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‘Command of the Air’: Alfred T. Mahan, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston S. Churchill and an Anglo- American Personal Diplomacy of Air Power*

Abstract

Explanations of the importance of Allied air power during World War II often look to the supporting military theorists such as Gen. William L. Mitchell and Marshal Hugh Trenchard to explain the rhetoric, if not the reality, of the air campaign. These theorists and their military acolytes undoubtedly had a significant impact on the deployment of air power, but they had much less to say on its use as a diplomatic tool. Study of both Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston S. Churchill demonstrates that they had a sophisticated appreciation of how to use air power to achieve their foreign policy goals within the realm of personal diplomacy. For both Roosevelt and Churchill, the origin of this appreciation lay in their early experiences of political office and particularly in their exposure to the work of naval strategist Capt. Alfred T. Mahan. As wartime national leaders, both came to share a discourse of personal air power diplomacy acting to simultaneously refine, challenge and reinforce each other’s conceptions. Viewed in this light, clear Anglo-American fields of cooperation in deterrence, coercion, persuasion and moral diplomacy emerge. Closer examination of this Anglo-American discourse and exchange adds to our understanding of the role of personal air power diplomacy at the national level in this era. It also brings into relief both the consensus and

tensions surrounding air power within the Anglo-American wartime alliance. Ultimately, it suggests that there was a good deal of continuity in the personal air power diplomacy of both leaders as they strove to integrate atomic weapons into their calculations and confronted the developing Cold War.

Keywords

Air power, diplomacy, international relations, Alfred Thayer Mahan, William L. Mitchell, Hugh Trenchard, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston S. Churchill, deterrence, coercion, alliance, persuasion, morality.

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Power on the international stage can encompass everything from the waging of total war to the ability to achieve diplomatic influence. As John Ferris has suggested, it is a complex amalgam of material strength, administrative capacity to organise and perception, both foreign and domestic. Air forces, as generators of power, can be impressive but are expensive and reliant on advanced industries.¹ Technological advances brought great strides in the military capabilities and effectiveness of aircraft by the 1940s, but these advances and the debates surrounding them can both draw our attention and cloud our understanding of aviation's contribution to the diplomacy of the era. Britain and the United States used the construction of vast air forces during World War II to provide the military power to achieve

¹ John Ferris, 'Power, Strategy, Armed Forces and War,' in Patrick Finney ed., *International History*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 61 and 63.

victory, but also to provide the diplomatic power to influence each other, allied nations and the enemy. Modern aircraft created another dimension in which diplomatic influence could operate. At the same time, personal diplomacy gained new prominence. National leaders increasingly circumvented or superimposed their interventions on the traditional arena of ambassadors, diplomatic staff and ministers. Neville Chamberlain famously conducted personal summitry with Adolf Hitler in the shadow of the bomber in 1938, but it was with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston S. Churchill that an Anglo-American personal diplomacy developed fully to encompass not just their meetings but day-to-day discussions and contacts. The close friendship of Roosevelt and Churchill has received a good deal of attention from scholars, but its significance went beyond being the glue that held the Anglo-American alliance together to achieve victory.² It provided a stage for shared dialogue and exchange of diplomatic influence in the world. Both believed key individuals could shape international relations and saw air power as one tool to deter, coerce and persuade others while being a moral force to justify their actions.³

The British and Americans looked upon the costly land battles of World War I with horror and as something never to repeat. For this reason, they demonstrated a good deal of interest in the disarmament process during the 1920s and early 1930s. At Washington in 1922 and then London in 1930, they succeeded in placing controls on naval weapons. They were less successful with military aircraft, but the Anglo-American hope was that disarmament might draw the tension from international relations. This hope proved illusory as the British first in 1934 and then the Americans in 1938 came to believe that they could only achieve security

² For example see Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War – Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* New York, Harper Collins, 1997 and Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston – A Portrait of a Friendship* London, Granta Books, 2004.

³ Steve Marsh discusses Churchill's need to find a stage for personal diplomacy in 'Personal Diplomacy at the Summit,' in Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh eds., *Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, 116.

with adequate military forces. Moral force transformed from a willingness to disarm to the possession of powerful air forces during the 1930s, though the British and Americans arrived at this conclusion from slightly different directions. For the British facing the rearmament of Germany, the fear was of an unprepared nation suffering a devastating ‘knock out’ blow. It would appear foolhardy not to prepare an equally devastating counter-blow for deterrence or potential use. The US faced no such threat from any country. The idea of geographic security underpinned by ideas of neutrality and isolation was still powerful with many Americans. Offensive aerial operations were difficult to justify in such a climate and so a defensive reliance on aircraft technology to maintain national security became an important moral justification for American air power.⁴ As both nations entered World War II, aircraft as a technological approach to preventing or limiting the impact of the war appealed. True, an air war could be potentially devastating, but it was ultimately preferable to the much greater anticipated carnage of a land war.

With the Germans on their doorstep, the British reached the conclusion by 1934 that rearmament was essential for their security. In the US, Roosevelt continued to hope for international cooperation that would limit the effects of aerial bombing if war broke out in Europe. Facing an increasingly threatening international situation, he mentioned the maintenance of ‘international morality’ eight times in his famous ‘Quarantine’ speech in October 1937.⁵ A year later he wrote to Hitler during the Munich Crisis appealing for him to

⁴ On the origins of air power doctrine see Ronald Schaffer, *Wings of Judgement – American Bombing in World War II* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power – The Creation of Armageddon* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987 and Craig F. Morris, *The Origins of American Strategic Bombing Theory* Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2017. On the combination of technological advance and morality, see Mark Clodfelter, *Beneficial Bombing – The Progressive Foundations of American Air Power, 1917-1945* Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

⁵ Roosevelt, Address at Chicago October 5, 1937. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/208843> accessed October 20 2019.

use ‘pacific methods’ and avoid ‘the use of force.’⁶ This hope eventually ‘faded’ and by 1938, Roosevelt advocated a serious American Air Force.⁷ Yet, he also maintained a belief in the moral power of his former position. As Europe descended into war once more, Roosevelt appealed to all sides to avoid the ‘inhuman barbarism’ of ‘bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities.’⁸ The British and French replied that they intended to spare civilian populations and cultural property while the Germans welcomed the President’s appeal and advised they had orders only to attack military targets.⁹ Roosevelt continued in his search for peace at least until the spring of 1940 sending his Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles on a peace mission to Europe in February 1940 and writing to both Hitler and Mussolini in April 1940 requesting they undertake not to use their armed forces to ‘attack or invade’ thirty-two listed countries. The aims of the Welles mission and the appeal were perhaps a last attempt to maintain the uneasy peace of the ‘Phony War’ and possibly Italian neutrality, but they also distinguished the Axis powers in moral terms.¹⁰ Roosevelt’s ‘Four Freedoms’ speech of January 1941 setting out essential human conditions in world terms (speech, religion, want and fear) and the later joint ‘Atlantic Charter’ of August 1941 did much to ideologically unify Britain and the US and cement the moral power of the force they would eventually deploy as allies in war.¹¹

⁶ Roosevelt, Letter to Adolf Hitler September 27, 1938 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209205> accessed October 20, 2019.

⁷ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare – The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002, 203.

⁸ Roosevelt, An Appeal to Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Poland September 1, 1939. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209957> accessed October 20, 2019.

⁹ Biddle, *Rhetoric*, 182.

¹⁰ J. Simon Rofe, *Franklin Roosevelt’s Foreign Policy and the Welles Mission* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 2. Roosevelt, Message to Hitler and Mussolini April 14, 1939. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209511> accessed October 20, 2019.

¹¹ Roosevelt, Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union January 6, 1941 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209473> and the ‘Atlantic Charter’ August 14, 1941 https://www.fdrlibrary.org/documents/356632/390886/atlantic_charter.pdf/30b3c906-e448-4192-8657-7bbb9e0fdd38 accessed October 20, 2019.

Both Churchill and Roosevelt were very clear on the importance of air power for eventual victory in World War II. Of the two, Churchill had the closer experience of its military potential. During his time as Secretary of State for Air from 1919 to 1921, the air power theorist and ‘father’ of the Royal Air Force Hugh Trenchard was Chief of the Air Staff. His early influence was evident in Churchill’s plan, as Minister for Munitions, for a thousand-bomber raid on Berlin in 1919. The idea clearly stayed with Churchill, writing in 1925 he noted ‘The campaign of 1919 was never fought; but its ideas go moving along.’¹² During World War II, the British aerial war effort would go on to consume nearly half their total war expenses with Bomber Command devouring a third.¹³ Although Trenchard experienced less favour from the Chamberlain administration, who offered him a training post in Canada, with Churchill’s assumption of power in May 1940 he received several offers of high-level military commands. He rejected them all and while there were certainly tensions with Churchill, he remained on good terms and eventually became an ‘unofficial’ inspector of the RAF writing several key wartime reports. Trenchard had Churchill’s ear when it came to developing military policy, but as he recognised himself, diplomacy was not high on his list of personal skills, nor the focus of his writing and speaking on the subject of air power.¹⁴

Roosevelt placed a similar emphasis on air power as a key component of victory. In May 1941, before the United States had even entered the war he declared ‘command of the air by the democracies must and can be achieved. Every month the democracies are gaining in the relative strength of the air forces. We must see to it that the process is hastened and that the

¹² Jorg Friedrich, *The Fire The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* New York, Columbia University Press, 2006, 51.

¹³ Friedrich, *The Fire*, 18 and 75.

¹⁴ On Churchill’s relationship with Trenchard see Vincent Orange, *Churchill and His Airmen – Relationships, Intrigue and Policy Making, 1914-1945* London, Grub Street, 2013 and Russell Miller, *Boom – The Life of Viscount Trenchard, Father of the Royal Air Force*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2016.

democratic superiority in the air be made absolute.¹⁵ After later agreeing upon a program to construct 82,000 combat planes, he wrote to Churchill in November 1941 that ‘there have been misgivings in some quarters about the size of this program. I have none. We simply must get a complete domination of the air next year, even though other important things give way.’¹⁶ Whilst not reaching quite the same proportion of expenditure during World War II as the British, the Americans still managed to spend a healthy 35% of their total war expenses on their air force.¹⁷

Roosevelt was certainly familiar with the contemporary American doctrines of air power. These were very broad definitions describing the ability of nations to project national power via military aircraft and ancillary forces to contribute to victory in war and conflict. The military acolytes of air power prophet Gen. William Mitchell undoubtedly had the president’s ear and saw the potential for their theories to be writ large on a global war. Yet to focus on the military is to miss the subtlety of Roosevelt in the diplomatic and political sphere. He did not consider fighting the war his job and was largely prepared to let his military prosecute it. Instead, grand strategy and diplomacy drew his attention as subjects that had a much deeper personal heritage and appeal. Immersed in the thinking of naval strategist Capt. Alfred Thayer Mahan, he recognised that air power’s diplomatic potential transcended Mitchell’s rather limited military vision.

Historians often described Roosevelt, because of his service as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration and clear enthusiasm for all things nautical, as being a

¹⁵ Roosevelt, Memorandum to the Secretary of War Ordering the Construction of Heavy Bombers May 5, 1941 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209565> accessed October 20, 2019.

¹⁶ Roosevelt to Churchill November 30, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence II*, 41.

¹⁷ Friedrich, *The Fire*, 18.

Navy man through and through.¹⁸ Others, however, to a greater or lesser degree picture him as a disciple of air power prophet Mitchell.¹⁹ Roosevelt invited the outspoken air prophet to appear before the Navy General Board in March 1919, but he toed the Navy line that became more hostile to Mitchell as the latter increased his accusations and demonstrations of Naval incompetence in the face of air power.²⁰ Roosevelt spoke up for aviation and had certainly encountered it a great deal during the recent war, but he still viewed aviation as an ‘adjunct’ that ‘might’ make surface ships impossible to use in the future, rather than in the present as Mitchell argued.²¹ As Vice Presidential candidate the following year, Roosevelt argued in a speech that, ‘it is highly unlikely that an airplane or a fleet of them could ever successfully attack a fleet of Navy vessels under battle conditions.’²² There is no evidence to suggest that Mitchell’s 1925 book *Winged Defense* or his later *Skyways* published in 1930 registered with Roosevelt. In any event, they dealt purely with what Mitchell described as military ‘air strategy’ and the contest for ‘supremacy of the air.’²³ Roosevelt flattered Mitchell during his electoral campaign during 1932, but the White House shunned him by 1934 and he was dead by 1936.²⁴

Roosevelt was actually more a student of naval strategist Capt. Alfred Thayer Mahan who argued for the importance of a strong battleship based US Navy with ports around the world

¹⁸ Sherry, *Rise*, 59-61.

¹⁹ Jeffery S. Underwood, *The Wings of Democracy – The Influence of Air Power on the Roosevelt Administration, 1933-1941* College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1991 argues for the strong influence of political generals guiding the president in air power matters. In ‘Presidential Statesmen and U.S. Air Power – Personalities and Perceptions,’ in *The Influence of Air Power upon History*, 186 he further argues that Roosevelt rarely intervened in military matters and left the war to his commanders. Eric Larabee, *Commander in Chief – Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and their War* New York, Simon and Schuster, 1987 pictures an engaged and active Roosevelt in military affairs.

²⁰ For a full account of Mitchell’s ‘War’ with the US Navy see Thomas Wildenberg, *Billy Mitchell’s War with the Navy – The Interwar Rivalry over Air Power* Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2014.

²¹ Burke Davis, *The Billy Mitchell Affair* New York, Random House, 1967, 51 and 58-60.

²² Davis, *Mitchell*, 89-90.

²³ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 9.

²⁴ Sherry, *Rise*, 48-49. Davis, *Mitchell*, 338.

to promote American trade and protect national interests. On receiving Mahan's book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* for Christmas 1897, Roosevelt's mother recalled he 'practically memorized the whole book' while he later told his future wife Eleanor that he found the book "most illuminating." The young Roosevelt similarly devoured Mahan's *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* received for his following birthday.²⁵ Also looming large in his early life was the presence of his fifth cousin and twenty-sixth president of the United States. Theodore Roosevelt's overt expression of American power (also often naval) and unilateral intervention in matters pertaining to US interests captivated the younger Roosevelt. Indeed, not only did he mimic his cousin's early career path he often mirrored his position on foreign relations, including becoming a staunch interventionist in World War I and a vociferous advocate of naval and military preparedness while the US remained neutral.²⁶

Whereas Mitchell provided little guidance on the wider diplomatic use of air power, both Mahan and TR provided an earlier example of the application of power to achieve national policy goals. Mahan clearly articulated how a state's ability to influence world affairs came from concentrated maritime power extending beyond purely military effectiveness. For Mahan, national power operated within an expanded geography of US national interests extending way beyond national borders. Oceans were highways of travel, colonies were gateways to markets and resources and navies clearly had a deterrent, coercive, persuasive

²⁵ Capt. A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1890, Capt. A. T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power Present and Future* Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1897. Isabel Leighton and Gabrielle Forbrush, *My Boy Franklin-As Told by Mrs James Roosevelt* New York, Ray Long and Richard R. Smith Inc., 1933, 15. Joseph P. Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill 1939-1941: The Partnership That Saved the West* New York, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976, 37. Alan P. Dobson has noted the early importance of Mahan for Roosevelt. See *FDR and Civil Aviation – Flying Strong, Flying Free* New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 4-5.

²⁶ The main work suggesting TR as the major influence on FDR is John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest – Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* Cambridge, Cambridge MA, Belknap Press, 1983, 359.

and moral diplomatic role beyond military conflict.²⁷ That Franklin Roosevelt understood Mahan's thinking on the application of naval power in wider diplomacy is clear. When a war scare erupted between the United States and Japan in 1913-1914, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt conducted a correspondence with Mahan encouraging him to write articles campaigning against splitting the fleet 'during critical diplomatic negotiations.'²⁸ In Simon Rofe's view, Roosevelt had learned the 'strategic necessities of international relations' from Mahan. It was into this Mahanian framework and understanding of power on the international stage that Roosevelt later incorporated the implications of air power as he interacted with the British in wartime diplomacy.

Churchill, like Roosevelt, had a practical understanding and appreciation of Mahan's notions of power in international diplomacy, prompting Francis P. Sempa to describe him as a 'geopolitical practitioner, not a geopolitical theorist.' The two had met in 1912 when Mahan visited Britain and, during their discussions, Churchill advised the American naval theorist that he had read his latest work *Naval Strategy* published the previous year. In the first volume of his history of World War I, *The World Crisis*, published in 1923, Churchill recounted that when he became head of the Admiralty in 1911 he found the navy 'had made no important contribution to naval literature. The standard work on sea power was written by an American Admiral.'²⁹ Although Roosevelt, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration, held the junior position, the parallels in the careers and experience of Churchill and Roosevelt and their exposure to the ideas of Mahan is striking. As national

²⁷ J. Simon Rofe, "'Under the Influence of Mahan": Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt and their Understanding of American National Interest', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19 2008, 732-745.

²⁸ Roosevelt to Mahan June 14, 1914 Franklin D. Roosevelt Library quoted by Rofe, 'Under the Influence,' 737.

²⁹ See Francis P. Sempa, 'Churchillian Geopolitics: Mackinder, Mahan and the Preservation of the British Empire,' *Competition Forum* Vol. 15, No. 1 2017 drawing on W. D. Paulson, *Mahan*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1939 and Suzanne Geissler, *God and Sea Power: The Influence of Religion on Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2015. Meacham, *Franklin and Winston*, 71 states both were students of Mahan.

leaders during World War II, not only did they come to share a close friendship but found they spoke the same diplomatic language of power. As war cloud gathered, they recognised a similar understanding and outlook in each other that facilitated a dialogue on Anglo-American air power as a deterrent, coercive, persuasive and moral force for diplomatic influence.

Deterrent Air Power

The deterrent potential of air power was initially most apparent to the British. Neville Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer and then Prime Minister, was convinced that British security depended on the development of air power believing that ‘the Air Arm has emerged in recent years as a factor of first-rate, if not decisive importance.’³⁰ Deterrence required numbers and credibility to be effective. Britain and France never had sufficient numbers of offensive aircraft before the war to present a credible threat or a willingness to declare forcefully that they would use them against potential enemies.³¹ The Germans concentrated on the immediate tactical rather than a strategic deterrent potential of military aircraft and this contributed to an inflated view of their air power on the diplomatic world stage. The implications of this perceived disparity in air power were clearly visible with British and French capitulation at Munich in September 1938.³²

Roosevelt cabled a brief ‘Good Man’ message when he learned Chamberlain was on his way to Munich to seal the fate of the Czechs.³³ Some historians have pictured a rather hasty conversion to deterrence by Roosevelt at this point in the face German aggression while

³⁰ Richard Overy, ‘Air Power and the Origins of Deterrence Theory before 1939.’ *Journal of Strategic Studies* 15:1, 81.

³¹ Overy, ‘Air Power,’ 82 and 86.

³² Overy, ‘Air Power,’ 89-90.

³³ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 166.

others have seen it as a purely political calculation.³⁴ Roosevelt, however, took a dim view of appeasement before Munich. After the resignation of Anthony Eden in opposition to the appeasement of Italy in February 1938, Roosevelt wrote ‘If a Chief to Police makes a deal with the leading gangsters and the deal results in no more holdups, that Chief of Police will be called a great man – but if the gangsters do not live up to their word the Chief of Police will go to jail...Some people are, I think taking very long chances – don’t you?’³⁵

As the world situation worsened, Roosevelt set about the creation of an adequate American aerial deterrent force grounded in his long-standing appreciation of Mahan’s notions of power. In January 1938, he declared American defence inadequate and asked for increased naval and air appropriations. On October 14 1938, he announced his intention to revise US defence plans and seek a further \$500m in funding. Then at a key meeting of November 14, he settled on a figure of 10,000 planes and capacity to produce 10,000 more each year.

According to Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Roosevelt explained that ‘When I write to foreign countries I must have something to back up my words. Had we this summer 5,000 planes and a capacity immediately to produce 10,000 per year...Hitler would not have dared to take the stand that he did.’³⁶ Ambassador William Bullitt put it another way when he wrote to Roosevelt September 20 1938 ‘If you have enough airplanes you don’t have to go to Berchtesgaden.’³⁷ On January 10 1939, Roosevelt lectured top Army officials that ‘the only check to a world war, which would be understood by Germany, would be the creation of a great air force and a powerful force in this country.’ The policy

³⁴ For example, see David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor – Roosevelt’s America and the Origins of the Second World War* Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2001, 41. On the Roosevelt’s political motivations, see Barbara Rearden Farnham, *Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis – A Study in Political Decision-Making* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997 and Dallek, *Foreign Policy*, 172-175.

³⁵ Roosevelt to John Cudahy March 9, 1938 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 232.

³⁶ John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Urgency, 1938-1941* Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965, 49.

³⁷ Sherry, *Rise*, 76-78.

recognised American alarm over German aggression, aversion to overseas military expeditions and a desire to preserve isolation, but also indicated a marriage with a longer-term understanding of international power that went beyond imitating the approach of the Fuehrer.³⁸

Chief of the Air Corps, Gen. Henry H. 'Hap' Arnold, called the planned increases the Air Forces' 'Magna Charta,' but the new policy did not necessarily represent an alliance with bomber advocates. The only clear strategic goal was hemispheric defence along with aid to strengthen the British and French position.³⁹ French defeat in 1940 forced a further radical recasting of Roosevelt's deterrent policy. On May 16 1940, Roosevelt asked Congress for vast appropriations:

to superimpose on this production capacity a greatly increased additional production capacity. I should like to see this nation geared up to the ability to turn out at least 50,000 planes a year. Furthermore, I believe that this nation should plan at this time a program that would provide us with 50,000 military and naval planes.⁴⁰

The purpose was to prevent the hampering of foreign orders and to head off the production capacity of 'one belligerent power' [Germany] though this was consistently over-estimated by US intelligence. After November 1940, air power increasingly emerged as an attractive, cheap alternative to full belligerence that did not necessarily have support from the American people. The policy aimed at Germany also began to appeal as protection for American interests in other parts of the world. In July 1941, Roosevelt sent B-17s to Philippines as a deterrent to Japanese aggression. Henry Stimson even claimed the bomber 'had completely changed the strategy of the Pacific,' but it was more a sign of desperation that placed so much

³⁸ Sherry, *Rise*, 80 and 82.

³⁹ Sherry, *Rise*, 89. Dallek, *Foreign Policy*, 173.

⁴⁰ Roosevelt, Message to Congress on Appropriations for National Defense May 16, 1940 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209636> accessed October 20, 2019. Crevald, *Age*, 120 suggests he plucked the figure from thin air. Sherry, *Rise*, 91.

optimism in the bomber.⁴¹ From deterrence, however, was born the American plan for command of the air not just for the US, but for key allies also. Roosevelt's request to Secretary of War and Navy on July 9 1941, requiring overall production requirements to 'defeat our potential enemies' resulted in the Air War Plans Division's AWPD/1 and eventually AWPD/42 that set out a comprehensive air plan for defeating the Axis powers.⁴² These pivotal planning documents underpinned not just American but Allied command of the air with the US going on to build an incredible 299,293 planes during World War II.⁴³ While the plans undoubtedly contributed to the eventual military victory, they also facilitated and underpinned an enhanced Anglo-American personal diplomacy of air power.

Coercive Air Power

Mahan repeatedly stressed the value of power in diplomacy asserting that 'the weaker we are in organized military strength, the more easy [sic] it is for our opponents to yield our points.'⁴⁴ As leaders, both Roosevelt and Churchill understood Mahan's point. Roosevelt had gained a first-hand illustration in Paris in 1919 when Wilson used the threat of a naval arms race with the British to gain acceptance of his plan for the League of Nations and carried the lesson on to his presidential wartime leadership.⁴⁵ This was evident in Roosevelt's declaration of unconditional surrender at Casablanca in January 1943 that he connected to his desire for 'command of the air by democracies.' He defined 'unconditional surrender' at the time as a 'reasonable assurance of future world peace' adding 'it does not mean the destruction of the population of Germany, Italy, or Japan, but it does mean the destruction of

⁴¹ Biddle, *Rhetoric*, 262 and Sherry, *Rise*, 101-102.

⁴² Conrad Crane, *American Air Power Strategy*, 28 and 32. Sherry, *Rise*, 99. See also Haywood S. Hansell, *The Air Plan that Defeated Hitler* Atlanta, Arno Press, 1972.

⁴³ Phillips Payson O'Brien, *How the War Was Won – Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 46 and 485. O'Brien argues the American, British and Soviet air forces would have been considerably smaller and victory a longer-term aim with Roosevelt's decision.

⁴⁴ A. T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1897, 98.

⁴⁵ Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt – The Ordeal*, Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1954, 3-15.

the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other people.’⁴⁶

There has been considerable debate about whether Churchill knew about Roosevelt’s declaration in advance as it did not feature in the official press release and both parties indicated spontaneity subsequently. Robert Dallek is convincing in his suggestion that a ‘spontaneous’ unconditional surrender offered a compromise over a disagreement with Churchill who questioned whether Italy should be included in the demand.⁴⁷ The declaration offered much on which the two could agree. It was a very clear statement designed to keep the Soviets committed to the war and away from a separate peace, but would also prevent any recurrence of the ‘stab in the back’ myth from World War I for Germany whereby the manoeuvres of politicians and diplomats took the blame for defeat. In August of 1944, Roosevelt told Secretary of War, Henry Stimson ‘it is of the utmost importance that every person in Germany shall realize that this time Germany is a defeated nation...The fact...must be so impressed upon them that they will hesitate to start any new war.’⁴⁸ Roosevelt stuck to this position for the rest of the war concerning the Germans and steadfastly refused to define unconditional surrender beyond ridding ‘them once and for all of Nazism and Prussian militarism and the fantastic and disastrous notion that they constitute a ‘Master Race’.’...it is best to permit our understanding of unconditional surrender to rest upon that!’⁴⁹ While both leaders would later face accusations of needlessly extending the war with the declaration,

⁴⁶ Roosevelt, Joint Press Conference with Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca January 24, 1943 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/210111> accessed October 20, 2019. See also Roosevelt, Address to the White House Correspondents’ Association February 12, 1943. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209772> accessed October 20, 2019.

⁴⁷ Dallek, *Foreign Policy*, 373-376. Roosevelt thought ‘It would be a mistake, in my judgement, to abandon or make an exception in the case of the words “unconditional surrender”.’ Roosevelt to Cordell Hull April 1 and 4, 1944 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 498-99.

⁴⁸ Dallek, *Foreign Policy*, 472-73.

⁴⁹ Roosevelt to Churchill, January 6, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence II*, 652. See also Roosevelt to Cordell Hull January 17, 1944 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 492.

they could actually argue the opposite. Unconditional surrender facilitated the full force of Allied air power and justified the continued bombing of Germany to eradicate all dissent. It was, to Roosevelt and Churchill, the surest way to avoid future conflict. Allowing any of the Axis powers to, in Mahan's words, 'yield our points' through bargaining and negotiation would be to deny the coercive potential of command of the air.

Despite his earlier doubt on the inclusion of Italy in an 'unconditional surrender' declaration, when it came to peripheral Axis powers, Roosevelt could be less of a zealot with Churchill acting to keep him on track. Heavy bombing of Sofia, Bulgaria in November 1943 initiated some informal peace feelers from the Bulgarian government. Roosevelt thought 'it would be worth while [sic] for us to make some concessions such as suspending bombing attacks on Bulgaria for a limited period and with your sending representatives to meet the Bulgarian Mission in Istanbul.'⁵⁰ The British did not like Roosevelt's suggestion of peace with a German ally who had been at war with Britain since June 5, 1942. Churchill replied 'Eden and I are agreed here that the bombing of Bulgarian targets as weather permits should not be stopped because of the peace overtures. If the medicine has done good, let them have more of it.' Roosevelt accepted the correction and replied 'I wholly agree...Let the good work go on.'⁵¹

Democratic command of the air also enabled Britain and the US to attempt to coerce other neutral nations to support their diplomatic and military goals, but this very much depended on their understanding of interest and relative power. In 1943, the British and Russians favoured measures to draw Turkey into the war on the Allied side. The Soviets wanted to coerce them

⁵⁰ Roosevelt to Churchill February 9, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 714.

⁵¹ Churchill to Roosevelt February 10, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill February 12, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol II, 715 and 724.

by stopping supply shipments, while the British favoured a more positive approach. The Americans believed Turkish entry would overstretch Allied resources and proposed as an alternative leasing some air bases from the Turks instead with Roosevelt communicating ‘This government agrees to join Great Britain and Soviet in making immediate demand on Turkey for the use of air bases and later pressing Turkey to enter the war.’ Nothing eventually came of this particular proposal suggesting real limits on the extent of Allied power and that the Turks had their own agenda of trying to acquire military equipment to protect themselves from the Soviets.⁵²

As the war progressed, Churchill was more mindful of the future threat from Soviet Communism while Roosevelt continued to be more concerned with the health of the ‘Grand Alliance.’ When concern grew that a German withdrawal from Greece might leave the door open for a Communist takeover, Churchill obtained agreement from Roosevelt to use American transport aircraft to ferry British troops into the country.⁵³ There were, however, limits to the coercive diplomatic nature of air power that could expose differences between British and American policy and capabilities. Roosevelt was more reluctant to take on the Soviets in areas they dominated than Churchill was. In August 1944, when Polish patriots rose against their German occupiers in Warsaw, Churchill wanted to use aircraft to drop supplies in support of their efforts. Although now close to the area, Stalin was happy to let his enemies destroy each other. Churchill believed that Allied victories that summer put them in a strong enough position to challenge the Soviets, but Roosevelt thought otherwise. He was prepared to appeal to Stalin to work together to ‘do the utmost to save as many of the patriots there as possible’ by dropping supplies but gave the impression the appeal was more of a

⁵² Roosevelt to Churchill, November 4, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 581.

⁵³ Churchill to Roosevelt August 17, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill August 26, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 278 and 297.

public relations exercise. When Stalin denied landing rights for Allied aircraft, Roosevelt took a pragmatic approach noting their dominance in the area. He advised Churchill ‘My information points to the practical impossibility of our providing supplies to the Warsaw Poles unless we are permitted to land on and take off from Soviet airfields. I do not see that we can take additional steps at the present time that promise results.’⁵⁴

Churchill was prepared to circumvent Soviet objections by sending the RAF on night operations at the limit of their range from August 19 to September 29 to drop a small tonnage of supplies to the Polish fighters.⁵⁵ Likely realising the RAF’s limited impact, he continued to try to convince Roosevelt to press the issue suggesting a cable to Stalin warning that allied aircraft would go in arguing that ‘I feel we ought to go in and see what happens. I cannot conceive that he would maltreat or detain them [the pilots and crews].’ At that moment, Roosevelt had more pressing concerns about the continued presence of American bases in the Ukraine used for the ‘Shuttle Missions’ of Operation Frantic and his attempts to negotiate access to Siberian airfields for use in attacking Japan. He also clearly had the health of the ‘Grand Alliance’ in mind when he stated ‘I do not consider it advantageous to the long range general war prospect for me to join with you in the proposed message to U. J. [Uncle Joe].’ Underlining the clear power differential with Britain he added ‘I have no objection to your sending such a message if you consider it advisable to do so.’⁵⁶ Churchill still did not give up on the Warsaw Poles and wrote again to Roosevelt on September 4 pointing out that Stalin’s refusal threatened future relations and undermined the position of the Polish government in exile. Churchill then moved to ‘beg that you will again consider the big stakes involved.

⁵⁴ Churchill to Roosevelt August 18, 1944, Roosevelt to Churchill August 19, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill August 24, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence II*, 282-3, 285 and 294.

⁵⁵ Chris Hansen, *Enfant Terrible – The Times and Schemes of General Elliott Roosevelt*, Tucson, Able Baker Press, 2012, 377.

⁵⁶ Churchill to Roosevelt August 25, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill August 26, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence III*, 295-96.

Could you not authorize your Air Forces to carry out this operation, landing if necessary, on Russian airfields without their formal consent?...I cannot think the Russians could reject this fait accompli.’⁵⁷ Roosevelt merely replied that it was now too late and the situation had ‘unfortunately been solved by delay and German action.’ This was not true as the fighting continued into October, but the realities of the diplomatic limitations of air power and its interrelationship with other spheres clearly indicated that he did not view it as an overwhelming force in the context of the Grand Alliance.⁵⁸ Stalin did finally consent to an American supply mission (Frantic-7) flown on September 18 that dropped approximately 100 tons of supplies that largely landed in German held areas. The Americans scheduled a further Frantic mission, but the last Polish fighters capitulated on October 2, 1944 before it could take place.⁵⁹

Persuasive Air Power

Aerial dominance played an important role in shaping alliance diplomacy between Britain and the United States. When Roosevelt decided to increase American air power, it provided a carrot in addition to a stick with which to influence allied nations. It contributed to the survival of France and Britain, but after French defeat in June 1940, the ‘Arsenal of Democracy’ stepped up its provision of all aid ‘short of war’ to Britain via Lend-Lease following the passing of legislation by Congress in March 1941.⁶⁰ Initially, this was to give Britain the arms to fight and prevent their defeat rather than to bring about direct American involvement. Churchill was never slow to point out his nation’s requirements to the Americans, sending his famous letter to Roosevelt of December 1940 pointing out the dire

⁵⁷ Churchill to Roosevelt September 4, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 309-10.

⁵⁸ Roosevelt to Churchill September 5, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 312-313.

⁵⁹ Hansen, *Enfant Terrible*, 378.

⁶⁰ Roosevelt, Fireside Chat December 29, 1940. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209416> accessed October 20, 1940.

state of Britain's defences and finances.⁶¹ He also specifically pointed out the deficiency in British aerial defences in 1940 noting the Germans 'have still a formidable numerical superiority. Our most vital need is therefore delivery at the earliest possible date of the largest possible number of Curtiss P-40 fighters'⁶² The close cooperation between the two nations helped Roosevelt realise that British survival and American security did not just depend on sending aircraft but the pilots needed to fly them. Churchill had suggested this need to Roosevelt's air officers visiting Britain in 1940. He noted 'when your officers were over here we were talking in terms of pilots.'⁶³ The response was twofold. Roosevelt authorised his own Army and Navy pilots to fly aircraft from the factories to the eventual despatch airfields, freeing up British ferry pilots and allowed his air force chief, Gen. Arnold, to allocate one third of pilot training capacity in the US to British and Commonwealth recruits.⁶⁴

Once the immediate danger from German invasion receded, it became more practical to think about going on the offensive and air power again offered a practical way to do so. The British therefore pressured the Americans for a larger share of their bomber production. Roosevelt was happy to agree. He told Secretary of War, Henry Stimson in May 1941 'we should get our big bomber program up to a monthly rate of 500 a month...The British are asking for very large numbers of additional bombers...Hap Arnold has just returned from Britain where he learned the need was for heavy bombers to attack Germany.' His public memorandum of

⁶¹ Churchill to Roosevelt December 7, 1940 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 102-10.

⁶² Winston S. Churchill to Franklin D. Roosevelt May 20, 1940 in Warren F. Kimball ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt – The Complete Correspondence* I (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984) 40. Churchill raised the P-40 fighters again in his message to Roosevelt of June 1, 1940. See Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. I, 41-42. On aircraft supplies generally in October see Churchill to Roosevelt October 27, 1940 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 80.

⁶³ Churchill to Roosevelt October 4, 1940 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 74.

⁶⁴ Churchill to Roosevelt May 10, 1941 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 183. Roosevelt to Churchill May 29, 1941 Kimball, *Correspondence*, I, 199.

the following day confirmed his decision that the US would underwrite what he called command of the air by the democracies.⁶⁵

Such an increased output from American aircraft production delivered to the British meant accepting an American voice in policy that drew away from the campaign against Germany. When Admiral King persuaded Roosevelt for greater bombing of German U-Boat production and bases in 1942, the president went out of his way to tell Churchill to make the bombing of submarine bases and manufacturing an extra special priority.⁶⁶ Churchill duly confirmed that ‘The highest importance is attached by us to bombing U-Boat construction yards and bases’ and ‘we are emphasising bombing attacks on U-Boat nests.’⁶⁷ At the beginning of 1943, the growing American contribution again challenged British operational doctrine. Following heavy losses and a demonstrable inability to hit precision targets, RAF Bomber Command advocated night area bombing over American daylight precision bombing. Churchill pushed hard for the Americans to join the British effort, but the Americans stood their ground convincing Churchill with the ‘round the clock’ approach hammered out at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.⁶⁸

American production also gave them an increasingly loud voice in Allied Command appointments. When the British suggested Air Marshall Sholto Douglas take command of the South East Asia theatre, Roosevelt made the disapproval of his military clear. Gen. Marshall opposed the move believing Sholto Douglas to be anti-American. Roosevelt called for an

⁶⁵ Roosevelt to Stimson May 4, 1941 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 365. In a further letter to Stimson on May 28, 1941, he pushed for further speeding up of getting bombers to England Roosevelt, *Letters*, 371-2. See also Roosevelt, Memorandum to the Secretary of War Ordering the Construction of Heavy Bombers May 5, 1941 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209565> accessed October 20, 2019.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, *How the War*, 238.

⁶⁷ See Roosevelt to Churchill March 19, 1942, Churchill to Roosevelt March 20, 1942 and Churchill to Roosevelt March 29, 1942 in Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 424 and 434.

⁶⁸ Overy, *Bombing War*, 306.

alternative who ‘understands the complications of Allied Command and has demonstrated outstanding ability’ before suggesting Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham as a suitable candidate. Perhaps sensitive to the delicacy of what he was suggesting he finished with the underlined ‘I will of course abide fully by your decisions and give unquestioned support to carrying out the task.’⁶⁹ Churchill was clearly irritated answering that ‘I am absolutely convinced that there is no foundation for the suggestions which have been made that this most capable officer has shown lack of good will and loyalty towards the United States or its officers.’ Nevertheless, it was difficult to refuse the Americans and Sholto Douglas transferred to Coastal Command.⁷⁰

Aerial power allowed the Americans to shape Allied policy to their longer-term benefit. The Allies had long viewed the Azores as important to the Battle of the Atlantic and as the plans unfolded for the invasion of Europe its attractiveness as a base and staging post for aircraft only increased. The Azores were neutral Portuguese territory, but even so, Roosevelt and Churchill had been discussing the annexation of the islands since their meeting in Placentia Bay in August 1941. These discussions led to an agreement at the Trident Conference in Washington in May of 1943 that the islands would be annexed by the Allies if requested bases were not agreed to by the Portuguese – via the never implemented ‘Operation Alacrity’ plan for invasion of the islands. Outright annexation of a neutral’s territory would not reflect well on the Allied cause, so the British preferred to invoke the 500-year old Anglo-Portuguese Alliance in their request for basing rights. Prime Minister Salazar of Portugal accepted the compromise in the hope of maintaining neutrality and in accordance with an Anglo-Portuguese agreement signed August 17, 1943 the British accepted bases at Lejas and

⁶⁹ Roosevelt to Churchill July 9, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 317-318.

⁷⁰ Churchill to Roosevelt January 4, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 646.

Santana in the Azores on October 8, 1943.⁷¹ Roosevelt and Churchill agreed at the Quebec Conference that American forces would also enter the Azores a few weeks later. This raised issues for the Portuguese who were worried about German retaliation, the local economic impact and possibly that American influence would remain after the war despite Roosevelt's statement that 'He [Prime Minister Salazar] may be assured that the United States has no desire to remain after the war in any Portuguese territory.'⁷² The British were also concerned the American military were using their aircraft ferrying needs as an entry route for civilian aviation dominance post-war. Pan American was requesting air facilities for military contracted flights in the Azores from January 1943 onward and the Air Force was pressurising Roosevelt to comply.⁷³ The US military claimed this was for ferrying military aircraft, but the British did not think the requirement for American military bases in the Azores was strong enough to risk a diplomatic dispute with the Portuguese. They advised they could not support sending American troops there 'until Portuguese agreement is obtained' noting 'we are not in occupation of the islands.'⁷⁴

On November 8, 1943, Roosevelt informed Churchill that the American Charge d'affaires in Lisbon, George Kennan, would take up the question with Salazar directly and requested British support. The immediate goal was to facilitate the delivery of aircraft for the coming cross Channel invasion, but the suspicion between the British and Americans over post-war aviation remained.⁷⁵ When the Portuguese appeared to reverse an agreement (of December 1943) to permit US aircraft to operate out of the British bases, Roosevelt considered sending

⁷¹ For a detailed account of Portuguese, British and American relations at this time see Norman Herz, *Operation Alacrity – The Azores and the War in the Atlantic* Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2004.

⁷² Roosevelt to Churchill October 6, 1943, October 9, 1943 and Churchill to Roosevelt October 15, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 494, 515 and 532.

⁷³ See Roosevelt to Churchill October 26, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 564 and description referencing Cordell Hull to George Kennan October 16, 1943 *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1943 II, 554-56.

⁷⁴ Churchill to Roosevelt November 1, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 574.

⁷⁵ See Roosevelt to Churchill November 8, 1943 and note Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 590.

the aircraft anyway advising Churchill ‘If you agree it is my desire to send the Squadron at an early date as planned disregarding Salazar’s change of mind.’⁷⁶ Churchill discouraged the use of force by the US and even suggested mischievously that the Americans operate under British markings and uniforms. He then further cautioned ‘Although we possess overwhelming strength it would be as you yourself felt rather inconsistent with our general attitude towards small powers to override them roughly in matters of neutrality.’⁷⁷ The Americans were able to ferry aircraft via the British airfield at Lejas during 1944 and their own negotiations eventually bore fruit with the acquisition of an airfield at Santa Maria for military flights from August 1944 and an accord with Pan American to use the field in December that year.⁷⁸

The British could do little to counter persuasive American air power gaining a foothold in the Azores, but this was not the only area they felt pressure from their ally. Although beyond the scope of this essay, American post-war civilian aviation interests began to make themselves felt in alliance diplomacy in the later years of the war.⁷⁹ With considerably less productive capacity than the Americans, the British had opted to focus on bomber and fighter aircraft production for the duration of the war. Under the Arnold-Powers Agreement of 1942, the British agreed to cede military transport aircraft production and supply to the Americans. This had clear implications for the domination of the post-war airline industry because it would use converted American military aircraft as no viable British alternative existed. Although the British Brabazon Committee planned to recapture sectors of the market with

⁷⁶ Roosevelt to Churchill January 17, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence II*, 667.

⁷⁷ Churchill to Roosevelt January 19, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill January 22, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence II*, 674 and 677.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 12 ‘Pan Am Goes to Santa Maria,’ in Herz, *Operation Alacrity*, 304-18.

⁷⁹ See Alan P. Dobson, *Peaceful Air Warfare – The United States, Britain, and the Politics of International Aviation* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991 and Alan P. Dobson, *FDR and Civil Aviation – Flying Strong, Flying Free* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

technologically superior aircraft, the Americans would dominate the immediate post-war aviation industry. This led them to see the coming rivalry with the British in terms of routes and access rather than aircraft.⁸⁰

Indicative of this was a small dispute that arose over a US request to halt an Air Ministry plan to survey Clipperton Island in the eastern Pacific. The US feared that Britain was looking for post-war air routes that circumvented the US. The island was actually under French control, but the US established radio and weather facilities there without permission anyway.

Churchill feared the Americans wished to take advantage of their wartime concentration on transport aircraft writing to Roosevelt ‘You will have the greatest navy in the world. You will have the greatest air force. You will have the greatest trade. You have all the gold.’ Roosevelt brushed aside Prime Minister’s protests and his further complaints about a recent bi-lateral civil aviation agreement with Republic of Ireland.⁸¹ The competition over access and routes was clearly the American priority. Roosevelt was quite willing to use Lend-Lease supplies to encourage the British to make a post-war civil aviation agreement advantageous to the Americans. He advised Churchill ‘We are doing our best to meet your lend-lease needs. We will face Congress in that subject in a few weeks and it will not be in a generous mood if it and the people feel the United Kingdom has not agreed to a generally beneficial air agreement.’⁸² As the war progressed, it increasingly looked as if Roosevelt took a more global Mahanian view that prioritised ‘national wealth and greatness.’

⁸⁰ Jeffrey A. Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet – The Anglo-American Fight For Aviation Supremacy* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007, 29-38.

⁸¹ Churchill to Roosevelt November 28, 1944, Roosevelt to Churchill November 30, 1944 and Roosevelt to Churchill March 15, 1945 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 419-24 and 566.

⁸² Roosevelt to Churchill November 24, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 407.

Anglo-American air power did not just present opportunities to persuade one another it also presented the possibility of joint proposals to the Soviets as the third member of the 'Grand Alliance.' In 1942, Roosevelt and Churchill had to advise Stalin there would be no second front in Europe that year and that they would cut back supply convoys to Russia. Facing a difficult diplomatic situation with their ally, the President and Prime Minister searched for a counter to, in Churchill's words, 'take the edge off various Russian disappointments about the Second Front in 1942, about the PQ Convoys, etc.'⁸³ Churchill, in a letter to Roosevelt dated August 30, 1942, suggested placing an Anglo-American Air Force on the southern flank of the Russian armies in the Caucasus to strengthen Russian air power, to shield interests in Persia and Abadan and for the moral effect of good comradeship in an operation known as VELVET. He also suggested it might make Stalin more amenable to asking some 'favors' for the Poles.⁸⁴ Roosevelt was in 'full accordance with the desirability of it [VELVET]' stating 'I appreciate the importance of Stalin knowing that we mean business.'⁸⁵

Roosevelt encountered some opposition to this further commitment from his military commanders, particularly Gen. Marshall, who called it out as a 'moral' rather than practical decision. The President began to row back in late September suggesting 'I am convinced that the air force should be made up entirely of British units under British control' and delaying making a final decision on the deployment.⁸⁶ Warren Kimball suggests that Roosevelt eventually insisted on the force for the Caucasus with his military, announcing on October 6 that 'we are prepared to send a heavy bomber group to VELVET in addition to an air

⁸³ Churchill to Roosevelt December 3, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 57-59.

⁸⁴ Churchill to Roosevelt August 30, 1942; Churchill to Roosevelt September 14, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol I, 579 and 594.

⁸⁵ Roosevelt to Churchill August 30, 1942 and September 15, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence*, I, 584 and 596.

⁸⁶ Roosevelt to Churchill September 24, 1942 (not sent); Roosevelt to Churchill September 26, 1942 and Churchill to Roosevelt September 28, 1942 in Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 607, 612-613.

transport group. I am anxious that we have on that front a real Anglo-American Air Force.⁸⁷

Churchill then sent the offer to Stalin on October 8, 1942 emphasising the joint effort by stating ‘The President and I’ are anxious ‘to put an Anglo-American Air Force on your southern flank and operate it under the strategic control of the Soviet High Command.’⁸⁸

Stalin showed scant interest in the idea and by late October, Churchill was starting to feel despondent with ‘no progress made in the necessary arrangements with Russia.’ Roosevelt was not ‘unduly disturbed’ having decided ‘that they do not use speech for the same purposes that we do.’ He went on that ‘I feel very sure the Russians are going to hold this winter and that we should proceed vigorously with our plans both to supply them and to set up an air force to fight with them. I want us to be able to say to Mr. Stalin that we have carried out our obligations one hundred percent.’⁸⁹ Roosevelt inadvertently identified the supply

vulnerability contained in the offer. Stalin now came back with a counter proposal to accept the aircraft only as an increase to Soviet production allotments rather than the Allied piloted force. Churchill was dismissive that ‘the replacement of the whole or greater part of VELVET force by the equivalent in aircraft... would destroy the whole Raison D’Etre of the plan.’ He further explained that since the offer ‘immense improvements have occurred in the Russian position on the... Southern front. At the same time by the Anglo American successes among the whole North African front we have shown the Russians that we are active comrades in the war and they are impressed by this.’ Churchill therefore did not ‘wish to force upon them what it costs us so much to give.’⁹⁰ Roosevelt was unwilling to give up on VELVET so easily stating ‘I would not wish to give him any authority to call that enterprise

⁸⁷ Roosevelt to Churchill October 6, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 620.

⁸⁸ Churchill to Roosevelt October 7, 1942, October 8, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* I, 621-623, 628 and 630.

⁸⁹ Churchill to Roosevelt October 24, 1942 and Roosevelt to Churchill October 27, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence*, I, 637 and 643. Stalin agreed to the proposal in a message to Churchill forwarded to Roosevelt November 13, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. I, 671.

⁹⁰ Churchill to Roosevelt December 3, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 57-59.

off because it seems to me to have great political and possibly military advantages.’ Quite what the great political advantages were is unclear, but they were possibly a mitigation of future Allied disappointments of the Soviets on the way, with the decision to pursue a Mediterranean strategy in 1943 leading to further convoy cancellations. Churchill replied ‘I entirely agree.’⁹¹

It was not the last time that the British and Americans used air power to attempt to placate the Russians. Indeed, the contribution of the Allied strategic air campaign proved a stalwart excuse for delaying the land invasion of Europe in the face of Soviet protests until the spring of 1944. Stalin had rejected VELVET and this left Roosevelt sending a plaintive message to Stalin that ‘I am just not clear as to just what has happened in regard to our offer of American air assistance in the Caucasus.’⁹² The Americans persisted, however, and the scheme eventually mutated into cooperation with the Soviets in the strategic bombing campaign with the ‘Shuttle’ missions of Operation Frantic using bases in the Ukraine during the summer of 1944. Roosevelt had raised the matter at the Tehran Conference in late 1943 and Stalin finally agreed after months of complex negotiations involving Ambassador Harriman in Moscow and Roosevelt’s son, Elliott, a Colonel leading a Photo Reconnaissance Wing flying in Europe. By that stage of the war, immediate American motives were to aid the strategic bombing campaign and set a framework for future bombing missions to Japan from bases in Siberia. For Roosevelt, it also provided another opportunity to encourage friendly relations with the Soviets and demonstrate the selflessness of the US to the cause of victory. Stalin was lacklustre in this enthusiasm and the operation proved a costly and frustrating failure. The Russians certainly felt they could learn from American methods and technology, but foreign

⁹¹ Roosevelt to Churchill December 6, 1942 and Churchill to Roosevelt December 6, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 61. See also Churchill to Roosevelt December 8, 1942 and Roosevelt to Churchill December 8, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* II, 65.

⁹² Churchill to Roosevelt December 17, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol II, 78.

aircraft on home soil would expose acute vulnerabilities to possible future American air attack and interfere with plans for the subjugation of Eastern Europe. It was, perhaps, more than Stalin's paranoid regime could contemplate.⁹³

Moral Air Power

Both Britain and the US had few qualms about conducting a general strategic bombing campaign in Europe. After the Butt Report of August 1941 highlighted the RAF's inability to hit specified targets with any degree of accuracy, it officially became a campaign of area rather than precision bombing for the British. From February 14, 1942, they specifically 'focussed on the morale of the enemy civil population,' a policy implemented by the new head of RAF Bomber Command, Arthur Harris, appointed less than a week later.⁹⁴ Churchill appeared enthusiastic about the change, writing to Roosevelt in March 1942 that 'Never was there so much good work to be done and so few to do it. We must not let our summer attack on Germany decline into a second rate affair.'⁹⁵ He later added that 'I am sure we should be missing great opportunities if we did not concentrate every available Fortress and long range escort fighter as quickly as possible for the attack on our primary enemy.'⁹⁶ Despite his earlier appeals to refrain from bombing, Roosevelt shared Churchill's view of bombing as a necessity once in the war.⁹⁷ Stating his true feelings to his friend Henry Morgenthau in 1941 he said 'I have suggested again and again that if they [the British] sent a hundred planes over Germany for military objectives that ten of them should bomb some of these smaller towns that haven't been bombed before...That is the only way to break German morale.'⁹⁸

⁹³ Overy, *Bombing War*, 232. Hansen, *Enfant Terrible*, 376.

⁹⁴ Friedrich, *The Fire*, 67-68 and 70.

⁹⁵ Churchill to Roosevelt March 29, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol I, 435.

⁹⁶ Churchill to Roosevelt September 16, 1942 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. I, 598.

⁹⁷ Overy, *Bombing War*, 282.

⁹⁸ Crane, *Airpower*, 68.

Both the British and American leadership repeatedly denied in public that they were in the business of the indiscriminate bombing of Germany. In a House of Commons debate on bombing in late 1943, the Secretary of Air Sir Archibald Sinclair repeatedly contended that British policy remained focussed on military targets and not area bombing. This was after the Operation Gomorrah attacks on Hamburg in July 1943 and the commencement of the ‘Battle of Berlin’ in November that clearly suggested otherwise.⁹⁹ Roosevelt used a similar evasion to deny any American participation in indiscriminate bombing when his military knew that both the technological limitations of the day and the poor European weather made it highly probable on occasion. In a speech to Congress on September 8, 1943 Roosevelt claimed ‘We [Americans] are not bombing tenements for the sadistic pleasure of killing as the Nazis did, but blowing to bits carefully selected targets – factories, shipyards, munition dumps.’¹⁰⁰ Whatever Roosevelt might say in public, neither he nor his military commanders had any aversion to terror bombing when it suited their purposes. In September 1944, he requested a study on the ‘psychological and morale’ impact of bombing and ordered plans prepared, as indeed all other combatants did, for chemical and bacteriological warfare if the situation arose.¹⁰¹ Local American commanders may have been keen to distance themselves from British area bombing at times, but their disquiet with operations such as Clarion (attacking communications) and Thunderclap (bombing German towns including Dresden) in 1945 were for practical or public opinion reasons rather than a moral position.¹⁰²

The American military confirmed that they were comfortable with indiscriminate bombing when they put forward a plan, supported by Roosevelt, at the end of March 1945 to use ‘war-

⁹⁹ A. C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities – Is the Targeting of Civilians in War Ever Justified?* London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, 196-7. The Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, issued similar denials, Friedrich, *The Fire*, 82.

¹⁰⁰ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 187.

¹⁰¹ Schaffer, *Wings*, 89 and Overy, *Bombing War*, 381.

¹⁰² Crane, *Airpower*, 7.

weary' bombers packed with 20,000 pounds of high explosive against German targets set on course with approximate timing devices. They had tried similar methods before on a smaller scale in the summer of 1944 with the 'Aphrodite' and 'Anvil' experiments using remotely guided pilotless bomb planes directed at V-Weapon sites in France. These had been ineffective and cost several lives, including that of Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., in an accidental detonation over East Anglia. Keen on the latest project, Roosevelt complained to Churchill that 'your Chiefs of Staff originally agreed' after they withdrew their agreement probably because of concerns that the bombers would be ineffective. Roosevelt enthusiastically continued 'My Chiefs of Staff inform me that they consider this weapon to be the most valuable in our all-out offensive against Germany...many lucrative targets in the industrial areas of Germany can be levelled and the German effort correspondingly weakened.' Responding to British concerns over retaliation, he added 'I can assure you that pilotless bombers will be launched only from bases in the continent which would appear to minimize the chances of retaliatory action against England. The enemy need to 'feel the full weight of our resources at this propitious hour'¹⁰³

Churchill remained reluctant to give permission for the indiscriminate attacks with such weapons.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, it was an American political decision and the Prime Minister handed it back to Truman who closed the matter in April 1945. Nobody wanted to authorise such an unwarranted and risky scheme so close to the end of the war.¹⁰⁵ Far better to demonstrate the continued moral benefits of aircraft with Churchill requesting a joint Anglo-American demand that the German government permit the Allies to provide food and medicine for the German occupied Netherlands via an emergency airdrop. Roosevelt agreed a joint message

¹⁰³ Roosevelt to Churchill March 29, 1945 and note Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 591-592.

¹⁰⁴ Schaffer, *Wings*, 85. Overy, *Bombing War*, 574.

¹⁰⁵ Biddle, *Rhetoric*, 241. Sherry, *Rise*, 263.

but died before he saw the results with Operation Manna run by the RAF and Operation Chowhound run by the USAAF in late April early May 1945.¹⁰⁶

None of the above meant that either leader was blind to the moral constraints on the use of air power. Churchill clearly had his personal doubts about the aerial destruction visited on Germany. Richard Casey, serving in Churchill's war cabinet, recorded in his diary that on watching a film of RAF bombers in action over the Ruhr, Churchill exclaimed 'Are we animals? Are we taking this too far?'¹⁰⁷ For either the Prime Minister or President to respond publicly to these concerns or alter policy, however, required the political or diplomatic implications of the question to have a bearing. There was certainly opposition to 'obliteration bombing' in Britain manifested in the Bombing Restriction Committee and particularly the work of writer and campaigner Vera Brittain. In her *Seeds of Chaos* published in early 1944, Brittain exposed the euphemisms used by politicians and air leaders to hide the reality of the bombing of Germany. In doing so, she aimed to counter the argument that the campaign would shorten the war and prove that it was only a continuation of atrocities similar to those committed by the Germans.¹⁰⁸ The book generated little response in a war weary United Kingdom, but an indignant one in the United States. Published as 'Massacre by Bombing' in *Fellowship Magazine*, 28 well-known clergymen signed it in approval. The insinuation that America was involved in something morally wrong prompted a furious public response. The *New York Times* reported their mail ran 50 to 1 against Brittain's argument. Counter commentary in press and journal editorials ranged from the need to do what is necessary in war to outright accusations of Brittain giving a mouthpiece to Nazi propaganda.¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁶ Churchill to Roosevelt April 9, 1945, Roosevelt to Churchill April 10 and 11, 1945 Kimball, *Correspondence III*, 621, 623 and 631.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 88.

¹⁰⁸ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 182-183.

¹⁰⁹ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 201-203.

controversy reached the White House where Roosevelt's confident political assessment of the country's mood led to a stinging series of rebuttals. Under Secretary of War Robert Patterson accused the Bombing Restriction Committee of 'giving encouragement to the enemy.' Eleanor Roosevelt called Brittain's argument 'sentimental nonsense.' The president himself got his Press Secretary, Steve Early to respond to the original *Fellowship* article with a depiction of a stark conflict between civilization and destruction and arguing for the necessity of bombing to shorten the war.¹¹⁰

With the potential bombing of culturally sensitive sites or occupied countries and peoples, both Roosevelt and Churchill drew on a language of military necessity and moral superiority to justify their decisions. When the question of bombing Rome and areas close to the Vatican arose in 1943, both were happy to forego cultural sensitivities and give permission for entirely practical military reasons.¹¹¹ Roosevelt, however, made particular efforts to maintain moral authority. In outlining the response to a request from the Pope in late 1942 that Rome not be bombed, Roosevelt fell back on his pre-war desire to exclude 'unfortified cities' from bombing. He wrote to Cordell Hull 'I really think that England and the United States could agree not to bomb Rome on condition that the city itself, outside the Vatican, be not used in any shape, manner or form either by the Germans or the Italians for war purposes.' He then added 'I should think that we might consider that it is up to the Vatican itself to propose that Rome be demilitarized...so that there is no reason for us to bomb it.'¹¹² When the issue resurfaced in 1943 he again placed the moral question in the hands of the Pope and the

¹¹⁰ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 203. Stephen Early 'Letter' *Fellowship* 10 April 1944 in Schaffer, *Wings of Judgement*, 170-71.

¹¹¹ Churchill to Roosevelt January 10, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol, II, 234.

¹¹² Roosevelt to Cordell Hull December 18, 1942 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 451.

Germans by suggesting that ‘the Vatican try to have Rome declared an open city i.e. that all military installations, activities and personnel...be removed from Rome.’¹¹³

Roosevelt further distanced Allied leaders from the moral decisions involved in bombing by placing it within the space of local military commanders. He was clear ‘that Eisenhower should be given full discretion as to the necessity from a military point of view of bombing...and should be given full discretion as to the time if and when he considers the attack advantageous.’¹¹⁴ Placing his faith in the doctrine of precision bombing, he requested that ‘Prior to launching these attacks all pilots concerned must be thoroughly instructed on the geography of the area, the location of the Vatican, and directed that they must not permit any bombs to fall in the Vatican City.’¹¹⁵ This was not an isolated exception, Roosevelt later prompted an outcry from the Vatican when he used similar reasoning for the controversial bombing of Monte Casino Abbey in 1944 arguing it was a German ‘strongpoint’ and telling the press the attack had been a ‘military necessity.’¹¹⁶

The British too were quite capable of deferring to their military as a moral justification of what they were doing to Germany. Churchill and his Chief of the Air Staff, Charles Portal singularly failed to effectively rein in Arthur Harris from prosecuting the RAF’s area bombing campaign and switch to the agreed Allied strategy of attacking oil targets late in the war. Historians have suggested that Churchill was blind to the moral questions of how they were using air power until quite late in the war, not writing a minute questioning area

¹¹³ Roosevelt to Cordell Hull, June 28, 1943 Roosevelt, *Letters*, 468. The first raid damaging several churches took place on July 19, 1944 see Schaffer, *Wings*, 45-46.

¹¹⁴ Roosevelt to Churchill July 4, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 303.

¹¹⁵ Roosevelt to Churchill June 14, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol. II, 250-251 and Roosevelt to Churchill June 15, 1943 Kimball, *Correspondence* Vol II, 252-253.

¹¹⁶ Schaffer, *Wings*, 52.

bombing until March 28, 1945.¹¹⁷ Yet the Prime Minister was equally capable of discussing the cultural or human impact at times with his American ally and their management of air power thus does represent an Anglo-American moral discourse. The clearest example of this is the Allied pre-invasion Transportation plan of 1944. The use of Allied air power in the run up to the invasion of Europe caused considerable disagreement between those who wanted to follow Director of the British Bombing Survey Unit Solomon ‘Solly’ Zuckerman’s plan to attack transportation nodes in the supply area of France and those wishing to continue the strategic focus against Germany. Churchill believed a strategic focus against the German Air Force should be maintained and objected to the transportation plan because the desired result may not be achievable and on the diplomatic and moral grounds that the excessive projected casualties among French civilians (80,000 including 20,000 killed) were unacceptable. In early May 1944, he wrote to Roosevelt:

I am satisfied that all possible care will be taken to minimize this slaughter of friendly civilian life. Nevertheless, the War Cabinet share my apprehension of the bad effect which will be produced upon the French civilian population by these slaughters... They may easily bring about a great revulsion in French feeling towards their approaching United States and British liberators. They may leave a legacy of hate behind them... Consider the matter from the highest political standpoint and give us your opinion as a matter between governments.¹¹⁸

Roosevelt, characteristically, deferred to his military planners (though not his Air Commanders who wanted to continue the strategic campaign) who thought the operation worthwhile. Echoing his decision over Rome he stated ‘However regrettable the attendant loss of civilian lives is, I am not prepared to impose from this distance any restriction on

¹¹⁷ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 175. Richard Overy, *Churchill and Air Power*, Churchill Archives <http://www.churchillarchive.com.mmu.idm.oclc.org/teaching-and-research/in-depth-guides/Overy> accessed October 20, 2019. Friedrich, *The Fire*, 145 is damning of a cynical Churchill.

¹¹⁸ Churchill to Roosevelt May 7, 1944. Churchill also forwarded the concerns of the French Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Massigli. Kimball, *Correspondence III*, 123-24.

military action by the responsible commanders that in their opinion might militate against the success of Overlord or cause additional loss of life to our Allied Forces of invasion.’¹¹⁹

Roosevelt and Churchill, fearful of their forces becoming bogged-down in France, both ultimately appealed to St. Augustine’s argument of a ‘just war.’ Bringing a swift victory and preventing the longer and greater suffering of the enslaved French people was a way around the dilemmas of using their air power in occupied countries.¹²⁰ It was an argument both found could apply equally to their enemies. When called to use Allied air power to put a stop to the Holocaust by either bombing the death camps or the train lines connecting them to the outside world, both leaders demurred. Churchill appeared the most supportive instructing his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden to ‘Get anything out of the Air Force you can and invoke me if necessary,’ but ultimately both he and Roosevelt deferred to their military who resented any diversion from their pursuit of victory.¹²¹ The idea of a ‘just war’ contributed to the growing numbers of German civilian deaths in 1945. Allied air power in Europe, by this stage, had acquired its own momentum policed alternately by either Roosevelt or Churchill to keep the other on track. Not applying its full force now risked sacrificing the ‘just’ nature of the war by causing unnecessary Allied deaths, delaying victory, and risking a future reoccurrence of conflict by appearing to invite diplomacy in moderating the terms of unconditional surrender.

An Augustinian deferral to military commanders to circumvent the moral considerations of air power did contribute to the American firebombing of Japan and eventual use of atomic

¹¹⁹ Roosevelt to Churchill May 11, 1944 Kimball, *Correspondence* III, 127. Biddle, *Rhetoric*, 235. Friedrich, *The Fire*, 105 takes Gen. Spaatz’s protests to Eisenhower at face value rather than motivated by a desire to target Germany’s oil supplies as part of a strategic campaign.

¹²⁰ Friedrich, *The Fire*, 82 and 109 argues Churchill was the more efficient slaughterer for not expressing concern to the Deputy Commander of the Invasion, Air Marshal Tedder.

¹²¹ Friedrich, *The Fire*, 110.

weapons there in 1945, but it would be incorrect to suggest that Roosevelt and Churchill thought of atomic weaponry only in terms of deployment in the war when ready.¹²² There was an Anglo-American personal diplomacy of atomic power suggesting some continuity with conventional coercion, deterrence and persuasion rather than solely following the moral momentum air power acquired in Europe, even if the accent was now overwhelmingly American and increasingly looking toward to post-war world. The limited numbers of weapons initially available to the Americans placed a coercive nature on their use. The deployment of small numbers would not produce national obliteration of the Japanese, but graduated destruction aimed at ending the conflict. With the defeat of Germany and the looming presence of the Soviet Union, negotiation was therefore an increasingly attractive path. Roosevelt and Churchill also at least gave the appearance that they had moral qualms about using atomic weapons. They may well have been partly guided by racialized thinking in their approach to Japan, but both agreed to use atomic weapons only after ‘mature consideration’ in the wording of the September 1944 Anglo-American ‘Aide Memoir.’¹²³ Such mature consideration ultimately meant Secretary of State Henry Stimson striking Kyoto of the USAAF target list because of the potential post-war diplomatic repercussions of destroying such an important Japanese cultural centre rather than refraining from using the weapons entirely.¹²⁴

Roosevelt and Churchill also shared a reluctance to announce publicly the existence of atomic weapons and technology, indicating a concern with the weapon’s deterrent value. Admitting and then sharing information to achieve international control, as directly suggested

¹²² As Grayling does in *Among the Dead Cities*, 152.

¹²³ Schaffer, *Wings*, 171. Sherry, *Rise*, 219. Aide Memoir September 18, 1944 <http://www.fdrlibraryvirtualltour.org/graphics/07-27/7-27-FDR-66.pdf> accessed October 20, 2019. On race, see John Dower, *War Without Mercy – Race and Power in the Pacific War*, New York, Random House, 1987.

¹²⁴ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 152.

by scientist Niels Bohr, would assign atomic weaponry a special place outside normal air power diplomacy, eliminate the clear American lead and make it useless as a deterrent weapon. This was clearly outside the prevailing Anglo-American conception of air power. It fell to Truman to inform Stalin of the existence of atomic weapons in July 1945 (though he undoubtedly already knew of them via his own intelligence sources). Again, this is suggestive of a persuasive element to allied diplomacy and the increasingly tougher line taken by Truman in comparison to his predecessor to secure American interests.¹²⁵ Indeed, Gar Alperovitz has argued that the decision to use atomic weapons on Japan was a diplomatic move intended to impress their significance on the Soviets.¹²⁶ In early atomic diplomacy, it appeared that both practical and moral concerns re-entered the wartime Anglo-American diplomacy.

The Anglo-American personal diplomacy of air power was born in the desire to limit armaments. When this failed, first Britain and then the United States reversed their position and began to rearm, eventually providing a grand stage for Roosevelt and Churchill to share a diplomatic language of air power. Deterrence eventually led to calls for complete ‘command of the air’ by the Allies, first with Britain and France as proxies and then through full American participation. For Roosevelt, this was no Gen. William Mitchell inspired rapid conversion following the Munich Crisis. Instead, like Churchill, he drew on the work of A. T. Mahan and a long experience of watching power deployed in international relations.

The decision by the democracies to achieve command of the air had important implications. It gave a momentum to the use of air power that set a path to the doctrine of ‘unconditional

¹²⁵ See Wilson D. Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman – Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹²⁶ Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, New York, Vintage Books, 1996. See also Wilson D. Miscamble, *The Most Controversial Decision – Truman, the Atomic Bomb and the Defeat of Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

surrender' firmly policed at difference times by Roosevelt and Churchill. This transitioned to the firebombing of Japan in 1945 and only stopped when changing world relations after the defeat of Germany and the nature and numbers of atomic weapons available became apparent. Both leaders avoided the moral questions raised at home by the use of air power because of the number of civilian casualties (in both enemy and occupied nations), the failure to use it to stop atrocities and the bombing of important cultural sites. Arguments of military necessity, enemy responsibility and of 'just war' provided a shared moral discourse that enabled Roosevelt and Churchill to deploy the full diplomatic force of air power.

Despite the personal diplomacy and shared diplomatic language of air power between Roosevelt and Churchill, there were clear Anglo-American tensions. Lend-Lease allotments allowed the British to specialise in fighter and bomber production, but there was a cost to this. The increasing dominance of American aircraft production and air forces gave them a powerful voice in British strategy and command appointments. Churchill, more often than not, had to defer to the Americans or, as with Greece in late 1944, even request their direct help. The complete lack of transport aircraft production left the British particularly vulnerable in the coming peace. Tensions burst into the open over American basing requests in the Azores and over post-war air routes. Air power now increasingly spoke with an American accent as the US conducted its own relations and negotiations that threatened to limit severely commercial opportunities for the British. Roosevelt was perfectly willing to use a diplomacy of air power and American support of Britain as a tool to persuade and coerce Churchill into agreeing to American policy goals. Although Churchill was able to mitigate some of these challenges through personal diplomacy, the period marks a distinct transition from British to American dominance and set the course of early Cold War alliance rivalry between the two nations.

Roosevelt and Churchill's personal air power diplomacy was certainly useful when it came to dealing with Stalin and the Soviet Union. Lend Lease allotments, the strategic bombing of Germany and the offer of an air force serving in Soviet territory all served to mitigate Stalin's disappointment with Allied convoy cancellations and delays to the invasion of Europe. Although Roosevelt was more hopeful than Churchill was, there were undeniable Allied tensions evident with the Soviets that presaged the Cold War. Soviet fears of exposing their vulnerabilities to air attack meant operations like VELVET went nowhere and others like FRANTIC became frustrating failures. There were also clear limits to Allied air power that even Roosevelt appreciated when he steadfastly refused to intervene over Soviet opposition to aid to the uprising in Warsaw. This realistic appreciation of the limits of air power, grounded in Roosevelt and Churchill's long experience in international affairs ultimately led to a return to deterrence with atomic weapons as relations hardened in the emerging Cold War.

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