly, in the most recent U.S. *Nuclear Posture Review*, there exist situations wherein U.S. policymakers would consider using nuclear weapons, such as using nuclear arms as a last resort option in self-defense.[13] Despite this explicit policy, Tannenwald firmly contends that an implicit taboo exists on the use of nuclear weapons today. She concludes that ethical norms against any appropriate use for nuclear arms have been "institutionalized and internalized to varying degrees in policy."[14] Where Tannenwald's argument differs from other normative arguments concerning nuclear policy is that Tannenwald cites evidence that the norms against nuclear use have developed into a new category of constraint, that of a "taboo."

This thesis will focus only on whether or not international and domestic expectations for behavior have constrained nuclear policy, not whether or not those expectations have transcended into the definition of a taboo. Furthermore, this thesis will look at whether or not social-constructivist norms on nuclear use are the same for first-use or retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons.

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[12] Ibid., 10.

[13] U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS121566.

[14] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 386–387.

Tannenwald and other social-constructivist scholars find evidence that norms against the use of and possession of nuclear weapons exist from the international community, religious organizations, and public opinion. From the international community, numerous treaties and conventions exist that highlight strong norms against the use and possession of nuclear weapons. However, there is a great disparity on exactly how these norms affect policies of possession and use. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) codifies international norms against both the possession and proliferation of nuclear arms, yet supports increased cooperation regarding peaceful nuclear activities.[15] This highlights differing expectations of behavior regarding nuclear capabilities. Furthermore, Article VI of the NPT calls for the United States and other nuclear-armed nations to remove their nuclear stockpiles.[16]

Religious organizations attempt to explain the ethical and normative constraints against the use of nuclear weapons as being grounded in religious principles. Religious groups are not altogether unified in their nuclear policy beliefs. Some churches and religious groups oppose all nuclear policies to include the use of nuclear weapons and their possession; others conclude that there are ethical reasons to support the possession and use of nuclear arms in certain situations.[17]

Howard Davis does an excellent job outlining the role and power of religious groups on influencing policy decisions for nuclear weapons. Overall, he argues that the influence and power of religious groups has never been particularly authoritative and that their influence on politics has been declining since 1945.[18] One reason for the small role that religious influence does provide for nuclear policies is that religious organizations rarely reach a consensus

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[15] Department for Disarmament Affairs, "The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," July 1, 1968, United Nations, http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.html.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Howard Davis, *Ethics and Defence: Power and Responsibility in the Nuclear Age* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 10.

[18] Ibid., 11–14.

concerning the morality of nuclear use and possession, and thus their role in creating and expanding norms for nuclear weapons is diminished. For example, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in October 1982 contended that nuclear arms possession is morally justified as a temporary means of deterring war, but their use is never morally acceptable.[19] Davis argues that until religious leaders can articulate their arguments in the language of politics and national interests, religious efforts to influence policymakers will continue to be weak.[20]

Finally, evidence for the existence of norms regarding nuclear policies exists among public opinion. Public opinion, as a venue for understanding which behaviors are considered appropriate, is an influential factor in developing policy. American leaders operate in a democracy, and as such, public opinion is an underlying foundation that influences U.S. foreign policy. Congress and the Executive Branch of government write U.S. foreign policy, and both are beholden to public opinion in a democratic society. Therefore, factors that influence public opinion will also influence policymakers and foreign policy itself.[21] The public is an actor that decides which behavior is appropriate to them, and thus they represent a normative voice in nuclear policy.

U.S. policymakers cannot disregard domestic public opinions when making foreign policy decisions and must always balance foreign policy objectives with public opinion back home. Steven Hook describes this balance between domestic support and foreign support as a "two-level game," that is uniquely constraining as both domestic and international support is often desired for successful policymaking.[22] The appropriateness of nuclear weapon use will be heavily influenced by domestic and foreign public opinion. This thesis will look

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[19] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, a Pastoral Letter on War and Peace,* May 3, 1983 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1983), http://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf, 16.

[20] Davis, *Ethics and Defence*, 270.

[21] Steven W. Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 212.

[22] Ibid., 82.

deeply into domestic and foreign public opinion on nuclear policies as evidence of normative constraints on strategy.

2. Military Utility School

The second perspective of thought, known as the "military utility school," focuses on the utility of nuclear arms as compared to conventional arms.[23] This theory discounts the relevance of norms and ethics in nuclear policy. John Mueller, a scholar of the military utility school, argues that nuclear weapons simply were not as useful as conventional weapons in American conflicts.[24] Other scholars claim that nuclear weapons had an inherent "indiscriminate nature, radiation effects, and so on,"[25] which prevented policymakers from choosing nuclear arms over conventional weapons.

This theory takes a realist approach toward policymaker decisions on the cost benefit analysis of nuclear weapons, arguing that conventional arms were better suited to material gains in the battlefield. Researchers in this school argue that as the effects of nuclear weapons become more precise, discriminate in their effects, and useful on the battlefield than conventional weaponry, the chances for their use will increase.

The explanatory value of this theory can be observed particularly through the war-planning and nuclear polices of U.S. military leaders. Contemporary literature shows that military leaders often differed in their views regarding the utility of nuclear weapons, and that support for their use was highly circumstantial. The U.S. director of Policy Planning Staff recognized the utility of nuclear weapons in the Korean War as early as 1950.[26] For a brief time following

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[23] Ibid.

[24] John E. Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nps/Top?id=10346475, 15, 148.

[25] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 40–41.

[26] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. VII Korea, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1950v07, 1041–1142.

the end of the Korean War, American political leaders implemented strategies wherein nuclear weapons use would be the cornerstone of army strategic doctrine; this strategic period was known as the "Pentomic Era."[27] On the other hand, as the constraining effects of radiation and nuclear fallout became more understood, military leaders saw the utility of atomic weaponry decrease. The capabilities of nuclear arms continually changed in order to increase their utility throughout U.S. history. The short and long-term political fallout from the use or possession of nuclear weapons is not considered relevant in the military utility theory; instead, those considerations fall into a third school of thought.

3. Logic-of-Consequences School

The third school of thought places little emphasis on the value of norms in nuclear policy and instead focuses on a realist understanding of the logic-of-consequences (LoC).[28] This line of thinking places explanatory value for the non-use of nuclear arms on policymaker's strategic cost and benefits analysis, broader than military utility, regarding their use. Theorists in this school focus on how policymakers weigh the short-term gains that nuclear weapons offer against the potential long-term consequences of their use.

This school differs from the LoA school regarding the role of norms. Specifically, the LoA school would argue that nuclear behavior is governed by an actor's personal beliefs and moral constructs, the LoC theory would argue that an actor's personal beliefs do not factor into their behavior; instead the actor is only concerned with how others would view their behavior. If an actor concludes that there is more to be gained than lost from one type of behavior, then they will choose the behavior that benefits them most. Norms represent an external constraint for the LoC school, rather than an internal one.

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[27] Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The U.S. Army between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), https://cle.nps.edu/access/content/group/04437998-a701-4c28-b26d-c673be566d7f/Week%206%20Readings/ADA956178%20Pentomic%20Era.pdf, 103–104.

[28] Sagan, Press, and Valentino, "Atomic Aversion," 2.

Nuclear deterrence, a prominent theory under the umbrella of the LoC school, is explained as a policy that is rooted in rational leaders refusing to use nuclear weapons out of fear that retaliation for such an attack will outweigh any benefits of their use.[29] Military documents express the goal of nuclear deterrence was to "discourage potentially aggressive states from taking steps that might bring on a new world war."[30] Rational leaders would calculate that the consequences of using nuclear weapons would be so severe, that they would choose not to use them on those grounds. Furthermore, possession of nuclear arms will act to deter other rational leaders as well.[31] It is widely understood that deterrence theory had a significant effect on U.S. nuclear policy.[32] This theory finds well-documented support in Washington's explicit nuclear policies, to include National Security Council documents[33] and *Nuclear Posture Reviews*.[34]

4. Tradition of Non-Use

T. V. Paul describes the tradition of non-use as the concept that the unwillingness to use nuclear weapons is "attributed to an informal norm inherent in the tradition of non-use, which has gradually emerged since 1945."[35] Thomas Schelling declares that this tradition of nuclear abstinence was an unintended result of nuclear non-use during the 1950s, and that the tradition on non-use

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[29] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2007), http://www.rand.org/pubs/commercial_books/CB137-1/, viii–ix.

[30] George F. Lemmer, *The Air Force and Strategic Deterrence 1951–1960* (Washington, DC: USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, 1967), http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb249/doc09.pdf, 1.

[31] Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May Be Better," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, ed. Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

[32] Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*; Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (1979): 291–324.

[33] National Security Council, *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1950), www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm.

[34] U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, xii–xiii.

[35] T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.

grows with every circumstance that nuclear arms are not used in conflict.[36] The difference between a tradition and a norm is subtle but important. A tradition is a self-perpetuating behavior that has continued over time largely because decisions to alter such a behavior were not desired. Traditions can persist, not because a behavior is deemed right or wrong, but simply because it has been done before and there is no desire to change that precedent.[37]

Leading scholars in the tradition of non-use theory argue that a tradition of non-use began with Truman's attempts to categorize the atomic bomb as inherently different from conventional weapons.[38] Ever since this form of nuclear behavior was chosen, nations have feared breaking this tradition as it might set a precedent for nuclear behaviors that are unwanted. There is not necessarily a normative reason to refrain from using nuclear weapons, but simply a desire to maintain the status-quo of non-use. A traditional behavior of non-use developed despite the explicit National Security Council (NSC) 68 and NSC 162 policies that allowed for their use, showing evidence that this behavior was not normatively based.

Schelling proclaims that America's decision to abstain from the use of atomic weaponry was an act of unacknowledged arms control that inadvertently strengthened norms against nuclear use.[39] Today's U.S. *Nuclear Posture Review* still calls for nuclear use in the defense of allies and those underneath an American "nuclear umbrella."[40] Overall, the tradition of non-use theory combines realist notions of national interests and discounts the power of norms to explain why policymakers are constrained against using nuclear weapons.

Theorists in this school argue that nuclear policies are not shaped by norms, but instead out of fear that the security of the United States may be

[36] Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* 296–297.

[37] Sagan, Press, and Valentino, "Atomic Aversion," 5.

[38] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 42.

[39] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 297.

[40] U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, xii–xiii.

negatively affected by violating the precedent of nuclear abstinence. Morality is not the variable that concerns scholars of this school of thought; it is the material consequences of violating a tradition that explains policymaker decisions. Finally, this school of thought finds that traditions themselves can lead to the development of norms. For example, Paul argues that "the normative prohibition inherent in the tradition is informal and intermediate," because the norm is not yet universal or codified in law among the "majority of nuclear states."[41]

Theories of appropriateness, military utility, consequences, and tradition all focus heavily on nuclear use policies and do not pay adequate attention to nuclear possession policies. Additional research is needed to determine how norms affected varying forms of nuclear use as well as nuclear possession decisions.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

Nina Tannenwald and T. V. Paul's books, *The Nuclear Taboo* and *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons,* respectively, are great case studies for answering this thesis' research question. These two books offer theories from the LoA, military utility, LoC, and tradition of non-use schools for the role of norms in nuclear policy, and their supporting evidence covers the entirety of the nuclear age. This thesis will draw evidence from the same cases as Tannenwald and Paul, but emphasize the differences between how norms affected nuclear possession policies verses how they affected nuclear use policies. Tannenwald places norms as the largest explanatory factor in the non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945. Paul emphasizes that non-use of nuclear weapons was not normatively constrained, instead the decision to abstain from their use created an informal norm against their use; an informal norm that continues today. These arguments are the primary starting point for this thesis because they are concentrated on the role that norms play in constraining U.S. nuclear policy, and because these books use evidence from throughout the Cold War.

[41] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 197.

It is possible that the evidence interpretations used by Tannenwald, Paul, and other theorists, misrepresent how norms affected nuclear policies by failing to distinguish a difference between their explanatory power for differing nuclear policies. Nuclear use policy is circumstantial, and norms that affect first-use policies might very well differ from those concerning retaliatory-use. Uncovering evidence that norms concerning nuclear weapons are variable, depending on circumstances surrounding their use or possession, highlights that some areas of nuclear policy have been overlooked or misrepresented.

Starting from 1945, Tannenwald and Paul use primary and secondary sources to defend their argument that norms against the use of nuclear weapons have slowly strengthened over time. This thesis will use an analytical method that differentiates between norms regarding nuclear use and possession policies. Research will also delve into primary source documents that detail how norms regarding U.S. nuclear policy were discussed and understood by policymakers during times when critical changes to American nuclear policy were publicized. Washington's explicit policies may not always match the actions and interests of policymakers behind the scenes. This thesis will highlight areas where explicit nuclear policies diverged from the tacit and prevailing norms that policymakers espoused during their development and implementation. Understanding the differences between America's explicit and implicit nuclear policies will be critical to explaining how norms affected U.S. nuclear policy.

Subsequent chapters are organized in a chronological format that starts in 1945, builds through the Korean, Vietnam, Gulf, and Cold Wars, and concludes with how norms affect U.S. nuclear policy today. This organization follows the research and organization of Tannenwald and Paul's arguments, and allows comparisons based on the same evidence to show how normative constraints have changed over time.

II. EARLY COLD WAR AND KOREAN WAR ERA

> Somehow or other we must manage to remove the taboo from the use of these weapons.
>
> —Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, October 1953[42]

A. INTRODUCTION

The substantial influence that norms placed on the use of nuclear weapons in the early Cold War is evident in the proclamation by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. When this statement was made, America was at the start of the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union, as well as battling a hot war in Korea. Policymakers in the early 1950s had to determine America's nuclear policy at a time when "the moral, psychological, and political questions involved in this problem would need to be taken into account and be given due weight."[43] This era represents a vital case study for understanding the interplay between norms and U.S. nuclear decision-making, because it set the foundation for American nuclear policy.

Evidence from this period in the Cold War shows that leading normative theorists over generalized the effects that norms had on America's use of nuclear weapons during this time period by primarily focusing on nuclear first-use policies while ignoring detailed nuclear retaliatory-use policies. For example, both Tannenwald and Schelling argue that Washington's refusal to use nuclear weapons in the Korean War was a reflection of American norms constraining the use of nuclear weapons, but evidence shows that American strategists held no qualms in using nuclear weapons in self-defense of an existential threat or in retaliation for a Soviet attack on European allies. In the Korean War era the

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[42] William Z. Slany, ed. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, National Security Affairs*, vol. II (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v02p1, 533.

[43] National Security Council, *NSC 68*.

prevailing ethical questions were not on whether or not to use nuclear weapons, but instead focused specifically on when their use would be morally and ethically justified.

Research shows that despite the non-use of nuclear weapons in the 1950s, policymakers were aware that nuclear weapons had to be stockpiled and employable at any time their use would be justifiable and appropriate. Furthermore, it is evident that America's explicit nuclear policy did not always align with the tacit understanding of the use of nuclear weapons. The two paramount documents on U.S. nuclear policy in the early Cold War are NSC 68 and 162. These documents show an explicitly aggressive nuclear policy, but historical documents make it clear that policymakers felt constrained by norms into a much less aggressive nuclear policy than these documents would suggest.

B. PREVAILING NORMS ON NUCLEAR USE POLICIES

A vast majority of evidence suggesting that norms constrained American policymakers is found in nuclear policies regarding the first-use and retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons. NSC 68 makes two things very clear regarding the first-use of nuclear weapons: first-use against the Soviet Union creates an enormous advantage for the United States[44] and the American people are morally opposed to a first-strike attack upon the Soviet Union.[45] Tannenwald provides evidence that the morality and American discomfort with the use of nuclear weapons was a primary factor in NSC 68's policy against preventive war with the USSR.[46] She associates norms against preventive war as "indirect"[47] contributions to the creation of a nuclear taboo, but she is over generalizing what policymakers were

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[44] National Security Council, "Atomic Armaments," in *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1950), www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm, A, 3.

[45] National Security Council, "Possible Courses of Action," in *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1950), www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm, C.

[46] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 107.

[47] Ibid., 105.

saying in their nuclear plans. Policies like NSC 68 and 162 do not limit America's first-use of nuclear weapons; instead they only limit their use as a weapon in a preventive war with the Soviet Union. This is a very circumstantial policy tailored to leave other nuclear options open, such as plans to use nuclear weapons in defense of Europe against Soviet aggression.[48]

Washington was planning to use nuclear weapons in retaliatory fashion against the USSR due to their "vulnerability to Soviet atomic attack," it would be appropriate to use "atomic weapons only for retaliation against prior use by the USSR."[49] Also, policymakers had plans to use the bomb as a last resort option when there was "no alternative method by which we can attain our objectives."[50] First-use of nuclear weapons, when used as a last resort, would not be morally illegitimate as Tannenwald claims,[51] only their first-use in a preventive war was morally repugnant to Americans. Norms against retaliatory-use had not been internalized by the American public or policymakers in the early Cold War.

Schelling applies his LoC theory to the 1950s nuclear policies as being underscored by tacit bargaining instead of explicit policies.[52] Schelling argues that America's reluctance to use nuclear weapons in the Cold War and in the Korean War set a precedent that nuclear weapons were only to be used as weapons of last resort.[53] While NSC 68 and NSC 162 make it clear that nuclear weapons were available for use, only NSC 68 restricts nuclear use to a last resort. NSC 162 made it explicit that America viewed nuclear weapons as "available for use as other munitions."[54]

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48 National Security Council, "Atomic Armaments," B, 2.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 129.

52 Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 137.

53 Ibid.

54 National Security Council, *NSC 162/2: A Report to the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1953), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-162-2.pdf, 22.

Despite this explicit nuclear policy, Paul argues that the non-use of nuclear weapons during the Korean War was a tacit recognition of their unique status as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and that decisions not to use these weapons are based on a tradition of their non-use.[55] This tradition was started with President Truman, and strengthened with President Eisenhower's continued nuclear abstinence. It is evident that policymakers had decided against the first-use of nuclear weapons in a preventive war with the USSR in 1950, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided that nuclear weapons would only be used in a counter-offensive to Soviet aggression.[56] Schelling argues that one result of this tradition of non-use was the development of political and social costs associated with violating that tradition.[57] Schelling, like Paul, does not argue that norms were being reflected in policymaker's nuclear decision-making during the Korean War. Schelling differs from Paul's tradition of non-use theory in that Schelling believes policymakers feared the long-term effects of breaking the precedent of non-use, and that LoC way of thinking constrained their strategies.

Eisenhower, Truman, and most American policymakers never expected that the use of nuclear weapons against Korea would be seen by the world as a legitimate and morally acceptable behavior. A 1950 memorandum prepared by the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs makes it clear that the use of atomic weapons in Korea will hold a "vastly different" effect on world opinion than the use of conventional weapons.[58] In this case, the memorandum is only referring to first-use of nuclear weapons. Policymakers, to include Eisenhower and Truman, were aware that there would be long-term consequences for using nuclear weapons in the Korean War.

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[55] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 50-63.

[56] David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945–1960," *International Security* 7, no. 4 (1983) 3–71.

[57] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 134.

[58] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* [Korea], 1098–1099.

There was ample discussion regarding the cost-benefit analysis for the use of nuclear weapons in the 1950s. Prior to Truman's NSC 68 policy, American policymakers and military leaders had proposed the benefits of offensive use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union in the 1950s, benefits that many believed would outweigh the costs of a continued Cold War.[59] Paying little attention to military leaders LoC assessments regarding how preventive nuclear war was aligned with U.S. national interests, Tannenwald argues that policymakers concluded that domestic norms regarded first-use nuclear policies as unacceptable.[60] Evidence for the influence of norms on constraining policy, as well as evidence in support of a materialist or LoC school understanding both appear in nuclear policies of the early Cold War.

Support for the LoC theory on nuclear use became explicit with America's implementation of a policy that allowed for the first-use use of nuclear weapons, as can be found in NSC 68 and NSC 162. Despite a tradition of non-use, policymakers wanted to ensure that they did not constrain America's ability to use nuclear weapons in a first-use basis because this would result in political costs from Washington's allies in Europe that believed nuclear use was necessary for their defense and security.[61] That cost-benefit analysis drove the need for policies that left all nuclear options on the table. NSC 68 acknowledged, however, that making any official declarations that America would only use nuclear weapons in response to aggression would not be in America's interests.[62] This is evidence of inconsistencies between America's explicit nuclear policies and their implicit plans for use.

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59 Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 106.

60 Ibid., 107.

61 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 62.

62 National Security Council, "Atomic Armaments," B, 3.

NSC documents reveal that the Joint Chiefs of Staff intended to use nuclear weapons as "potential offensive weapons."[63] These memos discuss the morality of using nuclear bombs offensively against China, and their authors worry that "the moral position of the United States would be seriously damaged."[64] The aggressive use of such weapons, they warn, "would help arouse the peoples of Asia against us."[65] NSC 162 emphasizes that the United States cannot meet its defense needs without international support and alliances,[66] therefore nuclear policymakers were constrained in their decisions on the use of nuclear weapons because of an emerging norm against their offensive use. Offensive use, or use of nuclear weapons when they are not a last resort, was morally and politically disadvantageous to the United States because of the development of international norms that painted aggressive use of nuclear weapons as morally abhorrent. President Eisenhower often spoke of nuclear weapons as being the same as conventional weapons, but Eisenhower's actions during this period tell a different story.[67] Policymakers struggled with the social-constructivist view that it would be inappropriate to use nuclear weapons in the Korean War, while also being influenced by the negative long-term consequences that might erupt from developing explicit policies constraining their first-use in a conflict with the Soviet Union.

The largest gap in knowledge regarding how norms affect policymakers is in nuclear policies regarding retaliatory-use. Mark Fitzpatrick argues that the moral and ethical constraints on the use of nuclear weapons are less confining

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[63] U.S. Department of State, "Omar N. Bradley to Joint Chiefs of Staff," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950. National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy*, vol. I (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1950v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1950v01.p0526&q1, 510.

[64] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [Korea], 1098–1099.

[65] Ibid., 1041–42.

[66] National Security Council, *NSC 162/2*, 8.

[67] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 158.

when the weapons are used in self-defense.[68] Similar to arguments in support of the possession and stockpiling of nuclear arms, it is clear that American policymakers did not feel constrained in any way against the use of nuclear weapons if an existential threat necessitated their use. NSC 68 and NSC 162 never mentioned any constraints on the use of nuclear weapons when the sovereignty of the United States was threatened; instead these documents sought to outline a plan for when their use would be permissible beyond self-defense.

The U.S. Air Force's nuclear deterrence strategy never questioned the use of nuclear weapons in defense of an attack against the United States itself, but it did consider the ethical considerations of using nuclear weapons in defense of NATO and North American allies.[69] In other words, nuclear use in certain retaliatory situations was understood to be appropriate; nuclear use in defense of allies was less clear. Social-constructivists like Tannenwald and Gizewski overlook the weakness of a nuclear taboo existing among policymakers regarding the use of nuclear weapons in response to an existential threat to America, as the evidence they provide for this era is focused on decisions to use nuclear weapons in a first-use rather than retaliatory fashion.

Using Schelling's argument that some of America's policies are tacit rather than explicit would apply to nuclear policies of retaliatory-use. America, a nuclear capable nation, recognized that there were moral restrictions on the use of nuclear arms. Paul and Schelling argue that these moral restrictions developed in the absence of norms, but once the tradition took hold they created norms against their use. Despite these constraints on their use, America chose to increase their nuclear posture levels with "New Look" policies that were outlined in NSC 162 and increased funding for nuclear development programs. Therefore,

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[68] Mark Fitzpatrick, *The World After: Proliferation, Deterrence and Disarmament if the Nuclear Taboo is Broken* (Proliferation Papers, no. 27) (Paris: Ifri Security Studies Center, 2009), https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/proliferation-papers/world-after-proliferation-deterrence-and-disarmament-if, 22.

[69] Lemmer, *Air Force and Strategic Deterrence 1951–1960*, 36.

it can be assumed that America had an understanding that the weapons could be used, and the language of NSC 68 and NSC 162 imply that these weapons would be used in retaliation against Soviet aggression, albeit as a last resort option.

The role of norms on U.S. nuclear use policies were divided among the explicit policy documents produced from nuclear strategists and the implicit behaviors that these policymakers were willing to perform regarding their use. Explicitly, American policymakers during the early Cold War could be largely classified into the social-constructivist school when considering constraints placed upon their nuclear use policies by norms. At the outset of the Korean War the United States was the only nuclear power in the world, and there were numerous occasions when nuclear weapons would have a military utility throughout that conflict. Despite this utility, policymakers debated the ethics of nuclear use and felt that their use would be inappropriate. Beliefs on the inappropriate use of nuclear weapons in a “first-strike” were internalized by policymakers and these internalized beliefs were even written in to NSC 68 but removed from NSC 162. Evidence that policymaker’s never wavered on their stance that retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons was appropriate and lacked any constraints indicates that norms against nuclear use did not extend to this particular policy in the same way as it did for nuclear first-strike use.

Fear of negative reputational consequences for nuclear first-use was found, which suggests that U.S. policymakers felt constrained against a nuclear first-strike out of fear for the long-term consequences of such a decision. Military leader and policymaker discussions tended to assume that nuclear use was inevitable and that the United States should consider using the weapons whenever they seemed appropriate, such as in a retaliatory-strike. For this reason, they created policies that left the door open for the use of nuclear weapons in the future; when the cost-benefit analysis of their use would better align with U.S. national interests. These discussions indicate that policymakers may not have internalized norms against the use of nuclear weapons and instead

were only reacting to external pressures regarding the reputational costs of using these weapons inappropriately.

C. PREVAILING NORMS ON NUCLEAR POSSESSION POLICIES

Reflecting on the devastating power of the atomic bomb in WWII, the international community and the United States quickly attempted to categorize nuclear weapons as non-conventional, and the morality regarding their use was questioned. In 1946, the first UN General Assembly resolution that was considered was a resolution that sought to regulate atomic energy and consider "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons."[70] Religious leaders called for American policymakers to declare that America would never be the "first to use atomic bombs in any future war" and to stop the manufacture of nuclear weapons.[71] In 1947, Truman claimed "the hope of civilization lies in international arrangements looking, if possible, to the renunciation of the use and development of the atomic bomb."[72]

Despite Truman's goals for regulating atomic energy, international nuclear disarmament proved too difficult to manage. Risks were too high that some nations might produce nuclear weapons despite a UN prohibition or international laws regarding atomic energy. The inability to create an international law mandating nuclear disarmament justified President Truman's decision to maintain a nuclear armament under civilian control. Respecting the emerging norms regarding nuclear weapons, President Truman wanted to keep nuclear

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[70] Official Document System, "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1 (1), 5, c," January 24, 1946, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/1(I).

[71] Robert W. Potter, "Japan Atom Bombing Condemned in Federal Church Council Report," *New York Times*, March 6, 1946.

[72] Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Atomic Energy," Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, October 3, 1945, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=165.

weapons out of military control, and he continued to argue that atomic weapons are not conventional.[73]

NSC 68 looked at the moral, psychological, and political questions that surrounded nuclear weapons. A memorandum from the executive secretary of the NSC to the secretary of state directly asserted that the mere possession of nuclear arms has a psychological impact that is "grossly in favor of the United States."[74] This same document referred to the existence of moral objections against the research and development of nuclear weapons, but dismissed these moral arguments as insignificant when compared to the military necessity of such weapons.[75] From a political standpoint, the possession of nuclear weapons was expected to deter war as well.[76] Ultimately, NSC 68 and 162 never called for nuclear disarmament nor did they speak to any ethical norms against the peaceful use of nuclear weapons or nuclear energy. The explicit nuclear policies outlined in those two documents make it clear that America had weighed the moral, psychological, and political questions that surrounded nuclear weapon possession and decided to increase its nuclear stockpiles and capabilities.[77]

The increased production of nuclear weapons and technology is could be considered evidence that policymakers found the possession of nuclear weapons to be an appropriate decision. International pressures from America's NATO allies and the vastly superior conventional war fighting abilities of the Soviet Union pushed the United States toward nuclear arms as requirement for security. The military utility of nuclear weapons became the cornerstone of U.S. Cold War policy, as is reflected through NSC documents and NATO planning.[78] The LoC

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[73] Harry S. Truman, "Letter to Senator Flanders on Disarmament," Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, March 14, 1951, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=263.

[74] U.S. Department of State, "Omar N. Bradley to Joint Chiefs of Staff," 505.

[75] Ibid., 511.

[76] Ibid., 518.

[77] National Security Council, "Atomic Armaments," A, 5.

[78] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd. ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2003) 47–49.

explanation for nuclear possession appeared to influence Truman and some other early policymakers as they attempted to move nuclear weapon use to international control in order to minimize the chances of these weapons being used inappropriately or without regard to their special status as non-conventional weaponry. Those attempts were quickly proven ineffectual, and the United States found that external international norms were pushing it toward maintaining a nuclear stockpile in order to deter Soviet aggression. American policymakers were focused on when and how to use nuclear weapons, and there is little evidence in the 1950s that they felt externally pressured toward disarmament or internalized powerful norms against their possession.

An area that has not been explored by leading theories on normative effects on nuclear policy is America's policy on the use of nuclear threats. Nuclear threats cannot be made without nuclear weapons possession. Schelling and materialist theorists would argue that nuclear threats in the 1950s were implicit, particularly in regard to deterrence. While NSC 68 and NSC 162 never specifically threaten the use of nuclear weapons against other countries, the wording of these documents makes it clear that they will be used if deemed necessary. Rather than drawing lines in the sand regarding what actions by other states would result in a nuclear attack, the rhetoric instead alluded to such a response with terms like "massive retaliation."[79] Politicians were careful to avoid making any overt nuclear threats for many reasons. In general, norms constrained U.S. leaders toward avoiding any unnecessary discussions regarding the use of nuclear weapons out of fears for reputational concerns and credibility for their deterrence goals. President Truman was advised against going into any details regarding nuclear policies beyond the fact that the U.S. government was determining their feasibility.[80]

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[79] Lemmer, *Air Force and Strategic Deterrence 1951–1960*, 3.

[80] Special Committee of the National Security Council, *The Development of Thermonuclear Weapons* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1950v01.p0533&id=FRUS.FRUS1950v01&isize=M&q1=Report%20by%20the%20Special%20Committee%20of%20the%20National%20Security%20Council%20to%20the%20President, 517.

The prevalence of norms against nuclear use during the early Cold War did not prevent Eisenhower from implicitly threatening the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese to compel them to sign the Korean Armistice in 1953.[81] There are no primary source documents that connect Eisenhower to having made an explicit nuclear threat against China; instead there is only evidence that John Foster Dulles leaked the idea that America would use nuclear weapons against China to the Indian Prime Minister in May of 1953, in the hopes that this threat would be related to China by second-hand.[82] The benefit of possessing nuclear weapons, and therefore having the ability to implicitly threaten their use, was considered and used by policymakers as a diplomatic tool in the Korean War. Restraint from making nuclear threats explicit and drawing lines in the sand regarding their use was deemed inappropriate by U.S. policymakers as well as strategically detrimental to maintaining the credibility of their nuclear deterrence by keeping the nuclear threshold ambiguous.

Throughout the Korean War explicit nuclear threats were avoided by Truman and Eisenhower, instead these leaders resorted to heavily implying their use. Eisenhower and his secretary of state both implied the threat of nuclear weapons by referring to them as conventional weapons and that America would "remove the restrictions of area and weapons" in the event that China refused to sign the armistice.[83] Implying the threat of nuclear weapons, rather than saying so overtly, displays an attempt to circumvent an emerging norm that had developed against their use. It is important to note that American policymakers felt constrained against making explicit nuclear threats, and this is evident in policymaker discussions as well as practice. Norms against nuclear threats appear to have been somewhat constraining for U.S. policymakers, because the threats were never made overtly and publicly, but the utility of an implicit nuclear

81 Lemmer, *Air Force and Strategic Deterrence 1951–1960*, 36.

82 Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 50–51.

83 Ibid.

threat which existed merely by having a nuclear force posture proved to be more significant than whether or not it violated emerging norms.

Thomas Schelling further argued that there was a benefit to the possession of atomic weaponry for nuclear bargaining. He concludes that there is value in the ambiguity and "uncertainty"[84] that nuclear possession can bring to diplomacy. Explicit threats need not be made, nor are they necessarily strategically advantageous, because the mere fact that one nation owns a bomb can lead to fear and increased senses of risk for states that might find themselves on the receiving end of a conflict with a nuclear nation. There is a strategic advantage in keeping other nations guessing as to one's nuclear intentions, and to create a sense that "not everybody is always in his right mind"[85] when making nuclear use decisions.

D. CONCLUSION

Having looked at the constraints that norms placed on the broad spectrum of nuclear policy options in the early 1950s, it is clear that the leading theories on these constraints fail to paint a complete picture. The majority of research into normative constraints on U.S. nuclear policy focuses too heavily on the first-use of nuclear arms, and fails to consider other policy decisions in the nuclear use realm. NSC 68 looked at the moral, psychological, and political questions that surrounded nuclear weapons, and policymaker discussions ranged from topics regarding nuclear first-use, retaliatory-use, possession, and nuclear threats. It would benefit theorists and policymakers to look at how norms affected other nuclear policies beyond first-use policies. This is particularly evident since a cursory look at this era's U.S. nuclear policies display little ethical or normative reservations regarding the retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons, nor any internal or external normative constraints on the development of increased stockpiles and capabilities. Since all the leading theories that use norms to explain nuclear non-

84 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 207.

85 Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 93.

use since 1945 find their foundations in the American nuclear policies of the 1950s, a broader application of these norms to the full range of nuclear policies will show that there are boundaries as to how influential norms are on varying nuclear policies.

John Foster Dulles's proclamation that "somehow or other we must manage to remove the taboo from the use of these weapons," fails to adequately describe norms against the use of nuclear weapons. Dulles probably would not have found a taboo or LoA constraint on the retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons. The taboo that Dulles wanted to eradicate was the emerging norm against the first-use of nuclear weapons and their treatment as non-conventional arms. This was an emerging norm that Dulles concluded would result in negative consequences for U.S. national interests, a solidly LoC school mentality. In his time there were also few norms that constrained American plans to maintain and increase its nuclear stockpile.

III. MID-COLD WAR AND VIETNAM ERA

A. INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam War era offers an important case study for observing norms governing nuclear use and possession in the middle of the Cold War. American presidents and policymakers debated whether to use nuclear weapons in the Vietnam conflict while also debating the future of U.S. nuclear possession policies when championing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Ultimately, U.S. policymakers decided against using nuclear weapons in the Vietnam War and agreed to pursue a policy (Article VI of the NPT) that would end American possession of nuclear weapons at some future date. This chapter will look at whether or not norms affected these policy decisions, and to what extent.

Focusing on policymaker's decisions about the Vietnam War under the Johnson and Nixon administrations will help classify the role of norms into one of the four major schools outlined as well as shed light onto any differences in that explanatory value of these norms on nuclear war planning and posture policies.

B. PREVAILING NORMS ON NUCLEAR USE POLICIES

For many reasons the Vietnam War marks a unique case study for understanding U.S. nuclear use policies. In Vietnam, despite technological and military superiority, America lost the war. This war was fought through multiple presidential administrations and policymakers that had differing opinions on how to wage war and how to use nuclear weapons. The humiliation America suffered from the loss of this war as well as the political costs associated with this setback shed new light on the role of nuclear weapons. Policymakers in this war decided against the use of nuclear arms. What factors influenced this decision? There is substantial evidence from this period that addresses this question.

Tannenwald claims that norms against the use of nuclear weapons were strongly tested during America's refusal to use the weapon in the Vietnam War.[86] Furthermore, she argues that norms had become so strong during this era that a taboo had formed against the first-use of nuclear arms.[87] Using historical evidence, Tannenwald claims that norms severely constrained nuclear use policies throughout the Vietnam War. She provides particularly poignant evidence that despite America's explicit policies that allowed for nuclear use during the war, there was an implicit understanding that nuclear use would never have been considered appropriate.

Paul concludes that a non-use tradition became "solidified" following the Kennedy administration's non-use of nuclear weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.[88] This tradition was established without particular concern for norms or ethics; it emerged merely through a desire to maintain a status-quo of non-use that America saw no benefit in changing. Starting with the Johnson administration and continuing to today, Paul argues that this solidified tradition will create informal norms against the use of nuclear arms. In his view, nuclear non-use created norms, and future behaviors regarding nuclear use or changing attitudes for nuclear policies could cause the tradition of non-use to "weaken or break down."[89]

1. The Johnson Administration

President Johnson inherited the Vietnam War upon taking office. According to Tannenwald he inherited a taboo against the first-use of nuclear weapons,[90] and Paul argues that a tradition on non-use had solidified by the time of his presidency. No nuclear weapons were used or explicitly threatened under

86 Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 190.

87 Ibid., 10.

88 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 64.

89 Ibid., 21.

90 Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 192.

the Johnson administration, yet U.S. nuclear stockpiles grew to their peak under his direction. This contrast in nuclear war planning policies against the growing nuclear force posture is better understood by looking at the norms associated with nuclear arms during Johnson's presidency.

International norms governing the use of nuclear weapons had grown since their use in World War II. No longer did America have a nuclear monopoly. Internationally, a tradition of non-use had emerged as no nation with nuclear capabilities had used nuclear weapons in anger since 1945. After the tradition on non-use was solidified, Paul's description of this tradition takes on terms of the LoC school. He argues that a tradition of non-use developed because nations decided not to use nuclear arms "because of a realization of the horrendous effects of nuclear attack (a material fact) which generated reputation costs for a potential user."[91] In other words, the tradition did not develop due to ethical concerns. It developed based off of materialist fears that their use would ultimately harm the nation using them in the long-term. A side effect of this decision to avoid nuclear use was the development of norms against their use, and they developed whether or not the development of these norms was intended or desired by policymakers. Paul argues that decisions not to use nuclear weapons were ultimately realist in nature and that when material concerns develop where the use of nuclear weapons would benefit a nation they may be used despite the tradition of non-use that exists.[92] This is in stark contrast to Tannenwald's LoA argument, wherein the material or long-term consequences of nuclear use are considered irrelevant compared to the ethical and normative constraints that were internalized by policymakers concerning nuclear use.

In addition to the development of a tradition of non-use, there was a strong trend of international and domestic norms against the use of nuclear weapons

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[91] T. V. Paul, "Taboo or Tradition? The Non-use of Nuclear Weapons in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 853.

[92] Ibid.

leading up to Johnson's presidency. The Baruch plan for international control of nuclear weapons under President Truman, while failing to be adopted set the tone that nuclear weapons were non-conventional. The next U.S. administration, under President Eisenhower, attempted to modify the non-use norm that began with Truman's policymakers. Despite Eisenhower's attempts to persuade the world that nuclear arms were no different than conventional weaponry, his administration's decision not to use them in the Korean War added to the growing tradition of non-use that was emerging.[93] Internationally, President Kennedy started to acknowledge U.S. interests and international pressures toward limiting the possibility of nuclear use and possession by starting negotiations for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In 1961, the UN General Assembly adopted a declaration that denounced the use of nuclear weapons as a "crime against civilization and mankind,"[94] passing with a vote of 55 to 20.[95] It was clear to American policymakers under Johnson that nuclear weapons were a separate category of arms and their use would not be judged the same way as the use of conventional arms among American citizens or the international community.

Recognizing that only five nuclear capable nations existed during Johnson's administration, it can be expected that the overwhelmingly non-nuclear capable international community would find the use of nuclear weapons to be a security issue. Therefore, the non-nuclear international community would largely support the codification of norms against nuclear use and force postures. The effect that international norms of nuclear use had on the Johnson administration appears to be stronger than those concerning U.S. nuclear possession policies.

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[93] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 50–53.

[94] United Nations, "GA Resolution 1653 (XVI)," November 24, 1961, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/167/06/IMG/NR016706.pdf?OpenElement.

[95] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 245.

As the Vietnam War dragged on, U.S. military leaders routinely requested to use nuclear weapons in the conflict and to include nuclear weapons in their war plans if China or the Soviet Union joined the war.[96] The *Pentagon Papers* clearly show that the Joint Chiefs wanted to make use of nuclear weapons and that military leadership believed in the utility of these weapons.[97] The potential use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam was certainly a double-edged sword. Their use would greatly provoke Chinese and Soviet intervention in the war and at the same time the utility of these weapons would be greatly increased should Sino-Soviet forces come to Saigon's aid. The only capability that the United States could bring to bear as a counter to massed Chinese forces was nuclear weapons.[98]

During a meeting with Johnson, former President Eisenhower recommended that Johnson use nuclear weapons against the Chinese if they joined the Vietnam War. However, Eisenhower was sure to point out that there would be political fallout for such a decision.[99] Policymakers had to consider a wide range of factors regarding the introduction of nuclear weapons in Vietnam, to include their military utility, the long-term consequences of their use, and the norms and appropriateness of their use. Despite Eisenhower's advice, Johnson maintained strong beliefs that nuclear use was inappropriate for circumstances as they existed in Vietnam. Johnson made his internalized views clear in a telegram to the Joint Chiefs in 1968 that called for the complete termination of all nuclear contingency planning in Vietnam,[100] and these sentiments were followed up in a news conference where Johnson emphasizes that he "at no time ever

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[96] Ibid., 195.

[97] Ibid., 194.

[98] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 67.

[99] U.S. Department of State, "Memo of a Meeting with President Johnson," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. II, Vietnam (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d133, 305.

[100] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 223.

considered or made a recommendation in any respect to the deployment of nuclear weapons."[101]

In 1964, Undersecretary Ball wrote a memo that predicted an enormous loss of international prestige if the United States ever used a nuclear weapon during the Vietnam War, and that the consequences of such an action would weaken the security of the United States.[102] The LoC school was pre-eminent in the Ball memo, as the memo speaks mostly about international prestige, reputations, and precedent setting rather than the military utility of atomic weaponry.[103] International political pressure strongly constrained against the use of nuclear weapons, and despite the apparent utility of nuclear weapons, Johnson and senior policymakers were determined to refrain from nuclear use for fear of negative political consequences.

A team of four civilian scientists conducted a study to determine the military utility of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam, and their results were presented to policymakers under the name *The 1966 Jason Report*. In this report, the value of tactical nuclear weapons was vastly dwarfed in comparison to the negative effects nuclear use would have on public and world opinion.[104] This report, while focusing on military utility of tactical nuclear use, made it clear that the tactical value of nuclear weapon use was not strong enough to overcome the strategic negative consequences that their use would bring about.

International and domestic norms constrained the Johnson administration's nuclear policies. Johnson's nuclear war planning policy throughout the Vietnam War emphasized that first-use of nuclear weapons was off the table. The ethics of killing and destruction appear to be irrelevant in this policy decision, as Johnson

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[101] Lyndon B. Johnson, "The President's News Conference," American Presidency Project, February 16, 1968, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29377.

[102] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 210.

[103] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 68–9.

[104] F. Dyson, R. Gomer, S. Weinberg, and S. C. Wright, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Southeast Asia* (Study S-266) (Washington, DC: Jason Division, Institute for Defense Analyses, 1967), http://oldsite.nautilus.org/archives/VietnamFOIA/report/dyson67.pdf.

was more than willing to maintain greatly destructive strategies throughout the war; for example, Operation Rolling Thunder was a three-year campaign that resulted in more bombs dropped on Vietnam "than were dropped on all of Europe during World War II."[105] At the same time, policies concerning the retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons remained unchanged from those of the early Cold War.

The LoA school would argue that Johnson never used nuclear weapons because their use had become taboo or at least violated social constructs that were internalized by policymakers. Evidence suggests that Johnson internalized beliefs that nuclear use in Vietnam was an inappropriate behavior, but he was not the only policymaker in Washington. His constructivist understanding of nuclear weapon use was unsupported among key policymakers, particularly the U.S. military.

Along with a largely pro-nuclear stance from military policymakers, the U.S. nuclear war plans during the war never explicitly ruled out nuclear arms or even nuclear first-use options. If China entered the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons use was already planned by the military leadership.[106] The decision to rely on conventional weapons, until such a time when nuclear use would be more appropriate (i.e., nuclear use was deemed more appropriate when and if China joined the conflict), shows that nuclear use was not an outright taboo or an internalized norm that constrained U.S. nuclear use policies.

The inconsistency between the internalized nuclear norms that Johnson and his administration had constraining their nuclear use options, compared to the explicit nuclear plans that allowed for their use, can best be explained along the LoC theory. Senior policymakers did not want the credibility of their nuclear deterrent and the strategic benefits of nuclear use ambiguity to be weakened, and therefore the explicit policy decisions that allowed for their use were published into policy. Whether or not Washington would have followed through

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[105] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 190.

[106] Ibid., 194.

with nuclear use is questionable considering the internalized beliefs that Johnson and his administration carried concerning these weapons.

By looking at the military utility school and LoC school at the same time, it becomes clear that policymakers in the Johnson administration placed greater weight on the consequences of nuclear use than they did on the utility of nuclear weapons when writing policy. As Thomas Schelling's LoC theory states, "nuclear weapons should not be evaluated mainly in terms of what they could do on the battlefield…much more important is what they do to the expectation of general war."[107] In other words, the long-term consequences of nuclear use were considered far more important than their short-term military utility.

The Vietnam War was just one event in the scheme of a larger strategic Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Long-term consequences for introducing atomic weapons into the Vietnam War, such as the increased possibility of future nuclear wars and the possibility of escalating the conflict to a larger scale, were considered to be against America's strategic interests. The outcome of the Vietnam War was never as important as managing the Cold War with the Soviet Union, nor was winning the war worth the reputational or political costs then associated to nuclear use. The LoC school is the most explanatory reason for the constrained nuclear war planning policies that America adopted for the Vietnam War. Policymakers could have expressed their normative beliefs concerning the use of nuclear weapons in their nuclear use policies, but they decided to maintain ambiguity concerning the boundaries that would need to be crossed that would necessitate nuclear use.

2. The Nixon Administration

President Nixon's view on the ethics of nuclear weapons was very different from President Johnson's. Nixon held no personal beliefs that inhibited the use of atomic weaponry in Vietnam. Records of Nixon's conversations with his advisors clearly show that he personally believed it was appropriate to use

[107] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 111.

nuclear weapons, make nuclear war plans, and deliver nuclear threats. He was quoted as saying "I would use nuclear weapons"[108] and willing to threaten their use.[109] Why then did he never act on these desires, and instead lead the United States toward greater nuclear arms controls and disarmament? By looking at the international and domestic norms against the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear force postures, it becomes clear that American policymakers were heavily constrained toward non-use of nuclear arms and toward decreased nuclear force postures.

At the outset of Nixon's tenure in office, he implemented a nuclear policy known as the "madman theory." This theory was based on the principle that other nations, particularly North Vietnam, ought to fear the possibility that America would use nuclear weapons against them, even if doing so would appear unethical or irrational. Despite reckless rhetoric, Nixon's decision-making regarding nuclear weapons was always rational. He believed that "whatever we do we must always avoid saying what we're not going to do…obviously we are not going to use nuclear weapons but we should leave it hanging over them."[110] This statement makes it clear that Nixon was aware of international norms against the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam, and his intentions were to give the illusion that he is willing to violate those norms in an attempt to gain strategic influence over Communist adversaries.[111] To add credence to his madman policies he authorized Operation Duck Hook, which is a plan that envisioned utilizing nuclear weapons strategically to end the Vietnam War.

Operation Duck Hook is an important plan from the Nixon administration that characterizes which school of thought dominated policymaker's decision-

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[108] President Richard Nixon, as quoted in Seymour M. Hersch, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 28.

[109] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 73.

[110] "Memo for the President's Files," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. VIII, Vietnam (Washington, DC: Department of State 1972), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v08/d131, 491. President Nixon to Admiral Thomas H. Moorer.

[111] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 73.

making for nuclear war planning. The plan itself was developed with military utility school thinking, as it looked only at the material benefits that nuclear weapons might provide for ending the Vietnam War while avoiding an analysis of the political and moral consequences of nuclear use.[112]

The nuclear aspects of the plan were specifically designed to be noticeable by North Korea and other nations, in the hopes that the implicit threat of nuclear weapons could achieve U.S. strategic objectives.[113] However, when Duck Hook failed to influence North Korea's actions, instead of escalating the operation to its planned nuclear step, Nixon called it off. In Nixon's memoirs, as well as numerous policymakers' recorded thoughts on the decision to stop Duck Hook prior to escalating into a nuclear strike, it is clear that this decision was based upon the cost-benefit analysis that the international outrage over a nuclear strike vastly outweighed any military utility for their use.[114] Recently declassified documents reveal that domestic and international opinions weighed prominently in the decision not to use nuclear arms for Operation Duck Hook.[115]

Historical records indicate that Nixon and his administration were significantly more influenced by domestic public opinions on nuclear war planning and posture policies than they were by international norms. During a discussion between President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Nixon expressed his understanding that the use of nuclear weapons in the Vietnam War would hurt his chances in the upcoming election.[116] Nixon was well aware that nuclear use

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[112] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 232–234.

[113] William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball, eds. "Nixon White House Considered Nuclear Options against North Vietnam, Declassified Documents Reveal," in *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 195* ((Washington, DC: National Security Archives, 2006), http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/.

[114] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 235.

[115] Burr and Kimball, "Nixon White House Considered Nuclear Options against North Vietnam."

[116] "Conversation between President Nixon and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)" in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. VIII, Vietnam (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v08/d88, 291.

would result in a "domestic and international uproar,"[117] and that domestic public opinion viewed nuclear options in the Vietnam War disapprovingly. Nixon's decision not to use nuclear weapons in the Vietnam War was heavily influenced by norms against their use, even though Nixon did not internalize those norms himself.[118] However, Nixon and his administration appeared ready and willing to use nuclear weapons if China entered the war.[119] China's entrance into the war would have increased the military utility of nuclear arms to a point where policymakers had plans to use these weapons despite the norms against their use.[120]

Nixon, unlike Johnson, had no internalized ethics or norms against the use of nuclear weapons or war planning policies. As president of the United States, he had an exceptional power to influence nuclear policies to align with his own norms concerning their use. Despite this power, the external pressures of international and domestic norms against the use of nuclear weapons in the Vietnam War proved to be more explanatory for Nixon's decisions not to use nuclear weapons than purely material concerns.

Nixon and his administration felt constrained against the use of nuclear weapons against Vietnam because their utility in the conflict would not outweigh the perceived reputational, political, and long-term security concerns for their use. Domestically, Nixon understood that nuclear use would hurt his chances for reelection as well. Nuclear use was never ruled out by his administration; had China entered the war it was very possible that Nixon would have been willing to accept the consequences of breaking from norms associated with a tradition of non-use because the military utility of nuclear weapons would be greater against much larger Chinese forces. Overall, the Nixon administration's nuclear use decision-making was heavily constrained by external forces and norms, not

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[117] Richard M. Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 102.

[118] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 230–231.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Burr and Kimball, "Nixon White House Considered Nuclear Options against Vietnam."

internalized beliefs. This is evidence that the LoC school explanation for the interplay of norms and policy choices is most relevant in explaining nuclear use policies for this administration.

C. PREVAILING NORMS ON NUCLEAR POSSESSION POLICIES

During this timeframe, historical evidence shows that norms were more constraining on nuclear use policies than they were on nuclear possession policies. This largely contributed to America's decision to maintain and improve the capabilities of their nuclear arsenal without ever using nuclear weapons during the Vietnam War. Evidence further dictates that the explanatory power of norms on nuclear use policy during the Vietnam War and Cold War were more powerful than behavioral expectations were on nuclear possession policies.

From the international community, numerous treaties and conventions came into existence during the Vietnam War era that highlighted strong norms against the use and possession of nuclear weapons. However, there are inconsistencies on exactly how these norms affect nuclear use and force posture policies. The appropriateness of nuclear weapon use was heavily influenced by domestic public opinion and international political expectations of behavior throughout the Vietnam War, and these influences will be examined under both the Johnson and Nixon administration.

1. The Johnson Administration

Along with the growing international norms against nuclear use, there was also a growing movement for nuclear disarmament and arms control. In 1946, the first UN General Assembly resolution was a motion that sought to regulate atomic energy and consider "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons."[121] Article V of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty established the first legal limitations on the use of nuclear weapons.[122] The Limited Test Ban Treaty was

[121] Official Document System, "United Nations General Assembly."

[122] The Antarctic Treaty, Arg.-Aust.-Belg.-Chile-Fra.-Japan-N.Z.-Norway-South Afr.-U.S.S.R.-UK-U.S., Dec. 1, 1959, http://www.ats.aq/documents/ats/treaty_original.pdf, Article V.

adopted in 1963 at the outset of Johnson's presidency. In 1968, Johnson's administration approved the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that set international norms against both the possession and proliferation of nuclear arms.[123] Furthermore, Article VI of the NPT called for the United States and other nuclear-armed nations to remove their nuclear stockpiles.[124]

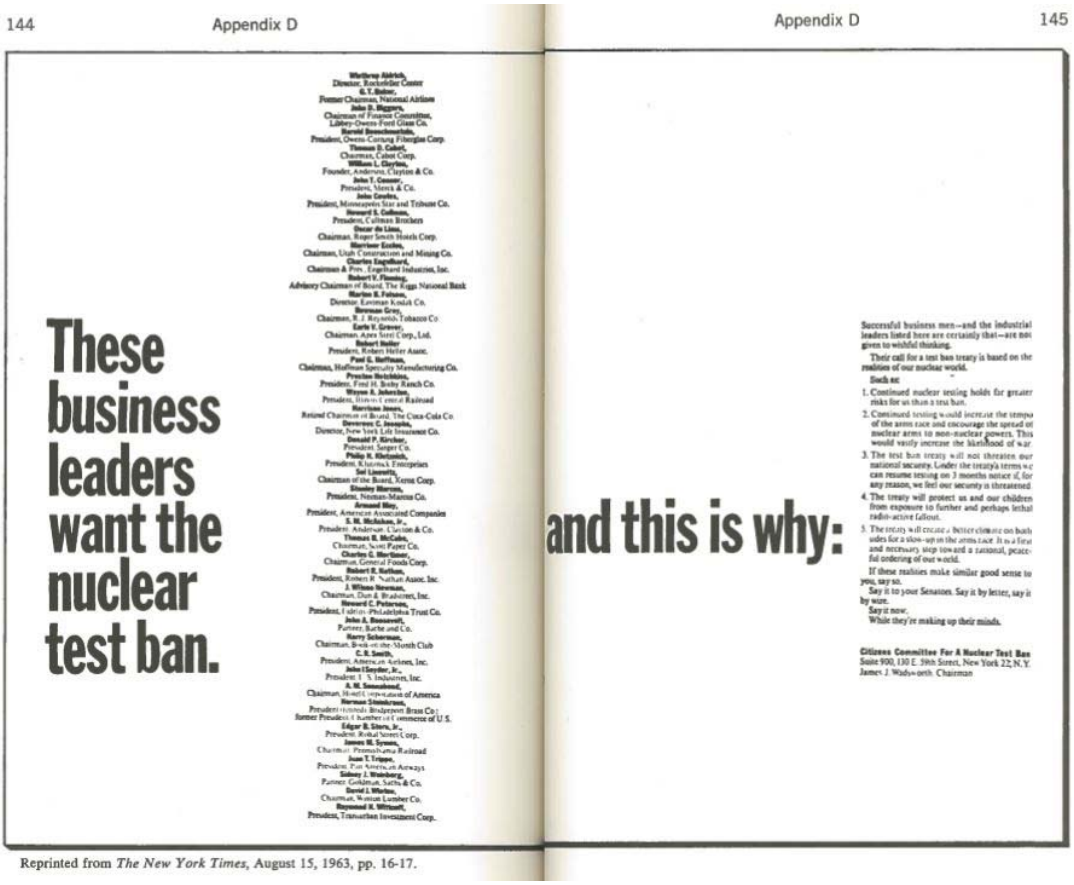
Throughout the 1960s, numerous "ban the bomb" organizations had developed and gained significant influence among domestic public opinion.[125] The three most prolific of these disarmament organizations was the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the United World Federalists, and the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE).[126] Along with lobbying the White House for arms control and disarmament, they also campaigned publicly and rallied domestic public opinion through the media (see Figure 1). The political reach that these domestic disarmament organizations ranged from local protest movements all the way up to the president's ear (see Figure 2).

123 Department for Disarmament Affairs, "Text of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," United Nations, accessed July 16, 20126, http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.html.

124 Ibid.

125 Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 59.

126 Mary Milling Lepper, *Foreign Policy Formulation: A Case Study of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), 61.


144 Appendix D

Appendix D 145

These business leaders want the nuclear test ban.

and this is why:

Successful business men—and the industrial leaders listed here are certainly that—are not given to wishful thinking.

Their call for a test ban treaty is based on the realities of our nuclear world.

Such as:

1. Continued nuclear testing holds far greater risks for us than a test ban.
2. Continued testing would increase the tempo of the arms race and encourage the spread of nuclear arms to non-nuclear powers. This would vastly increase the likelihood of war.
3. The test ban treaty will not threaten our national security. Under the treaty's terms we can resume testing on 3 months notice if, for any reason, we feel our security is threatened.
4. The treaty will protect us and our children from exposure to further and perhaps lethal radio-active fallout.
5. The treaty will create a better climate on both sides for a slow-up on the arms race. It is a first and necessary step toward a rational, peaceful ordering of our world.

If these realities make similar good sense to you, say so.

Say it to your Senators. Say it by letter, say it by wire.

Say it now.

While they're making up their minds.

Citizens Committee For A Nuclear Test Ban
Suite 900, 130 E. 59th Street, New York 22, N.Y.
James J. Wadsworth, Chairman

Reprinted from *The New York Times*, August 15, 1963, pp. 16-17.

Figure 1. SANE Advertisement in the *New York Times*, 1963.[127]

[127] Source: Lepper, *Foreign Policy Formulation*, Appendix D.

The honeymoon continues: SANE's Homer Jack receives a pen from U.S. President Lyndon Johnson at the signing of extension legislation for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, May 1965. Behind them, starting at the central pillar, are (left to right) Glenn Seaborg, J. W. Fulbright, Hubert Humphrey, Adrian Fisher, and William C. Foster. Photo courtesy Homer Jack Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Figure 2. President Johnson and SANE Leadership, 1965.[128]

Along with international and domestic pressures, Johnson and his administration also concluded that American security would increase through nuclear arms control measures. Regarding the signing of the NPT, Johnson found this treaty to be the "most important international agreement limiting nuclear arms since the nuclear age began."[129] Despite the required pursuit of complete nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT, the United States had no implicit plans to alter their nuclear force posture as such. For Johnson and U.S. policymakers, that would be too high of a security risk. In reality, America possessed the largest number of nuclear warheads during Johnson's presidency than at any other time in history (Figure 3). Additionally, increased nuclear capabilities were continuing to be researched by a powerful military-industrial complex that had taken root in America; this military-industrial complex

[128] Source: Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*.

[129] Source: Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 433.

cared more for bureaucratic concerns than for the newly codified nuclear norms that were adopted during this era.[130]

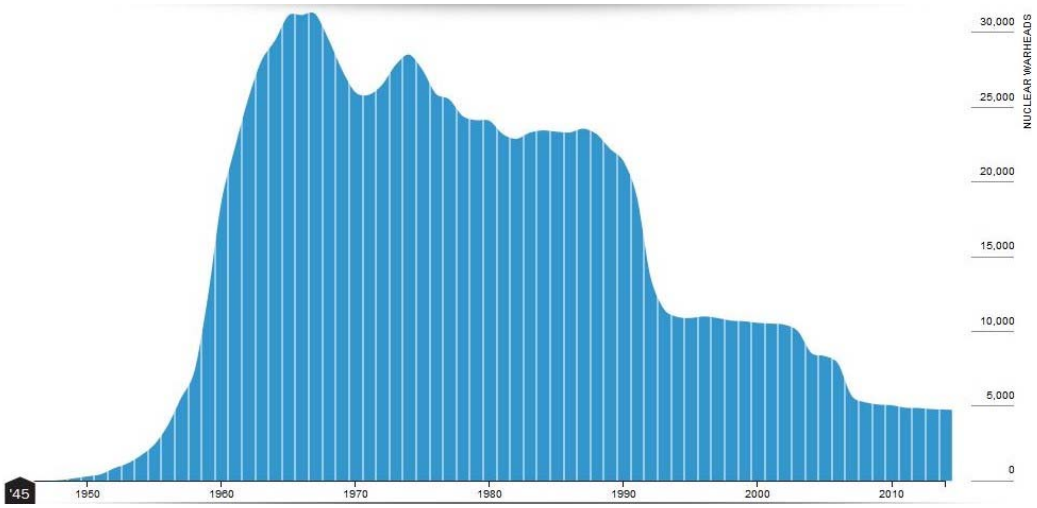


Figure 3. U.S. Nuclear Warhead Stockpiles.[131]

Along with international pressures against the use of nuclear arms, domestic pressure had steadily organized to argue against nuclear weapons planning and use. In 1961, top U.S. policymakers formed the U.S. disarmament program for the purpose of winning public opinion by explicitly creating an organization designed to reduce U.S. nuclear force posture levels.[132] Policymakers evidently had no implicit plans to rapidly disarm as America's nuclear force posture rose to its height despite domestic pressures for reduction, but norms had constrained leaders toward rhetoric of complete disarmament "at an early date."[133] Over 50 years after the signing of the NPT, the United States has not yet disarmed nor developed detailed plans for nuclear disarmament; the

130 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 323.

131 Source: Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Nuclear Notebook," The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, accessed August 11, 2016, http://thebulletin.org/nuclear-notebook-multimedia.

132 Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 406–407.

133 Department for Disarmament Affairs, "The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation," Article VI.

U.S. nuclear arsenal is only a small fraction of its peak, but this has resulted at least as much from practical as from normative drivers.

Maintaining a nuclear force posture was a cornerstone of the nuclear deterrence strategy that the U.S. military and policymakers adopted during Johnson's administration. While large and organized disarmament movements existed domestically and internationally, the Johnson administration believed that a nuclear stockpile provided security benefits that were more important than meeting these growing disarmament norms. Due to these norms, however, Washington found itself constrained toward explicitly pursuing policies of reduction, non-proliferation, and arms control.

The fact that these pursuits were undertaken largely through rhetoric rather than actual policy changes lends evidence to the decreased explanatory value that norms had on U.S. nuclear force posture policies. Other factors, such as increased production capabilities, better nuclear technologies, and increased security concerns, factored more prominently in decisions to increase the capabilities and quantities of nuclear possession in Washington. Dr. Dougherty's interpretation of how norms influence nuclear force posture policies was accurate during Johnson's administration, "In all cases, governments—regardless of their more idealistic statements—can be counted upon in international arms negotiations to promote their national interest."[134]

Johnson's administration faced international and domestic norms that called for the reduction and elimination of nuclear force postures, as well as limiting nuclear weapons testing. Constraints on nuclear possession policies pushed Washington toward the pursuit of non-proliferation agreements and multi-lateral arms reductions. While Washington agreed to policies that pursued complete nuclear disarmament, those agreements have not yet been realized or specifically implanted into U.S. nuclear possession policies. Washington's behavior concerning nuclear possession pursued arms control agreements that

[134] James E. Dougherty, *How to Think about Arms Control and Disarmament* (New York: Crane, Russak, and Company Inc., 1973), 54.

focused on regulating the number of nuclear weapons that ought to be maintained, rather than focusing on multilateral elimination of nuclear arms. The administration had not internalized nor felt constrained by growing domestic and international norms against the possession of nuclear weapons, but these growing movements did constrain policymakers toward arms control and increased rhetoric of the desire to ultimately rid the world of all nuclear weapons (as espoused in Article VI of the NPT). Johnson and his predecessor, Kennedy, appear to be have had a genuine and internalized desire to pursue nuclear arms reduction, but their nuclear policies always placed the importance of national security and reciprocity of arms reductions as more important than pursuing a unilateral disarmament. Had Washington implemented unilateral policies of disarmament, this would be strong evidence that the LoA school's emphasis on internalized norms against nuclear use and possession were in place. Such unilateral policies were not adopted, and strategic and national security concerns for such a decision show that beliefs about the appropriateness of nuclear possession were not internalized.

The relative values of normative constraints on nuclear possession during the Vietnam era were evident in U.S. policy pursuits of arms control and rhetoric of the pursuit of complete disarmament. In practice, the United States and international political elites regarded nuclear deterrence as an effective strategy at maintaining stability and peace. Rational desires for increased security won the day in policies that were implemented by the United States under Johnson. Following the LoC school, policymakers feared that giving up nuclear weapons would reduce American security and interests.

2. The Nixon Administration

International opinions of nuclear arms did not change very much from the Johnson to Nixon administration. Nixon and senior policymakers adopted and furthered the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) and Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) discussions that began under the Johnson administration. The

continuation of U.S.–Soviet arms discussions led America's allies to worry about the political implications resulting from Johnson's orchestrating of the Test Ban Treaty and NPT, as well as feeling relieved that the growing nuclear détente offered security benefits for all.[135] To reduce Cold War tensions the United States began a policy of détente with the Soviet Union, for both nuclear war planning policies as well as force posture.

International norms, to some degree, continued to pressure U.S. policymakers toward disarmament and non-proliferation. As mentioned previously, America's pursuit of disarmament and arms control received mixed responses from the international community. In Asia, the U.S. National Security Council sought policy advice for the question of, "which is the lesser of two evils—nuclear proliferation or the extension of more concrete American nuclear assurances?"[136] This issue developed in part because of America's reluctance to use nuclear weapons in the Vietnam conflict. As nuclear war planning options appeared more and more constrained, Asian nations were considering acquiring their own nuclear arms for security instead of relying on American assurances.[137]

Nixon recognized that a robust nuclear force posture was one way to wield nuclear power without having to use nuclear weapons. Speaking to his National Security Council he stated that "the main purpose of our forces is diplomatic wallop. The possibility of nuclear conflict is remote, because the fear of it is so widespread."[138] He continued to speak about the power and strategic benefits that a nuclear posture has for diplomatic and political gain, which he believed to

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[135] Ibid., 61.

[136] National Security Council, "Paper Prepared in the National Security Staff Council," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. I, Foundations of Foreign Policy (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d54, 175.

[137] Ibid.

[138] National Security Council, "Memorandum of Conversation," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. I, Foundations of Foreign Policy (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d96, 332. Minutes of NSC Meeting on Defense Strategy (President Nixon and NSC).

be even more important than nuclear effects on the battlefield.[139] Evidently, Nixon placed the strategic consequences of a strong nuclear force posture ahead of any international ethics or norms against the possession of nuclear arms.

In addition to domestic norms against the use of nuclear arms in the Vietnam War, Nixon was also being domestically constrained in his nuclear possession policies. “With the public and Congress sour on military expenditures thanks to the Vietnam War,” Lawrence Wittner argues, “The Nixon administration saw no alternative to strategic arms control.”[140] War weariness and the continued influence from disarmament organizations in America constrained policymakers toward disarmament and arms control. As a democratic nation, many policymakers feared that failure to align with domestic norms on nuclear policy would result in their loss of political office.[141]

As for nuclear possession policies, Nixon’s administration was influenced primarily by domestic norms against a strong nuclear force posture. Nixon believed passionately in the strategic power that a robust nuclear force posture offered. His implementation of the madman theory is an example of his high regard for nuclear weapons as both as a deterrent against aggression and as a diplomatic bargaining tool, but domestic politics forced him to abandon that strategy and pursue reduced force posture levels. Under Nixon’s support, both the SALT and ABM treaties were passed and America’s nuclear stockpiles began to decline. Even though Nixon did not internalize the notion that nuclear weapons use or possession were inappropriate in the Vietnam era, the prevailing international and domestic norms concerning their possession constrained his strategic options.

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[139] Ibid., 333–334.

[140] Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 436–37.

[141] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 74–75.

D. CONCLUSION

During the Vietnam War era, nuclear policymakers were constrained by international and domestic nuclear norms. By looking at historical documents from both the Johnson and Nixon administration, it becomes clear that norms were far more constraining on nuclear war planning policies than on nuclear possession policies. Neither Johnson nor Nixon ever used nuclear weapons or allowed nuclear weapons to be placed into the Vietnam theater of war, despite seeing the tactical military utility that nuclear weapons could provide. Additionally, even though both administrations pursued nuclear arms control and nuclear reductions, neither administration felt largely constrained to limit their nuclear force postures at the expense of national security.

Looking at the four schools of thought on how norms affect nuclear policy, the LoC school is the best explanatory theory for the Vietnam War period. This school of thought focuses on the strategic picture of U.S. security and welfare, and takes into account the political costs for violating nuclear norms. The reputational and political costs of violating nuclear use norms and traditions could place America's security at risk. President Johnson's internalized aversion to using nuclear arms, or entertaining any nuclear war planning policies, provides some evidence that the LoA school applied to his decision-making; Johnson maintained a social and constructivist aversion to nuclear war planning. Conversely, the Nixon administration provides little evidence to support the notion of a nuclear taboo, a prominent theory in the LoA school, as Nixon and several policymakers did not internalize any aversions to using nuclear arms on an ethical or moral level. Instead, the Nixon administration was constrained through a LoC cost-benefit analysis regarding the potential material gains of nuclear weapons use in Vietnam against the reputational and security risks of violating norms of non-use.

The military utility school finds the least support throughout the Vietnam War, as both administrations had military advisors that purported the tactical advantages of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Despite a military utility, both

administrations took the long-term LoC approach with their decisions to avoid nuclear use. Long-term negative consequences for violating nuclear norms, such as the possibility of increased nuclear proliferation, escalation of conflicts, loss of prestige and reputation, and damage to diplomacy, all proved to be the overwhelming concerns that constrained policymakers throughout the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War marked a pivotal opportunity for the use of nuclear weapons. Despite this, policymakers never used the bomb. Additionally, U.S. nuclear force postures varied greatly throughout the Vietnam War and nuclear stockpiles reached their peak under the Johnson administration. This is evidence that norms applying to nuclear use policies are different, or more influential, than those concerning nuclear possession. Similar to the early Cold War, the explanatory value of norms on nuclear use and possession varied over time and circumstances. Overall, American policymakers in this period tended to fall into the LoC category by recognizing the costs and benefits associated with domestic and international expectations for nuclear behavior, and choosing policies that best aligned with American long-term national interests.

IV. COLD WAR'S END AND GULF WAR ERA

A. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War marks an important case study for understanding how norms affected U.S. nuclear policies. Beginning with a look at policy decisions from the Carter administration and continuing through those of Reagan and Bush, it became clear that the explanatory value of norms on U.S. nuclear policies was not always consistent. Similar to the beginning and middle Cold War periods, evidence shows that appropriate expectations of behavior for the use of nuclear weapons were more constraining on nuclear use policies than those that concerned nuclear possession. Overall, internalization of norms among Washington's policymakers during this era was rarely the prominent factor for policy decisions. Instead, America's nuclear policymakers based their decisions for nuclear use and possession primarily along the LoC school of thought.

This chapter focuses on the role that ethics and norms had on nuclear policy through three American administrations and the Gulf War. This time-period covers several important developments in U.S. nuclear policy as well as illustrates numerous competing norms that dominated public and international opinions at the end of the Cold War. Analysis of the Bush administration details the rapid and unexpected fall of the Soviet Union, which led to unprecedented possibilities for change in nuclear policy. Finally, the Gulf War case study is unique in that it was the first post-Cold War conflict where America had the ability to use nuclear weapons, but never truly considered their employment due to conventional military superiority and a desire to maintain normative prohibitions for their use.

Paul argues that the maintenance of a tradition of non-use was repeatedly analyzed throughout this period on a cost-benefit analysis. Specifically, he concludes that policymakers felt constrained by "high reputational costs…and by the apprehension that the disproportionate effects for nuclear use nullified any

particular tactical gains nuclear use would have provided"[142] In this understanding, Paul takes on the LoC method of normative constraints being an external pressure. Paul has not abandoned his tradition of non-use theory, instead, his tradition theory has now taken on similar characteristics of the LoC school due to the development of reputational and political costs that have become associated with nuclear use. Whereas Paul argues that the development of these reputational costs had nothing to do with ethics or normative constraints when it developed, now that the tradition is established it has created these costs. Scholars in both the tradition of non-use and LoC theories place similar emphasis on the material costs that are now associated with nuclear use as a primary factor in nuclear decision-making.

America worked hard to create numerous treaties and conventions during this era that maintained the strong norms against the use of nuclear weapons that developed in the mid-Cold War period. There was a marked increase in domestic and international attention to nuclear policy during this time. Unlike previous eras, governments in the late Cold War period "have devoted more attention to public preferences and possible public reactions in the framing of their policies."[143] Policymakers found themselves faced with conflicting norms and ethics concerning the possession of nuclear weapons. This inconsistency in values regarding nuclear possession manifested itself in Washington's rhetorical pursuit of nuclear arms reduction, but rarely with actions that reflected such a pursuit of nuclear-zero. Decreases in nuclear possession policies were always pursued multi-laterally and with goals of increased security and national interests as a goal; ideational or moral overtones for arms control were rarely internalized by U.S. nuclear decision-makers. The appropriateness of nuclear possession was contrasted against the military utility that could be gained through possession of nuclear arms. Additionally, policymakers considered the long-term

142 Ibid., 78–79.

143 David Yost, "The Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?," *Armed Forces & Society* 16, no. 4 (1990): 491.

consequences of maintaining a nuclear arsenal versus pursuing a nuclear-zero policy.

This chapter will look at the prevailing norms that existed during each of the final three administrations of the Cold War. After determining what those normative expectations for behavior were, their influence on American nuclear policies will be interpreted along the four leading schools of thought regarding normative constraints on policymakers. Finally, lessons from these case as to the extent that this variable constrains nuclear policy will be discussed in the hopes of improving policymakers understanding of the role of norms in their decisions regarding U.S. national security interests.

B. PREVAILING NORMS NUCLEAR USE POLICIES

> If the United States should establish a pattern out there that it is legitimate to use those kinds of weapons, our children and grandchildren are going to rue the day.
>
> —Congressman Newt Gingrich[144]

This quote from Congressman Gingrich, in reference to the use of nuclear weapons in the Gulf War, highlights a LoC school mentality that was adopted by most American policymakers toward the end of the Cold War. From the 1970s until the end of the Cold War, the United States was never provided with any significant conflict in which the use of nuclear weapons was seriously considered. America's explicit policy for nuclear weapons was for deterrence only, and this deterrence was primarily focused on the Soviet Union. To everyone's surprise the Cold War ended quickly and unexpectedly, and America's nuclear use policies had to adapt to the new post-Cold War order.

The preeminent case study of U.S. nuclear use policy during this era came about in 1991 with the Gulf War. This conflict represents a critical case study for understanding American post-Cold War nuclear use policies.

141 McGeorge Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 4 (1991): 83–94.

Tannenwald argues that America never implicitly considered the use of nuclear weapons in this conflict, but concedes that this possibility was never explicitly ruled out.[145] She argues that non-use was implicit because U.S. policymakers never seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons despite threatening to do so, and that policymakers decided to make their explicit nuclear use policies deliberately ambiguous for strategic purposes.[146] This decision to maintain nuclear use ambiguity was similar to America's nuclear policy in the Vietnam War era. McGeorge Bundy accentuates the power of ambiguous threats when he discussed the role of nuclear weapons in the Gulf War: "That weapons are not exploded does not of itself exhaust the more subtle question of whether they are used. Weapons, and not only nuclear weapons, can also play a role merely by their existence."[147]

This begs the question, what were the norms regarding nuclear use at the end of the Cold War, and were they any different from during the Vietnam era? Furthermore, did these ethics and norms change at the end of the Cold War? Evidence shows that the prevailing norms on nuclear first-use and retaliatory-use remained constant from the end of the Vietnam War era and up to the Gulf War, as will be shown through three presidential administrations below.

Contrary to the Vietnam War, the Gulf War was a rapid and decisive military victory, with American forces possessing far greater conventional military strength than its opponent. With little debate or discussion, policymakers in this war decided against the first-use of nuclear arms, but maintained an ambiguous retaliatory-use policy for certain circumstances. What factors influenced this decision, and what factors influenced American nuclear use policies throughout the end of the Cold War? This chapter will look into the explanatory value of

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[145] Tannenwald, Nuclear Taboo, 294–296.

[146] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 486.

[147] Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf," 83.

norms on Washington's nuclear use policies, as well as if there is evidence of different normative constraints on nuclear first-use and retaliatory-use policies.

1. The Carter Administration

There was hardly any opportunity for the Carter administration to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, but their use was still considered as a possibility against Soviet aggression. Norms during this administration regarding the first-use or retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons remained relatively unchanged since those from the Vietnam Era. The United States maintained a strategy of nuclear deterrence, wherein nuclear planning was only for retaliatory-use, but had shifted its nuclear policy intentions toward non-proliferation more so than in the mid Cold War. The best source of insight for how norms affected the Carter administration's nuclear use policies can be seen in how they influenced policymaker decisions for construction of the neutron bomb and the development of the new nuclear strategy outlined in Presidential Directive 59 (PD 59).

Domestic and international norms concerning the neutron bomb were greatly constraining for U.S. policymakers. No weapon since the 1960's generated such a large ethical debate as the neutron bomb. Domestically and internationally the moral values of this new armament were debated, with advocates on both sides of the aisle. Despite representing a new weapon technology, policymakers quickly recognized that the neutron bomb was still a kind of nuclear weapon. Paul argues that the Carter administration was constrained by this reality, and therefore there would be reputational and political costs associated with breaking the tradition of non-use that was associated with these weapon systems.[148]

While the neutron bomb was a nuclear weapon, it was unique in that it specialized in taking human life through radiation poisoning, without causing significant damage to infrastructure. This weapon was intended to be more usable than other nuclear weapons because it can accomplish military objectives

[148] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 79.

with less collateral damage. Indeed, strategists and European leaders explicitly argued that the weapon was morally superior and more useful than standard nuclear and conventional weapons.[149] On the other hand, the way that radiation poisoning killed the enemy was considered morally reprehensible, and it was often compared to the immorality of chemical and biological weapons.[150] Among policymakers, some had internalized an aversion to their use while others had not. External factors such as protests and movements in Europe against the neutron bomb, based on ethical-norms concerning their use, were also influential on U.S. policymakers.[151]

Despite a divide over the morality and ethics of using a radiation-type weapon, the explanatory value of these ethics always took a back seat to U.S. policymaker's concerns over the long-term-consequences of using a neutron bomb. By the time of Carter's presidency, international norms had dictated that nuclear weapon use carried much higher political costs than the use of conventional weapons.[152] Tannenwald argues that U.S. policymakers were primarily concerned that the use of a neutron bomb would increase the chances for unwanted nuclear escalation.[153] Even if the discriminate and ethical superiority of neutron bombs could be agreed upon, the use of such a weapon would blur the line between what types of nuclear use would be considered appropriate. From a LoC perspective, the material benefits that neutron bombs could offer were not considered to be worth the risks of nuclear escalation. Therefore, it was external pressures of reputational costs and material cost to benefit analysis that led to the Carter administration's abandonment of the neutron bomb. A LoA understanding lacks sufficient evidence of influence of internalized beliefs regarding the appropriateness of their use, as the

[149] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 281.

[150] Ibid., 282.

[151] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 78–79.

[152] Ibid., 90-91.

[153] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 281.

appropriateness of the weapon was hotly debated among policymakers and a general conclusion as to their appropriateness was never agreed upon.

American policymakers were chiefly concerned with the prevention of large scale nuclear war, and they were convinced that neutron bombs might increase the chances of such a war. Ultimately, Carter decided not to manufacture this ethically-polarizing weapon.[154] His decision to do so was based somewhat on his own internalized aversion to the weapon but more so for his fear that the use of a neutron bomb would blur the line of appropriate use for nuclear weapons and result in unwanted reputational costs or set unwanted precedents for their use.[155]

While the military utility of a neutron bomb was considerably high, usefulness on the battlefield did not appear to be a prominent factor in this decision-making. The bomb could be effectively used against Soviet armored vehicles and infantry formations, which had become a growing concern for American and European nations,[156] yet discussions regarding the political harm that might follow the use this weapon trumped the cost-benefit analysis for their use. Policymaker's decision to factor in norms and reputational costs when deciding their policies for neutron bombs display a LoC school explanation for decision-making as opposed to one of pure military utility. To some extent, the political fallout for using neutron bombs would have been less than for the use of strategic or tactical nuclear weapons, because many argued that the discriminate effects of these weapons were morally superior to those of traditional nuclear arms. If this argument had been internalized by domestic and international actors, then U.S. policymakers would not have felt as constrained against the use of neutron weapons. Ultimately, the decision not to produce these weapons reflects that the military utility of the neutron bomb was never high enough to justify the reputational and political costs for their use.

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154 Ibid., 282.

155 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 78.

156 Stephen M. Younger, *The Bomb: A New History* (New York: Ecco, 2009), 39.

The LoA school would argue that ethics and norms surrounding neutron weaponry constrained their use, because policymakers internalized a revulsion to the use of such weapons. Tannenwald refers to this aversion as an example of a *de facto* no first-use policy because, by the late Cold War, American policymakers had almost completely internalized the belief that nuclear use was unacceptable.[157] Despite this supposed internalized norm, President Carter never explicitly made a no first-use pledge that was codified into U.S. nuclear planning documents and continued to maintain policies of retaliatory-use. The strongest evidence for a lack of internalized norms against neutron bombs would show up during Reagan's presidency, when policymakers decided to continue with the production and development of neutron bombs despite public opposition.[158] This reflects a cost-benefit relationship as trumping normative ideologies for neutron weapon employment, at least in policy outcomes.

While it is clear that some policymakers internalized a LoA belief that the use of neutron bombs was inappropriate, their policy decisions reflect a greater concern for realist and material notions of cost-benefit analysis that is found in the LoC school. As soon as the reputational and political costs associated with the use of neutron bombs became less costly than their strategic and deterrent capabilities, the next administration promptly funded their development. Stephen Younger, a senior policy scholar, took the decision not to use neutron bombs one step further in the LoC mindset by stating that decisions to abstain from their production were actually not normatively constrained at all, instead he states that policymakers acted only out of "practical interest to limit the use of the only weapon that could inflict tactical defeat on [U.S.] forces."[159]

For American policymakers, the utility of this weapon was never as important as the long-term-consequences that might result from their use.

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[157] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 291.

[158] Milton Leitenberg, "The Neutron Bomb: Enhanced Radiation Warheads," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5, no. 3 (1982): 341–369, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402398208437122.

[159] Younger, *The Bomb: A New History,* 198–199.

Specifically, policymakers feared that using this radiation-type weapon would increase the likelihood of large scale nuclear war. The true constraining effects on the decision to abandon the neutron bomb were based on material and realist concerns for the long-term security of the United States. The use of a neutron bomb might have the consequence of decreasing norms against the use of nuclear weapons as well as increasing the likelihood for nuclear escalation; both were considered regretful outcomes for the United States.

The Carter administration's development of PD 59 reflects how U.S. policymakers reacted to emerging norms and ethics for nuclear use. In 1978 Secretary of State Vance made a negative security agreement at a Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament. America pledged "not to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear states party to the NPT."[160] This decision to constrain America's ability to use nuclear weapons was not entirely motivated out of ethical or normative motives.

This decision was largely based on a desire to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which was considered vital to U.S. national security interests.[161] In addition to limiting which states America would use nuclear weapons against, the Carter administration also wanted to create plans for a limited nuclear war. Rather than maintaining policies for mutually assured destruction, as outlined in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), Carter asked for increased flexibility to fight a longer and limited nuclear war. The result was PD 59, a policy that emphasized deterrence, flexibility, and the capability to sustain a prolonged nuclear war.[162] This plan emphasized the need to allow for "bargaining effectively to terminate the war on acceptable terms," and the possibility of avoiding all-out nuclear war.[163]

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[160] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 80.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

[163] White House, *Presidential Directive/NSC 59, Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1980), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pd/pd59.pdf, 1.

This adoption of a new "countervailing"[164] nuclear use policy shows that while the administration's views on how to use nuclear weapons was slightly modified, overall the administration still held no internalized aversion to the use of nuclear weapons. Unlike many other NSC documents regarding nuclear strategy (i.e., NSC 68 and 162), ethics, morality, and international norms against the use of nuclear weapons were never mentioned in PD 59. Little evidence exists to show that policymakers in the Carter administration were ethically or normatively constrained in the development of this new policy; instead, the evidence portrays a LoC understanding that nuclear weapons would be used when the benefits outweighed the costs.

2. The Reagan Administration

Similar to his predecessor, Reagan's administration never faced any significant opportunities to use nuclear weapons in conflict. Regardless, the policy decisions from this administration still provide evidence as to whether or not norms constrained nuclear-use policies. Reagan took power after campaigning that the United States was in a window of vulnerability with the Soviet Union. This window, his administration argued, was a period of time in which the United States would fall irreparably behind the Soviet Union in nuclear capability.[165] This led Reagan and his administration to initially pursue a hawkish nuclear strategy that focused on prevailing, instead of countervailing, in a conflict with the USSR. While the veracity of America's vulnerability to Soviet military capabilities was false, the perception of weakness was strong in American public opinion.[166]

Internationally, evidence of a norm against nuclear use can be found in the codification of agreements that delegitimized their use. A 1981 UNGA resolution declared that states "allowing the first-use of nuclear weapons…" for

[164] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 387.

[165] Pavel Podvig, "The Window of Vulnerability That Wasn't: Soviet Military Buildup in the 1970s—A Research Note," *International Security* 33, no. 1 (2008): 118–138.

[166] Ibid.

any reason, was “incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the United Nations.”[167] Two years later, another resolution was adopted that further condemned the “first-use of nuclear weapons.”[168] Both of these resolutions condemn first-use, but make no condemnations for retaliatory-use. Norms against retaliatory-use of nuclear arms did not carry the same weight as those regarding first-use during Reagan’s presidency, because the public viewed nuclear deterrence as necessary and appropriate for war prevention.[169]

Tannenwald claims that influential policymakers, like Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, were pushing for an American “no-first-use policy.”[170] This argument stood in contrast to America’s decision in a UN Special Session on Disarmament to avoid undertaking such a policy.[171] She mentions McNamara was motivated both by a “tradition”[172] of non-use and by material concerns as to the benefits of using tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Tannenwald concludes that Reagan’s nuclear use policies were primarily concerned with maintaining national interests rather than influenced by normative constraints. While there was a great deal of “morally based arguments” during this period, she argues that these appeals to ideology “were a way of drawing attention to the interests at stake.”[173] This view most closely aligns with the LoC explanation for the value of norms in nuclear use policy, as it was realist concerns that mattered more to policymakers than ethical or normative prescriptions for acceptable behavior.

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[167] United Nations General Assembly “Resolution 36/100, Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe,” Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 1981, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/36/100. Adopted in 1981.

[168] United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution 38/75, Condemnation of Nuclear War,” Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 1983, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/38/75. Adopted in 1983.

[169] Yost, “The Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?,” 489.

[170] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 283.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid., 284.

[173] Ibid., 289.

Reagan adopted new nuclear policies that did not sit well with domestic public opinion. His implementation of National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 13 represented a switch from a countervailing strategy to a "prevailing" strategy for nuclear war. The creation of this strategy was partially a response to the perceived gap in nuclear capability that favored the Soviet Union.[174] This directive, while still intended as a deterrent policy that only provided for retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons,[175] nevertheless was perceived by many as the start of a new, dangerous, and unnecessary arms race.[176] NSDD 13's strategies of prevailing in nuclear war appeared to be irrational to the American public.[177] Increased public scrutiny and activism in nuclear politics constrained Reagan and his administrators toward new nuclear use policies, one of which was the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative program.[178]

The switch from a policy of "mutually assured destruction to mutual assured survival"[179] was largely undertaken in response to changing norms for nuclear use that constrained Reagan's nuclear policies. The inconsistency between growing stigmas against the first-use of nuclear weapons and U.S. deterrent policies, which relied upon the threat of retaliatory-use, became a political issue throughout Reagan's presidency.[180] The appropriateness of nuclear deterrence's reliance on mutual destruction was increasingly considered illegitimate by domestic public opinion. This change in expectations of legitimate behavior is particularly explanatory for Reagan's pursuit of the SDI program and arms control treaties as a means to address these new norms, both of which will be explored further in the nuclear possession section of this chapter.

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174 Podvig, "The Window of Vulnerability That Wasn't, 133–138.

175 White House, *National Security Decision Directive 13 Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1981), http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-13.pdf.

176 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 389–391.

177 Ibid.,392.

178 Ibid., 394.

179 Ibid., 395.

180 Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 292–293.

3. The Bush Administration

The Bush administration offers unique case studies for normative effects on nuclear policy. In addition to having to navigate new security paradigms that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this regime also encountered the first post-Cold War conflict in which America could have used nuclear weapons in combat. Nuclear use policies from this era highlight a clear distinction between first-use and retaliatory-use policies, and there is evidence that the explicit policies that existed regarding nuclear use did not align with policymaker's implicit plans for their employment.

The fall of the Warsaw Pact signaled an abrupt shift in conventional military power that greatly favored the United States and NATO allies.[181] This shift in power made the reliance on nuclear weapons, as an equalizer for conventional weakness, no longer valid for the United States. In the absence of Soviet Russia's powerful conventional military, nuclear weapons now became a threat to America's conventional military superiority. William Epstein, an expert on disarmament, makes the argument that when the United States had a strategic advantage in nuclear capabilities and testing, it would be logical for America to then support arms control measures that maintain this advantage.[182] Arms control measures, he states, would "practically ensure that the American margin of superiority would be maintained for a long and indefinite period of time."[183] This argument represents a LoC approach to nuclear decision-making, and this approach best explains the nuclear non-proliferation policies that America adopted after the Soviet fall.

Policymakers during this new era placed increased emphasis on the prevention of nuclear and WMD proliferation, and the Bush administration tailored their nuclear use policies to align with this emphasis. Secretary of

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[181] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 418–419.

[182] William Epstein, *The Last Chance: Nuclear Proliferation and Arms Control* (New York: Free Press, 1976), 99.

[183] Ibid.

Defense Dick Cheney spearheaded the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP), a policy which tasked military planners to generate options for using nuclear weapons against any nation that is capable of developing WMDs.[184] The United States justified its intervention against Iraq in part as a means of preventing the spread of WMDs, in addition to reversing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The role of preventing nuclear proliferation in the U.S. decision to enter the Gulf War, can be seen as "the very first case in which an existing effort to 'have the bomb' has been decisively blocked by clear-cut and internationally approved military and political action."[185] Gulf War plans were very different than previous American conflicts, because Iraq maintained a WMD arsenal that had to potential to inflict heavy costs for U.S. troops. In response to this new threat, nuclear plans developed for this war showcased a deliberate effort among U.S. policymakers that nuclear use was being contemplated only as a retaliatory option against WMD use by Saddam Hussein. This plan was explicit in the possibility of U.S. nuclear retaliatory-use, but policymaker interviews and discussions largely detail an implicit understanding that such retaliatory plans were never a serious consideration.

The 1991 Gulf War occurred in a very different strategic environment than previous conflicts throughout the Cold War. Escalation risks with nuclear-capable adversaries were at a minimum in the absence of the Soviet Union, and the conventional capabilities of the Iraqi military to inflict high levels of casualties to U.S. troops was a significant factor in military decision-making.[186] In addition to a large conventional capability, Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons that could have greatly increased the costs for American military intervention. Despite these risks, U.S. policymakers believed that domestic-norms against the use of nuclear weapons were constraining enough to prevent serious

[184] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use,* 181.

[185] Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf," 89.

[186] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 294–295.

consideration for a U.S. nuclear strike in the Gulf.[187] While constrained by expectations of high reputational and political costs for nuclear use, the Bush administration did not feel particularly constrained against making ambiguous nuclear threats.

This conflict provided an opportunity to redefine the boundaries of the tradition of non-use theory. Paul does not make a distinction between first-use and retaliatory-use regarding the establishment of the nuclear abstinence tradition. Despite numerous implicit nuclear threats delivered to Saddam, that emphasized the possibility of a nuclear retaliatory strike against Iraq if Baghdad made use of WMDs in the conflict,[188] Paul believed that the administration's ambiguous warnings were "a threat they were not willing to follow through."[189] Saddam never used WMDs against U.S. troops, and therefore the possibilities of retaliatory-use were not tested. For this reason, scholars like Tannenwald and Paul make arguments that align with a LoC understanding to support their claims that America implicitly never intended to use nuclear weapons in a retaliatory strike, despite explicit policies that allowed for their use. They claim that the reputational and political costs of such a decision would never have outweighed the benefits for their use.[190]

Paul provides evidence that America never intended to violate a tradition of non-use through senior policymaker interviews. According to him, interviews with President Bush, McGeorge Bundy, and Dick Cheney all mention that nuclear use was not in the long-term interests of the United States and therefore never seriously considered.[191] Closer inspection of senior policymaker interviews show that many bounded their nuclear use plans in terms of cost-benefit ratios, and

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[187] Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf," 85; Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 486; Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 297.

[188] "Text of Bush's Letter to Saddam Hussein," *Los Angeles Times,* January 13, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-01-13/news/mn-412_1_u-n-security-council-resolution.

[189] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 85.

[190] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 307; Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 83–86.

[191] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 83–86.

imply that nuclear use was certainly possible under unique circumstances. For example; President Bush could "conjure up some horrible scenario that would call for the use of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons,"[192] McGeorge Bundy remarked that nuclear use could have occurred as a "considered response to a genuinely parallel ferocity by others,"[193] and Defense Secretary Cheney outlined a circumstance where nuclear use could be expected when saying "were Saddam foolish enough to use weapons of mass destruction, the American response would be overwhelming and devastating," with "unconventional weapons" listed as a possible American response to Iraqi chemical weapon use.[194]

While no one can ever know if retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons would have occurred against a biological or chemical weapons attack from Iraq, there is evidence that policymakers were aware of circumstances that might have lead to their use. Their decision making was bounded in terms of the material gains that could be expected from nuclear use against the costs associated with violating domestic and international norms that condemned such attacks. Due to the superiority of U.S. conventional military strength, resorting to nuclear use was not worth the reputational costs for violating a tradition of non-use,[195] nor considered an appropriate level of force according to established norms.[196]

Prevailing norms on nuclear first-use and retaliatory-use remained constant throughout all three administrations at the end of the Cold War era. Nuclear first-use was still a condemned behavior among U.S. domestic public opinion and international attitudes. These norms were manifested in public attitudes and codified into international resolutions. Expectations for behavior concerning retaliatory-use were similarly expressed, and these norms were not

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[192] President George Bush, as cited in Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 85.

[193] Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf," 87.

[194] Dick Cheney, cited in John Pike, "Nuclear Threats During the Gulf War," Federation of American Scientists, accessed September 7, 2016, http://fas.org/irp/eprints/ds-threats.htm.

[195] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 86.

[196] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 298.

as constraining on policy as those of first-use. Evidence shows that retaliatory-use strategies hinged largely on a LoC understanding of costs and benefits, rather than being constrained due to a LoA argument concerning internalized norms regarding the morality of their use. Explicit Gulf War nuclear policies heavily implied that retaliatory use of nuclear weapons would be treated as an appropriate response to a WMD strike on U.S. troops. Policymakers made the claim that the benefits of such use were unlikely to ever be worth the costs, particularly over the long-term. As Congressman Newt Gingrich's realist remarks make clear, nuclear use in the Gulf would not have been in the long-term interests of America.

C. PREVAILING NORMS ON NUCLEAR POSSESSION POLICIES

> If we elect to continue to have them, we must understand why, how many we need, and the purpose we intend for them. If we elect to eliminate them, we should understand the challenges and the risks that will follow.
>
> — Senior Policy Scholar Stephen Younger[197]

The previous quote by senior policy scholar Stephen Younger outlines a recurring debate for U.S. nuclear possession policies throughout the end of the Cold War. The Carter, Reagan, and Bush presidencies represent a unique time where the United States pursued numerous arms treaties focused on limiting the numbers and capabilities of nuclear weapons that the United States and other nations could maintain. Scientists, diplomats, religious leaders, and policymakers became increasingly active in debating the ethics and expectations of behavior surrounding the possession of nuclear weapons. Their influence on U.S. nuclear possession policies could not be ignored and they did constrain American policymakers in decisions of numbers and capabilities of nuclear weapons that the public would allow. This section will look at the prevailing norms on nuclear possession that existed at the end of the Cold War and determine how influential those variables were in constraining policymaker decisions.

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[197] Younger, *The Bomb: A New History,* 198–199.

1. The Carter Administration

President Carter took office in 1977 after campaigning for a nuclear policy of bilateral disarmament with the Soviet Union, in the pursuit of an overall goal of a nuclear-zero world.[198] His administration pursued arms control measures through the continuation of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and the beginnings of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). While pursuing arms control, Carter and his administration were also faced with international and domestic pressures that constrained nuclear technological developments and force posture policies; particularly with the development of the neutron bomb. The strategic benefits that a large and capable nuclear deterrent provided were often weighed against the growing tide of international and domestic opinion concerning their use and possession. In the end, expectations of behavior regarding the possession of nuclear weapons and their capabilities appear to be less constrained by norms than they were by materialist concerns.

Domestic and international beliefs regarding the appropriateness of neutron bomb technology is a leading indicator of how norms can constrain U.S. nuclear possession policies. Domestically, the Carter administration recognized public support for the reduction of nuclear arms and pursuit of complete disarmament. In his inaugural address he made it clear that he would pursue policies that lead toward "the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this Earth."[199] Despite these explicit pursuits of arms reduction, his administration was also pursuing the development of new nuclear weapons technologies, to include the neutron bomb. The American public quickly expressed their concerns and opinions regarding the inappropriateness of this weapon,[200] and Carter internalized some of these concerns himself.[201]

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198 Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), 382–383.

199 Jimmy Carter, "Inaugural Address of Jimmy Carter," January 20, 1977, Lillian Goldman Law Library, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/carter.asp.

200 Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 277–279.

201 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 78.

Internationally, norms prohibiting the presence of this new technology in their regions was powerfully constraining for Carter's administration. Tannenwald and Paul both provide evidence that the public opinion of European nations internalized a belief that the neutron bomb was immoral and dangerous.[202] Organized protests, like the "ban the bomb movement," in Europe called for nuclear abolition and rallied public support to prevent the establishment of neutron bomb equipped Lance missiles staged in Europe.[203] Maynard Glitman argues that in response to this movement, Washington altered their policies regarding this weapon and "began to back off a bit from its support for fielding the new warheads and sought to place some of the political burden for the deployments on the Allies: We would produce and deploy if they wanted it."[204] In other words, U.S. policymakers had not internalized an aversion to building and deploying a neutron bomb, but they were refraining from doing so until the political costs for such a decision aligned with national interests. Had European attitudes been more accepting of neutron technology, the United States could have been expected to deploy the bomb in Europe for strategic gains.

Glitman's LoC explanation for U.S. nuclear pursuits regarding neutron bomb capabilities is somewhat shared by Tannenwald and Paul. Neither Tannenwald nor Paul argued that normative factors were the primary cause of the Carter administration's desire to abandon the possession and capabilities of neutron bomb weapons. They concluded that "strong political pressures"[205] and a desire to maintain a "firebreak"[206] between nuclear and conventional weapons were the best explanatory causes for neutron bomb abandonment. These represent material and realist concerns that best fit into the LoC school.

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202 Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 279; Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 78–79.

203 Maynard W. Glitman, *The Last Battle of the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006), 24–25.

204 Ibid., 24.

205 Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 280.

206 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 79.

The decision to abandon neutron bomb technology did not carry over to plans for the complete eradication of all nuclear stockpiles. Concerning the numbers and capabilities of nuclear arms, the Carter Administration had to contend with a mix of public expectations for behavior. The American public was becoming increasingly politically active concerning their beliefs regarding nuclear weapons. Two competing norms had emerged, one that wanted a nuclear free world and one that wanted to maintain a reduced, yet capable, nuclear arsenal for security and deterrence reasons. These competing norms led to the adoption of policies wherein "American negotiators accepted the bomb as a fact of international life whose influence must be controlled, rather than an evil to be abolished."[207] Policymakers were aware of normative constraints on nuclear possession, but they had decided that these norms did not outweigh the strategic and security benefits that they provided. For these reasons, the Carter administration continued to modernize their current nuclear stockpiles and cautiously pursued arms control measures that ensured a balance of power instead of complete nuclear disarmament. Discussions for the START and SALT negotiations reflect a desire to maintain symmetry of nuclear capabilities rather than complete disarmament.[208]

2. The Reagan Administration

At the outset of Reagan's presidency, a perceived "window of vulnerability" pervaded the nation. Fears regarding the strength of America's national security were entwined with America's nuclear defense policies. From a LoA perspective, there is evidence that Reagan internalized a belief that nuclear weapons were morally and ethically repulsive, and the pursuit of complete nuclear disarmament was an appropriate behavior.[209] While this belief may have been internalized by Reagan, evidence suggests that the American people at this

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[207] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 186.

[208] Ibid., 318–319.

[209] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 82–83.

time had not internalized a belief that nuclear disarmament was a moral imperative. Polling data shows that "most Americans have long had grave doubts about nuclear weapons…but see them as necessary for deterrence and war prevention," [210] and that 66 percent of Americans supported retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons against a nuclear attack.[211]

Four historic events occurred during the Reagan administration, which provide evidence for that era's norms, and how those norms affected nuclear possession policies. These events include the nuclear "Freeze Now" movement, the 1983 Conference of Catholic Bishops, the creation of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) policy, and the development of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The "Freeze Now" movement was the largest political protest against nuclear arms in American history.[212] This movement sought to curtail the hawkish nuclear policies from the Carter Administration (PD 59) and to call for an end to the nuclear arms race. The anti-nuclear movement had "stressed a moral abhorrence of weapons of mass destruction," [213] which was representative of the internalized values held by many American citizens. However, in order to better influence U.S. policy and gain supporters, the movement's leaders chose to broaden their message to include the material benefits that disarmament could bring about.[214] Evidence of the powerful effects that this movement had on establishing acceptable nuclear possession behaviors is found in a UNGA resolution that specifically called for "all nuclear-weapon states to freeze, under appropriate verification, all nuclear weapons in their possession both in

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[210] Yost, "The Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?," 489.

[211] Connie de Boer, "The Polls: The European Peace Movement and the Deployment of Nuclear Missiles," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1985): 125, as cited in Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 288.

[212] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo*, 285.

[213] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 382.

[214] Ibid.

qualitative and quantitative terms."[215] Democratic nations, like the United States, "appear to have become more important determinants of national and alliance policy."[216] This is reflected in how the movement succeeded in constraining the Reagan administration toward nuclear reduction treaties, such as START,[217] a treaty that they may not have been inclined to pursue if not for the powerful public expressions of norms against nuclear weapons.

Another powerful expression of norms concerning nuclear possession can be found in the 1983 Conference of Catholic Bishops. This conference resulted in a paradoxical ethical argument for nuclear weapons use and possession. While generally against nuclear use policies, the conference argued that the possession of nuclear arms for deterrence reasons was a righteous and acceptable behavior as long as a state continued to pursue policies toward a goal of nuclear disarmament.[218] This is paradoxical because it represents a norm that allows for nuclear possession (and the implied nuclear threats associated with possession), but argues that following through with a nuclear deterrent threat was never morally justified. The document sparked domestic debate regarding the morality of nuclear deterrence and constrained policymakers toward alternative defense policies.[219]

Partially in response to these conflicting norms of security and appropriate behavior, Reagan pursued policies that focused on increasing conventional deterrence capabilities such as increased support for anti-ballistic missile technologies.[220] However, critics maintained that many of these policies—the SDI in particular—functioned more to enhance U.S. nuclear first strike feasibility

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[215] United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution 38/76, Nuclear-Weapon Freeze," Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 1983, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/38/76. Adopted in 1983.

[216] Yost, "Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?," 491.

[217] Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*, 81–82.

[218] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*.

[219] Tannenwald*, Nuclear Taboo,* 286–287.

[220] Ibid.

than to reduce the role of nuclear weapons overall. The defensive nature of SDI was questionable to some arms control advocates, as the ability to neutralize an enemy's nuclear retaliation could also be interpreted as decreasing risks associated with a nuclear first strike.[221]

The powerful effect that rising anti-nuclear movements and the ethical arguments from religious leaders had on the Reagan administration is evident in Reagan's adoption of the SDI program. This program was designed to address questions and concerns from the American public on nuclear policy. Reagan directly references the nuclear Freeze movement when articulating his defense goals proclaiming:

> I know that all of you want peace, and so do I. I know too that many of you seriously believe that a nuclear freeze would further the cause of peace. But a freeze now would make us less, not more, secure and would raise, not reduce, the risks of war.[222]

In this statement he is showing that he finds material value in the possession of nuclear weapons, representative of a LoC response to growing norms against nuclear possession.

Despite the utility that he finds in nuclear weapons, his speech later addresses the powerful norm that had developed concerning the possession of nuclear arms. In response to these recognized norms, Reagan outlined plans for the SDI program in this speech as a way to address normative constraints on nuclear policies. His remarks called "upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."[223] Thus Reagan portrayed his

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221 Frank von Hippel, "Attacks on Star Wars Critics a Diversion," in *Assessing the Nuclear Age*, ed. Len Ackland and Steven McGuire (University of Chicago Press: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1986), 167–168.

222 Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, March 23, 1983, https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1983/32383d.htm.

223 Ibid.

administration as shifting away from a strong reliance on nuclear weapons, and toward more conventional means of maintaining national security.

The development of the INF treaty sheds light on the actual policy outcomes concerning emerging norms for nuclear force postures. Reagan's approach to arms control prioritized the development of the SDI program as a means to make nuclear weapons obsolete.[224] Early arms control discussions between Moscow and Russia focused on the reduction of nuclear arms and limitations on certain nuclear capabilities, particularly capabilities of intermediate-range missiles. Later in these discussions, to Washington's surprise, Gorbachev adopted a stance calling for the United States to agree to a policy of nuclear-zero.[225] This was a new precedent for U.S.-Soviet arms control diplomacy, but Reagan embraced it. Gorbachev and Reagan arms control discussions were unique in that "the two began to outbid each other in their utopianism."[226] While these two leaders were very influential in nuclear decision-making, there were still external pressures that were constraining their policy discussions.

European political elites were not convinced that the pursuit of complete nuclear disarmament was in their best interests. In response to INF discussions, NATO leaders urged a cautious and incremental approach to arms control; similar to how the Reykjavik discussions began before Gorbachev's unexpected change in attitude.[227] Domestically, Reagan's advisors did not think the president should agree to Gorbachev's proposals.[228] Policymakers were worried that nuclear deterrence, a staple of Western security doctrine, was being eroded with the increased push for nuclear disarmament. This general unwillingness to completely abandon nuclear possession, despite the growing norms calling for such action, is representative of a LoC explanation for the final INF treaty

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224 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 400.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

228 Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use,* 83.

agreement. Rather than pursuing complete disarmament, a possibility that was advocated by both Reagan and Gorbachev, the INF treaty encapsulated limitations on the types of nuclear weapons that could be maintained and called for reductions in their overall numbers.[229] Thus, policymakers hedged their risks by maintaining a nuclear arsenal; albeit a smaller one of reduced capability. Internalized desires for the eradication of nuclear arms that may have resided in America and Russia's heads of government did not necessarily find themselves reflected among American policymakers overall.

A trend of the Reagan administration was a growing public interest in nuclear strategy that questioned the rationale of nuclear deterrence. It appeared that the American public was internalizing a belief that nuclear first-use was an inappropriate behavior, but possession of nuclear arms as a deterrent was still considered acceptable.[230] Reagan and his administration were constrained toward addressing this external normative pressure regarding nuclear decision-making, and began to develop new nuclear deterrent strategies that focused on arms reduction and capability limitations. These pursuits were not done unilaterally, as policymakers wanted to ensure that the ideological nuclear policies that they were being pressured to undertake were balanced with similar limits and reductions from rival states. Enacting policies that focused on arms control rather than nuclear-zero, such as the INF Treaty, indicates that a combination of LoA and LoC outlooks best explains nuclear possession policy decisions for this administration. Reagan's seemingly internalized aversion to nuclear possession was not powerful enough to prevent policymakers from hedging on nuclear possession policies in the pursuit of material security interests. The administration's support for nuclear reductions, but not for nuclear-zero, represents a balancing of normative desires and material concerns.

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[229] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 400.

[230] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, 286-87.

3. The Bush Administration

The Bush administration pursued numerous arms reduction treaties and negotiated new agreements that limited capabilities for nuclear weapons. Many factors converged to shape these new nuclear possession policies, and norms concerning nuclear possession carried a lot of weight. By continuing similar policies of arms control and reduction measures from the Reagan administration, Bush and his advisors balanced the material benefits of nuclear possession with established norms that called for nuclear reductions and the pursuit of a nuclear-zero world.

Early in his administration, Bush signed the START I treaty. This treaty called for an approximately fifty percent reduction in the number of U.S. and Soviet nuclear warheads, a reduction in the number of nuclear delivery vehicles to 1600, and the removal of nuclear weapons from Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.[231] This was a significant arms reduction, but the levels of cutback remained far from a nuclear-zero posture. Both the United States and Russia, even after these steep reductions, maintain enough nuclear capability to ensure a reliable second-strike capability as well as to guarantee an unacceptable level of destruction to any nation that finds itself on the receiving end of a nuclear attack.[232] Maintaining these destructive nuclear capabilities, while still pursuing arms reduction, reflects a concern for the LoC school's strategic cost and benefit analysis regarding nuclear possession.

Prevailing norms in U.S. domestic opinion, and that of NATO's policymakers, did not view nuclear weapon possession as inherently wrong or inappropriate. Polling data regarding nuclear force postures indicated that Americans perceived nuclear weapon possession "as necessary for deterrence and war prevention."[233] This norm stood in stark contrast to the explicit pursuit of

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[231] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 423.

[232] Ibid., 422.

[233] Everett Carll Ladd, "The Freeze Framework," *Public Opinion* 5 (August/September 1982), 20, 41; as cited in Yost, "The Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?," 489.

a nuclear free world that was agreed to by U.S. policymakers with the implementation of the NPT in 1970. During the Gulf War, a conflict that had the possibility of U.S. nuclear use, there was a notable lack of increased nuclear protests and calls for arms reductions as compared to the massive movements during Reagan's term. This can be attributed to the U.S. public's perceived low levels of risk concerning nuclear use, as well as to increased emphasis on strategies of arms control as a means to maintain national security.[234] America's NATO allies also viewed nuclear possession as an appropriate behavior. The NATO strategic doctrine of 1991 made it clear that nuclear weapons were essential for deterrence.[235] Possession of nuclear arms, and the capability of those arms to inflict unacceptable damage to any aggressor, was the prevailing norm among NATO policymakers.

Bush's presidential initiatives for arms reduction, to include cancelling new nuclear technology research programs, taking bombers off alert, and other measures aimed at eliminating tactical nuclear weapons, were all undertaken with little domestic or international debate.[236] The lack of debate surrounding these presidential initiatives was a marked departure from historical trends surrounding previous arms control discussions, of which many had taken years of scrupulous diplomacy before being accepted. NATO allies and Russia were eager to maintain these new precedents for "as-rapid-as-possible Soviet/Russian disarmament,"[237] as a means to maintain current deterrent postures that had been successful throughout the Cold War.

The Bush administration did not pursue a nuclear-zero standard for arms reduction. Security benefits that came from nuclear deterrence were considered as well as the costs of violating the international norm of nuclear-zero that was agreed to in the NPT. The American public, and its allies, saw the material

234 Yost, "Delegitimization of Nuclear Deterrence?," 489–491.

235 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 422.

236 Ibid., 423.

237 Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 423.

benefits that nuclear possession offered and valued deterrence over the ideology of a nuclear-zero world.[238] That is not to say that Washington was abandoning its ideology of a nuclear free world; instead, it shows that material concerns for national security were more influential in nuclear possession policies during the Bush regime. The United States still harbored distrust for their Cold War adversary, and confidence in the material benefits of a nuclear force. These LoC factors weighed prominently in America's pursuit of arms reduction and avoidance of nuclear abolition.

LoA factors also constrained Bush's policymakers at this time, though to a lesser degree. Internalized norms that called for the pursuit of nuclear-zero, or at least reduction, were a key factor in driving nuclear force posture discussions in the first place. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the specter of nuclear war was vastly reduced and an opportunity for America to diminish their reliance on nuclear capabilities was presented. Norms that questioned the appropriateness of nuclear possession as a deterrent, prominent during Reagan's administration, also had less public traction in the post-Cold War world.[239]

In the absence of the Warsaw-Pact, fears of nuclear escalation or existential threats to national security were no longer prominent topics of American political discourse. This reduced the power of normative constraints on U.S. nuclear possession policies, but did not change a generally accepted belief that arms control was still the appropriate course of action for nuclear policy.[240] In accordance with the disarmament norms of the late Cold War, the Bush administration sought ways to marginalize the role that nuclear weapons played in national security while avoiding policies that would result complete nuclear disarmament.[241] Thus, a balance between normative constraints toward arms control, and a LoC understanding that nuclear ownership resulted in greater

[238] Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo,* 292.

[239] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 425–426.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid.

material benefits than costs, prevailed during Bush's presidency. This balance between ideological calls for nuclear arms reduction and a desire to maintain a nuclear force posture as a deterrent measure continued through subsequent U.S. administrations following the end of the Cold War.

D. CONCLUSION

Stephen Younger's quote regarding the need to decide whether to possess nuclear weapons, and how they might be used, was especially important for policymakers at the end of the Cold War.[242] This era consisted of a rapidly changing strategic environment, wars against adversaries with WMD capabilities, and a pinnacle of social movements concerning the ethics and appropriateness of nuclear weapons. American policymakers had to contend with normative constraints calling for a reduction in nuclear arms and capabilities, while still meeting domestic and international norms that valued nuclear weapons as a deterrent force. Nuclear policies from this time reflect similar constraints on nuclear use that persisted throughout the Cold War, and inconsistent constraints placed on nuclear possession policies. Nuclear possession norms varied between administrations from this era, with calls for complete nuclear disarmament often competing with conflicting expectations that nuclear possession for deterrence was acceptable and appropriate.

Domestic discussions and political activism became increasingly dynamic in debating the expectations of behavior surrounding the possession of nuclear weapons, and the political pressure of these debates was not ignored. This increased attention from domestic and international sources as to what nuclear behaviors were right or wrong constrained American policymakers, particularly regarding decisions of numbers and capabilities of nuclear weapons that ought to be possessed, as well as how those weapons should be employed. The effect of norms on policy outcomes was not always consistent throughout the three administrations presiding at the end of the Cold War era.

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[242] Younger, *The Bomb: A New History,* 198–199.

Starting with the Carter administration, policymakers found themselves constrained by expectations of behavior regarding the possession and development of the neutron bomb. Evidence suggests that key policymakers, like President Carter, had internalized an aversion to neutron bomb technology. Additionally, international and domestic opinion expressed a deep disdain for this radiological weapon and there would be large reputational and political costs associated with furthered development of this weapon. Both LoA and LoC approaches applied to policymaker's ultimate decision to abandon this new technology. With Reagan's reimplementation of the neutron bomb program, it is clear that his administration felt less constrained by norms concerning this technology. Instead, Reagan took a heavily LoC approach to this decision and concluded that the benefits of neutron bomb technology outweighed their political costs. The SDI program was also the result of external pressures constraining nuclear decision-making. Reagan's address to the nation, outlining the SDI program, recognized prevailing norms against the use and possession of nuclear weapons. In the same speech, Reagan made it clear that he personally believed in the necessity of nuclear arms as a deterrent and that the SDI program was a policy that bridged the gap between norms and national security requirements. Finally, the Bush administration continued to balance norms with material concerns for national security with its nuclear planning for the Gulf War and planning for disarmament objectives with the shattered Soviet Union.

Overall, American policymaker outcomes in this period tended to strike a balance between internalized norms and the external pressures of an increasingly nuclear-oriented domestic and international community's views on the employment and possession of nuclear weapons. While evidence suggests that internalized beliefs from policymakers may have constrained how they viewed nuclear use and possession, actual policy outcomes (such as policy directives, treaties, and war plans) suggest that the LoC explanation best describes America's policy decisions.

V. CONCLUSION

A. THE ROLE OF NORMS ON NUCLEAR POLICY

Sufficient evidence exists to show that norms have had a large role in influencing U.S. nuclear policy. Additionally, the explanatory value that norms played in nuclear decision-making has not been consistent throughout the Cold War. Certain administrations found themselves more constrained by expectations of behavior than others. This thesis found evidence to support several conclusions. First, U.S. nuclear policies rarely explicitly constrained the use of nuclear weapons, yet interviews and historical documents suggest that nuclear use was implicitly constrained by normative expectations of behavior (particularly first-use policies). These inconsistencies between explicit and implicit policies for nuclear use and possession were evident during the Cold War, but there is evidence that suggests that some normative constraints remained consistent throughout. Second, internalized beliefs regarding the appropriateness of nuclear weapon use varied widely among Presidential leaders and senior policymakers, but nuclear policy outcomes tended to strike a balance between normative expectations and LoC school analytic thinking. Finally, the constraining effects norms had on policy were very circumstantial, particularly when nuclear use policies are broken down into categories of first-use, retaliatory-use, and possession.

There were several normative trends throughout the Cold War, such as a general understanding that nuclear weapons are unconventional and thus carry different expectations and ideologies governing their use and possession. In the early Cold War, this norm was combated by policymakers in the hopes of increasing the benefits of using nuclear weapons while reducing the reputational costs that had become associated with them. Similar attempts to combat emerging and established norms against the use of nuclear weapons persisted throughout the Cold War, but waned as they remained largely unsuccessful. In the early-Cold War the Eisenhower administration attempted to combat the

unconventionality of nuclear weapons in the hopes of decreasing political and reputational costs for their use. In the mid-Cold War, Nixon tried to circumvent normative constraints for nuclear use by cultivating an image of irrationality with his madman strategy and brinkmanship. By the end of the Cold War, norms prohibiting nuclear use became so prevalent that leaders, like Carter, attempted to harness new nuclear technologies (the neutron bomb) in another attempt to circumvent normative constraints on nuclear use. None of these administrations were successful in removing or circumventing normative constraints for nuclear use.

Another evidenced normative tendency concerns the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. deterrent strategy. Consistent norms for nuclear deterrence reflect a trend that possession of nuclear arms, for the purpose of retaliatory-use and war prevention, was a generally accepted and appropriate policy with the American public and policymakers. U.S. Cold War policy never explicitly promised retaliatory-use of nuclear weapons against a nuclear attack on America or its allies. While an explicit rhetoric of nuclear-zero pursuits existed among U.S. nuclear treaties and arms control accords, the actual outcomes of these agreements emphasized parity of capabilities and reciprocal reductions. None of these agreements brought American or Soviet nuclear force postures down to a level where either nation would be unable to deter aggression with the ability to inflict unacceptable losses on their adversaries, which displayed the power of deterrence to triumph over normative constraints toward disarmament. Internationally, norms regarding nuclear use and possession have generally constrained U.S. nuclear strategies toward a deterrent posture as well. U.S. allies considered retaliatory-use as the most acceptable rationale for the possession and possible use of nuclear weapons, and the United Nations developed numerous resolutions condemning nuclear use without condemning nuclear possession (so long as nuclear armed nations pursued goals of eventual nuclear disarmament).

Internalized beliefs regarding the appropriateness of nuclear weapon use varied widely among Presidential leaders and senior policymakers, but nuclear policy outcomes tended to strike a balance between LoA and LoC school constraints. American policymakers throughout the Cold War were often presented with paradoxical strategies concerning nuclear use and possession. At the same time that America's nuclear use policies acted as a foundation of national security, the nation was also pursuing treaties that called for the complete disarmament of nuclear weapons. This paradoxical relationship between nuclear use and possession policies reflects a LoA and LoC understanding for the role of norms in U.S. nuclear policymaking.

The power of nuclear deterrence rested not only in the capability to inflict overwhelming devastation to an aggressor, but also on the credibility that you would do so.[243] Washington's decisions to forgo nuclear use in the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars were based off both normative and material concerns as to the costs and benefits of their use. Despite non-use, America maintained explicit policies that allowed for their use, reflecting an understanding that certain circumstances would lead to their employment despite reputational costs. Internalized norms that placed nuclear weapon use and possession in a negative light were often balanced with a LoC analysis regarding the material costs and benefits of such policies. As a result, norms on nuclear first-use have become increasingly constraining as each instance of nuclear abstinence throughout the Cold War added to the reputational and political costs associated with their potential use. From the nuclear possession perspective, a balance between arms reductions and the avoidance of a nuclear-zero America have been the outcome of conflicting norms and materialist considerations regarding nuclear force postures.

The constraining effects norms had on policy were very circumstantial. Contemporary normative theorists in the nuclear realm have succeeded greatly

[243] Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 206.

in defining normative constraints for nuclear use policies, but their research must be broadened to accurately distinguish differences of normative constraints for first-use, retaliatory-use, and possession. Evidence indicates that throughout the Cold War nuclear norms focused heavily on the appropriateness of first-use. In response to both internalized norms and external normative pressures, U.S. policymakers generally maintained explicit policies that allowed for first-use, but more deeply embraced retaliatory-use and continued improvements to U.S. nuclear force postures. Implicitly, evidence suggests that policymakers would not use nuclear weapons unless the benefits of their use outweighed the material costs (i.e., the efficiency of nuclear weapon use as compared to conventional weapons, as well as reputational and political costs associated with violating norms of non-use).

Scholars, like Tannenwald and Paul, have made great contributions to the understanding of how norms affected America's policies regarding the use of atomic weaponry. To further their theories, researchers should continue to explore and broaden the explanatory power of norms to differentiate between nuclear policies of first-use, retaliatory-use, and possession. Researchers should also focus on how the influence of nuclear norms is evolving in the post-Cold War world, in which lessened concerns over large-scale strategic nuclear war have reduced popular attention to nuclear issues broadly, leaving international nuclear norms less tethered to strong expressions of public opinion. A broader understanding of the constraining effects that norms have on varying nuclear policies will allow policymakers to make better-informed decisions regarding America's national defense strategies.

B. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Today's policymakers must be able to distinguish exactly how norms affect U.S. nuclear policy. Current U.S. nuclear policy places emphasis on the "prevention of nuclear terrorism and proliferation" as well as the strategic need of sustaining "a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal to maintain strategic

stability" and "deter potential adversaries."[244] This policy evinces the premise that, so long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States plans on possessing them while at the same time preventing other nations from gaining such capabilities. From a LoC perspective, this policy provides material benefits in the form of increased military capabilities for the United States, while also expressing a desire to limit and eliminate possession of nuclear weapons over the long term. But nuclear possession for the sake of deterrence and the pursuit of complete nuclear disarmament ultimately are contradictory policies, and the United States must eventually decide between the two. Future U.S. policies must address the inconsistency between norms that constrain policymakers toward arms reduction, and the material costs of abandoning nuclear deterrence strategies.

The United States possesses a limited number of nuclear weapons, and thus continued arms reduction measures will potentially lead to a nuclear free America. Nuclear-zero is considered an explicit goal of today's nuclear policy, and the 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR) makes it clear that Washington is pursuing "concrete steps"[245] toward a nuclear free world. Just two paragraphs after this overall goal, the NPR outlines a plan to increase nuclear weapon expenditures, modernize their capabilities, and increase reliability on nuclear weapons as a "hedge against future threats."[246] The balancing act of nuclear deterrence and elimination that began in the Cold War continues today. These policies suggest that America will relinquish its nuclear arsenals and strategies only when national security can be obtained without the need for nuclear weapons.

In order to bring U.S. nuclear use and possession strategies in line with growing norms that constrain both, Washington needs to find a new way to deter adversaries and maintain national security without a nuclear arsenal. This can be accomplished by developing the deterrent capabilities of U.S. conventional

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

245 Ibid.

246 Ibid.

weaponry, and by excising reliance on nuclear deterrence from the fabric of global security relations. For example, a nuclear-free United States would be unable to maintain nuclear extended deterrence guarantees with its allies. New policies and non-nuclear security relationships will need to be discussed with partners currently under U.S. nuclear umbrellas, and failure to do so may jeopardize global security.[247] Either of those two outcomes will minimize the material costs associated with abandoning nuclear deterrence, as nuclear deterrence would no longer be necessary. This would remove a major obstacle constraining U.S. nuclear possession policies that rely on a LoC analysis for nuclear possession as a deterrent. Norms against nuclear use and possession will not, in and of themselves, bring nuclear policies into alignment with actor expectations for a nuclear free world. Instead, a combination of LoA normative constraints and policies that reduce material costs associated with abandoning nuclear possession will increase the chances of a nuclear-zero world.

Alternatively, if policymakers wish to continue possessing nuclear arms as a means of deterrence, then leaders must alter their explicit policies away from the pursuit of a nuclear free world. Instead, policymakers should attempt to articulate the material benefits to national security that came from America's possession of nuclear weapons throughout the Cold War, and convince domestic and international audiences to internalize an expectation that nuclear weapons are not inherently abhorrent. At the same time, the material benefits of possession will need to continue to be tempered with expectations that nuclear use is only meant as a deterrent or as a last resort option. Maintenance of norms that constrain nuclear first-use, but allow for retaliatory-use, would preserve a system of norms that successfully prevented major wars throughout the Cold War, and could continue to avert them in the future.

Washington's paradoxical policy of pursuing a nuclear-zero world, while at the same time modernizing nuclear capabilities and promoting the effectiveness

[247] Wade Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," *The Nonproliferation Review* 20, no. 2 (2013): 330, doi: 10.1080/10736700.2013.799945.

of nuclear deterrence, is unsustainable over the long term. At some point, U.S. arms reduction will reach a point where further decline will make nuclear deterrence no longer viable. Even if nuclear deterrence can exist with just one bomb, one bomb is still not a nuclear free world. Therefore, U.S. policymakers must determine, both ideologically and rationally, what nuclear possession policy it ultimately wants to pursue.

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