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The University of Southern Mississippi

DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY: CASPAR WEINBERGER AND THE REAGAN  
DEFENSE BUILDUP

by

Robert Howard Wieland

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
Of The University of Southern Mississippi  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2013

## ABSTRACT

### DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY: CASPAR WEINBERGER AND THE REAGAN DEFENSE BUILDUP

by Robert Howard Wieland

December 2013

This dissertation explores the life of Caspar Weinberger and explains why President Reagan chose him for Secretary of Defense. Weinberger, not a defense technocrat, managed a massive defense buildup of 1.5 trillion dollars over a four year period. A biographical approach to Weinberger illuminates Reagan's selection, for in many ways Weinberger harkens back to an earlier type of defense manager more akin to Elihu Root than Robert McNamara; more a man of letters than technocrat. And yet Weinberger, the amateur historian, worked with budgets his entire public career. Essentially, Pentagon governance is the formation of a military budget that proscribes strategy. In Weinberger's case this meant financing a six hundred ship navy with fifteen aircraft carriers.

His career began in Sacramento hammering out budgets while an assemblyman on the California State Assembly Ways and Means Committee. By 1968, Governor Reagan selected him as California State Finance Director. By 1970, Nixon appointed him Commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission and then Director of the Office of Management and Budget. By the time Weinberger left President Ford's cabinet as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in 1975 he accumulated twenty-five years of budget expertise.

After five years at the Bechtel Corporation, Weinberger emerged a Republican senior statesman and was well prepared for the grueling defense budget battles ahead.

Eventually the political momentum for more defense dollars waned but the Secretary remained committed to larger defense budgets and the loyalty of his boss. This dissertation explores the many challenges he faced through procurement scandals, MX basing, defense reorganization, and the selling of both the defense budget and the Strategic Defense Initiative. The President entrusted his good friend gifted with rhetorical skill to oversee the largest peacetime military buildup in American history. This study concludes that in the end Weinberger, a center-right Eisenhower Republican was beholden to no one but his boss, and accommodated his instinct for fiscal conservatism to the spending requirements of the Reagan Doctrine, thus “Cap the Knife” became “Cap the Ladle.”

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A Dissertation  
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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In 1981 President Ronald Reagan began the largest peacetime defense buildup in American history. Whether real or imagined, the political perception created by him was of a weak America that needed an improved defense to compete with an aggressive Soviet Union. “Peace through strength” became a popular slogan in the 1980 presidential election campaign, and Reagan hoped to deliver on the defense hawks’ wish list. A nuclear strategic upgrade, the Triad, consisted of a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the MX; an updated submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the Trident; and the resurrected B-1 bomber. On the conventional side, the army wanted new equipment like the M1 Abrams tank while the Air Force requested a host of new fighters. Ultimately, the lion’s share of the Reagan defense buildup went to the navy with a goal of six hundred total ships including three new carrier groups.

To implement this 1.5 trillion-dollar buildup, Reagan chose a most unlikely candidate for secretary of defense. He selected a close political friend with little defense experience and no political ties to the hawks on the Committee on the Present Danger or the American Security Council, two influential defense lobbying groups. In almost every way, Caspar Weinberger, Harvard aristocrat and dogmatic lawyer, was a perfect foil to his predecessor, Cal Tech technocrat and pensive scientist, Harold Brown, who Colin Powell once mused, “preferred paper to people. I always had the impression that Brown would be just as happy if we slipped his paperwork under the door and left him alone to pore over it or to work out theorems.”<sup>1</sup> Where Brown pored over plans of fixed-wing

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Stevenson, *SecDef: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 127.

aircraft, Weinberger gave speeches. Often away from his office in a manner Brown would not have imagined, Weinberger was a gregarious wordsmith who enjoyed sparring with analysts on the Sunday news programs. He would need all his rhetorical skills in the coming budget battles with Congress, the press, Reagan's cabinet, and even members of his own party.

Most observers had expected Reagan to appoint someone like former secretary James R. Schlesinger, a conservative defense expert familiar with all the complexities of planning, programming, and budgeting at the Pentagon. Weinberger's only defense experience consisted of a few combat patrols with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division on New Guinea during World War II, but Reagan chose him based on a twenty-year relationship going back to days in California politics when the two worked well together, always seeming to know what the other was thinking. Also, Weinberger was at least familiar with Pentagon budgets, having served at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the Nixon Administration. Moreover, as Victor Davis Hanson suggests, "the study of history, not recent understanding of technological innovation, remains the better guide to the nature of contemporary warfare,"<sup>2</sup> and Weinberger's education in the liberal arts gave him a perspective that would serve him well as secretary of defense.

Interestingly, most studies of the Cold War or the Reagan administration contain few references to Weinberger, though Nicholas Henderson, British Ambassador to the United States, considered him "the most respected and influential long-standing member of Reagan's cabinet and someone with whom the British embassy were lucky enough,

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<sup>2</sup>Victor Davis Hanson, editor, *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

thanks to his goodwill, to enjoy excellent relations.”<sup>3</sup> In 1998, Weinberger and scholar Peter Schweizer wrote *The Next War*, which detailed five potential regional conflicts involving possible threats to the United States. A few lines in the foreword by Margaret Thatcher are compelling: “As President Reagan’s brilliant defense secretary, he had direct responsibility for the American defense buildup in the 1980s without which the Cold War could not have been won so swiftly and relatively painlessly.”<sup>4</sup> Weinberger served six years and eleven months in the Reagan cabinet, far longer than the average two-year tenure of other secretaries of defense. He was determined to stay and wring as much money for defense as possible. Ultimately, he failed to sustain the spending momentum and later lamented that “the American people will not stomach a defense buildup beyond four years without an impending crisis.”<sup>5</sup>

Reagan began his presidency with four goals: to cut taxes, trim domestic spending, rebuild the military, and balance the federal budget by 1984. To achieve these objectives, he and his transition team constructed a cabinet dominated by such safe, corporate center-right Republicans as Attorney General William French Smith and White House Counsel Ed Meese. Other moderates in the Reagan administration included Michael Deaver from Reagan’s California campaigns and James Baker and Richard Darman from Vice President Bush’s primary campaign the previous year. Darman and Baker, who became Reagan’s Chief of Staff, wanted fewer cuts in domestic programs,

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<sup>3</sup>Nicholas Henderson, *Mandarin: The Diaries of an Ambassador 1969-1982* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1994), 375.

<sup>4</sup>Caspar Weinberger and Peter Schweizer, *The Next War* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1998), ix.

<sup>5</sup> November 13, 2002 book discussion on Peter Schweizer’s *Reagan’s War* with Caspar Weinberger as featured speaker. Hosted by American Enterprise Institute. C-Span Video Library, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/ReagansWar> (accessed April 14, 2013).

more taxes, and slower growth in defense spending. At the center of the political maelstrom produced by this “team of rivals,” efforts to implement Reagan’s policies, Weinberger refused to yield a penny from defense.

Weinberger’s lengthy experience in government prepared him well to pursue the Reagan defense buildup. Military spending is about budgets, and as far back as 1952, Weinberger had served on the California State Assembly’s Ways and Means Committee. For the next thirty years, his life involved budgets of all sorts, from California’s as Governor Reagan’s finance director to the federal government’s as Nixon’s director of OMB. As federal trade commissioner and as secretary of health, education, and welfare (HEW), he learned administrative leadership as well as budget management. His two years spent as secretary of HEW involved budgets larger than that at the Pentagon. All of these posts trained him as a skilled bureaucratic infighter and budget expert.

Weinberger was the last secretary of defense to have served in World War II, and his infantry experience in New Guinea deepened his devotion to military preparedness. He often recalled that when he first enlisted, “We had no real weapons to practice with: we carried wooden rifles and used blocks of wood labeled ‘hand grenade.’”<sup>6</sup> World War II left an indelible mark on Weinberger, who like so many other American statesmen feared military weakness and lack of preparedness. After the war, he found the model for his thinking on defense matters in Winston Churchill, whose six-volume history of World War II he reviewed for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The first volume, *The Gathering Storm*, carries the subtitle, “How the English-speaking peoples through their unwisdom,

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<sup>6</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger with Gretchen Roberts, *In The Arena: A Memoir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 56.

carelessness, and good nature allowed the wicked to rearm,”<sup>7</sup> and Weinberger wrote of it glowingly, “This is the raw stuff of history, refined worked and molded into imperishable form by a master craftsman who is also one of the greatest participants in the scene he has so brilliantly reproduced.”<sup>8</sup> Weinberger reviewed other Churchill books and later joined the Churchill Society and gave its lecture in Fulton, Missouri. More importantly, he came to see the world in Churchillian terms, and as defense secretary recast the 1970’s as the 1930’s with the United States as Britain and the Soviet Union as Nazi Germany.

Weinberger’s appointment marked a departure from the succession of technocrats who had guided the defense department since the days of the Kennedy “whiz kids.” Scholars, who have charged Weinberger with incompetence because of his lack of military expertise, overlook a long heritage of liberally educated civilian administrators who have capably supervised American military affairs. Historian George Bancroft who served as President James K. Polk’s secretary of the navy is just one of a host of effective administrators steeped in arts and letters.

Weinberger took the helm at defense in an atmosphere of uncertainty about America’s strategic position in the world. Reagan, who had failed to capture his party’s nomination in 1968 and 1976, won the presidency in 1980 in part by capitalizing on a sense of American vulnerability in the face of growing Soviet power. During the economic boom years between 1951 and 1968, defense spending, driven by wars in Korea and Vietnam, averaged almost 10 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Thereafter, stagflation, the perverse combination of inflation and recession, drove it

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<sup>7</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), thematic page.

<sup>8</sup> Book Reviews File 1948-1949, Box 891, Caspar Weinberger Collection, Library of Congress.

steadily downward. In the decade following Richard Nixon's election in 1968, the proportion of the national budget allocated for defense decreased from 46 percent to only half that much. By the time Reagan took office, it was barely 6 percent of GDP.

Nixon and his chief foreign policy advisor Henry Kissinger sought to stop the bleeding. A relatively quick exit from Vietnam saved fourteen billion dollars. Exploiting Sino-Soviet tensions, Kissinger's celebrated "shuttle diplomacy" allowed Pentagon analysts to plan for one and a half wars instead of the traditional two and a half. By 1972, active army forces had dropped from sixteen to thirteen divisions, and the navy had eliminated eight of its twenty-four aircraft carriers. Meanwhile, détente with the Soviet Union led to a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) that enabled the United States to reduce the anticipated costs of its nuclear forces. Nixon, however, distracted during negotiations by the 1972 reelection campaign and bored by the complex details of SALT, agreed hastily to a treaty that allowed the Soviets to complete nuclear missile projects already in progress.

While Kissinger's popularity soared with détente, defense hawks became alarmed over the weakening of American forces. In 1976, Gerald Ford's President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), chaired by retired Admiral George Anderson, requested that three teams share the intelligence data that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) used in its annual National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of Soviet nuclear strength. Unlike 1960 when the "missile gap" controversy led to inflated estimates of Soviet forces, the PFIAB worried that intelligence in the 1970s underrated Soviet nuclear capabilities. The CIA staff (Team A), and its NIE were challenged by a new competitive group (Team B) headed by Richard Pipes, a hard-line Harvard Sovietologist, who later became an advisor to President Reagan. Other prominent Team B members included

retired General Daniel O. Graham of High Frontier, a pressure group promoting the Strategic Defense Initiative, and Paul Nitze, the cold war Democrat, who later became Reagan's chief negotiator on nuclear weapons.

Nitze began to suspect Soviet commitment to the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD), which had long been considered the most effective deterrent to nuclear war. So as long as both superpowers remained vulnerable to nuclear retaliation, neither was likely to launch a first strike; however, Nitze thought he saw troubling evidence that Soviet leaders might be flirting with the possibility of surviving and winning a nuclear war. The most recent versions of Russian offensive missiles were larger and carried heavier warheads. SALT included restrictions on construction of defensive antiballistic missile systems, but skeptics doubted American ability to verify Soviet compliance with the provisions. As Jimmy Carter's secretary of defense later put it, "We build, the Soviets build, we don't build, the Soviets build."<sup>9</sup>

In 1976, Nitze formed The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), which included leaders of the New Right, neoconservatives, Cold War liberals,<sup>10</sup> and other Cold Warriors from both parties. Prominent among them were Reagan, Eugene Rostow, James Schlesinger, David Packard, and Elmo Zumwalt. The CPD used the intelligence findings of Team B to argue that America was vulnerable to an aggressive Soviet Union engaged in a massive military buildup. Armed with Team B data, CPD argued that weakness was inherently provocative and that dangerous rogue states would fill the

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<sup>9</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 96<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1979, 278.

<sup>10</sup> Cold War liberals were generally Democrats committed to the goals of the Great Society but also hawkish regarding communism and the Soviet Union. The best example was Henry "Scoop" Jackson from the state of Washington, known as "The Senator from Boeing," who never met a social program he did not like but also fought tirelessly for large defense budgets.

vacuum created by America's retreat from military superiority. By contrast, a strong United States, as policeman of the world, would provide a Pax Americana of peace and security. CPD stalwarts would help shape the 1980 Republican platform and lend intellectual credibility to Reagan campaign's advocacy of "peace through strength." Scores of CPD veterans would serve in the Reagan administration.

Interestingly, Weinberger never joined the CPD. Though an ideological Cold Warrior, he was never a zealot, and he avoided hard right political positions. As Secretary of HEW under Nixon and Ford, he supported détente, which Reagan and other conservatives considered misguided. In fact, in Moscow promoting the sharing of health information between the United States and Russia, he publicly criticized members of America's National Science Foundation for making a strong stand in defense of Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov. His comments touched off a firestorm among American conservatives, who felt he should be defending Sakharov rather than Soviet-American scientific study.

The Carter presidency brought conservative anxieties, both foreign and domestic, to a head. Stagflation grew worse, and the defense budget shrank by another thirty-eight billion dollars. Foreign policy hawks seethed at Carter's notion that Americans had an "inordinate fear of communism,"<sup>11</sup> and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance declared that Soviet Premier "Leonid Brezhnev is a man who shares our dreams and aspirations."<sup>12</sup> Soviet influence spread throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, and in 1979 the American-backed Shah of Iran fell from power, and Russian troops invaded

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<sup>11</sup>Steven F. Hayward, *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, D.C: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 111.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 114



Afghanistan. When the Shah sought cancer treatment in New York, an angry Iranian mob seized the American embassy in Tehran and held scores of Americans hostage, fifty-three of them for more than a year. A poorly executed rescue effort in April 1980 left American aircraft and Carter's reelection hopes strewn across the Iranian desert.

Republicans, especially conservatives, smelled blood. Led by Texas senator John Tower and former Nixon National Security Council staffer John Lehman, foreign policy hawks secured wholesale inclusion of tough CPD language into the party platform. Its preamble declared, "America is adrift. Our country moves agonizingly, aimlessly, almost helplessly into one of the most dangerous and disorderly periods in history."<sup>13</sup> Warning of the "inexorable march of Soviet aggression," the platform demanded "overall military and technological superiority over the Soviet Union," including "the earliest possible deployment of the MX missile in a prudent survivable configuration."<sup>14</sup> On November 4, anniversary of the fall of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Reagan won handily carrying forty-four states. On his coattails, Republicans gained thirty-five seats in the House and won control of the Senate for the first time in twenty-eight years. Weinberger's tenacity and his skillful wooing of the "boll weevils," a group of hawkish Southern Democrats in the House, would help steer the Reagan agenda through the 97<sup>th</sup> Congress.

After the impressive win, the California Reaganauts, led by MIT-trained Martin Anderson of the Hoover Institute began to formulate policy plans. Defense and foreign policy issues were assigned to such hardliners as William Van Cleave and Richard Allen, while Weinberger, because of his state and federal budget experience, led a team (Spending Control Task Force) to explore "waste, fraud, and abuse" in government. A

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<sup>13</sup><http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25844#axzz2jJPvdl6> (accessed 10/10/13).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

few months later when Reagan chose him as defense secretary, professional Washington was stunned. “Why Weinberger?” wondered journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak in their popular opinion column. According to them, “No defense secretary has been less familiar with defense problems since Charlie Wilson in 1953 when the hardware was simpler and the dangers more distant.”<sup>15</sup> The simple answer was that Reagan trusted Weinberger and believed that his nature and his long and varied experience in government equipped him to navigate the controversial military expansion through the obstacles it was bound to face. The most formidable of those obstacles involved the budget implications of increasing spending while also pursuing the significant tax cuts candidate Reagan had promised. To justify the apparent inconsistency, Reagan turned to the “supply side” theories of economist Arthur Laffer, whose controversial fiscal “curve” suggested that by stimulating economic growth, tax cuts would actually increase rather than reduce federal revenue.<sup>16</sup>

Weinberger would have to move quickly, however, for he needed to secure the defense spending bills before the supply side principles had time to prove themselves. Indeed, Reagan’s early budgets produced substantial deficits until 1983 when economic recovery began to catch up with the spending increases. To serve Reagan’s defense buildup, Weinberger would have to overcome opposition from liberals in Congress, a hostile press, the nuclear freeze movement, moderate Republicans, conservative military reformers, and even some among the White House staff. To do so, he would draw upon not only his own grit, determination, and loyalty to his boss, but on a reservoir of

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<sup>15</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Why Weinberger? Why Carlucci?” *Washington Post*, December 19, 1980, A21.

<sup>16</sup> Herbert Stein, *Presidential Economics: The Making of Economic Policy From Roosevelt to Clinton* (Washington, D.C: The AEI Press, 1994), 246.

experience and sagacity built up over a long career of government service going back to his early days in California politics. The chapters that follow, trace that career, from California statehouse to one of the most powerful positions in Washington at the height of the Cold War.

The next chapter, “Booze and Water: Education of a California Civil Servant,” traces the political career of a young Weinberger back from fighting in the Pacific, establishing his law career and seeking outlets for a zeal for public service. In 1953, when he entered the California State Assembly, state politics was dominated by competing political fiefdoms led by Vice President Richard Nixon, Governor Goodwin Knight, and conservative Senator William Knowland. Navigating these byzantine waters prepared him well for later service amid the complexities and machinations of the Nixon White House and later the Pentagon. He took on the corrupt Alcohol Beverage Control Board and helped to consolidate the chaotic California water bureaucracy. His two years as Governor Reagan’s finance director, the second-most powerful spot in California government, cemented their friendship and helped him win a spot in Reagan’s cabinet twelve years later. He also managed to emerge relatively unscathed from bruising Republican battles between the right and the hard right.

The third chapter, “Cap the Knife With Nixon, Ford, and Bechtel,” follows Weinberger to Washington where his service in the Nixon and Ford administrations included a short successful stint with the federal trade commission, three years crunching numbers at OMB, and two years as secretary of HEW. The Watergate years were difficult, and Weinberger ensnared himself in a constitutional crisis over his refusal to spend congressionally appropriated funds. The lawyer in him relished the legal sparring in congressional hearings while he was at both OMB and HEW. By the time he left

Washington in 1975, he was rubbing elbows with powerful elites at the annual Bohemian Grove encampments and travelling the world for Bechtel Construction. He would soon possess a resume of personal experience and government service as strong as any in Washington.

The fourth chapter, “From Cap the Knife to Cap the Ladle: The Buildup and Congress,” describes in detail the legislative journey of the funding for the Reagan military buildup. Convinced that public support for large defense increases could be sustained only for a short time, he pushed such expensive projects as aircraft carriers into production quickly. Haste involving billions of dollars led inevitably to a certain amount of waste, fraud, and abuse. This chapter also introduces such legendary Capitol Hill personalities as Texas Senator John Tower and the southern “Boll Weevils,” formally known as the Conservative Democratic Forum but affectionately called the “redneck caucus.” The latter ironically helped to push the buildup over the stingy Republican moderates in Reagan’s own party. Weinberger’s relationship with the boll weevils was solid, but the rest of Congress treated him coolly. At hearings on Capitol Hill, he spoke eloquently with an air of confidence and professionalism, and he corresponded constantly with Armed Services Committee members. Ultimately, sufficient opposition emerged in both political parties to end the buildup by 1984. For the rest of his life, Weinberger fought for more defense spending, but he never completely mastered the arts of negotiation and compromise with congressional leadership.

The fifth chapter, “Reagan’s Rhetorician,” details Weinberger’s greatest contribution to the Reagan defense buildup, his abilities as a wordsmith and his power to persuade. He travelled the world speaking to think tanks, conferences, heads of state, and veterans groups. He was a regular on the Sunday morning news shows and enjoyed

sparring with journalists about “the decade of neglect” or the dangers of weakness. As a rhetorical gadfly, he offered a stark contrast to his technocratic predecessor Harold Brown, a wallflower who rarely spoke and only after leaving office wrote a significant work on American defense, *Thinking About National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World*.<sup>17</sup>

The best example of Weinberger’s forensic skills came against the accomplished Marxist historian E.P. Thompson in the 1984 Oxford Union Debate on the proposition, “Resolved: there is no moral difference between foreign policies of US & USSR.” The state department feared that nothing good would come from fighting over foreign policy in a university forum, but they need not have worried as Weinberger won the debate 271 to 232. From grand dinners of state in Beijing to the American Legion Hall in Morrisville, New Jersey, Weinberger delivered speeches peppered with allusions to World War II, quotations from Winston Churchill, and slogans about unpreparedness and the need for more defense dollars. Although not always successful, Weinberger exercised a strong will and a lawyer’s advocacy at the Pentagon.

Chapter VI, “MX, Procurement, Reorganization, Goldwater, and Other Headaches,” recounts Weinberger’s conflicts with cabinet colleagues, members of Congress, and defense reform groups. His correspondence reveals an aggressive administrator ably managing a host of issues from strategic defense to base closures. A notorious encounter with governmental reform in California, thirty years earlier, prepared him for political combat in Washington. His modification efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful to preempt the sweeping changes proposed in the popular Goldwater-

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<sup>17</sup> Harold Brown, *Thinking About National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983).

Nichols Act. He had tangled with zealous Goldwaterites before, but he was no match for them on the battleground of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Weinberger was not a visionary reformer, but his attention to detail and devotion to oversight earned the confidence of the military services, who valued his leadership and believed in his competence.

After and beyond the military buildup, Weinberger's labors and achievements at Defense are distilled in the title of Chapter VII, "To Rule the Waves, for He Is an Englishman!" Throughout his life, Weinberger breathed deeply of all things English, and as secretary of defense he sought to continue the "special relationship" that had begun between Great Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century and had grown stronger through two world wars. His signal contribution to the Anglo-American partnership was the indispensable but surreptitious logistical support he supplied to the United Kingdom during the Falklands War against Argentina in 1982. Queen Elizabeth later rewarded him with a knighthood.

Strategically, Weinberger saw America as England writ large, a continental island surrounded by the Atlantic on one side and the Pacific on the other. Like England, therefore, the United States depended on its navy to protect its security and prosperity. Weinberger promoted a defense policy that projected American power around the globe, and in the most active decade since World War II, U.S. warships saw action from the Gulf of Sidra to the Persian Gulf during the 1980s. Fittingly, the last major action under Weinberger's watch was a successful naval operation, the reflagging and escorting of Kuwaiti oil tankers to protect them from the ravages of the vicious Iran-Iraq War.

At a Pentagon ceremony on November 5, 1987, Reagan presented Weinberger with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was, said the president, "the finest Secretary

of Defense in the history of our nation.”<sup>18</sup> Few scholars have written about Weinberger’s legacy as secretary of defense, and fewer still would agree with Reagan’s assessment. However wise or productive, the massive Reagan defense buildup would never have existed without the skill, experience, and loyalty of Caspar Weinberger.<sup>19</sup> The development of which began in California in the 1950’s.

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<sup>18</sup> Presidential Remarks: Resignation of Caspar Weinberger, November 5, 1987, ID #498101, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>19</sup> Contemporary defense analysts wrote of Weinberger with the bias that no outsider should be entrusted with leading our nation’s defense. Gustavus Adolphus, Oliver Cromwell, Henry Knox, Nathan Bedford Forrest, Leon Trotsky, and Vo Nguyen Giap are just a few of the well educated men throughout history who proved successful in directing military affairs.

## CHAPTER II

## BOOZE AND WATER: EDUCATION OF A CALIFORNIA CIVIL SERVANT

Theodore White, the legendary journalist and Harvard classmate of Caspar Weinberger observed, “California politics squirm with a complexity and intrigue that defies reasonable analysis.”<sup>20</sup> For over twenty years Weinberger wrestled and sweat, fought off the radicals in his beloved California Republican Party, climbing his way ever steadily towards joining the Grand Old Party establishment. His California sojourn was full of disappointments, like his failure in 1958 to capture the election for state attorney general. For all his work and toil to raise membership in his Party, by 1962 Republicans only enrolled 2,926,408 voters to the Democratic colossus of 4,295,330.

Worse yet, just as Weinberger’s political career might have taken off, hayseeds, mountebanks, cowboys, and Okies invaded the California Republican Party. They paid allegiance to “Brother John Birch and the Antioch Baptist Church”<sup>21</sup> and fixated on communism and fluoridated water. This intrusion troubled Weinberger the consummate “Eisenhower Republican” who wore check pants, paid allegiance to the Chamber of Commerce, trusted his government, and worshipped at the Episcopal Church. By 1964 Goldwaterism swept California, and it appeared Weinberger was through. But if “knowledge is power” no one knew California government better than the ambitious Weinberger who found a way to remain relevant and counsel both Nixon in 1962 and Reagan in 1966 in their gubernatorial campaigns. Perhaps Weinberger’s craving and policy expertise might yet take him to the pinnacle of power. Below is a brief

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<sup>20</sup> Gladwin Hill, *Dancing Bear: An Inside Look at California Politics* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Charlie Daniels, *Uneasy Rider*, (SONY, 1983).



chronology of his twenty-year struggle to join the Republican elite and the possibilities it might bring.

California in the 1950s was a land that burned bright from post-war exuberance and an expansive confidence that all social and economic problems could be solved. It teemed with youthful vitality and showed no signs of slowing down from the World War II defense boom that saw the state's population increase by 50%. Many new arrivals were young veterans just back from World War II, looking for opportunities and in a hurry. By the 1950s this young state became what historian Kenneth Jackson called a "crabgrass frontier" in demand of schools, highways, universities, housing, and especially water. Most of California's growing population lived in the eight counties south of the Tehachapis Mountain Range with little water, while the northern regions had less people and bountiful water. The great migration and explosive economic expansion posed great challenges for California's governing class. Into this growth and abundance rose a young Army Captain back from the campaigns in the Pacific trying to find his way.

Born in 1917 San Francisco, Cap Weinberger's upbringing had little in common with California's presidents — Richard Nixon, born in 1913, and Ronald Reagan in 1911. Cap's early life was secure and certain with the love of his parents Herman and Cerise. His mother was an accomplished violinist and teacher while his father practiced law; in this upper middle class environment Weinberger blossomed with books, model trains, and loving parents. Boyhood illnesses kept young Cap from the ball fields. At age seven he stayed up late listening on the radio to the 1924 Democratic convention, "and although I was excited by the long 103-ballot struggle, I thought the whole proceeding untidy and

disorderly.”<sup>22</sup> Later on in high school he read the *Congressional Record* daily and became active in school government. Both Nixon and Reagan grew up hard. They had little time for books and piano lessons and worked to help their families get by. Richard Nixon’s father lost his ranch, and Reagan’s dad lost everything to the bottle. These two men from difficult backgrounds, the 37<sup>th</sup> and the 40<sup>th</sup> Presidents, chose different paths—Nixon became embittered while Reagan became splendidly optimistic.

Weinberger started college at Stanford but transferred to Harvard where he received undergraduate and law degrees. Nixon finished first among all High School Californians in academic exams but was unable to accept a scholarship to Harvard because of the burdensome expenses of lodging, food, and travel. Nixon stayed in southern California and attended a small Quaker school, Whittier College. At almost the same time in Illinois, Reagan attended Eureka College and washed dishes to pay for school. These three men from the same era, eventually crossed paths and travelled in the same Republican political orbit later in life. The contrasts and comparisons of these three California politicians are illuminating in light of Republican politics and policy in the last half of the twentieth-century.

One of many comparisons between the three Californians is worth taking note. All three came from religious traditions that left a lasting impression on their lives and their politics. Weinberger was brought up in an Episcopal home, and this merged well with his later love of all things English. His father was not religious, and instruction came from his mother Cerise. Later in life Weinberger became an Episcopal vestryman

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<sup>22</sup>Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, Interviews by Gabrielle Morris, December 13, 1978, “San Francisco Republicans,” The Bancroft Library, [http://www.digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/san\\_francisco\\_republicans.pdf](http://www.digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/san_francisco_republicans.pdf) (accessed October, 15, 2011).

and treasurer and attended St. Lukes in San Francisco in the denomination then called, “the Republican Party at prayer.”

Weinberger’s ancestry can be traced back to Jewish roots in Bohemia, in central Europe, but upon arrival in Colorado in the 1890’s, his father joined the Episcopal Church upon marriage to Cerise following a long line of Jews grafted into Anglicanism, including Benjamin Disraeli, Judah P. Benjamin, and many other prominent business and political figures. Years later in the Reagan White House, the President often referred to Weinberger admiringly as “my Disraeli.” Later in business the Anti-Semitism at Bechtel Corporation in the 1970’s did not seem to bother Weinberger but attending the WASP citadel of Harvard in the difficult 1930’s proved more uncomfortable for the young scholar. Historian Paul Johnson wrote that American Anti-Semitism was at its height in World War II.<sup>23</sup>

Richard Nixon’s father was not heavily devout, and religious instruction stemmed from his zealous mother Hannah’s Quaker faith. Then in 1925, Richard’s brother Arthur died, and his father experienced an emotional religious crisis. With his twelve-year old son Richard in tow, Francis Nixon went on a spiritual revival tour of southern California right off the pages of *Elmer Gantry*.<sup>24</sup> In the family Model T, Francis and young Richard headed out for the tent revivals and watched Billy Sunday thunder into a sweaty lather as he did his famous slide into home. The retired professional baseball player bellowed the old time religion. The following week father and son were off for more religious experiences and paid a visit to the Foursquare Church for the lively charismatic preaching of Aimee Semple McPherson. Sister Aimee mesmerized the crowd into a wild

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 470.

<sup>24</sup> Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1927).

glossolalia of strange shouts and whoops that no doubt startled the young Nixon.

Southern California in the 1920's was in many ways a "bible belt out west" that many Los Angelinos would not recognize today. It was a region awash in low-church fiery Protestant beliefs. The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola University today) had its founding in this era financed by prominent local oilmen. These developments had a great effect on young Nixon and played a significant role throughout his political career.

Ronald Reagan's Protestant roots in Illinois lacked the pizzazz of Nixon's or the prestige of Weinberger's, but his humble faith in the Disciples of Christ denomination helped sustain him through a most difficult upbringing. And like the Illinois Rail-splitter of sixty years prior, both mother and son engaged in quiet bible reading. Reagan's father, Jack, was often gone on drinking benders, and mother Nelle found pastors and other churchmen to provide mentoring for her son.

All three religious California politicians remained practicing Protestants throughout their lives, and how it affected them politically is remarkable. Both Nixon and Reagan, Low Church Protestants, harnessed evangelical religion and borrowed its language in many political speeches. The evangelical culture so prominent in southern California in the last century was used by these two candidates to advance their careers. Weinberger's northern California was far more secular, and as a High Church Episcopalian, he chose not to use these methods in his political campaigns. Ironically, when Weinberger later tackled the California liquor laws as a California Assemblyman, religious-minded temperance groups throughout the state joined his crusade.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Weinberger Collection has many letters from various denominations thanking him for cleaning up the liquor business in California.

It is possible that the various forms of Protestantism they practiced had a significant influence on these three politicians' views regarding American foreign policy towards Israel. Both Nixon and Reagan made alliances with a growing Evangelical Right that embraced a doctrine of Christian Zionism whereby a nation could be blessed by a close relationship to Israel. Many Evangelicals believed that the end of the age would witness a powerful Israeli state, and their literature and studies included this in their apocalyptic writings.<sup>26</sup> Preachers like Pat Robertson studied changes in the Knesset, looking for a deeper spiritual meaning. As a high churchman, Weinberger gave such pronouncements minor credence and remained an Arabist among the various American foreign policy camps.

After high school and a semester at Stanford, Weinberger transferred to Harvard where he joined classmates like the journalist Theodore White and David Rockefeller. As a middle class kid with a Jewish surname, the more elite clubs on campus shunned Weinberger, but he enjoyed working on the school's prestigious newspaper the *Harvard Crimson*. Weinberger remained staunchly Republican at a time when the overwhelming sentiment on campus was behind FDR. Upon graduation in 1938 he tried to get on with the British Royal Air Force, but his eyesight was insufficient. His father convinced him to stay on at Harvard, get a law degree, and if America declared war, he was free to join up.

Upon graduation he signed up with the infantry and went to Fort Benning, Georgia for Officer Candidate School. From there it was off to New Guinea and the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division where the young lieutenant led his company in jungle patrols and then

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<sup>26</sup> Hal Lindsey with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1970). This book sold millions of copies in the 1970's and is just one example of end time's religious literature.

transferred with the rank of captain to General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters. Weinberger, mustered out in 1945 commented, "My service in World War II was invaluable training for when I became secretary of defense in 1981. In particular, I was struck by the terrible lack of foresight that left America so unprepared-materially, psychologically, and in trained manpower-for war."<sup>27</sup> This sentiment had a great impact on him thirty-five years later as Secretary of Defense.

After returning to his native San Francisco, Weinberger clerked for the local federal judge William Orr for two years then practiced law with the prestigious San Francisco firm of Heller, Ehrman, White & McAuliff. He stayed with the firm for the next twenty-two years and made partner in 1959, and although successful, he remained unfulfilled in his law career. By the late forties, he began to engage in his true passion, California Republican politics. The moribund San Francisco Republican machinery did little for Dewey in 1948 and badly needed new blood to organize precincts and build up the party. Weinberger rolled up his sleeves and went to work, organizing and conducting legal duties for the local GOP. He used young people and created a viable, active Young Republican club to get out the vote and attract electable candidates. Thus began a fifty year relationship with his party and his place within it as moderates and conservatives battled for its soul.

Ever since the Grand Old Party's birth in 1856, it consisted of moderate and conservative wings that at times kept party unity but often broke into open conflict. President Grant's Old Guard battled the reform-minded Mugwumps in the 1870's. Progressive President Theodore Roosevelt fought the reactionary Speaker "Uncle Joe"

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<sup>27</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger with Gretchen Roberts, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 76.

Gurney Cannon throughout his presidency. TR then fought with President William Howard Taft when he removed Gifford Pinchot from his cabinet. Taft's son Robert, the Senator from Ohio, waged as many fights with Republicans as Democrats throughout the 1940's. Occasionally, a dynamic leader can bring the wings together like Dwight Eisenhower or Ronald Reagan, but even these men had enemies within the party. Ike had Senator Joe McCarthy to contend with while Reagan endured Senator Lowell Weicker who relished saying, "I'm the turd in the punch bowl."<sup>28</sup> As recent as 2009, a Tea Party Wing and a conventional, more moderate Republican establishment remain fractious as the party moves forward. Nowhere was this internecine GOP warfare more pronounced than California in the last half of the twentieth-century.

Weinberger staked out a position early in life that was neither left nor right; he was just a bit right of center, and, like the great war hero of his generation Dwight Eisenhower, believed the New Deal should be left intact. He did share a proclivity for balanced budgets like Eisenhower, and thus he could be described with a common political descriptor, an "Eisenhower Republican." This just-right-of-center philosophy left Weinberger with plenty of arrows shot at him from the right, especially in southern California. 1950's San Francisco elected a moderate Republican Mayor and in the majority Democratic Twenty-First Assembly District elected Cap Weinberger as its representative. As California grew, so did Weinberger as he struggled with the state's ever increasing complexities that took him to the most powerful unelected post in the state, that of California State Finance Director in 1968. California state government was

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<sup>28</sup> <http://old.nationalreview.com/impromptus/impromptus062402.asp> (accessed 11/5/13). This crude phrase became associated with Senator Lowell Weicker and Republican internecine political wars in the state of Connecticut. The rough phrase has since been used to describe Senator John McCain in relation to his party.

Weinberger's testing ground for what he might achieve and the first challenge in preparation for the Pentagon twenty nine years later.

In the election of 1952, a Republican year nationwide, Eisenhower led a wave of party faithful into legislative offices throughout the country that did not gut but rather validated and, in some ways, reinforced Roosevelt's New Deal. This was also Weinberger's first term in the California State Assembly where Republicans had a fifty-four to twenty-six majority. Weinberger, the San Francisco moderate, believed in balanced budgets that would have pleased both Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. A perfect example of this progressive-conservative governance came when Weinberger, serving on the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, increased the operations budget of the California University system but cut capital outlays for building projects for the various campuses from twelve million to seven million dollars. Assemblyman Weinberger explained in *California Monthly* magazine that enrollment only increased 4,200 students in a thirteen year period from 1939 to 1952 and that tennis courts at Berkeley and other buildings would not be built from an overall state budget of 1.3 billion, the largest state budget in the country.<sup>29</sup>

In 1952 Governor Warren prepared to leave California for the Supreme Court and left his position in the capable hands of Goodwin Knight, a moderate Republican who kept his party in control of the legislature through the 1950s even though Democrats outnumbered the Grand Old Party by one million votes. By then, Weinberger was serving on four committees: Elections and Reapportionment, Government Organization, Judiciary, and Ways and Means. Weinberger loved public service and politics, serving

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<sup>29</sup> Caspar Weinberger, "The Legislature and the University of California Budget," *California Monthly* (September, 1952) draft in U. California Folder, Box 25, Caspar Weinberger Collection, Library of Congress.



four two-year terms from 1952-1958, and by 1956 the legislative correspondents awarded him the accolade of “most effective” legislator. Meanwhile, he continued in his law practice, managed to teach a number of law classes in the Bay Area, and wrote a number of book reviews syndicated in the California newspapers. Most of the reviews involved the weighty World War II memoirs coming out in that period of Churchill and Eisenhower, a portent of where Weinberger might be in thirty years.

Weinberger’s correspondences to the voters in his district and around the state are most revealing and demonstrate his cool common sense in a fretful period of Cold War paranoia. It is interesting to note that at a time when legislative staffs were limited, these letters have a personal touch and are filled with significant information and depth on issues. These letters certainly say much about the strange political milieu of the 1950s. Regarding the various loyalty oaths for school teachers and state workers at the height of the commie craze Weinberger writes, “I find the loyalty oath bills to be the peculiar feature of our time. A Communist would simply lie about his affiliation so why have the foolish oath in the first place?”<sup>30</sup>

At the same time California was growing demographically, economically, and in its confidence in the future; ironically, it suffered from statist Bircher paranoia. Nothing better symbolized this than the fluoridated water craze. A resolution sent to Assemblyman Weinberger from the Los Altos Republican Womens Council, Federated feared, “compelling our nation to drink medicated water. One turn on one valve by one traitor in each city, and millions of Americans will be paralyzed with fluorine-poisoned

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<sup>30</sup> Caspar Weinberger to Allen Stahman, 18 June 1953. 1953 Correspondence Folder, Box 24, Weinberger Collection, Library of Congress.

water.”<sup>31</sup> Were these voter concerns the original fodder for General Ripper in the film *Dr. Strangelove*?<sup>32</sup> Certainly anti-fluoridation groups formed throughout southern California reminiscent of the film. The 1950s was a period of Cold War extremism, and Weinberger remained cool and moderate. He also supported the Fair Employment Practice Act, an early forerunner to later civil rights legislation sponsored by Byron Rumford, a black Democrat assemblyman from Berkeley. The act tried to eliminate hiring discrimination against minorities.

Every politician’s rise comes from a cause célèbre, and Weinberger found one while serving on the Committee on Government Organization. He was named Chairman of that committee’s Joint Subcommittee on Alcoholic Beverage Control because no politician wanted the post.<sup>33</sup> The committee had little success cleaning up California’s corrupt liquor trade, but it was this committee that launched Weinberger’s career as a comer and fixer in California politics. With the zeal of a progressive reformer from a bygone age, the quixotic barrister muckraked through California’s seamy underbelly.

A brief history is necessary of the corruption associated with California’s liquor industry and what challenges Weinberger faced. After Prohibition, Arthur Samish and his powerful liquor lobbyist cronies established a corrupt booze empire by attaching liquor authority to an old independent bureaucracy known as the Board of Equalization to collect liquor taxes and issue licenses. Created in 1879 the Board’s purpose was to move

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<sup>31</sup> Resolution opposing fluoridation of public drinking water. Fluoridation of Water 1953 File, Box 17, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>32</sup> *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, directed by Stanley Kubrick, Columbia Pictures, 1964. In the film General Ripper (Sterling Hayden) explains to Captain Mandrake (Peter Sellers) the Communist plot to pollute Americans’ “precious bodily fluids.”

<sup>33</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger and Gretchen Roberts, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 103.

funds to poor, rural, less-populated regions of the state for educational opportunities. The board was independent of the legislature and governor with one member representing part of the four separate districts comprising California.

Artie Samish the “Secret Boss of California” and William “Big Bill” Bonelli and their cronies began selling licenses issued to friends of the Board for \$525 and resold them for as much as \$10,000. Samish claimed, “I’m governor of the legislature,” and killed all reform bills that came before the California Legislature.<sup>34</sup> Weinberger attacked the scandal head-on by scheduling five hearings around the state that coincided with the investigative newspaper reporting of Art White in the *Los Angeles Mirror* and Carl Greenberg of the *Los Angeles Times*. These tabloids ran yellow with the large print broadside, “Big Bill Bonelli’s Saloon Empire,” with photos and tawdry stories of gangsters, and b-girls preying on young soldiers and underage youth.<sup>35</sup> White wrote in the *Mirror*,

“Hello gyrene,” said the waitress in the dimly lit dive in Oceanside. “You’re in the marijuana booth. What will it be gentlemen? Beer or marijuana?” This isn’t a fanciful conversation between a fictional bar gal and a marine on liberty. It took place, according to the California Crime Commission’s 1951 report, at the Casa Blanca Café, one of the five joints owned at the time by the sinister Vitella brothers. Right in the heart of Bill Bonelli’s Saloon Empire.<sup>36</sup>

The statewide press focused primarily on Bonelli, who represented the Fourth District of the Board of Equalization representing the eight southern California counties. White and

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph P. Harris, *California Politics* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), 87.

<sup>35</sup> Art White, “Bonelli’s Saloon Empire,” *Los Angeles Mirror*, October 12, 1953, Clipping, Joint Interim Committee, Subcommittee on Alcoholic Beverage Control 1953-55, Miscellany Folder #1, 1954, Box 32, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Art White, *Los Angeles Mirror* Clipping.

Greenberg described Los Angeles's notorious Skid Row and San Diego's Jungle, exposing the black-market sale of liquor licenses in Bonelli's Saloon Empire.

Just as Senator Estes Kefauver drew publicity investigating crime in 1950, papers in California began to follow the "Weinberger Committee," which armed with subpoena power, questioned police, district attorneys, bartenders, and many others. Then in December of 1953, at a hearing in Los Angeles, Weinberger asked Big Bill in his best Joe Friday imitation, "You don't pay much attention to the enforcement of liquor laws, do you?" Bonelli retorted, "I'm not a policeman."<sup>37</sup>

The Weinberger hearings had another defense related purpose. No state enjoyed the Cold War's munificence quite as much as California. Research and development, contracts, and bases all poured into California in World War II and again flourished in the Cold War's "fifty year conflict." San Diego had a very large naval presence, and Weinberger's tough questioning brought out stories of young sailors and marines being taken advantage of by clip joints, b-girls, and hustlers. The Defense Department grew concerned, and high ranking officers testified at most of the hearings held throughout the state, supplying Weinberger's committee with lists of "off limits" clubs and descriptions of what vices and crimes the military police investigated. Californians feared decline, a constant theme throughout American history.<sup>38</sup>

Weinberger quickly became known throughout the state and fashioned legislation based on the Committee's findings. He felt that reform would come by separating liquor control from the collection of liquor taxes. Weinberger created a Department of

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<sup>37</sup> Newspaper Clipping, "Bonnelli Says Liquor Board 'Rubber Stamp,'" December 1953 Newspaper Clipping File, Box 899, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>38</sup> The situation of California's military bases in the 1950s is reminiscent of the notorious red light district of Storyville in New Orleans during World War I. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, a Wilsonian progressive, kept New Orleans off limits to his soldiers.

Alcoholic Beverage Control, which was run by a director appointed by the governor, with authority to deny or revoke liquor licenses. With the sale of liquor licenses taken away from the Bonellis and other shady merchants, California would clean up of the “liquor mess” as referred to in the newspapers. Additionally, the new director post would be answerable to the governor and not the corrupting liquor lobbyists. The legislation moved through the legislature then was signed by Governor Goodwin Knight. The next step required taking the new liquor governance to the voters. Assemblyman Weinberger’s leadership style of the liquor chaos demonstrated his skill for identifying problems in government and providing solutions.

California, with its strong progressive tradition dating back to Governor Hiram Johnson (Teddy Roosevelt’s Bull Moose running mate in 1912), governed itself by initiative and referendum, and this issue-driven form of government is still very strong in the state today. Weinberger enjoyed historical role play throughout his life. As Secretary of Defense in the 1980s, he saw himself as a later day Churchill fighting for military hardware while his countrymen slept against creeping militarism. Exchange Nazi Germany for Soviet Russia, and the reenactment was complete. Only at this particular time he was more Carrie Nation than Winston Churchill. In the case of the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control Legislation, it was put on the ballot as Proposition 3 for the 1953 November elections. Weinberger dedicated the fall election season barnstorming the state for the Proposition 3 crusade speaking before church, civic, and Chamber of Commerce groups.

Weinberger relished his new role as a reforming progressive in a kind of neo-temperance movement that played well throughout the state. He reasoned that legislative victories like liquor reform might lead him to a potential statewide office, but as a

progressive San Franciscan, he needed to step gingerly among the many Protestant Fundamentalist voters in southern California. Temperance was still a strong issue in California even with repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution in 1933.<sup>39</sup> The Prohibition Party was still on the ballot and polled 58,216 votes for gubernatorial candidate Robert Wyckoff in 1962.<sup>40</sup> The Reverend Herbert H. Donnenworth, Executive Secretary of the California Temperance Association, wrote Weinberger thanking him for the Proposition 3 efforts.<sup>41</sup> Other letters poured in with similar sentiment cheered by the language of the new bill, “Offenses involving moral turpitude would become an additional ground for denial or revocation of liquor licenses.”<sup>42</sup> Four years later, when Weinberger ran for Attorney General, Mabel L. Dewing of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union pleaded that he sign the total-abstinence pledge.<sup>43</sup> Governor Goodwin Knight wired Abbott Book, Executive Director of the Northern California and Nevada Council of Churches on September 17, 1954, “It is the duty of every God fearing man and woman in California to vote for Proposition 3.”<sup>44</sup> Proposition 3 passed and

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<sup>39</sup> The prohibition issue remained strong in California because of a westward migration to Los Angeles of low-church Protestants creating a city just as Bible Belt as anywhere in the South. Itinerant Okies moving into southern California flailed about to the thundering sermons of Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPheerson in the 1920s. The demon in demon rum was just as strong in 1954 California as in the 1919 passage of the Volsted Act.

<sup>40</sup> “Prohibition Party Survives,” Newspaper Clipping, Newspaper Clipping File September 1-December 1, 1962, Box 922, Weinberger Collection, Library of Congress.

<sup>41</sup> Reverend Herbert H. Donnenworth letter to Caspar Weinberger, 21 September 1954, Alcohol Beverage Control Folder, Box 26, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>42</sup> Reverend Robert K. Menzel letter to Caspar Weinberger, 25 October 1954, Alcohol Beverage Control, Proposition 3 Folder, Box 26, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>43</sup> Mabel L. Dewing to Caspar Weinberger, 16 May 1958, Miscellaneous Correspondence File, Box 126, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>44</sup> Earl C. Behrens, “Knight Plea on Liquor Control: Churches Asked to Back Prop 3,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 17, 1954, Newspaper Clipping, Alcohol Beverage Control Proposition 3 Folder, Box 26, Weinberger Collection.

made Weinberger a statewide Republican political star, but he needed prudence and wisdom to handle eight southern counties that helped him pass the referendum. Their growing fear of fluoridation, communism, and liberalism would plague the moderate Weinberger's political future for the next fourteen years.

Another issue less sensational than booze but more vital to California's growth was the distribution and allocation of water. Since the state's founding in 1850, water rights were hotly contested in the courts between: north-south, urban-rural, state-federal, and between Arizona—California conflicts regarding the use of the Colorado River. By the time Weinberger came to Sacramento, over fifty districts emerged distributing water throughout California, and, much like liquor, water was a bureaucratic mess. Agencies overlapped into the Division of Water Resources, the Colorado River Board, State Water Resources Board, the Reclamation Board, and the Combined Division of Water Resources of the Department of Public Works. This hodgepodge of conflicting agencies might have limped along, but then in 1955, flooding in the north brought death and destruction while the south remained in a difficult drought. Public demand clamored for a way to bring water south rather than the Sacramento River "wasting" the water as it naturally flowed westward to the Pacific. The California Legislature needed a consolidation plan to make large-scale water projects workable so that the massive migration of Americans to Los Angeles had a survivable supply of this most important resource.

As a key member on the Government Organization Committee, Weinberger succeeded in consolidating a host of smaller, less effective water agencies into one massive Department of Water Resources in 1956. His water legislation consolidated all fifty water agencies, including some of the many fiefdoms like the Metropolitan Water

District, the Reclamation Board, the Colorado River Board, and the District Securities Commission. He garnered bipartisan support, and Governor Goodwin “Goodie” Knight signed it into law. With one large department, California now had the muscle and the bonding power to develop great water projects. Plans were drawn by California State Engineer Harvey Banks for a massive program with dams, levees, aqueducts, and pumps that would take northern water south over a seven hundred mile span to thirsty Los Angeles, a massive engineering feat known as the Feather River Project. Construction began in 1960 when financing passed the California voters by referendum. In 1956 Weinberger effectively summed up what was at stake to the California County

Supervisors Association:

The state’s present water administration, which by its very nature is characterized by overlapping authority, confused zones of responsibility, fragmented functions and uncoordinated policies, is incapable of carrying out a program of this kind effectively and efficiently. Our present lack of organization creates confusion in a situation that demands unity. It encourages buck-passing instead of fixed responsibility. It delays the development of new water supplies while the demands for water multiply as a result of population increases and expanding economy. Finally it fails to provide the kind of framework that is required if the state is to secure the benefits of unified, integrated and responsible administration of its water resources.<sup>45</sup>

The success of the water consolidation and reorganization demonstrated Weinberger’s progressive-conservative nature, a commitment to run lean, effective coordinated government that could benefit business and the California citizenry. Cheap, guaranteed water fostered a more highly profitable agribusiness, and Los Angeles emerged as

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<sup>45</sup>*San Diego Union Clipping*, March 4, 1956, Clippings 1956 Folder, Box 906, Weinberger Collection.



America's most populous city. A farmer from El Centro in the Imperial Valley noted, "Most farmers have to pray for water, down here we order it on the telephone."<sup>46</sup>

Assemblyman Weinberger had two crowning achievements in his legislative career, organizing and tidying up the liquor mess and bringing water south for farmers and cities to grow. In 1953 farm products profited California agribusiness 125 million dollars.<sup>47</sup> After six very successful years in the legislature, Weinberger prepared to run for attorney general in 1958. His assembly years began his thirty year effort of streamlining, cost cutting, trouble shooting, and improvement of government services. He proved that government had a positive contribution for ordinary Californians, very much in the moderate Republican tradition of Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower. At the same time Weinberger worked to make California government more effective, Ike's highway program was underway. Unfortunately, for Weinberger, he picked the absolute worst time for a Republican to run for a California statewide office, but papers like the Yolo County *Woodland Democrat* prodded him, "In Cap Weinberger the Republicans have in their ranks one of the most useful, courageous public servants in state service. He has all the requisites for being an outstanding attorney general."<sup>48</sup>

A brief sketch of California's unique political history is in order to explain the difficulties and complexities Weinberger faced in the 1958 election for attorney general. In the Gilded Age railroads essentially ran the sleepy, agricultural state. Then in the Progressive Era, Governor Hiram Johnson served from 1911-1917, elected on a liberal

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<sup>46</sup> Relman Morin, "Power and Water—Keys to the West," Newspaper Clipping, 1953 Water Folder, Box 25, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1953 Water Folder, Box 25, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>48</sup> "As We See It: Nixon Neutral," Op Ed Page, *Woodland Democrat*, Newspaper Clippings Folder, 1955, Box 906, Weinberger Collection.

Republican line on an anti-Railroad ticket. The Governor gutted the power of both the Democratic and Republican parties by taking away their ability to endorse candidates. To weaken the two parties even further, he pushed legislation that allowed candidates cross-endorsement. For instance, if a Republican candidate like Caspar Weinberger wanted the Democratic line in an election, he simply filed for the Democratic primary. Interestingly, Cap also had the Democratic Party label in all three of his assembly elections. Governor Johnson destroyed party politics in California and limited much of the railroad influence on the political process. Unfortunately, some political sin and graft simply moved from elected government into the permanent administrative areas of the California bureaucracy.

Throughout most of the twentieth-century, moderate Republicans in California used cross-filing to their advantage in a state that had more registered Democrats than Republicans. Only in the early 1930's did the Democrats enjoy party dominance in California, riding the Franklin Roosevelt wave as in many other states. The politician that best represented this moderate cross-filing phenomenon was Governor Earl Warren, who served from 1943-1953; he later served as the 14<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1953-1969. In this political milieu, a moderate Weinberger thrived in organizing San Francisco GOP politics and in working on the planks in the California Republican Party Platform.

Then great change came to California in the mid-fifties. The California legislature ended cross-filing, and candidates now ran with one line-Democrat or Republican. As more people poured into California, it surpassed New York as the most populous state, and many of its new arrivals came from the Protestant Midwest settling in the Los Angeles area. The state now became a possible stepping stone for a presidential

run by a statewide leader like Earl Warren or Richard Nixon. The tremendous population growth and loss of cross-endorsement created a rise in full throated political ideological expression, and the John Birch Society grew in influence electing two congressmen from Orange County.<sup>49</sup> These demographic changes created a California now divided into a conservative south, and a much more liberal north; these sudden developments created a much more difficult environment for Weinberger's run for attorney general.

His only run for statewide office came in "The Big Switch of 1958," converging the political forces of three Republican titans all trying to gain California as their presidential springboard, Vice President Richard Nixon, United States Senator William Knowland, and Governor Goodwin "Goodie" Knight. Because of his strong backing for Chiang Kai-shek, Knowland, the "Senator from Formosa," decided to leave the Senate and return to California, believing that a little executive experience in Sacramento was needed for a 1960 presidential run. The political background of 1958 is worth noting here because it defines the fissures that Weinberger was unable to overcome. For not only was the party divided along Nixon-Knowland-Knight fault lines, but the party also had to overcome a striking north-south divide that later tore at its fabric in 1964. More on this ideological conflict is detailed below and how Weinberger handled it as party chairman.

The problem was the sitting governor Goodwin Knight loved his post, having served as Governor Earl Warren's lieutenant governor until he rose to the top spot with Eisenhower's selection of Earl Warren for the Supreme Court. President Eisenhower was not in the best of health, and some political insiders felt Knight's strong relationship with

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<sup>49</sup> Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 201.

labor might make him more viable than the angst-ridden Nixon on the presidential ticket for 1956. Nixon held onto his vice presidential post, but his archrival Knight needed to go. Therefore, the “big switch” was on; Knowland would run for governor and Knight for senate, switching their political positions. Senator Knowland was the son of newspaper baron Joe Knowland, owner of the *Oakland Tribune* and a power in his own right. The Knowlands, Richard Nixon, and the powerful Chandler family, scions of the *Los Angeles Times*, foisted the “switch” on the California Republican Party in the back room. Edmund “Pat” Brown, the Democratic Attorney General of California, saw a potential political train wreck brewing and entered the gubernatorial campaign carrying his party to victory. As a result of all the Republican machinations and squabbles, in the 1958 election Brown’s coat tails carried Democratic candidates to victory all down the rest of the ticket. Knight and Knowland and much of the California Republican Party lay in ruins, but Nixon walked away from the mess bruised but politically alive, losing to John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election by the narrowest of margins.

Weinberger never experienced the 1958 landslide because he was already beaten in the 1958 primary for attorney general on June third by Congressman Pat Hillings of Los Angeles. Hillings served in the twenty-fifth Congressional District, succeeding Nixon in his seat when he moved on to the United States Senate. The Congressman claimed to have Vice President Nixon’s endorsement, but eventually the Vice President issued a statement claiming neutrality in the election.

Often in southern California political races, a common practice employed by Republican candidates was to paint their political opponents with a “pink” brush. In 1946 Democrat Congressman Jerry Voorhis and later in 1950 Helen Gahagan Douglas were both painted pink by Nixon as leftists, and this contributed to their defeat. Again in

Weinberger's primary race, unknown supporters working for Hillings sent information to a national radio broadcast by Fulton Lewis who read over the airwaves a 1956 article by the San Francisco *Peoples World* praising Weinberger's legislative accomplishments and inferring his leftward leanings. Voorhis, Douglas, and now Weinberger were all victims of the political tactic of red baiting that became a tradition in southern California.

Weinberger did well in a bruising Republican primary with little money. He was one hundred thousand votes ahead in the fifty-seven counties outside of Los Angeles County, but when returns came in, Hillings won handily. In the fall though, Judge Stanley Mosk of San Francisco defeated Hillings, completing the Democratic sweep of 1958.

Also on the ballot in 1958 was the Right to Work Initiative, Prop 18. Since the 1947 Taft-Hartley legislation became law, older northern industrial states with a strong labor tradition adopted closed shop laws whereby workers automatically attained union membership. Most Sunbelt states with little labor history opted for right-to-work laws, an open shop where workers were not required to join union ranks therefore depleting labor strength. In California, conservatives often tried to get right-to-work initiatives passed but ultimately ended in defeat. In 1958 labor came out strong for the Democratic ticket, fearful of the anti labor impression that Nixon and Knowland implied. Governor Knight, a moderate Republican from northern California, had a close relationship with unions and enjoyed their endorsement in earlier races. However Prop 18 was too closely linked to the Republican Party and he could not escape labor disapproval at the ballot box.

Weinberger also enjoyed union support in past races, staked out a unique position on labor issues, and kept right-to-work language out of the GOP party platform in the past. He believed right-to-work made the union shop illegal and put the power of the

state against the union. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times* Weinberger comments, “Labor and management need to be free to make the contract that both parties desire without any outside interference from the state.”<sup>50</sup> Weinberger framed Prop 18 in terms of a civil right of contract and the right of association—that unions had the right to organize unfettered. The AFL-CIO felt Weinberger had a good labor voting record in the California Assembly; however, labor rank-and-file added to the momentum of the Democrats because too many GOP officials endorsed Prop 18. The Right-to-Work movement in 1958 demonstrated Weinberger’s moderate political compass that often tried to navigate between abortion, détente, welfare, civil rights, and many other issues that frayed the Republican Party in the 1950s and for years to come.

Weinberger never again ran for elected office after the 1958 Attorney General primary but continued to be active in Republican politics, turned his attention to his ongoing law practice, and began a newspaper column syndicated statewide concerning California politics and policy. With GOP enrollment slipping statewide, Weinberger labored for voter drives at a time of low Republican morale and remained a popular speaker at Republican club events. Another dynamic journalistic opportunity opened for him when San Francisco’s KQED television station recruited him to moderate a program called, “Profile: Bay Area.” While moderating “Profile”, he researched a host of controversial issues as well as public interest stories related to cultural and San Francisco events. Long before Fox or MSNBC political news programming became popular, Weinberger argued with guests over abortion, taxes, education, and many other

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<sup>50</sup> Caspar Weinberger, “Right to Work Called Vital Civil Rights Issue,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1956, Newspaper Clipping, Republican State Central Committee Folder, Box 56, Weinberger Collection.

provocative topics. Shows occasionally became quite raucous when guests from San Francisco's legendary Old and New Left sparred in verbal combat.

Of the many hats Weinberger wore as statesman, lawyer, educator, perhaps none was more enjoyable for him than journalist. Here he remained close to the political action by throwing barbs at Governor Brown in his weekly column. For the next eight years through Governor Brown's two terms, Weinberger used his statewide column to snipe and excoriate him whenever possible. In a September 26, 1960 column, Weinberger snidely wrote, "Governor Brown also included highway gas taxes in his new 'no tax increase program'."<sup>51</sup> In other columns Weinberger attacked Governor Brown over a one hundred million dollar California surplus when the governor claimed there was no money for programs, leading with the headline, "State Surplus Proves Embarrassing to Governor Brown."<sup>52</sup> Twenty years later Defense Secretary Weinberger read all the papers and enjoyed sparring with writers at the *New York Times* by defending his budgets with letters to the editor.

On December 29, 1960 Weinberger wrote a column, "California, Now Booming, Faces a Critical Period." The state government authority, now an eight year veteran of California government and politics, pondered California's growth with a progressive-moderate manifesto writing from his native San Francisco,

We must demonstrate that we can solve our basic governmental problems such as providing a stable tax base competitive with other states, that we can deliver water and other necessities to all parts of California, that we can

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<sup>51</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, "Brown Says He Won't Ask For New Taxes," California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, September 26, 1960, Columns Printed, 1960 California Commentary File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>52</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, "State Surplus Proves Embarrassing to Governor Brown," California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, June 17, 1960, Columns Printed, 1960 California Commentary File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

attain an atmosphere where labor and management work together without crippling strikes or a threatening hostility, and that we can provide education of the highest quality, as well as the health and welfare services, recreational facilities, and all the other things people demand of their governments, *at the same time we are keeping our state government fiscally sound* (italics mine).

But those interested in the future of California will be watching to see if the legislature will act in such a way that the new capital we desperately need on such a huge scale will continue to be invested here.<sup>53</sup>

The column ran in all California newspapers and gave Weinberger a platform to comment on all the state issues from education, Berkeley, taxes, water, growth, political races, Governor Brown, and a host of others. Most of all, the opinion maker provided voters with valuable information on all the referendums that filled up the California ballot with headlines, “Be careful on Prop 9,” or “Prop 12, Bad for California.”<sup>54</sup> For the next ten years, he remained an influential opinion leader through the print and electronic media and a political force within his own party.

Weinberger held no elected office after 1958 and focused his efforts on the housekeeping of the California Republican Central Committee. From 1960 to 1962, he served as the Vice Chairman and then from 1962 to 1964 as Chairman. The state Republican and Democratic organizations remained weak compared to other states because of all the restrictive laws in place dating back to Governor Hiram Johnson. Politicians easily skirted good government laws by setting up political associations, which functioned like grass roots political clubs scattered across the country that lined up support for a particular candidate. Since the 1930s California Republicans had the California Republican Assembly (CRA) that endorsed candidates, and Democrats began

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<sup>53</sup>Caspar W. Weinberger, “California Now Booming, Faces a Critical Period,” California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, December 29, 1960, Columns Printed, 1960 California Commentary File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>54</sup>Weinberger Collection Box 176, All of the clippings of the syndicated column 1958-1966 and corresponding folders have headlines similar to these.



the California Democratic Council (CDC) in 1953 in an effort to regain their strong 1930s position.

Weinberger remained active at the state level, staying out of the growing moderate-conservative battles beginning to brew in the various political clubs especially in the south where Birchers, anti fluoridation groups, and many others began to take control of the grass roots. The Republican ground beneath Weinberger's feet was steadily shifting ever rightward. In this environment Richard Nixon ran for Governor but never became comfortable with the role of gubernatorial candidate in 1962. Weinberger served as his northern California advisor and served him well, informing him on all the various state issues. Nixon's problem was that as Vice President he travelled the world for his boss President Eisenhower and sparred with Khrushchev over a kitchen display on worldwide television. Gubernatorial candidate Nixon had little interest in California's domestic, arcane political issues. Now on the campaign trail, on the farm discussing water issues in Alameda County was a grind compared to meeting Charles DeGaulle a few years earlier discussing foreign policy as Ike's Vice President in Paris.

Throughout the 1962 gubernatorial campaign, Weinberger's behind the scenes counsel proved invaluable both in politics and policy. For the first time in Nixon's career, he faced a challenge from the right that Weinberger helped him navigate, tutoring him on all the California issues that he found so arcane and boring. Nixon's problem was while he relished politics and his campaign staff, Murray Chotiner, Bob Haldeman, et al. savored the political race, none of them knew anything about California policy. By the fall of 1961, Weinberger went to work writing speeches and tutoring Nixon on all issues California from water, education, transportation, and a host of other topics that Nixon knew nothing about. One example of this was an important speech he wrote for Nixon

on water policy that he gave before the Irrigation District Association Luncheon in San Francisco on April 26, 1962. The speech is a California water tour de force complete with the history of irrigation in the state and all the other esoteric water concepts that the engineers at the luncheon no doubt found compelling. The speech warned that the water policy fought so hard for during the 1950s was in jeopardy because of the mishandling of Governor Pat Brown.<sup>55</sup> Weinberger created more policy speeches for Nixon, not only to bolster his policy credentials but also to stanch the growing concern that Nixon was only using California for a later presidential run in 1964 or 68.

The best counsel Weinberger gave Nixon was a speech he helped craft to fend off attacks from the right led by Nixon's Republican challenger Joe Shell. Shell was the Republican leader in the California State Assembly and, along with Congressmen John Rousselot and Edgar Hiestand, represented southern California Birchers at the height of their power in the early 1960s. The trick for Weinberger and Nixon was to devise a speech that would steal their anti-Communist thunder and leave Shell and the Birchers discredited. The task was great because an explosion between moderates and Birchers might have destroyed the 1962 campaign. Nixon, Machiavellian par excellence, was up to the task. After all, he had the best of red baiting credentials from the Alger Hiss affair back in 1948 while serving on the House Un-American Activities Committee. It helped that Robert Welch, founder and leader of the John Birch Society, claimed that President Eisenhower was a communist traitor.<sup>56</sup> This absurd statement provided the fuel for

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<sup>55</sup> Speech before the Irrigation District Association Luncheon in San Francisco on April 26, 1962, Richard Nixon Folder, Box 126, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Welch wrote about this in his 1963 book, *The Politician*.

Nixon's speech and Republican primary victory. The key for Weinberger was to devise a speech that smeared Shell with Welch and yet kept up Nixon's anticommunist bona fides.

Not only Weinberger but many Republicans across the nation were hoping California's "regular Republicans" would slay the Bircher dragon growing so powerful in southern California. With much at stake, Nixon took to the podium in March 1962 and addressed the California Republican Assembly in those low, smooth, melodious, tones akin to his Checkers Speech, "It is clear one of the major issues in the campaign this November will be which of the candidates for Governor will develop the most effective and responsible program for fighting Communism within California."<sup>57</sup> Then on his own battles against "the Reds," "Without going into that record, I have learned through long experience how to fight Communism and how not to fight it."<sup>58</sup> Regarding President Eisenhower, "Robert Welch has described this great American as a dedicated conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy. No responsible candidate, member, or unit of the Republican Party can traffic with this viewpoint."<sup>59</sup> Then Nixon attacked Robert Welch, "No Republican organization or candidate can compromise with the demagoguery and the totalitarian views of Robert Welch."<sup>60</sup>

In one of Weinberger's few political victories of the 1960s, he managed to keep voters on the right loyal to Nixon and at least stymie Birchism in California. Nixon destroyed Shell in the primary but could not shake the perception that California was only a stepping stone for a later presidential run. It did not help matters that on the last day of

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<sup>57</sup> Statement of Richard Nixon, California Republican Assembly, March 1, 1962, Campaigns, Gubernatorial, Nixon, January-March 1962 File, Box 127, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

campaigning, Nixon on statewide television stated, “When I become Pres...” then caught himself and started over: “When I become Governor of the United States.”<sup>61</sup> Nixon lost to Governor Pat Brown by 297,000 votes out of 6,000,000 cast. Nixon’s presidential loss followed by this nasty California race left him bruised but not forgotten in Republican politics and left Weinberger with invaluable political favors that might prove useful in coming years.

Weinberger continued to work hard for his beloved GOP, drafting and developing programs to attract more members and strong candidates within the Party’s hierarchy. According to the Republican bylaws, after a southern Californian had served as chairman of the party for two years (1960-1962), party leadership succeeded to a northern Californian for two years (1962-1964) and then back again to the south ad infinitum. As part of this rotation, Weinberger served as State Chairman from 1962-1964 after a difficult race against party forces from the right. At this time, supporters of Senator Barry Goldwater aggressively gained control of the California Republican Assembly and much of the regular party organization preparing for the upcoming 1964 California presidential primary. The moderate Weinberger was all in for Governor Nelson Rockefeller but needed to step carefully since California law did not allow a sitting State Chairman to endorse any candidate in his party’s presidential primary. After Goldwater won the California primary, his staff was unwilling to take any support from the California Republican establishment because of his followers’ ideological zealotry and paranoia. Weinberger would gladly have worked with the

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 667.

Goldwaterites, but they shunned him and did not pursue his help until the last weeks of the campaign as California went for candidate Lyndon Johnson.<sup>62</sup>

Out of the 1964 election, a catastrophe emerged as a Democrat who recently switched enrollment to the Republican Party gave what admirers called, “The Speech” for Barry Goldwater. Actor Ronald Reagan, recently of “Death Valley Days,” Borax, and “GE Theater,” began to show an interest in politics and the governing of his adopted California. On October 27, 1964, Reagan gave his most famous speech borrowing lines from Franklin Roosevelt, “You and I have a rendezvous with destiny,” and a dab of Lincoln, “We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth.”<sup>63</sup> The speech was too little too late for Goldwater but catapulted Reagan into the spotlight with its prime time release on national television. This speech put Reagan in as Governor in 1966 and vaulted Weinberger to state and later national posts serving Nixon, Ford, and Reagan.

Weinberger began to reflect on the Goldwater disaster and wrote in his column, “American voters identify with the broad middle ground.”<sup>64</sup> To offset the right-wing inroads in California Republican politics, he helped to organize a new moderate group, the California Republican League, with a commitment to bring the party away from the right and into a position where they could win statewide elections. Weinberger used his

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<sup>62</sup>Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, Interviews by Gabrielle Morris, December 13, 1978, “San Francisco Republicans,” The Bancroft Library, [http://www.digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/san\\_francisco\\_republicans.pdf](http://www.digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/san_francisco_republicans.pdf) (accessed October, 15, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 126.

<sup>64</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “Americans Will Not Vote For an ‘Extreme’ Label,” California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, November 12, 1964, Columns Printed 1964 File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

popular syndicated statewide column, “California Commentary,” as an opinion shaper in an effort to keep the Republican Party in California towards the vital center. After the 1964 Republican Convention nominated Barry Goldwater, Weinberger wrote in his column entitled, “GOP Didn’t Go ‘Tilt’ When Barry Lit Up Board.” He stressed that the ‘64 nomination did not mean a takeover by western conservatives and that Goldwater would be a drag on the rest of the ticket come fall; a prediction that came true disastrously to his party.<sup>65</sup> After the Johnson landslide of 1964, Weinberger wrote a brutal column slamming the Goldwater forces entitled, “Goldwater’s Western Forces Live in a Private World.”<sup>66</sup> He wrote, “The Republican Party must alter its course drastically after its disastrous excursion to the far right.” Weinberger wrote that a recent trip through the eastern United States found Republican forces crushed by the loss and that the Party needed to turn towards the middle. He described western Goldwaterites as delusional.<sup>67</sup> Then in 1965 William Buckley, later the patron saint of conservatives, ran against Democrat Abe Beam and Republican Congressman John Lindsay on a third party line and won twelve percent of the vote. Conservatives were heartened by the twelve percent, but Weinberger dampened expectations when he wrote in his column entitled, “New York Lesson.”<sup>68</sup> Weinberger explained that candidates on the right could not

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<sup>65</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “GOP Didn’t Go ‘Tilt’ When Barry Lit Up Board, California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, July, 25, 1964, Columns Printed 1964 File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>66</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “Goldwater’s Western Fans Live in a Private World, California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, November 19, 1964, Columns Printed 1964 File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., California Commentary, November 19, 1964.

<sup>68</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “New York Lesson,” California Commentary Newspaper Clipping, November 9, 1965, Columns Printed 1965 File, Box 177, Weinberger Collection.

attract voters and that Republicans needed to stay in the middle. Try as he might though, the rightward shift of his party proceeded for the next fifty years.

The victory of the popular actor George Murphy over Senator Pierre Salinger ran against the Lyndon Johnson landslide in California and gave Republicans hope; he was also a portent of things to come. Prominent businessmen in southern California believed Ronald Reagan had the charisma to make a run against Governor Brown, whose second term was beginning to lose steam, and the California “Golden Dreams” began to lose their brilliance. California’s vast growth began to show a downside. The rapid population increase created smog, traffic snarls, and plenty of angst. The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley and its drift leftward created a common man resentment perfectly timed for Reagan. Voters began to voice a backlash, “We need someone to clean up the mess up at Berkeley!” and Reagan smirked, “A hippie is someone who looks like Tarzan, walks like Jane, and smells like Cheetah.”<sup>69</sup>

Weinberger, the San Francisco centrist, was not on board immediately because he promised dairyman and past mayor of San Francisco, George Christopher his support in the Republican primary. When Reagan defeated Christopher handily in the primary, Weinberger joined Reagan who was glad to have this vital, influential centrist Republican with plenty of ideas and policy expertise on his team. Weinberger’s role for Reagan was akin to what he provided for Nixon in 1962, intellectual fuel regarding all the complexities involved in California governance. Reagan avoided earlier strident anti-Communist rhetoric and kept to the script Weinberger and others provided. Reagan rolled over Brown in the 1966 election partly because the Governor underestimated the “second-rate actor” as did many others.

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<sup>69</sup> Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 203.

Throughout the Brown administration journalists, policy wonks, and reformers clamored for the reorganization of state government agencies that had not restructured in forty years. Upon election Governor Reagan assigned Weinberger to the chairmanship of the Commission on California State Government Organization and Economics. This commission was founded in 1961 and known as the “Little Hoover Commission,” received its nickname from the federal commission begun in 1946 by President Harry Truman and named after its past director President Herbert Hoover. Both agencies found ways for government to run more efficiently and save taxpayer money. As director Weinberger pushed for the gutting and reorganization of state boards, his popularity on the eleven-member commission plummeted but made for positive headlines as an infighter.<sup>70</sup> Reagan and Weinberger organized the one hundred and fifty member panel comprised of executives and management specialists to study efficiency and cost-control for California’s state government. Eventually, Governor Reagan tried to implement some of the findings into a more streamlined government.

Then, in 1968, Weinberger was promoted to Reagan’s cabinet as finance director, the most powerful position in California state government just below the governor. Reagan probably wanted to tap him immediately at the start of his administration in 1967, but southern California wounds in the Republican Party had not yet healed from the 1964 Goldwater debacle. Holmes Tuttle and Henri Salvatori were multi-millionaire friends of Reagan who financed his 1966 election campaign, but as conservatives, they found Weinberger to be anathema for a cabinet post. Most of Reagan’s southern California kitchen cabinet was leery of Weinberger, and it took the efforts of Reagan’s Executive

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<sup>70</sup> “Report Urges Regulatory Boards Slash,” Newspaper Clipping, July 27, 1967, Newspaper Clipping File July 1-September 30, 1967, Box 925, Weinberger Collection.



Secretary William Clark to bring the moderate on board. After a disastrous first year from Finance Director Gordon Paul Smith, who reported the wrong numbers on a number of state proposals and found himself in the hot seat, it was time for him to go. Smith was a management expert from the private sector who had no legislative or California state governmental experience, and Weinberger filled this need. The press, pleased by his return, wrote columns like Earl Behrens of the *San Jose Mercury* wrote under the headline, "Back From 'Exile,'" "The urbane and intellectual San Francisco lawyer who was in virtual exile from California GOP councils the last three years returns to Sacramento as Finance Director. He is responsible for a sizable chunk of the basic law by which California is run today."<sup>71</sup>

Governor Brown left the state a billion dollars in debt, a mere pittance in today's large deficit era, but a sizable sum for 1968. Governor Reagan raised taxes his first year and began to cut and prune where possible and also implemented Weinberger's reorganization plan he formulated from the Little Hoover Commission Study. A year into Reagan's administration, he eliminated the billion dollar deficit, and when the next year came in with a surplus, Reagan did the unthinkable and gave California citizens a rebate.

The Reagan administration was not without controversy. As a member of the California Regents, Governor Reagan joined with Brown appointees to dismiss President Clark Kerr from the presidency of the University of California. Berkeley students found him too harsh, and the Regents found him too soft on students. Another big issue came

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<sup>71</sup> Earl Behrens, "Back From 'Exile,'" *San Jose Mercury*, February 2, 1968, February 1968 Newspaper Clipping File, Box 925, Weinberger Collection.

on abortion; six years before *Roe v. Wade*,<sup>72</sup> Reagan passed a controversial abortion measure, the Therapeutic Abortion Act,<sup>73</sup> perhaps influenced by the pro-choice counsel of Weinberger. Before Weinberger joined Reagan's cabinet, he worked closely with Planned Parenthood organizations throughout the San Francisco Bay Area as moderator of KQED and served on the advisory committee of the Citizens Defense on Therapeutic Abortion.<sup>74</sup> Governor Reagan was not the last Republican politician to switch from pro-choice to pro-life, which demonstrates Weinberger's moderation mentioned by Reagan's close confidant Edwin Meese.<sup>75</sup>

Governor Reagan's administration received high points for competence and yet was not considered "great." One reason might be difficulties with the unyielding legislature that fought Reagan led by Jesse "Big Daddy" Unruh. Part Lyndon Johnson and part Tip O'Neill, the tough, bellowing Assembly Speaker fought Weinberger's efforts to economize and cut wherever possible. When Unruh needed a bill passed, he locked recalcitrant Republicans in the Assembly Chamber. It is interesting to note that the press during this polarizing period began to describe Weinberger as "conservative;" gone were the descriptions of "moderate" or "liberal" when he served in the legislature.

California budgets grew to five billion dollars compared to the 1.3 to 1.5 billion dollar budgets that Weinberger scrutinized while serving on the Ways and Means Committee back in the 1950s. When he forwarded his completed budget in February 4,

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<sup>72</sup> *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

<sup>73</sup> Therapeutic Abortion Act, signed into law by Governor Reagan on June 14, 1967.

<sup>74</sup> William K. Coblenz, Chairman, Citizen's Defense Fund on Therapeutic Abortion, to Caspar Weinberger, 3 March 1967, Weinberger Files-Correspondence, Box 219, Ronald Reagan Governor's Papers, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>75</sup> Edwin Meese Interview with author, 7/20/09.

1969 for the 1970 fiscal year he announced, “I am convinced that only if we can see and identify the amount we are spending for each program can we make the best use of our resources to reach the goals of your administration.”<sup>76</sup> This became Weinberger’s guiding principle when he moved on to oversee the budgets of President Nixon that led to his sobriquet, “Cap the Knife.” Weinberger the attorney became a budgeter and head bean counter, trying to keep costs down in a liberal climate that often demanded more revenue. Over the next eight years, he fought ever increasing budgets, and occasionally, he succeeded in trimming but more often lost to the massive force of escalating entitlements.

Always seeking new talent to transform Washington’s ever growing bureaucracies. Weinberger’s painstaking study of all the California departments in the budget did not go unnoticed by the Nixon administration in Washington. President Nixon sought policy people who would help to reinvent White House governance. As a veteran of all the fights and vicissitudes of California politics and policy, Weinberger was now well prepared to take on the tasks in Washington where he would be under an ever bigger spotlight. The opportunity came when a scathing report by Ralph Nader and the American Bar Association went after the Federal Trade Commission for its woeful incompetence. Weinberger would be expected to troubleshoot the way he had for Governor Reagan, and his abilities were now up to the task. Weinberger remained in contact with his good friend Governor Reagan, but for now, President Nixon repaid his many political favors accrued back in 1960 and 1962 to the trusted California advisor.

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<sup>76</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, Letter of Transmittal to the State of California Program Budget For the Fiscal Year, July 1, 1969 to June 30, 1970, Page A-1, Department of Finance Files, Box 229, Ronald Reagan Governor’s Papers, Ronald Reagan Library.

## CHAPTER III

## CAP THE KNIFE WITH NIXON, FORD, AND BECHTEL

Upon Richard Nixon's election in 1968, he lacked a comprehensive domestic plan for running the country. The same problems that dogged Nixon in California politics came to haunt him at a time when America's finances began to creak under the weight of guns and butter. Once again, Nixon and his aides, the same staff from the failed 1962 gubernatorial election, repeated the same mistake and focused on winning and politics but failed to put in place a competent domestic policy team. Nixon lacked a clear economic plan, and with the economy facing stagflation (a frightening blend of inflation and recession), a new domestic team was put in place in 1970 that included Weinberger and an attempt to fix a broken economy. Under these trying circumstances, Weinberger left Sacramento for Washington and tried to regain a past Republican orthodoxy, the balanced budget. In this first round of jobs in Washington, the man of letters would use history to try and advance his use of impoundment of funds, but his effort failed. Unfortunately, the federal budget continued to hemorrhage, but Weinberger did not go down without a fight, trying to stop the bleeding where possible. His familiarity with budgets gave him a tool for governance that later carried him to the highest corporate offices then back to Washington again to administer the nation's security through increased funding. From 1970 to 1980, Weinberger worked doggedly to establish a resume that propelled him to the highest corridors of power.

Seventeen years of California Republican politics at precinct and state-level positions left Cap a persistent and wiser official but not yet a senior statesman. The next ten years started with a meteoric rise in Washington, reforming and strengthening the Federal Trade Commission. Then Weinberger ran into strong opposition as Director of

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and later Secretary of Health Education and Welfare (HEW). It proved impossible to balance the budget when funding too many programs with little revenue. A difficult feat not accomplished until twenty years later by President Bill Clinton's Office of Management and Budget Director Leon Panetta. But Weinberger survived the bruising social policy battles of 1970s Washington and the angst of Watergate with his reputation intact at a time when American institutions were at their lowest ebb. Private industry came calling after five years in Washington that brought him back to California. As Vice President and Counsel of Bechtel Corporation, he travelled the world and emerged a senior administrator while maintaining a close relationship to his old boss, Governor Ronald Reagan. These ten years molded Weinberger into the kind of Pentagon chieftain who emerged in 1981, combative with Congress, an Arabist, and with a team of committed staff that followed him from HEW to the Pentagon. Six years later at the Pentagon, he tried to use history to advance the defense buildup with mixed results.

The prestige Weinberger enjoyed both as an accomplished problem-solver in California government and practitioner of two successful California budgets in 1969 and 1970 came to the attention of President Nixon. Meanwhile, Nixon focused on popular 1970s political movements: environmentalism, women's rights, and consumer protection which was gaining national momentum. "Nader's Raider's" led the consumer movement and fanned out across America, identifying unfair business practices in the spirit of his 1965 bestselling attack on the Corvair, *Unsafe at Any Speed*.<sup>77</sup> Nixon was constantly trying to stay one step ahead of such reform movements and would call a press conference with great fanfare to "stop inflation" or "cure cancer," and he would create

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<sup>77</sup> Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1965).

various councils and commissions to solve these tough issues. One such crusade came in the growing environmental movement; while Nixon did not share Rachel Carson's environmental passions, he constantly sought votes and created the Environmental Protection Administration by executive order on December 2, 1970.

The consumer protection movement grew, and Nixon needed an able administrator to breathe new life into an aging bureaucracy designed to safeguard against unfair and deceptive marketing practices. This led to Nixon's appointment of Weinberger. His rise through four Nixon executive postings in the next five years would establish him as a key policy player in national Republican circles. At the time of his appointment as Commissioner of Federal Trade, one newspaper column noted, "The Federal Trade Commission was buffeted and embattled when President Nixon appointed California's aggressive and knowledgeable Cap Weinberger to take charge and straighten things out."<sup>78</sup> In Washington, Weinberger gained a tremendous knowledge of federal budgeting and considerable administrative experience in the Nixon Ford cabinets. It was during this period from 1970 to 1975 that he rose from Federal Trade Commissioner (1970) to the first Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from 1971 to 1972, then the second Director of OMB from 1972 to 1973, and finally Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare from 1973 to 1975. These five difficult years provided the right training for his later Pentagon leadership in 1981, and although Weinberger lacked military and foreign policy experience, these expansive domestic policy chores prepared him for the massive Pentagon bureaucracy.

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<sup>78</sup>"FTC Carries On," September 14, 1970 Newspaper Clipping, November-December 1968 Newspaper Clipping File, Box 926, Weinberger Collection.

It is worth noting that during the Nixon era, domestic spending surpassed defense spending for the first time since 1948, and Weinberger was responsible for budgets and programs in the HEW bureaucracy about the same size as the massive Pentagon bureaucracy. Then in 1975, Weinberger left President Ford's cabinet and served as Vice President to Bechtel Corporation. The construction giant sent him jetting around the world meeting various foreign ministers as counsel in planning the construction of an airport in Saudi Arabia and a nuclear reactor in France. By 1980, he served as an advisor to his old boss, President-elect Reagan, as a seasoned cost cutter and political confidant of twenty years.

Weinberger's rise in the 1970s came from the confusing, irrational, flailing of a president who had no domestic policy agenda and little interest in or knowledge of domestic economic policy—for Nixon believed he was the foremost foreign policy president. From Nixon's lack of domestic expertise and his dismal domestic record emerged Weinberger from his budgetary role in Sacramento. Lacking a domestic focus, President Nixon presided over a robust Kennedy-Johnson economy that sagged and stalled with recession *and* inflation. Many economists believed that a recession should cool the economy off with higher unemployment and therefore stop inflation, but somehow Nixon managed to put economics on its head and push legislation in 1969 that was both recessionary and inflationary. Nixon cared little for economic policy and had little involvement with his economic team at a time that called for intense scrutiny of American financial affairs. It did not help matters that Republicans were only thirty years removed from the Hoover administration and needed to be more sensitive to their economic failings, leaving Joe Califano, President Johnson's domestic advisor to jest,

“The President is a Herbert Hoover in TV makeup.”<sup>79</sup> The success of the Nixon-Laird Vietnam troop withdrawals kept the President high in the polls while he dithered on domestic issues.

Additionally, Nixon did not care for the economic team he hastily formed to navigate the financially creaking 1970s. Typical of Nixon’s financial indifference was Treasury Secretary David Kennedy, a Chicago banker with little interest in economic or monetary policy whether Keynesian or Friedman, left or right. For two years Nixon rarely consulted him on financial issues. Advisors thought a financial heavyweight would bolster the Nixon cabinet, someone like David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank, but Nixon would have none of it. Nixon, the populist, hated bankers and the eastern establishment wing of the Republican Party represented by Rockefeller in general, incidentally a group that Weinberger respected from his Harvard days. Nixon’s distrust of banks came from two sources, his father’s difficulty with banks as a struggling grocer in the thirties and with William McChesney-Martin. As Chairman of the Federal Reserve, McChesney-Martin tightened interest on money in October 1960, sending the Eisenhower economy into a mild recession that Nixon believed cost him the presidential election to John Kennedy that November. President-elect Nixon’s lack of domestic planning carried over into his hasty selection of cabinet secretaries who were not carefully screened. Over at the Bureau of the Budget, soon to be transformed by Nixon into a new executive department—the Office of Management and Budget—entered Robert Mayo who bored Nixon in budget meetings and turned him off personally. Paul McCracken, as head of the Council of Economic Advisors and an economic academician

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<sup>79</sup> Allen J. Matusow, *Nixon’s Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars & Votes* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 62.



from Michigan, also bored Nixon. All three advisors mentioned above did not suit the President, and he fired both Mayo and McCracken in the next two years. This chaotic economic policy making created a need for the accomplished Weinberger in 1970.

When the President entered office in 1968, he collected two domestic advisors, the economics professor Arthur Burns from Nixon's Eisenhower years and Daniel Patrick Moynihan from the Kennedy-Johnson administration. Burns had served Ike on his Council of Economic Advisors and now served Nixon as his conservative conscience. Moynihan the charming, brilliant Undersecretary of Labor in the Kennedy-Johnson years fascinated Nixon, who hired him on the spot after a brief meeting to discuss domestic issues. Moynihan mesmerized Nixon with policy raconteur and history lessons on Benjamin Disraeli who as a Tory ruled Great Britain with liberal governance to the left of Gladstone's Liberals. These lessons convinced Nixon that he would carve out a place in history as the old red baiting conservative who reinvented himself, astounded America and opened China, promised the poor a guaranteed income, and passed the most progressive environmental laws. The Moynihan-Nixon marriage worked well because Nixon loved Moynihan's repertoire, and Moynihan, in return, could save the great society programs from Republican reactionaries. Ultimately, Nixon moved Burns out of the White House and appointed him the new Federal Reserve Chairman upon McChesney-Martin's retirement in 1970.

It probably did not help Nixon's domestic woes that he saw no need to establish a lobbying shop to cooperate and coordinate fiscal bills with congress and never established a working relationship with Democrats on the Hill, Speaker John McCormack, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, or Ways and Means Chairman Wilber Mills. Ironically, Nixon never learned the ways of the House or Senate himself

when serving in both chambers. Instead, he spent his time hunting Alger Hiss and other potential reds, bored by the complex domestic legislation brought before him. Nixon possessed a love and zest for political battles, but complex policy issues never caught his attention. He knew all fifty states' political districts and where to campaign in 1968, but when it came time to map a staff and a strategy for the first term, Nixon displayed a cool indifference, relying on and relishing in his foreign policy strength. Even in this department his choice for Secretary of State, William Rogers, had little foreign policy experience.

In this soup of left-right domestic schizophrenia, Nixon went back to California in search of the very capable Caspar Weinberger, who was now being mentioned in the press as a possible gubernatorial candidate to follow Governor Reagan. Only two years into Reagan's first term, Weinberger was holding the line on California's fiscal deficits and sopping up its red ink. Nixon wanted a big splash in the area of consumer protection, now coming to dominate the media. The President would open a charm offensive and attempt to co-opt the popular crusade of consumer and public advocate Ralph Nader. Nixon met with Nader and appreciated the young idealistic report developed by Nader's summer interns, which had lambasted the moribund Federal Trade Commission and recommended its elimination in a scathing report. Nixon then began a study of his own, employing the American Bar Association to investigate the Commission under the guidance of the influential Philadelphia lawyer, Miles Kirkpatrick. The ABA report concluded that the Federal Trade Commission needed "an outstanding chairman to lead

the way”<sup>80</sup> to put new life into a dying bureaucracy—that chairman was destined to be Cap Weinberger. This began his twelve years of cabinet level service to three presidents.

Woodrow Wilson created the FTC in 1915, the capstone of over thirty years of progressive government that started with the Sherman Antitrust Law of 1890. The Commission investigated and cataloged the business activities and practices of major corporations and combated restraint of trade and deceptive business practices. Infractions were then tried by trade commission attorneys or given over to the Justice Department for prosecution. Five commissioners were selected by the president in rolling seven year terms with one member acting as Federal Trade Commission Chairman. The Commission had a strong fifteen-year run, but then in the 1930s, the antitrust enforcement was eclipsed by the Great Depression. President Franklin Roosevelt went around the Commission, creating his own programs and agendas with their own industrial enforcement guidelines coming from other agencies like the National Recovery Administration. The FTC morphed into a backwater patronage agency run by Senator Ken McKellar and his Tennessee gang, along with Boss Crump’s Memphis Democratic machine. The politicians opened their own commission office down in Tennessee to keep the job spigot running, and the commission grew in size with little to show for it. In 1969, 400 Commission lawyers litigated 23 cases.<sup>81</sup> This federal agency with little reason for existence gained the sobriquet, the “little old lady of Pennsylvania Avenue.”

In 1969 James Nicholson’s term on the Commission ended, and President Nixon replaced him with Weinberger who also became chairman, taking the mantle from an old

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<sup>80</sup>American Bar Association Commission Draft on the Federal Trade Commission, see Section IV, “The Problem of Leadership,” p. 46, FTC-ABA Folder, Box 201, Caspar Weinberger Collection.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., ABA Draft, 32.

Tennessee political crony, Paul Rand Dixon. Weinberger was a quick study and digested all aspects of the FTC. The federal agency was a good fit for Weinberger since it appealed to his progressive ideals; he often quoted his trust-busting hero Teddy Roosevelt with his quote, “malefactors of great wealth.” Chairman Weinberger’s first act was to assemble a top flight staff, which he accomplished by hiring many of Nader’s Raiders. His right hand was a young ivy leaguer with an impressive pedigree named William Howard Taft IV, who appealed to Weinberger’s sense of noblesse oblige and elitism. The young Yale Law School graduate was President Taft’s great-grandson and a past summer intern for Ralph Nader. Will Taft remained by Weinberger’s side all through his Washington years, including those in the Pentagon.<sup>82</sup> Taft’s appeal to Weinberger was also based on what the young man represented: progressive mugwumpery, elite wasp, Brahmin, and privileged Republican.

In six months Weinberger studied the FTC bureaucracy and went to work cutting out the Tennessee fat, while assembling various mid-level managers and attorneys around the country for better coordination and response time to go after consumer fraud and foul business practices. Letters from Tennessee congressmen began to pour into Chairman Weinberger’s office pleading for all the cronies to be restored since many were so close to retirement, but he simply wrote back that the departed staff were talented enough to find work elsewhere. He could be hardnosed and strong willed in a gracious professional manner. Weinberger brought an excellent staff like Robert Pitofsky from the New York University Law School to litigate unfair methods of competition and deceptive practices in commerce. As the FTC improved and strengthened, Weinberger gained positive press

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<sup>82</sup> Like the Adams’s, Stevensons, Kennedys, and Bushes the Ohio Tafts served in a number of federal postings since the family patriarch Alphonso Taft served President Grant as Secretary of War.

from newspapers throughout the country. Just as he settled in to serve in the seven-year chairmanship, Nixon, however, called with new orders.

With all the recessionary fears in the economy, Nixon lost seats in the 1970 Congressional elections, and the President prepared a massive shakeup with his domestic team, the first of many in his administration. Robert Mayo of the Budget Bureau was fired; at the same time a newly created Nixon agency came into existence to replace the Bureau. The newly created OMB gained a new director, the up and coming Labor Secretary George Shultz. Nixon was continually creating and destroying bureaucracies, developing a new pricing commission here and an energy council there. In the midst of Nixon's agency-making, he began to seek economic counsel from Shultz and ignored McCracken and Kennedy. In 1971 John Connolly, President Lyndon Johnson's political protégé, replaced David Kennedy as Treasury Secretary, and now three years into his first term, Nixon finally managed to find an economic team that conducted policy.<sup>83</sup>

Secretary Shultz was a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an expert in labor and industrial policy. When Nixon tapped him for the labor cabinet post, he was teaching at the University of Chicago and a disciple of Milton Friedman's monetarist economic views. Friedman eventually became the dean of economic thought among Republicans in the 1980s, in a role similar to that of John Maynard Keynes among Democrats in the 1930s. Nixon became enamored with Shultz in much the same way he

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<sup>83</sup> By 1971 Nixon now had Shultz, Connolly and would soon drive Paul McCracken from the Council of Economic Advisors. McCracken's replacement was Herb Stein, father of celebrity Ben Stein, who droned on as the monotone social studies teacher in the blockbuster film, "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." At a time when meat prices soared by 40%, Herb Stein shocked news reporters by pulling a raw messy roast from his brief case to demonstrate the quality and availability of beef in a bizarre humorous way.

Connolly provided ideological relief from his dogmatic Republican advisors who were generally balanced budget, hard money types. At Camp David on August 15, 1971, when the momentous financial decision to take America off gold, Connolly had little advice since he didn't favor hard currency over soft. This harkens back to his political benefactor Lyndon Johnson who when interviewed for a teaching post in west Texas was asked about creation and evolution replied, "Oh don't worry, I can teach it either way."

enjoyed long policy discussions with Moynihan. With the creation of the Office of Management and Budget, Nixon tapped Weinberger as deputy of OMB to preside over the federal budget numbers. Nixon, impressed with Weinberger's handling of California's budget woes and his ability to revive the FTC in six months, believed he could stop the hemorrhaging in the federal budget.

Weinberger attacked the federal budget with the same zeal he had once poured into California's budget. In his first press conference, he introduced himself as a "fiscal puritan" with a belief that budgets needed to be balanced. The lifelong fiscal bureaucrats in Washington did not know whether to laugh or cry, but for the next three years, Weinberger did his best to tackle the federal budget and make new domestic policy foes along the way. Most of the middle managers as career civil servants in the various departments were loyal to their federal agency and not to President Nixon. The President created the OMB to act as a conduit between the cabinet heads and himself and to present their departmental budgets where Shultz and Weinberger could add or subtract funds as they saw fit, giving the two men powerful influence within the federal government. Most cabinet heads represented their agency and wished to expand their budget, but "Cap the Knife" always wanted to cut and prune where he could with an overriding concern to balance budgets. In a November 24, 1970 press conference, he stated, "Spending tends to expand for its own sake. A pilot project normally turns into an essential program in three years; it becomes an urgent priority in three years more. The distance from an urgent priority to an untouchable sacred cow is usually no more than five fiscal years."<sup>84</sup> For Weinberger, budgets represented moral, political policy making him in a way akin to

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<sup>84</sup> Newspaper Clipping, "Cap's Law," Newspaper Clipping File 1970, Box 926, Weinberger Collection.

the nineteenth century British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone who stated, “Budgets are not merely matters of arithmetic, but in a thousand ways go to the root of prosperity of individuals, and relations of classes, and the strength of kingdoms.”<sup>85</sup>

The three budgets that Weinberger prepared ('71, '72, and '73 fiscal years) did not balance and created deficits of 23, 23.4, and 14.9 billion respectively, which disappointed Weinberger in his failure to balance the federal budget. If only Washington adopted the California system for budgeting, all would be well lamented Weinberger to the press. At one particular news conference, Weinberger was photographed holding up the large federal budget in its thick phone book form while wearing horn rimmed glasses, giving the sophisticated Weinberger an owl-like appearance as head bean counter. This photo went out over the news service wires and appeared in all the media markets so Americans could put a face with the name “Cap the Knife.” With deficits rising, federal outlays expanded in all three Weinberger budget years from 210.2 billion in 1971, 230.7 in 1972, and 245.7 in 1973. While Weinberger was trying to hold the fiscal line, his boss President Nixon was telling the American people that he was now a Keynesian and that his first commitment was to full employment, policies not always conducive to balanced budgets. Both Nixon and Congress adopted tax cuts but demonstrated little interest within a weak economy for cutting programs. Unfortunately, for Weinberger, the discretionary spending portion of the budget was small, and entitlements (Medicaid, Medicare, social security, and food stamps) usually increased automatically. In the weak Nixon economy with unemployment and inflation rising, tax revenues were down. These

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<sup>85</sup> Jesse Burkhead, *Government Budgeting* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956), 6.

budget busters ran over the Director of OMB. The economic slump with inflation increasing added a five to six percent increase in the cost of social services.<sup>86</sup>

Weinberger believed he had a historic budgetary device to keep deficits down and could create budget relief to make Nixon look good before the American people. There existed an old budget practice known throughout American history as “impoundment”, which touched off a great constitutional controversy for President Nixon and Weinberger, and contributed in many ways to his constitutional conflict with Congress. Historically, the impoundment of appropriated funds was first practiced in President Jefferson’s Cabinet when Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin impounded \$50,000 dollars appropriated by Congress for construction of gunboats to protect the Mississippi River. With the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson concluded the boats unnecessary and impounded the monies in an effort to reduce the debt. Presidents followed the impoundment practice with Jackson, Lincoln, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations all impounding congressional funding at one time or another to fill budget deficits. Usually, defense appropriations were targeted by presidents who found them unnecessary and excessive for war aims. Like Gallatin of old, Weinberger continued to hold back congressional funding as Deputy and Director of OMB and then later as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Weinberger explained that Congress often appropriated funds for housing or irrigation programs in various states and that construction projects were not ready to commence. He simply withheld the funding until the project was ready and therefore could move the funding into the next fiscal year and show a saving.

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<sup>86</sup> Frank C. Porter, “Nixon’s Dilemma: Red Ink,” *Washington Post*, November 1, 1970, Newspaper Clipping, 1970 Clipping File, Box 926, Weinberger Collection.



Ultimately, this led to a constitutional crisis when President Nixon vetoed a pollution bill with money for sewers and water purification. Like so many of Nixon's vetoes Congress overrode, he then defiantly impounded the funds with Weinberger's approval. The whole impoundment controversy helped fuel impeachment flames and led to the passage of the Impoundment Control Act of 1974 that outlawed the executive budgetary practice. From 1971 to 75 Weinberger withheld funds from many projects both at OMB and HEW, creating a number of enemies on Capitol Hill in an effort to keep spending in check. On March 23, 1971, Senator Sam Ervin (later of Watergate fame) chaired three days of hearings before the Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to address impoundment. The "simple country lawyer" from North Carolina sparred with the polished San Francisco Weinberger, the former bemoaning executive abuses and the later arguing that funding was a shared responsibility between the legislature and the executive.<sup>87</sup> The impoundment controversy was just the first of many clashes Weinberger fought with Congress; this time they won with the passing of the Impoundment Act. Many battles lay in the future with Congress, but the constitutional struggles Weinberger engaged in the Nixon-Ford Cabinet demonstrated his zeal to serve his President at the expense of legislative compromise.

It is worth noting here that Weinberger was in a vastly different environment from his old Assemblyman days back in San Francisco, where he also carried the Democratic line in the 21<sup>st</sup> Assembly District and many issues were nonpartisan. Now at the federal level, it was all hardball, and Weinberger developed a strident, adversarial style at the many congressional hearings where he defended the administration. His bearing was

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<sup>87</sup> Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Separation of Powers, *Hearings on Executive Impoundment of Appropriated Funds*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1971, 97.

gracious and polite, but he often spoke with such certitude and rectitude that it worked against his policy goals. What served Weinberger well in the courtroom did not always work on Capitol Hill, especially in the Watergate era with conflict between the legislative and executive branches. Weinberger described the hearings in his memoirs, “Throughout all of this, the witness must strive to remember the cardinal rule: Any slight slip, any silly answer will form the basis of the media reporting and thus the public’s views on the hearing.”<sup>88</sup> Weinberger saw himself as “in the arena,” battling Congress on behalf of his boss with Nixon the client and he the attorney.

In Weinberger’s two years as deputy and one year as director of OMB, he developed a vast knowledge of the budget and became familiar with defense budgets and defense issues that served him well when entering the Pentagon in 1981. At OMB he needed to stop the bleeding and showed a willingness to cut wherever possible, often looking for innovative accounting techniques to try and save money. Defense has always been a ripe target for cutting since its budget each year comes from the discretionary portion of the budget. Ironically, the shoe would be on the other foot when in 1981, he battled a tough, young OMB director, the miserly David Stockman, who sought to cut large defense increases. Weinberger was fortunate that he worked with Nixon’s Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird who understood that cutting defense was necessary and part of the Nixon-Kissinger plan to scale back America’s military presence in the world post-Vietnam. Weinberger wrote Laird, “I am sure you understand that to achieve the

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<sup>88</sup> Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 62.

President's overall objectives for the 1973 and 1974 budgets and no tax increases in 1974 mean that difficult decisions have to be made.”<sup>89</sup>

Weinberger had a number of brilliant defense intellectuals to help him with budgeting. Ellis Veatch, a career bureaucrat who served President Kennedy as a defense budgeting expert, and James Schlesinger, from the Rand Corporation, who wrote an important treatise on defense spending in 1960 entitled *The Political Economy of National Security*.<sup>90</sup> The impolitic Schlesinger later served as President Ford's Secretary of Defense, alienated many, and was then summarily fired. Weinberger, Veatch, and Schlesinger faced many challenges along with Secretary Laird trying to do more with less funding. Below are just a few of the examples that demonstrate that Weinberger was not the defense novice that many of his detractors portrayed him in 1981.

One plan that saved the services money was the transfer of staff work to civilians, saving thousands per soldier in training expenses. The other great challenge for Defense was converting the army from the draft to an all volunteer force. Soldier pay was now pegged to the free market, and the old draft wages would not suffice. Unfortunately, the 1970s were a time of exceeding inflation, giving defense planners a tremendous financial headache, yet the Nixon team went ahead and lived up to the campaign promise to end the draft.<sup>91</sup> Overcoming inflation and increased military wages consumed the entire peacetime dividend from the Vietnam drawdown. Little funding was left for development

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<sup>89</sup> Weinberger Letter to Laird, 26 January, 1973, Department of Defense File 1971-1973, Box 259, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>90</sup> James R. Schlesinger, *The Political Economy of National Security: A Study of the Economic Aspects of the Contemporary Power Struggle* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960).

<sup>91</sup> The economist of great renown Milton Friedman nearing his death in 2006 was asked what was his greatest accomplishment and he stated it was his efforts to end the draft. Military analysts are divided on this issue including Dr. Andrew Wiest who makes a strong argument for the civic benefits of the draft in his lectures at the University of Southern Mississippi.

of new defense technologies and led to a decrease in carrier groups and monies for a new strategic bomber. Weinberger contributed to the decreases in defense in his quest for the elusive balanced budget. Ten years later he transformed into a defense booster who not only promoted the increase of three carrier groups but two new bomber programs and a host of other expansive weapons programs.

By 1972 Weinberger mastered the many intricacies of the federal budget, and with Nixon's landslide election, another cabinet reshuffling took place. Nixon carried forty-nine states but oddly arrived at the White House in a foul mood. He demanded that all cabinet members put a letter of resignation on his desk and with this bluster reshuffled the deck. A flummoxed Weinberger accepted his new cabinet posting at HEW, and his predecessor, the very capable Elliot Richardson, went to the Pentagon for a brief five-month stint as Secretary of Defense before settling in as Nixon's third attorney general.<sup>92</sup>

Nixon chose Weinberger because of his tough scrutiny of budgets and a commitment to shake up the Great Society programs. The Nixon-Weinberger plan was not to roll back the great social gains but to tweak, innovate, and appeal to an old conservative dogma—local governance. The domestic plan was to administer monies back to states in the form of block grants, like the model cities program whereby big city mayors would know best what programs they need to implement whether for summer youth employment or new housing stock. But before Weinberger could cut, create, innovate, and implement he had to survive a grueling confirmation before the Senate Finance Committee and its Great Society patrons. Democratic Senators Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut and Walter Mondale of Minnesota fought for domestic programs

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<sup>92</sup> Elliot Richardson was a talented administrator and a superb ninth secretary of HEW. He is best remembered for his finest hour when he resigned as Attorney General when Nixon ordered him to fire the Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox, the infamous "Saturday Night Massacre."

and came to the confirmation hearing looking for answers. In Weinberger's opening remarks he prepared for battle, "I came to this hearing with a strong commitment to the President's goal of controlling the entire federal budget to avoid higher taxes and inflation, which will only hurt those whom HEW is dedicated to help."<sup>93</sup> Senator Ribicoff, a founding father in Johnson's Great Society programs, served in President Kennedy's cabinet as the foremost Secretary of HEW and enjoyed grilling "Cap the Knife" on all aspects of the 90 billion dollar HEW budget and questioning the practice of executive impoundments. Senator Mondale picked up with the same line of questioning forcing Weinberger to earn his nomination. Both Senators asked a compelling common sense question, how can a budget cutter support the 250 programs and 110,000 employees of HEW? Ultimately, Weinberger passed confirmation with the votes of moderate-conservative Republicans and southern conservative democrats like Harry Byrd, Herman B. Talmadge, and the powerful Finance Chairman Russell Long of Louisiana.

Thirteen Years prior, Weinberger wrote in his syndicated column entitled, "California, Now Booming, Faces a Critical Period." He offered,

We must demonstrate that we can solve our basic governmental problems such as providing a stable tax base competitive with other states, that we can deliver water and other necessities to all parts of California, that we can maintain an atmosphere where labor and management work together without crippling strikes or a threatening hostility, and that we can provide education of the highest quality, as well as health and welfare services, recreational facilities, and all the other things people demand of their governments, at the same time we are keeping our state government fiscally sound.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Senate Committee on Finance, *Hearing on the Nominations of Caspar W. Weinberger, of California, to be Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and Frank C. Carlucci, of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare*, 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. 1973, 3.

<sup>94</sup> Caspar Weinberger, "California, Now Booming, Faces a Critical Period," California Commentary, Columns Printed 1960 File, Box 176, Weinberger Collection.

Throughout all the political strife in Washington, the above quote best details what Weinberger was trying to accomplish, the work of a dedicated civil servant who governed with a fiscal mind and progressive heart. Throughout his government tenure, there certainly were cuts but no talk of wholesale eradication of programs made popular by contemporary conservatism. While he was all for fiscal restraint, he enforced the newly created Title IX Programs on college campuses that provided women opportunities previously denied them. Weinberger also advocated for hospital research and a host of other programs that proved difficult to administer in a sagging economy with a smaller tax revenue stream.

Having passed confirmation in the full Senate, Secretary Weinberger continued to impound funds, angering HEW staff and recipients of domestic programs. In his many speeches at hospitals and regional HEW offices, Weinberger met spirited public protests. Despite the impoundment controversy, Weinberger remained intrigued by all sorts of domestic policy innovations and think tank remedies both left and right. The new Secretary was willing to experiment with a host of programs like block grants, guaranteed family income, college loans, and national health care. John Ehrlichman, advisor to President Nixon, often commented on Nixon's "zigs and zags" between left-right policy choices; this characteristic often resembled Weinberger's politics and policy, below are just a few examples. Conventional policy wisdom regarding aid to college students recommended that the institution of a student's choice should receive federal aid. Weinberger stressed that aid should go directly to the student; this policy innovation was one of many that Weinberger spoke of quite proudly on the television talk shows and corresponded with other education policies like school vouchers for parents, a program implemented in some areas of the country thirty years later. President Nixon was forever

innovating and introducing a host of domestic programs that were always given the title of “new,” and Weinberger was supportive of his boss not unlike his loyalty to Reagan ten years later. Both Weinberger and Nixon pushed their boldest program with support from both the left and right known as a “Guaranteed Family Income,” or as economists liked to call it a “negative income tax.” Beginning in President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration, liberal policy makers fought for an income that would help the poor with the cost of living. Policy experts from the right came on board because they saw the income as a way to bring aid down to the individual where they believed it could do the most good—a means to take power away from Washington and give it to the individual citizen. Weinberger and Nixon always sought ways to take power from Washington and put it into state government, or in the case of HEW, disseminate power to regional offices. President Nixon’s relationship with Congress was going from bad to worse, and with Watergate looming, the guaranteed \$2,400 dollars per family never became a reality.

On August 8, 1974 Nixon resigned, and President Ford stated, “Our long national nightmare is over.”<sup>95</sup> Ford kept Weinberger on, and the two worked well together. The President sought Weinberger’s advice about a Vice President, and he recommended both Nelson Rockefeller of New York and his old boss Ronald Reagan. The selections are noteworthy for what they say about Weinberger’s ideology. Rockefeller and Reagan represented polar opposite ideological perspectives within the Republican Party, yet Weinberger was more concerned about effectiveness than dogma. Ford’s selection of Rockefeller almost cost him the nomination when the Republican Right ran Governor Reagan in a heated presidential primary in 1976. Conservatives in the party always

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<sup>95</sup> James Cannon, *Gerald R. Ford: An Honorable Life* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 27.

found Rockefeller an anathema, and the politically savvy Weinberger's advice to the President appeared misguided.

Weinberger loved to travel and used his HEW role to move about the world as health ambassador. His many travels gave him valuable foreign policy experience and a chance to forge friendships with international leaders and ministers. At the height of détente, he travelled to Poland and Russia to meet with their health ministers and to establish scientific exchanges in August 1973. Then, in 1974, he attended a significant world population conference in Bucharest, Romania and meetings in Geneva, Switzerland at the World Health Organization. Controversy erupted when Weinberger refused to meet with dissident Andrei Sakharov and instead remained loyal to President Ford's détente policy, avoiding all possibilities of offending the Soviets. What a difference seven years would make when he followed the more hawkish stance of his new boss in 1981.

Weinberger's change in outlook can best be explained by practical politics. The Nixon-Ford-Kissinger triad spent the 1970's establishing a foreign policy orthodoxy, which was détente. Weinberger as their emissary not only adopted détente but bolstered Soviet-American relations through his speeches and a trip throughout the Soviet Union as HEW Secretary mentioned above. Soviet Health Minister Boris Petrovsky led Weinberger all through Russia where a doting Weinberger told the Soviet Press, "At every step I have met friendly Soviet people."<sup>96</sup> Secretary Weinberger addressed the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences in Moscow on September 3, 1973 saying, "Thirty years ago the United States and Soviet Union, comrades in arms, worked together to

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<sup>96</sup>S. Tutorskaya, "Interview: Success is Sure to Come," *Izvestia*, September 8, 1973, U.S.S.R. Trip File, Box 467, Weinberger Collection.



defeat a common enemy. Marching in step together our joint efforts will lead to a historic victory over cardiovascular disease, cancer, and pollution.”<sup>97</sup> Weinberger did not meet with Sakharov for the same reason Ford would not meet with Alexander Solzhenitsyn; Ford and his Cabinet remained devoted to Kissingerian orthodoxy. Getting tough with the Soviets was five years down the foreign policy road for the Republican Party. The political zeitgeist of the 1970s considered dissidents a throwback to bygone days of the 1950s Cold War that ran much hotter. Furthermore, President Ford commented that Solzhenitsyn, a hero in some political circles, was “a goddamn horse’s ass.”<sup>98</sup> In politics, a week is a lifetime, and Weinberger was not ready to join the hawks on the fringe of his party and meet with Soviet dissidents. Six years later Soviet divisions would roll across the Afghanistan border and change not only President Carter’s mind but Cap Weinberger’s as well.

Five successful years at the FTC, OMB, and HEW established Weinberger as a significant aide to two Republican administrations, and the herculean tasks of administering federal budgets and HEW domestic programs established him for any number of cabinet postings in the future. But for now, it was time to follow the revolving door out of government and into the board room when Steve Bechtel came calling. Weinberger wrote in his second memoir, “But by April 1975, with my mother’s health deteriorating, and with my wife suffering from arthritis and eager to return to California, I informed President Ford that I must reluctantly resign office as soon as he could find a

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<sup>97</sup> Caspar Weinberger Speech Before Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences, September 3, 1973, U.S.S.R. Trip File, Box 467.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *Gerald R. Ford* (Henry Holt & Company, 2007), 109.

successor.<sup>99</sup> Weinberger now followed a long tradition of American public officials, who “saw the opportunities and they took ‘em;” he now served on various corporate boards and took advantage of his expertise in consulting, lecturing, and a host of other lucrative possibilities. A multinational construction corporation offered just the right opportunity from his native San Francisco.

Eighty years ago when Warren Bechtel’s cattle ranch failed in the 1890s, he headed to the Land of Great Dreams and began road grading work that led to his first completed highway in 1919 for the state of California. By 1930 Bechtel was constructing the Hoover Dam and building cargo ships in a large ship building facility near its headquarters located in San Francisco. By 1945 the privately- held family firm passed the mantle to Stephen Bechtel, Sr., incorporated, and went worldwide with construction projects from shopping malls to the largest airport in the world, the King Fahd International Airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. As the company grew, executive officers began to revolve in and out of government from Bechtel to Washington. With many of its most lucrative projects in the Middle East, officers like John McCone left Bechtel for a stint in the Central Intelligence Agency, and many other officers found postings in the State Department. President Nixon’s Secretary of the Treasury, George Shultz, became Bechtel’s president and later served as President Reagan’s Secretary of State when Al Haig was fired in 1982.

In the 1970s Caspar Weinberger formed a close friendship with William Slusser and Steve Bechtel, Jr. at various outings of an elite club of statesmen and corporate types that met in the summers outside of San Francisco at a place known as Bohemian Grove.

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<sup>99</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger with Gretchen Roberts *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 250.

Over the years this secluded secretive club drove conspiracy types wild. A place where Earl Warren, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and a host of other powerful Americans told jokes and discussed foreign policy over a camp fire in a relaxed atmosphere of rustic cabins and bowls of chili. It was in this informal atmosphere that Slusser plucked Weinberger from HEW and brought him on board as Vice President and Counsel for Bechtel Corporation. Weinberger had worked for the prestigious San Francisco law firm of Heller, Ehrman, White but had left the firm in 1967 upon appointment to Governor Reagan's cabinet. He never had a deep love for jurisprudence; his passion was in politics and solving governmental administrative issues. Journalist Laton McCartney wrote on Bechtel's hiring of Weinberger, "His expertise was as a manager, cost-cutter, a political doer and fixer, and through the years it had served him well."<sup>100</sup>

Weinberger joined Bechtel at a most opportune time. OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) founded in 1960, punished America's aid to Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War by raising the price of oil 70 percent.<sup>101</sup> America's expense was OPEC's gain—which also worked very well for Bechtel and Weinberger. On the world's Monopoly board, the Persian Gulf States owned Board Walk and Park Place—Bechtel was only too willing to build its red hotels. The Saudis, flush with cash, came calling to their historic friends at Bechtel with construction requests for pipelines, port facilities, buildings, airports, refineries, ad infinitum. "Cap the Knife" became "Weinberger of Arabia" over the next five years as he met with Saudi officials lamenting the legal

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<sup>100</sup> Laton McCartney, *Friends in High Places* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 175.

<sup>101</sup> Gerald Posner, *Secrets of the Kingdom: The Inside Story of the Saudi-U.S. Connection* (New York: Random House, 2005), 49.

difficulties posed on Bechtel due to the Arab Boycott. Since 1948 Arabs had shunned any business that conducted commerce with Israel. Free trade sentiments did not concern Weinberger personally, but the political fallout that Bechtel endured for honoring the Arab boycott of Israel put his employer in potential U.S. restraint of trade violations. Weinberger explained to Arab officials that Congress and violations to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act might damage the Saudi-Bechtel relationship.

Weinberger in some detail described his travel to Saudi Arabia and his meetings with Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Yamani who also shared a love of Harvard; both were alumni.<sup>102</sup> After a series of dinners with various ministers and the American ambassador Bill Stoltz, it was time for Weinberger to conduct business: contracts, retainer fees, subcontracting and troubleshooting a whole host of legal, labor, and logistical issues. By 1980 Weinberger emerged a foreign policy Arabist that had a great effect on his decision making and on American foreign policy as the Cold War came to a close. Incidentally, the Bechtel Corporation had a distinct WASP culture that hired few Jewish employees and enjoyed poking fun at their Episcopalian vice president with the Jewish surname.<sup>103</sup> King Fahd, Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar, and other Saudi financiers like Adnan Khashoggi were enthusiastic financial supporters of the new Reagan Doctrine, a policy for getting tough with the Soviets and contributing financially to covert operations in Nicaragua and Afghanistan. While working for Bechtel, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the World Affairs Council bestowed their memberships to Weinberger as his political corporate connections grew.

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<sup>102</sup> Caspar Weinberger's Log of Mideast Trip, 36, Mideast Trip, November 1-18, 1975 Folder, Box 560, Weinberger Collection

<sup>103</sup> Bechtel senior staff often referred to Cap's legal department as "the Weinberg Company." See McCartney, 180.

In 1973 David Rockefeller formed the Trilateral Commission to bring together prominent business leaders from Japan, Western Europe, and North America to solve global issues like hunger and over population and form a counterweight to the expanding communist bloc. The Commission was roundly attacked from the left by Noam Chomsky and a collection of corporate liberal elites causing capitalist mischief and from the right where the John Birch Society portrayed “Trilats” as a menace to American sovereignty and a dark conspiracy out to control the world. As a problem solver and corporate executive, Weinberger joined both the Trilateral Commission and the Council of Foreign Relations from an interest in global issues, while enjoying networking on behalf of his boss, Steve Bechtel, Jr. In a letter to Bechtel dated November 7, 1977, Weinberger briefed him on a recent meeting in Bonn of the Trilateral Commission that detailed methods for doubling rice production in Southeast Asia. Weinberger detailed the funding from the IMF Bank and how Bechtel would prosper from irrigation and fertilizer production in various rice production ventures.<sup>104</sup> Weinberger savored his position on the prestigious Trilateral Commission, but it also served him well as it expanded his opportunities.

Weinberger enjoyed the corporate globetrotting and large salary, but legal work was never his passion. He missed politics as he sat in his San Francisco Bechtel office daydreaming in front of the signed photos of Governor Reagan, President Nixon, and President Ford. Then suddenly in 1978, a tax rebellion broke out in California led by the notorious anti-tax maven Howard Jarvis. In a milieu of political activism Jarvis collected enough signatures to get Proposition 13 on the ballot in time for the gubernatorial

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<sup>104</sup> Caspar Weinberger to Steve Bechtel, Jr., November 7, 1977, Steve Bechtel, Jr. File, Box 487, Weinberger Collection.

election between Democratic incumbent Governor Jerry Brown and California Attorney General Evelle Younger. Like Peter Finch in the popular 1976 Oscar-winning film *Network*, Jarvis was “Mad as hell and I’m not gonna take it anymore!”<sup>105</sup> In the Spirit of Shay’s Rebellion, Prop 13 stated that the maximum amount of any real estate tax shall not exceed 1% of the full cash value of such property. The politically astute Governor saw the tax revolt coming and met with Jarvis for many hours to discuss implementation and the user fees that would result from the loss of property tax revenue inherent in the passage of Prop 13. As California grew, property taxes became a standard practice to raise revenue, as in other states, to build a new school or finance the community swimming pool. Watergate and the Vietnam War now trickled down to the grassroots taxpayer, and property owners began to mobilize in a number of states in order to take a whack at local government and local property taxes. In California, Republican gubernatorial candidate Evelle Younger simply avoided the initiative and never grasped the growing strength of the Prop 13 protest. Younger was soundly trounced by Governor Brown, and the low property tax measure sailed to victory. The anti-tax momentum touched off tax measure initiatives around the country and gave Jarvis his fifteen minutes of celebrity, and a beleaguered United States Senate Finance Committee invited Jarvis to Washington for hearings. The political timing was also perfect for an aging cowboy actor from Santa Barbara who warned voters, “The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, ‘I’m from the government and I’m here to help.’”<sup>106</sup>

Governor Jerry Brown, now saddled with the popular new property tax measure, convened a fourteen member California Commission on Government Reform.

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<sup>105</sup> See Howard Jarvis’s biography, *I’m Mad As Hell* (New York: New York Times Book Company, 1979).

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/33742.html> (accessed November, 7, 2013).

Weinberger, the California government expert, was appointed by the Governor and for the first time in three years was again trying to solve budget shortfalls and get more government service from less funding. The fourteen member panel quickly split between liberals wanting to tax more and conservatives recommending budget cuts. Weinberger went with the conservatives and wrote the minority report that called for cuts. “Cap the Knife” had come a long way from his days in the California State Assembly writing legislation that expanded state government programs. He rolled up his sleeves to try and find solutions for his beleaguered State, California but abundance began to show cracks in its foundation.

The Governor’s blue ribbon panel, the Commission of Government Reform, comprised of a diverse collection of educators, business professionals, and administrators, were chaired by a learned policy professional, A. Alan Post. Almost immediately this high-minded commission erupted into policy fights over the next six months over how to administer California in light of Prop 13. Eight members felt the solution meant shifting local government tax burdens to the state to remedy the 7.04 billion dollars lost in property tax revenue from the referendum. Six others, led by Weinberger, felt a shift in revenues defied the spirit of California voters who felt taxes were too high. One issue that all fourteen members agreed on was an enlightened proposal to shift revenue from rich school districts to poorer ones. Everything else on the commission was a political donnybrook with Chairman Post lashing out in the press, “Few people pay attention to Weinberger’s views, he thought he could cut costs and taxes working for Nixon and Reagan and failed.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “Prop 13 advisor: Enact reforms or face tax hikes,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 5, 1979, Newspaper Clipping, Government Reform File, Box 100, Weinberger Collection.

When Post held a press conference to present the Commission's Report, no other Commission members were present. Weinberger stated to the press, "We (a six member group) do not believe the report as written fully reflects or responds to the message the people delivered when they enacted Proposition 13 by an overwhelming margin."<sup>108</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* stood by Weinberger on its editorial page and felt that only his proposals made any sense; his solution, as always, was consolidation. Consolidate tax activities, government pensions, tax forms, and abolish special designated funds by the legislature and pool them into a statewide general fund for fiscal savings. Gone were California's age of abundance and bipartisan camaraderie.

The past six months of commission work had been an exhausting, bruising experience for Weinberger with little gain for him or the languishing "land of great dreams" that began to lose some of its irresistible luster. College students for the first time began to pay tuition at the state university system, and Californians began to live with limited expectations. Over the next decade, Cap moved back to Washington and left California setting up residence in Bar Harbor, Maine.

The Nixon-Ford years and the corporate experiences at Bechtel followed a common historical pattern in American History where the "Wise Men" went from board room to presidential cabinet and back again. Cabinet members moved from influential firms like Dillon, Reed and Sullivan & Cromwell to providing experience and sage counsel to important pressure-filled Cold War decision making with the highest sense of purpose. Some detractors found Weinberger woefully unprepared for this kind of role at the Pentagon. Yet, in many ways, his political seasoning in the angst-ridden Seventies

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<sup>108</sup> Jerry Roberts, "State Panel Sees 'Almost Inevitable' Tax Boost," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 6, 1979, Newspaper Clipping, Government Reform File, Box 100, Weinberger Collection.



gave him the fortitude to survive almost seven years in a cabinet posting where the governmental life span averaged two years.

The following three chapters focus on Weinberger and the machinations, process, and politics of achieving the defense buildup and its many challenges. As Secretary of Defense, Weinberger believed that his policy tool was budgeting. All of his political career in Sacramento or Washington, he either pushed or cut budget numbers, yet he never claimed an aptitude for accounting—for his strength lied not in numbers but words. In Chapter IV entitled, “From Cap the Knife, to Cap the Ladle”, Weinberger battled through a series of committees on Capitol Hill with foes and allies with strong foreign policy and fiscal differences including members from his own Party. Gone are the days of cost cutting and “do more with less;” at the Pentagon he tried to open the funding spigot as far as possible.

The process was often byzantine, arduous, and chaotic. Chapter V, “Reagan’s Rhetorician,” explores his ability to sell the buildup to the media and the American people through speeches, debates, television, and letter writing. Long after the buildup ran out of momentum, Weinberger soldiered on. Interestingly, Weinberger’s career up to the Pentagon had little contact with the various hawks in both parties, and he associated mostly with elites like the Council on Foreign Relations. Then, in 1983, President Reagan introduced a fantastic new technological concept, the Strategic Defense Initiative. The “Star Wars” program, much like the buildup, did not include Weinberger in its origins, but he became its leading advocate. Like an attorney preparing his brief for a client, Weinberger worked tirelessly for both programs.

Chapter VI, “MX, Procurement, Reorganization, Goldwater, and Other Headaches,” delves into the eventual blowback from such a massive amount of funding

over a five year period for defense. The “waste, fraud, and abuse” that Reagan vowed to fight on the campaign trail crept into his foremost campaign pledge—the buildup. It did not help matters that Reagan promised to scrap the MX basing mode that President Carter worked on so hard through thirty different basing designs and years of research. It was up to Cap to find a solution. Additionally, Weinberger exposed all sorts of cost overruns that came back to bedevil his spending plans. Finally Congress, President Reagan, and a host of military reformers passed the Goldwater-Nicholls Reorganization Act that changed the Pentagon’s operating procedure. Paradoxically, the old fixer, consolidator, innovator, aided by his Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, stood in the way of these innovative changes—the reformer became the reactionary. And similar to his days on the Prop 13 Commission back in California, where he worked to overcome the bureaucratic conflicts, the budget’s wheels sank further into the mud of political opposition.

The last chapter, “To Rule the Waves, For He Is an Englishman,” briefly details what Weinberger did with the reemerging sea power. The first item of importance was to help Great Britain retake the Falklands and solidify the special relationship, then engage Libya and Iran in naval exercise to maintain the freedom of the seas. Ultimately, the Middle East saw some of Weinberger’s greatest achievements, for it was here that he grew rich working for Bechtel. Later though at the Pentagon, a foolhardy hostage swap almost destroyed his many accomplishments.

## CHAPTER IV

## FROM CAP THE KNIFE TO CAP THE LADLE: THE BUILDUP AND CONGRESS

For Weinberger the defense budget was policy formation, and getting it through Congress was his greatest concern and achievement. His lack of military expertise was not germane but getting defense financing through eight committees (Armed Services, Appropriations, Budget, and Resolution, in both houses), the Pentagon bureaucracy, and the White House staff was his greatest concern. However, in a period of extreme haste, expenditures sharply exceeded revenue, and while this unfortunate circumstance took place, Weinberger denied it and fought on. For Weinberger adopted the guiding principle of a military officer, the very suggestion that cost should be considered was rejected as corrupting the military judgment of the effectiveness of the armed forces. Certainly, the Armed Services Committees of the 97<sup>th</sup> Congress believed this as they helped Weinberger achieve the buildup. Below is a description of his efforts and the many hawks like Congressman Sam Stratton who provided communities, like the 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, many lucrative defense contracts that fed into the buildup. Fantastically, the large buildup began with a large budgetary error.

President Reagan campaigned in 1980 on three programs: to cut taxes, restore the economy, and buildup our armed forces thus making “America great again.” By the late 1970s, political hawks gained popularity from a perception of military weakness among the American people and a fear of American decline in general. President Reagan’s victory came from those American voters who felt the 1970s was a “decade of neglect” militarily. The President entrusted his one-time California State Finance Director, with little defense experience, to oversee the largest peacetime military buildup in American

history. The Pentagon demands were massive; needs included an increase in military pay, fuel, ammunition, spare parts, and other demands among the services which proved herculean. The Army requested a new battle tank, fighting vehicle, and helicopter along with a number of new divisions. The Navy sought a six hundred ship navy, up from four hundred and fifty, complete with three new aircraft carrier groups. The carriers needed Aegis cruisers and a host of fighters like the F-16 for their decks. The submarine fleet requested more Ohio-class submarines to house the new submarine launched ballistic missile, the SLBM Trident. The Air Force wanted new fighters and *two* new bombers—the B-1 and the development of the Stealth to be unveiled in the 1990s. The intercontinental ballistic system needed updating, and a request for 100 MX Peacekeeper missiles requested.

Weinberger's primary role as Secretary of Defense and administrator of the buildup meant creating the defense budget with a capable Pentagon team and presenting it to Congress. He presented his first budget on February 8, 1982, giving him a year to catch up on defense issues since taking the reins of the Pentagon in January, 1981, where he worked in the shadow of a large Carter defense budget increase handed off to Congress from Secretary Harold Brown a year earlier. Weinberger sailed through Senate confirmation (Senate vote 97-2 with North Carolina Senators Helms and East voting against), assembled his staff, and began preparation on the first Reagan defense budget for Fiscal Year 1983. This budget process, led by Weinberger, became the principal framework for making defense policy. The Weinberger defense budgets for Fiscal Years 1983 to 1985 are at the heart of the defense buildup and became Weinberger's defense policy. This budget process answered those critics who felt Reagan needed a defense technician, because he instead chose a seasoned budgeter. The Secretary and his deputy,

Frank Carlucci, chaired the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) that brought together the hawks, moderates, and all other factions within the Pentagon and White House staffs to review the many defense items requested earlier by the joint chiefs.<sup>109</sup> These figures then become part of the overall federal budget that President Reagan submitted to Congress. Within this process the powerful, seventeen-member Defense Resources Board, led by Weinberger, and comprised of Taft, Carlucci, Service Secretaries, Joint Chiefs, and various Pentagon Deputies kept a close watch over the creation of the budget in numerous meetings. Weinberger's most radical departure at the Pentagon concerned defense funding. For the last twenty years, civilian analysts crunched the numbers, and the services were divorced from the funding process. The Secretary's use of the Defense Resources Board (DRB) allowed the Chiefs and the service secretaries to involve themselves in their respective budgets. This was not an entirely new concept since uniformed personnel pre-McNamara also contributed to funding numbers. Weinberger explained in his memoirs,

The basic idea is quite simple. It is that the people with the responsibility for a particular activity should have the authority to participate actively in the budget process, as well as in the allocation of any funds that may be appropriated for the activities for which they were responsible. As a result of the McNamara belief that the Office of the Secretary of Defense should have all authority, the offices of secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force had been reduced virtually to ceremonial positions.<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, Weinberger's Naval Secretary, John F. Lehman wrote in his memoirs praising Weinberger in that first chaotic year at the Pentagon,

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<sup>109</sup> Two publications provide excellent surveys and a host of defense budget information are, Mark Rovner's *Defense Dollars and Sense: A Common Cause Guide to the Defense Budget Process* (Washington, DC: Common Cause, 1983) and the Staff Report to the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, *Defense Organization: The Need For Change* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985).

<sup>110</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 43.

There has been criticism from some quarters in subsequent years that Cap simply threw money uncritically at everything on the military wish list. That is simply not the case. Those dozens and dozens of DRB meetings in 1981 gave the defense budget a more thorough scrub than had ever been done before. The plain fact was that after hearing the arguments, Weinberger believed, as did many of us around the table, that all of these programs were needed, and that so starved were all of the services for spare parts, ammunition, aircraft, tanks, guns, and pay that there just were not many bad candidates put forward for funding. But the debate was thorough and searching, and hugely beneficial to all the participants. When the year was over we were all experts on everyone else's programs.<sup>111</sup>

The defense budget then passed through the Budget, Armed Services, and Defense Appropriations, and Resolution Committees of both houses for a total of eight committees. Ever since Nixon and Watergate, defense and foreign policy became increasingly under the purview of Congress, and often many more committees like Energy or Foreign Policy weighed in on Weinberger's programs. Both House and Senate defense bills got reconciled in committee and then voted by the full House and Senate. Members in both houses then offered changes from the floor changing the composition once again. The twisted Bismarckian sausage-making was carefully watched over by Weinberger's trusted deputy, Undersecretary for Legislative Affairs, Russell Rourke. Throughout the process, the lawyerly Weinberger appeared before all the committees, nervously rolling two pencils between his fingers with his trusted aide, a young Army General Colin Powell confidently handing him documents as needed. But Weinberger not only clashed with Congress on many occasions but also fellow cabinet members who wanted smaller, leaner government.

The Defense Buildup's birth came on February 2, 1981, when only a few weeks in office, Secretary Weinberger, and Deputy Secretary Frank Carlucci met with David

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<sup>111</sup>John F. Lehman, Jr. *Command of the Seas: Building the 600 Ship Navy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 153.

Stockman, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and William Schneider the Associate Director for National Security at OMB. The four met at the Pentagon to decide on the Defense Budget for Fiscal Year 1982. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown left the Pentagon, he already raised funding for 1982 by a whopping \$26.4 billion dollars on his last five days in office. The White House then requested \$32.6 billion on top of that. The four left their meeting with a colossal \$227.3 billion dollar budget for 1982. Ultimately, Weinberger's budget passed with cuts of a billion dollars for a \$226.3 military budget. By 1985 the budget rose to \$297 billion. The budgets explain of the largest peacetime buildup in American history.

An accounting glitch resulted from an error in where to start the 1982 accounting baseline for the next five years. The outgoing Carter and Reagan staffs kept adding large chunks of cash to the 1982 defense budget, so rather than start the seven percent increase from a defense budget of \$142 billion the baseline erroneously started at \$222 billion—they mistakenly ended up increasing the real growth rate of the United States budget by *10 percent* per year between 1980 and 1986. That was double what candidate Reagan had promised in his campaign budget plan.<sup>112</sup> Weinberger took the incorrect Stockman figures and accepted them as law. His Pentagon analysts crunched the numbers into orders for tanks, planes, and all the new hardware. When Stockman tried over the next four years to rein in spending, Weinberger trumped him all four budget years unwilling to compromise. Stockman bitterly lamented in his memoir, “Cap the Knife became Cap the Shovel.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> David A. Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 109.

<sup>113</sup> Stockman, 278.

A brief description of the committees mentioned above from the 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, regarding their political composition and leadership, is worth taking note to surmise the legislative sledding that Weinberger faced. The most accommodating committee to the buildup was the Senate Armed Services Committee chaired by Senator John Tower of Texas. Tower essentially founded the Republican Party of his state winning Lyndon Johnson's old Senate Seat when he moved on to the Vice Presidency. Senator Tower enjoyed shoveling money to defense more than Weinberger, especially if some of it went to his beloved Texas. The Committee's ideology was overwhelmingly conservative with plenty of defense expertise. Members included Republican Senator John Warner of Virginia, sometime husband of Elizabeth Taylor, and Secretary of the Navy in the Nixon Administration. The seventeen members, comprised of nine Republicans and eight Democrats, included conservative legends from both parties: Strom Thurmond, Barry Goldwater, and John Stennis. Senator Tower retired from the Senate in 1984 after four terms and left the Chairmanship with Goldwater for the next two years. The aging conservative campaign hero of 1964 became a curmudgeon with few legislative accomplishments and often alienated his old base of political supporters; one thing remained that he enjoyed, making life as miserable as possible for Cap Weinberger. In 1986 when the Democrats regained the Senate, a bright, moderate defense intellectual, Democratic Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, nephew of the legendary Georgia Congressman Carl Vinson, gained the Chair from Barry Goldwater. Senate Armed Services had a close working relationship with Weinberger but ran into conflict during the Pentagon reforms of 1986. Also on the Committee was the legendary Washington Democratic Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson. Both Richard Perle and Frank Gaffney left Jackson's staff and now worked at Weinberger's Pentagon Office for Security Policy. The only fully-



fledged liberals on the Committee were Senators Mark Levin of Michigan and Gary Hart of Colorado.

The Hawkish 97<sup>th</sup> House Armed Services Committee was another committee where Weinberger defense budgets received a hearty welcome. Mel Price of Illinois became Chairman in 1974, a proponent of nuclear energy and large defense budgets since his election to Congress in 1944. Price was joined by Sam Stratton (see below), Bill Nichols, Sonny Montgomery, and a host of other senior members who vividly remembered unpreparedness entering World War II and shared Weinberger's view of "peace through strength." In 1985 House Democrats ousted Price and bypassed the other more senior hawks for a more moderate congressman from Wisconsin, Les Aspin. Aspin, with a doctorate in economics from MIT, served Secretary MacNamara as a member of the "whiz kids" who often ran over the Joint Chiefs. Aspin's rise to Chairman was unusual in a body known more for its attention to seniority. Aspin's rise corresponded with the sudden halt of the defense buildup. The Committee makeup was twenty-six Democrats to nineteen Republicans; however, it's worth noting that ten of the majority party was also members of the Conservative Democratic Forum. The mainly southern "Redneck Caucus" was overwhelmingly pro-defense. Naval Secretary John Lehman found it interesting that members of his Republican Party never had the zest for large defense budgets like southern Democrats.<sup>114</sup> Both Secretary Lehman and Pentagon Speechwriter Mary McConnell commented that key Midwest Republicans like Senator Bob Dole, Nancy Landon Kassebaum, and Charles Grassley were the heirs of old Midwest Republican isolationism, demonstrated by their 1940s Bob Taft legacy. Ms.

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<sup>114</sup> John F. Lehman, Phone interview by author, March 12, 2013.

McConnell commented, “Senators like Bob Dole fight the war then come home and move on to other concerns.”<sup>115</sup>

Weinberger’s defense budget and the complete federal budget first passed through the House and Senate Budget Committees. Ironically, these committees’ genesis came from the Impoundment Act of 1974 when Weinberger withheld congressional funding (see Chapter II). The 97<sup>th</sup> House Budget Committee was far more liberal than its colleagues over at the House Armed Services Committee. Their Chairman, Democratic Congressman Jim Jones of Tulsa, was a skilled parliamentarian and budget negotiator with an uncanny ability to hold onto his Republican leaning congressional district. The thirty-member committee, comprised of eighteen Democrats and twelve Republicans, had a number of economic thinkers like Phil Gramm of Texas, still a Democrat at this time, and Jack Kemp of Buffalo, a founding father of supply-side economics in the House. Throughout Weinberger’s tenure, his greatest foe was the young House budget member from Long Island Democrat, Thomas Downey, who often fought against MX funding on the House floor.

The 97<sup>th</sup> Senate Budget Committee had hawks willing to move the large defense budgets through committee, but a number of its Republican members proved less willing for they were far more committed to balanced budgets. The Committee consisted of twelve Republican members and ten Democrats chaired by Republican Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, often tried to negotiating budget numbers with an uncompromising Weinberger who probably cost himself less defense financing. Curiously, all through Cap’s career he tried to moderate, negotiate with opposing wings of his party. Now as Secretary of Defense, he would not relinquish a dime. In 1982

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<sup>115</sup> Mary McConnell, Phone interview by author, August 25, 2013.

Weinberger's buildup forced the President to raise the deficit ceiling that set off a political firestorm with the Senate Budget Committee (see 1983 Budget Hearing battle below). *Washington Post* Correspondent David Broder slammed the Secretary with an editorial "Weinberger Then and Now,"

It's an old story in Washington that where you stand depends on where you sit. In those days, Weinberger understood the importance of enforceable spending ceilings when on October 10, 1972 Richard Nixon put the spending lid on Congress. Now Weinberger tells Congress to forget about the overall ceiling and pump out the money the Pentagon wants. He urges Tower's Committee to ignore the ceiling and avoid any reductions in Reagan's defense hike. It is disquieting to see him put his talents on the block for another president who sets his own will above the law.<sup>116</sup>

Republicans Charles Grassley and Nancy Kassebaum broke with the buildup early and pursued the "waste, fraud, and abuse" that so often characterized any defense buildup. Democratic Senator Don Riegle of Michigan is another member worth mentioning because his blast against the buildup made headlines throughout the nation.

The last two committees to overview the defense budget just before it went to the floor for a vote were the appropriations committees. The 97<sup>th</sup> Senate Appropriations Committee, led by Republican Chairman Ted Stevens, was cut from the same ideological cloth as Bob Dole or Pete Domenici and often led to tough questioning of the Secretary. The 97<sup>th</sup> House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Joe Addabbo, clashed with Weinberger over style as well as politics. Cap was aristocratic, Harvard, and black tie, while Addabbo was Queens, New York, a Damon Runyan character from the streets of Ozone Park, blue collar, and Saint Johns University. Congressman Addabbo made life difficult for Cap but enjoyed his defense pork as well.

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<sup>116</sup> David S. Broder, "Weinberger Then and Now," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1983, Newspaper Clipping from June Correspondence File, Box 596, Weinberger Collection.

When Weinberger first took the helm in 1981, he simply took over the Carter defense budget, already with a five percent increase from the 1980 defense budget and increased it to seven percent for Fiscal Year 1982. This gave the Secretary a year to familiarize himself with the Pentagon and present his own numbers for Fiscal Year 1983. But an interesting mistake took place with the new Budget Director David Stockman that boosted the buildup even more.

At this juncture, OMB Director David Stockman worked around the clock cutting domestic programs to the tune of \$30 billion dollars. Working long hours, he prepared Reagan's federal budget and mistakenly added Carter's five percent to Reagan's seven percent, creating a whopping twelve percent increase rather than a seven percent increase; this translated into a whopping 1.46 trillion dollars spread over a five-year period. Stockman wrote in his memoirs, "I stormed about the office fuming over my mistake. But by then the February 18 budget was out and they were squealing with delight throughout the military-industrial complex."<sup>117</sup> At this juncture, Weinberger did not squeal but strapped on his helmet and prepared for combat. He would take that 1.46 trillion dollar figure and run as fast and as hard as he could against the young budget director and any other White House staff who got in his way.

In the fall of 1981, David Stockman joined forces with White House Chief of Staff James Baker and his deputy Richard Darman to try and reason with President Reagan and Secretary Weinberger. In a series of meetings at the White House and at Reagan's Santa Barbara ranch, Weinberger stonewalled all three and never gave an inch on cutting any of the twelve percent increase. Weinberger simply used his trump card, a

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<sup>117</sup> David A. Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 109.

twenty-year relationship with Reagan that stymied these three over the next four years. Weinberger would not be as successful with Congress over the next six years but could stop the knowledgeable budget expert with ease. In 1986, Stockman got his revenge in a scathing memoir that portrayed Reagan as a dunce and Weinberger a fool.<sup>118</sup> Weinberger responded by describing him as a “budget reduction zealot” pursuing the “righteousness of reduced budgets.”<sup>119</sup>

The ideological sojourn of David Stockman began while attending Harvard Divinity School and babysitting Professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s children. Often Stockman and the intellectual Moynihan discussed politics, policy, and philosophy. Stockman later worked for Congressman John Anderson for a time and eventually moved politically from the far left to the fiscal far right and ran for Congress in southern Michigan. Upon victory, he fell in with Congressman Jack Kemp and drank deep of supply side economic theory that later captivated some of the Reagan White House. Then, in 1981, the newly appointed OMB Director Stockman prepared for a series of meetings with Weinberger. Certainly Cap the Knife, a veteran of the OMB, would understand the complexities of budget work, realize his mistake, and roll back the erroneous defense figures. Instead, Weinberger dug in his heels and conceded nothing; furthermore, anything over a trillion dollars over five years sounded just about right to him. After all, presidents throughout the 1970s had cut defense to the bone, and now it was time to make America great again through massive defense spending. Weinberger put his good friend President Reagan in a bind because now he had to choose between

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<sup>118</sup> See David Stockman’s *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed*.

<sup>119</sup> Caspar Weinberger, “The Unpopular Mandate: America’s Defense,” *New York Times* October 6, 1986, Manuscript Copy, Correspondence, Miscellaneous August-December File, Box 601, Weinberger Collection.

trusted subordinates. At the end of the day, Weinberger steamrolled Stockman and Baker and walked away with plenty of cash to buy the wish list of conventional and nuclear military hardware mentioned above.

Weinberger would need to hit the line hard and fast because the opposition to massive arms spending grew over the next three years. In retirement, Weinberger often stated simply and puissantly, “Democracies do not like to spend money on defense.”<sup>120</sup> At a meeting of the American Enterprise Institute in 2002 Secretary, Weinberger lamented about going before Congress requesting more money for defense and members of congress asked, “Why do we need it again this year?”<sup>121</sup> He also noted that after four years in a democracy, it is impossible to continue a large defense buildup because its voting constituency is limited. The man of letters then referred to Montesquieu who noted that democracies perish by their very nature because they are never willing to procure funding for defense.<sup>122</sup>

One source of Weinberger’s political aid for the buildup came from hawks in the White House who believed in getting tough with the Soviets. First and foremost was the President, and since Weinberger was part of the old California staff, he had complete access to his office at any time. Key White House hawks like Ed Meese, Bill Casey, and Jeane Kirkpatrick aided Weinberger in the buildup. Sovietologists like NSC staff members Richard Pipes and Constantine Menges saw the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” and provided a number of staff research papers on how to keep unrelenting

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<sup>120</sup> November 3, 2002 book discussion on Peter Schweizer’s *Reagan’s War* with Caspar Weinberger as featured speaker. Hosted by the American Enterprise Institute. C-Span Video Library, <http://www.cspanvideo.org/program/Reagan’sWar> (accessed April 14, 2013).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., *Reagan’s War* book discussion.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., *Reagan’s War* book discussion.

pressure on the Soviets. The greatest irony of all was the undying loyalty of southern Democrats to the buildup. If only Cap could count on such alliances from his own party in Congress.

Weinberger believed confronting the Soviets meant a large expenditure for defense; therefore, it is worth putting the 1980 to 1984 defense buildup in perspective. While it is the largest peacetime buildup in dollar amount since World War II, the buildup as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is only a few points higher than President Carter's outlays for defense. President Kennedy's buildup from 1961 to 1963 averaged around 9% GDP per year compared to President Reagan's defense spending that averaged 5-6%. Both buildups had similarities in that they lasted about three years, were costly, and featured a certain amount of waste, in part, because of the large amounts going through the procurement cycle so quickly. In the end, the Cold War cost America \$13 trillion from 1947 to 1989. From 1981 to 1989, the Pentagon budget doubled from \$158 billion to \$304 billion annually. While many budget numbers are presented here, it gives the Reagan buildup some financial-historical perspective. As a percentage of the nation's resources, the Reagan buildup is far smaller than the buildups for Korea and Vietnam, but why such large dollar amounts under Reagan? The answer was in the expansion of the economy under Reagan by one-third. As the economy grew, it expanded the defense dollar amounts. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy spent 45-50% of their overall budget on defense while President Reagan averaged around 26%.<sup>123</sup>

As President Carter left the White House in January of 1981, he increased defense spending for fiscal year (FY) 1982 by five percent in his last defense budget; the

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<sup>123</sup> Figures from Derek Leebaert's *Fifty Year Wound* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 501, and Stephen J. Cimbala, ed. *The Reagan Defense Program: An Interim Assessment* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1986), 10.

following year, 1982, was Reagan's first prepared budget for Fiscal Year 1983.<sup>124</sup> This put the Reagan defense team in a political dilemma since they campaigned on a platform promising to get tougher with the Soviets than the last administration; the Pentagon staff, led by Weinberger, decided to up the ante to seven percent, penciling in the new figures over the old five percent Carter numbers.<sup>125</sup> 1982 was the first Reagan budget that Weinberger prepared for the Fiscal Year 1983.

In Weinberger's first *Annual Report to Congress FY1983 FY1984 Authorization Request and FY 1983-1987 Defense Programs*, on the opening page is a quote by President Reagan that distilled all of Weinberger's thoughts on defense, "We know only too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak. It is then that tyrants are tempted."<sup>126</sup> The four hundred and twenty-eight page document spelled out in detail the buildup, a Cold War manifesto more in tune with the 1950s than the 1970s. Weinberger then wrote, "We must correct the major weaknesses in our defenses that have resulted from a decade of neglect. With the cooperation of this Congress, we will construct a defense that can substantially reduce the dangers we now face."<sup>127</sup> He then wrote in language more akin to Truman than Kissinger, "For the long term our prospects are bright, the resilience of democratic nations, the productivity and

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<sup>124</sup> Perhaps a more accurate description of the buildup is the "Carter-Reagan Buildup" since President Carter increased military budgets from 1979 to the end of his administration based on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

<sup>125</sup> Walter S. Mossberg, "Administrations Defense Strategy is Awaited," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 1981.

<sup>126</sup> Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to Congress FY1983 FY1984 Authorization Request and FY 1983-1987 Defense Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



innovation of capitalism will transcend communism.<sup>128</sup> Weinberger next gave a brief military history lesson that noted how defense expenditures remained relatively constant for the last thirty years with the exception of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Vietnam War interrupted defense reinvestment and the 1970s led to a period of “retrenchment.”<sup>129</sup> He went on to write that the buildup would take many years to compensate for the “decade of neglect.” Always the Anglophile, Weinberger quoted Sir John Slessor, British Air War Minister in World War II, “There is a tendency to forget that the most important social service that a government can do for its people is to keep them alive and free.”<sup>130</sup>

Defense analysts left and right, criticized the vast expense planned, roughly 1.5 trillion over five years, but what especially concerned many experts, was the “get tough with the Soviets” language and the approach to Weinberger’s strategy. He urged a ban on technology transfer to the Soviets through trade. This was a significant departure from past administrations, both Republican and Democrat that promoted trade—Soviet raw materials for the latest western technologies. This technology boycott created a great diplomatic strain with our NATO allies who enjoyed industrial contracts with the Soviets, including a massive pipeline development across Russia that benefited French and British corporations. Eventually, Secretary of State Shultz prevailed over Weinberger in getting the pipeline back on track but not until it lost the Soviets a number of vital years in economic development.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 9.

Weinberger wrote, “Our strategy must see to it that the productivity and technological creativity of free societies are not exploited to make good the chronic deficiencies of the communist system.”<sup>131</sup> Over the course of thirty years fighting the Cold War, America’s strategy demanded preparation for “2 ½ wars,” war with the Soviets, China, and a flashpoint somewhere in the world like Vietnam or Lebanon. After Nixon’s success in opening China in the 1970s, strategic language now changed to “1 ½ wars.” Weinberger upset strategic orthodoxy when he wrote in the *Annual Report*, “Another case in point is the mistaken argument as to whether we should prepare to fight ‘two wars,’ ‘one and a half wars,’ or some other tally of wars. Such mechanistic assumptions neglect both the risks and the opportunities that we might confront. *We may be forced to cope with Soviet aggression, or Soviet-backed aggression, on several fronts* (italics mine).”<sup>132</sup> This last sentence set off a firestorm among the Joint Chiefs and other Pentagon planners. Did Weinberger want to fight the Soviets everywhere? Where would the money come from to fund this impossible task? America grumbled spending roughly five to six percent of GNP for defense. A buildup this massive might require fifteen percent of GNP, a number that some defense analysts wanted to spend in the 1950s. Weinberger hoped to reach a whopping seven percent of GNP, but his dream never quite prevailed. Over the course of his tenure, spending remained between five and six percent of GNP, and in battling the Soviets, the Reagan Doctrine closely resembled Kennedy’s flexible response.<sup>133</sup> Weinberger’s defense buildup may have stalled, but Soviet

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>133</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America’s Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 72. This masterful work is full of defense funding information.

expansionism also stalled in Angola, Afghanistan, Central America, and Cambodia with an infusion of American military equipment to rebel groups. The Secretary with the Churchillian bent would continue to rely on his political friends from the Sunbelt in both parties for defense dollars.

A collection of forty-four Democratic House members, predominantly southern, including nine from Texas, played a significant role in getting the defense bills through committee and to the floor. These members called “Boll Weevils” like Congressman Sonny Montgomery of Meridian, Mississippi, and plenty of old New Dealers like Mel Price made passage of the buildup possible. They were led by Texas Democrat Kent Hance, a feisty conservative from Lubbock. Both Reagan and Weinberger needed this man badly due to his powerful congressional seat on the House Ways and Means Committee. Both New Dealers and Boll Weevils liked their pork served in large amounts and enjoyed both kinds—social and military. Journalist Michael Barone described Congressman Montgomery, “He has always been on the side of urging a strong defense and is an unabashed enthusiast for all things military.”<sup>134</sup>

No congressional district represented the Reagan buildup better than Congressman Samuel Stratton’s 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.<sup>135</sup> Lovingly called “Sam” by his constituents, in his eleventh term, he often ran unopposed and faced little Republican opposition in this overwhelmingly Democratic district representing New York’s Capital District. The Congressman’s major interest was defense matters ever since graduating from college where he served on Massachusetts Congressman Thomas

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<sup>134</sup> Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, *The Almanac of American Politics 1982* (Washington, DC: Barone and Company, 1981), 601.

<sup>135</sup> Hometown of Ph.D. candidate, the people listed in this narrative are just a few of the hard working Eastern Europeans who emigrated after World War I.

Eliot's staff concerning FDR's military preparedness program. Stratton's district was a capstone of the Cold War Military-Industrial-Congressional-Complex and the sort of legislative district that served as the building block of Weinberger's defense buildup.

Within the district, astride the west bank of the Hudson River, stands the historic Watervliet Arsenal with a long tradition of turning out quality cannons since 1813. Machinists Pete Zaloga and Tom Bushaloff worked the lathe turning out the finest naval long range cannon in the nation. After work, they crossed the street to Ziggies for some cold ones where Dave Zyglewicz regaled the crowd about hanging on for ninety-six seconds against Smokin' Joe Frazier in a 1969 title bout.<sup>136</sup> Second shift at the Arsenal just let out, and Zig lined up shots and beers along the bar for the incoming draftsman, machinists, and technicians. But suddenly it grew quiet, and Zig turned up the television as reports came in about the Soviet downing of Korean Airlines Flight 007. The news hit a tender nerve among these sons and daughters of the Stalinist Ukrainian genocide, and Steve Bohoniak agonizingly shouted, "Those sons of bitches!" Bushaloff drifted off into a tale about the Russian Civil War in the 1920s, "My Dedushka (grandfather) fought with the Whites under Admiral Kolchak! If only they had just a few more troops and equipment."<sup>137</sup> Folks got back to their drinks, and Zig demonstrated that great left hook. The year is 1983, and the Soviets handled their shooting down of an off course passenger plane very badly. The third shift arrived for work at the Arsenal, and Weinberger's buildup hums along smoothly for the rest of the Cold War.

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<sup>136</sup> Online article details Dave Zyglewicz's fifteen minutes of boxing fame, [www.boxing.com/no\\_stardust\\_for\\_ziggy.html](http://www.boxing.com/no_stardust_for_ziggy.html) (accessed February 15, 2012).

<sup>137</sup> Albany's Capital Region historically drew large populations of immigrants from Eastern Europe having fled Stalinist slaughter or many other forms of communist oppression. Many czarist soldiers fought with the "Whites" against the "Reds" in the Russian Civil War, 1917 to 1922. Tom Bushaloff's grandfather served with Admiral Kolchak, the White Army leader. Bushaloff's relatives fled to America when the Reds won and began liquidating Bolshevik opposition.

The defense workers mentioned above represent a type of voter that was vital to the defense buildup led by Secretary Weinberger. They were ethnic, white, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox voters active in associations like the Ukrainian Club or the Pulaski Club, and they attended services at St. Basel's or St. Vladimir's. Their politics were patriotic, pro-labor, economically liberal, and socially conservative; they represented what became known as the "Reagan Democrats." This voting bloc came from places like Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Watervliet; convenient locations in the north that helped Weinberger with politicians reluctant to spend money on defense.

Septuagenarian Price was the titular head of the House Armed Services Committee, but Congressman Stratton, third in seniority, was the driving intellectual force behind committee efforts. Not only did he keep the machinists employed at the Watervliet Arsenal, but fifteen miles west in the 28<sup>th</sup> is downtown Schenectady, and General Electric Turbine was busy completing an order of fighter aircraft engines. Just down the Mohawk River from the GE plant is the high-security Knolls Atomic Power Lab (KAPL) that worked around the clock on the nuclear propulsion for the new Ohio Class submarines, all part of the buildup. It was here that a young Ensign James Earl Carter worked on nuclear propulsion in 1951. Stratton also brought home the funding for military research at Union College and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where Secretary Weinberger received an honorary degree in 1973. The 28<sup>th</sup> represented the quintessential Cold War community funded by the buildup's largesse where the military industrial complex and the research and development benefitted both town and gown. Similar congressional districts to New York's 28<sup>th</sup> comprised the forty five House Armed Services Committee seats that served the buildup in an expensive, clumsy synergy that thrived on congressional defense pork.

Both Armed Services Committees marked up their military budgets quite high, but the appropriations and budget committees often scaled back on the Armed Services Committees. The House Appropriations Committee Chairman Joe Addabbo was skeptical of the Pentagon's buildup, but Weinberger and Naval Secretary Lehman wooed him with home port projects. Home porting was an ingenious program devised by the two secretaries for winning congressional votes whereby the naval ships under construction in the 600 ship naval program needed a base. Congressman clamored for this special pork and induced recalcitrant politicians to vote for the buildup. Economic historian Robert Higgs described Congressman Addabbo and many of the New York Congressional Delegation as "doves gone pork hawk."<sup>138</sup> Congressional Boll Weevils, and Cold War Truman Democrats, also known as "Reagan Democrats," all pursued the buildup, but some liberals needed to be bought. The same pattern that characterized the House Appropriations Committee on Defense held sway in the Senate Appropriations and the House and Senate Budget Committees as well. The defense buildup was in full swing, and a political success that characterized Reagan's "hundred days" agenda. But by late 1983, political rumblings began.

In the 1982 Congressional elections, signs of a blow-back emerged when Republicans lost a significant twenty-five seats in the House while the Senate races brought little change. This new 98<sup>th</sup> Congress was comprised of 269 Democrats and 166 Republicans in the House, while the Senate included 46 Democrats and 54 Republicans. Americans felt the administration had spent too much on guns and not enough on butter, and public opinion rapidly changed from the presidential election of 1980. Suddenly, the Secretary and the buildup came under attack from a number of pressure groups. The

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<sup>138</sup> Robert Higgs, *Depression, War, and Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 178.

National Council of Bishops came out in support of a nuclear freeze, and back home at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, their priest spoke of excommunicating Weinberger. Think tanks left and right wrote of a "lack of proper priorities," burdensome defense budgets, and a lack of "bang for the buck." The economy was just beginning to come out of its slump, and members of both parties in the Senate Budget Committee began to mark up the 1984 defense budget. Members from both parties poured volleys at Weinberger.

On February 3, 1983 on a gray, bitter cold day, Weinberger seated himself before the microphone in Room 6202 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, an apropos location since the late Senator Dirksen of Illinois supposedly stated, "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money."<sup>139</sup> Weinberger looked over his three-ringed binder and began turning two pencils between his fingers as he often did when sparring on the Hill through endless hearings. Just behind him as usual sat his trusted aide, General Colin Powell, who spent endless hours preparing the notebook for the hearing. This hearing began a push back by Congress against the large defense budgets.

Senators arrived, both Democrat and Republican, to this meeting of the Senate Budget Committee to knock the confident, strident Secretary down to size and rein in spending. Chairman Pete Domenici started with opening remarks, "The Department of Defense must justify fully the requested increase in budget authority in terms of priority and relationship to defense strategy."<sup>140</sup> Then Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida, the ranking Democrat on the committee spoke, "I think we on this committee are going to

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<sup>139</sup> [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/everett\\_dirksen.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/everett_dirksen.html) (accessed November 7, 2013).

<sup>140</sup> *Public Statements of Secretary of Defense Weinberger, Volume II*, (Washington, D.C: National Printing Office, 1983), 34.

have to play the role of editors and do some cutting, or nobody is going to buy what the Pentagon is trying to sell.”<sup>141</sup> Weinberger quickly retorted to Senator Chiles, “Reductions are not safe for the security of the United States and for every billion dollars cut in defense spending, 35,000 jobs are lost.”<sup>142</sup> Domenici quickly countered this military Keynesianism, “What about the 135 billion dollar cuts in entitlements, do they represent a loss in jobs as well?”<sup>143</sup> Weinberger then responded that the threat from the Soviets was so overwhelming that America must be able to deter war. Now it was North Dakota Republican Senator Mark Andrew’s turn, and he kept his remarks short and critically commented that budget targets became too rigid in the minds of Pentagon planners. Things in the committee remained tense as the senators and Weinberger went back and forth, but then came the explosion.

Michigan Democratic Senator Donald Riegle shouted, “I think we have a Secretary of Defense whose basic judgment is dangerous to our country! You give every appearance of being an inflexible ideologue who has lost any sense of rational proportion when it comes to assessing the defense needs of our country! You’re mortgaging our future and your presentation is deceptive!”<sup>144</sup> Weinberger, hardened from his Nixon days of testifying on the Hill, snidely asked, “Do you want another 154,000 laid off?”<sup>145</sup> Senator Riegle’s blast ended when his questioning time ran out, and it made great newspaper copy for the next few days. Weinberger stated in his closing comments, “So

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 80.



we cannot afford to be very wrong. We think we are asking for the correct amount, and we think we can afford it because we have to.”<sup>146</sup> Weinberger left the Budget Committee with a political black eye that began a steady decline in support for more military spending. For the next four years and nine months of his tenure, he worked that much harder to try and keep the military buildup going, but large federal deficits swallowed these efforts.

Then the buildup hit a brick wall created by the inability of President Reagan and Congress to solve the growing budget deficits that loomed ever larger since the Great Depression. Three senators promoted a plan to stop the bleeding, but politicians found this legislative medicine as painful as the red ink and derailed the defense buildup. Congressman Phil Gramm of Texas, an Aggie Economics Professor and a leader of the Boll Weevils, left Congress, switched party registration from Democrat to Republican, and won. He then ran for the senate seat held by the retiring John Tower in 1984. In contrast to Gramm, Senator Warren Rudman was a “regular” Republican in the Bob Dole mold, a moderate Senate insider who served on the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and often sparred with Weinberger over bases, salaries, spare parts, and a host of all things defense related. Senator Fritz Hollings of South Carolina with his mellisonant, deep voice, looked and acted like a southern senator from central casting. A hawk on most defense issues except the MX missile, he was a Democrat of the old school devoted to balanced budgets. Together these three enacted the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Balanced Budget Deficit Control Act of 1985. The act aimed at cutting the budget deficit, which at the time was the largest in America’s history. The bill passed the Senate, 61-31 and the House, 271-154. This legislation reduced to some extent the large

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 93.

increases that Weinberger introduced each year in defense. The defense establishment was not the only constituency hurt by this legislation, for automatic cuts (sequesters) also hit those seeking larger domestic spending.

Gramm-Rudmann-Hollings did not affect Weinberger's efforts for his pursuit of more dollars for defense, and he went on fighting. Weinberger appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense on June 25, 1985, again rolling two pencils between his fingers, pleading for defense funding in a far less hostile environment from the previous two years. At this committee, Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska presided and reminded Weinberger that Gramm-Rudman-Hollings might kick in for the 322.2 billion dollar budget requested. The House already trimmed Reagan's defense request for Fiscal Year 1986 by 3.8% to 292.2 billion dollars. The Senate charted a 302.5 billion dollar course that eventually reconciled with House appropriations in a defense budget of 272 billion. Massive defense growth politically ran out of steam, but Weinberger charged on, reminding committee members that defense reduction from 1970 to 1979 endured a 20% decline.<sup>147</sup> Weinberger explained, "We had the unhappy task of rebuilding the whole triad at once and any apparent lack of resolve will not be missed by the Soviets. If only we had simply increased defense funding two percent each year since 1970 we would not have these convulsive increases now."<sup>148</sup>

Another issue Weinberger continually faced in committee hearings from 1985 on was a byproduct of good economic fortune. In producing budgets, Weinberger and his staff planned their costs around a 7% inflation rate. At about the same time, defense

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<sup>147</sup> Weinberger before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, June 25, 1985, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Year1986>. (accessed November 30, 2012).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

analysts crunched the military cost figures in the early 1980s, Federal Reserve Chairman Dale Volker ingeniously raised interest rates grinding the economy to a halt. The created recession brought political fallout for both Carter and Reagan but purged inflation from the economy. While Weinberger planned for 7% inflation and it moved closer to 4%, leaving the Defense Department with an embarrassment of riches and with more spending power per dollar. Unfortunately, for Weinberger this money from the sky left him explaining to Congress that he did not hoard funds. He explained that he was not a fortune teller, but being off by a few points on inflation, meant billions of dollars in excess for defense. The congressional committees now had even more incentive to cut defense costs.

By 1984, Weinberger's close ally, Senator John Tower, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee retired leaving the Chair to Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Republican Party politics came full circle, and Weinberger needed to step carefully with his political *bête noire* from twenty years ago. Back in 1964, when Weinberger served as California Republican State Chairman, Goldwater won the State's Republican Presidential Primary against Weinberger's moderates in the party establishment (see Chapter II). Now, the aging Senator once again made life difficult for him on a host of defense issues. Weinberger answered Goldwater's queries as to where and why the Defense Department enjoyed a newfound financial windfall from lowering inflation. He crossed out the heading "Senator Goldwater" and replaced it with "Barry" as is the custom in political letter writing. The Secretary wrote a detailed letter explaining the savings in inflation adjustments, lower fuel costs, and foreign currency savings,

Section 1407 of the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year

1986 requires the Defense Department to report to the Committees on Armed Services. The Department will continue its long-standing practice of reporting all savings to the Congress on a timely basis and identifying how these amounts have been applied in the form of reprogrammings, lapses, or reductions to requests for new budget authority.<sup>149</sup>

This letter then detailed the various savings and lists the cuts from Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, but most importantly, the letter is emblematic of hundreds of other correspondence that demonstrate Weinberger's attention to detail and forthrightness. These letters strongly contradict an impression by Weinberger detractors that he hid cost savings and had little interest in the everyday functioning of the Pentagon.

On March 14, 1986 to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harvard, two of its alumni, Ted Kennedy and Caspar Weinberger met to debate, "Are arms buildup and arms control compatible?" Senator Kennedy stated, "A trillion dollars spent but nothing done in arms control. We've heard of the welfare cheat and now we have the procurement cheat." And then Kennedy gave the now familiar refrain, "Cap the Knife has become Cap the Ladle."<sup>150</sup> Then Weinberger spoke, "Buildup and arms control, you can't get one without the other." He then spoke about the defense deprived 70s and went through a laundry list of the buildup gains: 100 B-1 bombers, seven new trident submarines, 50 new MX missiles, personnel better and stronger, and no more Soviet incursions like Afghanistan. Weinberger's plan was the buildup then negotiations with the Soviets,

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<sup>149</sup> Weinberger to Senator Barry Goldwater, 3 March 1986, March 1-4, 1986 Correspondence Folder, Box 610, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>150</sup> March 14, 1986 Kennedy-Weinberger Debate, [www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PoliticalDebate](http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PoliticalDebate) (accessed, November 22, 2012).

better known as “peace through strength.”<sup>151</sup> He had another thirty-two months to serve and used every speaking opportunity to push the buildup.

In November of 1987, Weinberger retired as the second longest serving Secretary of Defense with Robert McNamara the longest tenure. Secretary Weinberger invested almost seven years trying to restore morale to forces broken from Vietnam and make “America great again,” through speeches, pay increases, and the best military equipment possible with little regard for expense—a far cry from his cost cutting days at OMB. It helped substantially that the gods of inflation smiled on him so that the cost of procurement went down and made it possible to keep the ammunition bins full, and all the new gadgets had a healthy supply of cheap oil, especially the thirsty Abrams battle tank. And yet this good fortune left him an embarrassment of riches of unexpected cash that he had to explain before various committees on the Hill. Weinberger’s record of success is mixed, not unlike the buildup that started so strong but lost footing in his last three years.

Even so, the buildup has a mixed legacy. It would require an intense study of Soviet documents to know if the buildup brought down the Soviet Union as some in the Reagan victory school attempt.<sup>152</sup> Secretary Weinberger never claimed this; his aide and deputy of twenty years William Howard Taft IV stated it was impossible to conjecture about this possibility of Soviet demise.<sup>153</sup> Two accomplishments can be surmised from

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> See Richard Pipes, “Misinterpreting the Cold War: The Hardliners Had it Right,” *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb., 1995): 154-160. Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006) and Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>153</sup> William Howard Taft IV. 2009. Interview by author. Washington, D.C., December 9.

the controversial buildup. First, it produced the right mix of high tech weaponry to smash the fourth largest army in the world in a number of weeks led by Weinberger's protégé, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell. Secondly, the buildup reduced gradually over time through President Bush's term and left President Clinton with a sizeable peace dividend, which contributed to a balanced budget for the first time in many years. President Clinton governed during a time of relative peace and prosperity reminiscent in some ways to the 1920s. Unfortunately, President Reagan left a sizable debt similar in size to the price of the buildup.<sup>154</sup>

Starting in 1982 through 1987, when Weinberger left the Pentagon, he constructed six budgets in an effort to ride the wave of the large Carter budget that he was able to exploit because of the accounting error by Budget Director David Stockman. By digging in his heels and using his close friendship with Reagan, he won for the Pentagon an ocean of cash to buy all sorts of military hardware. The steep drop in inflation and a resurrection of the political dove forces by 1984 stopped Weinberger's beloved buildup. Worse yet for Weinberger was an onslaught of procurement problems, cost overruns, and reformation battles regarding the Pentagon that diminished his power and influence. Most Secretaries of Defense last two years, had Weinberger stayed too long? The defense buildup was so much bigger than Cap; the whole military industrial complex, defense analysts, think tanks, pressure groups, and politicians groaned about American weakness since the seventies. But, in Weinberger, they had a ferocious advocate who served his President for almost seven years.

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<sup>154</sup> Reagan inherited a debt of .9 trillion and left office eight years later with an accumulated debt of 2.9 trillion, the buildup accounted for 1.3-1.5 billion.

CHAPTER V  
REAGAN'S RHETORICIAN

Of Cap Weinberger's many talents—legislator, lawyer, politician—his greatest gift came in the ability to persuade and debate. While at the Pentagon, others provided the intellectual muscle as technicians, mathematicians, and analysts to create the defense buildup. Weinberger's greatest role was to persuade the American people that the buildup was necessary. He took the buildup on the stump and spoke to think tanks, lobby groups, Rotarians, and shipyards. He spoke in an all or nothing style. America was weak, and it must be strong as a deterrent to Soviet hegemony. His style was not doomsday but uplifting, and he convinced many that fighting the Cold War was a noble American deed that brought out the best in America. Through talk shows, letters to the editor, articles, speeches, and debates he moved about the country in a way not seen since Secretary Robert McNamara.

On May 25, 1983 Weinberger gave the commencement for the United States Military Academy. He opened by stating, "You chose a school and a profession back in 1979 which were not then popular." He told the cadets, "To be good officers we study engineering and mathematics. But to be great officers we also need to study philosophy, history and human nature." He ended by reminding them it was an honor to wear the uniform and when you leave here you will be ready." His eloquence at the commencement left General Shy E.C. Meyer, Army Chief of Staff in tears.<sup>155</sup> From 1981 to 1986 Weinberger flew 1,782 hours and travelled 754,134 miles on 225 trips promoting

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<sup>155</sup> General Shy Meyer to Weinberger, 31 May 1983, May 1983 Correspondence Folder, Box 596, Weinberger Collection.

American strength and the buildup.<sup>156</sup> Interestingly, the defense buildup and the Strategic Defense Initiative were not of his creation, and yet he emerged their finest most enthusiastic spokesman.

While at Bechtel, Weinberger quietly advised Reagan during the presidential campaign of 1980 but had little to do with defense issues and did not plan an active role in the campaign as Edward Meese or Bill Casey. Weinberger and Reagan remained close throughout the Seventies, meeting at various functions at Bohemian Grove and Republican Party functions. Weinberger's advice was bureaucratic in nature—streamlining government, cost analysis, and leading the Spending Control Task Force—all issues covered for Presidents Nixon and Ford, back in his California days. Defense issues on Reagan's presidential campaign were handled by two defense intellectuals from the University of Southern California, William Van Cleave and Richard Allen. While not the point man on defense issues, however, Weinberger served on the Republican National Committee's Advisory Council on National Security alongside Bill Casey, Richard Allen, and John Lehman.<sup>157</sup> Allen became Reagan's National Security Advisor and Van Cleave thought he might land the number two spot at the Pentagon when Weinberger accepted Reagan's offer as Secretary of Defense. While Weinberger worked on domestic issues in the transition period between the Carter and Reagan administrations, Van Cleave labored over a new defense plan.

After the successful November election, Ed Meese, Martin Anderson, and a host of Reaganauts including Weinberger began recruiting cabinet members. There was some

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<sup>156</sup> "SecDef Trip Info," Travel Authorizations and Related Data File, Box 606, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>157</sup> Memorandum for the President Elect Regarding Fred C. Ikle, Department of Defense Transition File-Personnel Matters, Box 573, Weinberger Collection.



talk that Weinberger might get State or the Treasury. The President-elect then selected him for Defense because it was a leading priority for Reagan, and he wanted his trusted advisor overseeing the buildup. Weinberger prepared to take the Pentagon mantle when Van Cleave arrived at his Bechtel office looking for a Pentagon position and to present his well-prepared defense study. Weinberger summarily told him his services were not needed and showed no interest in his laborious study. Even more shocking was Weinberger's selection of Frank Carlucci and William Howard Taft, his old HEW staff who also had no Pentagon experience.

Many defense analysts pondered the selection of Weinberger. The best reason is that Weinberger was chosen because of his advocacy, his rhetorical ability to write, speak, and his ability to sell the defense buildup to our allies and the American people. In Russell Weigley's important book, *The American Way of War*, he described Alfred Thayer Mahan as a historian who rarely wrote about the latest 1890s technologies like gun sighting or the submarine. His three historical volumes, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (1890);<sup>158</sup> *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (1892);<sup>159</sup> and *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812* (1905)<sup>160</sup> established Mahan as the leading proponent of sea power and a great influence on American strategy. Weigley wrote of Mahan, "He was better as a

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<sup>158</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1890).

<sup>159</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1892).

<sup>160</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1905).

propagandist for a policy of sea power than as a strategist.”<sup>161</sup> While Weinberger never left a long shadow on American strategy, he shared Mahan’s ability as a propagandist, a historical spokesman for the defense buildup and never claimed expertise as a strategist or technician. His ability was to go out and sell the defense program, not the finer points of missile technology— Weinberger’s critics missed this entirely.<sup>162</sup> Weinberger certainly never had the technical expertise of Secretaries Harold Brown or James Schlesinger, but his ability to address an audience were excellent. When Soviet Minister Andrei Gromyko met Weinberger, he sullenly observed, “You make many speeches.”<sup>163</sup>

Weinberger developed his eloquence as high school president and gave a number of speeches, his inaugural, pledging for the local Community Chest Drive, and a speech at graduation entitled, “The Profession of Politics and the Art of Statesmanship.” His early speeches are insightful and give the impression of a confident young man who might run for office some day. He wrote that “Dwight Morrow, Calvin Coolidge, Cordell Hull, and Carter Glass exemplify the finest type of American citizen.”<sup>164</sup> The essay was well-written and gave praise to both parties, and established in his youth a staunch Republican view in the Theodore Roosevelt mold, also his father’s hero. As a teenager he enjoyed meeting President Herbert Hoover in San Francisco at the Republican

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<sup>161</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 178.

<sup>162</sup> Mark Perry *Four Stars: The Inside Story of the Forty-Year Battle Between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and America’s Civilian Leaders* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), Dale Herspring’s *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), and James Locher III *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002) all three authors never mention his forensic skills but obsessed over his supposed lack of military knowledge.

<sup>163</sup> Weinberger Speech to the International Platform Association, August 6, 1987, ID #535908, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>164</sup> Weinberger High School Speech, October 30, 1933, High School Folder, Box 4, Weinberger Collection.

National Convention in 1932. His writing ability served him well as president of the Harvard *Crimson*, later as a federal judicial clerk, and as an attorney writing many briefs before the Ninth Judicial Circuit. These advocacy skills Weinberger used to promote President Reagan and the defense buildup plan.

The new Secretary of Defense came out strongly for the buildup and quoted Frederick the Great, “Diplomacy without force is like music without instruments.”<sup>165</sup> Seven months into office, Weinberger became more familiar with his office and gave an important speech that was the theme of his seven year tenure. His speech before the Bohemian Grove on July 17, 1981, the influential retreat center in Northern California of policy makers and industry leaders, he mentioned his coming battles with OMB Director David Stockman, and quoted Adam Smith, “Defense is much more important than opulence.”<sup>166</sup> The Secretary then gave a brief outline of the last thirty years, how the strategic advantage of the 1950s turned into the diminishing advantages of the 1960s and that now was all gone. The Soviets now had a four-to-one advantage in tanks and a three-point-seven-to-one advantage in submarines.<sup>167</sup> The theme for his next six years was that America became weak and now must rebuild. On April 20, 1982, just a few months after Weinberger gave a detailed budget to Congress, he addressed the Council on Foreign Relations. He opened his remarks with a response to the press, “Some accuse us of merely throwing money at defense with no clear idea of what we are trying to

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<sup>165</sup> News World Interviews, November 25, 1980, Transition Folder, Box 575, Box 575.

<sup>166</sup> Remarks for the Secretary of Defense at Bohemian Grove, July 17, 1981, Churchilliana File, Box 594, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

accomplish.”<sup>168</sup> Weinberger then detailed American decline and Soviet Expansionism of the last decade and what must be done to restore parity. He concluded, “Negotiations to secure reductions can succeed only if we enter them with strength.”<sup>169</sup>

While at the Pentagon it appeared Weinberger’s ideological position shifted to the right, at least regarding foreign policy and defense matters. While the day-to-day operations remained in the hands of moderates like Will Taft and Frank Carlucci, his strategic and policy staff came from the hawks in both parties. These staff members pushed hard for the buildup and supplied Weinberger with plenty of analytical muscle. Fred Ikle, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, and John Lehman, Secretary of the Navy were the three most aggressive hawks at the Pentagon and had a great influence on Weinberger. The Secretary now spoke often before the American Security Council and other “get tough with the Soviets” pressure groups. On February 18, 1983, he addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), an annual confab of the right that one cannot imagine him addressing ten years prior. Now, comfortable within the Pentagon, Weinberger became the leading spokesman for “peace through strength” and the buildup. At CPAC, he gave the base what they wanted to hear and blasted Ted Kennedy for suggesting a nuclear freeze, “It’s what I call the ‘quit while were behind’ option.”<sup>170</sup> Next he used a little military Keynesianism claiming for every billion dollars

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<sup>168</sup> Weinberger Address to the Council of Foreign Relations, April 20, 1981, File 528000-535908, Box 2, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Remarks by the Secretary of Defense, Conservative Political Action Conference, February 18, 1983, File Folder 126000-127999, Box 4, FG 013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

cut from defense, 35,000 jobs are lost.<sup>171</sup> He then launched into the weakness of America compared to Soviet strength and the importance of rebuilding America's defenses.

Weinberger ended his speech as he often did with a historic flourish, "When the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free and was never free again."<sup>172</sup>

Often in Defense speeches, Weinberger made reference to his hero, Sir Winston Churchill and often saw himself in similar political situations to the British war leader—trying to get a recalcitrant public behind expensive defense building policies. Frank Gaffney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Forces and Arms Control Policy, 1983 to 1987, stated that Weinberger read Churchill and garnered his ethos of military preparedness from him.<sup>173</sup> In a letter from Marshal A. Staunton, counsel for Bechtel Corporation and a colleague of Weinberger, he wrote to him about a book by Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill, The Wilderness Years*. Staunton wrote, "I have been reading with increased interest and concern of your courageous fight to support the needed military spending to deter the Russian adventurist activities. The parallels between your battle and those faced in the thirties are too close not to deserve comment."<sup>174</sup> Weinberger enjoyed the historical narrative of himself as a 1980s Churchill battling a complacent public and congress, encouraging them to get to work building military hardware against the foe, in this moment a bellicose Soviet Union. In a speech to the American Jewish Committee, May 13, 1983, the Secretary Stated, "You

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Frank Gaffney interviewed by author, May, 25, 2010.

<sup>174</sup> Marshal A. Staunton to Caspar Weinberger, 13 September 1983, January-September 1983 Correspondence File, Box 597, Weinberger Collection.

may have heard that I am a great admirer of Winston Churchill, and one of the reasons I feel that way is that he understood weakness is provocative, that tyrannies can all too easily conclude from our restraint not that we are peaceable, but rather that we are powerless.”<sup>175</sup>

Then in 1983 in Fulton, Missouri, Secretary Weinberger gave his greatest speech on the campus of Westminster College, the thirty-ninth John Findley Green Foundation Lecture, entitled, “Winston Churchill, Prophet, Pragmatist, Idealist, and Enthusiast.” He had big shoes to fill, for here in 1946 Churchill himself gave his famous iron curtain speech entitled, “The Sinews of Peace.” Past lecturers included President Gerald Ford, Attorney General Griffin Bell, Clare Booth Luce, and Prime Minister Edward Heath. Weinberger’s speech demonstrated his devotion to his greatest hero and gave the audience his reasons for the largest peacetime buildup in American history. He stated, “Winston Churchill awakened an entire generation on both sides of the Atlantic the generation that would fight what Churchill always called the ‘unnecessary war,’ the generation of which I am a part.”<sup>176</sup> Weinberger then mentioned his college classmate, John F. Kennedy, working alongside him at the *Harvard Crimson*, and also part of that generation who wrote, “We must always keep our armaments equal to our commitments.”<sup>177</sup> Weinberger went on to say preparing for war was the only way to prevent it from happening. While Weinberger never mentioned the buildup directly, he then launched into his historical narrative for military preparedness, “And for too many

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<sup>175</sup> Weinberger Speech to the American Jewish Committee, 13 May 1983, May 1983 File, Box 600, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>176</sup> Weinberger’s Address, 39<sup>th</sup> John Findley Green Foundation Lecture, entitled, “Prophet, Pragmatist, Idealist and Enthusiast,” Summer, 1983, [www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches-about-winston-churchill](http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches-about-winston-churchill), (accessed April 26, 2012).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

of those years we, like the British in the 1930's, unilaterally restrained our own efforts all through the decades of the 70's in fact, which was the second decade of the Soviet's enormous growth."<sup>178</sup> He then addressed at the growing nuclear freeze movement that began to push back against the buildup, "I have great respect for many in the nuclear freeze movement. I know they are sincerely motivated, and they too want peace, but I greatly differ with their belief that by freezing ourselves into a position of nuclear inferiority we would preserve peace."<sup>179</sup> Weinberger closed his speech with one more argument for the buildup, "We can't be idealists without some means of preserving those ideals."<sup>180</sup> The 1983 John Findley Green Foundation Lecture became the cornerstone for Weinberger's justification for the buildup as it faced stiffer resistance in the last three years of his leadership at the Pentagon.

As a journalist who enjoyed writing a syndicated column read throughout California in the 1960s (see Chapter II), Weinberger enjoyed sparring with the various defense journalists at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. In combative language, he always tried to make the case that he was right and they were wrong regarding the buildup. When David Broder, dean of the Washington News Corps wrote an editorial in the *Washington Post*, "Weinberger Then and Now", he blasted Weinberger and Reagan for ignoring debt ceilings and running rough shod over the congressional budget process. Weinberger responded with hard hitting language in his letter to the

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

editor, “Broder demonstrates yellow journalism of the crudest sort.”<sup>181</sup> He responded to the *New York Times* about an article blasting Pentagon procurement practices with General Electric in a letter stating, “Nor do you tell your readers the 400 contractors who have been suspended or debarred from doing business with the Pentagon over the last year alone.”<sup>182</sup> *The New York Times* attacked the Pentagon’s handling of the Grenada invasion, and Cap hit back in a letter to the editor, “Our country is blessed with outstanding military leaders and men and women in uniform, and your inaccuracies and irresponsible characterizations ill serve them. They know the value of working together, regardless of uniform color, for a common cause.”<sup>183</sup> He responded in kind to a *New York Times* article that quoted Eisenhower who, according to the paper, eschewed large military budgets to which Cap retorted, “Fortunately for President Eisenhower, he followed an administration that enhanced rather than decimated America’s defense capability.”<sup>184</sup> He then listed the fruits of the buildup, better pay, more equipment, twice the number of fighter aircraft, and an increase in M-1 tanks. Weinberger wrote, “We developed and acted on a well-considered and comprehensive strategy to deal with the world of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.”<sup>185</sup>

In another venue, academia, a concerned English professor from UCLA, Dr. Mike Rose wrote him saying, “Please reconsider your decision to abandon the SALT Treaty.

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<sup>181</sup> Weinberger’s Letter to the Editor, 24 June 1983, June 1983 Correspondence File, Box 596, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>182</sup> Caspar Weinberger, “We Have Many Success Stories at the Defense Department,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 1983.

<sup>183</sup> Caspar Weinberger, “Grenada Invasion Was A Military, Political Success,” *The New York Times*, September 30, 1986.

<sup>184</sup> Caspar Weinberger, “The Military Doesn’t Get Everything It Wants,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1986.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*



We are so close to nuclear disaster that we need whatever safeguards we have. To abandon SALT is to shove us closer to war.”<sup>186</sup> Weinberger combatively replied, “SALT II is not a safeguard because it is a license for Soviet arms expansion, the President said we would never build more than they did. Furthermore, abandoning SALT does not push us closer to war but gives us a better opportunity to get agreements for real reductions.”<sup>187</sup>

Weinberger enjoyed many television appearances as well. Typical was his appearance on William F. Buckley’s Popular PBS show, *Firing Line* June 2, 1986, regarding the subject, “Are We Overdoing the Defense?” Buckley’s questions were provocative, but Weinberger had little to worry about since the questioner’s sympathies lay with a strong defense. The Secretary, as always, created the most positive tone he could muster—changes and reforms were being implemented, budget deficits had little to do with defense spending, and problems came from a meddling Congress. In a memo from the Public Affairs Office of the Pentagon, they advised Weinberger in a forthcoming interview with David Martin from CBS, “Your being once again the point man for the defense budget. It would also give them a chance to see you as spokesman for Defense and as communicator who tirelessly seeks to maintain public support for the program.”<sup>188</sup> The Public Affairs Office in one sentence summarized Weinberger’s seven years at the Pentagon, but his greatest efforts as salesman came when asked to pitch a high-tech defense program he knew little about.

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<sup>186</sup> Dr. Mike Rose to Weinberger, 5 June 1986, June 1986 Correspondence File, Box 613, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>187</sup> Weinberger to Dr. Mike Rose, 17 June 1986 Correspondence File, Box 613, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>188</sup> Bob Sims, Public Affairs Officer, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 3 January 1986, January 1986 File, Box 608, Weinberger Collection.

The Strategic Defense Initiative, akin to the defense buildup, was also a plan that Weinberger was not involved in at its origin, yet, once introduced, he fought doggedly for its funding. Ambassador Hank Cooper, chief negotiator at the Geneva Defense and Space Talks, claimed that his determined tenacity fighting on the Hill each year for budget funding kept the program alive.<sup>189</sup> Once again, Weinberger was on the hustings, in the studios, in the newspapers, and at committee meetings fighting not only for the overall defense budgets, but fighting to keep a new fledgling defense department alive at the Pentagon, the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO). The Secretary created this new department to prevent the effort from being bogged down in inter-Service, interdepartmental maneuvering.<sup>190</sup>

Ironically, Secretary Weinberger and his trusted aides were kept out of the loop when President Reagan gave his speech to the American people on March 23, 1983 that outlined the Strategic Defense Initiative. In the half-hour speech, Reagan spelled out the defense buildup and then in the last five minutes of the speech said, “Let me share with you a vision of the future that offers hope.”<sup>191</sup> He then went on in general terms to describe a system off in the future that would intercept nuclear missiles rendering them “impotent and obsolete.”<sup>192</sup> Secretary Weinberger, Richard Perle, and Ron Lehman were in Portugal at a NATO conference and tried drastically to stop the speech. The three spent the night calling around Washington pleading to delay the SDI announcement until

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<sup>189</sup> Hank Cooper interview with author, April 10, 2009.

<sup>190</sup> Daniel O. Graham, *Confessions of a Cold Warrior: Autobiography of Daniel O. Graham* (Fairfax: Preview Press), 171.

<sup>191</sup> President Reagan televised speech, March 23, 1983, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApTnYwh5KvE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApTnYwh5KvE), (accessed June 22, 2013).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

they could properly brief NATO allies. Most White House and Pentagon staff were against the plan because so many of its complex details needed formulation, and allies forewarned. Still, President Reagan and a small coterie of aides including his science advisor, George Keyworth, went ahead with the announcement of a new research program; a product of military thinking that technology can solve many difficult challenges in war. Reagan critic Frances Fitzgerald wrote, “But there was no stopping Reagan, and at 8:00 P.M. on March 23, the President launched his radical and utopian proposal upon a startled world.”<sup>193</sup>

SDI’s origins began in the early 1970s when President Reagan met with Edward Teller at Livermore Labs and discussed the idea of a defense system that could intercept nuclear missiles. Then, in 1978, retired Army General, Daniel O. Graham founded High Frontier to promote the Strategic Defense Initiative. For Weinberger, these developments mirrored his aggressive pursuit of the defense buildup. Although he was far from its inception, he still became its leading advocate. The Initiative symbolized all that was “dominate-militarily-through technology,” with research and development that included an array of satellites, lasers, missiles, and a host of computer technologies. While Weinberger would sell the program as a humanitarian, peaceful defense technology, there were great foreign policy heresies committed. The many disciples of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) at State and Defense believed in Robert McNamara’s concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD). The concept was over twenty years of established nuclear policy derived from both the concept that the Soviets and the United States kept the peace with a nuclear gun pointed at each other’s heads. With both sides

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<sup>193</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 198.

vulnerable, any defensive technologies would upset the established nuclear standoff and mutual vulnerability. The only problem with MAD that Weinberger noted in many SDI speeches was that the Soviets never complied, and they had a whole array of defense missile technology around Moscow. Furthermore, the Soviets built an impressive radar system at Krasnoyarsk in violation of SALT. President Nixon authorized in 1970 a new antiballistic system (ABM) called “Safeguard” to protect 12 Minuteman III ICBM sites at Maelstrom Air Force Base, Montana, and at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. Because of Safeguard’s technical limitations, The House of Representatives deactivated the only ABM site in the country after only four months of operation and a cost of six billion dollars.<sup>194</sup>

Once Weinberger recovered from the initial surprise of President Reagan’s March SDI speech, it was time to organize a new research department in the Pentagon and get Reagan’s message out. This task was as difficult as the buildup itself. Many pundits and defense experts found the untested technology fantastic and impossible. Senator Ted Kennedy gave it the label that stuck, “Star Wars,” to which the Secretary fired back with a quick retort, “A label put on it, ironically enough, by the man whose older brother had the courage and vision to first see an American on the moon.”<sup>195</sup> What probably helped Weinberger the most was the program’s allure to the technological dreamer laboring in the vineyards and labs of the Pentagon’s “black box,” the laboratories of highly classified military experimentation. Technological challenges coupled with research dollars for the universities as well as industry had a large scientific-industrial appeal. Within weeks of

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<sup>194</sup> Joseph M. Siracusa, *Nuclear Weapons: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89.

<sup>195</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, “Nuclear Weapons and SDI: Debunking the Myths,” Washington, D.C., 11 April 1985, ID #013 311000-312899, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

Reagan's speech, he was before the Aviation-Space Writer's Association confidently stating, "I believe that the President's idea is particularly important and promising."<sup>196</sup> He noted that the SDI technology would not appear in days but years, and the world would be more stable and secure by providing a shield against nuclear attack. Within the year, through the offices of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Advanced Technology, Weinberger established the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) with a startup of close to eight million dollars.<sup>197</sup>

Weinberger was no technician but found defense technology's possibilities irresistible. He needed to sell SDI to America's NATO allies because the program had the potential of pulling Western Europe away from America, something the Soviets tried since the start of the Cold War. The Secretary's worry was that SDI's development, a shield for America, could potentially leave Europe outside of its protection and thus isolated. In 1984, Weinberger addressed the Wehrkunde Conference, an annual foreign policy conclave, to discuss international security policy in Munich, Germany. His speech was entitled, "Seizing the Future: The Strategic Defense Initiative's Promise for NATO." He stressed the great unity within NATO, and the United States' commitment to the alliance stating, "We are working together to exploit emerging conventional technologies, which in my view offer a tremendous hope for offsetting the Warsaw Pact's superior numbers and thwarting their offensive strategy. Technology should be the handmaiden

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<sup>196</sup> Weinberger Speech to the Aviation-Space Writer's Association, April 8, 1983, ID #151691, FG 013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>197</sup> "Department of Defense Intent to Establish a Software Engineering Institute," March 1, 1984, ID #198312-229999, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

of strategy.”<sup>198</sup> In the following year, NATO met in Ministerial Session where he offered the allies a chance to join in the ongoing research efforts.<sup>199</sup> Then, he stated before the Republican Study Committee, “SDI’s central purpose is to enhance deterrence both for America and allies around the world.”<sup>200</sup>

Weinberger continued to barnstorm, speaking before the American Society of Newspapers Editors on April 11, 1985 he joked with reporters about his lengthy travel on behalf of SDI and concluded his speech by saying, “Even if it’s less than perfect it will deny the Soviets the confidence they can attain their goals.”<sup>201</sup> Two months later, he was before the Republican Study Committee in an effort to coach the Republican House members on how to get funding for SDI in the Democrat controlled House Armed Services Committee. He stressed that the Soviets were way ahead in anti-missile technology and that the U.S. needed to catch up. He commented, “If our research bears out we will have a more stable world but Moscow is intent on blocking SDI.”<sup>202</sup> Then two weeks later in Boston at the Edison Electric Institute Convention, Weinberger appealed to their love of technology, “Let me conclude my speech by mentioning a

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<sup>198</sup> “Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the Wehrkunde Conference,” 10 February 1984, ID # 296760, FG 013, Box 8, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>199</sup> Outgoing Telegram, Text of Weinberger letter on SDI, 26 March 1985, Private File, Box 605, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>200</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the Republican Study Committee, 5 June 1985, ID #324901-333705, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>201</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, “Nuclear Weapons and SDI: Debunking the Myths,” Washington, D.C., 11 April 1985, ID #013 311000-312899, FG 013 WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., Republican Study Committee, ID #324901-333705, Ronald Reagan Library.

defense breakthrough that will prosper your profession.”<sup>203</sup> The Secretary had established the benefits of “Star Wars,” but now an established department with real research needed development.

In April 1984, Lieutenant General James Alan Abrahamson became the first Director of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization. Secretary Weinberger desired start-up funding for 1985, with his goal of four billion dollars annually for the next five years. Ultimately, Cap could only wrestle from Congress half that amount because the rush for the defense buildup had already run out of steam by 1985 (see Chapter IV). Funding averaged two billion per year for the rest of Weinberger’s tenure. SDI funding followed the usual trail to President Reagan whereby Cap put in his request and solicited the President to make the necessary phone calls to various members of Congress on the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees. The President’s popularity in certain districts was extremely high, and Cap understood the importance of a call to a certain congressman who ignored the request at their peril. Weinberger wrote the President, “Your direct involvement will go far toward gaining House Armed Services Committee support. To that end, a proposed letter has been prepared for your signature urging support for SDI. It would also be most helpful for you to speak by telephone with certain members of the Committee.”<sup>204</sup> Weinberger spent the last two years at the Pentagon calling and writing congressmen in an uphill effort while keeping the wobbly SDI research program alive. Secretary of State George Shultz saw SDI as a bargaining chip to be bargained away at the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). But Weinberger

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<sup>203</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger at the Edison Electric Institute Convention, 20 June 1984, ID# 240043, FG 013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>204</sup> Secretary of Defense Memorandum for the President, 18 April 1986, April 18-20, 1986 File, Box 611, Weinberger Collection.

was having none of this; just as he trumped Stockman a few years earlier at White House meetings, he overcame Shultz through his close ties with Reagan. SDI survived the Soviet talks to live another day, yet still on questionable footing.

After Weinberger left the Pentagon, members of both political parties had little use for the Strategic Defense Initiative. Then, the First Iraq War in 1991 revived antiballistic missile technology although on a smaller scale than SDI. Patriot missile batteries provided a type of shield, protecting both Israel and allied forces in the Saudi Arabian desert throughout the war. The conflict ended quickly, and within the year the Soviet Union tumbled. Under the Clinton Administration, Secretary of Defense William Perry folded the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) into other departments and claimed, “To take the stars out of star wars.”<sup>205</sup> Then, fifteen years later, the Israelis grew tired of constant rocket fire by Hezbollah into Israel. In March, 2011, a new antiballistic system, “Iron Dome” had a roughly ninety percent success rate in keeping missiles out. Recently, the North Koreans stepped up their nuclear capability and improvements in rocketry propulsion. President Obama responded to this by carefully installing 30 anti-missile missiles in Alaska (26) and California (4). Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced, “We will strengthen homeland missile defense by deploying 14 additional ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska. These additional GBIs will provide a nearly 50 percent increase in our missile defense capability.”<sup>206</sup> Though lacking in Star Wars grandeur, Weinberger’s efforts to sell an outlandish, dreamy defense system were vindicated by antiballistic missile systems set up along the Alaskan

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<sup>205</sup> Hank Cooper Interview with author, April 10, 2009.

<sup>206</sup> Article from Christian Science Monitor, March 14, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2013/0315/US-to-ramp-up-its-anti-missile-defenses-following-North-Korea-Threats>. (accessed September 7, 2013).



coastline. This anti-missile system, a small legacy of the program devised thirty years earlier, became a reality.

Most importantly, Star Wars became an important political tool for Weinberger in that it had the potential to defend his beloved defense buildup from cuts. The MX basing (see Chapter VI) became a political nightmare for the Reagan administration, and Star Wars offered a new purely defensive military system. Whether Star Wars could work was not germane, but seizing the moral high ground was most important. Military technicians scoff at the crazier aspects of Star Wars—missile satellite trucks orbiting around earth blasting incoming Soviet missiles. And yet, these fantastic notions helped Weinberger weaken some of the powerful political efforts of the nuclear freeze movement.

Mary McConnell, Weinberger's chief speechwriter for SDI, contends that Star Wars, although never implemented, convinced Gorbachev that the Cold War rivalry needed to end and therefore came to the conference table; a similar view was shared by Ambassador Hank Cooper of the Geneva Space Talks. This is the accepted perspective held by many in the "Reagan Victory School", but other historians like Fitzgerald argue that the defense program had little to do with Soviet foreign policy.

Secretary Weinberger's strength was not grand strategy or military expertise, yet he used his art of persuasion in a series of articles for *Foreign Affairs*. In the spring 1986 issue in an article entitled, "U.S. Defense Strategy," he distilled the "peace through strength" approach to President Reagan's foreign policy. Weinberger wrote in his opening, "In 1980 the crucial issue was whether the United States could afford to acquiesce in the Soviet Union's attempt to achieve a position of global military superiority. The answer from the American electorate was clear. We agreed to pay the

price for military strength to deter war.”<sup>207</sup> His theme throughout the article was a simplistic plan of deterrence—build expensive and big to deter the Soviet Union from advancing an aggressive plan against the U.S. or its allies. He then launched into his six tests that should be measured before committing troops to combat; these six principles became known as the “Weinberger Doctrine.” In the article he is very critical of the détente 1970s era carried out by “misinformed arms control advocates” and quotes Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, “When we build, they build. When we stop, they build.”<sup>208</sup> In a triumphant tone, he points out Gorbachev’s return to the negotiating table, driven there by the defense build up. He closes the article from his father’s hero, “Seventy-five years ago, Theodore Roosevelt enjoined Americans to ‘speak softly and carry a big stick.’” His counsel of caution is as relevant today as then. But we must also carry a stick as powerful as our adversary’s, for our strength is the foundation of our strategy for peace.”<sup>209</sup>

One year removed from the Pentagon, Weinberger wrote another article for *Foreign Affairs* in 1988.<sup>210</sup> President Reagan had the distinct achievement of signing the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987. This treaty gave the President a unique foreign policy victory of being the first American president to sign an agreement with the Soviets that actually eliminated nuclear weapons. SS-20’s left Eastern Europe as Pershing missiles in Western Europe disappeared, a legacy of the “zero-zero” solution formulated by Weinberger’s staff back in 1981. In the 1988 article

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<sup>207</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “U.S. Defense Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, #4 (Spring, 1986): 675.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 690.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 697.

<sup>210</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “Arms Reduction and Deterrence,” *Foreign Affairs* 66, #4 (Spring, 1988).

Weinberger crowed once again that “peace through strength” brought Gorbachev and the soviets to the conference table. This article was very similar to the 1986 one in *Foreign Affairs* except for Weinberger’s triumphalism and a misread of Premier Gorbachev. He starts the article with a warning that the new premier is the same as the Kremlin old guard. Unsurprisingly, he concluded the article with a concern that defense budgets will once again be cut and that this is reckless. Weinberger had misread Soviet developments badly as the Cold War headed to its twilight.

Finally, it is worth taking note of Weinberger’s strong debating skills. As mentioned above, he won the Oxford Union debate with renowned historian E.P. Thompson in 1985. Regarding Soviet-American moral equivalence E.P. Thompson observed the “two ossified gerontocracies” as the Politburo “dead from the neck down” and Reagan as “on an autocue and half-dead from the neck up.”<sup>211</sup> Weinberger went for the high ground, “At the Fulda Gap, which divides East and West Germany, our observation towers face east because it is essential that we be apprised of any kind of movement towards the line. But the observation towers on the other side face east, too, for a very different reason: to contain and prevent people from coming to the West. That is a significant moral difference.”<sup>212</sup>

A year later on the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Harvard, Cap Weinberger and Ted Kennedy came together for a debate at the Kennedy School of Government entitled, “A Strong National Defense and Arms Reduction, Are They Compatible?” Senator Kennedy went first and came out swinging, “A trillion dollars

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<sup>211</sup> “The Oxford Debate that Weinberger Won,” March 6, 1984, *Washington Post* Transcript, Presidential Oral History Program Miller Center UVA Folder, Box III, 127, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

spent on arms control and no arms agreement. We've heard of the welfare cheat but what of the procurement cheat? 'Cap the Knife has become Cap the Ladle.'"<sup>213</sup> Weinberger then explained that the buildup and arms control are symbiotic, "You can't get one without the other."<sup>214</sup> He then launched into a long list of the military improvements made, vowing no more Soviet incursions into places like Afghanistan. The two sparred back and forth, Kennedy blaming the Pentagon for overestimating inflation costs, and Weinberger accusing Congress of too much oversight, forcing the Defense Department to buy equipment they did not need. Both men represented disparate elements of the American electorate, and both enjoyed the contest at the college that meant so much to both of them. This was the kind of venue that Weinberger so cherished, "in the arena," battling a legendary statesman over vital policy issues. These occasions kept him going beyond the typical two years and out, the route that so many defense secretaries took. Unfortunately, there was serious policy blowback that the buildup engendered.

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<sup>213</sup> Political debate celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Harvard University, March 14, 1986, [www.c-apanvideo.org/program/Political Debate](http://www.c-apanvideo.org/program/Political%20Debate). (accessed November 10, 2012).

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

MX, PROCUREMENT, REORGANIZATION, GOLDWATER,  
AND OTHER HEADACHES

Since the 1950s, Weinberger's career was characterized by reform and consolidation; whether it was pensions, water departments, or health facilities, he merged programs and saved money. Now at the pinnacle of his career, the buildup engrossed the Secretary, like Gollum's ring or Ahab's whale. Now with procurement scandals and MX basing problems, his cherished defense spending began to slip from his fingers, and rather than stay out in front of these setbacks, he worked all the harder within the existing Pentagon structure to save his diminishing programs.

For the first three years of his tenure, Secretary Weinberger pressed the buildup as hard as he could and told audiences that America was in a position of weakness and that to remain a great nation it must rebuild militarily both in conventional and strategic forces. Weinberger maneuvered large defense budget increases through the House and Senate and steamrolled opposition among liberals, moderates, and White House staffers with relative ease. But by 1983 to '84, the defense buildup ran into a number of problems beyond Weinberger's control. He worked tirelessly, but the fallout from a failure to find a solution to MX basing, four hundred dollar hammers all over the newspapers, and resistance to congressional Pentagon reforms weakened his leadership. Finding a solution to a new intercontinental ballistic missile basing system was beyond his expertise, and apparently beyond all the other defense intellectuals' who had worked endlessly on the project for the last twelve years. The other two problems, procurement scandals and Pentagon Reform, were opposite sides of the same coin, and Weinberger believed he could solve both problems in-house. He had cleaned up California in the

1950s and provided the means for Los Angeles to acquire water. In six months, he had brought the moribund Federal Trade Commission back to life; surely through his hard work and bureaucratic expertise, he could wipe the procurement scandal clean, and streamline the massive Pentagon with its two million service members and another one million civilian personnel. Weinberger gave it his best efforts, putting in fourteen hour days, but his efforts had mixed results alienating many doves, reformers, and moderates including some in his own political party.

Perhaps Weinberger remained at the Pentagon far too long, and like the second term of any American presidency, problems mounted. Most secretaries of defense last two years because of the daunting challenges and work load; Weinberger's six years and eleven months attested to a staying power not seen since Robert McNamara. His good friend and ally in the buildup, Senator John Tower, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, retired, and the post was given to Senator Barry Goldwater. The composition of the Committee changed drastically over the years, and many of Cap's allies were gone. In a stinging nasty veiled rebuke to the Secretary, Senators Barry Goldwater and Sam Nunn wrote President Reagan on January 16, 1985, "We believe the complexities in the defense area are so great that the system can no longer tolerate individuals in Democrat or Republican administrations whose principle qualifications are their past support of a political campaign and who will receive a majority of their training on the job."<sup>215</sup> This was a marked contrast from the prior Senate Armed Services Committee under Tower who praised his efforts in an Armed Services report on defense improvements written just one year earlier. The Senate Armed Services report concluded

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<sup>215</sup> Senators Barry Goldwater and Sam Nunn to President Reagan, 16 January 1985, ID # 285760, FG 013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

in the face of mounting political pressure, “The Department of Defense has significantly increased its warfighting capability during the past three-and-a-half years and will continue to do so with the continued support of the American people and the Congress.”<sup>216</sup>

If the sagging confidence of Congress was not bad enough, a grassroots movement against nuclear weaponry gained momentum. Clerics, university professors, mothers, and students all joined a massive political momentum known as the “Nuclear Freeze Movement.” Weinberger hoped to blunt their efforts with the Strategic Defense Initiative, which was a purely defensive program, but activists countered that such a defense would force the Soviets to build even more nuclear missiles. The movement hit close to home when the Reverend Robert Warren Cromey preached a sermon from the pulpit of Trinity Episcopal Church, San Francisco, calling for the devoted Vestryman’s resignation from the Episcopal Church,

The House of Bishops, General Diocesan Conventions, Deanery of San Francisco could call on him to resign from the church until he:

- looks to our Bishop’s fine statements on disarmament
- responds and hears the Roman Catholic’s statements on war and disarmament
- listens to doctors and nurses who describe the pain and horror of nuclear war
- he is in dialogue with Mother Russia and not just jingoist politicians

Change comes when Christian men who make decisions are held personally accountable by their church when those Christian men speak and act against humanity. We must personalize our target. Mr. Weinberger is selling death. He is accountable to God, Jesus Christ and his church for his behavior.

I will personally circulate petitions, gather signatures for the governing bodies of our churches to seek Mr. Weinberger’s resignation from the Episcopal Church.

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<sup>216</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Improvements in the U.S. Warfighting Capability FY 1980-84* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), iii.

We denounce nuclear weapons and the arms race to Armageddon.<sup>217</sup>

For all the pressures mounting, the only opinion that mattered for Weinberger was from the most powerful politician of the 1980s. President Reagan wrote congratulating him for an honor received by the Foreign Policy Association, “You deserve the highest honors for your vital contributions to national security and foreign policy.”<sup>218</sup> Weinberger needed the confidence of the President because finding a basing system for the new MX was almost impossible.

Weinberger’s problems began soon after his arrival to the Pentagon trying to find a basing mode for the new MX. The Defense Department designed “Missile Experimental” (MX), also known as the “Peacekeeper,” to replace its aging intercontinental ballistic missile, the Minuteman. The need for a new accurate ICBM came from Soviet missile accuracies developed in the 1970s, and their numbers increased fivefold. By the 1980s, they could potentially destroy nearly all U.S. Minuteman silos. The United States would then rely on the remaining two legs of the strategic triad, bombers and submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM’s). With creation of the MX, the issue that puzzled defense technicians was its basing. Since the United States swore off a first-strike in nuclear war, the new missiles needed a basing system founded on survivability of a Soviet surprise. President Carter’s Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown wrote, “For the United States to rely on vulnerable land-based ICBMs or to abandon them while the Soviet ICBM force remains much less vulnerable would be a peacetime

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<sup>217</sup> Reverend Robert Warren Cromey Sermon, “I Want to Live,” 15 December 1981, Correspondence File August-December 1981, Box 599, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>218</sup> President Reagan to Caspar Weinberger, 25 April 1986, Correspondence Thank You’s M86 File, Box 599, Weinberger Collection.



military defeat of major magnitude and an international political defeat as well.”<sup>219</sup>

President Reagan’s 1980 presidential campaign was partly based on a pledge to solve the MX issue and close the “window of vulnerability” with the Soviets. Weinberger now tackled the MX by trying some unconventional plans.

Before leaving office, the Carter Administration devised a “racetrack” system whereby an underground rail track would shuttle 200 MX missiles between 4,600 missile shelters laid out through Nevada and Utah. Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada, a close friend of President Reagan’s, and the Mormon Church in Utah fiercely fought against the rail scheme. The track basing cost estimation came in around forty billion dollars, and Reagan scrapped the program upon his election. After twelve years and dozens of deployment modes studied, Weinberger started from scratch. At first he studied putting the missile out to sea and pondered a study by Sidney Drell of Stanford and Richard L. Garwin of IBM entitled, “SUM, the Small Sub Undersea Mobile Basing System for the MX Missile.”<sup>220</sup> Secretary Weinberger presented a variation of this plan to the Joint Chiefs, but they found the plan unworkable.<sup>221</sup> The Secretary then sought the possibility of launching the MX from a specially designed C-5 cargo plane that perpetually circled around the skies in anticipation of a Soviet missile strike. Defense specialists also found this program unpractical.

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<sup>219</sup> Harold Brown, *Thinking About National Security* (Bolder: Westview Press, 1983), 67.

<sup>220</sup> “SUM, the Small Sub Underseas Mobile Basing System for the MX Missile,” October 17, 1980, Richard D. Drell and Richard L. Garwin, Transition Folder, Box 575, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>221</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 270. Herspring writes of a meeting in the Tank at the Pentagon with the Joint Chiefs where Weinberger unveiled his plan to put the MX to sea. General David Jones, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, looked straight at Weinberger, “Well, I think this is the kind of idea that *Reader’s Digest* would like.”

Finally, Weinberger unveiled his basing plan known as “Densepack.” According to this plan, improved hardened silos placed 2,000 feet apart would survive a Soviet first strike because with each incoming missile, the preceding explosion destroyed the next incoming missile; defense planners called it “fratricide.” Assuming the MX survived the Soviet first-strike, the missile then launched in retaliation. This program drew great criticism because each Soviet missile had multiple warheads and would endure through this supposed “fratricide.” Weinberger’s proposal flopped with most of the Joint Chiefs even though Chairman Vessey was cautiously optimistic. The secretary needed support in the House, and in 1982, they voted to cut off funding for the MX. Congressman Ed Markey snickered, “Dense Pack is six generals sitting around the Pentagon trying to figure out what the window of vulnerability is.”<sup>222</sup>

At this juncture President Reagan appointed a bipartisan panel led by President Ford’s National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft. The President’s Commission on Strategic Forces, or more plainly known as the “The Scowcroft Commission,” became a bombshell for Weinberger and other Administration hawks because of its provocative findings. McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, wrote in the *New York Times*, “The Scowcroft Commission says a massive surprise attack on 1,000 missile silos would be a very special case—to deter such surprise attacks we can reasonably rely both on our other strategic forces and on the range of operational uncertainties of a single-warhead missile.”<sup>223</sup> Defense liberals from the past three presidential administrations felt vindicated. There was no “window of

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<sup>222</sup> Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 268.

<sup>223</sup> McGeorge Bundy, “Appealing, But Mostly Appalling,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1983.

vulnerability”, they crowed. President Reagan and all the hawks at the Committee of the Present Danger were wrong. The basis for the defense buildup, a weak America, was flawed. The Scowcroft Commission vindicated the doves, but Weinberger pressed on, lobbying to keep some sort of funding for the embattled MX.

The Scowcroft Report’s recommendations included hardening old Trident and Minuteman missile silos for the installation of 100 MX missiles. This suggestion never addressed the issue of survivability other than the new hardened silos might provide MX protection against a Soviet first strike. An interesting development from the study was the request for a new, smaller single-warhead missile that became known as the “Midgetman,” in contrast to the larger ten-warhead MX. The Midgetman had maneuverability and the potential for moving around the country on various railroad cars; therefore it would prove difficult for the Soviets to track. An added feature of the Midgetman was its lack of desirability as a target compared to the MX with its ten warheads.

On May 4, 1983, Chairman Mark Hatfield of the Senate Appropriations Committee had tough questions for Weinberger, “Since the MX silos are vulnerable to a first-strike, does that then put us in a position to launch them to save them, in other words use them or lose them?”<sup>224</sup> The tough critic’s questioning of the defense buildup went back and forth with the Secretary. Weinberger explained that there would be a short time of vulnerability, but in due time, the missiles would achieve survivability through technological breakthroughs; furthermore, while the MX is deployed, the B-1 and the new Trident missile would also be deployed. All three legs of the strategic triad would

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<sup>224</sup> Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Special Hearing, Department of Defense, Non departmental witnesses: Hearings on S. Con. Res. 26, A Resolution to Approve Funding for the MX Missile*, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1983, 190.

complicate Soviet planning. This frustrated Hatfield who wanted questioning to remain about the flaws of MX. When his ten minutes of questioning expired, the senior Senator from Mississippi, John Stennis rhetorically asked Weinberger and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Vessey, “Haven’t Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter and all the generals since 1973 approved the development of the MX?”<sup>225</sup> Then he angrily concluded that the President must have this ICBM for negotiating purposes with the Russians. Once again, southern Democrats came to the aid of the embattled Secretary.

A week earlier, at a Senate Armed Services hearing, Weinberger argued, “Four presidents and six secretaries of defense failed to find a basing mode for the MX. While we failed to develop the land leg of the strategic triad, the Soviets deployed over 800 new ICBM’s a year.”<sup>226</sup> Weinberger was trying to get 9 billion dollars for MX implementation and another 1.5 billion dollars for research. By mid-1983, Congress approved the deployment of 100 MX missiles in minuteman silos, but only fifty were deployed. Speaking before the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco Weinberger declared, “We must all realize that, while we have spent the last twelve years debating the MX, the Soviet Union has deployed four new classes of ICBM’s.”<sup>227</sup> Nine years later, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the MX was removed in 2005. The original goal of the defense buildup was 200 MX ICBM’s, so the Secretary had a partial victory. However, like so many of his efforts at the Pentagon, it came with the aid of Democratic hawks like Sam Stratton and John Stennis in the Congress. Weinberger worked the

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>226</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate: MX Missile Basing System and Related Issues*, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1983, 114.

<sup>227</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, 25 October 1984, ID # 269656, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.\

phones of key members through old fashioned arm twisting.<sup>228</sup> While the MX sapped much of Weinberger's political power, soon a large scandal erupted that brought an end to large defense spending.

Armies and navies since the Sumerians faced disappointment from their suppliers; food and provisions often arrived late and over budget. Equipment orders malfunctioned, and bribery up and down the supply chain flourished. In the American war for independence, Washington's troops went hungry at Valley Forge while the young nation's procurement officer, Silas Deane, toured European capitals getting rich. The Civil War that spawned the Gilded Age was rife with cost overruns, shoddy equipment, jobbers, and dubious officials with fat purses. President Harry Truman launched his career in the United States Senate pursuing corrupt contractors in World War II through a series of Senate hearings. Throughout history, preparation for war is littered with the malodorous byproducts that reformers call "waste, fraud, and abuse." War itself is waste; since the creation of armies and navies involves a tremendous amount of money, often on a quick time schedule, military conflict can often times generate a disastrous diseconomy. In 1967 Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Clark Mollenhoff, wrote *The Pentagon*, that detailed numerous supply scandals from 1925 to 1964. His work even described such scandals as Senator Bilbo of Mississippi using defense contractors to upgrade his home.<sup>229</sup> He wrote, "Although we have moved from war dominated by horses and small guns into an era of nuclear power and jet aircraft, many of the basic problems have

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<sup>228</sup> Secretary of Defense Memo, "Telephoning House Members on M-X," 18 July 1983, May-June, 1983 Correspondence-Miscellaneous File, Box 600, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>229</sup> Clark R. Mollenhoff, *The Pentagon* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), 87.

remained.”<sup>230</sup> Unfortunately, the defense buildup that Weinberger administered also became mired in procurement waste that he worked doggedly to stop through departmental reforms. Despite his laborious efforts, defense spending scandals plagued his time in the Pentagon. He understood that the notorious parts scandals would derail the buildup, and his efforts at reform, like the MX basing, had mixed results.

President Reagan arrived at the White House in 1981 promising a strong defense, lower taxes, less spending, and lean efficient government. He believed that trusted aides like Cap Weinberger, one of his trusted “Reaganauts” from California state government, would bring competence in government to Washington. The accomplishments of Sacramento days, efficiency, low taxes, and effective government could flourish in the federal bureaucracy led by his gifted, pragmatic, rather conservative staff. In Reagan’s first term, he appointed industrialist J. Peter Grace chairman to his President’s Private Sector Survey on Cost Control. This massive study outlines all of the federal departments, including defense, and offers suggestions to excise waste, fraud, and abuse from within the United States Government. The impressive staff from the private sector that wrote the report, resembling a massive phone book, believed the Defense Department could save up to 28 billion dollars. Efficiency was in the air around the White House, and the President expected big improvements over at the Pentagon.

Early in Weinberger’s tenure, Deputy Secretary Frank Carlucci introduced the “Carlucci Initiatives,” thirty-one suggestions for streamlining and cutting waste in the Pentagon. “Cap the Knife” still had his reputation intact from HEW days, but then reports began to come in from the Air Force regarding cost overruns. The great spare parts scandal was born and became regular viewing on the nightly news—horror stories

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 29.

of \$17.59 for a bolt that cost sixty-seven cents. The Navy spent \$110 for a four cent diode. Secretary Weinberger spent the rest of his tenure trying to clean up the procurement scandal; it was far more formidable than anything he saw at the Board of Equalization in the 1950s California or the 1970s Federal Trade Commission.

On July 19, 1983, Congressman Robert Garcia of New York rose in the House Chamber and spoke the sentiments of many Americans, “The Pentagon continues to waste taxpayers money spending too much money the wrong way.”<sup>231</sup> Weinberger got out early and tried to reform the massive Pentagon bureaucracy from within. First, he appointed Joseph Sherrick, a trusted Pentagon hand with many years at the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, to head a new department at the Pentagon, the office of Inspector General to root out purchasing scandals. He strengthened the Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council and created another new department, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Logistics. Reporting to this new Assistant Secretary were three Deputy Assistant Secretaries for Procurement, Production, Support, and Spares. Weinberger continued to juggle and adjust the Pentagon bureaucracy, but an agency of two million service members and a million civilian employees, conducting an infinite number of purchases was just too massive for one man.

In a Rose Garden ceremony honoring twelve defense employees, President Reagan gave out a hotline number Weinberger created, “call 1-800-424-9098, toll free to report “waste, fraud, and abuse.”<sup>232</sup> Reagan thanked the Secretary, “I’m proud of the managed reforms Cap Weinberger has brought to the Pentagon. Today we are safer,

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<sup>231</sup> Congressman Robert Garcia of New York, “Pentagon Continues to Waste Taxpayers Money,” *Congressional Record* (July 19, 1983), 19822.

<sup>232</sup> Presidential Remarks: Rose Garden Ceremony Honoring Defense Employees, 5 October 1984, ID # 2677586, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

more secure, than we were four years ago, and we are tackling the tough problems that have plagued defense management for so many years.”<sup>233</sup> Weinberger’s hard work did not stop procurement scandals, and for the rest of his administration, Herbert Lawrence Block, “Herblock,” the *Washington Post* editorial cartoonist continued to draw Cap with a toilet seat around his neck attached to a six hundred and forty dollar price tag.<sup>234</sup>

In an effort to minimize the scandal’s impact, Weinberger went on the lecture circuit toting his reforms. In 1983, speaking before the Military Order of the World Wars upon receiving their Distinguished Service Award, he explained, “At this point you may be thinking about some of the recent headlines such as, ‘Spare Parts Bills Jar the Pentagon.’ True you usually have to read pretty far down in these stories to discover that it was DOD audits that uncovered these overcharges on military equipment and spare parts in the first place.”<sup>235</sup> Weinberger proceeded to go on the morning talk show circuit and again took up letters to newspapers and opinion leaders to explain the various administrative steps to stem the lax procurement standards.

In a letter to stem the disgust of retired Air Force General David Burchinal, Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert J. O’Brien explained the steps Weinberger was taking towards better procurement. The hard work brought some results; in a letter to the Secretary of Defense from California Senator Pete Wilson, member of the Senate Armed

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/herblock/gallery/26.htm> (accessed November 7, 2013).

<sup>235</sup> Remarks by the Secretary of Defense Before the Military Order of the World Wars, 6 September, 1983, ID # 164059, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.



Services, he wrote, “Your strong leadership has already led to numerous improvements in the management and operations of the Defense Department.”<sup>236</sup>

The sheer number of purchases, staff involvement, and audits within the Defense Department was staggering. In a letter to Congressman John Dingell, House Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Weinberger wrote, “The Defense Department’s acquisition workforce of over 500,000 members takes over 15,000,000 actions on defense contracts within a complex statutory and regulatory framework covering government and defense procurement.”<sup>237</sup> In 1984 there were 123,000 corrective actions on 41,000 Department of Defense audits, resulting in monetary benefits returned of 2.8 billion dollars.<sup>238</sup> In a letter to Senator Mark Hatfield, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, Weinberger explained in great detail the many actions taken to reform spare parts procurement and the efforts taken for competitive bidding.<sup>239</sup> Unfortunately, Weinberger’s in-house reform efforts failed to eradicate all of the scandals, and at midterm, a host of Navy scandals erupted involving a number of contract suppliers.

The handmaiden of the procurement scandal became Pentagon reform, and its proponents came from everywhere. Think tanks, commissions, studies, journalists, politicians both left and right joined in to find corruption, make changes, and clean up

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<sup>236</sup> Senator Pete Wilson to Weinberger, 10 March, 1986, June 1986 Correspondence File, Box 614, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>237</sup> Weinberger to Congressman John Dingell, Undated, March 1986 File, Box 610, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>238</sup> Fact Sheet for Defense Cost Savings Ceremony, October 5, 1984, File 013 258000-267599, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>239</sup> Weinberger Letter to Senator Mark Hatfield, 12 March 1986, March 10-12 Correspondence File, Box 610, Weinberger Collection.

“the Pentagon mess” from “waste fraud, and abuse” once and for all. The Defense Reform Caucus, a bipartisan group of House and Senate members, began to meet in an effort to make legislative changes and clean up the problem; the diversity of its membership included both Republican Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia and Democratic Senator Gary Hart of Colorado. Brookings, Cato, Heritage and a host of other think tanks all published reports on how to “get more bang for the buck.” In 1985, at the height of the parts scandal, Georgetown University’s Center for Strategic and International Studies published an impressive study, *Toward A More Effective Defense*,<sup>240</sup> that distilled the thinking of past secretaries of defense, service chiefs, academics, defense analysts, and congressmen. Six secretaries of defense signed a brief letter of introduction to the study. They concluded, “In our view, the public’s concern is well-founded; there are serious deficiencies in the organization and managerial procedures of the U.S. defense establishment.”<sup>241</sup> The significant study formed a framework for upcoming congressional defense reforms.

Dina Rasor, a past journalist with *ABC News* who later worked for the National Taxpayers Union, a political action group devoted to ferreting out waste in government, founded the Project on Military Procurement and in 1981 gained notoriety investigating the Pentagon’s procurement practices. She found cost overruns, problems with the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, defective M-1 tank engines, flawed fighter jet engines, troubles with the division air defense gun (DIVAD), and a host of other defective hardware; most of all she grated on defense establishment. In 1986, retired Air Force General James P.

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<sup>240</sup> Barry M. Blechman and William J. Lynn, editors, *Toward A More Effective Defense: Report of the Defense Organization Project* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1985).

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

Mullins responded to the procurement scandals in his book, *The Defense Matrix*.<sup>242</sup> As commander of Air Force Logistics Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the General was in charge of nearly 95,000 men and women worldwide, and a 46 billion-dollar budget. General Mullins defended the military, and his reputation against the parts scandal explaining its origins came from the 1970s, the “decade of neglect” that drove defense suppliers and defense technicians out of business. The Pentagon could not just use any generic screw from a hardware store; screws that go into an F-15 need to be of a certain military specification. He wrote, “Budget cuts of the ‘70s also decimated America’s defense industry. Almost half our defense suppliers, with all their experience and expertise, simply vanished during those years.”<sup>243</sup>

Weinberger continued efforts to improve the Pentagon from within and hoped the scandals would leave the newspapers. He worked harder and took the matter personally and fought outside pressures for reform for two reasons. He reasoned that reforms meant his buildup was flawed and trying to get more funding from Congress would prove impossible thereafter. He argued before the North Texas Chamber of Commerce, “Far from punishing waste, then, cutting the defense budget just makes it harder to eradicate waste and inefficiency.”<sup>244</sup> In a letter to President Ford’s Secretary of the Treasury, William E. Simon, now part of the White House Conference on Productivity, Weinberger wrote, “The Department of Defense which controls a major portion of the federal government manpower and expenditures is strongly committed to productivity

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<sup>242</sup> General James P. Mullins, *The Defense Matrix: National Preparedness and the Military-Industrial Complex* (San Diego: Avant Books, 1986).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>244</sup> Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the North Texas Chambers of Commerce, 20 September 1984, ID #2420000-246905, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

improvement.”<sup>245</sup> As the embattled Secretary fought on, it only got worse. Richard P. Godwin, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, resigned, reporting it was impossible to battle waste because Pentagon personnel refused to cooperate. Within the next month, reform leadership left Weinberger’s hands and moved on to the White House and Congress for a drastic Pentagon management change called the “Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986.”

By 1986, Pentagon Reform left Weinberger’s grasp and crossed the Potomac over to Capitol Hill led by the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Committee that helped Weinberger through so many legislative battles relating to the buildup had changed substantially over five years. Gone were Senators Henry “Scoop” Jackson and the Chairman, John Tower. Senator Jackson, a close ally of the buildup, died suddenly in 1983 of an aortic aneurysm. In the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Chairmanship succeeded to Senator Barry Goldwater who, as mentioned above, had little respect for Cap Weinberger dating back to his presidential run in 1964. Furthermore, Senator Ted Kennedy joined its ranks, and while the Committee remained on the ideological right, it lost much of its pro-buildup sensibilities. This policy shift on the Committee was just one of many problems that Weinberger faced as Senators Goldwater and Nunn planned the Pentagon reorganization.

Meanwhile, President Reagan and the White House staff planned to get out in front of Pentagon Reform even if Weinberger remained committed to the status quo. President Reagan called for a Pentagon study led by David Packard, computer genius of Hewlett-Packard fame and President Nixon’s Deputy Secretary of Defense. President

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<sup>245</sup> Weinberger to William E. Simon, 7 June 1984, ID #251374, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

Reagan named his panel the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, and they produced a report entitled, “A Quest for Excellence: Final Report to the President by the President’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management.” Packard, the entrepreneurial genius, had staffed a similar panel for President Nixon in his attempt to stamp out waste within the Pentagon. Packard’s new Blue Ribbon Panel convened in 1985 comprised of fifteen leaders in administration, defense, and business.

Three of the fifteen commission members were good friends of Weinberger: Economist Herb Stein (Father of Ben) from his Nixon cabinet years, Frank Carlucci, a close lieutenant of thirty years, who succeeded him as Pentagon Secretary, and William P. Clark, key advisor to then Governor Reagan, and later the President’s second National Security Advisor. Other notables included Brent Scowcroft, dean of Republican security policy and NSA advisor to Presidents Ford and Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush, General Robert H. Barrow, United States Marine Corps, and William J. Perry, who later became Secretary of Defense for President Clinton.

The Commission struck at the heart of Weinberger’s many efforts, “Excellence in defense management cannot be achieved by the numerous management layers, large staffs, and countless regulations in place today.”<sup>246</sup> Though the report never attacked Weinberger personally, it came through in all its veiled references, “Excellence in defense management will not be achieved through legions of government auditors, inspectors, and investigators. It depends on the honest partnership of thousands of responsible contractors and DOD, each equally committed to proper control of its own

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<sup>246</sup> President’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, *A Quest for Excellence: Final Report to the President* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), xiii.

operations.”<sup>247</sup> The report stood out as a reminder of Weinberger’s reform failures at the Pentagon, but the dutiful Secretary of Defense soldiered on for another year trying to increase defense funding. Still, his crusade ran out of momentum. Weinberger wrote Packard a week after the report went out, “I want to confirm what I have said many times, that you and the Commission have performed a valuable service for all of us. As you know, we are busy putting into effect many of the Commission’s recommendations.”<sup>248</sup>

Four months before the findings were released to the public, Herb Stein wrote a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that buoyed Weinberger’s buildup efforts. He wrote that working on the Commission taught him an enormous amount about the Pentagon, talking to past Secretaries of Defense, scholars, experts, service men and women: “Nothing I learned indicates that the defense budget should be cut. Steps can be taken that would get more military strength per dollar of expenditure. It may be that the savings should be applied to achieving a higher level of strength, not a lower level of expenditure. That issue our commission did not study.”<sup>249</sup>

Weinberger swallowed the report as best he could, but many of its findings led to a showdown in the Senate Armed Services Committee, particularly those recommendations calling for Pentagon streamlining. Ironically, the reformer that worked so hard to consolidate California government stood squarely in the path of a unified Pentagon. Weinberger cringed at making the military services more “joint” and questioned whether civilian leadership was jeopardized. One such issue that concerned

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Weinberger to David Packard, 2 July 1986, July 1986 Correspondence File, Box 615, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>249</sup> Herbert Stein, “On Pentagon Reform,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 14, 1986.

him was the Panel's recommendation that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be the President's principal uniformed military advisors. Weinberger believed legislation threatened the prerogatives of the Secretary of Defense.

At the same time the Blue Ribbon Panel conducted its study, the Senate Armed Services Committee began a series of hearings on reorganization. Senator Goldwater commenced, "All of us have the same objective—the strengthening of the American military capabilities. I hope that everyone will keep the fact in mind and will work to be part of the solution and not part of the problem."<sup>250</sup> Then Senator Nunn, the intellectual force behind service unification, got to the heart of the matter for Weinberger, "I also want to point out this effort is not an attempt to cut the defense budget. This is not a referendum on Secretary Weinberger's stewardship."<sup>251</sup>

A few weeks later, more hearings, and Goldwater growled, "You might as well tell your boys over there to get ready because we are going to do all we can to help you reorganize!"<sup>252</sup> Secretary Weinberger then gave his opening remarks recalling his administrative style to advance a unified policy but let lieutenants pursue that policy in a decentralized style. He claimed to have followed this administrative style back at the Federal Trade Commission and while running the Office of Management and Budget. He then launched into his work at the Pentagon, "We have conducted the largest audits in the Department's history, practices and problems of the past have been corrected."<sup>253</sup> Then in defense of the status quo, "We would be reluctant to conduct drastic experiments with

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<sup>250</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Reorganization of the Department of Defense: Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*, 99th Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., October 16, 1985, 4.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

the Department's structure. Vesting military command in the elected Executive is a fundamental tenet of our constitution and our philosophy which requires effective exercise of civilian control of the military."<sup>254</sup> Goldwater then scolded Weinberger for not allowing uniformed personnel to speak with committee staff. Weinberger coolly retorted that personnel could speak freely, but it was vital for a force of three million to coordinate their statements.

The legislation concerned Secretary Weinberger because he felt it crowded the Secretary of Defense out of the chain of command. His great fear came from the potential that left civilian Pentagon authorities out of vital decision making. After all, he reasoned, in a democracy should not soldiers be led by civilians? The United States Navy historically hated jointness, and Weinberger's ally, Secretary of the Navy John Lehman sneered, "They are creating a Prussian General Staff!"<sup>255</sup> Weinberger wrote Senator Barry Goldwater earlier in the year, "A basic tenet of our democracy—that the major military decisions will be made by the elected executive."<sup>256</sup> In a letter to Senator Jeff Bingamon, Democrat from New Mexico and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Weinberger wrote, "Integration of the Service Secretariat would weaken the effective management of our defense effort by blurring the distinct, unique, and vital roles of the Service Secretary and Service Chief."<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 189.

<sup>256</sup> Weinberger to Senator Goldwater, 3 February 1986, 1986 Feb. 1-4 File, Box 609, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>257</sup> Weinberger to Senator Bingamon, 13 August 1986, 1986 August 13-17 File, Box 617, Weinberger Collection.



The Secretary tried to slow, obfuscate, and pick apart Goldwater-Nichols since he felt it was a reflection of his handling of the Pentagon. Weinberger received aid from his overzealous Naval Secretary who had many connections throughout Washington. His lobby efforts in Congress were led by Deputy Navy Undersecretary for Policy for Policy, Seth Cropsey, who took an active role in derailing legislative Pentagon reform. In a dustup involving Senator Goldwater and the Naval Department, he felt it unconstitutional that the Naval Department influenced members of Congress over the reorganization bill. Weinberger tried to cool things down by writing the Senator, “To my knowledge, no one in that office has attempted to interfere with the constitutional functions of the Armed Services Committees.”<sup>258</sup>

In the end Goldwater won the service unification battle, and on October, 1986, President Reagan signed the Goldwater-Nichols bill into law that created more jointness in the branches and military cost savings by eliminating duplicate spending for the four branches of the armed services. Regional commander in chief’s (CINC’s) reported to the President and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff became the President’s chief military advisor. Other changes included an officer’s compulsory transfer through other branches, a new requirement for advancement in rank. The comprehensive legislation truly made the services joint, yet examples of waste still plague the military twenty-seven years later.

A year after Weinberger left office, he appeared once again before the House Armed Services Committee and the Acquisition Policy Panel. He stated defiantly, “The procurement story is largely based on rumors and allegations that are purported to be

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<sup>258</sup> Weinberger to Senator Goldwater, 23 May 1986, May 1986 Correspondence File, Box 613, Weinberger Collection.

pending against a very small number of former and present defense employees and a slightly larger number of defense contractors and consultants.”<sup>259</sup> When asked by committee members about possible corruption, Weinberger waxed philosophically, “dishonesty goes back to biblical times.”<sup>260</sup> He spoke freely in a relaxed style in an effort to save his reputation from the “parts scandal of 1984.”

The MX, Procurement Scandals, and Pentagon Reform contributed to the breakdown in a political consensus for Weinberger’s crusade, the defense buildup. Deputy Defense Secretary William Howard Taft believed funding for defense dried up at the same time Goldwater-Nicholls was signed into law confirming the Secretary’s concerns.<sup>261</sup> Weinberger failed to lead out-front on the reforms and tried to fix problems within the Defense Department by new oversight measures and working harder. His single-handed efforts were too small to tackle such a large problem, so the Congress and the White House simply went around his intransigence and pushed his obstinate Naval Department through a popular bipartisan effort that eventually won. He might still salvage his reputation by actually using the fruits of the buildup on behalf of freedom of the seas.

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<sup>259</sup> House Armed Services Committee, *Integrity of Department of Defense Acquisition System and Its Impact on U.S. National Security: Hearings Before the Full Committee and the Acquisition Policy Panel, Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives, 100<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., September 28, 1988, 591.*

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 604.

<sup>261</sup> William Howard Taft IV, interviewed by author, December 9, 2009.

## CHAPTER VII

## TO RULE THE WAVES, FOR CAP IS AN ENGLISHMAN!

In spite of all temptations, to belong to other nations Cap remained an Englishman! Cap remained an Englishman! The humorous lyric above is a play on the 1878 Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera “HMS Pinafore.” President Nixon enjoyed the musical that pokes fun at patriotism, but for the Secretary of Defense with noble bearing, this was all serious business. And like the British Empire of old, the American Navy began trolling the Persian Gulf waters in 1942, and then in 1947, the United States could no longer meet its need for oil from domestic production. On into the future, access to Persian Gulf oil remains an urgent strategic naval priority as codified in the Carter Doctrine and the Reagan Corollary. While this study is not focused on foreign policy, it is worth taking note of the Persian Gulf in the 1980s, for it is here that Weinberger enjoyed great success exercising the fruits of his defense buildup known as the Tanker War. It is also here that Weinberger suffered his greatest humiliation as a four count indictment came crashing down on his head.

Caspar Weinberger, anglophile in word and deed, received his crowning glory, a twenty-five minute audience with the Queen in Buckingham Palace on February 24, 1988. The Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, had recommended him for the honorary knighthood for “unfailing support and assistance” in the 1982 Falkland Islands War. Weinberger, lover of “trump and solemn heraldry” beamed with pride when he received the Knight Grand Cross, for he was an Englishman. The devout Episcopalian Vestryman, the closest American equivalent to the British Anglican Church, was active in a number of Anglo societies, the International Churchill Society, and the American

Ditchley Foundation. During Weinberger's defense tenure, his wife Jane volunteered her services to the Folger Library, the home of the largest collection of William Shakespeare's writings anywhere in the world. The Secretary was steeped in all things English, and it had a profound effect on his Pentagon administration.

As the lover of all things British, Secretary Weinberger loved its culture, having the bearing of an acculturated Harvard WASP; he also based much of his defense policy on British principles. He was the first American official to run to the aid of the British on their almost impossible 7,500 mile logistical tail from Great Britain to the Falklands. Great Britain, a seafaring nation, counted on its navy as the senior service in military conflict. Secretary Weinberger, with the aid of another thoroughgoing Anglophile, Naval Secretary John Lehman, made sure that in many ways the military buildup of the early 1980s was a naval one. Three aircraft carriers and new Ohio Class, Trident Subs were a stupendous undertaking. And like many British officers and statesman of the past, Weinberger leaned heavily towards the moderate Persian Gulf States in formulating his foreign policy views. Ever since Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty switched the British Navy from coal to oil, the British commanded a presence in the Gulf, and such duties were transferred over to the Americans in the late -1940s where they have remained ever since. Weinberger was an Englishman culturally, in naval strategy, and in foreign policy. Chapter V of this study detailed the way in which Weinberger used Winston Churchill's quotes as a basis for the defense buildup. The "Special Relationship" was already well established by the time Weinberger entered the Pentagon. For some eighty years Anglo-American relations were inseparable working closely on a number of foreign policy ventures. Weinberger's legacy was to foster, strengthen, and maintain the alliance, especially through the Falkland crisis.

Culturally, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* noted, “It is well known that the Secretary is an inveterate Anglophile who reads English literature and studies the history of the English aristocracy.”<sup>262</sup> Weinberger gave a foreign policy speech before the Pilgrims Society on June 21, 1983. The Society, founded in 1902, dedicated itself to promote “good will and everlasting peace” between the United States and Great Britain. The patron of the Society is Queen Elizabeth II. In the speech Weinberger covered familiar ground of the Special Relationship, “Our unique bond offered untold strength to the world’s never-ending struggle for freedom.”<sup>263</sup> Weinberger then explained the deployment of Pershing II’s in Europe to offset the Soviet SS-20’s intermediate range nuclear missiles in Eastern Europe and a host of other strategic policies. He then closed by reading poetry from A.E. Housman about looming war and then a piece from William Wordsworth regarding gardens of peace, “The vital power of social ties endeared by custom.”<sup>264</sup>

The Ditchley Foundation and its sister organization, the American Ditchley Foundation, aim to promote international understanding and promote Anglo-American relations. Secretary Weinberger was an active member, enjoyed its conferences, and appeared on its roster of lecturers. On April 13, 1983, at the Ditchley Foundation Dinner he stated, “It is the vigor and genius of free and unfettered individuals have made our two countries the greatest guardians of liberty and greatest examples of the glories which

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<sup>262</sup> Foothill College Address, 16 September 1988, Sept.-Oct. 1988 File, Box III 53, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>263</sup> Pilgrims Society Speech, 21 June 1983, Miscellaneous File May 1983, Box 600, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

freedom for each person can bring to us all.”<sup>265</sup> One year earlier Weinberger expressed these sentiments through bold action.

Four hundred miles east of Argentina lay the Falkland Islands or “Las Malvinas”, depending on one’s choice of national sensibilities. The island chain had caused a problem for Anglo-Argentinean relations ever since the latter gained independence from Spain in 1820. In December, 1981, a junta led by General Leopoldo Galtieri seized power from General Viola and was determined to remove Britain from all territories in the South Atlantic. Galtieri was a big, drunken stooge in the fascist dictator mold, but he was America’s slob after all, which potentially complicated matters. On April 2, 1982, Argentine troops invaded the Falklands, and Margaret Thatcher was not willing to back down and prepared an invasion force.

General Galtieri paid a visit to the White House a year earlier regarding the military training bases in Argentina that served the preparation of Contra forces for operations against the Sandinistas. Within the White House, a small but influential group led by United Nations Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick felt America’s interests lay with the Argentines in the conflict. The White House, at least on the surface, began a half-hearted neutrality, and Secretary of State Alexander Haig began “shuttle diplomacy” between London and Buenos Aires. Weinberger would have none of it and seized the moment through backchannels in the Royal Navy. Confidentiality was so vital that Weinberger went straight to the White House for a meeting with President Reagan and laid out his plan for an immediate logistical support of Great Britain. The face-to-face meeting, a complete success in that everyone else remained ignorant of Weinberger’s

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<sup>265</sup> American Ditchley Foundation Dinner, 13 April 1983, Correspondence Miscellaneous Jan.-April, 1983 File, Box 599, Weinberger Collection.

actions and fell for the neutrality charade, furthermore there was no paper trail of Weinberger's meeting.<sup>266</sup> Confidentiality was so secure that many high ranking American and British officials did not know of the Weinberger-naval connection. On May 3, 1982, on an official visit to London, Secretary of the Navy John Lehman sat opposite British defense officials at a dinner in his honor at Lancaster House. Lehman recalled, "After the wine had loosened tongues, they began lamenting that the Americans were 'weaseling' and 'as usual, fair-weather friends, deserting Britain in her hour of need.' It suddenly dawned on me senior officials had no idea what the United States was really doing."<sup>267</sup>

While Lehman sat presenting toasts, Weinberger's staff was busy dropping off vital supplies to Ascension Island, the midway supply depot for the British invasion force en route to the Falklands. Fuel, 4,700 tons of airstrip matting, 300 AIM 9L Sidewinder missiles, 20,000 sonobuoys, 200 Mk-46 torpedoes, and vital satellite intelligence contributed to British victory.<sup>268</sup> Prime Minister Thatcher wrote in her memoirs, "Using the latest version of the sidewinder missile supplied by Caspar Weinberger, we could not have taken the Falklands."<sup>269</sup> Sir Nicholas Henderson, British ambassador to the United States wrote, "Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, deserves undying gratitude from us for the characteristic generous lead he gave. I was in frequent touch with him, and, on the few occasions when Pentagon officials queried our requests he overruled

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<sup>266</sup> John Lehman, President Reagan's Secretary of the Navy, interview by author, March 12, 2013.

<sup>267</sup> John F. Lehman, Jr. "Reflections on the Special Relationship," *Naval History*, October, 2012, 42.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>269</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 226.

them.”<sup>270</sup> By 1982, Great Britain had depleted its maritime forces, and Weinberger gave vital American military supplies. Within three months, the British flag flew once again over the Falklands, and Weinberger had strengthened the Special Relationship.

Throughout Weinberger’s term, he established warm relations with British Defense Ministers John Nott, followed by Michael Heseltine. The correspondence back and forth related to friendships established in the Ditchley Foundation and joint exercises between American and British forces. This correspondence reflected Weinberger’s attachment and passion for Anglo-American relations. The relationship also reinforced Weinberger’s commitment to maritime superiority.

Secretary Weinberger was fully committed to the free navigation of the seas and fully committed to “Pax Americana,” taking up the mantle from Great Britain who ruled the waves for the last three hundred years before World War II. The Reagan Doctrine was an aggressive foreign policy of matching Soviet strength all over the world, whether at the Fulda Gap, in the Sea of Okhotsk, or the Persian Gulf. This navalist approach required a strong fleet and rapid deployment forces. This controversial strategy was exemplified by Secretary of the Navy, John F. Lehman in his 1978 work entitled, *Aircraft Carriers: The Real Choices*. Lehman contended that the aircraft carrier could project American power to places that air and land forces could not approach. He wrote, “U.S. policy makers have repeatedly found themselves confronted with a requirement for the capability to project power in circumstances which ranged from the need to remind potentially hostile nations of the U.S. physical presence and hence ability to affect a given political situation, to the more active injection of carrier force to affect the outcome

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<sup>270</sup> Sir Nicholas Henderson’s Report, “The USA’s Contribution in Support,” 19 December 1983, Nicholas Henderson File, Box 602, Weinberger Collection.



of a particular crisis.”<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, if war broke out with the Soviets and Warsaw Pact forces came screaming through the Fulda Gap in Germany, the response would be a carrier attack on the Soviet eastern Pacific coast—an effort to outflank the Soviets, and a key to the “Lehman Doctrine.”

Reagan Doctrine or Lehman Doctrine, these unconventional strategies gave the serious defense analysts pause. The problem was, Reagan won the White House, and Weinberger’s Pentagon pushed for a large naval buildup. When Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Thayer tried to economize and cut the funding for one of two aircraft carriers, Weinberger overruled him and made sure President Reagan signed the paperwork on two new aircraft carriers, the *George Washington* and the *Abraham Lincoln*.<sup>272</sup> In Weinberger’s Annual Report to Congress, he mirrored Lehman’s strategy, “During the 1970’s, however, we tended to narrow the range of our concerns to the center of Western Europe and to neglect the fact that, for the European center, as well as ourselves, other parts of the world are vital.”<sup>273</sup> The Pentagon’s goal was to increase the United States Navy from 450 ships to 600, and Weinberger had potent allies to help him achieve a naval buildup.

In the Senate, Senator John Tower not only served as Chairman of the Armed Services but, very conveniently, was the longest serving naval reservist, a master chief

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<sup>271</sup> John Lehman, *Aircraft Carriers: The Real Choices* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), 18.

<sup>272</sup> James M. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 254.

<sup>273</sup> Secretary Caspar Weinberger, *Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), II-12.

boatswain's mate.<sup>274</sup> Also effective on the Committee for naval interests was Senator John Warner, President Nixon's Secretary of the Navy and the Senator of Virginia responsible for bringing naval pork back to the naval yards at Newport News. In the House, Congressman Charles E. Bennett from Florida's Third Congressional District, represented Jacksonville's major Navy facilities and ranked second in seniority on the House Armed Services Committee. Third in seniority was Sam Stratton whose 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District represented a number of naval interests including aircraft engines and nuclear submarine propulsion (for more information see chapter three). Weinberger navigated the defense buildup through the House and Senate dangling, the massive naval pork that led to large defense budget increases. One way Weinberger used to raise massive funding for the Navy was a concept called "home-porting," a system for establishing naval port facilities scattered among coastal cities (or congressional districts) and ladling naval construction projects to defense hungry congressmen. But another influential force for the naval buildup came from a brash service secretary.

Weinberger's other service secretaries included John Otho Marsh, Secretary of the Army, a Vietnam veteran and Democrat from Virginia who had served in the House of Representatives, and Verne Orr, Secretary of the Air Force, Reaganaut from California who had served as Director of California Motor Vehicles. Orr had taken Weinberger's old job as California State Finance Director when he left for Washington to serve as Federal Trade Commissioner in 1970. Both service secretaries brought capable, competent service to their posts, but Secretary of the Navy brought a storm of controversy.

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<sup>274</sup> Locher III, 86.

The bright youthful, naval reserve lieutenant commander brought plenty of bravado to the Naval Department as a carrier pilot in his ray bans and flight jacket. It was no surprise that the top box office film in 1986 was Jerry Bruckheimer's *Top Gun*. Secretary Lehman was all Maverick, the rebellious carrier pilot in the film, and he actively encouraged the film's production.<sup>275</sup> His large ego and intellect were fueled by five years on Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff, and he later served as deputy director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Most service secretaries presided over their branch of service and ran the operation with a light hand. Lehman realized that the Secretary of the Navy actually had the power to run the department his way and ran over everyone to achieve the 600 ship navy. Most importantly, Weinberger gave him free reign to shake up the hidebound Navy. This came about for two reasons; as mentioned above, Weinberger believed in a unity of policy, implemented by a decentralization of power among compartmental staff. The second reason for Lehman's long leash was his powerful connections throughout the Reagan Administration and on the Hill with influential Congressional leaders. Weinberger handled Lehman accordingly knowing; he would contribute to the buildup.

The naval buildup also provided plenty of opportunities for President Reagan. Secretary Weinberger and a host of congressmen would launch a number of submarines, aircraft carriers, and even battleships; the defense buildup coming off an analyst's budget report and into action. Four Iowa class battleships were recommissioned, pulled out of mothballs with a new coat of paint, complete with the latest computer technology and a host of the latest tomahawk missiles. The *Iowa*, *Missouri*, *Wisconsin*, and the *New*

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<sup>275</sup> Lawrence Suid, *Sailing on the Silver Screen: Hollywood and the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 229.

*Jersey*; these four graceful ladies of the sea harkened back to the days of Sousa, Nimitz, Tokyo Bay, American glory, and Franklin Roosevelt's defense buildup of the 1930s. Certainly, Secretary Lehman would argue that "bigger is better" and that the Falklands crisis proved that larger ships withstood a missile hit better than smaller ships. But these four historical pillars served public relations-historical purposes much more than the latest naval tactics.

On October 27, 1984, Weinberger gave the speech launching the aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* at Newport News Ship Building and Dry Dock Corporation. He gave the loftiest of his speeches, rising from mere spokesman to high priest and apologist for the increase of military power. He started his remarks with a tribute to Theodore Roosevelt, "To celebrate the legacy of a man whose very name is synonymous with vigor and strength and who bestowed on his country, and the world, a decade of peace."<sup>276</sup> He then melded the buildup's "peace through strength" message into the words of the twenty-sixth President. He interrupted the tribute with a brief self-congratulatory note, "And just incidentally it is only 24 months since I laid her keel. She is now 18 months ahead of schedule and \$42.1 million under budget for her construction."<sup>277</sup> Weinberger then claimed that one hundred years ago, America was in need of a similar military resurgence when TR assumed the duties of Assistant Secretary of the Navy stating, "He wrote that 'people are beginning to realize it is folly to rely for defense upon a navy composed partly of antiquated hulks, and partly of new vessels rather more worthless

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<sup>276</sup>The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense at Newport News Ship Building and Dry Dock Corporation on the Occasion of the Launching of the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 70), 27 October 1984, ID #281191-281999, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

than the old.’ Today I believe the Rough Rider would indeed be proud of us.”<sup>278</sup>

Weinberger then repeated the oft-used refrain how the 1970s “was a decade of neglect” and defense spending fell 21%. He mentioned that the Soviets launched an aggressive blue ocean navy not interested in peace since all of their resources came from the Eurasian land mass dubbing the Soviet Fleet, “A sea going navy built to threaten the sea lanes over which flow the lifeblood of the free world.”<sup>279</sup> Then he focused on the reason for the naval buildup, “Our heritage has been and will always be to voyage freely and peaceably on the oceans of the world, to create and maintain the conditions under which other nations can do the same.”<sup>280</sup> This commitment to freedom of the seas eventually took Weinberger and the United States Navy to actions off the coast of Libya and in the Persian Gulf over the next few years. Weinberger wrapped up his salute to the buildup and the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* in a crescendo, “Free the cables and tools of her builders and gracefully she will turn toward the wind to send her aircraft toward the sky!”<sup>281</sup>

Weinberger’s goal was fifteen carrier battle groups completely outfitted with the Aegis cruiser escorts, fighter planes, crew, and all other vessels and kit required. In the following year from the Theodore Roosevelt’s launch, Weinberger sent his naval wish list to Congress in 1984. It included more of everything: fleet oilers, mine warfare forces, mine countermeasures helicopters, mines, torpedoes, repair ships, attack submarines, and

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

an endless order of naval equipment.<sup>282</sup> From 1980 to 1983, the Navy budget grew by 92.8%, and these increases came at the expense of other branches, notably the Army.<sup>283</sup> Weinberger now put the drive for naval hardware into high gear.

One characteristic of the 1980s was the strange behavior of Libya's dictator, Muammar Gaddafi. His brazen attacks of President Reagan made him a legend among some of the developing nations, replete with garish uniforms that frustrated corporals often enjoy, and a retinue of glamorous bodyguards. Journalists and Johnny Carson enjoyed his silliness, but many other times it came at the expense of human life. Between 1981 and 1986, the United States Mediterranean Sixth Fleet conducted naval exercises on eighteen occasions in Libya's Gulf of Sidra and seven of those times crossed Gaddafi's "line of death." According to international law, territorial waters only cover a range of twelve miles from the coastline. The Gulf of Sidra is 275 miles wide, and the "line of death" extended ninety to one hundred and fifty miles north of the Libyan coast. In 1981 two Libyan SU-22 jet fighters engaged two American F-14's sixty miles north of the Libyan coast; when fired upon, the F-14's returned fire and shot down the SU-22's. This cat and mouse contest continued for six years in the Gulf of Sidra between Libyan and United States Naval Forces.

On March 24, 1986, the Sixth Fleet entered the Gulf of Sidra for the nineteenth time and destroyed two Libyan patrol boats. At the press conference on March 27,

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<sup>282</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 1985* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), 137-155.

<sup>283</sup> Eric J. Schmertz, Natalie Datlof, and Elexej Ugrinsky, eds. *President Reagan and the World* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 210.

Weinberger praised the performance of the Fleet for “great valor and professionalism.”<sup>284</sup> He explained that the many engagements in the Gulf were a product of America’s commitment to freedom of the seas. He could not resist a plug on behalf of equipment procured from the buildup and he commented, “Harpoon and Harm missiles worked well, their sophistication paid handsome dividends and their investment is wise.”<sup>285</sup> In the next year, America’s commitment to freedom of the seas would face an even greater test.

While Libya and the United States engaged in what strategists call “low intensity conflict,” Iran and Iraq fought a grisly war that resembled World War I. Young Iranian boys wore a plastic key around their necks as they ran helplessly into Iraqi lines to their death. Ayatollah Khomeini promised these boys the keys would open the doors to heaven in reward for their courageous martyrdom. The West fell in behind Iraq to a limited extent, for it feared Khomeini although most nations remained neutral in this bloodiest of wars that cost one million casualties and billions of dollars over six years from 1982 to 1987. Iraq piped its oil west overland via Turkey, while the Gulf States and Iran used tankers to move its oil out through the Persian Gulf through the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

The Sunni Arab Gulf States allied with their religious and ethnic brothers, the Iraqis, and helped finance their expensive war efforts. This angered Iran, both Persian and Shiite, who laid mines throughout the Gulf and continually threatened Kuwait. Matters grew worse when in 1986, Iraq lost the Faw Peninsula to victorious Iranian forces. This put the hostile force almost on the Kuwaiti border at the northwest end of the Gulf.

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<sup>284</sup> March 27, 1986 Press Conference with Secretary Weinberger and Joint Chiefs Chairman William Crowe regarding U.S. Naval Exercises in the Gulf of Sidra, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/NavalE> (accessed October 22, 2012).

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

Developments became too hot for the Kuwaitis who began a search for a naval power to escort their eleven tanker fleet. They first called upon the Soviets because they knew their decision making was instantaneous and confidential. The sometimes reliable United States aired its decision, making it out in the open, and democracies often suffer bureaucratic inaction. The Kuwaitis hoped to reflag their ships under foreign temporary ownership for insurance purposes and an appeal to neutrality in the ongoing Iraq-Iran War.

Secretary of State, George Shultz, moved cautiously regarding tanker escort in the Gulf. International law made reflagging Kuwait tankers a cumbersome, lengthy, and complex legal procedure. Furthermore, on May 17, 1987, the *Stark* endured crippling fire from Iraqi fighter planes mistaking the American destroyer for an Iranian tanker. America did not need a dangerous naval conflict in the Gulf. Under these circumstances, Secretary Weinberger seized the moment akin to his daring decision regarding the Falklands five years earlier.

Weinberger based his quick decision on four principles: maintain freedom of the seas, preserve free world access to the oil resources of the region, promote security and stability of moderate Arab states, and prevent the domination of the region and its critical resources by any hostile power. Weinberger's stand was an enforcement of the Carter Doctrine—that any threat to the Gulf was a threat to the United States. In a Gulf Security conference, six months out of office, Weinberger quoted Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The study of history lies at the foundation of all sound military conclusions and practice.”<sup>286</sup> Weinberger concluded, “In the Persian Gulf, our interests are longstanding. We have

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<sup>286</sup> Caspar Weinberger, Speech to the Strategic and International Studies (SAIS) Gulf Security Conference, May 3, 1988, May 1988 File, Box III 53, Weinberger Collection.



been there since 1949. It is important that we place our vital interest there in a historical context, and not just react to headlines.”<sup>287</sup>

The two year reflagging effort was a success but not without its difficulties. On July 21, 1987, the first escort, the *Bridgeton*, struck an Iranian mine. The tanker was able to limp into its Kuwaiti port, but this incident set off a row between Weinberger and Congress. He felt he complied with the various reports and briefings, but now that American escorts came under hostile Iranian fire, Congress felt the 1973 War Powers resolution needed adherence. Weinberger spelled out his reasons for an American presence in the Gulf at various congressional hearings and detailed proudly the destruction of an Iranian oil platform used to create mischief among the tankers.<sup>288</sup>

On June, 1987, Weinberger addressed the House Foreign Affairs Committee in a series of hearings, in his opening remarks he stated, “Why are we in the Gulf? We do so because it is vital to our interests in that region.”<sup>289</sup> He assured the Committee, “We believe Iran will not launch any attacks on American ships at this point. Other friendly Arab states are hoping that we show the resolve to help them fend off the threat of radical Shiite fundamentalism.”<sup>290</sup> Admiral Crowe, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, helped fend off arbiters of the War Powers Act on the Committee by declaring the Persian Gulf, “not a no man’s land but a bustling thoroughfare.”<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Secretary Weinberger’s Testimony Before Senator Pell and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 23, 1987, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/GulfUpdate>. (accessed October 15, 2012).

<sup>289</sup> House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Overview of the Situation in the Persian Gulf*, 100<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1987, 126.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 132.

Ultimately, the “Tanker War” was a complete success as forty-six tanker convoys plied their way through the Persian Gulf. By 1988, the Iranians gave up and sued for peace with Iraq. Weinberger declared the Gulf escort operation “Ernest Will” a success and confirmed America’s commitment to the Gulf States. The 1987 to 88 Tanker War demonstrated what was best in the American Navy. Akin to the Brown Water Navy of the Vietnam War, naval personnel demonstrated what was best in the American sailor—the ability to innovate under hostile conditions and finish their mission with a whole host of American equipment from carriers to minesweeping equipment.

The use of sea power by the United States resembled in some ways what Great Britain achieved over the last three hundred years, keeping the sea lanes open for world trade and to achieve forward power projection. Among strategic circles, proponents of the “Continentalist” School believed that land forces in Europe were key to America’s security. Weinberger, an infantryman from World War II, sided with the “Maritimists.” He believed in these principles and keeping American hegemony in the Gulf; this also dovetailed into his relationship with the Saudi royal family and his tilt towards an Arabist foreign policy. While the buildup skimmed on heavy infantry divisions for the Fulda Gap, it poured more resources into rapid deployment and landing craft. The forces that Weinberger created were ideal for the First Iraq War.<sup>292</sup>

Practicing foreign policy in the Middle East during the 1980s was full of pratfalls and embarrassments, defeats and little else. A number of domestic developments in America added mystery and wonder to the Middle East and left policy issues no less heated. The folks who a young Richard Nixon met at all those fevered revivals in the

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<sup>292</sup> William Howard Taft IV interview with author, December 9, 2010.

1920s (see Chapter II) were now coming into political power. Ironically, it was President Jimmy Carter who first mobilized the evangelical vote, and then it jumped over to the Republicans led by the “Great Communicator.” These Low Church Protestant folks voted in the millions, and were well versed in a book by Hal Lindsey that sold in the millions called the *Late Great Planet Earth*.<sup>293</sup> Lindsey’s theology was nothing new, dating back to before the American Civil War. Lindsey harnessed this Victorian “end times” theology as detailed in his book. His theological beliefs were one hundred and fifty years old and still dominate the Southern Baptist Church and most other evangelical denominations often called “Dispensationalists” or “Christian Zionists” by their critics. In its simplest terms, a powerful nation state of Israel would emerge and usher in Christ’s return, and those who support Israel will enjoy great favor. Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Episcopalians—most High Church Christians do not share these eschatological, end times views.

The evangelicals, who became an important voting bloc within the Reagan coalition, closely watched events in the Middle East based in part on their dispensational beliefs. While thumbing through the biblical chapters of Ezekiel and Revelation, leaders like Pat Robertson tried to divinate what five more Likud seats in the Knesset meant for America and the end times. This religious-political movement could not be taken lightly, as John Connolly found out when he entered the 1980 Republican Convention. He dared question Israeli policies and America’s close relations, and by the end of the day, his campaign was finished.

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<sup>293</sup> Hal Lindsey with Carol C. Carson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 1970). Over 15 million copies were sold and represents Dispensationalism in all its fantastic claims and imagery.

While these developments were brewing over the preceding five years, Caspar Weinberger enjoyed close business relations with the moderate Arab leaders in the Gulf States from working with Bechtel from 1975 to 80. The Bechtel Corporation had nothing to do with business opportunities within Israel in light of its many lucrative construction contracts around the Persian Gulf. Upon Reagan's election and Weinberger's advance to the Pentagon, the Secretary used his Arab ties to further advance America's presence in the Persian Gulf and relations with Saudi Arabia. As a skilled politician, he avoided his allegiances to the Gulf States and focused on the Cold War when addressing evangelical groups, playing on their loathing of the Soviet Union; as an Episcopalian, Weinberger never aired any dispensational tendencies towards Israel.<sup>294</sup>

Now in the Pentagon, the Secretary arranged for a number of controversial military sales to Saudi Arabia. He sold them airborne warning and control systems (AWACS), aerial refueling tankers, and advanced AIM-9L missiles. Weinberger lobbied hard for the sales and probably cost Senator Roger Jepsen his seat in the 1984 election against Tom Harkin. Weinberger wrote Prince Bandar bin Sultan,

Your Royal Highness:

I wish to extend congratulations to you and to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on this imperial occasion. Today is a special milestone in the development of security cooperation between our two great nations.

This event should be an occasion of great pride for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian people as the Royal Saudi Air Force prepares to take delivery of its first E-3A AWACS aircraft. This moment marks the culmination of long years of hard work and preparation by many people here at Boeing, in Washington, and in Saudi Arabia to get ready for this event.

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<sup>294</sup> Weinberger collection at the Library of Congress has no documentation regarding Low Church Protestant sentimentalities.

We in the Department of Defense are proud of our role in the PEACE SHIELD program and are especially gratified by the knowledge of the great contribution these aircraft will make in improving the air defense posture of the Kingdom. The delivery of the first AWACS aircraft is a symbol of the United States continuing commitment to the security and well-being of the Kingdom.<sup>295</sup>

Six years from the time of the AWACS sale, Secretary Weinberger engineered the reflagging in such a manner that he requested Saudi aid in patrolling the Persian Gulf waters by air, and conveniently, requested aid from those very same AWACS he sold earlier. In his memoirs, he is grateful for the Saudi AWAC patrols on the lower Persian Gulf while American patrolled the upper Gulf region. Weinberger wrote in glowing admiration, “The Saudis made substantial concessions, agreeing to engage in our operation, including the AWACS patrols, more directly than had been their custom in the past; successfully escorted convoys subsequently demonstrated the value of that agreement.”<sup>296</sup>

Peter Schweizer, coauthor of a number of books with Weinberger, claimed the Saudi-American relationship was part of an effort to bring down the price of oil.<sup>297</sup> The dysfunctional Soviet Union needed hard currency, and one of the few exports they had was petroleum. King Fahd, a close ally of President Reagan in the Cold War, simply opened the spigot a little wider and flooded the markets with cheap oil. With a decrease in price, Soviet coffers greatly suffered as the Cold War conflict entered its final act.

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<sup>295</sup> Weinberger to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, 27 June 1986, June 1986 Correspondence File, Box 615, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>296</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1990), 408.

<sup>297</sup> Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 240. Among Weinberger documents found at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Collection and the Weinberger Collection at the Library of Congress no documentation was found to support this claim. Both collections denied request made through freedom of information to look at classified documents.

As Weinberger cemented ties with Saudi Arabia, his efforts did not go unnoticed. In 1983 Seymour Cohen, President of the Jewish American Political Affairs Committee, called for his removal from the cabinet, “The United States should never again be a hostage to a self-serving feudal kingdom.”<sup>298</sup> The Secretary spoke before the American Jewish Committee and well into his speech stated, “Let me stop at this point, and talk about something which has concerned both of us deeply. And that is the allegation that I, personally, have some animus against Israel. I want to say, as forcefully as I can, that this is simply not true.”<sup>299</sup> He went on to mention that if the moderate Arabs conclude we are unreliable to allies like Israel, how can we be trusted.

The Weinberger collection is full of warm salutations back and forth between Weinberger and moderate Arab leaders but absent of any correspondence with Israeli officials. Typical of the correspondence is a letter to President Habib Bourgiba of Tunisia, “We look upon our security relationship with you as an integral part of the defense of the Free World. Mr. President, please accept the assurance of my highest esteem.”<sup>300</sup> In his memoirs his meetings with Menachem Begin were almost always unpleasant. Former Israeli official Nimrod Novick said, “His was the less friendly voice in a very friendly administration.”<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Letter, Seymour Cohen, President, Jewish American Political Affairs Committee, to President Ronald Reagan, March 23, 1983, ID #135238, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>299</sup> Remarks by the Secretary of Defense to the American Jewish Committee, 13 May 1983, ID #150646, FG013, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>300</sup> Weinberger to President Habib Bourgiba, 9 September 1982, Correspondence Personal 1982 File, Box 595, Weinberger Collection.

<sup>301</sup> Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *The Reagan Presidency: An Oral History of the Era* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2003), 197.

Geoffrey Kemp, on staff of the National Security Council during the Reagan Administration, noted that the Defense Department became anti-Israel since the time of the oil embargo in 1973.<sup>302</sup> Some historians argue that anti-Israel sentiment among the armed forces stretched back to the Truman Administration when Israel was first recognized. When British history is explored, one finds an affinity for Israel stretching back to Arthur Balfour and his Declaration about establishing an Israeli state in Palestine. Balfour was also no doubt influenced by dispensationalism, a theology first developed in England by John Nelson Darby. The British Army never took well to an Israeli state, especially since Tommy Atkins fought alongside his Muslim brothers in engagements all throughout the Empire. Both the United States and Great Britain have a duality in their foreign policy with Israel and the Arab World, with Israel usually prevailing. Middle East scholar, Rashid Khalidi calls the United States, “Israel’s Lawyer.”<sup>303</sup>

In the duality of American foreign policy between Arabists and Israeli sentiments, Secretary Weinberger contributed significantly to closer Saudi-American relations. His efforts prove that history is destiny because his actions follow an Anglo-American pattern of friendly relations with Israel, while both nations had armed forces personnel that bonded with the Arab world. Unsurprisingly, Weinberger was no exception to that pattern. It is another example of Weinberger’s long standing foreign and defense policy as an Englishman.

Unfortunately for Weinberger, just as he enjoyed success in the Gulf, the National Security Council began running a rogue arms operation out of the basement of the White

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Professor Rashid Khalidi talked about his book *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*. <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Brokers> (accessed November 8, 2013).

House beginning in 1985. Below is a brief sketch of the most absurd foreign policy in United States history. The seeds for this buffoonery began with the flawed National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane who despised Weinberger's relationship with President Reagan and all the rest of the "California snobs" in the White House. The delusional McFarlane believed he could create an opening with Iran, akin to Kissinger's confidential opening of China. He would establish relations with moderate forces in Iran and achieve Kissingerian foreign policy stardom as he "opened Iran." Weinberger felt he stopped this nonsense when at a National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting he sneered, "All the moderates in Iran have been executed."<sup>304</sup> The whole imbecilic, convoluted tragedy is worth retelling because try as he might, Weinberger's arduous labors at times came back and hit him like the fiscal impoundments of 1972 or his work on California's Proposition 13. The hardnosed administrator sometimes failed to push hard enough at the right time, then got tough at the wrong time.

Around 1985 David Kimche, an Israeli foreign policy official, feared what Arabists like Weinberger and others accomplished through a closer relation with the Gulf States in the Middle East. Perhaps a rapprochement with Iran and the United States was in order. Meanwhile Hezbollah began kidnapping Americans in Lebanon, and President Reagan grew restless constantly asking White House Staff about the hostages. Eventually, Kimche brought McFarlane and his aide, Oliver North, in contact with a mysterious Iranian, the notorious Manucher Ghorbanifar, aid to the Iranian Prime Minister. The CIA gave Ghorbanifar a polygraph test that he failed and insisted to whoever was listening at the National Security Council staff that he was completely untrustworthy. Kimche related to McFarlane that the Israelis would act as intermediary

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<sup>304</sup> Caspar Weinberger with Gretchen Roberts, *In the Arena*, 349.



and deliver their antitank TOW missiles to Iran for the release of the American hostages with Ghorbonifar acting as the Iranian emissary. Thus began the rogue arms for hostages operation that continued for the next year. Weinberger became implicated along with General Powell, his military aide at the Pentagon, and other defense officials indirectly when the Israelis requested to have their TOW stockpiles replenished by the Pentagon.<sup>305</sup> Weinberger violated the Arms Export Control Act by signing off on delivery of American arms to the Israeli intermediaries that again handed the weapons over to a second party. It is surprising to see how often Powell was present at the various arms for hostages meetings, yet survived the investigation with reputation intact, probably because of his full cooperation with Lawrence Walsh's Iran-Contra investigation.<sup>306</sup>

McFarlane, close to a nervous breakdown, resigned and handed the operation over to his deputy, Vice Admiral John Poindexter, who kept the arms flowing to Iran. Weinberger continued to fight the illegal operation, and then CIA director William Casey developed a legal argument that kept Weinberger and the Pentagon out of the loop. Casey and CIA legal counsel Stanley Sporkin washed up the arms sales by claiming a presidential finding to the CIA would allow the TOW's and now HAWK missiles to be delivered by the CIA. The CIA would buy the missiles and conveniently leave not only Weinberger out of the loop but Congress as well.

To make matters even more illegal, Oliver North began overcharging the Iranians on TOW and HAWK missiles to the Iranians. He pocketed this cash and used it for keeping the Contras supplied on Honduran-Nicaraguan outposts in their war against the

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<sup>305</sup>Lawrence E. Walsh, *Final Report of the Independent Counsel For Iran/Contra Matters, Volume I: Investigations and Prosecutions, August 4, 1993*, "Part VIII, Investigations and Cases: Officers of the Department of Defense (U.S. v. Caspar Weinberger and Related Investigations), 405, [http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/part\\_viii.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/part_viii.htm). (accessed September 16, 2013).

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. Diary entries show Powell at Weinberger's side frequently.

Sandanistas. The illegality stemmed from the Boland Amendment passed by Congress that prevented the United States from arming of the Contras.

By 1986 a Lebanese newspaper exposed the whole stinking mess, and the American media and politicians on Capitol Hill went wild. Attorney General Edwin Meese went into damage control mode and did his best to protect the President. He eventually appointed an independent counsel with powers to prosecute and investigate. In the meantime, the President selected John Tower, Edmund Muskie, and Brent Scowcroft to conduct an investigation of the National Security Council to make sure “all the facts come out.” The Tower Commission report came down hard on Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. It claimed:

Given the importance of the issue and the sharp policy divergences involved, however, Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger in particular distanced themselves from the march of events. Secretary Weinberger had access through intelligence to details about the operation. Their obligation was to give the President their full support and continued advice with respect to the program or, if they could not in conscience do that, to so inform the President. Instead, they simply distanced themselves from the program. They protected the record as to their own positions on this issue. They were not energetic in attempting to protect the President from the consequences of his personal commitment to freeing the hostages.<sup>307</sup>

In the Joint Congressional Iran-Contra Hearings of 1987, Weinberger gave a spirited defense, decried the absurdity of the whole operation, deeply resented the Tower Commission report. Weinberger claimed he kept no extensive notes of any meetings with the exception of an occasional scratching on a piece of scrap paper. Six months later, Weinberger retired from the Pentagon and joined the prestigious Washington Law firm of Rogers & Wells. Then Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh began an

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<sup>307</sup> John Tower, Edmund Muskie, and Brent Scowcroft, *The Tower Commission Report: The Full Text of the President's Special Review Board* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 82.

investigation into Weinberger. His staff scoured the same Weinberger Collection documents footnoted throughout this study and kept at the Library of Congress. With one great exception, however, not all the classified documents had been removed. Weinberger claimed he never took notes at the various meetings of the National Security Council, but Walsh's Counsel Staff found a notebook that proved a smoking gun. On June 16, 1992, the grand jury indicted Secretary Weinberger, charging him with five felonies, including one count of obstructing a congressional investigation, two counts of making false statements, and two charges of perjury two days before the statute of limitations expired on the Iran-Contra Investigation.<sup>308</sup> Saudi Arabia had been very lucrative for Weinberger as Counsel to Bechtel, but now his close friendships there might send him to jail. Walsh was going after Weinberger, not only for his lie on the note taking but also for his false statements telling the staff of the House Select Committee that he had not known about the Saudi's having funded the Contras in Nicaragua.

Weinberger's tenure ended tragically—every bit the proper English gentleman at Buckingham Palace four years ago, to a presidential pardon delivered by President Bush on Christmas Eve, 1992. Weinberger's Navy performed well throughout the Middle East, but now, like the USS *Stark*, he was broken but not out. Perhaps a second memoir might resuscitate his legacy.<sup>309</sup> Weinberger's mistakes, shipping the Tow Missiles, betrayed his friendship to the Gulf States, and his efforts to cover up his knowledge of McFarland's bizarre machinations were unfortunate. Ultimately, he tried to provide a hedge around his boss.

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<sup>308</sup> Lawrence E. Walsh, *Firewall: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover-Up* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 415. Unfortunately the researcher never found a smoking gun in the hundreds of documents perused.

<sup>309</sup> His first memoir *Fighting for Peace* published in 1990, then *In the Arena* published in 2001. See Weinberger's chapter 18, "The Nightmare Year," from *In the Arena*.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

The governmental career of Caspar Weinberger ended in paradox. After years of dedication to consolidation of government and fiscal restraint and at the pinnacle of that career, he embraced Pentagon diffusion and maximum defense spending. In pursuing the latter goals, his best allies turned out to be Democrats, as some in his own party disdained his spending policy as secretary of defense. Republican Senator Robert Dole once sneered, “Cap Weinberger is the first person in history to overdraw a blank check.”<sup>310</sup>

Those in uniform, including General Colin Powell and Admiral William Crowe, generally thought well of him, as did most who worked with or under him. Lieutenant Colonel Mel Best, who worked under him on MX basing modes, put it gruffly, “Weinberger knew his job, we didn’t need any polywonk running the place!”<sup>311</sup> Hank Cooper, Ambassador to Geneva on Space and Arms Control, believed that Weinberger’s unwavering support of SDI funding played a vital role in the Geneva, Reykjavik, and Washington arms control talks between Reagan and Gorbachev.<sup>312</sup> The opinion that mattered most, however, was that of Ronald Reagan, who said of Weinberger, “My trusted adviser of twenty years was a safe harbor of principle in a world of stormy affairs.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Charles A. Stevenson, *SecDef: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006), 65.

<sup>311</sup> Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Mel Best (retired) interviewed by author, April 13, 2010, Alexandria Virginia.

<sup>312</sup> Ambassador Cooper interviewed by author, 4/17/10, Alexandria Virginia

<sup>313</sup> Departure Ceremony for Secretary Weinberger, November 17, 1987, [www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Cer](http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Cer), (accessed November 10, 2012).

Defense analyst Charles A. Stevenson chose the title *SecDef: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense*<sup>314</sup> for good reason. In the 1980s, leadership of the Pentagon involved administering an organization of three million people and managing a typical budget of 220 billion dollars. Some knowledge of military affairs, economic principles, and sophisticated technology was valuable if not essential. Most critical in Weinberger's case was salesmanship, demanding the skills of a historian, strategist, diplomat, lawyer, politician, and public relations expert, all wrapped up in a superior intellect. However, mixed his overall legacy as defense secretary, Weinberger succeeded spectacularly in the primary task for which he was chosen, securing and supervising the largest program of military expansion in the history of the United States and perhaps the world.

Ironically, his checkered career had prepared him well for the job. During the early days in California, he became a dynamic leader of the state assembly. Throughout the 1960s, he managed to hold the fledgling California Republican Party together despite open civil war, and journalists rated him the most effective politician in the state. As Governor Reagan's finance director, the second most important position in the state, he turned deficits into surpluses by scrutinizing the state budget line by line. He later refined those administrative and political skills at the federal level under Presidents Nixon and Ford, first at the Federal Trade Commission and then as Director George Shultz's chief cost cutter at the Office of Management and Budget. Weinberger was less successful, but perhaps learned more, as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, whose massive bureaucracy best resembled the one he would inherit at the Pentagon. He

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<sup>314</sup> Charles A. Stevenson, *SecDef: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006).

found himself in “deep weeds,” in the words of Reagan’s Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, trying to change the habits of lifetime civil servants. He was better suited, said Lehman, for the single-minded pursuit of a definable objective like selling and supervising the defense buildup.

His labors as a lawyer and businessman earned him a practical grasp of economics, though he lacked formal training in the field. His years negotiating complex contracts for Bechtel in the Persian Gulf exposed him to the people and the problems of one of the most strategic regions in the world. Working for a company that honored the Arab boycott of Israel, gave him a rounded perspective on Middle East affairs rare in the Reagan administration. He also established personal relationships that would pay rich dividends in Saudi-American relations and in the Kuwaiti “Tanker War.”

The last World War II veteran to serve as defense secretary, he brought to the job the experience of a uniformed officer in the field. Though not a technocrat like Harold Brown, he surrounded himself with knowledgeable subordinates and listened to their advice. Though initially blindsided by Reagan’s surprise announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), he quickly became the program’s greatest advocate. If he did not understand the technical aspects of launchers or “brilliant pebbles,” like Churchill, who fought for development of radar during World War II, he understood their strategic value and created an entirely new department at the Pentagon to develop SDI research.

His greatest contribution to the Reagan administration was his rhetorical skill. Whether organizing support for military expansion or defending SDI, his role was more that of salesman than theorist. Endowed with the debating skills of a lawyer, the instincts of a publicist, and most of all the sensibilities of a historian, he found opportunities to refine them all, from the rough and tumble of California politics to the bureaucratic

infighting of the Nixon and Ford White Houses. As a journalist and talk show host, he had learned stage presence. Whether jousting on camera with reporters on the Sunday news shows or testifying before congressional committees, he spoke in clear, confident, convincing tones.

His most serious liability was his lack of congressional experience. He sometimes failed to appreciate the give and take of legislative horse trading. By the late 1980s, many of his hawkish supporters had departed Capitol Hill. With the Cold War winding down and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks beginning to bear fruit, the military buildup lost much of its urgency, and Weinberger's tenure as defense secretary had perhaps outlived its usefulness. He resigned on November 5, 1987, though he never really retired. He enjoyed being *In the Arena*,<sup>315</sup> as he titled his second memoir, and as a private citizen he kept up the drumbeat for more defense spending, especially in his weekly column, "Commentary" he wrote for *Forbes* magazine,<sup>316</sup> where he served as a publisher. Traveling the world with Kip Forbes, speaking, writing, and granting interviews, he had finally, he joked, found a job he enjoyed. He died on March 28, 2006, at age eighty-eight and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. "Cap was," said his old Harvard classmate David Rockefeller, "one of the great Americans of our time."<sup>317</sup>

Surveying the historiography of the Reagan administration is much like sitting near the entrance of his presidential library. Some visitors approach the twenty-foot statue of him with reverence and admiration, others with contempt. His presidency lacks

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<sup>315</sup> Caspar Weinberger with Gretchen Roberts, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington D.C: Regnery Press, 2001).

<sup>316</sup> Caspar Weinberger, "Commentary on Events at Home and Abroad: Can We Trust This Nice Mr. Gorbachev?" *Forbes* 143, no. 1 (January 9, 1989): 37.

<sup>317</sup> In Remembrance of Caspar Weinberger, April 4, 2006, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/rem>. (accessed October 8, 2012).

the chronological distance for detachment. The same is largely true of historians, who generally praise or condemn him according to their ideological sensibilities. The scholarship on Weinberger is likewise largely polarized. Career diplomats, civil servants, and many journalists, considered him rigid, lax in leadership, and lacking in strategic goals. Journalist Andy Pasztor suggests that the Weinberger Pentagon “summed up an entire era of unchecked greed.”<sup>318</sup> More typical of Weinberger portrayals are works like James A. Locher III, an aide to the Senate Armed Services Committee, who lamented that since Weinberger did not jump on the reform bandwagon, he must have lacked vision and competence. This view discounts the primary reasons that Reagan selected Weinberger in the first place, to promote the buildup and to restore morale. If Locher, Pasztor, and others portray Weinberger as incompetent, the Victory School is far too uncritical. Peter Schweizer, Paul Kengor, and Jay Winik picture Weinberger, Casey, Kirkpatrick, and other hawks in the administration outmaneuvering the Soviets at every turn and eventually bringing them to their knees.<sup>319</sup> Rare are such balanced and sophisticated studies as Gail Yoshitani’s *Reagan on War: A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980-1984*<sup>320</sup>, which traces the evolution of Reagan’s foreign policy as it searched for appropriate principles to guide the use of American power in trouble spots around the world.

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<sup>318</sup> Andy Pasztor, *When the Pentagon Was For Sale* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 37.

<sup>319</sup> See Peter Schweizer’s *Reagan’s War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), Paul Kengor’s *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), and Jay Winik’s *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>320</sup> Gail Yoshitani, *Reagan on War: A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980-1984* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012).



A close study of Weinberger's role in that process puts to rest the canard that his policy at the Pentagon was designed to placate the New Right. As an Eisenhower Republican, his political compass was set at center-right, and he did not hesitate to promote such moderates as Frank Carlucci or to fire hawks like William Van Cleave. In the end, he was beholden to no one but his boss, out of loyalty to whom he accommodated his instinct for fiscal conservatism to the spending requirements of the Reagan Doctrine. His legacy remains, for good or ill, the Reagan defense buildup, which he achieved, according to cabinet colleague George Shultz, with "a technique he used on many issues before and after: take a position and never change."<sup>321</sup> John Tower offers a more generous assessment: "Weinberger's quick intellect and... his willingness to listen to the uniformed military leadership and to appoint talented experienced people to senior Pentagon positions made him an effective leader. His insistence on measured increases in the level of defense funding inspired the other services."<sup>322</sup> Perhaps both judgments contain a kernel of truth, for Weinberger, like Reagan himself, was as complex as the era they both helped to shape.

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<sup>321</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 142.

<sup>322</sup> John G. Tower, *Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1991), 236.

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