The Ideal America(n):
Dwight Eisenhower’s Elusive Search

by

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Abstract

Dwight Eisenhower believed in what Scott Nearing defines as “the meaning of America [and] the promise of 1776.” This historically grounded study investigates the idealism that defined Eisenhower’s presidency and asks what an exploration of his idealist understanding of the United States as he believed the Founding Fathers imagined it can tell us about the man, the presidency and the nation. Eisenhower assumed the presidency in the midst of what he considered an apocalyptic struggle for survival with the Soviet Union. For Eisenhower, this conflict of ideologies was a battle for the hearts and minds of humanity. In his determination to (re)construct his idealised vision of the United States, led by an ideal president, Eisenhower merged historic myths of Americanism with contemporary issues to persuade Americans that their victory against godless communism was possible only as they embraced and embodied the nation’s foundational myths and traditional principles. Keenly aware of the power of words, Eisenhower is, however, rarely held up as an exemplar of oratorical ability. Scorned for his garbled syntax and grammatical errors, the persistent under-appreciation of Eisenhower’s language has obscured the ability of historians to properly analyse the nostalgic and mythologised view of the United States he constructed during his eight years as leader of the free world. Adopting a thematic approach, this thesis probes how Eisenhower constructed, perpetuated, and justified his idealised vision, domestically and internationally. Divided into two sections, the first focuses on Eisenhower’s efforts to represent himself as the ideal American president, above politics, committed to the preservation of the Constitution and the survival of the two-party system. The second examines the way Eisenhower engaged traditional American principles of freedom, principle, religion and peace. Within the framework of superpower conflict, re-evaluation of Eisenhower’s rhetoric and presidency based on his commitment to a mythic ideal will prompt another revision of Eisenhower’s position in the history of the Cold War and the American presidency.
INTRODUCTION

The Ideal America(n) President: Dwight Eisenhower’s Elusive Search

The United States of America has been marked to wear the burdensome but glorious mantle of world leadership. Today’s great opportunity… is to make that leadership a moral, intellectual and material model for all time.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commencement Address, Columbia University, 8 June 1950.

To be dedicated to a single purpose – the freedom, strength, prosperity and peace of America – and to strive with all that’s in us to advance the welfare of her citizens – that is the way forward we must seek for America.


I have spent my adult life in public service. This I have been proud to do because of my unshakable belief in America’s great destiny as the world leader for freedom, and because America represents the mightiest temporal power that has ever been developed here on this earth.


“I like Ike.” More than 50 years have passed since Dwight Eisenhower left the White House, yet this simple three-word presidential electoral slogan still can be considered a concise explanation of how an apparent political novice swept to victory in 1952 and maintained an average approval rating any president would envy.1 His role as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in the Second World War catapulted Eisenhower into the public sphere, captured the people’s admiration and reverence and transformed him into a cultural hero.2 For columnist Marquis Childs, in the aftermath of war Eisenhower became the symbol of a “warmhearted, friendly, simple America, personifying the mighty rush, the Niagara, of American power coming into being.”3 Known affectionately by his childhood nickname, “Ike,” it was his possession of these qualities – sincerity, warmth, humility and his famous grin – that cemented his position in the hearts of the American people. Eisenhower, it appears, personified something of a happy paradox – at the same time as he was perceived as an exalted leader, he was identified also as a “down-to-earth” individual.4 With his strong moral compass, dedication

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1 During his eight years in the Oval Office, Eisenhower’s monthly approval ratings averaged 64 percent, a figure never equaled since the Second World War. Jean Edward Smith, Eisenhower: In War and Peace, Random House, New York, 2012, p.xiii.


to principle, and a fervent attachment to democracy that Stephen Ambrose asserts was akin to religious faith, many Americans believed the victorious war-hero was the ideal man to unify and lead the United States through its next great challenge. Eisenhower’s understanding of the world, however, had been profoundly influenced by the Second World War. Like many Americans affected by the experience of war, Eisenhower returned from the ruins of Europe convinced the United States, as Abraham Lincoln had once proclaimed it, was “the last, best hope of earth.”

This thesis investigates how Eisenhower’s presidency was defined by his engagement with American historical traditions, values and foundational narratives as he worked to construct an idealised presidency and (re)construct his vision of an idealised United States. Eisenhower emphasised consistently the wisdom of the Founding Fathers, commitment to the Declaration of Independence and adherence to the Constitution. He believed also in the myth that the United States, chosen by God to lead the world in the quest for liberty and justice for all humankind, stood for “good against evil, right against wrong, democracy against tyranny, and virtue against vice.” In fact, much of our contemporary understanding of the Cold War, of the Soviet Union and of American ideals is, as Mary Stuckey argues, “tinted with the notions of American history as understood by Dwight Eisenhower.” Eisenhower’s conscious application of language, which conflated world history, American history and the Cold War into one cohesive idealised narrative, provides the basis for this historically grounded exploration of the president’s perception of Americanism. This study makes no attempt to define Americanism, in itself a complex task, but rather to analyse Eisenhower’s engagement with his vision of traditional American ideals throughout his eight years at the helm of the world superpower.

This investigation of Eisenhower’s idealism illustrates also his belief that only a nation unified by founding myths and ideals could win the battle for hearts and minds. Eisenhower never downplayed the threat that the Soviet Union’s atheistic communist doctrine posed to the democratic foundations of the United States. Nevertheless, Eisenhower believed American

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9 Ibid., p.245.
democracy, as discrete from Western democracy more generally, was superior to anything the world had to offer. He declared the American system of governance recognised and protected “the right of the individual and…ascribes to the individual a dignity accruing to him because of his creation in the image of a supreme being.”\textsuperscript{10} And, for Eisenhower, it was Americans’ embodiment of these ideals that represented the United States’ clearest path to victory over the Soviet Union. Eisenhower conceived of the Cold War as primarily an ideological conflict, with world opinion his battlefield. Committed to the protection of the American Way of Life as imagined by the Founding Fathers, Eisenhower merged foundational myths with contemporary issues creating an ideologically persuasive vision of the nation that unified Americans behind his presidency.\textsuperscript{11}

Structurally, this thesis has adopted a thematic approach to the analysis of Eisenhower’s presidency. It is divided into two sections with each comprising of four case studies. Each chapter considers a particular American ideal and the way Eisenhower drew upon themes of Americanism to justify political action, fortify national bonds or preserve his ideal American nation. Together, the chapters form a coherent argument: Eisenhower’s idealised vision of the United States and its highest office defined his presidency as he worked to reshape the nation to better reflect those ideals as he perceived them. The first section, “The Presidential Ideal,” focuses on Eisenhower’s construction of his ideal presidential self. Each chapter concentrates on a specific aspect of Eisenhower’s attempt to deliberately represent himself to the American people as an ideal American president, above politics, committed to the preservation of the Constitution and the survival of the two-party system. The second section, “The National Ideal,” examines how Eisenhower engaged with traditional American ideals of freedom, principle, religion and peace. Primarily, these chapters look outward toward the Cold War and are part of Eisenhower’s attempt to construct an idealised American response, as guided by history, toward the ideological conflict with the Soviet Union. In this section, Eisenhower often has a dual audience – he was speaking to the American people and the wider international community. The Cold War has a stronger presence in this section due to Eisenhower’s belief that, in order to score an ideological victory over the Soviet Union, the United States had to be an exemplar of the ideals it championed.

Section one begins with an examination of Eisenhower’s electioneering, which establishes his idealised conception of the American presidency. Eisenhower sought to emulate George Washington’s ideal: the nonpartisan, above the fray, president for all Americans. Yet, as chapter one demonstrates, Eisenhower was concerned about the survival of the United States’ two-party political system. Noting a clear discrepancy between his electoral successes and those of his party, this chapter argues the president faced a conflict of desires as he sought to be both apolitical and reinvigorate the electoral viability of the Republican Party. Chapter two explores Eisenhower’s political idealism, something he defined as “Modern Republicanism.” Eisenhower’s political philosophy aligned with Abraham Lincoln’s and Theodore Roosevelt’s, but brought him into conflict with the party’s conservative Old Guard. Based around the fight over the president’s fiscal 1958 budget, this chapter analyses the struggle Eisenhower faced in convincing Republicans to adopt fiscal conservatism and liberal humanism – in essence, his ideal vision of Republicanism. The remaining two chapters, which examine Eisenhower’s responses to the Bricker Amendment and the crisis at Little Rock, establish his commitment to upholding a traditional, constitutionalist approach to the presidency. When it came to the assault on his presidential authority by the proposed Bricker Amendment, Eisenhower’s response demonstrates how history shaped his view of the presidency and what he considered the proper balance of power. Chapter four emphasises Eisenhower’s utilisation of the Constitution to frame his response to the civil rights crisis. The strengths and weaknesses of Eisenhower’s idealist approach to the presidency are most visible within this analysis. Although his actions illuminate his constitutional idealism, his refusal to provide moral leadership hampered his ability to properly lead the American people toward the realisation of the honoured American principle of equality for all. In each chapter, what emerges is a president actively engaged in the public construction of an idealised presidential image.

Section two focuses on Eisenhower’s vision of his ideal United States. Religion was central to Eisenhower’s ideological conflict with the Soviet Union for he believed democratic government would fail without a spiritual foundation. Chapter five scrutinises Eisenhower’s language and foreign policy actions in order to understand the president’s commitment to religious belief as the United States’ best defensive and offensive Cold War weapon. Eisenhower’s commitment to spiritual faith reveals also his belief in the historic narrative that the United States is a nation on a divine mission to reshape the world in its image. Chapter six shifts the analysis to an investigation of Eisenhower’s defence of freedom against the incursions of McCarthyism. Although Eisenhower directed his appeals towards an American
audience, his language indicates his concern that McCarthy’s actions were tainting the United States’ image and prestige abroad. A substantial portion of Eisenhower presidential scholarship has been focused on telling and re-telling, judging or justifying Eisenhower’s actions during his presidency. Although this chapter uses the McCarthy episode as its case study, the emphasis remains on the importance of Eisenhower’s idealised vision of freedom in the (re)construction of his ideal nation, not on inserting itself into the contentious debate. Analysing the president’s responses to the concurrent crises in Hungary and over the Suez Canal reveals Eisenhower’s commitment to what he considered crucial principles of the American heritage: anti-imperialism and self-determination. Chapter seven further highlights, however, that Eisenhower’s actions were intended to gain a propaganda victory over the Soviet Union. Peace, which Eisenhower promised could be achieved only with justice, is the focus for the eighth and final chapter in this study. Waging peace was a constant theme in Eisenhower’s presidency and, although this investigation ranges broadly across his two terms, the emphasis is centred upon the goodwill tours undertaken in in the twilight of his presidency. This chapter highlights Eisenhower’s unwavering commitment to achieving for the world a permanent and just peace – a goal that dominated his presidency.

The two sections link together to form an image of a president dedicated to reshaping the nation and the presidency, to reflect what he considered ideal based on tradition and his constitutionalism – and how Eisenhower sought to persuade Americans to respond and think the way he thought they should, in line with his idealised vision of the United States. Each of the themes surveyed within this thesis should be considered as representing Eisenhower’s relentless imaginings of an idealised version of the American nation – including the nation’s foremost symbol, the president. Through this survey of his engagement with these American ideals, Eisenhower’s ideological battle for the hearts and minds of the world’s peoples comes into sharper focus.

Eisenhower has been the subject of much academic scrutiny over the past seven decades. Yet, a reliance on the same anecdotes, and continued arguments over judgments made on Eisenhower’s actions, means that there remain new ways to interpret the same past. Instead of making a moral judgement on Eisenhower’s presidency, this thesis asks what an exploration of his idealism can tell us about the man, the presidency and the nation, as he perceived it. Further, over the course of an eight-year presidency, with consistently positive approval ratings and an international prestige that came from his role in the Allies’ WWII victory, the receptivity
of most Americans to the strategies Eisenhower employed demand a re-evaluation of his presidency. Reconsidering Eisenhower’s presidency should prompt also a reassessment of his position and influence within the history of the American presidency.

Before any investigation of Eisenhower’s vision of American idealism can begin, however, this introduction provides an overview to the unique nature of Eisenhower’s popular appeal. Acknowledgement of the president’s popularity is important. For eight years the majority of Americans trusted in Eisenhower to lead them along the right path. That they trusted and revered him is merely one reason why his presidency deserves re-evaluation. It is rare, however, to read a work on Eisenhower’s presidency that does not make some reference to his “garbled syntax.” The persistence of the myth that his supposed difficulty with language during his press conferences equates to an ill-informed, detached and uninterested president is likely one reason his language has long been considered unworthy of detailed examination. The other is summed up by journalist Merriman Smith who acknowledged Eisenhower’s speeches lacked the “guttiness of a Truman stump speech or the drama of a Roosevelt oration.”

Yet, as this introduction establishes, Eisenhower had a rare awareness of the power of words. To discount his presidential language within an overarching examination of his presidency merely because he shunned the gaudy, inflated or high-sounding phrases adored by speechwriters is to miss the profoundly nostalgic and mythologised view of American history he consistently crafted during his eight years in the White House.

The United States of America, like any other nation, has been built upon a series of foundational myths. Although it has been already acknowledged that no attempt will be made to define the full realm of Americanism, to provide context to Eisenhower’s actions and his own idealism, this introduction surveys briefly the history of American exceptionalism. Belief in American exceptionalism is more than a celebration of the nation’s uniqueness and its special virtues. It is the self-elevation of the United States to a higher moral plane than other nations, resulting in a strain of moralism prevalent in US foreign policy.

And, although the Cold War dominated Eisenhower’s presidency, and the threat posed by the Soviet Union guided much of his presidential decision-making, within the confines of this study the emphasis

remains on Eisenhower’s attempts to be the ideal president, presiding over his ideal United States. Exceptionalism in the Eisenhower era was defined partly by the distinct contrast between democracy – naturally embodied by the United States – and totalitarian dictatorships. As Eisenhower himself perceived it, it was up to the American people to win World War III without having to fight it, and this time, to preserve and expand the American Way of Life.

The Phenomenon of “Ike”

The Second World War had not yet even been won before Americans began imagining Eisenhower as their president. Indeed, even though he had held no prior public office, by August 1945 a Gallup opinion poll saw 24 percent of respondents choose Eisenhower as their preferred president.\(^{15}\) It had been with the help of an enamoured wartime press that Eisenhower constructed an image of himself as the common man, dedicated, considerate, humble and possessing a special sort of moral vision.\(^{16}\) In the postwar years Americans decided this was the man they wanted to lead the nation. The intensity of support for an Eisenhower presidency is all the more surprising given his lack of political affiliation, the absence of any pronouncements on the major issues of the day and his repeatedly stressed unavailability for nomination. For journalist William Miller, Americans wanted Eisenhower for their presidency simply because they liked “Ike.”\(^{17}\) And it did not seem to matter to which political party he belonged. Typifying this sentiment, in 1948 general president of the Textile Workers Union Emile Rieve stated: “lots of people think Eisenhower would be a good candidate and with that I agree. But I must say I really don’t know what he stands for. But I would take a chance.”\(^{18}\) In the midst of his first political campaign, the crowds to hear him speak were larger, and more enthusiastic, than his opponent’s. His blunt and simple sincerity, his moral lectures and the magic of “Ike” prompted journalist James Reston to question whether that meant Eisenhower was the preferred candidate, or simply a national hero.\(^{19}\)

Eisenhower’s landslide 1952 election win shattered all voting records as he soared to victory with 34,075,529 votes – at that time the greatest popular vote in American political history.

\(^{15}\) Crable, ‘Ike: Identification, Argument, and Paradoxical Appeal,’ p.188.


The win was not a statement of support for the Republican Party, which managed only a narrow Congressional majority. Instead, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Eisenhower’s almost clean sweep “did crash like a bull thru [sic] a china shop over such political shibboleths [sic] as the labor vote, the farm vote, the votes of minorities, and the traditionally solid south.”

Eisenhower’s election seemed a mandate from the nation for leadership from a great personality who would rise above the strife and partisan nature of politics. Two days before the new president’s inauguration, George Gallup charted Eisenhower’s rise to fame. Gallup defined Eisenhower’s popularity as prolonged and overwhelming to the point that the “public would literally not let him rest on his well earned military laurels.” Moreover, Gallup’s assertion that Eisenhower was the only man in recent history who could have been elected on either party ticket was a testament to the strength of his apolitical popularity. Even his defeated opponent Adlai Stevenson recognised the force of Eisenhower’s personality had been a crucial factor in his resounding electoral defeat.

According to Stephen Whitfield, while the United States’ third president was the first to articulate the ideal of consensus, it was the thirty-fourth president who embodied it: “Virtually everyone liked Ike.” During a whirlwind tour of New Hampshire six months into his presidency, the *New York Times* reported that the enthusiasm that had dominated the election remained. Americans, according to the paper, still shouted that “magic three-letter nickname,” and, as they had during the campaign, held it “aloft in home-made signs.” Two weeks before Eisenhower’s heart attack in September 1955, Reston wrote that the president’s popularity had reached:

> beyond the bounds of reasonable calculation and will have to be put down as a national phenomenon, like baseball. The thing is no longer just a remarkable political fact but a kind of national love affair, which cannot be analyzed satisfactorily by the political scientists and will probably have to be turned over to the head-shrinkers...It is a

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23 Eisenhower’s personality was a contributing factor to his electoral victory. Yet, Stevenson’s belief that this was key to his defeat fails to acknowledge the disillusionment many Americans had with the Democrats after two decades in power and the perception of widespread corruption within the Truman administration. Hyman and Sheatsley, ‘The Political Appeal of President Eisenhower,’ p.443.
remarkable psychological situation. Roosevelt at the height of his popularity never had it so good…There is something very personal about his following.26

According to journalist Arthur Krock, Eisenhower embodied “the American ideal of the democratic leader.”27 The president’s personal charm, genial manner and soldierly bearing, his mental and moral integrity and his compassion all contributed to his appeal. Krock’s insightful assessment of Eisenhower captured the complex nature of his esteem. The personal strengths that generated intense public adoration and made him a popular leader were the source of his political weakness.28

Eisenhower had constructed deliberately the image of himself as a novice politician, above the fray of politics. Yet, according to political pollster Samuel Lubell, he was “as compleat a political angler as ever fished the White House.”29 His apolitical status increased his popularity, but it diminished his political influence. As veteran journalist Walter Lippmann surmised in May 1957: “he has never been willing to break the eggs that are needed for the omelet.”30 Eisenhower’s re-election had been a testament to Lippmann’s argument. The number of popular votes outstripped his 1952 record-breaking tally, and in every region except the Pacific Coast his plurality exceeded that of four years earlier. Nonetheless, this was the first election since 1848 in which a president had failed to carry at least one house of Congress.31 There existed almost a national consensus that Americans liked “Ike” but wanted the Democrats in control of Congress.32 Eisenhower’s refusal to engage in the mudslinging so commonly associated with politics contributed to the burgeoning condemnation of his political abilities. Before Eisenhower had even left office, Norman Graebner presented a scathing assessment of his presidential impact. Never had “a popular leader who dominated so completely the national political scene affected so negligibly the essential historic processes of his time.”33 Although a January 1960 Gallup opinion poll reported that 71 percent of polled Americans approved of Eisenhower’s presidency, the popular image of the president more content to golf than to lead

28 Ibid.
his country had taken hold academically. In 1962 Eisenhower’s presidential performance was judged and found wanting. Informed by a select group of historians, Arthur Schlesinger conducted his presidential performance poll for the second time. The results found Eisenhower languishing in 22\textsuperscript{nd} place, tied with Chester Arthur at the bottom of the below average presidents and just above Andrew Johnson, the only president at that time to have been impeached. Eisenhower was affronted by his position. The former president argued that presidential rankings clearly equated: “an individual’s strength of dedication to oratorical bombast; determination, with public repetition of a catchy phrase; achievement, with the exaggerated use of the vertical pronoun.”

Today, Eisenhower is not remembered as a leading American orator. It ought to come as no surprise, then, that Eisenhower’s speeches rarely are included in collections of the great orators of the modern world. Nor do they appear often in anthologies of American presidential addresses. Yet he should, argues Richard Crable, rank among the United States’ foremost political communicators. While his two-time opponent Adlai Stevenson impressed the literati with his bookish facility with language, Eisenhower’s oratorical successes did not come because of his reliance on traditional ideals of rhetorical superiority. Rather, the magic of his rhetoric arises from the interaction of perceptions that he was a common man, the victorious Supreme Commander, a soldier of peace and a revered American president. But Eisenhower was possessed also of an unusual sensitivity to the power of speech. Words were, for Eisenhower, weapons in his apocalyptic battle with the Soviet Union. In 1952, John Gunther wrote that for years Eisenhower had carried with him two bibles: the first was Fowler’s Modern English Usage; the second Technical English. As president, Eisenhower made deliberate rhetorical choices. He eschewed oratorical flourish in favour of clean, simple prose in order that he might communicate more effectively with the average American. Americans liked “Ike,” liked that he truly was a common man who had risen to become a great military hero.

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36 As quoted in ibid., p.180.
and an uncommonly loved American president. And it was, in large part, his mastery of language that contributed to and perpetuated this image of Eisenhower as president.

So often criticised or overlooked, Eisenhower’s language must be considered a crucial element of his appeal. From the beginning of his foray into politics, Eisenhower endeavoured to simplify the language he used in public. According to the later recollection of speechwriter Malcolm Moos, the man widely considered responsible for coining the famous “military-industrial complex” phrase, Eisenhower abhorred the “lofty turn of phrase” most speechwriters preferred. Rather, he believed his words should reach the average American with a message they believed in, in order to create a bond between the president and the people. During the 1952 presidential campaign, Adlai Stevenson’s “flashy prose” endeared him to intellectuals. By contrast, Eisenhower alienated the literati with what Robert Wright describes as his “folksy, idiomatic, and endearingly convoluted rhetoric.” Eisenhower’s errors of syntax were seen as proof of a lack of intelligence, his convoluted manner of speaking an indication he was ill-prepared to comment on many issues affecting the United States, and his moralising tone was interpreted as evidence his approach to national problems was naïve. Middle Americans, however, appreciated that Eisenhower was not an intellectual. Instead of a flashy but insincere rhetorician, he was a calming and deeply reassuring presence. And so, even as the press wondered whether to quote his verbal meanderings verbatim or repair his fractured syntax, the nation voted for Ike in record numbers.

With the American public suspicious of experts and “eggheads,” Eisenhower well understood that his image as a folksy farm boy from Kansas was no weakness politically. Downplaying his intellectual capacity and adopting a more accessible style of language, even though he was an astute and incisive politician with an excellent command of the English language, enabled Eisenhower to draw a sharp line of contrast between himself and the professional politicians who surrounded him. A fact that escaped most observers in the 1950s and, to a large extent,

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still does today, is that Eisenhower had an essentially rhetorical nature. His keen sensitivity towards the power of language and the discursive strategies he employed to accomplish his presidential goals fail to be acknowledged in many of the works documenting Eisenhower’s presidency. Indeed, many scholars devote little, if any, space to a discussion on his facilities as a communicator, perhaps as Martin Medhurst suggests, because they find little to remark upon. Yet, during the Second World War Eisenhower was a remarkably successful extemporaneous speaker and a “better-than-average” orator in the immediacy of the postwar years.

Near the end of the war, Franklin Roosevelt’s veteran press secretary Stephen Early observed an Eisenhower press conference. He came away a believer, stating: “It was the most magnificent performance of any man at a press conference that I have ever seen. He knows his facts, he speaks freely and frankly, and he has a sense of humor, he has poise, and he has command.” Similarly, Eisenhower worked doggedly for three weeks on the draft for his Guild Hall speech in June 1945. There was no false oratory, no wasted words and those who heard it considered it “a masterpiece of oratory.” Those who worked with him appear only to have encountered the “Guild Hall” Eisenhower. Former speechwriter Robert S. Kieve complained in an interview years later:

> The general public thinks of him as a grandfatherly old man who had no concept of the English language, no interest in it, no feeling for the precision of words, no capacity for determining when a sentence ended and when it began, no knowledge of paragraphing or of organization. And yet in all of these things he had a greater capacity than anybody I’ve ever known…Absolute pedant with the English language. Insufferable.

Nevertheless, the legacy of Eisenhower’s presidential rhetoric is defined by what Medhurst describes as “syntactical complexities, verbal ambiguities, and lackluster style.”

Much of the criticism originated from belief that, in the context of his press conferences, Eisenhower had a problematic rhetorical style. Instead of a man in command of both the press

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48 Medhurst, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator, p.4.
and his language, Richard Conley writes the president was depicted as “poorly skilled at off-the-cuff remarks and seemingly uncomfortable at impromptu question-and-answer forums.”49 The oftentimes evasive, ambiguous or awkward nature of Eisenhower’s press responses still should be seen, however, as deliberate. The president was anything but ill-informed or unprepared for his press conferences. Within the archives at the Eisenhower Library are substantial records of the detailed pre-press conference briefings presided over by the president’s indefatigable press secretary James Hagerty.50 But, as Hagerty himself recalled in a later oral history interview, Eisenhower, in front of an average of 200 press corps, answered extemporaneous questions in which he had: “a split hundredths of a second to try to use his own mind to say, many times, ‘Has this been cleared? Has this been announced? Is this private?’” Hagerty asserted also that, even though Eisenhower was continually criticised for his syntax, he believed each reporter within the Indian Treaty Room understood “exactly what he was talking about.”51

The president confronted the headline-seeking reporters determined to catch him out with trick or loaded questions. Rarely did Eisenhower allow himself to be caught out.52 Political observers nevertheless used his vagueness and ambiguity to question Eisenhower’s intellect, awareness and sophistication.53 His detractors were forced to admit, however, that as a communicator supposedly without apparent ability, Eisenhower enjoyed remarkable rhetorical success with the American people and continually confounded the academic community with the variability of his communication styles.54 The president’s private communications provide further proof of the president’s skill with the English language. Examining his written communications reveals what Meena Bose and Fred Greenstein portray as a “keenly analytical mind and an impressive capacity to analyze policy alternatives and to anticipate their

50 The Press Conference Series of the Eisenhower Papers provide substantive evidence to refute any claims that Eisenhower had little understanding of the goings-on of his administration. Many of the pre-press conference briefing records demonstrate a president aware of the issues brought up for discussion.
Even as the characterisation of Eisenhower as grammatically challenged persists within the scholarship, it must be understood that, regardless of whether he used extraordinarily precise or disturbingly vague language, Eisenhower always was in control of his message.

Eisenhower preferred not to make a speech of any kind unless he had a goal he wished to achieve. Three days before he vacated the White House for John F. Kennedy, Eisenhower delivered his Farewell Address. Broadcast nationally via radio and television, Eisenhower reinforced the image he had been creating for the past eight years of the ideal nation as it faced its atheistic, communist enemy:

Throughout America's adventure in free government, our basic purposes have been to keep the peace; to foster progress in human achievement, and to enhance liberty, dignity and integrity among people and among nations. To strive for less would be unworthy of a free and religious people. Any failure traceable to arrogance, or our lack of comprehension or readiness to sacrifice would inflict upon us grievous hurt both at home and abroad.

Drawing on the nation’s foundations, this was a vision he had articulated time and again. Yet, sandwiched in the middle of his sixteen-minute speech was Eisenhower’s solemn warning to “guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence…by the military-industrial complex.” This short phrase captured the imagination of the nation. And it continues to capture the imagination of historians who appear perpetually focused on extricating his warning from the rest of his speech, determined to unpack exactly what Eisenhower meant, or confirm who came up with the term in the first place.

Eisenhower’s apparently prophetic warning of the “military-industrial complex” and his popularity with the American public are not, as often seems the case, the sum total of his presidency. The nature of Eisenhower’s appeal was unique in American politics, for it freely

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56 Medhurst, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator, p.75.
58 Ibid.
crossed party lines, geographical boundaries and group interests. Daniel Rossides argues that Eisenhower is perhaps the only person to rival Abraham Lincoln, “a man who personified all the most vigorous American values: humble origins, hard work amid adversity, intellectual striving, moral strength, and a common touch,” as a cultural hero. In terms of popularity, however, Rossides believes Eisenhower outstrips Lincoln. There simply is no American in history who has enjoyed more popular esteem than this general-turned-president.

Eisenhower’s popularity with the American public did not always translate to political success. His presidential performance was harshly criticised by intellectuals of the era, yet even his detractors were forced to admit Eisenhower’s ability to transcend all traditional limitations of popular approval. Nonetheless, his alienation from the intellectual community contributed to the portrayal of Eisenhower as a caretaker president, working to obscure his attempts to (re)construct his ideal United States – an idealised vision of a nation destined to achieve victory over the Soviet Union.

**American Idealism**

According to Hilde Restad, the most powerful, persistent and popular myth the American people tell about themselves is that theirs is a nation chosen by God, with a unique mission to convert the world to the American Way of Life. In short, they see the United States as an exceptional nation. Acceptance of American exceptionalism is a deeply rooted national tradition. Americans believe theirs is what Thomas Jefferson termed “the empire for liberty,” and instinctively trust Abraham Lincoln’s declaration that the United States was “the last, best hope of earth.” In the minds of the American public, as Jason Gilmore contends, American exceptionalism is a “national fantasy,” an idea that needs no verification, no tests and “inspires a sense of grandeur and uniqueness in the public mind.”

The core of the idea of exceptionalism is that the United States, born of revolution, was the first nation to be explicitly founded on the consent of the governed, the principle of equality, and every individual’s right

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60 Hyman and Sheatsley, ‘The Political Appeal of President Eisenhower,’ p.444.
62 Almost three decades later Americans would elect Ronald Reagan, another Republican president beloved by the American public but criticised and mocked by many establishment politicians and intellectuals.
to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The colonists created what they perceived to be a morally and politically exceptional nation, an idea that expanded following a second victory in another world war. As chosen by God, their special favoured status grants them an apparent uniqueness shared by no other nation. Possessed of a divine destiny and moral duty to expand their power and the influence of their institutions and beliefs until they dominate the world, Gilmore asserts that the United States believes itself the “redeemer” nation.

Since the birth of their nation, all American leaders and foreign policy officials have taken an oath of office that requires them to serve what Seyom Brown terms the “three-dimensional irreducible national interest: the physical survival and safety of the nation, its economic well-being, and the perpetuation of the American way of life.” In essence, American policymakers must seek “to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” Combined with belief in the nation’s exceptional nature, the resultant impact on US foreign policy is an assumption that policy decisions are necessarily more moral, virtuous and altruistic than other nations. Moralism, traced back to the Puritan era, remains a strong presence in American history, culture and politics. Merging with Puritan moralism is the inherent religiosity of the United States, which requires that, as a principled nation, it go to war only for the highest purpose. This sense of moralism and mission contributed to president Woodrow Wilson’s eventual entry into the First World War. Wilson’s war was ideological, and he worked hard to convince Americans they fought in order that “the world be made safe for democracy.”

Wilson’s Fourteen Points championed the principle tenets of the American Creed. Centred in the belief in equality and in the rights to liberty, Jefferson’s “self-evident truths” were the basis of Wilson’s motivation to see the world embrace American ideals of peace, liberty and democracy, and to establish the principle of self-determination for all peoples in Europe. Even as victory provided clear evidence of the nation’s new international power and influence, Wilson’s subsequent failures reignited the isolationist debate. For one brief, fleeting moment the United States had seemed determined to save the world. During the interwar years, many Americans wanted nothing more to do with it.

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66 Ibid., p.2420.
67 Ibid., p.2421.
69 Davis and Lynn-Jones, ‘Citty Upon a Hill,’ p.23.
Influential *Time-Life* magazine magnate Henry Luce published “The American Century” in the 17 February 1941 issue of *Life* magazine. Ten months before the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Luce beseeched his audience to shake off the isolationism that had shrouded the United States since the nation squandered the “golden opportunity” handed them on the “proverbial silver platter” in 1919 to assume the mantle of world leadership. Luce believed the twentieth century to be the “American Century,” a notion founded upon a vision of the United States that relied heavily on traditional national narratives. And, as the world’s “Good Samaritan,” it remained their manifest destiny to share “with all peoples…our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution.” Luce’s embrace of the nation’s core political ideals reinforced the argument that there existed something unique about the American nation. John Lewis Gaddis argues that, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, even as Franklin Roosevelt privately adopted a pragmatic approach to the conflict based on balance of power politics, he engaged Wilsonian ideology publicly to persuade Americans to support their nation’s entry into the theatre of war. Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms – freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear – were freedoms he argued all Americans ought to be willing to fight for.

Emerging victorious and strengthened from the carnage and destruction of the Second World War, a battle defined as good against evil, heaven against hell and democracy and freedom against tyranny and fascism, reinforced Americans’ belief in their exceptional country. According to Tami Davis and Sean Lynn-Jones, victory became a celebration of the nation’s unique nature and special virtues. Yet, the United States was not the only victor to emerge from the war. With a political ideology at odds with the nation’s embrace of democratic capitalism, the Soviet Union, nevertheless, had been the nation’s wartime ally. But, the peace that emerged out of victory was precarious, the shaky wartime alliance showing already signs of strain. Although allied to defeat Hitler, there was something different about the peace in 1945, with many Americans perceiving the Soviet Union that had emerged from the ruins of war an aggressor capable of inflicting the same kind of devastation on their homeland that had befallen much of Europe and Asia. The United States was the only nation powerful enough to

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76 Davis and Lynn-Jones, ‘City Upon a Hill,’ pp.20-1.
contain the Soviet threat, but to contain meant to entangle themselves in alliances and permanent defence establishments that earlier generations of Americans had abhorred.\textsuperscript{77}

Thus, crystallised by the war, there was an American awareness that peace and freedom were now indivisible. This conviction gave American leaders little choice. In order to safeguard the security and liberty of the United States, they had to defend peace and freedom everywhere. In reverse, a threat to peace anywhere in the world posed a concurrent threat to American security. A loss of freedom anywhere in the world increased the risk of losing Americans’ freedom. Cognizant to the realities of their wartime alliance, in the midst of war Gunnar Myrdal had written that “peace cannot be preserved if the development of a democratic life in every nation is not internationally guaranteed and the possibility of oppression is not checked.”\textsuperscript{78} In the aftermath of war, American policymakers self-consciously sought to avoid what they believed were the mistakes of the interwar years. During the interwar period, the United States had been trapped by the myth of virtuous isolation. The premise of isolationism, however, was not isolation from the global ebb and flow of trade, ideas and migration. Rather, the desire to isolate themselves from entanglement in European affairs had become, even as they involved themselves in war, what Walter Mead defines as the eternal and unchanging principle of the United States, the “foreign policy equivalent of the Bill of Rights: the one true faith, handed down from on high.”\textsuperscript{79}

Bolstered by undeniable economic and military gains, President Harry Truman’s rationale for his postwar activist foreign policy was the embrace of American exceptionalism. Presented to Truman in April 1950 was the National Security Council Paper NSC-68, entitled “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security.” Known also as “The Strategy of Freedom,” unlike traditional geopolitical security papers, its first several pages are devoted to the definition of the apocalyptic struggle between American good and Soviet evil.\textsuperscript{80} NSC-68, whose authors added weight to their argument by engaging the authority of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence, was crucial in fortifying the perception

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of the Soviet Union as the most pressing threat that faced the United States. The foundation for Truman’s foreign policy decisions was ideologically and religiously based, with the historical authority evident within the document lending legitimacy to the American mission. Reading in parts more like homily than policy blueprint, clear evidence was presented of the catastrophe that lay ahead should Americans turn their backs on providence. In years in which the lines between sermon and strategy blurred, American postwar policymakers believed they had the right to reshape the world in the United States’ image.\(^8\)

Victory in two world wars had convinced many Americans of their divine mandate to spread the American cause, now intimately linked with the idea of freedom, to the rest of the world. The nation’s foundational myths, emblazoned in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, bound the American people, secured them to God’s blessing and protection and called them to their historic mission.\(^2\) Fighting the “good war” against an enemy that threatened freedoms central to the American Creed, and to secure the freedom of Europe had played into the sense of mission the American people have for their place in world history. The dissolution of the alliance with the Soviet Union and the onset of the Cold War ensured that the United States, a nation which Peter Onuf claims has become indistinguishable from “democracy,” would have to be the model democratic nation for all to emulate. Jefferson, who had written that the new American nation was “opening…all eyes [to] the rights of man,” could have been referring to the postwar world, for the United States, once again, believed they had proved the right of national self-determination always would overcome the might of empire.\(^3\)

As the new decade dawned, a strengthened belief in the exceptionalism of the United States had become widespread. As Godfrey Hodgson has described it, the precise meaning of exceptionalism had now shifted. Freedom, cherished by the American people since their fight for and declaration of independence, had a new and focused meaning: freedom was defined now in opposition to the Soviet Union’s communist doctrine.\(^4\) Dwight Eisenhower, who was elected by a landslide as the soldier of war but the candidate for peace, combined the nineteenth


century’s belief in God and country with Wilson’s twentieth-century belief in their international mission. The 1950s would bear witness to Eisenhower’s attempts to (re)create his American ideal as he shifted the conflict between the superpowers to one of ideology rather than of “hot war” in his battle for the hearts and minds of humankind.

Conceptual Framework

Since the mid-twentieth century, Western historical inquiry has adopted interdisciplinary approaches offered by the social sciences, linguistics, anthropology and ethnology. This new orientation toward the embrace of conceptual and theoretical impulses offered by other humanities disciplines has become established within the historical discipline. In fact, historians today make use of what Susanna Fellman and Marjatta Rahikainen describe as “a rich conceptual tool box.” This thesis integrates Eisenhower’s discursive constructions of his ideal United States within its wider historical context, namely the Cold War. The broad aim of this study is to locate Eisenhower’s presidential ideals within their proper historical dimension, along with an incorporation of the socio-political environment into the overall analysis. Language and ideology are interdependent, and it is with words that Eisenhower sought to reinforce the ideals of Americanism as he perceived them. Eisenhower’s determination to perpetuate the foundational myths of the United States, as it faced an imposing ideological enemy, must be properly unpacked and contextualised.

This thesis relies upon primary source materials in the examination of Eisenhower’s idealism. His public presidential language, his private correspondence, the plethora of administration memorandums, records of meetings and telephone conversations, Ann Whitman’s diary entries, the dissemination of his discourse and the representation of his presidency in a range of American newspapers all have been drawn upon and scrutinised to build a detailed and thorough picture of the importance of Americanism to Eisenhower. Biographies, presidential studies, edited collections, books and articles devoted to one specific event, speech or period within his presidency all have been consulted to further inform the analysis, confirm dates and events and provide the narrative that binds together this work of history. It must be noted that

85 Inboden, Religion and American Foreign Policy, p.6.
throughout this thesis, numerous of Eisenhower’s included quotes have an added emphasis. All such emphases are Eisenhower’s.

This study is concerned with Eisenhower’s idealism and, as such, the predominant source of analysis is his presidential language. To fully appreciate the depth of Eisenhower’s engagement with American traditions, history and values, this exploration has not restricted itself to a small set of specific speeches, such as his annual State of the Union addresses. Instead, analysis has ranged across his campaign speeches, remarks at educational institutions, addresses to Congress, radio and television speeches to the American people, press conferences, publicly released memoranda and exchanges of letters between political leaders.

With more than 15,000,000 documents making up the Eisenhower Papers, the Eisenhower Presidential Library archives are the richest source of material for any study of Dwight Eisenhower and his presidency. Although this thesis has engaged principally with his public language, accessed via the online resource The Presidency Project, the material gathered during a research trip to Abilene, Kansas, has been invaluable in constructing a more complete image of Eisenhower’s absolute commitment to traditional tenets of the American nation. Archival research was conducted also at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, enabling access to a wide variety of American newspaper sources for analysis within this work. The Columbia Center for Oral History’s Eisenhower Administration Project has been vital to this project. Even though personal recollections are inevitably coloured by bias and the passage of time, the oral histories collected as part of this extensive project provide greater depth and further support for the argument put forth in this work. As a prolific communicator, Eisenhower’s private correspondence has provided another valuable source of primary analysis. Collated and edited by Louis Galambos and Duan van Ee and published by Johns Hopkins University, the Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower include diary entries, letters to friends and family and memoranda to Executive and Congressional members. The access to, and analysis of, his private correspondence adds depth and validity to the assertions made in this thesis about Eisenhower’s ideals during his presidency by recognising his complex and layered communication style. Bose and Greenstein argue that, while much presidential rhetoric

87 The free availability of Eisenhower’s public speeches, proclamations, press conferences, statements and remarks compiled on Project has been instrumental in allowing a broad and comprehensive assessment of Eisenhower’s discourse. John T. Woolley & Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/
analysis is focused on public communications, a president’s private correspondence, whether consistent or inconsistent with his public language, should not be discounted. Private correspondence represents an important source of influence within any presidential administration and can, as Bose and Greenstein assert, shape historical judgments or alter the legacies of particular presidents. For Eisenhower, this is particularly relevant. Thus, Eisenhower’s private correspondence has been examined alongside his public discourse.\(^{88}\)

The modern mass media did not create the rhetorical presidency, yet its ability to provide the president with an almost immediate and large audience has given it some special characteristics by breaking down communication barriers between the president and the people.\(^{89}\) Although a variety of newspapers have been accessed for investigation within this thesis, *The New York Times*, known colloquially as “America’s Newspaper,” was considered the paper to read for foreign policy news in John Foster Dulles’ State Department and, as such, is the primary news source accessed for this thesis. *The Washington Post*, the most important daily newspaper in the American capital, the staunchly isolationist, and determinedly Republican *Chicago Tribune*, numerous African American newspapers including the *Cleveland Call and Post*, the *Arkansas State Press* and *Atlanta Daily World* all have been consulted, too. While broadsheets form the core of newspaper sources, news magazine periodicals also have been considered, such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, and Henry Luce’s *Time* magazine. Contrary to the myth perpetuated at the time that Eisenhower either did not like to read anything longer than one-page, or read only western pulp fiction, Sherman Adams recalls the president looked at several newspapers each morning. Most often his preferred paper was the *New York Herald Tribune*. He seldom read the Washington papers, or those papers that continually printed negative coverage of his administration such as the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. But Eisenhower considered newspapers an important source for keeping his pulse on the mood of the nation.\(^{90}\) In concurrence with the president’s assessment, it is for this reason that newspapers have been widely incorporated into the analysis within this thesis.

Historians, Gary Reichard claimed in 1975, had as yet shown little interest in subjecting the condemningatory assessment of Eisenhower’s presidency, developed by Democrats and liberals,

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to any serious critical analysis. According to Evan Thomas, the image of “granddad in a golf-cart, the do-nothing, platitude-spouting, syntax-mangling, over-the-hill oldest man ever to occupy the White House,” constructed by followers and admirers of John F. Kennedy has been one of the most effective and lasting hatchet jobs in American political history. Even though a few observant journalists saw through it, and Eisenhower’s aides penned memoirs detailing a very different and active president, it was only with the opening of the Eisenhower archives that scholars discovered a more accurate representation of his presidency. Yet, as Thomas rightly observes, the misimpression of Eisenhower as an ineffective leader has shown remarkable endurance. The revisionist analysis that resulted from the release of confidential presidential papers created a radically altered image of Eisenhower as a powerful, vigorous leader whose genius secured peace throughout his presidency. By the mid-1980s, another shift in perception had occurred. Post-revisionists accept the activism put forth by the revisionists, but argue Eisenhower’s presidency was more complex, and less successful than the revisionists had declared. Yet scholars, regardless of their perspective, seem content to continue to revisit certain key events and retell the same anecdotes at the expense of addressing overlooked aspects of Eisenhower’s presidency.

Marquis Childs’ influential 1959 Eisenhower: Captive Hero offers a devastating critique of the president. Pervading Childs’ narrative is an overwhelming sense of disappointment. The victorious wartime hero had not, in his mind, lived up to Americans’ immense expectations. Nevertheless, nestled within his analysis is an awareness that Eisenhower was driven by his belief in the ideals of the American nation: “If he had any single fixed goal it was to restore an era of good will from the simpler America of his memory.” Although Childs appears to appreciate much of Eisenhower’s character, he criticises the president for his apparent inability to make decisions, his tendency to respond reactively rather than proactively and his penchant for delegation. Rather than explore Childs’ assertions regarding Eisenhower’s idealism, scholars sustained this negative view of the president for years. Eisenhower speechwriter Emmet J Hughes’ The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years, straddled the line between strident criticism and admiration for Eisenhower. Hughes’ dismay stemmed from the
intractable political gulf that separated the two men. Initial reviews quickly seized on the criticisms but once again failed to absorb Hughes’ implicit argument that Eisenhower clearly understood the power of language. His healthy scorn for the contrived orator and Hughes’ belief Eisenhower was a man who “rebelled against rhetoric,” provided evidence almost entirely overlooked by the academic community at the time of Eisenhower’s vast capacity for language. It cannot be argued that this scholarly disregard for Eisenhower’s language has persisted. Nonetheless, the most glaring omission within contemporary scholarship remains the lack of detailed investigations into how he used language to shape an ideal United States that aligned with his conception of the nation’s history and traditions. Adopting a post-revisionist perspective of the president, this thesis advances the scholarly conversation on the idealism that shaped Eisenhower’s attempts to (re)construct his American ideal through an in-depth exploration of his presidential language.

The persistence of the contemporary image of “caretaker president” is surprising given the competition provided by respected journalists such as Robert Donovan, Merriman Smith and Arthur Krock whose portrayals of Eisenhower during his presidency were vastly at odds with the caricature intellectuals gleefully constructed. Donovan’s 1956 *Eisenhower: The Inside Story*, which presents an image of a capable president pursuing his moderate agenda, benefited also from access to the White House. As Donovan himself recalled later, his work was “unchallengeable [for] it was just plain record.” Smith published *Meet Mister Eisenhower* in 1955 after having spent hours with the man himself as part of his research. Unlike Donovan’s account of Eisenhower’s first term, Smith intended his work to create a human picture of Eisenhower as president. The portrait that emerges is of a complex, determined and tenacious president. Despite what Smith notes as “some amazing reports to the contrary,” the Eisenhower he saw was an active and involved president. He was also, however, methodical, calm and unruffled – not something that sells papers. Recreational activities and the implications Eisenhower was a “sort of well-meaning, field-and-stream playboy who turns to the bridge table when dusk makes further golf impossible,” was more likely to increase a paper’s readership. Krock, who drew his extensive conclusions of Eisenhower’s abilities as president

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98 Ibid., ‘Oral History Interview with Merriman Smith,’ CCOH, p.4.

from examination of press conference transcripts, constant observations of the president and 
the testimony of “qualified sources,” surmised that: “No intelligent man so plainly concerned 
with the judgment history will make of him could be a lazy or reluctant president.”

Arthur Larson, former special assistant and speechwriter for Eisenhower, did not publish his 
memoir until 1969. Larson’s respect for his boss’ ability with language and political aptitude, 
however, was made plain as early as 1958. Larson’s *Eisenhower: The President Nobody 
Knew*, mounts a well-constructed defence of Eisenhower’s rhetoric, arguing “no one I have 
ever known was more conscientious about his writing, whether as to content, clarity, 
correctness, or style.” The Eisenhower that emerges is a pedant with language and a zealous 
editor who never finished working on a speech until the moment he delivered it to his audience. 
Larson strove to dismiss the “garbled syntax” characterisation of Eisenhower’s press 
conference utterances claiming the president’s awareness of the trouble one simple, carelessly 
chosen remark could make was responsible for the oftentimes stilted and awkwardly 
constructed responses. As with all who worked with Eisenhower, Larson’s president is 
markedly removed from the caricature. Suffused with his disappointment at the attitude taken 
by many within the Eisenhower administration, E. Frederic Morrow’s 1963 *A Black Man in 
the White House* presents a remarkably honest account of his time working for the president. 
Even as he regretted Eisenhower’s inability to fully comprehend the discrimination faced by 
African Americans in the 1950s and the conservative position he took on civil rights, Morrow’s 
diary entries reveal that he persevered in his role because he believed in Eisenhower’s 
“character, decency and courageous spirit.” Morrow does not dismiss what he terms 
Eisenhower’s “derelictions,” yet affirms his belief that whatever defects the president had he 
was not indifferent or without dedication to the cause of equality for all American citizens.

The opening of the archives at the Dwight D. Eisenhower presidential library enabled scholars 
to reappraise critically the Eisenhower legacy. Yet, within this vast literature on Eisenhower 
there exists little analysis of his use of American history and foundational symbols to maintain 
his vision of an ideal United States. Nevertheless, there are scholars that cross a variety of

100 Krock, ‘Impressions of the President,’ p.34.
disciplines including history, communication studies, religious studies and presidential studies including Martin Medhurst, Kenneth Osgood, Mary Stuckey and Ira Chernus who have undertaken to analyse the merits of Eisenhower’s presidential language and his idealist nature. Their works, reviewed below as part of the evaluation of the literature, have been significant in informing the exploration of Eisenhower put forward in this study. It is, of course, impossible within the space constraints of a doctoral thesis to acknowledge and review more than a scant selection of the more than six decades of academic literature that engages with Dwight Eisenhower and his presidency. Subsequently, the works of scholars who have engaged in some way with the notion of idealism and language within Eisenhower’s presidency have been prioritised within this historiographical assessment.

The first scholar to engage with Eisenhower’s archival records was Herbert Parmet. Published in 1972, Eisenhower and the American Crusades portrayed an active and commanding president. Written by a self-proclaimed “Stevenson Democrat,” Parmet’s work was characteristic of the initial flurry of revisionist assessments – his initial anti-Eisenhower bias shifted, somewhat reluctantly, into an almost surprised appreciation of Eisenhower’s presidential abilities. Parmet credits Eisenhower as a speaker, describing his first State of the Union address as spoken “with eloquence and with intonations that gave the impression that his mastery of the problems had given him full command of the material.” Parmet argues Eisenhower’s public speech was intentional. Maintaining his popularity with everyday Americans and in order to embody the popular image the public had of him, Eisenhower spoke deliberately like an average American in public. Thus, the presidential candidate in 1952:

was clearly not the same man who had won such wide respect with his Guild Hall speech in London back in 1945. His mission was different and so was his strategy…He had never had much use for what he considered pretense anyway.

Parmet made exhaustive use of the Eisenhower archives, along with numerous oral history interviews of former Eisenhower associates and aides, and his work demonstrates his

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107 Parmet, Eisenhower & the American Crusades, p.194.

108 Ibid., p.117.
understanding of why Eisenhower undertook such a deliberate discursive strategy. Parmet acknowledges Eisenhower’s dedication to, and pride in, the United States, his belief that American democracy was “superior to anything the world had even seen and as good as its people desired” and discerns his political ideology as a “delicate blend of conservatism and internationalism.” Nevertheless, his work fails to fully explore how this idealism shaped Eisenhower’s presidency.109

The explosion of revisionist works in the 1970s – what Jeff Broadwater defines as the “Eisenhower renaissance” – paralleled the deterioration of the Cold War liberalism that had dominated the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the aftermath of Vietnam, Watergate, double-digit inflation and the Iranian hostage crisis, Broadwater believes Eisenhower benefited from a rush of nostalgia for a supposedly simpler past and a fall in expectations of presidential success.110 In his historiographical assessment of Eisenhower revisionism, Stephen Rabe argues that the surge in interest in the Eisenhower presidency and the abrupt revisionist shift in perspective of his abilities is most easily explained when understood that access to documentary evidence dictates scholarly research. And the members of Eisenhower’s administration were “inveterate diarists, memoirists, notetakers, and recorders of conversation.”111 Still, Rabe agrees with Broadwater’s assessment: as the popular mood has soured in the United States, Eisenhower’s reputation spiked, and the president accordingly has “become a man for all political seasons.”112 For Rabe, the works of Robert Divine, Fred Greenstein and Stephen Ambrose defined the revisionist movement and sustained Eisenhower’s much improved presidential reputation.113 Rabe however believes the first generation of revisionists, in an overreaction to the contemporary caricature of the president, inflated Eisenhower’s successes and, as Richard Immerman argues also, distorted his record. Indeed, Richard Immerman’s 1990 ‘Confessions of an Eisenhower Revisionist: An Agonizing Reappraisal,’ is emblematic of the first generation of post-revisionist scholars. Admitting his discomfit with the revisionist label, Immerman nevertheless acknowledges he considers himself a revisionist.114 Yet, Immerman, like Rabe, H.W. Brands, David Anderson, Duane

112 Ibid., p.98.
113 Ibid., p.99.
Tananbaum and Burton Kaufman, have shifted the debate around Eisenhower once again. Rabe succinctly summarises the post-revisionist perspective these scholars adhere to: accept the revisionist perspective but know that the avoidance of war is not peace.\(^ {115} \) Post-revisionist literature often present readers with a nuanced, and ultimately realistic portrayal Dwight Eisenhower. Yet, although Immerman, who believes Eisenhower “entered the White House with a highly developed world view and extreme self-confidence,” considers it essential that analyses of the Eisenhower presidency incorporate an examination of the president’s “predispositions, core values, and belief systems” into their work, it must be acknowledged that the tendency towards judgment continues to overshadow this integrated style of assessment.\(^ {116} \)

Those historians who equate presidential greatness with personal activism and soaring rhetoric miss the significance of Eisenhower’s presidency and institutional legacy.\(^ {117} \) Robert Ivie believes unquestionably that it is the distractions of Eisenhower’s supposed limitations as an orator which has diverted critical attention away from the rhetorical sophistication of his presidency. For Ivie, his representation of Eisenhower is as the ultimate Cold Warrior. Ivie argues that, even as perceptions of Eisenhower’s presidency shift with time, scholars continue to overlook the “lasting influence of Eisenhower’s Cold War presidency on the nation’s political culture.”\(^ {118} \) And that, according to Ivie, was the “rhetorical legacy of fear that perpetuated the age of peril” constructed by Eisenhower, which positioned the Cold War as the ultimate battle between good and evil.\(^ {119} \) Although Ivie’s eventual conclusion mirrors the conclusions reached within this study – that a problematic element of Eisenhower’s presidential legacy has been his insistence that Americans can achieve peace on their own terms – this thesis argues instead that Eisenhower’s idealist understanding of the United States defined his response to the Cold War.\(^ {120} \)

\(^ {115} \) Rabe, ‘Eisenhower Revisionism,’ p.114.
\(^ {116} \) Immerman, ‘Confessions of an Eisenhower Revisionist,’ p.323.
\(^ {119} \) Ibid., p.17.
\(^ {120} \) Robert L. Ivie, ‘Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “Chance for Peace,”: Quest or Crusade?’, Rhetoric & Public Affairs, 1/2, 1998, p.228.
Within the works of historian Kenneth Osgood, another portrayal of an ardent Cold Warrior emerges. Osgood asserts that when Eisenhower arrived at the White House in the winter of 1953, the new president was in fact still the General, determined to “prosecute the Cold War with the same intensity as the world war that had brought him fame.” The emphasis in each of Osgood’s analyses, understandable for a man with a specific interest in propaganda, intelligence and political history, is Eisenhower’s commitment to, and deployment of, psychological warfare strategies against the Soviet Union. Osgood’s understanding that the battle for hearts and minds was vitally important to Eisenhower validated the early conclusions reached during the research for this study. For eight years, the administration’s propaganda and psychological warfare strategies all had one purpose: to win the peace and thus the Cold War through a sustained campaign to gain influence and alliances around the world. As Osgood affirms, the “highest priority” of American psychological strategy in the Eisenhower administration was to convince the world of the United States’ peaceful intentions. The language of peace that Eisenhower constructed was, according to Osgood, a deliberate strategy to shift the emphasis of American propaganda away from the seemingly futile virulent anti-communism toward the promotion of positive themes about the American nation and its people. Nevertheless, Osgood’s sustained emphasis on propaganda and psychological warfare within the context of Cold War has the unfortunate effect of appearing to lessen the sincerity of Eisenhower’s commitment to the protection and preservation of the ideals of Americanism.

Mary Stuckey’s *The President as Interpreter-in-Chief* and *Defining Americans: The Presidency and National Identity* present nuanced evaluations of Eisenhower often not present in generalised presidential studies. Stuckey recognises that within the context of the conflict with the Soviet Union, Eisenhower’s presidential language defined the United States as on the

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122 Osgood, ‘Words and Deeds,’ p.3.

123 Ibid. pp.3 & 5 and Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p.3.

124 Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p.75.

125 Ibid., p.363.
With Eisenhower’s ideological vision of the United States evident in the language Stuckey examines, the image she constructs of the president is of a Cold Warrior also. Yet, unlike Ivie’s analysis, Stuckey exposes what she considers the deliberate nature of Eisenhower’s attempts to unify Americans behind traditional ideals of Americanism in the face of aggressive Soviet expansionism. Using language everyday Americans could relate to, Eisenhower’s rhetoric was designed to encourage a very specific American citizen – religious, stable and faithful to the ideals of the Founding Fathers as articulated by Eisenhower. Driven by a sense of divine mission, the president’s ideological justifications resulted from the necessity of preserving the past as much as it did from protecting the future.

Fred Greenstein, author of the often-cited *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, is another self-proclaimed “Stevenson Democrat.” Before the 1950s had come to an end, Greenstein, a political scientist, was already lecturing his students to view Eisenhower as he and his colleagues did – a “good-natured bumbler,” who lacked the leadership qualities to be an effective president. Yet, after extensive research, in 1979 Greenstein reached the following conclusion: “Eisenhower was politically astute and informed, actively engaged in putting his personal stamp on public policy, and applied a carefully thought-out conception of leadership to the conduct of his presidency.” His conclusions were based on three forms of evidence he found throughout the Whitman files. The first was the transcripts of Eisenhower’s conversations and conferences, second were the markups and insertions in numerous drafts of speeches and correspondence and, finally, his personal correspondence. Greenstein’s analysis revealed to him a skilled and sophisticated application of language and supported his argument for Eisenhower as an activist president.

Although Greenstein’s works emphasise Eisenhower’s self-conscious adoption of a covert, or “hidden-hand” style of leadership, he recognises the instrumentality of language in the construction of Eisenhower’s public presidential persona. Willing to replace the clear and

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126 Stuckey, *The President as Interpreter-in-Chief*, p.57.
130 Ibid. p.587.
analytic language that dominated his private correspondence and speech, Eisenhower deliberately adopted a layered communication style depending upon his audience.\(^{132}\) Greenstein argues also for Eisenhower’s deliberate adoption of a public persona, that his winning smile and magnetic personality were not wholly spontaneous or free of calculation. That persona was an apolitical president, consistent with his view that the presidency, and thus himself, should be seen as representative of the American populace as a whole, not just of one party. This, for Greenstein, is a distinguishing characteristic of Eisenhower’s presidency, one that allowed him to maintain a high level of popular support as the head of state, but which weakened and limited his successes as an executor of national policy.\(^{133}\) Greenstein has acknowledged the profound impact Eisenhower’s political convictions had upon his presidency and believes his reason for taking up the presidency was his concern about the state of the world order. Yet, in focusing so completely on the practical application of Eisenhower’s leadership style, Greenstein appears to have overlooked the impact of history and tradition on why Eisenhower chose to construct his presidency the way he did. Nor does Greenstein credit the sincerity within Eisenhower’s construction of his ideal presidential self. Nevertheless, Greenstein’s analyses enabled a greater awareness of the deliberateness of Eisenhower’s public persona as a specific articulation of his idealism.

Communication scholar Martin Medhurst is an established authority on Eisenhower’s presidential rhetoric.\(^{134}\) For Medhurst, Eisenhower’s language designates him as the ultimate Cold Warrior, engaged in discourse that looked towards a future that belonged to the free.\(^{135}\) Medhurst, who argues that Eisenhower’s understanding of the Cold War was rhetorical in nature – that rhetoric was a weapon in the arsenal of democracy – seems to have based his examinations of Eisenhower’s language wholly within this Cold Warrior context.\(^{136}\) Medhurst’s works indicate


\(^{136}\) Ibid., p.289.
his awareness of the importance of the presidency to Eisenhower, whom he believes saw the presidency as “the preeminent symbol of American democracy” and his understanding of Eisenhower’s constitutionalist political philosophy. Nonetheless, the predominance of Cold War framing in Medhurst’s works has not allowed Eisenhower’s idealist and, at times, romanticised vision of the United States the prominence it deserves.137 Yet, Medhurst’s analyses do establish the consistency of language and symbols used by the president as well as the influence of American history on Eisenhower’s rhetoric. “Hence the Republic became, for Eisenhower,” argues Medhurst, “the ultimate locus of value.”138 Able to see past the critique of Eisenhower’s language to the consistency of his message and engagement with national traditions, Medhurst’s work is an important foundation for any exploration of Eisenhower’s presidency. Rich in rhetorical analysis, Medhurst’s evaluations are, nevertheless, situated firmly within communication studies. This examination of Eisenhower’s idealism contributes the historical context often lacking in Medhurst’s investigations.

Professor of religious studies Ira Chernus has spent more than a decade examining Eisenhower’s rhetoric – from his military years through his presidency.139 Chernus claims that contrary to what many historians have long believed, Eisenhower was a committed ideologue. And, Chernus argues that Eisenhower’s ideological beliefs were embraced long before he assumed the presidency.140 The ideology to which Chernus believes Eisenhower subscribed was a conviction that human life was an eternal struggle between the universal impulse of selfishness and the countervailing ability to control our innate egocentrism. For Eisenhower, the American Way of Life was the application of voluntary self-control with the struggle to achieve this ideal a religious one.141 According to Chernus it is especially appropriate to study Eisenhower from the perspective of language, something he considers historians have given

140 Chernus, Apocalypse Management, p.8.
141 Chernus, Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace, p.7.
far too little authority in the past. He is, in fact, persuasive for why it is crucial that Cold War historians begin to take seriously the study of language, arguing that public language is the most common and potent of Cold War weapons – something Eisenhower himself well understood. Exceedingly careful with words, Eisenhower actually sought to have a profound influence on the way Americans acted and thought about the United States and its role in the world. Thus, Chernus asserts, Eisenhower wanted to “naturalize” his ideology through his public rhetoric, enabling it to assume the taken-for-granted status characteristic of myth. Chernus’ insights into Eisenhower’s ideological constructions influenced this study with his claim that the president’s language left an enduring legacy on the United States and the way Americans saw their role in the Cold War. While Chernus’ research has focused itself on the language of war and peace and much of his analyses have focused on the exploration of what it was Eisenhower meant, this thesis has sought to build upon his work, inserting Eisenhower and his idealism into key episodes within his presidency to complement the image Chernus has already constructed of the president. Chernus makes no attempt to hide his displeasure with the way Eisenhower conducted the Cold War. This study, on the other hand, endeavours to avoid applying judgment to Eisenhower’s actions as president, allowing instead the reader to come to their own conclusions.

Since the 1970s, Louis Galambos has been immersed in the life and careers of Dwight Eisenhower. Initially co-editor for The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, Galambos undertook full editorial responsibility for their compilation from volume eight. The Papers were finally completed in 2001. Galambos’ 2018 Eisenhower: Becoming the Leader of the Free World is the impressive result of his decades of academic scrutiny. Galambos has skillfully captured the complexity that defines Eisenhower’s personality referring to his combination of “fierce ambition and passivity” and the fact that although Eisenhower did not want to be a politician, he did want to be president. Galambos asserts his belief that as president, Eisenhower:

142 Ibid., p.4.
143 Chernus, ‘Meanings of Peace,’ p.95.
firmly believed in something that people routinely referred to as the ‘public interest.’ This was an idea, a goal, that he thought existed beyond and was far superior to partisan politics…and the self-aggrandizement on display so often in Washington…It was linked tightly in his mind to democracy and to the right kind of leadership.\footnote{Ibid., p.169.}

Galambos’ impressive biography, published at this thesis neared the very final stages of completion, suggests that the view of Eisenhower put forward in the following pages has already begun to resonate within the scholarly community.

For many of the Americans who voted for him, Dwight Eisenhower was the epitome of the ideal American. He was, as Martin Medhurst affirms, the “living embodiment of America at its best – strong, determined, optimistic, straightforward, sincere, and as common as the Kansas soil – or so it seemed.”\footnote{Medhurst, \textit{Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator}, p.4.} He embodied virtues valued by Americans and, as a politician who stood above the fray, Eisenhower delivered a consistent message that was so naturally “American,” that little thought was given, then or now, to his role in naturalising the discursive message of American national identity and extending notions of Americanism.\footnote{Miller, \textit{Piety Along the Potomac}, pp.9-10.} Yet, even while Eisenhower’s discourse has been seen as effective only in reinforcing his popularity with the American public, his strategic engagement with foundational texts and myths must be seen as contributing to what Thomas Ricento refers to as the construction of the symbolic United States.\footnote{Craig Allen, \textit{Eisenhower and the Mass Media: Peace, Prosperity, & Prime-Time TV}, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1993, p.7 and Thomas Ricento, ‘The Discursive Construction of Americanism,’ \textit{Discourse & Society}, 14/5, 2003, p.612.} The very fact that Americans revered their war-hero president should have been reason enough to consider Eisenhower’s discourse as powerful.\footnote{Three months before his death in March 1969, a public opinion survey placed Eisenhower at the top of the nation’s most admired men.} The simple language Eisenhower utilised prompted many to dismiss his rhetoric, yet this formed a significant component of the clear discursive strategy he employed during his presidency. Eisenhower worked to construct, perpetuate and justify his image of the ideal nation by infusing his presidency with key symbols of the United States. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, key figures such as Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and fundamental beliefs, such as the United States as God’s chosen nation, all were employed by Eisenhower to sustain his vision of American idealism. The continuing ideological impact that this has had on the United States has prompted recent scholarship to begin to clarify Eisenhower’s position as
a persuasive political strategist. With his unusual sensitivity to the power of speech, Eisenhower not only furthered his objectives but also sought to preserve his ideal American nation in the face of an all-encompassing ideological struggle for survival. This thesis thus provides a new lens and a fresh approach to interpreting Eisenhower’s presidency.

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CHAPTER ONE

The All-American (Republican) President: Above the Political Fray?

When I got around to Americans, Washington was my hero.


I believe that the President of the United States should serve all the people irrespective of their race, their creed, their color…or how they voted. I further believe that a Presidential candidate has the responsibility to speak for his party. This I have done.


It is not, so far as I am concerned, a political meeting. But I have been on a political trip and so it would be a little out of character if I had not a word to say about the political situation.


Not even a resounding presidential electoral victory in November 1952 was enough to convince many Americans that Dwight Eisenhower was indeed a politician. In fact, as noted political pollster Samuel Lubell discovered, many Americans saw Eisenhower as “above both parties.”¹ Eisenhower was a conservative at heart, however, and after twenty years of Democrat political dominance he feared American democracy was in jeopardy. His self-professed “fanatical” devotion to American democracy and his overdeveloped sense of duty to country combined to persuade Eisenhower to nominate as a presidential candidate in 1952. Eisenhower became the first Republican president in twenty years, yet the millions of Americans who chose Eisenhower in 1952, and again in 1956 did not necessarily consider they had voted for the Republican Party. For Eleanor Roosevelt, it was a “love affair between President Eisenhower and the American people.”²

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the lack of partisan constraints upon Dwight Eisenhower’s immense political appeal. In order to appreciate the attraction of his apolitical approach and understand Eisenhower’s desire to be perceived this way, this chapter explores the idealised nonpartisan presidency George Washington endeavoured to construct. The primary focus within this chapter, however, is the analysis of Eisenhower’s presidential campaigns. The pressurised environment of an election campaign enables a close examination of a candidate’s character, beliefs and political principles. This study emphasises two of Eisenhower’s competing

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and ultimately incompatible priorities: He sought to be a president in the nonpartisan mould of George Washington yet desired also the restoration of the Republican Party’s traditional political dominance. In 1952, his speeches demonstrate the influence of Washington on his approach to partisan politics. Eisenhower succeeded in framing his candidacy as a crusade for national unity and the restoration of high ideals to government. Compared with his re-election campaign of 1956, his calls for fellow Republicans to be elected were subdued. Following Republican losses in the 1954 midterms, Eisenhower faced a Democrat-controlled Congress. The analysis of Eisenhower’s 1956 electioneering evidences his struggle to reconcile the above-politics presidency he had constructed with his determination to now publicly position himself as the head of the Republican Party. In the end, Eisenhower was unable to overcome the persona of a nonpartisan president he had so successfully constructed.

“Nothing, Except to Do His Duty”

The war was far from won in 1943, yet that did not stop speculation about a possible presidency for the Allies’ Supreme Commander. War correspondent Virgil Pinkley reasoned Eisenhower’s military successes had drawn him into a long-standing American tradition of rewarding individuals who had served the nation in time of war with its highest office in time of peace. Eisenhower retorted Pinkley had “been standing out in the sun too long.”

Pinkley, however, was not alone in seeing a presidential future for Eisenhower. So, apparently, did the Tank Corps Post No. 715, who resolved to boost Eisenhower for president because of his “leadership qualities.”

Allied victory merely added to the speculation. During a press conference on 22 June 1945 in Abilene, Eisenhower was asked if he would consider a political office. Declaring he wanted only to “be a citizen of the United States,” his resolute refusal was designed to silence speculation:

I should like to make this as emphatic as possible. There’s no use my denying that I’ll fly to the moon, because no one has suggested it, and I couldn’t if I wanted to. The same goes for politics. I’m a soldier and I’m positive no one thinks of me as a politician. In the strongest language you can command you may say that I have no political ambitions at all.

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Make it even stronger than that if you like. I’d like to go further than Sherman in expressing myself on that subject.\(^5\)

Eisenhower believed his wartime successes were the climax of his career. Anything that “could happen to me thereafter would, in my opinion, be anticlimactic.”\(^6\) The Eisenhower “boom,” however, gained significant traction when he assumed the presidency of Columbia University. Unable to accept his decision at face value, there were many who believed Eisenhower had ulterior motives.\(^7\)

Denials had done little to dissuade American voters. Various polls revealed Eisenhower led Truman or any other Republican as preferred candidate. One poll demonstrated that 58 percent of Americans who favoured his nomination did not know whether Eisenhower was a Republican or Democrat.\(^8\) A 1948 Roper opinion poll revealed voters of both parties considered Eisenhower top choice for president.\(^9\) For the military hero turned Columbia University president, the “tossing about of my name in the political whirlwind” was embarrassing.\(^10\) The vast quantities of mail that arrived at Columbia imploring Eisenhower to seek the presidency prompted sociologist Dr. Robert K. Merton to analyse the letters. One of the more significant findings was that 80 percent were indifferent to his party affiliation.\(^11\) “We Like Ike” was for columnist Marquis Childs no political slogan. Rather it was an entreaty to a demigod. In the turmoil of war’s aftermath Eisenhower represented strength, triumph and unswerving confidence.\(^12\) With repeated calls he be nominated on both major party tickets, Eisenhower appeared to be the “unity candidate” Americans could rally behind. It seemed, however, no amount of public or private pressure or praise could persuade Eisenhower who, in effect, turned down the presidency of the United States in 1948. Instead, President Truman scored an astonishing come-from-behind victory.

\(^5\) John Gunther, *Eisenhower: The Man and the Symbol*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1952, pp.144-5. Gunther writes that when asked by a friend which General’s he admired most, Eisenhower replied with William Tecumseh Sherman. Gunther believes the answer fascinating for Sherman is quoted as having stated that “War is hell,” was president of Louisiana University and rejected the presidency of the United States, pp.27-8.


\(^8\) Ibid., p.145.


\(^12\) Childs, *Eisenhower: Captive Hero*, p.132.
As both parties turned their attention to the 1952 presidential election, Eisenhower remained the most prominent name considered by both parties.\textsuperscript{13} Influential political columnist Drew Pearson solicited Christmas cards from those listeners of his radio program who desired an Eisenhower victory. On New Years Eve 1951, 16,000 cards were sent to Eisenhower, representing “dramatic evidence of the deep faith the American people have in your leadership.” Pearson, playing on Eisenhower’s renowned sense of duty, believed “no man in a democracy has a right to ignore the sentiments of his fellow countrymen.”\textsuperscript{14} On 7 January 1952, Eisenhower publicly announced he would not ignore a duty that would “transcend my present responsibility.” But, in the absence of “a clear-cut call to political duty,” he remained committed to his NATO duties.\textsuperscript{15}

Aware that a large part of his electoral appeal was bound up in his lack of political credentials and apparent disinterest in a political career, Eisenhower continued to disavow any political intentions. He had, however, become deeply involved in American politics, meeting with many politicians and journalists. Although he refused to concede he was anything other than a military leader, Eisenhower had begun to privately nurture an informal political staff that worked tirelessly toward his nomination as the Republican candidate.\textsuperscript{16} While Eisenhower found the kind of politicking that Truman delighted in distasteful, his 10 January 1952 diary entry evidences his preparedness to put aside his personal convictions. He had written already to General Lucius Clay that only a true sense of duty could compel him into politics, and he did not believe “such a desire…too unworthy a purpose.”\textsuperscript{17} The only thing that could convince him to put aside the vital work being undertaken at NATO would be if he were “called to a more important duty.” He “would so consider a nomination by the Republican party.”\textsuperscript{18} Eisenhower’s internal conflict is evident as he allowed his frustrations with those who wanted him to actively involve himself in the political process to boil over:

CHAPTER ONE: The All-American (Republican) President

Time & again I’ve told anyone who’d listen that I will not seek a nomination. I don’t give a d— how impossible a “draft” may be. I’m willing to go part way in trying to recognize a “duty” – but I do not have to seek one – and I will not.¹⁹

Historians continue to debate whether Eisenhower truly was a reluctant candidate in 1952.²⁰ It is not my intention to weigh into this discussion. Whether Eisenhower pursued the presidency is irrelevant to this study. What is important, however, is to acknowledge that Eisenhower had constructed a public persona that emulated the example set by Washington and his successor John Adams. Neither man actively sought the office, campaigned or wrote a single word to seek out votes.²¹ Even after his name had been formally entered in the Republican primaries, Eisenhower continued to present himself as a non-candidate.

The Cincinnatus Ideal

The majority of the Constitutional framers disapproved of political factions. George Washington believed that Article II encouraged the president to stand above the political fray that dominated the legislature. Washington conceived that the president, whose primary duty was to execute laws, would provide a strong measure of unity and stability to the political system. Washington had retired from the United States’ army desiring no public office. His fellow Americans, however, who abhorred monarchy but wanted Washington as their king, refused to allow this heroic figure to withdraw from the world. Indeed, Washington’s awe-inspiring personality and popularity made him indispensable in unifying the nation and legitimating the new executive office. On 4 February 1789, he became the Electoral College’s unanimous choice to be the nation’s first chief executive.²² Washington’s delay in arriving in New York to assume the presidency was not simply because he understood that Americans feared potential abuse of executive power. More importantly, he did not want to be seen as improperly eager. As he had done during his time in the army, Washington desired to fulfil

¹⁹ Ibid.
the myth of Cincinnatus – the Roman legend of a disinterested patriot, devoting his life to his country. His diffidence may have been studied but it was not deceitful. Washington was genuinely devoted to his country and to the ideal of doing one’s duty.

Washington was aware his every action could set enduring precedents for his successors. For Washington, in the nation’s “progress toward political happiness my station is new; and, if I may use the expression, I walk on untrodden ground.” With only vaguely defined powers, he settled many important questions about the character and extent of presidential authority. The president ought to be an impartial judge, unmoved by partisan pressures, and Washington took great care to set this example. Securing the reputation of the presidency was his highest priority. It was “of the utmost importance,” he wrote, “to stamp favorable impressions upon it.” Anti-federalists were convinced that the presidency would inevitably evolve into monarchical rule. Refusing to vindicate those fears and to the exclusion of pursuing his own political agenda, Washington’s presidential conduct was instead intended to win the trust of Congress and the American people.

Surrounded by unyielding partisanship, Washington’s nonpartisan presidency did not survive even his own administration. Disagreements between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson created partisan conflict during Washington’s first term that became irreconcilable in his second. As a Federalist in political orientation, Washington nonetheless continued to act only for the interests of his country. Influenced by Washington’s warnings of “the demon of party spirit” James Madison, James Monroe and John Quincy Adams each determined their success as president on the degree to which they

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23 John Gunther claims that as a boy Eisenhower’s favourite historical figure also was Cincinnatus. Gunther, Eisenhower: The Man and the Symbol, p.27.
25 Ibid., p.71.
27 Brookhiser, Founding Father, p.133.
28 Milkis and Nelson, The American Presidency, p.79.
subordinated or transcended partisanship. Madison believed it vital factions disappear from politics to ensure the survival of good government. Adams accepted wholeheartedly Washington’s theory that to preserve liberty the president must shun party, stand strong in the face of popular pressure, remain above the partisan fray and direct public policy designed to benefit all Americans. Adams believed also that in order to guide the nation toward righteousness, the president was obliged to exalt and dignify his office. In the end, deferring to Congress on legislative matters, shunning the use of patronage to gain political power and shrinking from direct and indirect appeals to the public severely handicapped their ability to exercise power and deprived Washington’s initial successors of their capacity to lead the nation. Americans were quick to discard Washington’s warning against the establishment of party competition. Andrew Jackson’s electoral triumph in 1828 brought a swift end to the positive ideal of nonpartisan leadership. With his romanticised understanding of American history, more than a century later Eisenhower would seek to return the presidency to the ideals prescribed by Washington.

No Draft

While Eisenhower remained silent in Paris, senators Robert Taft and Harold Stassen campaigned in New Hampshire ahead of the Republican primary. To Taft’s 35,838 and Stassen’s 6,754 votes, Eisenhower won with 46,661 votes. Eight days later Minnesotans voted. Out of deference to the favourite son Stassen, Eisenhower was not on the primary ballot. But, five days before the primary, Eisenhower supporters organised a write-in campaign. Termed the “Minnesota Miracle,” Eisenhower’s loss was narrow with 108,692 votes to Stassen’s 129,076. Still in Paris, Eisenhower won also the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Massachusetts primaries. Numerous primary wins, an untarnished reputation, and unparalleled popularity was still not enough to hand Eisenhower the nomination.

Eastern internationalists had controlled the Republican nominating process since 1940. As the standard-bearer for the conservative wing of the party, Robert Taft had twice been unsuccessful in his attempt to secure the Republican presidential nomination. Instead, in 1944 and 1948 he had watched as Democrats defeated the “me-tooism” of Thomas Dewey.

32 Jamieson, Packaging the Presidency, p.8.
Taft, however, believed he would regain control of the White House through aggressive opposition of the Democrats. John Greene emphasises that with the nation once again at war, faced with crippling inflation and frustrated with entrenched Democrat rule, 1952 represented Taft’s best opportunity to gain the nomination of a traditionally conservative party. The United States had nonetheless begun to adjust to its new leadership role in world affairs. Taft’s conservatism and nationalist focus seemed, now, to belong to the Republican era of ascendancy in the 1920s. The conservatism and isolationism that endeared Taft to right-wing Republicans alarmed the liberals who considered Taft-style isolationism unrealistic in a modern, increasingly interdependent world. It was into this tense political situation that Eisenhower was drafted. Having emerged as the postwar guardian of internationalism, Eisenhower was the antithesis to Taft’s neo-isolationism. Moreover, and more importantly, Eisenhower represented victory.

Nostalgia on the part of the American people and Republicans’ inept campaigning had kept the Democrat tide of governance alive for twenty years. Although the Democrat vote for the presidency had been in decline since 1936, Republicans faced an uphill battle to steal back the White House. They had gained 28 seats in the House and five in the Senate during the 1950 midterms, but Democrats still controlled Congress. Adlai Stevenson was an unlikely presidential candidate by traditional standards, but his credentials were impressive. A Princeton-educated lawyer, in 1941 Stevenson had entered government service. He served as special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy until 1944 when he moved to the State Department. There he played a key role as an adviser in the creation of the United Nations and later served as adviser and alternate delegate for the General Assembly. A traditionally Republican state, Illinois had voted Democrat for governor only three times since the Civil War. Stevenson, in his first attempt at elective office, won the governorship in 1948 with an impressive 572,067-vote margin. His success, along with his rhetorical skills, caught the attention of Democrat party leaders. Actively declaring his disinterest in a presidential

37 Casey, ‘Confirming the Cold War Consensus,’ pp.84 & 88 and Divine, Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections, p.11.
nomination, he had even written in October 1951 that he hoped Eisenhower would be
nominated to succeed Truman on the Democrat ticket. Yet, after a gruelling convention,
Stevenson was declared the Democrat candidate.

“Is It Good For America?”

Although he professed himself a “neophyte in politics,” Eisenhower’s political instinct was
intuitive. His candidacy relied on the idea he had entered the race propelled only by a sense
of duty to his country. His colossal ethos ensured that, even as he commenced a vigorous
political campaign for the nation’s highest office, he retained his image as the man above the
political fray. And so, on 11 July 1952, Eisenhower became the “nominee of the great
Republican party.” He had no difficulty forging connections with his audience. Delivering
one or two major speeches, combined with ten to twelve whistle-stops from dawn to dusk,
ensured that daily Eisenhower encountered thousands of potential voters. Throughout the
gruelling schedule, Eisenhower “never missed a speech or a wave or a handshake.”
Emphasising ideals over specific policy platforms, this sense of vagueness reinforced his
dissociation from politics. While the majority of his audiences were Republicans, journalist
Beverly Smith, who spent time aboard the “Look Ahead Neighbor” campaign train, heard
repeatedly: “I’m a lifelong Democrat, but this time I’m going to vote for Ike.” Nevertheless,
the Great Depression remained a vivid memory for many Americans and to return the
Republican Party to power was an unsettling thought. Wherever Lubell travelled he found
Americans struck with fear over a return to “them Hoover times.”

For Democrats, partisan loyalty was complicated by the appeal of the Republican candidate.
The depth of Eisenhower’s popularity was revealed by the Texas Democrats’ state convention.
The Chicago Daily Tribune reported the party “voted glumly” to place Adlai Stevenson on the
November ballot. The resolution that requested “every Democrat to vote and work for Gen.

41 Beverly Smith, ‘I Watched Eisenhower Campaign,’ Saturday Evening Post, 225/18, 1952, p.27.
Eisenhower,” however, was met with “roared approval.” This resolution and its overwhelmingly positive response was all the more striking since Texas had not voted Republican for president since 1928.\footnote{Back Ike, Texas Democrats Urge as Adlai Goes on Ballot,’ \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, 10 September 1952, p.1.} Eisenhower’s appeal with Democrats reached well beyond the borders of his birth state. As one solemn farmer in Kentucky asserted: “I don’t just like the man, I revere him. But like my father before me, I’d as soon cut off this right arm as vote Republican.”\footnote{Smith, ‘I Watched Eisenhower Campaign,’ p.110.} Aware he appealed to voters of all political persuasions, Eisenhower genuinely desired to be that elusive all-American president. For the beleaguered Republican Party however, Eisenhower’s candidacy became their conduit back to the American people.

Eisenhower needed a careful rhetorical approach if he was to remain above-politics whilst simultaneously engaged in a fierce partisan battle to return the Republican Party to power. His refusal to engage in personalities softened the appearance of his partisan attacks on the Truman administration. Instead, it was “they,” the “current administration,” the “party in power” or the “men in the administration” who were destroying American ideals of thrift, economy and self-reliance.\footnote{The speeches Eisenhower delivered while in Illinois are an excellent example of his penchant for attacking without calling anybody out personally. ‘Texts of Eisenhower Talks Attacking Administration’s Foreign and Domestic Policies,’ \textit{New York Times}, 03 October 1952, p.16.} Eisenhower openly accused the Democrats of enacting “policies based on division, on political profit, on petty ambition.” Yet, his assertion that “with statesmanship instead of partisanship,” Americans could come together to find a common ground helped support his image of an apolitical candidate.\footnote{‘Text of Speech,’ \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, 05 September 1952, p.4.} In Columbia, South Carolina, Eisenhower announced he had not accepted the nomination “of my party” for partisan reasons, and he argued it was not partisanship that carried his campaign into “every section of our country.” His only declared purpose, and his only campaign theme was that with “our country’s future at stake,” this election provided Americans an opportunity to place loyalty to country above loyalty to party. Yet, at the same time, Eisenhower’s speech was a concerted effort to play on southern discontent at being taken for granted by the Democrats. Republicans had been unable to crack the former Confederate states and Eisenhower was the first Republican presidential candidate...
since the Civil War to actively campaign in this region.\textsuperscript{48} He sought, then, assistance of the “solid South” to help him “win this election for America.”\textsuperscript{49}

As a “cause for every American,” Eisenhower embarked upon a self-proclaimed crusade that required the strength of a “hundred and fifty-five million united Americans” if they were to restore American ideals he claimed had been damaged by twenty years of Democrat rule.\textsuperscript{50} Duty, he proclaimed, had compelled him to run for the presidency because he believed principles of Americanism were endangered, “and that means America is imperiled.”\textsuperscript{51} Eisenhower was on a mission to heal the national divide, for when Americans united they could achieve anything to which they set their hearts and minds. Consequently, if the American people chose to elect him, he pledged “to you – to all of you, all over this land – that I shall regard the Presidency of the United States, not as the highest ‘job’ in the land, but as a call to the leadership of the greatest crusade in the world.”\textsuperscript{52} Once the American people had elected the Republican Party, the government would have only one consideration for policy enactment: whether it was “good for the United States of America as a whole.” Eschewing partisanship, Eisenhower professed his administration’s first concern would be not for the welfare of Republicans, but for the welfare of all Americans.\textsuperscript{53} Eisenhower had constructed a campaign dedicated to the restoration of American greatness: “One hundred years ago America was the wonder of humanity and the symbol of man’s hopes and goals everywhere. We can make it that again.”\textsuperscript{54} When he spoke of the history of American democracy and declared his audience was “just as interested as I am in seeing that the United States Government is one in which you can take pride,” he positioned himself as the only candidate equipped to restore the fundamental tenets of the American republic.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{48} Eisenhower’s admittedly limited success in cracking the “solid South” can be seen, however, as a precursor to Richard Nixon’s 1968 election campaign. The Republican Party adopted a Southern Strategy which, unlike Eisenhower’s electioneering, was an overt attempt to win over white southerners by appealing to the still deep-seated racial hostilities that dominated the south.

\textsuperscript{49} Throughout his campaign, Eisenhower had often professed to having only one theme, although it varied depending upon his audience and the national mood. ‘Text of Eisenhower Address in South Carolina Starting New Tour,’ New York Times, 01 October 1952, p.29.

\textsuperscript{50} ‘Text of General Eisenhower’s Address to the American Legion Convention,’ New York Times, 26 August 1952, p.12. In other speeches, Eisenhower correctly noted 156,000,000 Americans – see for example ‘Text of General Eisenhower’s Address to V.F.W.’ New York Times, 06 August 1952, p.16.

\textsuperscript{51} ‘Text of Speech,’ p. 4 and ‘Excerpts from Eisenhower’s Whistle-Stop Speeches in Midwest,’ New York Times, 16 September 1952, p.25.


\textsuperscript{53} ‘Excerpts from Eisenhower’s Whistle-Stop Speeches,’ p. 25.

\textsuperscript{54} ‘Text of General Eisenhower’s Address to the American Legion Convention,’ p.12.

\textsuperscript{55} ‘Texts of Eisenhower Tampa, Birmingham and Little Rock Talks,’ p. 20.
In the harsh black-on-white of the newspaper, Eisenhower’s speeches do not adequately portray the effect his personality had on his audience. More a “nineteenth-century prairie-stumper” than political candidate, Eisenhower had nevertheless grasped the “game” of electioneering. For his many whistle-stops Eisenhower’s manner of addressing the crowd made his audience feel as if they were engaged in a personal conversation. “I Like Ike” was no clever campaign gimmick. Statements of fact for most Americans, Eisenhower’s father-figure style of campaigning made him appear more likeable. Although Eisenhower actually often discarded his ghosted speeches in favour of off-the-cuff remarks, the sheer number of talks a candidate delivers required numerous speechwriters. Stevenson, whose wit and intellect endeared him to the “eggheads,” was criticised for too often speaking above his audiences’ head. Eisenhower, on the other hand, aimed his clean and simple prose at the average American voter. Eisenhower instinctively understood the nature of effective political oratory. While some of the press derided his speeches as “synthetic banalities” and “meaningless platitudes” Eisenhower was interested only in getting his message across to the American people in a way they understood. Thus, out went the soaring oratory, to be replaced with what his primary speechwriter Emmet Hughes described as his attempt to “reduce all issues to some bare essence, starkly seen and graphically stated.” When compared with the poetic eloquence and sharp wit that characterised Stevenson’s campaigning, Eisenhower’s language can appear dull and, at times, haphazard. Yet, in aiming his language at the level of the common voter, Eisenhower’s oratory should be seen as all the more effective for he rarely bored, confused, or intimidated his audience.

At first glance, Eisenhower’s speech in Richmond, Virginia, was devoid of overt partisanship. Speaking in front of an audience of “Democrats for Eisenhower,” he proclaimed he desired only what was best for all the United States. Virginia had a rich historical connection with the Founding generation and Eisenhower referred to the fact that “on this spot we seem almost to breathe the atmosphere of American history.” Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and founder of the Democratic-Republican Party, was Eisenhower’s partisan anchor as he worked to convince his Democrat audience of the need to return the United States

57 Ibid., p.397 and Greene, The Crusade, p.201.
60 Greene, The Crusade, p.184.
to its original precepts of limited government – the political philosophy that just happened to
guide his Republican Party. Jefferson believed also in “honor in public life,” commitment to
economy in government, in the ideal that “the best government is the least government,” and,
along with other Founding Fathers, had rebelled against centralised government. Engaging the
southerner Jefferson enabled Eisenhower to refrain from an open attack on the current
administration even as he accused that same administration of being filled with men who
desired only to “fatten the pocketbook,” of the “waste and extravagance” that dominated the
highest levels of government, and the worrying trend towards total centralisation. To these
Democrats, Eisenhower delivered a pledge he had given already many times before:

If you decide to send me to Washington, I will strive always to see America’s people as a
single nation. I will never be President for one class or one group. My duty as I see it, will
be to be the President of the whole United States. It will be my duty to test each proposal,
each action, by a single rule: What is good for the United States of America. 61

In a Democrat stronghold, this pledge was an attempt to blur the lines between party, to
proclaim Eisenhower would be not just a Republican president, but would honour all
Americans with his patronage.

His serene self-confidence, combined with a genuine sense of indignation, gave Eisenhower’s
campaign a particular resonance that maintained the above-the-fray persona he had
constructed. 62 Eisenhower claimed in Wisconsin he spoke “not as a partisan or a candidate, but
simply as an American citizen – moved to honest anger by this persistent, gnawing threat of
Communist treason in our national life.” In the home state of Senator Joseph McCarthy,
Eisenhower’s reference to an “honest” anger was as close as he would come to repudiating
McCarthy. 63 As his campaign entered its final month, Eisenhower remained confident that
millions of Americans, regardless of political affiliation, would “demand – with the fervor of
an aroused people – the appointment of new guardians of our country’s security.” 64 In New
York he appeared sincerely stung by criticism flowing from the Democrats. Of the accusation
that another Republican administration meant inevitable recession, Eisenhower retorted:
“Sheer bunk, and they know it.” Eisenhower did not often allow himself to get openly

63 The McCarthy drama is addressed in chapter six.
sidetracked by a tit-for-tat contest with the Democrats. Rather, the “ideal of this crusade is the service of America, no one party, not one section, 156,000,000.”

Eisenhower remained not just “one Republican seeking out and addressing another,” but “an American citizen hunting up every American citizen I can find.” His goal was to unite Americans behind the great programs he believed his administration would enact.

Though he openly called for Republican unity and the “election of the Republican ticket from top to bottom,” in San Antonio, Texas, Eisenhower began to favour language that emphasised the ideal of nation above party. In Houston, the time had come for Americans “to put country above party labels. By your free vote, you will decide.”

In the words of the popular southern Democrat governor James Byrnes, it was high time to “place loyalty to country above loyalty to a political party.” On the Boston Common, and in front of a crowd of thousands, Eisenhower told his audience he was there “to talk simply as one citizen to another.”

A few days later the Arkansas Pine Bluff Community broke an 84-year precedent by supporting Eisenhower’s candidacy. The editors wanted to be clear, however. The paper had not gone “whole hog” Republican. Rather, it was “just for Ike.” With one week before the campaign concluded, Editor & Publisher reported that Eisenhower’s candidacy was being supported editorially by 67.34 percent of 1,385 daily newspapers. The total circulation of these papers was 40,129,237.

Eisenhower was no longer just a military hero. By campaign’s end, he was truly a politician. His speeches were clearer, more concise and, because Eisenhower hated rhetorical flourishes, they became more powerful and evocative, even as he continued to engage clean, simple prose.

In the final days of his first political campaign, he returned to the reasons that had prompted him to seek the presidency. The most important was the millions of Americans who, “without regard to party affiliation wanted me to run.” Eisenhower recalled that after he had been “honored” with the Republican nomination, his first job had to be unification of the Republican Party. This campaign was a sign of his devotion to this task, of “drawing into that unity all –

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68 ‘Text of Eisenhower Address in South Carolina,’ p. 29.
all – of our people, every American I could reach with my message.” In the midst of the tumult of the campaign, Eisenhower refused to become a traditional political candidate. Instead, he declared he remained what he had struggled to be his whole life:

humble in the sight of God, strong in the knowledge of the greatness of America, firm in a belief in honor and principles, and secure in a conscience which has not been compromised in this campaign.72

With this statement, he reinforced his above-politics persona and defined himself as a man who put principle before political gain. Eisenhower concluded his campaign back in Boston, expertly weaving together the themes that had dominated his electioneering in a final, stirring address dedicated to unity. To achieve national unity, a “complex and exacting principle,” demanded a government wholly dedicated to preserving the ideals of the United States of America.73

**An Eisenhower Landslide**

After traveling 33,000 miles, visiting 44 states, and delivering 228 speeches Eisenhower had done all he could to ensure a Republican victory.74 Americans, however, divorced their support for Eisenhower from other Republican candidates. Republicans did pick up 22 House seats and gain a tenuous one-seat majority in the Senate, but three out of five Eisenhower supporters failed to vote a straight Republican ticket.75 Even though 30 percent of American voters in 1952 had considered themselves Republican, 34,075,529 or 55.18 percent of the votes were cast for Eisenhower. Outside the South, 670 counties that had voted Democrat the past two decades backed Eisenhower. In the farm states of Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota, Eisenhower carried every county – a feat that had not occurred since 1920. Eighteen states that had consistently cast electoral votes for both Franklin Roosevelt and Truman also went Republican.76 Of the votes cast for Eisenhower, 56 percent of votes originated with party regulars, 18 percent came from new voters, but a substantial 24 percent of votes came from Americans who switched. In contrast, only 3 percent of Stevenson’s votes came from people

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75 Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, p.56.
who switched from Republican to Democrat. The United States was essentially awash with support for Eisenhower.

That Eisenhower ran far ahead of his party ticket in most states prompted Stevenson to primarily attribute his loss to his opponent’s personal popularity. Political commentators interpreted the strength of Eisenhower’s victory as a public declaration of confidence in his perceived ability to lead the nation through the Cold War, end the conflict in Korea, and clean up the mess in Washington. Yet, while it had been implied the main issues were Korea, Communism, and Corruption – or K, C as Republican strategists termed it – these issues lacked Eisenhower’s allure. His margin of victory came not because of independents, the elusive stay-at-home voter, new voters, women or any other single group as some partisans speculated. Instead, Americans who voted Democrat in 1948 but switched in 1952 provided his expansive victory. Of those voters who switched party allegiance, however, very few considered their vote a permanent shift to the Republican Party. Eisenhower had drawn together voters from every region in the nation, with the grandchildren of Union and Confederate veterans, farmers and suburbanites, city and slum dwellers alike all professing their preference for “Ike.” For Lubell, the victory was historically significant. Eisenhower had managed to rise above the bitter, partisan cleavages of the past.

The Loss of Congress

Deeply concerned at the disparity of electoral results, Eisenhower nevertheless did not “intend to make of the Presidency an agency to use in partisan elections.” The president desired the Republican majority be maintained but he would not, he declared in February 1954, go “into any State and I am not going to participate in local contests. I think that as President I have really no right to do so.” When a mild, post-Korea recession hit that spring, Eisenhower worried Republicans might “get tagged like Mr. Hoover did, unjustly, of not doing anything.” The party had only just begun to shed the depression label yet Republican midterm prospects

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81 Lubell, ‘Who Elected Eisenhower?’, p.27.
appeared to dim because of economic uncertainties among voters. Eisenhower quickly shifted his position indicating that he enjoyed traveling his country and would likely talk about his legislative program if he did. By June, he asserted openly the party in the White House should control Congress and therefore he supported Republican electoral candidates. In the end, Eisenhower even posed for campaign photograms with Republican candidates. 84

After almost two years in office, Eisenhower’s preference for nonpartisan governing ensured that many voters still drew a distinction between their president and his party. As Lubell made another trip around the United States he found on one Cleveland street three successive people who all echoed the same feeling: “I’m for Eisenhower, but not for the Republican party.” One of those he encountered further commented: “I’ve always felt Eisenhower was a pretty good Democrat.” 85 Although the 1954 midterms turned on local issues and local personalities, the Republican establishment was intent on drawing the president into the campaign. 86 Candidates assumed his coattails would assure them of victory. Doing more than any previous sitting president had, Eisenhower stumped for his colleagues. He cooperated with a last-minute effort to swing the elections by telephoning ten Republican voters urging them to phone ten other Republicans in chain-letter fashion to get out and vote. The climax of his campaign intervention was a one-day plane trip with speeches in four critical areas. 87

Almost 44 million votes were cast in 1954, an unprecedented number for an off-year election. The turnout, however, did not bring victory for Republicans. In the House, Republicans handed the majority to the Democrats. Two Senate seats also swapped parties stripping Republican control from Congress. Democrats took also eight governorships gaining a 27-21 national majority. 88 Charles Thomson and Frances Shattuck argue the 1954 midterms demonstrated that, for Americans, Eisenhower could be both within and above politics. As the months of his presidency progressed, politically involved Americans had witnessed the evolution of Eisenhower as a man of politics. But for the majority of voters, Eisenhower was neither a politician nor a party man and the connection between president and party in the minds of most

87 Ibid., p.12 and Lubell, Revolt of the Moderates, p.34.
CHAPTER ONE: The All-American (Republican) President

Americans still had not been made. In the election aftermath, Eisenhower appeared to acquire what Lubell called an “all-out zeal” for the revitalisation of the Republican Party at the polls.  

“My Answer Will Be Positive, That is, Affirmative.”

In 1956, registered Democrats and independents outnumbered Republicans two-to-one. Eisenhower’s possible re-election was not hampered by these figures, for in May 1955 six out of every ten Democrats believed Eisenhower should be their nominee if Republicans failed to renominate the president. The results of a study ordered by the Stevenson campaign demonstrated Democrat appeal had not weakened. Their greatest strength was their image as the party of the little man, prepared to fight for economic and social reform. Democrats, however, remained hampered by the label of war-prone party. Americans believed Republicans were less likely to lead them into war. Without doubt, however, Republicans’ greatest strength was Eisenhower. The president had achieved unity and stability without serious economic trouble and Americans were disinclined to alter the status quo. Eisenhower’s prestige and popularity had not diminished as his presidency advanced, helped along by the so-called Spirit of Geneva in 1955 and his recovery and return to duty following his heart attack in September. The Democrat nominee once again, Stevenson understood that Eisenhower remained stronger than his party. Stevenson’s priority was to win back Democrats who had voted for Eisenhower in 1952. To achieve this, he had to go on the attack and hope he could draw Eisenhower into the political fray. If Stevenson could convince American voters Eisenhower was both a politician and a Republican, then he could saddle the popular president with his party’s relative unpopularity.

It would be another month before Eisenhower put to rest speculation over his availability for re-election. The New York Herald Tribune had no doubt their president should seek a second term. Eisenhower was the symbol of national unity and it was “his moderate, forward, unpartisan leadership” that had “done much to dissolve the bitterness, erase the harsh, divisive,

89 Ibid., p.12.
90 Lubell, Revolt of the Moderates, p.31.
92 Jamieson, Packaging the Presidency, p.92.
controversies which tended to stalemate government for so long.”\textsuperscript{95} When it came to the United States’ two-party system Eisenhower owed the Republican Party no overriding obligation. The same could not be said for his party. It would be for Eisenhower a “derogation of duty” if it were suggested he run only to secure the Republican Party’s future. Nonetheless, it would be sheer folly if the president could not see one of the “compelling reasons why he should accept renomination is to secure the two-party system.”\textsuperscript{96} Bluntly the \textit{Herald Tribune}'s editors declared without Eisenhower, Republicans faced defeat. Nine months before Americans would decide their next president, this article acknowledged that in the eyes of most Americans a vast gap remained between Eisenhower and the Republican Party.

Eisenhower had intended to be a one-term president. He believed four years would be enough to push the Republican Party into the political mainstream. Unfailingly, the president insisted Republicans unshackle themselves from the political debates of the 1930s and 1940s.\textsuperscript{97} The 1954 midterms had proved, however, that not only had Eisenhower failed to convince the party to adopt his pragmatic policies, Americans tended still to divorce president from party, happy to praise their president and criticise Republicans. On 29 February 1956, Eisenhower made a rambling announcement he considered would “be of interest” to the press corps. Although his “answer could not be expressed just in the simple terms of yes and no,” he assured the reporters that “my answer will be positive, that is, affirmative.”\textsuperscript{98} Three days after his press conference, \textit{The Economist} suggested the president’s decision to accept the nomination all but guaranteed Eisenhower’s re-election. Re-election was not to be mistaken as a vote of confidence in the Republican Party for Eisenhower was unique amongst all presidents, “except perhaps George Washington” in being “so honored by all factions in his own country.” The vote would be personal for the gap was too vast to be bridged by November.\textsuperscript{99}

Eisenhower began campaigning almost immediately. In their centennial year Eisenhower strove to link his Republican ideals with the party’s most famous president, Abraham Lincoln. Trusting in Lincoln and the Republican Party, Eisenhower declared he would “work in the coming campaign to have the American people more clearly know the principles of the

\textsuperscript{95} ‘To the President,’ \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, 30 January 1956, p.1.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Allen, ‘Eisenhower’s Congressional Defeat of 1956,’ p.58.
\textsuperscript{99} ‘President Eisenhower Rides Again,’ \textit{The Economist}, 03 March 1956, p. 539.
Republican program for America.” Their platform would be “a program of principle around which all Americans – Republicans, independents, and sound thinking Democrats – can rally. We welcome them all.” Eisenhower’s speech to party leaders revealed his campaign strategy and marked his shift away from his apolitical all-American presidential persona. He was now a partisan president seeking the restoration of a Republican majority but leading a party he believed a political home for all Americans.

At the Cow Palace in San Francisco there was no doubt Eisenhower would be the Republican Party’s nominee. The central theme of Eisenhower’s acceptance address was his belief the Republican Party was the party of the future. He stressed his conviction that key to the restoration of Republican strength was to return to their party’s original principles. So doing, the Republican Party would be not only “the party of the future,” but “the party that draws people together, not drives them apart.” A dual audience for this speech – Republican politicians and the voting public – Eisenhower’s message was the same: His policies were the Republican Party’s policies. The president had decisively connected himself with his party.

The 1956 campaign has failed to receive widespread historical examination. It was a landslide, not a landmark election, and was subsumed by two international crises that erupted in the campaign’s final stages (examined in chapter seven). Yet, within this campaign, the president’s discordant priorities are particularly evident. Eisenhower initially clung to his apolitical style of speaking. His desire not to be perceived as a political candidate stumpin for votes impelled him to tell his audience in Newton, Iowa, that although they may struggle to believe him, he did not intend to make a political speech. Rather, he had come merely to express some thoughts as he mingled “with so many of my fellow Americans.” In Peoria, however, Eisenhower sounded remarkably like a politician stumpin for his party. He thanked their governor who was committed to good government, believed his “good friend” senator Everett Dirksen should be returned to the Senate, praised three House Republican candidates and hoped

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100 ‘Text of Talk by Eisenhower to Party Chiefs,’ Chicago Daily Tribune, 18 April 1956, p. 6. The decision has been made to continue analysis from newspaper texts to ensure continuity.
102 Craig Allen, ‘Our First “Television” Candidate: Eisenhower over Stevenson in 1956,’ Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 65/2, 1988, p.352. There are fewer works that address the 1956 campaign. The best examples of works that prioritise the campaigns over the crises in Hungary and over the Suez Canal are Thomson and Shattuck, The 1956 Presidential Campaign, and Divine, Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections.
“a lot more Republicans” would be headed to Congress. With only a month before the nation voted, Eisenhower shed his nonpartisan approach. “In the midst of a political campaign,” the president warned, there could “be no mistake.” Eisenhower declared the differences between the two parties were not merely fanciful, they were real and they affected American lives, “the life of the nation today and the life of the nation tomorrow.” In Lexington, Eisenhower framed his appeal for Republican votes as a way for Americans to help their president. Eisenhower declared Republican candidates had proved their commitment to the ideals of his United States, but it would be only with their election that Eisenhower could enact the programs that would benefit all Americans.

Journalist Joseph Harsch believed Eisenhower’s initial campaigning showed the president had remained “relatively speaking, remote and aloof from the crash of partisan battle, the President of all the people.” Content to deal with his administration’s record in general terms, as the weeks progressed Americans witnessed “much more than before, a partisan Republican.” On the campaign trail the president now spoke actively for Republican candidates. Democrat criticisms were forcefully refuted which led Harsch to wonder (and Democrats to hope) whether Eisenhower was damaging his appeal as the nonpartisan president by engaging in such partisan language.

Clearly affronted by Democrat campaign tactics, proud of his achievements and eager to drag the Republican Party to electoral victory alongside him, overemphasis on the Republican nature of his achievements weakened Eisenhower’s claims of apolitical leadership. Eisenhower had emphasised he would not engage in political mudslinging, nor would he conduct a backslapping campaign. His campaign speeches attest to his failure to properly refrain from either. By stating Republicans had “very deliberately reversed those practices of the Nineteen Thirties and Nineteen Forties that mean tight centralization of control in Washington,” he repudiated Democrat policies without alienating Democrat voters whom he needed to vote Republican, at least for president.

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104 ‘Text of President Eisenhower’s Talk at Peoria on Farm Program,’ ibid., 26 September 1956, p.20.
105 ‘Texts of the Addresses by President Eisenhower in Cleveland and Lexington, Ky,’ ibid., 02 October 1956, p.18.
In the midst of a whirlwind day of campaigning Eisenhower learned of the Israeli invasion of the Sinai Peninsula. The impact of this global crisis, coming mere days after the uprising in Hungary, had a marked impact on Eisenhower’s electioneering. Because this episode is explored in chapter seven, the events in Egypt and Hungary are not detailed here, the focus instead remaining on Eisenhower’s campaigning, muted though it now was. Eisenhower echoed the same themes that had characterised much of his campaigning. In Jacksonville, Eisenhower repeated his preference for the term “we” as he proudly announced the achievements made in the past four years. This time, inclusivity was not designed to draw Americans towards the president but to associate him with the Republican Party and convince Eisenhower supporters to vote a straight Republican ticket and restore their majority in Congress. Although he referenced the uprisings in Jacksonville, in Virginia Eisenhower’s speech resembled the one he had delivered four years earlier with its references to Virginia’s historic links to the American republic.¹⁰⁸ In the wake of the Israeli invasion, Eisenhower cancelled some planned campaigning. Focusing on the crises did not appear to hamper Eisenhower’s chances of re-election. If anything, they assisted his bid for as the Chicago Tribune noted 71 percent of Americans backed Eisenhower in a war crisis, and the New York Daily News showed that Eisenhower’s vote-getting ability had increased with 59.9 percent of their straw ballots cast in his favour.¹⁰⁹

Speaking in Philadelphia, Eisenhower dedicated a significant portion of his speech to the crises. But he was there primarily “in the name of a political party – and I am this party’s leader.”¹¹⁰ And, while he hoped Americans would send all Republican candidates to Washington, he reminded his audience that “before all else I am your President – responsible not to Republicans or to Democrats but to all Americans.” And, in his final, formal campaign speech, this was how he would speak to them. But, even after declaring his intentions to speak as the all-American president most considered him to be, Eisenhower devoted his energies to running through his litany of promises and pledges made in 1952 and the achievements of his Republican administration since then.¹¹¹ The crises inspired Eisenhower to return to his above-the-fray persona and appeal to his audiences as their president, dealing with a fraught and tense

¹¹¹ Ibid.
international situation, rather than as the Republican candidate. His final speech provided Eisenhower the opportunity to reinforce to Americans the very great strides he believed he, and the Republican Party, had made on behalf of the people. To the end, Eisenhower endeavoured to drag his party into his orbit, so the voting public would, in linking the two, restore Republicans to a congressional majority.

Of the 50 political experts polled by *Newsweek*, 47 had predicted an Eisenhower victory. Most of the commentators expected the president to receive at least 380 electoral votes, far in excess of the 226 needed to secure his re-election.\(^{112}\) In the end, after traveling 17,000 miles and delivering only 12 major speeches, Eisenhower achieved 457 electoral votes and secured 57.6 percent of the popular vote.\(^{113}\) The president received the popular mandate he had been seeking with 35,581,003 votes cast for his re-election. Eisenhower’s almost 10-million vote plurality was second only to Franklin Roosevelt’s 1936 landslide.\(^{114}\) As well as exceeding his 1952 plurality by almost 3 million votes, for the first time since 1876, Louisiana voted for a Republican president.\(^{115}\) Eisenhower’s victory was as widespread as it had been four years earlier. He carried six southern states, dented the Democrat grip on big cities by taking Chicago and brought Stevenson’s margin of victory in New York to less than 100,000 votes. The president also made substantial inroads into the African American voting bloc. For Robert Divine the election was a personal triumph for the president “who placed himself above party” and ran ahead of House Republicans by 9 percent.\(^{116}\)

The Republicans, on the other hand, not only failed to claw back their congressional majorities in either the House or the Senate, they also suffered additional losses in the nation’s statehouses. The Democrats added only two additional House seats, a number at odds with how the electoral results are often portrayed. Regardless, Eisenhower was now the first American president in more than a century to fail to bring a majority to both Houses of Congress.\(^{117}\) The president’s plurality and Republican failure to increase their representation in Congress


\(^{114}\) Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, p.433.


\(^{117}\) Allen, ‘Eisenhower’s Congressional Defeat of 1956,’ p.66.
illustrates that rarely had there been such a gulf between the vote for the president and the vote for his party.\textsuperscript{118}

**Conclusion: The Above Politics, Republican President**

The first person to cultivate the image of Dwight Eisenhower as apolitical, nonpartisan and above-politics was the man himself. Eisenhower used the popular desire for his candidacy, the affection Americans had for their victorious war hero and the “draft movements” his silence spawned to his political advantage. Eisenhower was a non-candidate by choice, his non-participant politics his political genius.\textsuperscript{119} An instinctive politician, Eisenhower understood his great political capital with the American people derived precisely from his image as a non-politician, without any political history or known party affiliation.\textsuperscript{120} This chapter has established Eisenhower eventually acquiesced to demands he make himself a candidate because of his commitment to the United States and his overdeveloped, Washingtonian concept of duty to country. The analysis of Eisenhower’s 1952 campaign highlights the ease with which he was able to emulate Washington’s example. Eisenhower’s distaste for politicians was not manufactured, nor was his attempt to govern only in the best interests of people and nation. Yet, scrutinising his response to the 1954 midterms and his 1956 electioneering demonstrates that only when Eisenhower was unable to transfer his popularity to his party did representing himself as a Republican president become a high priority. That Eisenhower failed to convince either the American voters or right-wing Republicans of his Republican credentials is of significance to the remainder of this thesis. Eisenhower was unable to persuade his party to unify behind his presidency and he encountered challenges that came from within his own party, challenges which hampered the (re)construction of his American ideal. And, as this chapter has demonstrated, an above politics, partisan president was an unsustainable ideal.


\textsuperscript{119} Greene, *The Crusade*, p.49.

\textsuperscript{120} Henderson, ‘Duty, Honor, Country,’ pp.78-9.
CHAPTER TWO

With a Fiscal Head and a Liberal Heart?

The Dilemma of Modern Republicanism.

I have just one purpose, outside of the job of keeping this world at peace, and that is to build up a strong progressive Republican Party in this country...before I end up, either this Republican Party will reflect progressivism or I won't be with them anymore.


...foreign aid has no pressure group in any district in the United States...and so this becomes a fair target. But I say to you there are no dollars today that are being spent more wisely for the future of American peace and prosperity than the dollars we put in foreign aid.


People like to call it ‘the middle of the road.’ I don’t. I call it the mainstream of American thinking. You have to find programs that will take the basic convictions and conclusions of the American people and so codify them that they will appeal to the good sense of the mass...I think this is the mainstream of American thinking.


The first Republican president in twenty years, Dwight Eisenhower was both true fiscal conservative and pragmatic Cold Warrior. With a political philosophy that echoed Abraham Lincoln’s, and as the intellectual heir of Theodore Roosevelt’s progressivism, Eisenhower’s “Middle-of-the-Road” philosophy put him often at odds with his party’s conservative Old Guard.\(^1\) Since its inception the Republican Party has been like “fratricidal twin brothers,” with one half representing American idealism, the other American enterprise.\(^2\) As the titular head of the Republican Party, Eisenhower’s idealism complicated his ability to reconcile conservative Republicans’ expectations with his own political principles. The Old Guard expected immediate implementation of their fiscal trinity: tax reduction; balanced budgets; and lower spending.\(^3\) The new president, on the other hand, was engaged in what he considered was a battle for hearts and minds. To recapture the American voting public and re-establish Republicans’ political appeal meant maintaining New Deal programs. Determined also to win

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2 Steven Thomas Wagner, ‘Pursuing the “Middle Way”: Eisenhower Republicanism, 1952-1964,’ Ph.D., Purdue University, 1999, p.3.
over the newly independent nations, Eisenhower’s steadfast commitment to the Mutual Security program took precedence over Old Guard demands. Resented as a giveaway by “un-Modern” Republicans, the president believed foreign aid prevented the extremes of wealth and poverty that permitted communist infiltration in the developing world.\(^4\) For eight years Eisenhower confronted a dilemma: could he convince Republicans that political success required a fiscal head and a liberal heart?

This chapter examines Dwight Eisenhower’s efforts to fortify a moderate Republican consensus based upon his search for an American political ideal amidst Cold War geopolitics. The first section explores how Eisenhower’s political philosophy fitted within the parameters of the Republican Party’s complicated political principles. Although the exploration is relatively brief, the chief purpose is to contextualise Eisenhower’s Sisyphean task of crafting his Modern Republican party.\(^5\) While the preceding chapter detailed the challenge Eisenhower faced in getting the American public to see him as a Republican president, this complementary chapter examines the president’s attempt to persuade the Republican Party to embrace his vision of Republicanism. This chapter establishes that “Modern Republicanism” departed from conservative Republican principles in two key ways: first, it accepted Americans’ expectations had changed since Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and secondly, it considered the United States engaged in a battle for influence and alliances amongst the underdeveloped nations. The survey of Eisenhower’s fiscally conservative principles and commitment to the Mutual Security program culminates in an analysis of the furious battle between Eisenhower and Congress over the fiscal 1958 budget. Most academic scholarship has condemned Eisenhower as failing to persuade the Republican Party to adopt his Modern Republican philosophy, asserting he bears the responsibility for the conversion of the GOP “once and forever more into a vessel of right-wing ideology.”\(^6\) Yet, as this chapter attests, although fiscal conservatism was of paramount importance to Eisenhower and the Republican Party, the president was unable to overcome the entrenched reactivity to any modernisation or internationalisation of the party. The Republican leadership refused to adopt either Eisenhower’s political pragmatism or his Cold War ideology.

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\(^4\) Cox Richardson, *To Make Men Free*, p.225.


Political Idealism

Eisenhower reclaimed the ideologies of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt whose presidencies mark periods of progression for Republican Party policies. Under their leadership Republicans expanded the right to vote, regulated business, and raised taxes. Sponsorship of progressive legislation, however, resulted each time in a backlash within the ranks and the gradual distancing of conservative Republicans from their own reforms. Against taxation, which they believed resulted in wealth redistribution (primarily to supposedly lazy African Americans and immigrants), and interfered with the Constitution’s protection of property, these Republicans favoured policies that limited federal government activity and prioritised protection of business. These distinct periods of ideological cleavage reflect the unresolved renegotiation within the party’s two conflicting belief structures: equality of opportunity; and protection of property. These same ideological divisions would mar Eisenhower’s presidency, too.

Profoundly different from antebellum Democrats who viewed politics as a battleground for power, Eisenhower revered the Republican Party’s first president. A committed party man, Lincoln nonetheless believed government should act in the interests of all its citizens. He crafted a nonpartisan vision that enabled Republicans to argue their fledgling political party represented all Americans. The connection of the Republican Party with Thomas Jefferson, the man who penned the Declaration of Independence and headed the Democratic-Republican Party, allowed Lincoln to further emphasise his party’s commitment to the doctrines of political equality and expanded economic opportunity. The United States in the 1850s, however, was riven with racial divisions. The southern states, the nation’s richest region, actively embraced slavery. This “peculiar institution” dominated all aspects of life in the fifteen slave states from Maryland and Delaware to Texas. Powerful southern slaveholders controlled the government, determined to establish their way of life as the law of the land. At a crucial juncture in the nation’s history, when it looked as if the United States might abandon the promise of equality prescribed in the Declaration of Independence, in favour of the protection of property written into the Constitution, Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg address. The first Republican president pledged the nation to the promise of equality. As we will see in chapter four, however, almost

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7 Cox Richardson, To Make Men Free, pp.x-xi.
8 Ibid., p.19.
10 Cox Richardson, To Make Men Free, pp.xiii, 6 & 42-3 and Gould, Grand Old Party, p.7.
a century on from Gettysburg the United States continued to resist the historic ideal that all Americans were entitled to equality of opportunity.

Republicans quickly hammered out a new, active role for the federal government. They created an army and navy of more than 2.5 million men, established a national banking system, imposed an income tax, created a system for dispersing public land in the West, provided schools and homes for poor Americans, commenced work on a transcontinental railroad and freed the nation’s slaves. The Republicans’ innovative economic policies were meant to allow hardworking men to rise. Yet, within half a century, Republicans had taken the nation to the opposite end of the political spectrum. Although they spoke earnestly of equality, cultivation of big business and policies designed to “protect” American industry from foreign competition had created vast economic inequalities. The party abandoned the idea that economies grew from ground up and enacted legislation to protect business, insisted on high tariffs to protect industry, cut taxes and attacked any regulatory legislation. The Old Guard, as Republicans who backed big business had come to be known, now embraced political ideals that Kathleen Cox Richardson argues echoed the antebellum southern slaveholders.

Theodore Roosevelt resurrected the Lincolnian philosophy of government. Prosperity had replaced the economic difficulties that plagued the nineteenth century’s final decade, yet the nation confronted serious social inequalities. Roosevelt was concerned that conditions for many Americans in an industrialised society – sweatshops, exhaustion, child labour, tenement living, ignorance and grinding poverty – would not equip these people to be “fitted for the exacting duties of American citizenship.” His Square Deal implemented governmental regulations of business, prohibited political donations by corporations, and imposed income and inheritance taxes. Roosevelt’s politics coincided with the rise of Progressivism, with American liberalism redefined to meet the crises of the industrial era. Committed to the ideals of individualism, Progressives nevertheless were committed to social welfare and supported an active federal government. The Senate, however, had become the province of wealthy men who allowed big business, banks and corporations to dominate and direct economic policy.

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11 Cox Richardson, *To Make Men Free*, p.xv.
14 Ibid., pp.ix & 149-50.
Holding onto their congressional majority in the 1902-midterm elections emboldened the Old Guard. Roosevelt’s progressive agenda was dismissed.\textsuperscript{16}

The Republicans’ 1918 sweeping midterm victory represented a triumph for the Old Guard who had regained control in 1912.\textsuperscript{17} In a position to enforce their agenda, conservative Republicans endeavoured to repeal progressive policies. Discarding social welfare legislation and federal government initiatives, Republican leaders believed government should concern itself only with the promotion of business prosperity.\textsuperscript{18} The full enactment of Old Guard economic policies plunged the nation into depression. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s stunning electoral victory in 1932 was a repudiation of Republican economics.\textsuperscript{19} Following Roosevelt’s 1936 electoral landslide, Republicans were left with only 16 Senators and 88 Representatives in Congress. From 1936 the Old Guard watched as eastern party liberals nominated a former Progressive, a former Democrat and a New Deal supporter for the presidency. Unable to wrest back the White House, conservative Republicans sneered at what they saw as a policy of “me-tooism.”\textsuperscript{20} In spite of Americans’ support for the New Deal, Old Guard Republicans refused to budge. Despite their failure to nominate a candidate of their own, these men remained idealists, committed to low taxes, balanced budgets, the prioritisation of states’ rights and the desire to curb “the labor bosses.”\textsuperscript{21} Eisenhower’s resounding 1952 electoral triumph brought a party in opposition for twenty years back to the White House. Yet, the Old Guard considered Eisenhower another “me-too” candidate.

The new president certainly mistrusted the “fiscal incontinence” of Truman’s Fair Deal. Regardless, Eisenhower did not agree with those Republicans, including his brother Edgar, who clamoured for the repeal of the New/Fair Deals. He rebuked his brother, affirming his belief he could not turn his back on programs many Americans believed now to be the federal government’s responsibility. When he called for moderation in government, Eisenhower was, in part, asserting his conviction that the Republican Party would be committing political suicide if it attempted the elimination of these widely popular programs.\textsuperscript{22} When Eisenhower defined

\textsuperscript{17} Gould, \textit{Grand Old Party} p.221.
\textsuperscript{18} Cox Richardson, \textit{To Make Men Free}, p.183.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.203.
\textsuperscript{20} Wagner, ‘Pursuing the “Middle Way,”’ p.6.
his program to the American people as liberal in “all of those things that bring the Federal Government in contact with the individual,” but conservative on the “economy of this country, your pocketbook, and your taxes,” he proved he had staked out the middle ground. It was, Eisenhower believed, a program to benefit all Americans.\(^{23}\)

The conclusions Eisenhower reached after many hours spent reflecting upon the true nature of the American republic during the Second World War would see Lincoln’s vision of government reimagined once more. Like Lincolnian Republicans before him, Eisenhower believed economic freedom and equality of opportunity formed the foundation of his American ideal. But, as a twentieth century leader, the carnage and destruction produced by the rampage of fascism drove him toward the belief that the United States should promote and encourage prosperity worldwide.\(^{24}\) The influences of his upbringing and decades in the military had nonetheless produced a remarkably conservative man. Eisenhower considered incentives, profits, private enterprise and free markets the basis of national prosperity. The traditional American values of thrift, hard work and self-improvement were the foundation for wealth-creation. Like most Republicans, for Eisenhower, free enterprise and individual endeavour were the principal components of American democracy.\(^{25}\) His fiscal conservatism and concern over the ever-increasing size of the federal government determined his initial position on foreign economic policy. At the beginning of his presidency the basis of Eisenhower’s foreign economic program relied on the ideal of “trade not aid.”\(^{26}\)

There were few who could match Eisenhower’s understanding of the international problems plaguing the world. When the presidential candidate had returned to the United States in June 1952 he was less informed on domestic issues facing the nation. When it came to the economy, though, he was no blank slate. The economic policies Eisenhower pursued as president reflected the philosophy of political economy he developed during the turbulent postwar years. Since the 1930s Eisenhower had deliberated on the ideal relationship between state, society and economy. Convinced the United States was continuing an alarming trend towards ever increasing government centralisation in the name of “social security,” he feared “an ever-


\(^{24}\) Cox Richardson, To Make Men Free, pp.221 & 225.

\(^{25}\) Morgan, Eisenhower Versus the “Spenders,” pp.15-16.

growing bureaucracy is taking an ever-greater power over our daily lives.” He held nothing back in a January 1949 diary entry calling centralisation “immoral, and its adoption, in this general sense, will lead to statism and, therefore, slavery.”27 The strength of his feelings about the proper size of the budget and the allocation of public resources to federal programs and taxation defined the role Eisenhower’s government would have.28

Eisenhower’s Republicanism was a reaffirmation of a rich historical tradition that perceived a republic as welcoming of all public-spirited and politically oriented citizens who preserved the civic virtue and welfare of its people.29 For the president, the fundamental purpose of a political party was to embrace a philosophy of government that applied traditional principles to current issues. Eisenhower believed that his Republican Party “must be for the promotion of ideals.”30 The ideals that had guided the party since its creation were to be found within the 1956 Republican National Platform: a government of integrity that had a limited impact in Americans lives; belief in a sound, not rubber dollar; the rejection of deficit spending; reduction of taxes; encouragement of private business; respect for law and order; equality and dignity for all men; and the supremacy of the individual. Summoning Abraham Lincoln, Eisenhower imagined a Republican Party “dedicated to one ideal, one principle: to serve this country [and]…to preserve the dream and the vision of our founding fathers.” His Republican platform was a “program of principles” around which Americans could rally. Eisenhower would “welcome them all.”31

Eisenhower may never have doubted the exceptional nature of the United States, but he held serious concerns about the political longevity of the Republican Party. Less than two years after his decisive electoral victory, Eisenhower expressed his view to press secretary James Hagerty that the Republican Party held little appeal unless Americans believed they had “a truly liberal program.” Otherwise the “hidebound reactionaries won’t get to first base. Of that

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28 Morgan, *Eisenhower Versus the “Spenders,”* p.15.  
I am convinced.” In November 1954, the Republicans ceded their slim congressional majorities. For his 1956 re-election campaign (reviewed in the preceding chapter), Eisenhower engaged in a “battle to win the hearts and minds of men and women.” His first campaign victory had been a stunning affirmation of the people’s belief in Eisenhower, but it had not been confirmation of commitment to Republican principles as the results of the 1954 midterms demonstrate. Eisenhower’s second electoral campaign was characterised by discourse that endeavoured to persuade Americans to see Eisenhower as a Republican president. His huge, but unsurprising re-election prompted Eisenhower to proclaim that Americans had “approved of modern Republicanism.” The Republican Party, however, suffered additional Congressional losses. Eisenhower’s letter to the Reverend Canon Anthony Parshley acknowledged the fundamental truth: “the public in general does not believe that my own convictions are yet largely characteristic of the Republican Party as a whole.” This issue continued to vex the president who stated: “I cannot understand it. These are Republican programs. I am a Republican President.”

A Republican Looks at His Party

The release of A Republican Looks at His Party by Under Secretary of Labor Arthur Larson in the lead-up to the 1956 election prompted a flurry of commentary on “Modern Republicanism.” According to Sherman Adams, Larson’s views on the Republican Party’s role in the modern age aligned “closely with Eisenhower’s brand of politics with its increased emphasis on Lincolnian service to the people and international responsibility.” Asked on Meet the Press if what he had called “New Republicanism” was based on Eisenhower’s political philosophy, Larson agreed it was. The president himself affirmed that, “in a book that size,” it was the best expression he had seen of his philosophy of government. While Larson argued “New Republicanism” was “in the direct line of descent from our oldest political traditions,” critics

33 Eisenhower, ‘Address at Meeting Sponsored by the Republican National Committee’
35 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to the Reverend Canon Anthony R. Parshley, November 16, 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 20, DDEL.
openly derided the political philosophy as an extension of Democratic principles. Yet, “New Republicanism” according to Larson updated the conservative ideas associated with Alexander Hamilton, Lincoln, William McKinley and Roosevelt. A set of ideals specifically oriented toward “contemporary mid-century facts,” Larson declared Eisenhower’s Modern Republicanism different from any previous political tradition. Detached from both the Old Guard’s 1896 ideological principles and the New Deal ideology to which the Democrats remained committed, Larson judged Eisenhower’s political genius lay in his ability to balance the country’s positive forces. In everything Larson believed Eisenhower sought to do, the key was balance.39

Like the New/Fair Deal policies that preceded him, political columnist Stewart Alsop considered Eisenhower’s Modern Republicanism “politically shrewd,” a pragmatic political consideration that allowed the Republican Party to win again.40 There can be little doubt Eisenhower sought the revitalisation of the Republican Party. His political philosophy was not slyly adopted for political gain, however, but rather borne by his own experiences. As a youth he had lived the creed of self-reliance, prized individual initiative and resented the intrusion of the federal government in Americans’ daily lives. As he aged, however, his fears of class conflict and vision of a mutually cooperative and prosperous society drove him toward the progressivism Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had represented. Eisenhower was not a man of political extremes. Reconciling his own political principles, the president’s desire to find the middle ground in politics put him in harmony with the majority of Americans who desired constructive solutions that willingly crossed partisan and ideological lines. Eisenhower’s middle ground was a thoughtful political philosophy but, as is often the case in American politics, his commitment to the centre often resulted in the accusation of vacillation. While Modern Republicanism represents one example of the president’s pragmatism, it also establishes that Eisenhower remained the consensus builder that had brought him such success in the Second World War. Aware he might have to compromise certain time-honoured American traditions in order to secure their foundations, Eisenhower believed his administration might have to infringe on the ideals of limited government, free enterprise and individual initiative in order to preserve American liberties.41 Ideological purists in the

41 Wagner, ‘Pursuing the “Middle Way,”’ p.10.
Republican Party found Eisenhower’s realist approach to twentieth-century governing unpalatable. Eisenhower’s middle way was not banal as critics have accused, but rather represented his uphill struggle to resolve the tensions between Republicans and the modern state government apparatus Americans had come to expect.42

A Modern Fiscal Conservative

When Eisenhower entered the White House he faced a grim reality. The budget proposed by the Truman administration anticipated an almost $10 billion deficit. The fiscal 1954 budget had planned military expenditures over $45 billion. Combined with foreign aid and nuclear programs the figure totalled $55 billion, amounting to almost 70 percent of a projected $78.1 billion budget. The national debt stood at $267 billion, the debt ceiling $275 billion. Debt payments and obligations for domestic programs totalled $14 billion. The Truman administration had authorised, but not financed, a further $81 billion in expenditures the Eisenhower administration would have to pay out of their first two fiscal budgets.43 The United States also faced ongoing deficits, inflation continued to devalue the dollar, wage and price controls remained in effect, and taxes absorbed much of the American wage.44 Conservative Republicans, seduced by what David Reinhard describes as Eisenhower’s “vague and honeyed words” during the election campaign, had allowed their imaginations to run wild, envisioning a return to the period prior to the Civil War where the federal government had done little more than collect customs duties, deliver mail and maintain a small army on the Western frontier.45 With a Republican finally re-installed in the Oval Office, the Old Guard assumed the new administration would immediately cut social security, legislate broad tax cuts, and slash government spending. Eisenhower’s appointment of Ohio industrialist George Humphrey as Treasury Secretary and Detroit banker Joseph Dodge as director of the Bureau of the Budget established the president’s fiscally conservative credentials. Both men assumed national strength came from a sound economy that could be achieved only through balanced budgets.46 Eisenhower reaffirmed his confidence in Republican economic principles with his assertion that, if the United States’ economic future was to be secured, tax

reduction must be a necessary government objective. But, in a blow to the Old Guard, an immediate tax cut was not on the cards.

The majority of Republican House freshmen elected in 1952 criticised federal encroachment in American lives. For these Republicans, the New/Fair Deals symbolised a socialist invasion. Demand for their repeal was immediate. Taftite Republicans distrusted Eisenhower’s economic policies, which they scorned as “Democrat Lite” programs, but Eisenhower understood their agenda to be impractical and irresponsible. Although he was prepared to indulge liberal and conservative beliefs, Eisenhower leaned right on fiscal matters. With Herbert Hoover’s economic legacy (Secretary of Commerce during the booming 1920s, Hoover was president when the economy collapsed in 1929) still fresh in the memory of many Americans, Eisenhower committed himself to the restoration of the party’s economic reputation. Eisenhower’s need to secure the nation’s fiscal solvency was “not merely...some abstract, statistical feat to be performed by government accountants,” but vital to democracy’s survival. Eisenhower was determined to disentangle his administration from the sins of the last Republican administration. To do so, he had to gain the acceptance of his “Modern Republican” philosophy from Americans and his own party.

In twenty years of governance, Democrats had balanced the budget only three times. Deficit financing ran counter to American fiscal traditions. Not unknown in the pre-Depression era, deficits were the exception rather than the norm. In the first three decades of the twentieth century two-thirds of federal budgets had been in the black. Franklin Roosevelt’s response to the Great Depression, however, not only broke the historic tradition of a limited federal government but also normalised deficit spending. Eisenhower came to the White House determined his administration would return to the tradition of balanced budgets. The Eisenhower administration worked tirelessly to reduce Truman’s proposed fiscal 1954

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49 Cox Richardson, *To Make Men Free*, p.237.
50 FDR adopted initially a cautious fiscal policy, but when a spending cut in fiscal 1938 resulted in the nation’s sharpest recession, he was convinced to maintain deficit spending until the economy had recovered. The onset of the Cold War and hostilities in Korea ensured deficit financing became the new financial reality. Morgan, *Eisenhower Versus the "Spenders,"* pp.24-5.
51 Ibid., p.2.
expenditures, eventually bringing the actual budget deficit down to only $3.1 billion.\textsuperscript{52} Over eight years Eisenhower succeeded in balancing the budget three times – the last American president to achieve this result – without repealing New Deal programs. His administration reduced also the percentage of national debt to the GNP, if not the absolute level of national debt. But Eisenhower was no “fiscal hawk.” Prepared to engage the federal government to promote economic growth and secure Republican popularity, Eisenhower used the government to encourage individual opportunity and provide a public safety net. He created the Department of Health, Welfare and Education, and called for aid to assist depressed areas, federal funds to address the educational crisis and implemented the most ambitious infrastructure plan the United States has ever seen. However, in true Republican fashion Eisenhower also enabled Congress to free up business development by cutting regulations and price controls.\textsuperscript{53}

Eisenhower believed Modern Republicanism, which he often defined as “liberalism in matters involving people and conservatism in matters economic in nature,” was distinct from Democrat policies. Eisenhower’s middle way would not increase spending, expand federal programs or further enlarge governmental bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{54} The president imagined the federal government as prudent and business-like managers, halting expansion of federal programs, stemming socialism and concerned with Americans and the budget.\textsuperscript{55} Nearly all of Eisenhower’s initial policy proposals reflected long-standing conservative Republican ideals including the desire for a balanced budget, tax reductions, encouragement of free enterprise, and reduction of federal bureaucracy. Yet, conservative Republicans, who glorified individualism, isolationism and the rights of property while rejecting egalitarianism and centralised government often stymied Eisenhower. The Republican Party had been, since Warren Harding’s presidency, the conservative force in American politics. The Reactionary Old Guard had no intention of shifting their perspective to accommodate the vast changes occurring in American society.\textsuperscript{56}

The conflict with far-right Republicans provoked Eisenhower to retort the Republican Party “must be known as a progressive organization or it is sunk.” In a conversation with General Lucius Clay in November 1954 he was emphatic: “I think that far from appeasing or reasoning

\textsuperscript{52} McClenahan and Becker, \textit{Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy}, pp.30-1.


\textsuperscript{54} Ann Whitman, Diary Notes, Tuesday, February 16, 1954, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 1, DDEL.

\textsuperscript{55} McCenahan and Becker, \textit{Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy}, p.54.

\textsuperscript{56} Reinhard, \textit{The Republican Right since 1945}, pp.229-30 and Wagner, ‘Pursuing the “Middle Way,”’ p.164.
with the dyed-in-the-wool reactionary fringe, we should completely ignore it and when necessary, repudiate it.” To Eisenhower it was unthinkable that those who believed in moderate government could object to the non-personal components of his program. He considered the situation critical:

I think that unless the population of the United States is given an opportunity to embrace this kind of government, then eventually we are going to lose much of the individual liberty, initiative, and rights that we now enjoy…what we must all do is work for this kind of idea, principle or doctrine.\(^{57}\)

Eisenhower was insistent. The only way to block Democrats’ return to power was to reshape the image of the Republican Party as filled with progressive conservatives. Committed Republican ideologues seem to have been incapable of understanding their president’s pragmatic approach toward political reality, suspecting him instead of working to undermine traditional Republican principles.\(^{58}\) Eisenhower’s political philosophy, unpalatable to many conservative Republicans, was not well understood by the American people either. Despite the involvement of some of the nation’s most efficient advertisers, the search for an appropriate slogan was futile. Modern Republicanism, “progressive moderation,” or “dynamic conservatism” all failed to win over his party or the nation.\(^{59}\) Ann Whitman’s diary reflects the unwinnable position the president had found himself in. Eisenhower thought the answer lay with the positioning of the party “between 2 extremes of the world: those who want better government (economic, political, also moral); & those who believe the government should stay out of everything.” The situation was summed up by Eisenhower’s question of how the party could still adhere to its traditional principles but apply them to the problems of today, to the way Americans now lived.\(^{60}\)

**The Soviet Economic Offensive and American Foreign Aid**

During the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 1952, the Kremlin outlined their new approach toward the developing world. No doubt influenced in part by the Marshall Plan and Truman’s Point Four program, the Soviet Union was to embark upon a program of peaceful

\(^{57}\) Dwight D. Eisenhower, Resume of Conversation between President Eisenhower and Lucius Clay, 18\(^{th}\) November 1954, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, DDEL.

\(^{58}\) Morgan, *Eisenhower Versus the “Spenders,”* pp.80-1.


\(^{60}\) Ann Whitman, Diary Notes: Wednesday, August 11, 1954, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 3, DDEL.
economic competition. Actively attempting to increase Soviet influence beyond Europe’s borders, the Kremlin’s new leadership courted Third World leaders and visited countries such as India and Burma armed with promises of lavish economic assistance. Initially, communist bloc trade agreements had included only Afghanistan, Iran and Egypt. Between 1952 and 1956, agreements included Argentina, India, Greece, Lebanon, Uruguay, Iceland, Burma, Yugoslavia, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan and Indonesia. At the same time, communist states began participating in non-communist trade fairs.\(^{61}\) By August 1956, Soviet bloc technicians were working in at least fourteen Asian and Middle Eastern nations. More than 700 Indian steel workers, engineers, and technicians were being trained in the Soviet Union. Almost all the Soviet bloc agreements in 1956 were with Third World countries.\(^{62}\) By the end of 1957, aid agreements with the underdeveloped nations amounted to $1.5 billion. Comparatively, from June 1945 to June 1957, the United States had provided approximately $60 billion in economic aid to the international community.\(^{63}\)

Economic professor Joseph Berliner’s 1958 examination of the Soviet economic offensive led him to conclude there existed a “pervading uneasiness among all who are concerned with the future of these countries and with the position of the United States in world affairs.”\(^{64}\) To appeal to the economic aspirations of the developing nations the Soviets framed their policy of economic assistance to appear as if they respected state sovereignty. Based on his investigation, Berliner believed the Soviets intended to purge themselves of the “Stern Russia” image, a nation guided entirely by power considerations and intent on spreading communism through war and revolution, and substitute in the minds of the developing world an image of a “benevolent, industrial people who desire only to live and trade in peace.” By 1955, the Soviet’s economic offensive was well underway.\(^{65}\)

Most of the policy elite in Washington puzzled over the attraction of the Soviet economic offensive. The common reaction was to wonder if “some incredible naiveté or…propensity for committing national suicide…has moved those nations to invite the subversive minions of

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\(^{62}\) Kaufman, *Trade & Aid*, p.64.


\(^{64}\) Ibid., p.vii.

Moscow to their lands?” What many Americans failed to appreciate was the Third World’s admiration for the rapidity of Soviet industrialisation. For the most part, developing nations appreciated the Kremlin’s offer of long-term, low interest rate loans they believed came without the implied obligations that accompanied American grant assistance. For many of the new Asian governments the threat of communism was less raw than the memory of Western colonialism. The United States’ military alliances with former colonial powers, and their excessive faith in military strength were considered proof they needed to be wary. Although Moscow was indulging in some latter-day imperialism, the Soviets had managed to maintain their anti-colonial credentials. Moreover, Soviet economic assistance promised more bargaining power for the underdeveloped world, breaking the American monopoly of aid giving.

The United States’ desire for the economic independence of the underdeveloped world was not entirely altruistic. To halt any drift towards communism, Washington intended to employ foreign aid to draw these nations into the free world alliance. Soviet–style economic regimentation and political dictatorship in vast swathes of the world was not something the Eisenhower administration considered acceptable. Eisenhower’s determination to secure the freedom of democracy around the world led his administration to authorise the covert actions that toppled the democratically elected governments in Iran and Guatemala in 1953-4 and impelled their support of Ngo Dinh Diem in Vietnam. Although Eisenhower assured his Mexican counterpart in 1956 the United States would not force the adoption of their economic framework on any country, the president’s actions had established his preparedness to sacrifice nations who allowed communists too much influence. Eisenhower was prepared to concede his desire for allies in the fight against communism played, of course, some role in the United States’ economic aid program. But as he assured President Ruis Cortines, he desired only to see Mexico strong, prosperous, obviously democratic and firmly committed to the free world alliance.

Dwight Eisenhower’s initial impulse had been to discontinue the United States’ existing foreign aid program. Preferring trade over aid, Eisenhower believed liberalised trade deals and the encouragement of private foreign investment would enable the United States to accomplish

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66 Kaufman, Trade & Aid, pp.64-5.
68 Berliner, Soviet Economic Aid, pp.2-3, 137 & 140.
69 Memorandum of Conversation between President Eisenhower and President Ruis Cortines of Mexico, 27th March 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 14, DDEL.
its foreign economic objectives and allow him to indulge his fiscal conservatism. Eisenhower’s goals were quickly challenged. The Cold War already had altered the international and political situation and now the onslaught of nationalist sentiment within the developing world forced the administration to shift its attention from Europe. The competition for influence between the superpowers ensured foreign aid became a vital component in the battle for hearts and minds in Asia and Africa. Ironically, Eisenhower’s commitment to restoring the value of the American dollar contributed to his support for foreign aid. Eisenhower had been influenced by the positions of a number of economic experts, particularly Walt Rostow and Max Millikan of the M.I.T. Center for International Studies. Pioneers in the field of economic growth, these men believed foreign aid led to economic development. While contemporary scholarship has concluded the link between aid and economic development was “tenuous at best,” Eisenhower believed foreign aid represented the best value equation for the United States. Yet, he overlooked the possibility that his foreign policy goals were incompatible with the needs of the recipient nations.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the United States had adopted a policy of economic aid intended to rebuild Western Europe and create a thriving world economy that would ensure their hard-won peace. Internationalists imagined a world based on principles of multilateral cooperation, trade liberalisation and currency stability. Buoyed by the success of the Marshall Plan, but aware the underdeveloped nations guardedly jealously their hard-won independence, Truman used his 1949 Inaugural Address to assure their leaders that: “old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing.” With the postwar United States more reliant on trade and alliances, internationalists argued commitment to foreign aid became commitment to national security. In order to halt communism’s expansion, the United States had to commit to economic development beyond Europe’s borders. Although American foreign aid had been intended as a temporary measure, the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in June 1950 and increased militarisation of the Cold War ensured the foreign aid

70 Kaufman, Trade & Aid, p.7 and McClenahan and Becker, Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy, pp.184-5.
71 Wagner, “Pursuing the “Middle Way,” p.179.
73 Kaufman, Trade & Aid, p.1.
program took on an air of permanence. The Mutual Security Act, which had replaced the Economic Cooperation Administration Act, had been set to expire on 30 June 1952. Congress extended the program until 30 June 1954.\footnote{Kaufman, \textit{Trade \& Aid}, p.1.}

Foreign aid provoked significant congressional resentment. Determined to reduce federal spending, conservative Republicans attacked the foreign aid program as a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars. The near-hysteria of the McCarthy era that had turned many Americans into neo-isolationists had wide-ranging implications for foreign policy. Because it lacked a strong domestic constituency that believed in the beneficial nature of the program, foreign aid was an easy target.\footnote{Wagner, \textit{Pursuing the “Middle Way,”} p.190 and Baldwin, \textit{Economic Development and American Foreign Policy}, p.100.} For Eisenhower, however, the only way to survive the onslaught of Soviet expansionism was to protect the unity of the free world. The president considered military and economic aid “as much a part of our security program as our military efforts at home.”\footnote{Dwight D. Eisenhower, \textit{Press Release: Statement by the President, 2nd December 1953, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 1, DDEL.}} Despite Dean Acheson’s explicit argument that friendly nations could earn economic independence by exporting goods to the United States enabling the foreign aid budget to eventually be slashed, conservatives persisted with tariffs and industry protection.\footnote{Baldwin, \textit{Economic Development and American Foreign Policy}, p.105.} The Korean War enabled Congress to hamper further the transfer of public capital to underdeveloped areas. The increased American demand for raw materials as part of the military rearmament efforts emboldened Congress to argue the earning power of the underdeveloped nations had increased, thus reducing any need for economic aid.\footnote{Ibid., p.86.}

If Eisenhower’s May 1953 message to Congress on the Mutual Security Program reached for an audience beyond Capitol Hill, the sustained emphasis on militarisation and the American-centric focus would have been unlikely to win over the hearts and minds of the developing world. The speech conveyed instead that the American president was an ardent Cold Warrior determined to achieve peace through a massive build-up of military weapons around the world. Eisenhower’s commitment to the United States’ position of international leadership cannot have failed to disappoint Taftite Republicans. The president passed to Congress the final responsibility of ensuring the free world did not become “disunited at a moment of great peril
when peace and war hang precariously in balance.”

Congress may have cut Eisenhower’s funding requests each time, but the president must be considered remarkably successful in achieving the funding he did within a climate of significant resentment. Yet, Eisenhower did not appear to be making substantial headway with regards the developing world. Eisenhower’s 1956 message to Congress on the Mutual Security Program was more attuned to the needs of these nations. This time Eisenhower claimed the need for the mutual security program was “urgent because there are still nations that are eager to strive with us for peace and freedom but, without our help, lack the means of doing so.” Those in the US who did not support his program were short-sighted. Still, Eisenhower faced an uphill battle in persuading Congress and Americans of the program’s necessity. For the president, he believed his administration must organise to show Americans “how sound and sensible investment in foreign economies” helped them in the short-term and in the long-term.

In the midst of the budget battle in August 1957, Eisenhower telephoned his Treasury Secretary. The discussion centred on Eisenhower’s desire to find another, more appealing name for foreign aid.

The Dilemma of a Cold War Republican President

Having arrived at the term “mutual security,” the bill to enact it was Eisenhower’s most difficult. The annual battle over mutual security brought the ideological differences between Modern Republicanism and the conservative Republican leadership into sharp focus. Whether Congress wanted to save or spend, Eisenhower had to fight every year for appropriations he considered vital for the maintenance of world peace. The fact the program lacked domestic appeal did not help the president’s cause. Easily labelled a giveaway program, Wilton Persons, who had worked with Eisenhower since his NATO days, reflected that the president’s yearly struggle for funding was “a real wrestling match.” Yet, it was the one bill Persons believed Eisenhower “got into personally more than probably almost any other.” In 1956, Eisenhower requested a substantial increase in funding for the Mutual Security program. To justify his

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83 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Paul Hoffman, March 8, 1957, DDE Diary Series, Box 22, DDEL.
84 Telephone Calls: President Eisenhower to Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, August 20, 1957, ibid.Box 26, DDEL.
request, the president framed the need for funding as crucial to achieving Cold War victory. Without the full appropriation Eisenhower asserted the United States would allow the Soviets to cause catastrophic change to the international environment and disrupt the unity of the free nations. Congress was unconvinced.\(^87\) In January 1957, Eisenhower proposed the nation’s largest peacetime budget. The president’s budget message for fiscal 1958 proposed federal expenditures of $71.8 billion, even prompting Democrats to accuse the president of extravagance. Despite a foreign aid request 40 percent less than the peak of Truman administration spending, isolationist Republicans wanted it slashed to the point of elimination.

The “un-Modern” revolt over the fiscal 1958 budget was not about whether the foreign aid budget received a few hundred million dollars more or less. This particular battle was a contest over the leadership and direction of the Republican Party. The attack on the budget and the determination to permanently cripple the Mutual Security program was an attack on the president and Modern Republicanism.\(^88\) During a conversation with Senator Bridges in May 1957, Eisenhower despaired that one of the party’s principal leaders had called mutual security “nothing but a do-gooder act.” For the president, nothing could have been further from the truth. Although he acknowledged the popularity of budget cuts, he would “rather see Congress cut a billion off the defense part” than attack the funds for mutual security.\(^89\) Perhaps naively, Eisenhower had expected his party to trust his decisions in this area, especially as he had put his reputation on the line in support of the program.

The fiscal 1958 budget became a flashpoint for conservative Republicans, the same men who disdained any talk of modernising the party. Without any acknowledgment that spending had been largely held in check in 1956 and 1957, almost $7 billion in additional spending sent many Republicans into a tailspin of rage. With 1500 Republicans gathered in Chicago in February 1957 for the annual Abraham Lincoln National Republican Club meeting, the full extent of party dissatisfaction was palpable. The event’s theme was “Real Republicanism versus Modern Republicanism.” Although most attendees were respectful of their president, budget criticism was sharp.\(^90\) The rebellion of right-wing Republicans had been brewing for


\(^{89}\) Conversation between the President and Senator Styles Bridges, 21 May 1957, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 9, DDEL.

\(^{90}\) McClenahan and Becker, *Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy*, pp.65 & 70.
some time. The moderate, middle-way approach to governing would force Republicans to accept the public now expected the federal government to fulfill roles they had traditionally not found agreeable. Taftite Republicans intended to fight this change.  

The anticipation of another fierce battle over mutual security funding prompted Eisenhower to go public. His first televised address on 14 May 1957, sketched out in broad strokes the overall budget issues facing the nation. Although the federal budget was “huge,” it was also the third budget in a row the administration had balanced. The budget had been reduced to encompass only what was “the essential national interest – and no more.” Intent on acquiring public support Eisenhower pulled no punches, asserting that unless Americans were prepared to gamble with their national safety no great reductions were possible. In fact, the budget had provided only a “moderate sum for waging peace.” The following week, Eisenhower’s national address was a half hour defence of his administration’s Mutual Security program.

A Roper poll in late March 1957 had revealed only 4 percent of the Americans interviewed wanted an increase in foreign aid. Some 24 percent thought current spending was appropriate, 31 percent wanted a small cut, 27 percent a drastic cut and 3 percent wanted foreign aid stopped entirely. Eisenhower thus spoke of “waging the peace” as the “most misunderstood of any of the Federal Government’s activities.” The address was Eisenhower’s attempt to persuade Americans that dollar-for-dollar, mutual security funding did more to secure the United States’ safety than any other program. To strip this program of funding increased the long-term threat of war. Determined to alter the perception of mutual security funding as so-called foreign aid, Eisenhower insisted this label was “misleading – for it inspires a picture of bounty for foreign countries at the expense of our own. No misconception could be further from reality.” Commitment to the Mutual Security program was the United States’ acknowledgement they faced with an expansionist enemy ideology, that guns alone could not meet the Soviet threat. Mutual Security was thus vital because:

- You cannot fight poverty with guns.
- You cannot satisfy hunger with deadly ammunition.

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91 Ibid., p.194.
Economic stability and progress – essential to any nation’s peace and well-being – cannot be assured merely by the firepower of artillery or the speed of jets.\(^9^4\)

And so, at a cost of only $4 billion, Eisenhower argued mutual security funds were the key to meeting whatever dangers the United States faced. If Congress crippled the program in “the false name of ‘economy,’” their actions would, he declared, weaken the nation. For, if moderate government disappeared, Eisenhower believed the communists would be emboldened to expand their despotic imperialism.\(^9^5\) At the height of the conflict Eisenhower wondered if he might not make another speech on the subject of mutual security. It was high time, the president said, to make a stand for what they believed in – “whether mutual security or anything else.”\(^9^6\) Eisenhower’s preparedness to publicly involve himself in the fight to increase the material well-being of those in the underdeveloped nations contrasts with his reticence to involve himself openly in African Americans’ fight for civil rights during his presidency.

The appropriations phase traditionally is where foreign aid funding receives the greatest cuts. In 1953, Eisenhower had requested $5.5 billion, $2 billion less than Truman had proposed. The House Appropriations Committee authorised $4.4 billion, achieved only after the administration tirelessly wooed Appropriations chairman John Taber.\(^9^7\) The 1954 battle was a repeat of the previous year. The administration again pared down their request, yet of the $3.5 billion requested, Congress appropriated only $2.8 billion. Of that, $2.5 billion was for military purposes leaving only $350 million for economic and technical assistance.\(^9^8\) The next year followed the same established pattern.\(^9^9\) The response of the Senate and House with regards to the mutual security funding request for fiscal 1958 was markedly different. The Senate was receptive, cutting only $250 million. The House, however, slashed an additional $375 million. These cuts were made in an environment clouded by anger at the administration’s proposed civil rights bill. A number of southern representatives vented their anger over civil rights legislation by slashing foreign aid spending. Other legislators, piqued at the Bureau of the Budget’s order that government agencies restrict the following years spending at current levels,

\(^9^5\) Ibid.
\(^9^6\) Telephone Calls: President Eisenhower to Press Secretary Hagerty & Secretary of State Dulles, 5\(^{th}\) August 1957, DDE Diary Series, Box 26, DDEL.
\(^9^7\) Reichard, The Reaffirmation of Republicanism, p.72.
\(^9^8\) Wagner, ‘Pursuing the “Middle Way,”’ pp.191-2.
\(^9^9\) Kaufman, Trade & Aid, pp.54-5.
attacked foreign aid funding. Congress eventually agreed upon a $3.38 billion Mutual Security funding package, almost $500 million less than requested and $200 million less than the Senate had initially approved.\textsuperscript{100} The Old Guard could afford to lose the “Battle of the Budget” without surrendering in the “Battle for the GOP.” Right-wing Republicans had used the fiscal 1958 budget to sound off against Modern Republicanism. Actual budget cutting was a secondary endeavour. Primarily, this had been a political battle, with the structure and philosophy of a post-Eisenhower GOP at play.\textsuperscript{101} Eisenhower’s persistence paid some dividends. Without the effort Eisenhower and his administration put in, a senator such as Everett Dirksen never would have gone against years of speeches in opposition to the program to vote for the funding. A number of Republican congressmen marvelled also at their audacity in voting against their own records. Any of these men might have made the phone call that came through to the White House one summer afternoon: “Hello, put me through to Persons. This is internationalist Allen speaking – brand new internationalist. Damn it, I just voted for Mutual Security for the first time in my life.”\textsuperscript{102}

**The Rejection of Eisenhower**

The revision of Eisenhower’s presidency has done much to repair his presidential legacy. Modern Republicanism is one area, however, where critics hold sway. Admittedly holding limited appeal for the party’s Old Guard, Eisenhower critics have successfully crafted a narrative of failure that itself fails to acknowledge the ideological shifts which define party history.\textsuperscript{103} As Geoffrey Kabaservice insightfully points out, it is curious a party that claims the mantle of fiscal responsibility continues to reject the legacy of the most fiscally conservative president of the last eighty years.\textsuperscript{104} It would appear the emotionally based, long-running conservative opposition to Eisenhower was sparked by his securing of the presidential nomination over conservative favourite Senator Robert Taft. Not even Eisenhower’s obvious

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp.107-8.

\textsuperscript{101} Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945*, p.141.


\textsuperscript{104} Kabaservice, ‘Leading as a True Conservative,’ p.41.
conservatism and commitment to Republican philosophy have been unable to overcome his rejection by the Republican Party.105

Eisenhower’s supposed failure has been simplified into an easily accepted narrative. In 1957, Republican columnist Stewart Alsop wrote “Just What is Modern Republicanism?” For Alsop, the problem facing Eisenhower was how “to save the heart of his Modern Republican program, and in so doing, to place his imprint so indelibly on his party that it will continue to be the party of Eisenhower in the voters’ minds.”106 According to David Reinhard, however, Modern Republicanism was Eisenhower’s “grandest flop.” A “hazy concept” that offered Americans little more than “a smorgasbord of liberal and conservative offerings,” the only thing Modern Republicanism achieved was a great deal of internal anger. Following consecutive losses in two elections, in 1957 conservative Republicans dominated the debate over what was real and what was Modern Republicanism. Their disdain for Modern Republicanism was meant to offend. Declared a “form of bribery” and campaign “catch phrase” the debate prompted even liberal Republican George Aiken to urge the administration drop the term, because it was “misleading, badly misused and subject to misinterpretation.” Eisenhower’s Modern Republicanism was widely considered a direct attack on “old-fashioned, regular, unhyphenated Republicanism.”107 Contributing to the narrative of failure is the assertion that Eisenhower made no effort to build a base of support for Modern Republicanism.108 According to Alsop, if Eisenhower was to succeed in beating, persuading and tempting the party as a whole into embracing Modern Republicanism, the president would have to use his “immense power – of patronage and high appointment; of personal and political support…above all his power to make or break potential Republican presidential candidates.” Unsurprisingly for a president dedicated to a nonpartisan, apolitical presidency Eisenhower lacked what Alsop considered the necessary “instinctive political vindictiveness.”109

Complicating this image of Eisenhower is Daniel Galvin’s 2010 Presidential Party Building: From Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush. Galvin’s impression is that Eisenhower worked tirelessly behind the scenes to rebuild a Republican Party that appealed to a majority of American voters. He did not merely “dabble in party building here and there.” Instead,

105 Ibid., p.42.
Eisenhower was persistent and aggressive in championing the virtues of Modern Republicanism.\textsuperscript{110} This view is reinforced by one of Eisenhower’s closest supporters. In the mid-1950s, Paul Hoffman estimated that 95 percent of the Republican rank and file supported the president’s program. A contemporary survey sustains Hoffman’s assertion, with forty-two state Republican chairmen and two-thirds of the Republican National Committee self-identifying as “Modern Republicans.”\textsuperscript{111} Bret Baier’s 2017 \textit{Three Days in January: Dwight Eisenhower’s Final Mission} agrees Eisenhower was indeed devoted to the reinvigoration of the Republican Party. When pressed, however, Eisenhower’s commitment to the modernisation of the Republican Party was subordinated to his belief in doing what he considered best for the United States.\textsuperscript{112} Galvin concludes by conceding that Eisenhower was never quite able to resolve the tension between his “Modern Republican” philosophy and the growing conservative sentiment within his party.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{Conclusion: Party or Nation – For Which Greater Good?}

The idealism that drove Dwight Eisenhower was at odds with Republicans who opposed the transformation of their ideological values of individualism, thrift, and the least amount of government involvement in the economy or in American lives.\textsuperscript{114} Eisenhower’s political philosophy, heir to the ideals embraced by Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, stood for balance between the historic and the new, between traditional and modern, and between the Left and the Right on the political spectrum. Essentially, it reclaimed the middle ground. Yet, the president’s aspirations for a “Modern Republican” Party that embraced welfare liberalism and fiscal conservatism did not survive even his own administration. Eisenhower had been convinced his stunning re-election victory was a mandate for Modern Republicanism. As this chapter has established, however, the success of his progressive conservative philosophy proved limited as congressional Republicans used the battle over the fiscal 1958 budget to make abundantly clear their dissatisfaction with the president’s domestic and foreign economic policy goals. The president had sought to persuade Republicans that in order to re-establish the party’s political appeal, they had to accept Americans’ expectations of government had changed. He also had fought furiously to dislodge the isolationism that had, in part, compelled

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\textsuperscript{111} Kabaservice, \textit{Rule and Ruin}, p.32. \\
\textsuperscript{113} Galvin, \textit{Presidential Party Building}, p.43. \\
\textsuperscript{114} Birkner, ‘What Was Modern Republicanism?’ , p.471.
\end{flushright}
him to seek the presidency from within the party. Eisenhower had not betrayed the ideals of fiscal conservatism but, rather than unifying the party around his philosophy, Eisenhower succeeded in further dividing the party ranks. The divisions within the party over economic policy and Eisenhower’s commitment to winning over the hearts and minds of Americans and the developing world were incompatible.  

CHAPTER THREE

“The President Must Not Be Deprived”: The Bricker Amendment and the Attack on Executive Authority

I do think that the wisdom of our founding fathers in establishing the balance between the Executive and the Legislative Departments has been proven time and time again. I do not see any point in amending the Constitution to prove that it should not be changed.


The history of the Confederation shows exactly what happened to America then and what could happen to America today if the enforcement of treaties and the carrying out of international obligations in our country is left to the laws and whims of the states.


When it comes to the point of using any amendment to change or alter the traditional and constitutional balances of power among the three departments of Government, a feature of our Constitution that is the very genius of our whole system of government, I won’t compromise one single word.


Dwight Eisenhower was committed to restoring and securing the historic foundations of the United States government. For him, this meant embracing a constitutionalist approach to governing. Concerned the previous twenty years of Democrat rule had expanded excessively the powers of the presidency, Eisenhower intended to reinstate nineteenth-century ideals and restraints to the presidency. Yet, like Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman before him, Eisenhower brought to the White House an expansive and forceful conception of the president as the maker and executor of US foreign policy.1 The evasion of congressional oversight by Roosevelt at Yalta in 1945, and Truman’s sidestep of congressional approval in committing troops to the Korean offensive in 1950, had convinced conservatives that great danger existed in executive abuses that annexed power traditionally reserved for the legislature. In January 1953, two weeks before Eisenhower’s inauguration, Republican senator John Bricker sponsored a proposed constitutional amendment that represented an immediate assault on the president’s ability to conduct the nation’s foreign policy. Determined to safeguard what he

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believed the proper composition of the American government, Eisenhower actively opposed any “crippling of the Executive power.”

This chapter begins with an exploration of the widespread congressional support for Bricker’s constitutional amendment – support that primarily came from within the president’s own party. In order to appreciate the significance of the conflict that erupted, the chapter probes the tensions between the executive and legislature created by the Constitution’s deliberate vagueness on the president’s ill-defined but evident powers. As the analysis presented here establishes, constitutionalism defined Eisenhower’s approach to his presidential responsibilities. Although he relied upon the contours of the presidency as invented by the Founding Fathers to construct his idealised image of the presidency, the persistent critique that Eisenhower was a weak and ineffective leader can no longer be sustained. This chapter’s detailed examination of Eisenhower’s response to the Bricker amendment evidences both his anger at the Republican attack on his executive authority and also the activism he displayed in thwarting Congress’ attempt to seize his rightful, and traditional, presidential powers. The contrast between the fiery nature of Eisenhower’s private correspondence and his idealised and conciliatory public discourse supports also the broader argument that he engaged deliberately in the construction of an ideal public presidential persona. While the interplay of vigour with his sense of presidential limitations can be hard to pin down, Eisenhower’s success against the popular amendment enables us to appreciate the complex and contoured nature of his presidency.

**The President Must be Stopped – ‘Usurping’ the Power of Congress**

The American Congress was in danger of becoming immaterial. Since the 1930s, the president had steadily increased his responsibilities, becoming the principal source of policy initiative and proposing much of the legislation considered by Congress. The Founding Fathers had worried the president might “usurp” executive authority. Yet, although congressional concerns had been raised time and again, the issue had always been resolved. Truman’s decision to commit American troops to the conflict in Korea without seeking congressional approval, coming as it did on the heels of Roosevelt’s activist foreign policy, inspired a campaign to limit

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presidential authority. Influential Republican senator Robert Taft angrily announced Truman had “usurped” his power and “violated the Constitution of the United States.” Determined to ensure that no further violations could occur, in January 1951 Republican Representative Frederic Coudert introduced a formal resolution to the House requiring congressional authorisation before American troops were sent out of the country.\(^4\) Conservatives continued to rage about presidential abuses of power when Truman seized the nation’s steel mills in order to avert a strike that threatened to paralyse the Korean War effort on 8 April 1952. Although Truman had taken action under what he considered his constitutional right as president and commander-in-chief, Republicans condemned the move as an unconstitutional usurpation of executive authority.\(^5\)

In the days that followed Truman’s seizure of the steel mills, Eisenhower’s soon-to-be Secretary of State John Foster Dulles added to the tension by claiming that congressional power could be further eroded. In a speech to the American Bar Association (ABA), Dulles asserted that a treaty made with an international body could theoretically strip further power from state and federal governments.\(^6\) The momentum for what would become known as the Bricker amendment had begun to gain traction in the late 1940s. Many ABA leaders had expressed their unease about the possible impact on internal law should the United States become a signatory to the UN Charter, the Genocide Convention, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations’ attempt to draft a declaration that would become a binding international covenant on human rights was perceived as an attempt to promote at the least state socialism, at the worst communism, throughout the world. The worst fears of the ABA were realised in 1950 when a Californian lower court ruled the human rights provisions within the UN Charter invalidated state laws that disqualified Japanese aliens from owning American land.\(^7\)

Presidential treaty power was limited only by the Supreme Court’s ruling that a treaty may not “authorize what the Constitution forbids.” The Constitution also gave the president the power “by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of

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\(^7\) Duane A. Tananbaum, ‘The Bricker Amendment Controversy: Its Origins and Eisenhower’s Role,’ *Diplomatic History*, 9/1, 1985, p.75.
the Senators present concur.” Article VI of the Constitution, however, allowed “all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby.” Known as the “supremacy clause,” the Constitution allowed for treaties to become the supreme law of the land as soon as they went into effect. Excepting that a treaty could not expressly violate the terms of the Constitution, presidents faced no other limits in negotiating treaties. Consequently, Senator Bricker believed the American people needed protection from probable abuses of American power. The conservative Republican had come to national prominence in the New Deal era. As governor of Ohio, Bricker actively opposed Roosevelt’s attempts to regulate business and replace federal authority in matters the Ohioan believed were the domain of state and local officials. Nominated as the Republican Party’s vice-presidential candidate in 1944, Bricker’s electioneering was dominated by criticism of the New Deal. Truman’s Fair Deal also earned his wrath as he equated the centralisation of power in the federal government with Soviet communism. Bricker took positions on foreign policy that were consistently nationalist and conservative. He supported the elimination of foreign aid (or at the very least deep cuts to its budget) and was an outspoken opponent of any strengthening of the United Nations’ powers lest it someday limit the United States’ freedom of action. Bricker’s worldview would lead him into conflict with Eisenhower. In October 1951, Eisenhower recorded his belief that the “wise men” must learn that the purpose of NATO was “the protection of a free way of life.” Eisenhower considered alternative solutions, such as the notion of a Fortress America, hopeless.

Bricker submitted his first constitutional amendment to Congress on 14 September 1951. The amendment prohibited the United States from becoming a signatory to any agreement that could alter the character and structure of the American government. The proposal stipulated that the president could not make executive agreements in lieu of treaties. Over the next two years, the Bricker Amendment was studied, modified and resubmitted countless times. By January 1953, Bricker had secured the co-sponsorship of 62 other senators, including 44 of 47 Republicans for

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his constitutional amendment. Known as Senate Joint Resolution 1, Senator Bricker formally submitted his proposed constitutional amendment to Congress on 7 January 1953. In February, Republican Senator Arthur Watkins submitted the ABA’s proposed constitutional amendment to Congress. With senatorial support from almost all of his Republican colleagues in the Senate, Bricker anticipated he would receive executive support. After all, the 1952 Republican Party Platform had appeared to indicate a need for such a constitutional amendment. Bricker was quickly disabused of this idea. The Cabinet meeting of 20 February 1953 established the executive team as firmly opposed to the Bricker amendment. Dulles warned the conduct of foreign policy would be rendered “impossible” because of serious limiting of executive authority. Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson and Attorney General Herbert Brownell voiced their support for Dulles’ argument. Vice President Richard Nixon believed the vast support for the amendment had “developed considerably from opposition to the U.N. Genocide Convention.” Dulles was tasked with the creation of a memorandum for Eisenhower that detailed the implications of the amendment on executive authority.

The second article in the proposed constitutional amendment was, as Charles Alexander describes it, “a strange bewildering evocation of the doctrine of states’ rights.” Generating the greatest controversy, it declared a treaty would become effective as internal law only through implementing legislation “which would become valid in the absence of a treaty.” The “which” clause would force the executive office to ensure every treaty was compatible with existing laws in every American state. New York Times reporter Cabell Philips pronounced the effect would be to “substitute, in contravention of the clear intent of the Constitution, the discordant voices of forty-eight separate state governments for the single voice of the President in foreign affairs.” Published in Foreign Affairs Arthur Dean interpreted Bricker’s amendment as “radically altering” the current division of powers that existed between the

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13 Bricker’s proposal was a revised submission of SJR 180, which he had submitted during the Eighty-Second Congress. Encountering serious opposition from president Truman, it gained no traction at the time.
14 Tananbaum, ‘The Bricker Amendment Controversy,’ p.78.
17 Alexander, Holding the Line, p.72.
18 Ibid., p.72.
executive and legislative branches of government. Such was the level of Americans’ trust that Eisenhower would never abuse the power of his presidential office, Democrat senator James Eastland believed the current president should be exempted from the amendment.

Co-sponsors and supporters argued a constitutional change was necessary because of the great danger posed by the potential for presidential abuses of power. Should Congress remain unwary to this threat they would become unwilling collaborators to the imposition “upon the nation [of] legal obligations that will deprive the people of constitutionally guaranteed rights, and will invade the domain of power reserved to the States.” Contrary to popular characterisations, Duane Tananbaum argues the Bricker Amendment was not an attempt to limit the president’s ability to conduct the nation’s foreign policy. Rather, both Bricker and the ABA intended to limit the impact of international agreements, such as the UN Charter, the Genocide Convention, and the proposed covenant on human rights, on the United States’ domestic law. This was not, however, the only reason politicians had for supporting a constitutional amendment. Although many amendment supporters professed their desire to ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of the American people, the only freedoms these supporters were intent upon protecting was their right to ensure no presidential treaty upset the patterns of discrimination and segregation widespread within the United States. Before a Senate subcommittee an ABA spokesperson had testified, “our cherished freedoms are under attack.” What he considered under attack were segregationist statutes in the District of Columbia. Similarly, Democrat Senator A. Willis Robertson supported the amendment because, when adopted, American courts would be unable to use the UN Charter to overrule his state’s segregation laws. Congress also would be prohibited from passing civil rights legislation. Eisenhower, who had read the Federalist papers to better understand the ramifications of the amendment, considered that the amendment would very probably return the United States to the time of the Articles of Confederation, an action that would cripple the implementation of foreign policy.

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22 Dean, ‘The Bricker Amendment,’ p.3.
The Paradox of the American Presidency – Vigour and Limitations

In fact, under the Articles of Confederation legislative government had failed.\textsuperscript{26} Since the invention of the American presidency at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, the role has been the subject of concern and controversy. The framers had faced an unenviable task. Embittered over their experience with English monarchs, and aware that Americans would not accept the centralisation of great power in one person, the men nonetheless desired a more authoritative and decisive national government. Influenced by the work of John Locke and Montesquieu, the system they created has a foundation of limited and shared powers. The framers never considered the presidency would become a powerhouse of political power. Rather, they envisaged their president as a constitutional executive. Remote from the political arena, this informed, dignified and virtuous statesman would shun partisanship and work for the good of all Americans. Nevertheless, in order to halt any accumulation of arbitrary power that might jeopardise their hard-won freedoms, the framers instituted a system of checks and balances meant to guard against such possible misuses of power.\textsuperscript{27} Fearful that an overly specific description would prompt insurmountable opposition, the framers’ proposed a Constitution that remained silent or vague on a number of points. The final document resembled a broad charter, what Thomas Cronin calls “a general guide rather than a detailed encyclopedia for future behavior.”\textsuperscript{28} Ratification proved a daunting task. Patrick Henry’s cry that the presidency amounted to an “awful squint toward monarchy” echoed throughout the thirteen states. Not until June 1788 did the required approval come from nine states.\textsuperscript{29}

Although federal power was separated among three supposedly co-equal branches of government, the Constitution was intended to establish the supremacy of Congress in the execution of government functions. The president, on the other hand, independent from the legislature, was expected to share power with Congress yet refrain from impeding upon the legislative functions of government. The presidency was meant to be powerful enough to act as a balance to Congress but lack the strength to overpower it. With a non-legislative mode of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Cronin (ed.),\textit{ Inventing the American Presidency}, p.xi.
\item As quoted in Emmet J. Hughes,\textit{ The Living Presidency: The Resources and Dilemmas of the American Presidential Office}, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., New York, 1972, p.39.
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election, the authority to block legislation that encroached upon his office and the ability to protect his constitutional status, Congress has not easily controlled the exercise of presidential power even as it was meant to be the president’s most effective restrainer. This separation of powers and mechanism of checks and balances was intended to prevent either branch from gaining undue dominance. Yet, the framers virtually guaranteed unending friction between Congress and the president. And, for the United States to achieve any real progress, each branch needs to work together in a spirit of cooperation. Congress, however, has tended instinctively to adopt an anti-presidential approach, comfortable only when it has occasion to differ from the president. While the Constitution provides the executive branch with the responsibility of crafting the nation’s foreign policy, Congress holds the ability to either strengthen or destroy the president’s objectives. Through its control of the nation’s purse, its right to conduct investigations and through debate, Congress can reshape any president’s foreign policy program. In 1956, Norman Graebner observed that Congress’ ability to alter foreign policy “for good or evil” was without parallel in any other democracy.

The framers’ expectations of Congress’ legislative superiority and a remote congressional executive soon crumbled. The nation’s first few presidents indeed had been minimally involved in the legislative process. The deliberate vagueness that had been written into the Constitution regarding presidential powers enabled successive presidents to mould the office in ways that reflected their understanding of constitutional power. The result has been that for all the Constitution implies about separate and co-equal branches of government, power has steadily shifted toward the executive. While the increase of presidential power has ebbed and flowed, the accumulation of presidential power has been historically cumulative. Presidential scholars argue that constitutionalist presidents have deliberately slowed this transfer of power, whereas activist presidents speed up the process. Franklin Roosevelt effectively ignored the three presidents who had preceded him, acting like the immediate successor to Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Yet, when threatened by congressional action, even so-called weak

presidents have been vigorous in their defence of their presidential prerogatives. When Eisenhower arrived at the White House in January 1953, the presidential office had accumulated a degree of power that far surpassed anything the Founding Fathers had originally imagined.

It was meant as no compliment when Richard Neustadt claimed Eisenhower “genuinely thought the Presidency was, or ought to be, the source of unifying, moderating influence above the struggle, on the model of George Washington – the Washington that is to say, of legend, not of life.” For the president, however, this certainly would have been considered one. Indeed, Eisenhower had been unafraid to admit he held “certain conceptions of what the President of the United States can logically and properly do.” In his influential exploration of the steady growth of American presidential power, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., asserts that Eisenhower had come to the White House as an American Whig – opposed to the usurpation of powers by the president. Believing that Roosevelt and Truman had distorted Lincolnian activism and arrogated Congressional power Eisenhower was determined to restore what he believed was the proper constitutional balance between the presidency and Congress. Indeed, once the party of presidential activism, the Republican Party of the 1950s chafed against a strong executive. To restore nineteenth-century ideals, Eisenhower was committed to scaling back the authority of the president in domestic matters and returning to Congress its rightful powers and responsibilities. Liberal intellectuals roundly dismissed the new Republican president’s approach to his office. Just like the presidents of the founding generation and their “unworthy successors,” they charged Eisenhower with mistakenly subscribing to the belief that presidents should preside over a government instead of leading their people.

The political orientation, personality and conception of constitutional principles of governance define, for each American president, the limits of their power and the range of their influence.

38 Schlesinger, The Imperial Presidency, pp.152-3.
Franklin Roosevelt had sought to arouse Congress, using his presidency to “goad and prod the sluggish processes of government toward the new and unknown.” Eisenhower, on the other hand, sought to assuage Congress and considered his presidency “a command to respect and encourage the sovereign processes of government to safeguard the old and the proved.”\textsuperscript{42} Charles Alexander argues Eisenhower possessed a narrow constitutionalist perception of his presidential authority in domestic matters. Quite prepared to cede to Congress power he considered rightfully theirs, the president made legislative recommendations but refrained from openly leading, persuading or pressuring the Congress into voting as he wished.\textsuperscript{43} What this exploration of Eisenhower’s response to the Bricker Amendment proves, however, is that although the president engaged what Fred Greenstein coined his “hidden-hand” leadership style, Eisenhower was anything but reticent in pressuring Congress to vote against the amendment.

As he acknowledged to his brother in March 1953, Eisenhower stood “ready to admit the right and duty of the Congress to watch the Executive Departments and to make such investigations as they may choose in order that their law-making function may be properly performed.”\textsuperscript{44} Constitutionalism defined Eisenhower’s understanding of the presidency, but this statement was not a reflection he intended to be a passive president. Eisenhower’s commitment to securing and defending the historic traditions of the United States and (re)constructing his ideal nation meant that when something he believed was necessary, “you might say to the welfare of this country,” he would speak out “in a way that was unmistakable.”\textsuperscript{45} One week shy of twelve months in office, Eisenhower was resolute as he declared he had no intentions of ceding to Congress the full legislative processes of the country:

Look: I want to make this very clear. I am not making recommendations to Congress just to pass the time away or to look good or for anything else. Everything I send to Congress I believe to be, and the mass of my associates believe to be, for the good of this country; therefore, I am going to work for their enactment. Make no mistake about that. That is exactly what I am here for and what I intend to do.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Hughes, \textit{The Living Presidency}, pp.127-9.
\textsuperscript{43} Alexander, \textit{Holding the Line}, p.33.
Eisenhower intended to participate fully in the governing of the United States. When it came to the execution of American foreign policy the president would yield none of the authority granted him by the Constitution. As he wrote to Roy Howard in February 1954, Congress would do well to remember one of the key reasons for the 1787 Constitutional Convention was “to make sure that the making and carrying of our international obligations would be the exclusive function of the Federal Government.”\textsuperscript{47} After their dismal experiences with the Articles of Confederation, on this point the framers, and Eisenhower, were adamant. Eisenhower’s constitutionalism appears, however, to have been impacted by the reactionary nature of the Republican Party in Congress. The president perhaps even would have been prepared to cede full authority in domestic matters to the legislature if he had believed they were as committed as he was to the restoration of his ideal vision of the United States.

\textbf{“We Are a Unit – Not 48 States”}

Before Eisenhower had taken his oath of office, he was faced with a challenge to his presidential authority. The Republican Party was already divided, in part because of the incompatibility between the liberal, internationalist views of the eastern establishment and the conservative, isolationist Old Guard. Eisenhower’s desire to repair the fracture led him initially to attempt accommodation with Bricker and his supporters.\textsuperscript{48} The combative journalist May Craig, possibly unwittingly, was quick to provide Eisenhower with an opportunity to illustrate the framers’ influence on his perception of presidential leadership as she wondered if the president had devoted much thought to his relationship with Congress. “Indeed I have,” he replied. Eisenhower elaborated further, professing he did not “believe that this Government is set up to be operated by anybody acting alone. I think it is clear what our founding documents mean; and I intend to function, as far as I am concerned, in that way.”\textsuperscript{49} Eisenhower’s commitment to traditional American governance was restated in a memo to the Heads of the Executive Departments and Agencies. The implications of the proposed constitutional amendment “would not only impose restraints upon the President…but would affect the powers of the Federal Government as a whole and those of the States.”\textsuperscript{50} Eisenhower had adopted a presidential style he believed honoured the aspirations of the Founders. And this included his

steadfast refusal to allow the rightful authority of the executive to be encroached upon by Congress. Bricker had been mistaken when he assumed his amendment would receive the support of the president and the Secretary of State. Despite what The Washington Post termed Bricker’s “missionary work” at the White House, he was now “in the ridiculous position of a Republican Senator trying to undercut the powers of a Republican President to deal with a world crisis.” Bricker’s 1951 efforts could be characterised as partisan politics. How could his attack on his own party’s president be explained?\(^{51}\)

Although he faced an outright attack on his presidential power from within his own party, Eisenhower chose not to unduly antagonise Congress. Thus, when Neil Stanford of the Christian Science Monitor inquired about the possible restriction on the administration’s foreign policies, Eisenhower grasped the opportunity this question provided him:

> The Bricker amendment, as analyzed for me by the Secretary of State, would, as I understand it, in certain ways restrict the authority that the President must have, if he is to conduct the foreign affairs of this Nation effectively. Now, I do not mean to say that that is the intent of the amendment. I am perfectly certain that the men that have written the amendment, that are supporting it, are convinced that it would work only to the good of the United States and protect the individual rights of citizens of the United States inside our own country. I do believe there are certain features that would work to the disadvantage of our country, particularly in making it impossible for the President to work with the flexibility that he needs in this highly complicated and difficult situation.\(^{52}\)

By adopting an openly conciliatory position on the amendment and ensuring any criticisms of his interpretation would be directed toward Dulles, the president avoided deepening the rift within his party. But, in highlighting the negative ramifications of the amendment on the United States’ ability to conduct their Cold War efforts, Eisenhower put forth a subtle challenge to the argument for a constitutional change. Duane Tananbaum, whose works have informed the analysis put forth in this chapter, believes Eisenhower’s response was typical for the president – neither rejection nor endorsement of the proposal but rather evasive and ambiguous.\(^{53}\)

Eisenhower’s opposition to the amendment was driven by his unflinching belief in the “wisdom of the founding fathers.” His brother Edgar, on the other hand, was an ardent supporter of the

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\(^{53}\) Tananbaum, The Bricker Amendment Controversy, p.77.
amendment and did not hesitate to inform his brother of his views. In his reply the president relied on history to support his argument. He declared the Founders had been proven correct time and again in establishing the right balance between the branches of government. Eisenhower closed by asserting, “I do not see any point in amending the Constitution to prove that it should not be changed.”

Initially, Eisenhower focused his public opposition on the damage the amendment could do to the United States’ Cold War objectives. The sentiments he expressed privately to Edgar, however, quickly formed the foundation for all his expressions of opposition. Eisenhower, who had delegated the responsibility for drafting his statement on the Bricker Amendment to Dulles, directed him to ensure he based his argument upon “principle and Constitutional wisdom, rather than personal ability and wisdom of individuals.”

For seven weeks the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the proposed amendments before voting to send a modified version of Bricker’s proposal to the Senate floor on 15 June 1953. There were three key restrictions to the president’s treaty making powers. The first stated simply that the president could enter into no treaty that conflicted with the Constitution. As Eisenhower commented at a press conference this seemed to him an “anomaly,” an attempt to amend the Constitution “in order to show that it is going to remain the same.” The third point also was straightforward. Executive agreements would be made equal to treaties and thus would be overseen, along with the power to reject, by Congress. It was the second point – the “which” clause – that would thoroughly disrupt the conduct of American foreign policy. Dulles’ memorandum to Eisenhower noted that the amendment as now proposed would render traditional treaties impossible “for the future, and, perhaps, invalid retroactively.” Dulles could think of “few constitutional changes which would render our nation more incapable of taking care of itself in the world of today.” When Senate Majority Leader William Knowland indicated publicly the president might have accepted the necessity of constitutional change, the press was quick to solicit clarification from Eisenhower. Without directly refuting Knowland’s statement, Eisenhower confirmed his position had not altered. In fact, he had “always stated that I don’t believe that any treaty can circumvent or supersede our Constitution.” In a powerful rejection of the Bricker Amendment, Eisenhower put himself firmly on record: “I will never

56 Ibid.
58 John Foster Dulles, ‘Memorandum to the President,’ 14th June 1953, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, DDEL.
agree to anything that interferes with the constitutional and traditional separation of powers between the departments, and the necessary coordination as specified by our Constitution.” So strong were the president’s feelings he immediately repeated himself.\(^{59}\)

In a telephone conversation with Brownell that focused on Bricker’s refusal to compromise, Eisenhower expressed his concern over “the complete readiness of the Republican Party to tear us apart.”\(^{60}\) Although 44 Republican senators had co-sponsored the resolution, Republican Senator Alexander Wiley was leading the senatorial resistance to any constitutional amendment. Careful study of the Judiciary Committee’s revised amendment motivated Eisenhower to write to Wiley he had found “nothing in it to alter my conviction that amending our Constitution in this fashion would hamper the orderly conduct of our foreign affairs.” The adoption of the amendment would be disastrous in a time of war, something considered distinctly possible in the 1950s. It seemed to Eisenhower that “the 176-year record of the handling of American foreign affairs by the President of the United States…with the advice and consent of the United States Senate, is one that will favorably stand comparison with any other similar record in the world.” Altering the Constitution would not only introduce indecisiveness in their foreign policy conduct, it would irrevocably damage the nation’s new leadership position. Eisenhower believed the amendment not only unnecessary, but “its inclusion in the law of our land would work to the disadvantage of our country.”\(^{61}\)

Eisenhower’s aspirations of unity within the Republican Party impelled the administration to collaborate with Bricker supporter Knowland on an amendment the president could support. Knowland submitted to Congress an amendment considerably milder than Bricker’s. Simple and to the point, this amendment would allow no treaty or executive agreement to violate the Constitution. Eisenhower gave it his “unqualified support.” The president’s “unqualified” support was not, however, without some qualifications:

Under our form of Government, the President has the duty to conduct foreign affairs. Every American knows this to be our traditional policy which has functioned so well during the lifetime of our Republic…Consequently I am unalterably opposed to any amendment which would…hamper the President in his constitutional authority to conduct foreign


\(^{60}\) ’Telephone Calls: Attorney General Herbert Brownell to President Dwight Eisenhower,’ 23\(^{rd}\) June 1953, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, DDEL.

affairs…As President I have taken an oath to defend the Constitution. I therefore oppose any change which will impair the President’s traditional authority.\textsuperscript{62}

The use of such inclusive terminology effectively isolated the amendment’s supporters. The term “traditional” reinforced Eisenhower’s reliance on the reverence Americans possess for their founding documents. The \textit{New York Times}’ William White defined the statement as “one of President Eisenhower’s most direct and forceful interventions with the Senate on a foreign policy issue.” The paper also quoted Senator Wiley, who called Eisenhower’s statement a “decisive repudiation of those who attempted to upset the traditional separation of power.”\textsuperscript{63} Wiley’s language mirrored Eisenhower’s by relying on tradition as reason enough to oppose the amendment. Even Eisenhower’s private ruminations, such as his 24 July 1953 diary entry, evidence his desire to honour the constitutional principles of the founding generation. The president could not accept an amendment that would “completely wreck the traditional and prescribed balance” between the president and Congress in the conduct of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{64} In an interview with the Associated Press, Bricker vowed to “slug it out” with administration leaders in an effort to force the adoption of his proposal in the following year’s Congress.\textsuperscript{65} If Congress were to vote to adopt the Bricker Amendment, Marquis Childs believed it would “be taken by the world as a vote of no confidence” in Eisenhower and his Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{66}

Although \textit{The Washington Post} considered the Bricker Amendment the “Greatest Debate since 1788,” essentially the issue had been on hold for six months as the administration grappled with the mania surrounding Senator Joseph McCarthy’s escapades, the tense negotiations required to achieve an armistice in Korea and opposition to Eisenhower’s desegregation orders in the District of Columbia and the Armed Forces. When Congress reconvened in January 1954, the amendment retook centre stage. No matter that Eisenhower had adopted a pacifying style of opposition, the divisions between the Old Guard, right-wing isolationists and liberal internationalists had deepened. This division cannot, however, be solely attributed to Bricker. Raging at the same time was the acrimonious debate over McCarthy’s conduct (examined in chapter six), and the

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\textsuperscript{64} Eisenhower, \textit{The Eisenhower Diaries}, p.248.
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\textsuperscript{66} Marquis Childs, ‘Bricker Amendment,’ ibid., 31 October 1953, p.11.
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developing crisis over civil rights (analysed in chapter four). Both the amendment and the actions of McCarthy posed a direct threat to Eisenhower’s power and prerogative.67

As a staunch conservative, Edgar refused to be persuaded by his brother’s arguments. As the issue regained momentum, Edgar found himself on the receiving end of his brother’s frustrations. He would never:

under any circumstances, agree to the enactment of an Amendment, which for the first time in the life of our Constitution, attempts to attack the very basis of our governmental system – the proper division of governmental functions among the Legislative, Judicial, and Executive Branches. I am not going to be known in history as the Chief Executive who agreed to the emasculation of the Constitutional method for discharging one of the most serious responsibilities (treaty making) devolving upon the President, the Congress, and indeed the Courts.68

Eisenhower slammed the fear tactics the amendment supporters engaged in, describing them as “some of the best creators of bogey men that I have yet encountered.”69 Yet, the success of these tactics prompted Eisenhower to reconsider. After his outburst to Edgar, the president conceded to “Jack” McCloy, Roosevelt’s former Assistant Secretary of War, that it was “possibly wise to agree to – even propose – an amendment.” Because of the fears aroused by Roosevelt’s supposed overextension of his presidential authority, Eisenhower granted “that there have grown up certain fears which might be best eliminated by an amendment which would be nothing more than a reaffirmation of the supremacy of our Constitution.”70

Eisenhower’s pragmatic nature enabled him to see that political realities might dictate his acceptance of some form of amendment. There was nothing, however, that could make him accept the “which” clause. He adamantly declared during a legislative leader’s meeting he would “go into every state to fight it.” The president was adamant: Congress could not “abrogate power for foreign affairs conduct.” No president or Secretary of State could represent “forty-nine governments” in a meeting with Malenkov or Molotov. On this point, he would not surrender. Urged to compromise, Eisenhower stated he was “willing to go as far as possible,

69 Ibid.
but not compromise with principle.” Eisenhower also appeared fixated on the possibility he might be the president that crippled the executive’s ability to act.71

Nationally syndicated Republican columnists, the Alsop brothers considered the amendment “an expression of the distrust of the executive power that 20 years of Roosevelt and Truman instilled in almost all Republicans and the majority of Southern Democrats.” Although the outcome was still undetermined, Eisenhower had proven himself “remarkably impressive.” Rather than generating bitterness within the Republican Party with a “rigid and brutal and intransigent” approach, the president had been “firm but never rigid, clear as to principle but always ready to give any amount of time to discuss language and procedure.”72 The majority of Republican senators were co-sponsors to Bricker’s amendment, defining the political limits of Eisenhower’s public opposition. To avoid any unnecessary inflaming of hostilities, the president never criticised openly those who supported the amendment. Rather, he preferred instead to subtly undermine its supporters suggesting in one press conference they were allowing fear to cloud their judgment.73 Many of the amendment’s supporters feared that rights traditionally ascribed to the states could be jeopardised by presidential action. Eisenhower could understand this concern. He was a self-professed states’ righter, who disagreed with steady accumulation of federal power. Nevertheless, under the Articles of Confederation government had been chaotic and foreign policy virtually unmanageable. For Eisenhower, the Founding Fathers were “probably the wisest group of men that were ever brought together in this country, indeed possibly in the world,” and the president refused “to go right back to the general system that prevailed before our Constitution was adopted.” To that, he proclaimed, he would “never agree.”74 Herbert Parmet considers this press conference an example of one of Eisenhower’s “masterful” performances in which the president put forward a variety of oppositional reasons all designed to deflect criticism away from himself as he endeavoured to remain charitable to his opponents.75

75 Parmet, Eisenhower & the American Crusades, pp.311-12.
Away from the glare of the media Eisenhower vented his anger over the amendment to James Hagerty, his press secretary. Hagerty’s diary described a president so angered he was prepared to embark upon a nationwide campaign of opposition. To Hagerty, Eisenhower fumed that “this was stupid, blind violation of Constitution by stupid, blind isolationists.” Yet, his violent opposition or proposed cross-country campaign never made its way either to public or press. While Eisenhower seethed privately, Congress and the American people had so far witnessed only a president whose considered opposition was premised on a traditionalist’s constitutional understanding of presidential power and leadership.

The president’s position, however, had hardened. In a hand-delivered letter to Knowland, which the White House released publicly on 25 January 1954, Eisenhower’s anger was visible. His opposition remained “unalterable” for as it stood the Bricker Amendment would “be notice to our friends as well as our enemies abroad that our country intends to withdraw from its leadership in world affairs.” The result would so impair their foreign policy conduct as to make impossible any engagement with the international community, harming the United States’ goal of lasting peace. Aware that the letter would be made public, Eisenhower declared that of course he agreed no treaty or international agreement could be made that violated the Constitution. But, as he reminded the Senate’s Majority Leader, the president “must not be deprived of historic position as the spokesman for the Nation.” Just three days after Bricker warned the president about becoming personally involved, The Washington Post applauded Eisenhower’s “strong” language.

A flurry of correspondence left the Oval Office in January. Eisenhower understood the president played no official role in amending the Constitution. Nonetheless, he was determined to actively resist Congress, a position he advised Edgar he would maintain “to the bitter end.” He could not, he wrote to the Dean of Harvard Law School, accept the Bricker Amendment and was “prepared to throw every available resource into the struggle to make certain that this crippling amendment does not become part of our basic law.” He conceded that some form of amendment might be necessary for the average American simply did not understand this was an “attempt to

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76 Hagerty, _The Diary of James C. Hagerty_, p.7.
go back to the days of the Confederation.” Nevertheless, he would not, he declared, “weaken the Federal Government in its task of providing for the nation’s security.” Indeed, Eisenhower believed that history had proved under the Articles of Confederation, the United States had become “a laughing stock in the world.” He refused, therefore, “under any circumstances to be a party to the disruption of the basic pattern of our system of government.” The president had adopted a protective stance toward the prerogatives of the executive office. As the gatekeeper of presidential authority, he was committed to securing its historic powers.

Despite Eisenhower’s belief that amending the Constitution was foolhardy, in a telephone conversation with Dulles the president suggested they seek a bi-partisan solution. The president was determined to “lick Bricker once and for all.” To achieve this, Dulles was instructed to meet with Democrat Senator Walter George and work on another compromise proposal. Through George, the administration would work with Senator Lyndon Johnson, the Senate Minority Leader. If the language would “allay the fears of anyone in the U.S.” Eisenhower would accept the amendment as it would solve the problem and “we don’t knuckle to Bricker.” The George Amendment was submitted to Congress on 27 January 1954. Even though the administration had instigated this amendment, Eisenhower’s opposition did not soften. He reasoned that in the attempt “to change or alter the traditional and constitutional balances of power among the three departments of Government, a feature of our Constitution that is the very genius of our whole system of government,” he would not “compromise one single word.” He repeated an argument he had made before the press corps the previous year as he affirmed: “I go back again and again that that Constitution has served us very well for 165 years.”

The Senate had yet to vote on the amendment when the New York Times publicly declared their anticipation that victory for the administration was forthcoming. The defeat was “a triumph for President Eisenhower and a tribute to his firmness in refusing to capitulate when the battle seemed to be running against him.” Three weeks later the Senate rejected Bricker’s proposal.

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83 ‘Telephone Calls: President Eisenhower to Secretary of State Dulles,’ 20th January 1954, John Foster Dulles Telephone Conversation Series, Box 10, DDEL.
84 Ibid.
85 Tananbaum, ‘The Bricker Amendment Controversy,’ p.87.
87 ‘Bricker Down; George to Go,’ New York Times, 03 February 1954, p.22.
50-42. When Bricker had submitted his Joint Resolution to Congress there were only 3 Republicans who were not co-sponsors. Twelve months later, vindicating Eisenhower’s activism against Congress, 17 Republicans voted to reject the proposal.\textsuperscript{88} Ann Whitman’s diary notes of the following day, however, record Eisenhower as having “fretted” about the Bricker Amendment. The president had secured a victory, but the George Amendment was yet to be voted upon. He now considered that unless the language of an amendment his administration had approved was “greatly modified” he would be forced to oppose this amendment.\textsuperscript{89} When the votes were cast in the Senate for adoption of the compromise George Amendment, Bricker and his supporters fell one vote short of the necessary two-thirds majority.

Defeated by only one vote, in May 1954 a motion was pending before the Senate to reconsider the issue. Senators who had supported the administration were concerned about the consequences because of a “persistent belief among great portions of our public that our Constitutional system will be destroyed unless something positive is done to protect it.” Once again, Eisenhower prepared his administration to accept the possibility they would be forced to back a constitutional amendment.\textsuperscript{90} The motion failed, but Bricker refused to accept defeat. Eisenhower met with the senator in November but again no compromise could be reached. The president refused to “be a party to damaging or lessening the executive authority below that intended by our Constitution.”\textsuperscript{91} Until Bricker’s loss in the 1958 midterm elections, the senator continued to push for his amendment, constantly reworking the provisions but never able to secure congressional or executive support. More than three years after Eisenhower had left the White House, his stance remained the same. “I had convictions of my own,” Eisenhower reminded his interviewer, “and I became very certain that what they wanted to do in the famous ‘which’ clause would just put us back into the Confederation of 1783.”\textsuperscript{92}

**Conclusion: Active Constitutionalism**

In January 1953, when Senator Bricker submitted his joint resolution to Congress, he had secured the two-thirds majority required for adoption. For the next twelve months Eisenhower actively endeavoured to persuade Congress and the American people of the danger this

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\textsuperscript{88} William S. White, ‘Bricker Plan Dies in Senate, 50 to 42, but Issue is Alive,’ ibid., 26 February 1954, pp.1,8.
\textsuperscript{89} Ann Whitman, ‘Diary Notes,’ 26\textsuperscript{th} February 1954, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 1, DDEL.
\textsuperscript{90} Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Attorney General,’ 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1954, DDE Diary Series, Box 6, DDEL.
\textsuperscript{91} ‘Telephone Calls: President Eisenhower to Secretary of State Dulles,’ 5\textsuperscript{th} November 1954, John Foster Dulles Telephone Conversation Series, Box 10, DDEL.
\textsuperscript{92} As quoted in Parmet, *Eisenhower & the American Crusades*, pp.310-11.
restriction posed to the traditional division of powers between the government. The president’s role in formulating administration strategy was pivotal. Unable to win over entirely the conservative wing of his party, Eisenhower nonetheless managed to overcome a congressional assault on the authority of the executive office. Eisenhower, critics argued, had subscribed to an outdated and ineffective constitutionalist belief that presidents should govern the nation, not lead its people. This chapter’s examination of Eisenhower’s response to the Bricker Amendment, however, argues that working within his own conception of the presidency, Eisenhower was an active and effective president. This activism was driven by his desire to protect the traditional and historic powers of the presidency, supporting the thesis’ overall argument that Eisenhower drew heavily on the nation’s history in order to (re)construct his ideal vision of the presidential office and the United States. The contrast shown within this chapter between Eisenhower’s public and private discourse further supports the assertion that the foundational principles of the United States had a profound effect upon Eisenhower’s actions. Mindful of the stature of the executive office, Eisenhower deliberately tempered his responses in public, presenting himself as conciliatory and open to compromise, while ensuring the American people believed he would never usurp the Constitution.

93 Dean, ‘The Bricker Amendment,’ p.3
CHAPTER FOUR

The President Must Uphold the Constitution: Idealism in the Civil Rights Debate

I believe with all my heart that our vigilant guarding of these [civil] rights is a sacred obligation binding upon every citizen… A cardinal ideal in this heritage we cherish is the equality of rights of all citizens of every race and color and creed.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, State of the Union Address, 2 February 1953.

As President of the United States, I have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution. That Constitution, due to the wisdom of our forebears, is subject to the interpretation of one of the three separate branches of our government, the Supreme Court…From the beginning, in 1789, there have been individuals in our nation who have publicly and emphatically disagreed with particular laws…But such disagreements must not be translated into open defiance of the Constitution, as interpreted by the Courts. If we allow that, we have anarchy.


To be faithful to my oath as President I am compelled to prevent obstruction of the orders of a Federal Court…Our free institutions depend upon a respect of all citizens of our Courts and their decisions. Chaos and anarchy will prevail if their orders can be flouted by mobs.


When Dwight Eisenhower took the oath of office, formally becoming the 34th President of the United States of America, he swore to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” According to his brother Edgar, Eisenhower “believed absolutely” in the Constitution. He accepted that the “judicial Power of the United States” was vested in the Supreme Court and respected the separation of powers between the three branches of government. He considered himself also a states’ righter, trusting that under the Constitution the United States was a confederacy of free states. Unless they took action that interfered with or ignored federal authority, states could rightfully determine their own legislation. The decision by the Supreme Court in 1896 to legalise segregation legitimised racial prejudice and, in the southern states especially, formed the foundation for their American way of life. Eisenhower’s idealism ensured that, even when faced with endemic racial discrimination, the

president continued to believe Congress and the American people would honour the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence, that, “all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights.” Judged harshly for failing to provide moral leadership during the civil rights crises that erupted during his presidency, Eisenhower’s actions in this instance speak louder than his words.

This chapter begins by examining Eisenhower’s commitment to abolishing racial discrimination. Consistent with his constitutional conception of the presidency – discussed in the preceding chapter – and belief in the theory of states’ rights, Eisenhower acted only where he possessed clear federal authority to do so. In order to understand the internal conflict that characterised Eisenhower’s responses to the civil rights crises, this chapter considers the tensions that surround the relationship between constitutional supremacy and states’ rights. Examined at length are the president’s responses to the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education ruling and the crisis at Little Rock. The analyses reveal the fragility of his idealised vision of American society when confronted with the ugly reality of the United States’ ingrained racism. This chapter repositions the debate around Eisenhower’s civil rights credentials. In each of the crises the president’s actions demonstrate the significance of the Constitution, the president’s respect for the United States’ founding documents and his commitment to law and order.

“I Propose to Use Whatever Authority Exists…”

Eisenhower had defeated powerful enemies during the Second World War. Yet, for Arkansas State Press journalist Laureen White, such was the intransigence of those determined to thwart any change to their way of life, the upcoming battle over civil rights would be Eisenhower’s hardest fight yet. Eisenhower had little doubt of the struggle that awaited him. Campaigning in the south, he had faced crowds that “whooped and hollered” at charges of corruption in the Truman administration, but remained stonily silent when he warned Americans were in danger of losing their own rights if they remained unwilling to protect the rights of all their neighbours. The president faced resistance within his own party, too. In his determination to build the strength of the Republican Party in the south, former president Herbert Hoover had

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forsaken African Americans. He closed the Negro division of the Republican National Committee, omitted African Americans from his public statements, excluded them from federal construction jobs on Nevada’s Boulder Dam, and appointed John J. Parker, an avowed opponent of black enfranchisement as his first Supreme Court nominee. Nevertheless, the Atlanta Daily World was hopeful Eisenhower would counter the “shackles of race prejudice and wicked discrimination.” Yet, Eisenhower still had to choose “whether to break with the dixiecrats who helped elect him or break with the Constitution that he is sworn to protect and preserve.” Break with the Constitution and he would prove himself a moral coward. But break with the dixiecrats and they would crucify him. Harry Truman’s attempt to enact civil rights legislation in 1948 had resulted in the splintering of the Democrat Party and the introduction of a more conservative Congress in 1950. Resistance to civil rights remained just as formidable when Eisenhower entered the White House.

Known as the Lost Statute case, in January 1953 the US Court of Appeals ruled 5-4 that Washington restaurants could legally refuse service to black customers. Although the District of Columbia’s legislative assembly had passed laws in 1872 and 1873 that forbade racial discrimination, the Court argued that the legislative assembly lacked authority to pass the laws and the absence of enforcement had established the custom of segregation. Eisenhower had assured Herbert Brownell of his intention to eliminate discrimination within areas under his constitutional control once elected. Accordingly, the Justice Department filed a brief with the Supreme Court requesting the laws be found valid and in effect. The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the Eisenhower administration’s favour. Facing hostile resistance from southern senators who had kept the status quo in place, Eisenhower executed the ordinance. By the end of his first year, all public facilities in the District were desegregated.

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8 ‘Between the Lines: Eisenhower’s Triumphant Entry,’ Atlanta Daily World, 01 February 1953, p.4.
As the nation’s Commander-in-Chief, Eisenhower exercised the full power of his constitutional authority over the armed forces. Within their first twelve months almost all southern Naval bases were desegregated along with the nation’s 47 veterans’ hospitals. By mid-1954, all military installations and facilities had been desegregated. The Justice Department filed a brief opposing segregation on inter-state transportation and in August Eisenhower created the President’s Committee on Government Contracts. The result was a mandatory anti-discrimination clause. In Washington, the Committee persuaded the Capital Transit Company to end its ban on African American bus drivers and streetcar operators. The Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company was persuaded to drop segregation of its business offices. And some four hundred African Americans were employed in the Savannah River plan of the Atomic Energy Commission in South Carolina.13

Democrat Representative Adam Clayton Powell declared to his Harlem constituents in February 1954 that Eisenhower had “done more to eliminate discrimination and to restore the Negro to the status of first-class citizenship than any President since Abraham Lincoln.”14 The Cleveland Call and Post, on the other hand, expressed their displeasure at the presidential compromises Eisenhower was making in order “to carry Negro support on one shoulder and Dixiecrats on the other.” Eisenhower continued to grapple with a large contingent within his party that still dreamt of “a ‘Lily White’ Republican party in the South.” To achieve this Republicans had to form alliances with life-long Democrats, and that meant “white-supremacy Democrats.”15 George A. Smathers, Democrat senator for Florida, represented the sort of alliance Eisenhower would have to make. Smathers had publicly warned the president that any attempt to pass civil rights legislation risked losing southern Democrat support for all other administration proposals.16

Brownell submitted a report to Eisenhower at the beginning of 1955 on the administration’s efforts to end racial discrimination and segregation. Their accomplishments are impressive. In the District of Columbia segregation had been ended in restaurants, lunchrooms and all other public eating-houses. The Board of Recreation had abolished segregation throughout its

15 ‘Eisenhower’s Dilemma,’ *Cleveland Call and Post*, 12 September 1953, p.2_C.
16 Huggins, ‘Eisenhower and Civil Rights,’ p.76.
facilities and the Board of Education already had their plan in place for the desegregation of
public schools. District government contracts also contained a non-discrimination clause. The
Department of Health, Education and Welfare had undertaken a re-education campaign to
lessen opposition to desegregation. Further, the department reported that Public Health Service
hospitals in the south would achieve the 1 July 1955 deadline to desegregate all services and
facilities. In the armed services the Department of Defense was adhering to its initial schedule
to eliminate segregation in military schools and had implemented a vigorous policy of
opportunity and treatment for African American personnel. The Navy Department had
abolished separate recruitment and eliminated all barriers to the use of previously segregated
facilities. The Department of the Army had omitted racial designations in orders for Army
Reserve reassignments, and the Armed Forces had proceeded ahead of schedule in eliminating
African American units. The Department of Justice had urged the Interstate Commerce
Commission to outlaw racial segregation of railroad passengers traveling interstate and
supported the ultimately failed legislation to abolish “Jim Crow” practices in all forms of
interstate transportation. The administration also had established the President’s Committee on
Government Employment Policy to ensure all departments and agencies adhered to the
government’s non-discrimination policy.17

Eisenhower’s desegregation of areas under federal jurisdiction reveals a developed conception
of his presidential responsibilities. Eisenhower himself articulated this to his friend and South
Carolina Governor James Byrnes, an ardent segregationist. The impetus to achieve racial
equality stemmed both from “the duties placed upon us by the constitution and by conscience.”
Where Eisenhower considered the federal government had “clear and exclusive
responsibility,” the states were duty bound to cooperate with, and never impede, the
enforcement of federal authority.18 What Eisenhower wanted was progress “towards the goals
established by abstract principle.” He did not want that progress, however, to “cause such
disruption and mental anguish among great portions of our population that progress would
actually be reversed.” His actions were consciously tempered by his recognition of the

17 Maxwell Rabb, ‘Report by the Attorney General on the Administration's Efforts in the Field of Racial
Segregation and Discrimination,’ 26th January 1955, Cabinet Series, Box 4, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower
Van Ee, The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, vol. 14, Johns Hopkins University, (hereafter Eisenhower
resistance and upheaval desegregation would have in the south.\(^\text{19}\) Surrounded primarily by men whose racial opinions were conservative, Eisenhower nonetheless advanced policies that emphasised his conviction that all American citizens were entitled to receive equal political and economic opportunities and impartial treatment by the government.\(^\text{20}\) As explored in the first chapter of this study, a significant aspect of the Eisenhower presidency was his nonpartisan approach to politics. He took the same approach with civil rights, seeking to ensure the United States remained a united confederation of states operating under the rule of law. Grounded in his constitutional responsibility to faithfully ensure the nation’s laws were enforced, Eisenhower did not preach the moral imperative for change, preferring to instead remind Americans of their obligation to obey the law.

**“We Cannot Legislate This”: Brown v. Board of Education**

The American Constitution is the oldest single-document constitution in the world. Representing a “sacred, secular covenant” between the government and its people, the Constitution defines the limits of federal power and offers American citizens protection from governmental intrusion on their basic rights.\(^\text{21}\) The Supremacy Clause within Article VI declares the American Constitution “the supreme law of the land.”\(^\text{22}\) Set against the Tenth Amendment, which gives the states any powers not explicitly designated to the federal government, and combined with the enduring doctrine of state sovereignty, Americans and their government are trapped in a never-ending argument over the nature of the Union.\(^\text{23}\) For Eisenhower, committed to Abraham Lincoln’s philosophy that government should do only what the people or the states could not do for themselves, the prospect of federal intrusion discomforted him. The United States remained a collection of 48 sovereign states yet, when Eisenhower won the 1952 presidential election, the Supreme Court had already begun to hear arguments in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. Should the Court dismantle the constitutionality of the separate-but-equal ruling, Eisenhower would have to uphold and possibly enforce their decision within the states. When it came to the issue of civil rights, his press secretary Jim Hagerty was emphatic: Eisenhower did not have “a segregationist mind or

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\(^\text{22}\) Jefferson et al., ‘Constitution of the United States.’

a segregationist bone in his body.” There could be no doubting where he stood, Hagerty argued, for Eisenhower acted decisively wherever he believed he had constitutional authority. As asked to comment on whether he believed he had a presidential obligation to endorse the desegregation ruling during an October 1956 press conference, Eisenhower spoke instead of his constitutional duties:

> Look, I put that in this way: We start out with article I of the Constitution, and we go on right down to the end, including its amendments, and the Constitution as it is interpreted by the Supreme Court, I am sworn to uphold it.

> I don’t ask myself whether every single phase of that Constitution, with all its amendments, are exactly what I agree with or not.

> I am sworn to uphold it, and that is what I intend to do.

As a constitutionalist Eisenhower did not consider it appropriate for the president to publicly question, approve or disapprove of the way the judiciary interpreted the Constitution. He would always uphold the Supreme Court’s rulings, but he believed any comment he made would create expectations he comment on every case, a situation he feared could negatively impact the Court’s ability to create or amend laws. While Eisenhower preferred the position of “executive neutrality,” his silence tended to suggest displeasure rather than support for the Court’s decision.

In 1896, the United States’ Supreme Court legalised separate-but-equal public school facilities. Ruling on the constitutionality of segregated facilities on interstate transportation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court used the education system’s example to officially approve segregation. More than half a century later, seventeen states, along with the District of Columbia, legally mandated segregated public education. A further four states allowed school segregation. In October 1952, the Supreme Court began hearing arguments in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a combination of five segregation cases. In anticipation of a ruling against segregation, Georgia and South Carolina passed legislation allowing for the abolishment of the public school

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28 Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, p.133.
Following the unexpected death of conservative Chief Justice Fred Vinson on 8 September 1953, Eisenhower appointed liberal California governor Earl Warren the new Chief Justice. On 17 May 1954, the Court issued a unanimous ruling declaring the principle of separate-but-equal education un-Constitutional. Overturning legalised public school segregation lent a moral urgency and justification previously lacking in the civil rights debate. Although the Supreme Court proclaimed the principle of desegregation, it evaded the politically explosive enforcement issue, deferring it to the Court’s new term. Nonetheless, southern fury erupted at the “northern Supreme Court’s” efforts to impose their “northern values” and standards of equality upon the southern states.

As he faced the press two days after the Brown ruling, Eisenhower distanced himself from the decision. Asked by Harry Dent from Columbia State and Record (S.C.) whether he had any advice for the south, Eisenhower offered nothing of substance. The only “advice” Eisenhower offered was more a warning as he conveyed his belief that the “Supreme Court has spoken and I am sworn to uphold the constitutional processes in this country; and I will obey.” The president’s seeming lack of support has been widely interpreted as proof he was at best a reluctant integrationist. Yet, Eisenhower had summoned to the White House immediately the District’s school commissioners. Within the context of his own self-imposed limitations of presidential authority, Eisenhower determined to set a precedent for the nation. He advised the board of his great interest in the immediate desegregation of the area’s public schools. At the beginning of the 1954 school year, 116 of the 158 District schools had enrolled students of both races.

Eisenhower was quick to initiate the process of integration in the District of Columbia, but he remained apprehensive about how southern states would respond. The president considered legislation inadequate to deal with more than half a century of constitutionally accepted segregation – a belief he had already articulated during an appearance before the Senate Armed Services

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29 Duram, A Moderate among Extremists, p.90.
30 Burk, The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights, p.143.
Committee in 1948. And, as he advised E. Frederic Morrow on numerous occasions during his presidency, Eisenhower believed there had “to be a change in the heart” before integration would be successful. Eisenhower had expressed his fears also to Byrnes in July 1953:

Consequently, I believe that Federal law imposed upon our states in such a way as to bring about a conflict of the police powers of the states and of the nation, would set back the cause of progress in race relations for a long, long time.

Emmet Hughes’ memoir misinterprets the president’s statements on civil rights, arguing Eisenhower opposed the Brown ruling. Acknowledging the depth of Eisenhower’s feelings on the subject, Hughes quotes Eisenhower as being convinced that the Supreme Court decision “set back progress in the South at least fifteen years...It's all very well to talk about school integration – if you remember you may be also talking about social disintegration. Feelings are deep on this, especially where children are involved.” Eisenhower was adamant Americans could not “demand perfection in these moral questions. All we can do is keep working toward a goal and keep it high. And the fellow who tries to tell me that you can do these things by force is just plain nuts.” These are not the words of a segregationist. Rather, Eisenhower’s outburst reflected his oft-stated conviction that legislation was not the path to racial equality. In the face of deeply rooted hostility, legislation was insufficient.

Edgar Eisenhower was in Washington when the Supreme Court delivered its verdict. Eisenhower, he remembered, was bothered by the lack of “either an act of Congress or an amendment to the Constitution” which declared segregation unlawful. He could not “understand why it’s no longer the law.” For 76 years the Constitution had been understood to validate segregation and now, overnight, the Supreme Court had rendered its original interpretation invalid. Lest this recollection suggest the president was against Brown, Eisenhower’s Supreme Court appointments prove his commitment to his presidential oath. As racist and segregationist language and behaviour pervaded the southern states, Eisenhower

appointed four liberal midwesterners and northerners to the Supreme Court. In defiance of southern senators and amidst threats of reprisal each justice pledged to uphold *Brown.*

The *Arkansas State Press* angrily proclaimed that all the southern Negro communities wanted was “just a word” from their president. Eisenhower denied them “even that little.” The president infrequently met with African American groups and when he did, tended to dismiss matters of race. Adamant all men were created equal, Eisenhower belittled their struggle for equality, as he reminded his audience at the United Negro College Fund Luncheon, the Constitution “made no distinction among them by reason of inconsequential factors over which they themselves had no control.” Eisenhower’s speech echoed the argument he used in front of white southerners as he proclaimed, “the only way to protect my own rights is to protect the rights of others.” If he did not defend the Constitution, there would be “nobody left to defend me.” To protect the Constitution meant securing the United States’ foundations. Yet, as Eisenhower admitted to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Americans had not achieved their ideals. Even as he remarked again on the “inconsequential” nature of the race issue and called on the memory of the only president to wage war on the south, the president counselled his audience of the need to exercise patience. He was confident the “great mass of Americans” believed in the ideal of equality but this concept was not yet “a living reality in their lives.”

As Eisenhower continued to gloss over the intractable issue of racial equality, his language attests he was more concerned with the threat posed to the national order by angry whites than he was by an oppressed minority.

Known as *Brown II,* the Supreme Court delayed by a full year their enforcement ruling. Required to desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” many southern political leaders wilfully interpreted this as some indefinite date in the future. Designed to appear less like a northern imposition of will, the Supreme Court had gambled, passing responsibility for compliance to the federal district courts. According to Hagerty, Eisenhower “had some doubt in his own mind what in the devil the Supreme Court meant by ‘all deliberate speed.’” Eisenhower doubted also whether integrating schools en masse was the appropriate method. The president’s

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40 Kahn, ‘Shattering the Myth,’ p.50.
44 Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights,* p.151.
personal preference was gradual integration that allowed students and their families time to adapt.\textsuperscript{45} His refusal to provide his support openly for the Court saw Eisenhower’s prestige suffer. A July 1955, Gallup poll recorded that one criticism of his presidential behaviour was the belief he encouraged segregation.\textsuperscript{46}

The Eisenhower administration rarely drew attention towards civil rights. In August 1955, however, the White House released Eisenhower’s letter to Val Washington, Director of Minorities in the Republican National Committee. The president embellished upon a complicated reality as he gave “major credit” for the “tremendous advances” made in civil rights to the American people. After all, it was their “sense of fair play, their recognition that all our citizens are bound in a common destiny, their spiritual faith in the dignity of all men under God,” that had enabled such forward progress.\textsuperscript{47} Southern opposition to integration, however, had formalised. In March 1956, the “Southern Manifesto” declared the intentions of one hundred members of Congress to overturn \textit{Brown}. Eisenhower deflected a question on the Manifesto, claiming merely that “I am sworn to defend and uphold the Constitution of the United States, and, of course, I can never abandon or refuse to carry out my own duty.” When asked if the 1956 Republican platform should endorse \textit{Brown}, the President would say only “I am sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States…Everybody knows I am sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States. That is my job.”\textsuperscript{48} Eisenhower’s deflection reflected his concern many southerners considered \textit{Brown} a Republican decision.\textsuperscript{49} And, with a February 1956 Gallup opinion poll showing over 70 percent of northern whites supported \textit{Brown}, while 80 percent of southern whites remained firmly opposed, it could be argued Eisenhower had put politics before principle. As a president committed to an idealised image of a unified nation, Eisenhower’s disinclination to discuss the ruling likely stemmed instead from a desire to avoid any further polarisation within the nation.\textsuperscript{50}

Offering an apologia for the south that glossed over the violent reality, Eisenhower referred often to people’s “deep-seated emotions” and “the need to be understanding of other people’s

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{45} Edwin, ‘Oral History Interview with James Hagerty,’ 6\textsuperscript{th} February 1968, pp.236-7.\
\textsuperscript{47} ‘“Fair Play” Put His Civil Rights Plans Over: Ike,’ \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, 09 August 1955, p.6.\
\textsuperscript{49} Ann Whitman, ‘Diary Notes,’ 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1956, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 8, DDEL.\
\textsuperscript{50} Burk, \textit{The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights}, p.160.}
CHAPTER FOUR: The President Must Uphold the Constitution

deep emotions as well as our own.” He believed Americans could be persuaded to embrace the words of their Declaration. He expressed his hope that “we can only believe that the good sense, the common sense, of Americans will bring this thing along.” Eisenhower was steadfast in his belief that law and force could not change a man’s heart, for he believed the south was “full of people of good will, but they are not the ones we now hear.” What the nation heard was violence breaking out in the south.

In the nation’s formative years, interposition had been recognised as a valid state response to actions taken by the federal government. Eisenhower feared forced integration would provoke some southern states simply to close their public schools. The events in Tennessee, Kentucky and Texas in 1956 demonstrated the influence state governors had over the success or failure of integration. To uphold the law, the governors of Tennessee and Kentucky called out the National Guard to hold back angry mobs from the schoolhouses in the mountain town of Clinton and the mining settlement in Sturgis. Despite hostile crowds, African American children successfully registered and attended previously segregated schools. In Clinton, the mob had been whipped up by an out-of-towner brought in by a racist fanatic from Washington, DC. Without any outside interference, the entire publicly financed school system in Louisville, Kentucky, was desegregated without incident. The “Texas Situation,” however, underscores the complications election year politics added to the civil rights issue. Eisenhower was eager to build upon his 1952 electoral victory and did not want to disappoint the Texans who were supporting Eisenhower and Governor Allan Shivers in the upcoming election. Shivers, however, was basing his campaign on the strictest kind of segregationist politics and the president could see no way to “get in bed with him on that.” As a “Democrat for Eisenhower,” Shivers also boasted publicly of his intention to defy federal law. When a mob of 200 whites surrounded Mansfield High School in order to prevent any enrolment of African American students, Shivers ordered Texas Ranger Captain Bob Crowder to dispatch six men to “guard”

54 Interposition is the claimed right of an American state to oppose actions by the federal government the state considers to be unconstitutional.
56 ‘Pre-Press Conference Briefing,’ 9th May 1956, Press Conference Series, Box 4, DDEL.
the high school. No students dared tempt the anger of the mob, choosing instead to attend segregated schools in nearby Fort Worth.\textsuperscript{57} When questioned about the incident, Eisenhower argued federal intervention had been unwarranted as local forces had themselves halted any potential violence. The president refused to acknowledge Shivers had called out the National Guard in order to obstruct integration rather than prevent violence.\textsuperscript{58}

Eisenhower’s doubts about the wisdom of forced integration appeared to have been validated as violence against African American communities increased in the south. The nation already had been shaken by the brutal 1955 murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, lynched for supposedly whistling at a white woman. In 1956, two days of rioting had been ignited in Alabama after Autherine Lucy attempted to cross the colour line at the University of Alabama. And, in early 1957, following the success of the 381-day bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, the city’s black churches had been bombed. In Clinton, Tennessee, and Bessemer, Alabama, black communities were bombed too, and in North Carolina race riots had broken out between white and African American servicemen.\textsuperscript{59} No prominent member of the Eisenhower administration had spoken out against the deplorable conditions African Americans faced in these states. In a memorandum for Gabriel Hauge, Morrow acknowledged many African Americans felt abandoned by the president, believing Eisenhower had left them “to the mercy of state governments that have manifested their intention to violate all laws, human and Divine, as long as it results in ‘keeping the Negro in his place.’”\textsuperscript{60} Not only had Eisenhower’s civil rights record been damaged, the Republican Party had deserted the president and abjured their responsibilities. Duram argues, however, that Eisenhower’s belief that forced integration had hampered civil rights progress and encouraged outbreaks of violence deterred the president from taking any strong, public action in this area.\textsuperscript{61} As the nation prepared for the school year to begin again in 1957, Eisenhower urged “Americans to recognize what America is, the concepts on which it is based, and to do their part so far as they possibly can to bring about the kind of America that was visualized by our forebears.”\textsuperscript{62}


\textsuperscript{58} Eisenhower, ‘The President’s News Conference,’ 5\textsuperscript{th} September 1956.

\textsuperscript{59} Cohn, ‘Managing Change with the Illusion of Stability,’ p.11.

\textsuperscript{60} E. Frederic Morrow, ‘Memorandum to Gabriel Hauge,’ 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 14, DDEL.

\textsuperscript{61} Duram, \textit{A Moderate among Extremists}, p.71.

language was an implicit acknowledgment the United States had continually failed to live up to its founding ideals. By the end of the 1956-7 school year, there were still no desegregated schools in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina or Virginia.\(^63\)

**Crisis at Little Rock**

Eisenhower considered himself a “little astonished that the Supreme Court was trying to reach out and control so many parts of Federal government.”\(^64\) The Supreme Court had intruded upon an issue he believed belonged to the states. Eisenhower regretted the forced nature of integration but remained steadfast that Americans must observe the ruling. As president, his “basic purpose” was to ensure “respect for the Constitution – which means the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Constitution – or we shall have chaos.”\(^65\) On *Brown*, examination of Eisenhower’s responses suggests the president was genuinely conflicted. His pledge to uphold the Constitution meant enforcing *Brown*. Personally, however, Eisenhower trusted in the ideals of limited government, oriented naturally towards states’ rights and advocated against increasing centralised government. Because of his internal struggle, untangling the president’s discourse can be confusing. While he lectured Senator Prescott Bush on the importance of national leaders being “encouraged to appeal to the moral obligation of our people rather than refer only to the law,” Eisenhower refused to allow an official statement of support for the Court’s ruling to contain the words “Eisenhower Administration.”\(^66\) He reminded Brownell he had “always denied that the Administration took a stand on the matter.”\(^67\) His fear that any public endorsement of *Brown* would further harm civil rights prospects and increase the divide amongst Americans meant Eisenhower failed to provide the kind of moral leadership civil rights advocates demanded.

Southern resistance to the administration’s proposed civil rights bill was such that during a pre-press conference briefing the president wondered if “it would be out of character for him” to comment that a “lot of people seem to be working to protect the right of the man who might

\(^{63}\) Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, p.172.

\(^{64}\) ‘Pre-Press Conference Briefing,’ 25\(^{th}\) April 1956, Press Conference Series, Box 4, DDEL.


\(^{66}\) Wilton B. Persons, ‘Memorandum for the Record: Meeting between President Eisenhower and Senator Bush,’ 1\(^{st}\) August 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 17, DDEL.

\(^{67}\) Ann Whitman, ‘Telephone Calls: President Dwight Eisenhower to Attorney General Herbert Brownell,’ 19\(^{th}\) August 1956, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 8, DDEL.
interfere with another’s voting rights” rather than protecting the right of all citizens to vote. Although the administration continued to lobby Congress, the president publicly downplayed the proposed legislation, choosing only to emphasise the bill’s modest nature:

You people well know I believe in moderate government. I don’t believe you can change the hearts of men with laws... I think there is here a great educational problem that involves a moral value and human values. At the same time, when the Supreme Court finds, nine-to-nothing, that such-and-such is the law of the land, and they issue an order – now, they are the Supreme Court.

Even as he emphasised the moral imperatives of the Civil Rights Bill, the president remained invested in distancing his administration from the responsibility of Brown. His continued assertions that law could not sway the hearts of men inadvertently undermined African Americans’ civil rights advancements. The bill Eisenhower signed on 9 September 1957 was indeed flawed. It was, however, notable for being the first civil rights legislation approved by Congress since 1875. Regardless of the historic nature of the achievement, there was little fanfare from the administration. For Ronald Huggins, the final irony is that the crisis in Little Rock was to prove Eisenhower right. Law and force were insufficient to effect change where emotions ran deep. Yet, it is in these instances that leadership becomes more crucial.

In 1948 Arkansas had become the first American state to voluntarily admit African American students to a state university. The state’s Democrat Governor Orval Faubus was an unlikely demagogue, having offered no previous challenge to civil rights progress, delivered no speeches of defiance after Brown, and had even given African Americans a role in his election campaign. Although the Arkansas legislature had passed a bill abolishing mandatory attendance at integrated high schools and allocated state funds to fight integration, the Little Rock school board unanimously adopted a moderate integration plan. Eisenhower’s 1957 State of the Union address recognised the increased tensions but urged all Americans:

68 ‘Pre-Press Conference Briefing,’ 21st August 1957, Press Conference Series, Box 6, DDEL.
70 Huggins, ‘Eisenhower and Civil Rights,’ p.179.
in all sections of the country to approach these problems with calm and reason, with mutual understanding and good will, and in the American tradition of the deep respect for the orderly process of law and justice.73

Eisenhower believed Americans had much to be proud of, but “unhappily” much remained to be done.74 Undeterred by his rhetoric, a group of white mothers filed a petition in the Arkansas State Chancery Court to prevent the integration plan’s implementation. Faubus appeared before the Court on 29 August, testifying that desegregation might lead to violence. The Court issued the restraining order. Petitioned by the Little Rock school board, the US District Court issued an order preventing anyone from interfering with the opening of an integrated high school.75 According to The Hartford Courant, the Eisenhower administration was wise to hold back initially on any action. There was, however, no question of the outcome. Although Eisenhower had repealed a Reconstruction law that permitted the use of force when he signed the Civil Rights Bill, the paper trusted the president had ample powers at hand to resolve the issue.76

Eisenhower dreaded the ramifications of open conflict between federal and state government. When Faubus engaged the Arkansas National Guard to bar entry to nine African American students at the previously all-white Central High School, Eisenhower did not look upon Faubus’ actions as a civil rights issue, but as a state intent on defying federal authority. If Eisenhower allowed the challenge to go unmet he would fail in his constitutional duty.77 The White House’s release of Eisenhower’s telegram to the Governor echoed the stance he had taken since Brown: “When I became President, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. The only assurance I can give you is that the Federal Constitution will be upheld by me by every legal means at my command.”78 In spite of Brownell’s reservations, the president met with Faubus in Rhode Island on 14 September. Determined to reach an agreement, Eisenhower suggested Faubus return to Arkansas and change the National Guard’s orders. Eisenhower recalled he advised Faubus that:

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
I did not believe it was beneficial to anybody to have a trial of strength between the President and a Governor because in any area where the Federal Government had assumed jurisdiction and this was upheld by the Supreme Court, there could be only one outcome – that is, the State would lose, and I did not want to see any Governor humiliated.\(^79\)

Faubus apparently assured the president he would comply with the Supreme Court’s ruling. While the president felt he had made the outcome clear to Faubus and avoided a possible altercation in Little Rock, Faubus’ actions proved Eisenhower had misjudged the governor. Faubus withdrew the National Guard from Central High School. When mob rule followed the president released another statement. Filled with optimism at what he considered the innate goodness and law-abiding nature of the American people, the statement was his attempt to persuade Little Rock to accept desegregation gracefully. Eisenhower’s language, his belief that “every right thinking citizen” wanted justice to prevail, and his conviction they would “vigorously oppose any violence by extremists,” projected an idealised image of a United States where equality was real.\(^80\)

The thousand angry whites gathered around Central High School the following day ignored the president’s appeal. Averse to any further administration involvement, the president had nonetheless already authorised plans for federal troops to be engaged. When riots ensued, Little Rock Mayor Woodrow Wilson Mann formally requested federal intervention (White House aide Maxwell Rabb had the wording approved beforehand). With a state governor now openly defying a federal court order, Eisenhower responded forcefully. He declared the rioting a “willful obstruction of justice” and issued a proclamation.\(^81\) Powerfully worded, Eisenhower’s statement reinforced his prioritisation of respect for law and order. He stressed also the lawful nature of any action his administration might be forced to take. Both The Washington Post and the New York Times focused on Eisenhower’s proclamation language, considering it “perhaps the angriest,” and “by far the strongest statement,” Eisenhower had made since becoming

\(^{79}\) Ann Whitman, ‘Diary Notes: Notes Dictated by the President Concerning Visit of Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas to Little Rock on 14th September 1957,’ 8th October 1957, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 9, DDEL.


On 24 September 1957, Eisenhower federalised the Arkansas National Guard and ordered 1,000 paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division based in nearby Fort Campbell, Kentucky, into Little Rock.

Flanked by the portraits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee, at 9:00pm on 24 September 1957, Eisenhower delivered his most significant address on civil rights. Just two months earlier he had told journalist Merriman Smith he could not “imagine any set of circumstances that would ever induce me to send Federal troops.” His authorisation of intervention required the president to justify his actions. Eisenhower’s opening statement had been added at the last minute, the words carefully chosen:

In speaking from the house of Lincoln, of Jackson and of Wilson, my words would better convey both the sadness I feel in the action I was compelled today to take and the firmness with which I intend to pursue this course until the orders of the Federal Court at Little Rock can be executed without unlawful interference.

Prior to this speech, Eisenhower had consistently disappointed his liberal critics. With federal troops now on the ground in Arkansas, the president invoked the name of the only other president to “make bloody war on the South.” He decried the “demagogic extremists” that forced his hand but reminded the nation it was not he, and by extension the Republican Party, who had declared segregation unconstitutional but the Supreme Court. Overwhelmingly, however, the president’s speech focused on the rule of law. Where possible, Eisenhower avoided the emotionally charged topic of segregation. Thus, the president proclaimed, “the responsibility and authority of the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution are very clear.” His faith in the law was repeated a further five times. He asked for “proper and sensible observance of the law,” declared the “overwhelming majority of our people…are united in their respect for the observance of the law,” and reminded Americans the “foundation of our American way of life is our national respect of the law.” The speech was broadcast nationwide, but his language suggests Eisenhower’s intended audience were white southerners.

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84 Eisenhower, ‘The President’s News Conference,’ 17th July 1957.
86 Nichols, A Matter of Justice, p.197.
idealism that dominated Eisenhower’s presidency was visible as he professed the south to be filled with people “of good will, united in their efforts to preserve and respect the law even when they disagree with it.” Although he beseeched “the citizens of the State of Arkansas” to bring about the cessation of the crisis, Eisenhower was concerned with a broader issue. Sending federal troops into Little Rock, he asserted, had caused the “fair name and high honour of our nation in the world” harm. When Little Rock, and by extension the United States reinstated peace and order, only then did Eisenhower believe would “be restored the image of America and of all its parts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Eisenhower’s reference to the Pledge of Allegiance reimagined again a united nation, instead of one currently plagued by racial division and enmity.

With his speech delivered, Eisenhower resolved to “play down the Little Rock situation, to be as quiet as possible about it.” The president continued to worry they “might have ground torn out from under us by an amendment to the constitution or ‘some law.’” There was no playing down such a momentous demonstration of federal strength, as the senatorial comments gathered by The Washington Post reveal. Opposition from southern Democrats was intense. South Carolina Senator Olin Johnston confirmed if he were Faubus he would “ignore the President and call out the National Guard in the name of the state of Arkansas…to defend the state against all alien influences.” Georgia Senator Herman Talmadge likened Eisenhower’s actions to those of Russia, claiming the president had destroyed Arkansas’ sovereignty. Virginia Representative William Tuck exclaimed he would defy the Supreme Court “as long as I can stand to advocate unyielding resistance to such tyranny.” Mississippi Senator James Eastland proclaimed Eisenhower’s actions were “an attempt by armed force to destroy the social order of the south. Nothing like this was ever attempted in Russia.” The New York Times and The Washington Post, however, professed their full support for the president, arguing what was at stake went beyond desegregation to the ability of the federal government to enforce the Constitution. Eisenhower’s actions were designated “one of historic importance politically, socially, constitutionally.” For The Economist the situation was clearly ironic. The

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87 Eisenhower, ‘Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Little Rock.’
88 ‘Pre-Press Conference Briefing,’ 3rd October 1957, Press Conference Series, Box 6, DDEL.
president, an advocate for returning power to the states, had been “forced to act as the strong arm of ultimate federal authority.”

The president refused to alter his language in the wake of Little Rock. Faced with continuing acts of racial violence, he publicly affirmed his belief that the only way Americans were “going to whip this thing in the long run” was when they honoured the glorious heritage of the republic as Eisenhower imagined it. He maintained his position that compliance with the Court’s ruling would be only truly possible when “the hearts and minds of men to the logic and the decency of a situation” had been won. Hazlett, who had written to express his support for the president’s civil rights position, was treated to an explication of what Eisenhower considered the larger hurdle facing the nation. It was his duty to:

make people see, particularly in the south, that my main interest is not in the integration or segregation question…The point is that specific orders of our Courts, taken in accordance with the terms of our Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court, must be upheld…If the day comes when we can obey the orders of our Courts only when we personally approve of them, the end of the American system, as we know it, will not be far off.

Eisenhower’s determination to stress the importance of observing the nation’s founding documents left civil rights seemingly relegated to a secondary concern. Prioritisation of the Constitution at the expense of expressing public support for racial equality nevertheless continues to allow scholars to misinterpret Eisenhower within the context of this debate.

Leadership Failure?

As Philadelphia Tribune journalist Dean Hancock admitted, “intelligent and fair-minded observers know that the President cannot single-handedly solve the color question in this country.” Even Eisenhower could not “wave some magic wand and solve the nation’s greatest problems.” Americans would forgive what was not uttered if the president’s actions proved him committed to the cause. And, as Hancock attested, he had “time and again shown himself the herald of the new day of human brotherhood and democracy.” Eisenhower’s refusal to provide moral leadership on civil rights, however, led many white southerners to believe they

94 Dean Hancock, ‘Between the Lines: President’s Influence on Side of Human Brotherhood,’ Philadelphia Tribune, 29 January 1955, p.4.
had an ally in the White House. Cabinet Secretary Maxwell Rabb, the man who “stumbled into” his unofficial role as minorities adviser, acknowledges Eisenhower failed to “take the kind of firm public stand that he should have.” As president, he was responsible for “leading the people into an acceptance of the decision” and for maintaining national unity.\(^{95}\) This does not mean, however, the Eisenhower presidency was a barren era in the fight for civil rights. As Rabb asserts “there was audacity and great progress.”\(^{96}\)

An examination of Eisenhower’s handling of civil rights renders unacceptable what Michael Mayer calls the neat lines of traditional historiography that “glorifies the contributions of Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy and portrays Eisenhower's two terms as an intervening period of quiescence.”\(^{97}\) Eisenhower’s civil rights record is formidable. He recognised the practical and moral imperative for ending segregation with his support based upon his principled belief that “equality of opportunity for every individual in America is one of the foundation stones of our government.” This was a belief he voiced consistently throughout his presidency.\(^{98}\) Nonetheless, his political philosophy led to genuine doubts about the federal government’s legal right to end segregation in the individual states. His reverence for the presidential office, however, ensured he honoured his pledge to uphold the Constitution. This internal conflict has led scholars to accuse the president of inconsistency on the civil rights issue.\(^{99}\) In the end, as was his custom, Eisenhower adopted the position of “executive neutrality,” and staked out a tenuous position in the middle of the debate. Critics have argued Eisenhower refused to harness his power and prestige to support the dissolution of segregation and promote equal political and social rights.\(^{100}\) And, although Eisenhower felt he delivered on his civil rights promises, his successes were practically wiped out by the “hasty farewell” African Americans paid him as they looked towards Kennedy to achieve what they believed he failed to do.\(^{101}\)

Robert Donovan acknowledges racial barriers were quickly broken down in the District of Columbia by the Eisenhower administration. In the south, however, he believes the president “took a sort of compromising view” because of his concern southerners were “being dragged

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\(^{96}\) Ibid., p.6.


\(^{101}\) Simeon Booker, ‘What “Ike” Thinks About Negroes,’ *Ebony*, 18/2, 1962, p.84.
into this thing too precipitously.” Donovan’s compromise is for Morrow more fairly described as ambivalence. There was “just no question” that Eisenhower’s background and his friends negatively impacted on his understanding of the situation. Accusations of ambivalence are both common and problematic. While Cary Fraser provides little substantive evidence to support his claim Eisenhower was “profoundly ambivalent” about Brown, Steven Goldzwig and George Dionisopoulos argue Eisenhower’s narrow definition of constitutional law, which precluded his involvement in the fight for civil rights, supports their argument for ambivalence if not outright opposition. These criticisms indicate the problems in condemning the president without comprehending how Eisenhower’s conception of the presidency influenced his decision-making. J.W. Anderson skilfully tackles the criticism by claiming Eisenhower’s actions were consistent with his personal understanding of the presidency as the “great reconciling force in national affairs, and himself as a mediator and defender of law and order rather than a partisan in domestic politics.” James Duram’s A Moderate Among Extremists has been, for this particular chapter, the most insightful examination of Eisenhower’s civil rights record. Duram, like Anderson, argues Eisenhower’s actions were consistent, even if they were often ineffective and frustrating. He provides neither apology nor critique, noting simply the disappointments along a path littered with good intentions. Duram’s interpretation highlights the importance of viewing the civil rights debate within the framework of Eisenhower’s philosophical ideals. Within this study, however, the analysis has contextualised Eisenhower’s responses within the framework of his determination to (re)create his idealised United States. The president’s reliance on the Constitution as a device to obscure southern defiance was Eisenhower’s attempt to reshape a more ideal American response by honouring the historic narrative of equality for all men as enshrined in the nation’s founding document.

Conclusion: Flawed Idealism

Dwight Eisenhower struggled to navigate successfully the civil rights debate. As the first president since Abraham Lincoln to face a domestic crisis provoked by determined white supremacist opposition to black enfranchisement, Eisenhower confronted what Cary Fraser

106 Duram, A Moderate among Extremists, p.viii & 54.
terms a “profoundly vexing problem, with long roots and deep divisions.” This assessment of the actions Eisenhower took to rapidly abolish discrimination in areas under his federal authority highlights the centrality of the Constitution. This was the nation’s supreme law and, as president, he had taken an oath to uphold that law. Yet, the internal conflict created by his commitment to constitutionalism and belief in states’ rights makes analysis of Eisenhower’s response to civil rights problematic. Although the president believed the federal government had little right to involve itself in the civil rights debate within the individual states, when the Supreme Court ruled on Brown Eisenhower committed to upholding the Court’s interpretation of the Constitution. Eisenhower deplored those who believed the presidency could be used as a “bully pulpit.” Analysis of his language demonstrates that although he preferred to skirt the issue wherever possible he consistently articulated his conception of the limited federal authority he possessed in this issue, voiced his fears Brown would rupture social cohesion and declared his primary role was as defender of law and order rather than partisan politician. The middle-of-the-road was, for Eisenhower, a principled and reasonable approach to an issue he believed the federal government had little right to involve itself in. Eisenhower’s legacy, of course, would have benefited from greater moral leadership, but to do so would have been at odds with the way he constructed his presidential self.

107 Fraser, ‘Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock,’ p.233 and Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos, ‘Crisis at Little Rock,’ p.215.
Conclusion: The Presidential Ideal

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race or calling.


I am particularly pleased by your recognition that in the White House today a simple, earnest and plodding citizen, with the aid of loyal and devoted associates, is trying to do his best for the country as a whole.


The US president, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, is: “the only national voice…His position takes the imagination of the country. He is the representative of no constituency, but of the whole people.”¹ For the American people, the president is the national symbol, the focus for their hopes and aspirations. Indeed, public opinion polls regularly indicate that Americans, in general, expect their presidents to embody the nation’s most socially valued characteristics.² And, as Martin Medhurst suggests, Eisenhower’s popularity with the American people stemmed from the belief that he was not only a victorious war hero, but was “the living embodiment of America at its best – strong, determined, optimistic, straightforward, sincere, and as common as the Kansas soil.”³ This section has explored Eisenhower’s complicated attempts to construct a presidential persona based upon an idealised image he had of a nonpartisan, nineteenth-century constitutional executive. Working to encourage the view amongst the American people that his was an ideal presidency, Eisenhower respected the contours of the presidency invented by the Founding Fathers more than a century and a half earlier. This idealist interpretation was intended to restore the dignity Eisenhower believed had been lost in the previous twenty years under Democrat leadership. As Emmet Hughes argues, Eisenhower’s presidency was defined by his conscious intention to correct the imbalance of powers between the co-equal branches of government that he believed dated from the 1930s, the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal programs.⁴

CONCLUSION: The Presidential Ideal

When Dwight Eisenhower arrived at the White House in January 1953, with the goodwill and affection of his fellow Americans, the United States’ new president lent what Thomas Cronin and Michael Genovese describe as “a bipartisan air to the majesty of the office.”5 Analysis of Eisenhower’s electioneering suggests that the president desired to be a nonpartisan chief executive. Nonpartisanship, Eisenhower understood, was a valuable asset. As one adviser had told him: “The people want another George Washington. They really think of you as a modern George Washington.”6 Even though the political landscape that separated Washington’s presidency from his own was much altered, Eisenhower endeavoured to honour his idol’s presidential example. Eisenhower used his apolitical popularity and the idea that he stood above the political fray, to become what Washington had once been – the all-American president and symbol of national unity.7 But Eisenhower’s success in restoring the idealism of Washington’s “above politics” style of leadership came at the expense of his attempts to re-establish the political dominance of the Republican Party. Even as Eisenhower consciously connected himself to the Republican Party during his 1956 re-election campaign, ultimately he failed to comprehend that American voters were not able to see him as a partisan president.

Eisenhower struggled to be seen as a Republican, not just because of his emphasis on nonpartisanship. Reclaiming the middle ground in politics, Eisenhower advocated a political philosophy that was anathema to the party’s Old Guard. Eisenhower’s ideal vision of Republicanism blended fiscal conservatism with liberal humanism. Nevertheless, the president was engaged in a battle to win back Americans to the Republican Party.8 Thus, even as he despaired that the nation’s tradition of fiscal conservatism had been discarded, to re-establish Republican political viability the party had to accept Roosevelt had altered permanently Americans’ expectations. Although he refused to repeal the New Deal, Eisenhower’s commitment to fiscal conservatism was constant. In the climate of the Cold War Eisenhower sought also to bind the free world to the United States. Thus, Eisenhower’s commitment to social welfare and an active federal government (the intellectual descendent to Theodore Roosevelt’s progressivism) stretched beyond the US. Eisenhower championed the much-

maligned Mutual Security program as he fought to protect the American free economy and balance his nation’s essential security needs with maximum economic strength. His internationalism, however, pushed conservative Republicans even further away from Modern Republicanism as they openly criticised the foreign aid program as a giveaway. So-called “Un-Modern” Republicans seized the proposed $71.8 billion budget for fiscal 1958 to express their displeasure at Eisenhower’s domestic and foreign economic policy goals. Analysis of the budget battle reveals that Eisenhower was unable to bridge the gap between Old Guard economic expectations and his battle for the hearts and minds of Americans and the free world.

The final two case studies within this section probed Eisenhower’s constitutionalist conception of the presidency. The exploration of Eisenhower’s response to Congress’ assault upon his presidential authority in the field of foreign affairs illustrates the impact of history upon his conceptualisation of the proper balance of powers amongst the branches of government. With the support of 44 of the 47 Senate Republicans, John Bricker’s proposed constitutional amendment became the rallying point for what Richard Davies calls the “unreconstructed conservatives” in the Republican Party. Working within his own interpretation of the role of the president, Eisenhower opposed the attempt to seize his rightful, and traditional, presidential powers. The contrast between his public and private language is particularly noteworthy within this study and it supports the assertion Eisenhower’s construction of his idealised presidential persona was consciously adopted. As a constitutionalist, Eisenhower accepted that the president had no official role in amending the Constitution. Consequently, even as he raged to his associates in private, publicly he sought to persuade rather than provoke. This sense of vigour combined with self-imposed limitations defined Eisenhower’s presidency. Yet, his personal style of “soft” activism meant the Bricker Amendment eventually fell short by a single vote.

Eisenhower was a constitutionalist, but he believed that under the Constitution the United States was a confederation of free states. The internal conflict between Eisenhower’s presidential commitment to constitutionalism and his personal conviction in the theory of states’ rights made problematic the assessment of his response to the civil rights crisis. The analysis presented in chapter four illuminates the ways in which Eisenhower relied upon his constitutionalism to frame his policies and his actions in response to Brown and the crisis in

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Little Rock, acting only where he was convinced he had the federal authority to do so. The president’s rapid dismantling of racial discrimination in areas under his federal authority was intended to set an example for the rest of the nation to follow. He struggled, however, to convince Americans to understand that respect for the laws of the nation was crucial to the success of their democratic government, nor could he persuade intransigent southerners that his language of equality was part of the fabric of the republic. Although Eisenhower may have failed to provide the moral leadership many Americans expected of their president, he consistently articulated his respect for the Constitution, urged the nation to respect and uphold the Constitution and believed – perhaps naively – all Americans would, eventually, honour the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence.

These case studies have explored how Eisenhower’s attempt to construct an idealised presidential persona relied upon the nation’s traditions and history. This section has examined Eisenhower’s efforts to be “above-politics” like George Washington and his attempt to reinvigorate the progressive legacies of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt in order to secure the nation’s two-party political system. Eisenhower’s desire to protect the president’s constitutionally prescribed authority over US foreign policy and his commitment to respecting and upholding the Constitution, even as it conflicted with his own personal belief in the doctrine of states’ rights has also been analysed. The political philosophy that defined how Eisenhower sought to represent himself to the American people, had just as significant an impact upon his attempts to (re)construct his vision of an idealised United States.
CHAPTER FIVE

“The Great Fundamental of Our National Life”

For Eisenhower, Spiritual Faith is the Core of Democracy

The faith we hold belongs not to us alone but to the free of all the world. This common bond binds…the planter of wheat in Iowa, the shepherd in southern Italy and the mountaineer in the Andes. It confers a common dignity upon the French soldier who dies in Indo-China…the American life given in Korea.


Our system demands the Supreme Being. There is no question about the American system being the translation into the political world of a deeply held religious faith.


It was certainly not difficult for me to build up an intensive religious faith as long as I was as dedicated as I think I am – to a free system of government among people. To me it makes no sense, without a religious foundation.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Remarks at the 22nd Annual Convention of the Military Chaplains Association, 6 May 1954.

Dwight Eisenhower’s 1953 Inaugural Address was replete with religious imagery. For many of the Americans whose votes had swept Eisenhower into the White House, their new president possessed the ideal blend of patriotism, faith and moral principle. Eisenhower’s spiritual rhetoric reflected his belief that the democratic government he revered could not exist without religious faith. During his presidency Eisenhower perfected the themes developed by Harry Truman, merging “God and country” with Woodrow Wilson’s belief in the United States’ international mission to bring about a new world order. Religion became re-endowed with political, cultural and social meaning as the United States mobilised for the possible outbreak of war with the Soviet Union. Defined by T. Jeremy Gunn as “governmental theism,” the overt demonstrations of the United States’ religiosity should be seen as a determined effort by the Eisenhower administration to contrast the state-sponsored atheism of the Soviet Union with an identifiable state-sponsorship of religion’s importance to the United States.

argues Eisenhower used religion to distinguish between what he believed was the righteousness of the American cause and the wickedness of the Soviet Union. Because religion reminded Americans who they were and what they stood for, Eisenhower used religion also to tell Americans what they were fighting for. With his steadfast belief that spirituality and freedom of worship were the bedrock of democracy, Eisenhower was engaged in an apocalyptic battle to ensure the American system of government was not defeated at the hands of an atheistic, ideological foe. Eisenhower’s crusade dominated his eight years in the White House.

This chapter probes the centrality of religion to Eisenhower’s attempt to (re)create his American ideal, capable of uniting Americans in their ideological battle with the Soviet Union. Analysis of his engagement with spiritual faith is a fitting start to this second section, for Eisenhower believed the core of the American republic was its spiritual heritage. Without faith there would be no American ideal for Eisenhower to promote and protect around the world, thus spirituality in fact underpins each of the themes within this section. This chapter begins with an exploration of Eisenhower’s first Inaugural Address and the president’s explicit linkage of religious faith with democratic government. The speech was an amplification of the sentiments expressed within the 1952 Republican Party platform, which proclaimed Republicans had “always recognized Communism to be a world conspiracy against freedom and religion.” Analysis suggests Eisenhower began his presidency convinced that recommitment to the United States’ traditional and historic values of spiritual and moral faith were the nation’s greatest strength in its battle with communism. The new president did not spark the revival of religion that characterised the United States in the 1950s. Nonetheless, this study demonstrates that the president’s unwavering embrace of spiritual faith enabled him to successfully position himself as what Conrad Cherry terms the “leading spokesman and a stellar symbol of the revival.” This examination focuses on the president’s religious discourse and foreign policy actions throughout 1954. This year represented the high water-mark for political expressions of religiosity within the Eisenhower administration with the Pledge of Allegiance officially altered in order to proclaim the United States as one nation, under God. The investigation of Eisenhower’s foreign policy decisions in Vietnam and Guatemala demonstrate how the president harnessed religion to define the intractable division between the free world’s ideals and those of the communist powers. This

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7 Cherry, *God's New Israel*, p.303.
chapter concludes with a reflection on the inclination within the scholarship to belittle the president’s religiosity, accusing Eisenhower of vagueness, insincerity or cynical appropriation of religion for political advantage.  

(Re)Dedication to Religious Belief

Presidential hopeful Dwight Eisenhower belonged to no church and subscribed to no theological creed, but he was a man of faith. Although he spoke more of ideals than specific policy platforms, Eisenhower’s religiously oriented discourse merged effectively the rigid anti-communist sentiment prevalent amongst Americans with the United States’ spiritual heritage. Declaring spiritual strength the heart of the nation’s defence against communist aggression, Eisenhower believed the conflict a battle between “anti-God and a belief in the Almighty.” The strength of Eisenhower’s belief in the spiritual righteousness of the United States, his certainty that when God was present communism could not survive and his conviction that the future belonged to those who would “bear spiritual and intellectual arms against an army of Communist ideas,” represented his commitment to using the United States’ religious heritage as a Cold War weapon.

Celebrating his 62nd birthday in San Antonio, Texas, Eisenhower delivered a speech that emphasised the relationship he saw between peace and spirituality. Professing his belief that faith in God would gain the world lasting peace, Eisenhower declared spiritual poverty “the Achilles’ heel” of any nation. Thus, Eisenhower decreed that adherence to the principles of the Founding Fathers would both fulfil their nation’s spiritual destiny and win the battle for the hearts and minds of humankind. As he embarked upon his crusade to restore spirituality and morality to the American government, Eisenhower continued to outline the apocalyptic nature

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9 Spirituality and anti-communist rhetoric were not the only themes or competing priorities that characterised Eisenhower’s campaign. Throughout his campaigns, Eisenhower engaged numerous themes that resonated with the American people and their history including peace, freedom and integrity. See also chapter one for an examination of Eisenhower’s ultimately incompatible goal of being a nonpartisan, Republican, president.
of the threat communism posed to democracy, maintaining that as president he would engage spiritual faith to defeat their atheistic, ideological enemy.

On 4 November 1952, the American people unequivocally chose Dwight Eisenhower to be their new president. At the Commodore Hotel in New York a week before his inauguration, Eisenhower met with the evangelical Reverend Billy Graham. According to Graham, Eisenhower intended to incorporate spiritual faith into his Inaugural Address. Over a working lunch Eisenhower gathered together his Cabinet to discuss the latest draft of his address. His soon-to-be Secretary of State John Foster Dulles commented that the speech made reference to “interdependence” but seemed to him to lack cultural and spiritual values. Eisenhower remarked that he thought this to be in the draft, but he would alter the emphasis accordingly for he intended his address to be the beginning of what could be called a “spiritual crusade.” Although it would be no sermon, faith was the basis for his speech and Eisenhower believed he had to remind his audience the American government was “deeply embedded in a religious faith.” Turning to principal speechwriter Emmet Hughes, Eisenhower suggested Hughes find a way to enable him to declare that the American government remained committed to the faith of the Founding Fathers and unless Americans accepted this ideal their government made no sense. The detailed notes taken during this working lunch demonstrate the importance the incoming administration gave to the inclusion of spirituality in their new president’s Inaugural Address. Indeed, this theme dominated the conversation amongst the men.

In front of more than 750,000 people and an additional 75 million Americans watching on 118 television stations in 74 cities, on 20 January 1953 Eisenhower swore to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. More than sacred political ceremony, Eisenhower’s inauguration was, in many ways, a religious consecration. Awash with spiritual rhetoric, Eisenhower’s Inaugural Address emphasised faith. Not faith in progress, but faith in the Creator and the gifts he had bestowed upon the United States. Since George Washington’s first

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15 Ibid.
Inaugural Address in 1789, prayer had played no part in inaugural ceremonies. Prayer and politics had not become untethered, however, with the Congressional Record registering Senate prayers since 1885 (when they began to officially record the prayer). In 1937 Franklin D. Roosevelt had reintroduced prayer as part of the official proceedings. Although Roosevelt had used the sacred to legitimise the secular, Eisenhower’s open embrace of the omnipresent nature of the nation’s civil religion was intended to inspire, unite and prepare Americans for the Cold War. While American presidents have all willingly voiced their belief in a providential higher power, Eisenhower began his Inaugural Address with prayer, a presidential act without precedent:

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the Executive branch of Government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race or calling.

May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen.

Eyewitnesses reported audience members taken aback as Eisenhower had bowed his head and begun to pray. The prayer had not been included in the program of events and people openly wondered about its significance. The story that emerged was of a spontaneous and hastily constructed prayer, written that morning after Eisenhower attended a service at the National Presbyterian Church. Scratched out on a yellow pad, only his immediate family knew of his intentions. The prayer was celebrated as a sincere reflection of the president’s religious beliefs and a sign of his moral character. Johnathan Herzog, however, has argued Eisenhower’s prayer was anything but spontaneous, instead calculated for political effect and meant to imbue the speech with spirituality. Disregarding the debate that surrounds the origins and sincerity

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19 Ibid. p.92 and Medhurst, ‘God Bless the President,’ pp.7 & 71-2.
22 Herzog claims the inclusion of the prayer was decided at the Cabinet meeting that discussed the draft Inaugural speech. According to Eisenhower’s advisers the speech was too materially focused. Having read the proceedings, Herzog has misrepresented a calculated nature to the prayer – there is nothing within the
of the prayer, Martin Medhurst contends Eisenhower’s prayer achieved three key objectives: unification; discrimination; and exemplification. Prayer was a powerful unifying force and Eisenhower’s first words encouraged national and international unity. Prayer also discriminated between a society founded on theistic presuppositions and one bound to materialistic tenets, enabling Eisenhower to distinguish between the United States and the Soviet Union. And, finally, he wished to exemplify in front of the whole world the orderly transfer of power from party to party. Given Eisenhower’s private remarks about his desire to incorporate spiritual faith into his Inaugural Address it is unlikely he included the prayer for purely political reasons. Indeed, this exploration suggests the prayer signalled Eisenhower’s intention to make religious symbolism the cornerstone of his presidency.

Brimming with biblical imagery, nearly every idea expressed in his prayer was repeated and expanded in Eisenhower’s address. He addressed God once in prayer and the Deity five times in the speech. In both, he pledged his concern for all people. In prayer he spoke of his dedication to serving the American people, and in the speech of his dedication to the nation’s founding documents. He sought God’s guidance to know right from wrong and expressed similar feelings regarding the nation’s ability to achieve on the side of good. But it was faith that dominated the address, spoken of once in prayer but repeated 13 times in the Inaugural, proclaiming the new president’s politics of faith. It was, the president declared, time for Americans to beseech God’s guidance as his words depicted a world divided between the forces of good (the United States) and evil (the Soviet Union). Summoning all knowledge of the past as they scanned the horizon, Eisenhower decreed there was but one question to answer: “How far have we come in man’s long pilgrimage from darkness toward the light? Are we nearing the light…Or are the shadows of another night closing in upon us?” Eisenhower’s discourse reaffirmed his certainty that the United States was indeed God’s “City Upon a Hill.”

The language Eisenhower engaged to contrast the United States’ spiritual heritage with communism’s atheist doctrine clearly defined the president as an ardent Cold Warrior. Eisenhower’s speech evidenced also the interconnected nature of spiritual faith with another historic American myth: freedom. He bound the two themes together as he described a conflict

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proceedings that suggested a formal prayer and Eisenhower himself continually emphasised his desire to prioritise spirituality in the address. Herzog, The Spiritual-Industrial Complex, p.94.


25 Eisenhower, ‘Inaugural Address.’
where freedom was pitted against slavery, the lightness against the dark. Only a free people, proclaimed Eisenhower, could withstand the onslaught of communist aggression. Permanently bound to democracy was religious commitment and Eisenhower implored Americans to fully embrace this fundamental aspect of their heritage as they girded for battle with the Soviet Union:

At such a time in history, we who are free must proclaim anew our faith. This faith is the abiding creed of our fathers. It is our faith in the deathless dignity of man, governed by eternal moral and natural laws.

This faith defines our full view of life. It establishes, beyond debate, those gifts of the Creator that are man’s inalienable rights, and that make all men equal in His sight.

…This faith rules our whole way of life. It decrees that we, the people, elect leaders not to rule but to serve.26

Eisenhower’s speech reveals his belief in the notion of manifest destiny for he was unambiguous about the role he believed the United States was fated to play in a divided world. The Soviet Union posed the greatest threat to democracy and to meet the challenge, Eisenhower decreed that “destiny has laid upon our country the responsibility of the free world’s leadership.” Yet, if Eisenhower was to restore lasting peace and worldwide freedom, his nation had to embrace and embody the idealised vision he presented to them. “For this truth must be clear before us: whatever America hopes to bring to pass in the world must first come to pass in the heart of America.”27 Bookending his address with another prayer, Eisenhower reified the connection between religion and Americanism.28

**Religious Revival**

There is little that is more powerful in the pantheon of American mythology than the belief the United States benefits from God’s favour. For Cherry, the nation can be perceived as the “light to the nations,” positively influencing other peoples and drawing them towards democracy and freedom through force of example. But, as Cherry acknowledges, more often the United States behaves as the “chosen people,” who, actively seek to safeguard American principles at home and abroad by engaging “a muscular imperialism that cloaks American self-interest with

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
platitudes about saving the world for democracy.”29 Although Herzog argues against a spontaneous revival of religion in the aftermath of the Second World War, the domestic resurgence of religion that nevertheless occurred in the United States reasserted historic American traits that equated faith with success and prosperity and national wellbeing as signs of divine approval. Eisenhower believed the United States’ Judeo-Christian heritage made it a special moral force in the world.30 His commitment to democracy as the political expression of belief in God ensured his battle with the Soviet Union was founded upon spiritual faith.31 Yet, he failed to live up to the ideal, instead straddling Cherry’s two versions, rhetorically positioning the Cold War in a world-historic context that claimed the United States as God’s chosen nation whose victory would come with the blessings of the Almighty.32

In the early 1950s, many Americans responded to the Cold War as an ideological battle between the god-fearing and the godless, in which the spiritual foundations of human life and belief were threatened.33 American policymakers appeared to have been keenly aware the Cold War could be legitimised through what Axel Schäfer defines as “religious belief in a just cause, a worldview based on a clear distinction between good and evil, adherence to moral principles and strong enemy images.”34 Of their conflict with the Soviet Union, Republican Senator Ralph Flanders declared to Congress: “In very truth the world seems to be mobilizing for the great battle of Armageddon. Now is a crisis in the agelong warfare between God and the Devil for the souls of men.”35 Flanders’ connection between Christianity and anti-communism was an accurate reflection of the suddenly fashionable nature of religion. Patriotism, which in itself was virtually synonymous with anti-communism, became entwined with religion. As the “Red Scare” spread, church attendance soared.36 In unprecedented numbers Americans flocked to religious leaders

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29 Cherry, God’s New Israel, p.20.
31 Medhurst, ‘God Bless the President,’ p.206.
33 Kirby, Religion and the Cold War, pp.1 & 3.
and groups in the battle of good versus evil. In 1954, Gallup polls reported that 79 percent of all Americans claimed to be church members, while 96 percent believed in God. The increased religiosity and church attendance cannot be solely attributed to Cold War tensions. But, as William Inboden argues, it is folly to downplay the significance of the nation’s “atheistic foe” for moving Americans to church. As talk of “godless communists” became commonplace some of the nation’s leading clergy organized “crusades” that merged patriotism and Christian teachings. As American Christianity began to reassert its traditionally dominant political influence, popular preachers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Billy Graham were instrumental in shaping public discourse against communism. The nationwide “crusades” that Graham undertook reached hundreds of thousands of Americans. When he proclaimed that “the principles of Christ form the only ideology hard enough to stop communism,” Graham reinforced national fears of Soviet encroachment.

Eisenhower had belonged to no official church prior to becoming president. Baptised into the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, shortly after his inauguration, Eisenhower expressed to Ann Whitman that “he joined the church, not because he felt it made any difference to his already deeply felt religious faith, but that it simply was easier than to explain why he had never belonged to a church.” The manner in which religion pervaded the Eisenhower administration can be seen in the 3 February 1953 memorandum sent to his Cabinet. The suggestion had been made that Cabinet meetings be opened with prayer. Cabinet members were given three options: (a) Open the meetings with a short, spoken prayer, given by an individual attending, (b) The meeting to be opened by the president announcing a 30 second period for silent prayer, or (c) The meeting to be opened without any ceremony. No one chose the last option. Most chose the second, although some, like Harold Stassen, noted their preference for a combination of the first two. The most prominent member of Eisenhower’s Cabinet was his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who held this position until his death.

39 Inboden, Religion and American Foreign Policy, p.258.
42 Ann Whitman, ‘Diary Notes,’ 24th October 1953, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 1, DDEL.
43 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Memorandum to Cabinet Members,’ 3rd February 1953, Cabinet Series, Box 1, DDEL.
from cancer in May 1959. Dulles possessed genuine and intense religious convictions, and they often coloured his approach to international politics. Even before the onset of the Second World War, Dulles had argued the United States carried the grave responsibility for the international community’s “spiritual leadership.” In the aftermath of the war, Dulles adopted a fervently anti-communist worldview, convinced the confrontation with the Soviet Union was no longer a conflict over rival economic models but one of spiritual determinism. The principal source of war, if it came, would be found in a clash between Christianity and communism. Dulles was an early proponent of engaging in a “moral offensive” designed to effectively expose communism’s faults when contrasted with the spiritual faith of American democracy. Dulles and Eisenhower believed communism represented the free world’s greatest threat, and they engaged Cold War rhetoric that asserted the Achilles heel of communism was Marxist atheism. Eisenhower’s presidential language complemented the clergy’s argument that a recommitment to spiritual faith was critical in the defense against communist advancement. He maintained also that spiritual faith was a key component in reshaping the nation to resemble his American ideal. Drawing his ideal from the history of the nation’s founding, Eisenhower’s language consistently linked spiritual faith with Americanism, and Americanism with victory in the Cold War.

One Nation, Under God

Dictating thoughts for inclusion in his 1953 Christmastime Pageant of Peace address, Eisenhower argued that communists found no solace in prayer because their doctrine denied the dignity of man and the existence of the Almighty. Thus, more than any other difference, Eisenhower believed communism and freedom were “placed in opposition by prayer.” Eisenhower, however, did not limit his supplications to the Judeo-Christian denominations that underpinned the United States’ religious landscape. Instead, he embraced all believers as he strove to minimise doctrinal differences and promote religious tolerance in a bid to strengthen every Americans’ spiritual faith. The United States had not yet, however, faced an enemy committed to an ideology so entirely at odds with democracy, nor one that believed religion the opiate of the masses. In response, Eisenhower bound religion and societal conflict together more effectively than any president before him. Observing the World Day of Prayer in March

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45 Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*, p.2.

46 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Dictation,’ 21st December 1953, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, DDEL.
1954, Eisenhower likened himself to revered and inspired leaders who constantly sought “Divine guidance” in their work.\textsuperscript{47} Traveling to Transylvania College, Kentucky, less than three weeks later, Eisenhower advised his audience the United States’ spiritual foundations were “a translation into a political system of a deeply-felt religious faith.”\textsuperscript{48}

Flag Day, 14 June 1954, marked an important step forward in Eisenhower’s religious offensive toward the (re)creation of his ideal. Written by Francis Bellamy in 1892, the original Pledge of Allegiance read: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” In 1923, the Pledge was altered to include “the Flag of the United States of America.” Although the idea had been “kicking around for several years in Roman Catholic circles,” in April 1953 the Catholic Democrat Representative Louis C. Rabaut had introduced a bill to Congress to include “under God” to the nation’s Pledge.\textsuperscript{49} Congress had previously ignored sixteen other similar bills. But, with the Presbyterian Reverend George M. Docherty’s sermon in February 1954, the bill finally garnered significant attention. A Scottish émigré, Docherty had come to a “strange conclusion” when studying the Pledge uttered daily by all American school children. Missing from the Pledge was “the characteristic and definitive factor in the American way of life.” In fact, Docherty declared “it could be the pledge of any republic…I could hear little Moscovites [sic] repeat a similar pledge to their hammer-and-sickle flag in Moscow with equal solemnity.”\textsuperscript{50} Docherty’s sermon galvanised Congress with no fewer than seventeen new bills submitted. In speaking for the House’s now Joint Resolution, Rabaut contended that Americans might “argue from dawn to dusk about differing political, economic, and social systems, but the fundamental issue which is the unbridgeable gap between America and Communist Russia is a belief in Almighty God.”\textsuperscript{51} Washington gave bipartisan commitment to the Pledge’s alteration.

One hundred and fifty years after it was written originally, and three decades after “the United States of America” was formally included in the Pledge, Eisenhower signed the bill that officially marked the United States as one nation, under God. To the nation, and to the world,

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the president confirmed that by proudly proclaiming their dedication to God, Americans had reaffirmed “the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource, in peace or in war.” In April, with the first American stamp bearing the motto “In God We Trust” issued, Eisenhower had similarly announced that throughout its history, the nation’s greatness had come from their spiritual faith. Eisenhower’s enthusiastic support for God’s very public inclusion into American life revealed how, in the name of patriotism and anti-communism, religious language and belief could be appropriated, formally binding the nation ever closer to his “ideal”.

Eisenhower’s nationally televised “Multiplicity of Fears” address on 5 April 1954 was intended to reassure Americans that, despite the dangers facing them, the United States possessed the strength to withstand any threat. The president declared the nation drew its strength from their spiritual foundation, “so announced by the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence.” He called on Americans to remember the immortal words of their Declaration: “We hold that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain rights.” This one statement, for Eisenhower, proved the Founding Fathers had created a nation based on spiritual faith. Dedication and devotion to the United States was, for the president, the first element of their nation’s strength. And they faced one clear danger: the “great threat imposed upon us by aggressive communism, the atheistic doctrine that believes in statism as against our conception of the dignity of man…that is the struggle of the ages.” As was his custom, Eisenhower brought history into his discourse, declaring a just and lasting peace within a prosperous world was possible, but only if Americans committed themselves to a faith like Washington’s, Lincoln’s, and “our pioneering forefathers.”

Bringing his address to a close, the president reinforced this image of the United States as a chosen nation with a divinely inspired mission:

But I say, again, that it is the American belief in decency and justice and progress, and the value of individual liberty, because of the rights conferred upon each of us, by our Creator, that will carry us through, as we study and plan these things…we do not have to be hysterical.

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We can be vigilant. We can be Americans. We can stand up and hold up our heads and say: America is the greatest force that God has ever allowed to exist on His footstool.  

During the formative years of the Cold War, as this speech attests, Eisenhower’s domestic rhetoric was heavily influenced by his certainty that the onslaught of communist advancement would be halted when the United States embraced their spiritual heritage. Eisenhower’s engagement with religiously inclined language further highlighted for the international community the distinction between American democracy, founded on spiritual faith, and the Soviet Union, committed to atheism and international expansion.

During a conversation with the president, Joseph T. Meek, the Republican candidate for the Illinois Senate declared Eisenhower’s greatest achievement to have been the “restoration of integrity, Christianity, and the honor of the White House to the American people.” Eisenhower responded with a discussion on the ideal that all men are created equal. But, as the president perceived it, all men were obviously not created equally, “except under one thing – the Creator.” This particular sentence exemplifies the confusing nature of the president’s rhetoric on the issue of civil rights (examined in depth in chapter four). Yet, it signifies also that his belief in equality stemmed from spiritual faith. That the United States existed because of its belief in a higher power was a recurring theme in Eisenhower’s discourse, especially apparent when he spoke in front of religious audiences. At the World Christian Endeavor Convention, the president suggested they would be “foolish indeed” if they supported the notion of free government but did not believe in the spiritual character of man. In his quest for a strong and idealised nation, Eisenhower argued that the United States would surely fail if Americans forgot that the basis for a free government was belief in the Almighty. To ensure victory and secure lasting peace for the whole world, only a “great moral crusade” would, in Eisenhower’s eyes, be enough to defeat their ideological enemy.

Scheduled to speak to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches on 19 August 1954, Dulles and Eisenhower speechwriter Gabriel Hauge discussed the president’s speech two days prior. According to Hauge, Eisenhower “had the idea that he likes very much of a world day of prayer for peace and he would challenge this group to take the leadership in forwarding such

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55 Ibid.
a project.” Dulles indicated his general approval, but suggested Eisenhower couple this idea with the notion of justice or otherwise he could inadvertently find himself promoting pacifism. A prayer for a just peace, Dulles thought, would be more appropriate.58 The speech Eisenhower delivered proposed that his audience lead the way towards the goal of inviting every person around that world that believed in a higher power to join “in a mighty, simultaneous, intense act of faith.”59 For the president, it was vital the world recognise the United States’ search for a just peace was favoured by God. But, even as the percentage of Americans belonging to a church steadily increased, the president acknowledged:

At our national beginnings, now a century and three quarters gone, we announced what we intended to make out of this country. We proclaimed then the principles on which it was founded, and toward which we continue to strive. We have fallen short, yes. But the ideals we have set forth, that we have blazoned on the record, stand always there to challenge us... We are essentially a religious people. We are not merely religious, we are inclined, more today than ever, to see the value of religion as a practical force in our affairs.60

Fusing patriotism and religion, Eisenhower imagined a “dedicated, patriotic group that can well take the Bible in one hand and the flag in the other, and march ahead.”61 His address to the Annual Convention of the Military Chaplains Association reinforced his regular petition that the Founding Fathers could only explain the nation’s new system of government by acknowledging the “divine source for its beginnings.”62

At the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner the president proclaimed that the “American dream” was a goal to be achieved through work, wise thought, unity among men and “faith in God.”63 Eisenhower’s religious discourse appears to have been intended to fortify the nation’s spiritual

58 ‘Telephone Calls: John Foster Dulles to Gabriel Hauge,’ 17th August 1954, John Foster Dulles Telephone Series, Box 10, DDEL.
60 Ibid.
strength as he continued to wage Cold War against the United States’ ideological enemy. His public campaign of support for governmental displays of religiosity and for religious organisations, and the regularity with which he invoked spiritual faith, demonstrates also that Eisenhower was dedicated to the historic narrative that he himself had recently formalised, of the United States as one nation, under God.

To Protect Democracy from Communism

As the foremost representative of the United States’ civil religion, the president affirms the existence of God and acknowledges that the nation’s destiny and resultant national policies must be interpreted in the light of his divine will. Every American president has spoken of a higher power, has prayed and been prayed for, sought God’s divine blessings and thanked Him for their preordained successes. In the shadow of the Cold War, Eisenhower fused religion with foreign policy as he worked to combat the allure of communism in the underdeveloped nations. For, if any nation voluntarily embraced the doctrine of communism, the ideological battle for alliances would be tipped in the Soviets’ favour. Eisenhower’s actions in Vietnam and Guatemala, two small and underdeveloped countries, established the lengths the president was prepared to go to halt communism and protect democracy around the world.

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any communist foothold in either nation, Eisenhower, it appeared, had no compunction interfering in another country’s sovereign affairs.

The Republican Party campaign platform had called for the liberation of communism’s “captive peoples.” When Eisenhower entered the White House, however, he focused instead on halting any further expansion of communist influence. By April 1954, the military conflict between the French and Vietnamese had rapidly turned in the communists’ favour. Eisenhower expressed his grave concerns should Indochina fall into communist hands in a cable to Winston Churchill, noting the “consequent shift in the power ratio throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous.”

Asked at his press conference of the “strategic importance of Indochina to the free world,” Eisenhower articulated his “falling domino” theory. Shifting a regional contest for control into the broader Cold War battle for global influence, Eisenhower contended if Vietnam fell, other nations would almost certainly follow, marking the “beginning of a disintegration” of the most profound consequences, “incalculable to the free world.”

Eisenhower had referred to his principle of the falling domino during his National Security Council (NSC) meeting the day prior, evidencing the president’s pragmatic awareness of the region’s geostrategic importance, and his commitment to denying communism any further territorial gain. While Eisenhower publicly discussed the political significance of the region, in private Eisenhower explored the possibility of engaging religion as a means to halt communist expansion throughout Vietnam. During a February NSC meeting the president questioned why they could

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not do more to capitalise on the religious issue in Indochina.\textsuperscript{70} The memorandum of the meeting recorded the results of his question:

Since he understood that most of the people of Vietnam were Buddhists, the President asked whether it was possible to find a good Buddhist leader to whip up some real fervor.

The President illustrated his idea by referring to the incursion of the Arabs into North Africa and Southern Europe in the early Middle Ages. It was pointed out to the President that, unhappily, Buddha was a pacifist rather than a fighter (laughter).\textsuperscript{71}

Undismayed by Buddhism’s pacifist nature, Eisenhower pushed for religiously oriented opposition to the communists in the North. The president, who believed the idea of religious motivation had potential, pointed out that “Joan of Arc had managed to defeat a large enemy force.” Dulles acknowledged there were a million and a half Roman Catholics in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{72}

When Dien Bien Phu fell in May 1954 Eisenhower was adamant the communists would not be allowed to seize the whole of Vietnam. Engaged in a global contest for influence, Eisenhower prioritised religion in the most crucial decision his administration made regarding Vietnam. Ngo Dinh Diem was not the only political option the United States could have supported. There were several popular, qualified and avowedly anti-communist candidates who easily could have taken over the leadership of Bao Dai in the South. They were, however, Buddhists, Cao Dai or Hoa Hao, considered too susceptible to neutralism or communist influence to serve as dependable allies in the American crusade.\textsuperscript{73} Diem was a Vietnamese nationalist who had refused to cooperate with the Viet Minh, spurning the offer of a position within the communist government of Ho Chi Minh in the aftermath of the Second World War. Diem also was hostile to the French, enabling his American advocates to feel confident their support for his leadership remained true to the oftentimes contradictory American creeds of anti-colonialism and self-determination (a theme explored in chapter seven). But it was, as Seth Jacobs argues, Diem’s Catholicism that secured the Eisenhower administration’s support.\textsuperscript{74} The decade’s most popular television preacher Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen had long advocated the fusion of religion with foreign policy. Eisenhower’s support of Diem made Sheen’s vision a reality.

\textsuperscript{70} S. Everett Gleason, ‘Memorandum of Discussion at the 183\textsuperscript{rd} Meeting of the National Security Council,’ 4\textsuperscript{th} February 1954, FRUS, 534, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v13p1/d534.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Jacobs, \textit{America's Miracle Man in Vietnam}, pp.4 & 86.
\textsuperscript{74} Jacobs, ‘Our System Demands the Supreme Being,’ p.598-600.
adding “biblical proportions to a foreign struggle.” Eisenhower’s support of a Catholic head of state, in a nation populated overwhelmingly by Buddhists, sat comfortably with Eisenhower’s belief that religion was the best weapon the free world possessed against the Soviet Union.

Closer to American soil, Guatemala’s democratically elected government appeared to the Eisenhower administration to have been infiltrated by Soviet communists. In 1944, a popular revolution had ousted Jorge Ubico’s dictatorial regime, and in March 1950 the country had elected Jacobo Arbenz. A top-secret CIA report concluded Arbenz was a “ruthless opportunist with no pronounced political convictions.” Yet, in 1952 Arbenz announced Decree 900, a democratic land reform project that empowered the Guatemalan government to expropriate uncultivated portions of latifundias. Between 1952 and 1954, Arbenz’s administration distributed 1.5 million acres of land to 100,000 Guatemalan families. This attempt at democratic land reform sparked serious concerns in the Eisenhower administration that the Soviets had infiltrated Guatemala’s government. Communists did have a place in the Arbenz administration, but they possessed little actual power – of the 51 deputies in the Guatemalan Congress, only four were communists.

Unlike Vietnam, where Catholics were a minority, the strength of Guatemala’s Catholic Church ensured the ease with which the Eisenhower administration emphasised religion as a propaganda weapon. Distributed to the Guatemalan people on 9 April was a letter supposedly written by the Guatemalan Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano. It proclaimed: “The people of Guatemala must rise as one man against this enemy. Our struggle against Communism must be…a crusade of prayer and sacrifice…a total rejection of Communist propaganda – for the love of God and Guatemala.” Arellano may have approved the letter, but it was the CIA who wrote it. Given the code-name PBSUCCESS, the CIA believed religion would motivate Guatemalan support for Arbenz’s removal. From PBSUCCESS headquarters, a 28 April memorandum outlined the best possible way to utilise the Catholic Church to rouse the Guatemalans. The memorandum confirmed that the CIA believed it crucial the Catholic Church be mobilised against Arbenz. It was suggested the Church could “warn the faithful

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75 Winsboro and Epple, ‘Religion, Culture and the Cold War,’ p.229.
77 Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, pp.44-5 & 47.
78 Gunn and Slighoua, ‘The Spiritual Factor,’ p.44.
against inevitable spiritual contamination through the commie-led fronts.”\textsuperscript{79} Despite little evidence of communist infiltration in Arbenz’s government, American officials seized upon the conflict between communism and Catholicism in an attempt to turn the Guatemalan people against their leaders.

Dulles had travelled to Venezuela in March 1954 to speak at the Organization of American States. Placing pressure on the Guatemalan government, Dulles spoke in explicit language:

I believe that it is time to make it clear with finality that we see that alien despotism is hostile to our ideals…that if it does not heed our warning and keep away we shall deal with it as a situation that might endanger the peace of America.\textsuperscript{80}

Dulles also deftly tied the spiritual faith that dominated most Latin American countries to the United States’ fight against the communist threat with his assertion that Americans “believe in a spiritual world; we believe that man has his origin and destiny in God…That is the conception of my Government.”\textsuperscript{81} Dulles’ words echoed Eisenhower’s who, throughout his presidency, reinforced his belief that democracy only made sense when its spiritual foundations were acknowledged and accepted. Even though the US-initiated “quiet embargo” had forced Guatemala to seek military hardware from behind the Iron Curtain, the publicised discovery of a covert Czechoslovakian arms shipment aboard the Swedish freighter \textit{Alhem} at Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, provided Eisenhower with the ideal opportunity to denounce the dangers of engaging with Soviet communists.\textsuperscript{82} Richard Immerman believes the discovery also forced the Eisenhower administration to push forward with the covert CIA plan to oust the Arbenz government – a plan Eisenhower had authorised in August 1953.\textsuperscript{83} As the CIA began the implementation of the final stage of PBSUCCESS, religion still was a primary propaganda component. Emphasising Arbenz’s alleged commitment to atheistic government, the CIA broadcast the false declaration that in Arbenz’s Guatemala “there will no longer [be] any religious instruction at state expense, but on the contrary lessons in atheism, Soviet style.”\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{79} ‘Memorandum for the Record,’ 21\textsuperscript{st} April 1954, FRUS, 131, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54Guat/d131.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p.243.
\textsuperscript{83} Immerman, \textit{The CIA in Guatemala}, p.161.
\textsuperscript{84} As quoted in Gunn and Slighoua, ‘The Spiritual Factor,’ p.45.
As Dulles addressed the American people following Carlos Castillo Armas’ successful CIA-supported insurgency, he affirmed the constancy of the United States’ support for the Guatemalan people. And, in pledging their “political opposition” to communism, the United States remained committed to making “our Americas” an inspirational example to the world. Yet, in their determination to rid the Americas of what Dulles called “the evil purpose of the Kremlin,” Eisenhower had supported the overthrow of Guatemala’s legal government based on the belief that their ideological enemy had created “the first beachhead of international communism in the Western Hemisphere.”

**Did Eisenhower Politically Appropriate Religion?**

Even though Eisenhower openly declared himself the most religious man he knew, contemporary critics and many scholars since have judged the sincerity of his religious faith and found him wanting. It is not, they argue, that Eisenhower did not believe in God. But his belief was too vague, his language too lowest-common-denominator inclusive, he was not baptised until after his inauguration and in the anticommunist fervour that gripped the nation, he appropriated religion for purely political reasons. David O’Connell, for example, concedes Eisenhower’s personal spiritual faith cannot be questioned but finds it “undeniable” that Eisenhower’s every religious action, every religious word uttered during his presidency contained clear political purposes. And, although Gary Smith acknowledges that Eisenhower, more than any other president, prodded Americans to recommit themselves to the religious convictions of the Founding generation, he still questions the depth of the president’s spiritual faith. Although Eisenhower’s faith was “authentic,” it was apparently not as central to either Eisenhower’s political philosophy or persona as he contrived to make it appear. What seems to bind these criticisms together is the sense that, while Eisenhower did take his pastoral duties as president seriously, he committed the grave error of overgeneralising religion and harnessing its power for political purposes.

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87 O’Connell, ‘God Wills It,’ pp.105-6.
Scholars who seek to discredit Eisenhower’s sincere commitment to religious belief quote mostly his famous “and I don’t care what it is” reference. Taken from his December 1952 speech to the Freedoms Foundation – a conservative, patriotic foundation that trusted the United States’ belief in God separated it from the Soviet Union – Eisenhower’s words are regularly taken out of context nor quoted in full. It has been easy for scholars to engage these seven words to support an argument that the president lacked a genuine theological belief system and instead appropriated spiritual faith for political advantage. The statement stems from Eisenhower’s recollection of a conversation he had with Soviet Marshal Georgy Zhukov. Attempting to refute Zhukov’s assertion that the United States appealed only to the materialistic and selfish nature of man, Eisenhower defined what he believed the United States stood for, “what I believed to be the basic one, the basic reason for its existence. [But] I knew it would do no good to appeal to him with it, because it is founded on religion.” Zhukov’s indoctrination into the “Bolshevik religion” meant it would be “hopeless” for Eisenhower to converse with Zhukov about the religious origins of the American government. Central to the American democracy, Eisenhower declared, was the belief, written into the Declaration of Independence, that all were equal under God:

In other words, our Government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith and I don’t care what it is. With us of course it is the Judeo-Christian concept, but it must be a religion that all men are created equal.90

Eisenhower’s recollection of his conversation with Zhukov was intended to illustrate the great difficulty the United States faced in attempting to explain to a communist the basic concepts that underpinned their government. What is more illuminating, however, is what followed this oft-repeated statement. Eisenhower asserted his belief that if the United States were to win their present ideological struggle, Americans would have to embrace the notion “that we are a religious people…If we can sell ourselves this idea at home…we can win the ideological war.”91 Even before he took the oath of office, and though he may have lacked the easily identifiable denominational affiliation that some scholars appear to require, Eisenhower had defined both his commitment and belief in the religious foundations of the United States, and the decisive role religion would have in their fight with the Soviet Union.

91 Ibid.
Conclusion: Spiritual Cold Warrior

This chapter’s exploration of Eisenhower’s religious discourse reveals the president made no attempt to downplay his commitment to spirituality during his time in the White House. Through the examination of Eisenhower’s discourse, which provides ample references to spirituality and spiritual faith as his nation’s greatest strength, this chapter has examined how the president fused religion with ideals of Americanism, highlighting the vital role religion played in Eisenhower’s ideological conflict with the Soviet Union. As an ardent Cold Warrior, Eisenhower believed the United States’ spiritual heritage was their best defensive and offensive weapon. Under his leadership the United States fought the Cold War with religious language, symbols and imagery defined by his interpretation of the nation’s religious foundations. The formidable influence of religion, combined with the belief that secular institutions were not capable of defeating communism, ensured that foreign policy actions that prioritised religion as a weapon also were easily justified by the Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower’s commitment to spiritual faith prompted him to write to Reverend Elson in 1958 and proclaim international actions his administration had taken were consistent with the values identified in his foreign policy. They were “the natural outcomes of doctrines, belief, convictions and policies that have been upheld by this Government…I need not recite them to you. You know of the…Vietnam [and] Guatemala…incidents.” Yet, Eisenhower also deployed religious language and imagery for a greater purpose. Analysing the president’s belief in spirituality as the bedrock of the United States’ democratic government reveals his consistent appeal to the American people to recommit themselves to their nation’s historic ideals and embrace the divine mission God had bequeathed to them. By framing the Cold War as a battle between religion and atheism, Eisenhower sought to (re)create his ideal based upon the national narrative that theirs was, and is, a nation with a divine mission.

CHAPTER SIX

To Defend the “Frame of Freedom”

Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Attack on an American Ideal

So he dwelt at length on the preservation of freedom – my favorite subject!!!!

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Diary Entry, 7 July 1949.

We live in an age of peril. We must think and plan and provide so as to live through this age in freedom – in ways that do not undermine our freedom even as we strive to defend it.


And we must, even in our zeal to defeat the enemies of freedom, never betray ourselves in seizing their weapons to make our own defense…For the kind of America in which we believe is too strong ever to acknowledge fear – and too wise ever to fear knowledge.


Dwight Eisenhower venerated the American ideal of freedom. His Columbia University speech in October 1949 elevated freedom to an ideal “that must be treasured beyond all else – even life itself.”

In the shadow of the burgeoning Cold War, freedom, according to Eisenhower, was the heart of American democracy. Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, on the other hand, was content to trample on the civil liberties of his fellow Americans in order that supposed communists-in-government be rooted out and exposed. Historians have traditionally accused Eisenhower of failing to say anything that could be construed as a direct repudiation of the senator. Eisenhower refused to name or shame the senator. As he wrote George Craig in March 1954, were he to “stand up in public and label him with derogatory titles, I would make a serious error.” It would, in fact, “make the Presidency ridiculous.” Eisenhower’s supposed failure to publicly renounce McCarthy initially coloured, and to some extent still influences, historians’ treatment of Eisenhower’s attachment to the ideal of freedom. Eisenhower’s position was, as Mary Stuckey argues, defined by his conviction that the language of accusation and denial could defeat communism in the short term. Nevertheless, the “door to nihilism” would open if he did not replace condemnation with positive promotion of idealised American

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values in response to the communist threat.\textsuperscript{3} Within the vast literature that covers this controversial period there remains a need to explore Eisenhower’s engagement with the historic narrative of freedom and the threat McCarthy posed to this ideal.\textsuperscript{4}

This chapter opens with a succinct exploration of the importance of freedom to the American identity. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the perceived threat of communist infiltration enabled the rise of McCarthy. This chapter’s exploration of Eisenhower’s defence of freedom highlights the president’s romanticised vision of historic American ideals and is consistent with his constitutionalist conception of the presidency. Using Eisenhower’s public speeches, press conferences and private correspondence, this chapter charts a chronological approach to the conflict. The study commences with Eisenhower’s 1952 election campaign and his decision to delete a short paragraph from his Milwaukee speech defending General George C. Marshall. Surveyed also are the overseas library debacle, the “book-burning” incident and the Army-McCarthy hearings. Eisenhower’s responses were shaped by his concern that a direct attack on the senator would do no harm to McCarthy’s demagogic aspirations but instead harm the presidency, the Republican Party and the nation’s ideological battle against the Soviets.\textsuperscript{5}

\textbf{The Land of the Free}

No idea is more fundamental to American national identity than the belief the United States is, and always will be, the land of the free. This essential characteristic has been glorified within the narrative of American history. The veneration of freedom is not, of course, unique to the United States. But the idea of freedom occupies greater space in the United States’ public discourse. As historian Eric Foner has written, freedom – or liberty – is the central term in the American political vocabulary, embedded within the historical record and the language of everyday life. Liberty is listed among humankind’s inalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence, the avowed purpose of the Constitution is to secure liberty’s blessing and The

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{5} Oakley, \textit{God's Country}, p.176.
\end{footnotes}
Star-Spangled Banner declares the United States to be the “land of the free.” The idealisation
of freedom has been enshrined also within such symbolic national images of freedom as the
Liberty Bell and the Statue of Liberty.

The Declaration of Independence does not proclaim that liberty belongs only to a chosen few.
Rather, freedom is a universal virtue, an ideal the United States should promote and protect
everywhere. The ideal of freedom is advanced most often in times of conflict. Where the
American Civil War had been fought in order to bring about “a new birth of freedom,” eight
decades later the United States’ involvement in the Second World War was defined by the
desire to protect what Franklin Roosevelt called the Four Freedoms: freedom of speech;
freedom of worship; freedom from want and freedom from fear. In 1943, while enmeshed in
the European theatre of war, Dwight Eisenhower’s letter to his childhood friend “Swede”
Hazlett illustrated his absolute commitment to the United States’ fight to defend the revered
American ideal of freedom:

In no other war in history has the issue been so distinctly drawn between the forces of
arbitrary oppression on the one side and, on the other, those conceptions of individual
liberty, freedom and dignity, under which we have been raised in our great democracy…I
do have the feeling of a crusader in this war.

On VE Day in 1945, the victorious General declared the United States and her allies had
endured “sorrow and suffering,” but that it had not been in vain. For Eisenhower, those whose
lives had been cut short had sacrificed so “that the rest of us might live in the sunlight of
freedom.” Eisenhower considered American involvement had secured a freedom that
transcended the European continent.

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7 Kevin Coe, ‘The Language of Freedom in the American Presidency, 1933-2006,’ Presidential Studies
8 Andrew Preston, ‘The Death of a Peculiar Relationship: Myron Taylor and the Religious Roots of America’s
Cold War’, in (eds.) John Dumbrell and Axel R. Schäfer, America’s "Special Relationships:” Foreign and
History of American Freedom.’
pp.1081-2.
10 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Speech – VE & “A” Day Statement, SHAEF,’ 4th May 1945, Eisenhower Papers,
vol. 4, pp.2673-6.
During the Second World War the United States and the Soviet Union had faced a common enemy. A temporary alliance between the two powers helped secure victory over Nazi Germany. Americans, however, have a long tradition of hostility toward communism. When communism arrived as a political ideology in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century it sparked what J. Ronald Oakley claims was “rabid” anti-communist sentiment. Americans, who had fought a bloody war of independence to secure their republic, considered communism an unrelenting political-military conspiracy that threatened democracy, Christianity, private enterprise and anything else considered “American.”

In the Second World War, even as the two powers allied together, groups like the American Women Against Communism continued to claim communism was an “alien ideology,” told Americans they must choose between the American Patriot Oath or the Communist Oath and proclaimed the situation urgent for “COMMUNISM IS AT OUR DOOR TODAY.” In the immediate aftermath of the war Eisenhower initially had shared the hope of many that the United States and her allies could, with respect to balance-of-power politics, craft a peaceful, and permanent, international order. Yet, whatever the triumphs achieved in the spring of 1945, compatible wartime objectives gave way rapidly to a postwar power struggle between two political ideologies intent on maximising their global influence.

Eisenhower believed that liberty was the inalienable right of all people. In the immediate aftermath of the war, he warned his audience at the Freedom House Anniversary Dinner that, although they had preserved the freedoms Americans had fought to protect, the demands of war and its consequences called for an “increased vigilance in guarding our liberties.” In 1949, as relations between the two nations teetered on the brink of hostilities, Eisenhower declared that freedom, a revered American ideal, had to be “guarded as the chief heritage of our people, the wellspring of our spiritual and material greatness, and the central target of all enemies…who seek to weaken or destroy the American Republic.” With President Truman’s assertion that the

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United States was responsible for supporting “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” the United States became what Foner describes as the self-proclaimed leader in a “global crusade for freedom against a demonic, ideologically driven antagonist.”\(^{16}\) This conviction gave Americans little choice. In order to defend the security and liberty of the United States they had to be prepared to defend freedom everywhere. In this ideological conflict, any loss of freedom or any threat to the fragile peace increased the risk Americans could soon be denied their freedoms. NSC-68 exemplified this postwar understanding of the geopolitical situation. The United States believed it was “mortally challenged by the Soviet system” because slavery could not tolerate freedom’s existence and had to seek its annihilation.\(^{17}\) As the new decade dawned, Americans faced an enemy both threatening and powerful. Communism was an “evil shadow hanging over the world,” but the threat, the possible destruction of the United States, came also from within the nation itself.\(^{18}\)

The Cold War shifted the nation’s traditional language around freedom from a set of inalienable rights into something larger, more encompassing, but ultimately more ambiguous. Freedom was now, by definition, everything that fascism and communism were not.\(^{19}\) This had profound implications for the United States domestically as the highest levels of government had officially endorsed anti-communism. While Americanism became synonymous with nationalism and loyalty to the state, communism became the symbol of its opposite.\(^{20}\) Stoked by Senator Joseph McCarthy’s rampages, Americans’ long-held fear of communism now threatened traditional American rights including the revered First Amendment’s freedom of speech.\(^{21}\) Consequently, the willingness of McCarthy and his supporters to disregard Americans’ civil liberties and individual freedoms in order to uncover an exaggerated internal communist threat, posed, for Eisenhower, as great a danger to freedom as the Soviet Union’s threat.

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18 Rosteck, ‘The Case of Eisenhower Versus McCarthyism,’ p.75.
20 Rosteck, ‘The Case of Eisenhower Versus McCarthyism,’ p.79.
The Rise of McCarthy(ism)

For political journalist Richard Rovere, Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy was “the most gifted demagogue ever bred on these shores.”\(^{22}\) Rovere reasoned that amongst the American people there had been no bolder seditionist, nor had any politician so swiftly accessed the “dark places of the American mind.”\(^{23}\) Elected to the Senate in November 1946, McCarthy initially was an undistinguished freshman senator, barely heard of outside his home state. But, in February 1950, a single speech brought him swiftly to national prominence. On February 12, or thereabouts, Republicans gather annually to celebrate their first president Abraham Lincoln. These occasions afford Republicans the opportunity to deliver orations linking themselves with their party’s most illustrious figure. In 1950, Lincoln Day was held on 9 February and McCarthy was scheduled to speak in Wheeling, West Virginia. Rarely did McCarthy deliver speeches as they had been drafted. He added, embellished, digressed, improvised, expanded upon arguments or ideas and harangued his audience or his target. McCarthy’s office later issued an “official” text of the speech, which likely was what he had intended to say. Yet, just before he spoke Arthur Herman contends McCarthy scribbled in some changes that would turn out to be the most controversial component of the infamous address.\(^{24}\) His address was broadcast but unrecorded and those who heard it later provided conflicting reports of the speech’s contents. Frank Desmond’s report that appeared in the Wheeling Observer, however, quoted the senator as claiming to “have here in my hand a list of two hundred and five [names] that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party.” According to McCarthy, these men, whose employment was knowingly maintained by the Truman administration, continued to shape State Department policy.\(^{25}\)

Senator McCarthy was not alone in belabouring the communist issue, or in charging Democrats with being soft on communism. The standard elements of the anti-communist crusade included the assumption of guilt by association, politically driven exploitation of Americans’ fears and the belief nonconformist behaviour was disloyal. To this McCarthy added what Jeff Broadwater asserts was a “penchant for wild, spectacular, and almost wholly unsubstantiated

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.9.
The speech itself was a “scissors-and-paste” construction of disparate fragments drawn from a wide range of Republican accusations, including a lengthy section directly lifted from Senator Richard Nixon’s speech to the House of Representatives the previous month.  

McCarthy was not content to hurl the customary indictments that permeated right-wing discourse at the American government. Instead, he accused the Truman administration of being complicit in treason, implied they were even, perhaps, traitors themselves.  

Two days later McCarthy publicised a telegram he had sent the president. The senator openly acknowledged he had accused the State Department of harbouring a “nest of communists and communist sympathizers.” He altered his allegation again, scaling back his outlandish accusation. Now McCarthy claimed he held in his possession “the names of 57 communists” who continued to play a significant role in shaping the nation’s foreign policy.  

In the second week of February 1950, McCarthy made “banner headlines” around the nation. For the next four years he remained, almost without fail, a principal source of front-page news.  

Editorial cartoonist and political commentator Herbert Block coined the adage “McCarthyism” barely a month after McCarthy’s Wheeling speech. Block considered the term a “synonym for the hatefulness of baseless defamation or mudslinging.” For others, such as Fulton Lewis Jr., radio commentator and “official McCarthyite muezzin,” McCarthyism was Americanism.  

Nonetheless, Senator Joseph McCarthy was neither the architect nor the cause of the phenomenon that bears his name. McCarthyism was not a passing aberration, restricted to the senator’s excesses, but rather an exaggeration of a prevailing policy of anti-communism dominant within the United States for decades. Anti-communism was a natural expression of American political culture that had long feared the rise of radicalism within the nation. The notoriety that rapidly followed Senator McCarthy’s ascension to power, however, cannot be attributed solely to his Wheeling speech, Harry Truman, the conviction of Alger Hiss or even the Cold War. Robert Griffith argues the primary reason for McCarthy’s swift rise to political power was due to Republican partisans who,

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The Omitted Defence

The relationship between Eisenhower and McCarthy has been long defined by the deletion of a single paragraph during the 1952 campaign. Eisenhower’s decision to remove a 74-word defence of General George C. Marshall during a campaign stop in Milwaukee has been used to perpetuate the idea Eisenhower lacked the leadership needed to confront McCarthy. On 14

June 1951, McCarthy delivered a scathing 60,000-word attack on General Marshall on the Senate floor. Drafted by historians who believed the United States had consistently underestimated Soviet malice, McCarthy had slandered Marshall’s record.37

During a conversation with his principal speechwriter Emmet Hughes on the content of his Milwaukee speech, Eisenhower asked if they could insert a personal rebuke to the senator, “right in McCarthy’s backyard.”38 Hughes prepared a short paragraph defending Marshall. According to Sherman Adams, Wisconsin Governor Walter Kohler recommended Eisenhower rethink his decision. Kohler disagreed with McCarthy’s methods, but believed as a senator he was entitled to say what he desired and “could behave any way he wanted to.” The drafted defence, moreover, was simply out of context with the rest of the candidate’s speech. Eisenhower agreed to its deletion.39 That would have been the end of it had a mimeographed copy of the speech, including the Marshall paragraph, not already been handed to the press.

Eisenhower may have acquiesced to pressure, yet analysis of the speech he gave in Milwaukee illustrates that he remained in command of his message. Even as he deleted from the address his conviction that the senator’s methods should be “a sobering lesson in the way freedom must not defend itself,”40 Eisenhower rebuked any attack on American freedoms:

As a people we must be wise enough to know this principle: Freedom must defend itself with courage, with care, with force and with fairness. Failing to remember this principle, freedom in destroying its mortal enemy, could destroy itself. Freedom is not only a precious but also a complex privilege...It places its faith in the ultimate ability of the people to think clearly, to choose wisely, to act firmly and compassionately.41

The emotive adjectives reveal a candidate far from reserved in his criticism. The reproach of McCarthy may have been implied, but Eisenhower was engaged in transmitting his particular view of freedom and Americanism to his audience. In their fixation on the deleted paragraph, the press overlooked Eisenhower’s conclusion: “The future of this country belongs to more courageous men.

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It belongs to men who know that freedom’s fight must be forever relentless, uncompromising and fair.”\textsuperscript{42} In Eisenhower’s ideal United States there was no place for men like McCarthy.

Eisenhower’s critics, then and now, argue a public defence of Marshall would have proved his opposition to McCarthy. Yet, the presidential candidate already had defended Marshall and expressed his disapproval of the senator’s methods. During a “Farewell to Denver” press conference in August 1952 Eisenhower was asked about McCarthy’s attack. The \textit{New York Times} reported that Eisenhower “walked into the center of the room to defend vehemently the patriotism and selfless service of his old chief.” Despite what the paper described as Eisenhower’s “obvious dislike” for McCarthy’s methods, the Republican candidate explained that he believed the margin for control of Congress would be tight and thus he would be for any Republican. But, while he sought the election of as many Republicans as was possible, he declared:

I am not going to support anything that smacks to me of un-Americanism – that is un-American in character…it is impossible for me to give…blanket support to anyone who holds views…that would violate my conception of what is decent, right, just, and fair.\textsuperscript{43}

Although the press had named McCarthy in every question dealing with the issue, Eisenhower avoided using the senator’s name. When asked for clarity he testily replied he had advised the press “many, many times” that he would mention no names during the campaign. But, if they could not take his words and “apply it to the facts” then he did not see what more he could do.\textsuperscript{44} Even though Eisenhower did not give the press what they wanted, which was an outright repudiation of the senator, he appears nevertheless to have intended his audience to perceive McCarthy’s actions as in conflict with his ideals of Americanism.

After Eisenhower left Wisconsin, he continued to reference his distaste for “witch-hunts” and “character assassination.”\textsuperscript{45} To a Salt Lake City audience he declared Americans “cannot pretend to defend freedom with weapons suited only to the arsenal of tyrants.”\textsuperscript{46} Eisenhower’s capitulation in Milwaukee may have stung personally but he had been deliberate with his rhetorical choices. Eisenhower agreed with McCarthy on the need to root out alleged

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} W.H. Lawrence, ‘Eisenhower to Back M’Carthy if Named, but Assails Tactics,’ ibid., 23 August 1952, p.1.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
communist subversives in government. His commitment to his vision of Americanism, however, ensured the two men were at odds.

**The Free Right to Knowledge**

As the first Republican president in twenty years, Eisenhower had what columnist Marquis Childs described as a “civic-textbook concept of the co-ordinate powers of the three branches of the federal government.”

Eisenhower’s constitutionalism (examined in chapters three and four) meant he did not believe the president possessed any official means of exerting control over the legislative body. What he could do, however, was persuade Congress and the American people that McCarthy posed a threat to the nation’s freedom. Thus, while he affirmed the right of Congress to undertake “any investigation they see fit,” he suggested those investigations could, in attempting to protect the United States from an external threat, employ methods that damaged the foundations of the nation. And, in a pointed jab toward McCarthy, the president asserted his conviction that it took “statesmanship and real wisdom” to understand this.

Eisenhower continued to stress his belief that McCarthyism threatened American ideals. Speaking at the annual convention of the National Young Republican Organization, the president declared the need for a national policy that observed Americans’ inalienable liberties. They had to remain ever vigilant, “guarding against those enemies who would claim the privilege of freedom in order to destroy freedom itself.” If his implication was not clear, Eisenhower expanded, proclaiming that defending freedom with destructive methods was “suicide – perhaps slow, but certainly sure.” Eisenhower reinforced his message that the problem of internal security could be met “without resort to un-American methods; the rights of the innocent and the reputation of the devoted public servant must be militantly defended.”

The language Eisenhower employed suggests he was not only engaged in a defence of freedom. His refusal to engage in the kind of muckraking that his predecessor and the senator appeared to delight in can be seen as his attempt to protect the ideal presidential persona he had begun to construct.

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During the early years of the Cold War American libraries had been increasingly challenged over the types of materials they carried, putting the First Amendment’s right to freedom of speech under attack. Governmental bodies and special interest groups claimed, however, their intent was to protect Americans from “subversive” or “un-American” perspectives.\textsuperscript{50} McCarthy, who had been targeting the State Department for years, turned his attention toward the United States’ overseas information libraries in early 1953. The official directive for the selection of books instructed librarians to judge materials based primarily on their content. Works by “controversial authors” could be included only if their presence supported the libraries’ objectives and did not enhance the authors prestige. McCarthy’s scrutiny of the agency wrought chaos. Between 19 February and 8 July 1953, the State Department issued a bewildering array of confidential directives concerning what books should be on the libraries’ shelves. One directive even ordered the destruction of a 1946 issue of the \textit{Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science} because it contained an article on the United Nations. Another required the removal of works by authors who had invoked the Fifth Amendment before testifying in front of congressional committees.\textsuperscript{51}

The US’ Assistant Secretary of War during the Second World War John J. McCloy was unhappy with McCarthy’s unrelenting investigations and intimidation of the State Department. Employing the president’s tactic, McCloy delivered a speech to the New York State Chamber of Commerce that did not mention McCarthy directly. Rather, McCloy implied his dissatisfaction as he complained about the prevalent use of innuendo and the constant distortion of facts. Mere days later, McCarthy dispatched his chief counsel Roy Cohn and consultant David G. Schine on a supposed fact-finding mission of the overseas libraries.\textsuperscript{52} The following month and coinciding with the irrational and at times seemingly hysterical removal of books from United States’ overseas libraries for fear they contained pro-communist sentiments, McCloy and Eisenhower were scheduled to speak at Dartmouth College. To columnist Drew Pearson, McCloy recounted later how Eisenhower had come to make his off-the-cuff book burning speech. The president, overhearing McCloy discussing the State Department’s burning of books in overseas libraries, interjected to refute McCloy’s assertion. McCloy replied: “I’m afraid they are, Mr. President. I have the evidence.” According to McCloy, Germans had been

flocking to American libraries because they knew they were getting a cross-section of works. And, as McCloy explained, the value of the destroyed books had been their uncensored and critical nature. Russian libraries, which employed heavy censorship were, on the other hand, virtually empty. In the battle for global influence, Eisenhower cannot have been pleased to hear that McCarthy’s “investigations” had stifled one of their key weapons – the freedom within the United States to hold conflicting and dissenting views.

When Eisenhower addressed the audience he discarded his speech and spoke extemporaneously. Stilted and lacking the polish of a prepared address, Eisenhower asked his audience to “have [the] courage to look at all about you with honest eyes.” Every person there, he was sure, was proud of the United States, but it stood “a long way from perfection.” Beseeching his listeners not to “join the book burners,” Eisenhower renounced ignorance as he asked:

> How will we defeat communism unless we know what it is, and what it teaches, and why does it have such an appeal for men, why are so many people swearing allegiance to it? It is almost a religion, albeit one of the nether regions.

> And we have got to fight it with something better, not try to conceal the thinking of our own people. They are part of America. And even if they think ideas that are contrary to ours, their right to say them, their right to record them, and their right to have them at places where they are accessible to others is unquestioned, or it isn’t America.

The *New York Times* reported Eisenhower’s speech as a “strong and clear-cut” example of his convictions. His off-the-cuff remarks were apparently “pure, premeditated and unadulterated Eisenhower” and were how those who knew him heard them expressed in private. Eisenhower’s Dartmouth remarks had indeed been an example of the president’s beliefs. An individual’s right to the freedom of speech, a principle enshrined within the First Amendment to the Constitution, was what this analysis suggests Eisenhower’s remarks were intended to defend, for without the liberty to express one’s own beliefs, the United States was no better

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55 Ibid.
than the Soviet Union. And, in a battle for the hearts and minds of people everywhere, the strength of these ideals was, for Eisenhower, what would bring Cold War victory.

The press and the anti-McCarthyites rallied around Eisenhower, applauding him for what they hoped had been an open repudiation of McCarthy. His press conference three days later deflated their optimism. Veteran journalist Merriman Smith asked for clarification of whether the president’s remarks might be understood to be “critical of a school of thought represented by Senator McCarthy.” Eisenhower disposed quickly of his standard “I do not talk personalities,” and asserted his conviction that his address at Dartmouth “should stand by itself.”

57 He would, however, elaborate:

I believe the United States is strong enough to expose to the world its differing viewpoints…that is America, and let’s don’t be afraid to show it to the world. Because we believe that form of government, those facts, that kind of thinking, that kind of combination of things, has produced the greatest system of government that the world has produced. That is what we believe; that is what I am talking about...

I am against “book burning” of course – which is, as you well know, an expression to mean suppression of ideas. I just do not believe in suppressing ideas. I believe in dragging them out in the open and taking a look at them.

58 Although the grammatical construction of his response makes for awkward reading, Eisenhower’s appeal to the ideals that made the United States exceptional were a magnification of his discursive strategy. For the president, a positive, strong and idealised rhetorical vision was enough to counter McCarthy’s rampages. David Nichols argues the Dartmouth speech and Eisenhower’s press conference put the president firmly on record as against censorship. Yet, the press, for whom freedom of speech and censorship should have the most value, were unable to see beyond McCarthy’s drama to understand what Eisenhower was ultimately seeking to protect.

Truman’s post-war “Campaign of Truth” had embraced the idea that libraries should be at the forefront of the conflict with the Soviet Union. As an instrument in their ideological conflict with communism, an information campaign would allow the dissemination of what Truman considered “a full and fair picture of American life and the aims and policies of the United

58 Ibid.
States Government.” A library that represented a plurality of views would be the clearest example of the ideals that shaped the United States: pluralism; freedom of inquiry; and faith in the ability of the people to govern themselves.\textsuperscript{60} Pioneering the use of libraries in cultural diplomacy, in 1948 the American Library Association (ALA) adopted a strengthened Library Bill of Rights. The ALA’s credo of intellectual freedom pledged to fight censorship and allow materials in their collections that represented all sides of the argument on controversial issues.\textsuperscript{61} The president of the ALA Robert Downs had written Eisenhower and praised him for his recent Dartmouth speech. Along with a telegram stating that the president’s forthcoming letter (sent via airmail) embodied his “explicit views on censorship,” Downs was invited to read out Eisenhower’s letter at the ALA’s 72\textsuperscript{nd} annual meeting.\textsuperscript{62} The association’s incoming president Miss Flora B. Ludington, a librarian at Mount Holyoke College, delivered the conference’s inaugural address. Ludington held that as a society became freer, the responsibility upon the individual to be informed of the important issues of the day increased also. A library should not take any official position on disputed points of view, nor should it impose thought control. Instead, libraries should “encourage an appreciation of the past and an understanding of the present.”\textsuperscript{63} Although the document’s authors worried that in the current political climate librarians’ fears would defeat their proposed manifesto, the 3,300 librarians present at the conference voted overwhelmingly to adopt \textit{The Freedom to Read}. The manifesto contained a series of seven basic propositions “that placed the defense of the freedom to read uncompromisingly in the public interest.”\textsuperscript{64} Newspapers around the country, including the \textit{Washington Post}, the \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, the \textit{Baltimore Sun}, and the \textit{Norfolk Virginian-Pilot} all printed \textit{The Freedom to Read} in full, with \textit{The New York Times} declaring it amongst “America’s outstanding state papers.” Within two weeks, a dozen major newspapers had written editorials on the conference with only four remarking unfavourably on \textit{The Freedom to Read}.\textsuperscript{65}

Eisenhower’s letter echoed the ALA’s sentiments, declaring that American libraries served as guardians of the nation’s precious liberties. According to the president, this was the right to “freedom of inquiry, freedom of the spoken and written word, [and] freedom of exchange of ideas.” It was upon these clear principles, Eisenhower pronounced, that “democracy depends

\textsuperscript{60} Robbins, ‘The Overseas Libraries Controversy,’ p.28.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p.27.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Robbins, ‘The Overseas Libraries Controversy,’ pp.32-3.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p.34.
for its very life.” The president asserted his belief that smug disdain or chronic fear of new ideas placed American democracy at grave risk. As such:

> We must in these times be intelligently alert not only to fanatic cunning of Communist conspiracy – but also to the grave dangers in meeting fanaticism with ignorance…freedom cannot be served by the devices of the tyrant…And any who act as if freedom’s defenses are to be in suppression and suspicion and fear confess a doctrine that is alien to America.\(^{66}\)

There was no hesitation or uncertainty in Eisenhower’s language. Instead, the president’s criticisms of any attack on freedom intensified. He claimed there existed within the United States “some zealots who – with more wrath than wisdom – would adopt a strangely unintelligent course…freedom cannot be censored into existence.”\(^{67}\) The use of visually descriptive language seems meant to reinforce Eisenhower’s argument that McCarthy was engaged in methods of investigation injurious to the preservation of the ideals of Americanism.

**Defending the American Code**

The article, “Reds in Our Churches,” which appeared in the July 1953 edition of *American Mercury*, appeared to damn American protestant clergymen. Written by J.B. Matthews, McCarthy’s new executive director of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, the article in fact noted that only a “tiny majority” of Protestant clerics endorsed Moscow’s communist doctrine. Yet, Matthews had begun with the sensationalist claim that the “largest group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States today is composed of Protestant clergymen.”\(^{68}\) The three Democrat members of McCarthy’s Senate Committee condemned the article immediately as “a shocking and unwarranted attack against the American clergy.” Such charges as those made by Matthews in the article, including his assertion that “at least 7,000” clergymen served the Soviet conspiracy, could not, the senators argued, be “supported by the facts.”\(^{69}\) Deputy Attorney General William Rogers, Nixon and Emmet Hughes worked frantically behind-the-scenes to encourage a telegram of protest from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in New York in order to allow the president to respond with a sharp critique of the accusations. Once the telegram had been received, the White House moved quickly fearing McCarthy’s intention to fire Matthews would lessen the

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\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) As quoted in Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, p.224.

impact of any presidential response. Hughes’ memoir recounts their frenzied activity, as they awaited Eisenhower’s modifications to the prepared statement. Nixon was dispatched to delay McCarthy and the White House managed to beat the senator to the proverbial punch.\textsuperscript{70} The message within the president’s telegram was aimed beyond its named recipients. Attacks such as the one made against the clergy, Eisenhower declared, betrayed “contempt for the principles of freedom and decency.” Expressed as spiritual platitude, Eisenhower asserted:

\begin{quote}
The churches of America are citadels of our faith in individual freedom and human dignity. This faith is the living source of all our spiritual strength. And this strength is our matchless armor in our world-wide struggle against the forces of godless tyranny and oppression.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

The public nature of the response suggests an intention to emphasise Eisenhower’s earlier statements that continued violations of foundational national ideals threatened the survival of their democracy. In light of the more imposing ideological enemy the United States faced, Eisenhower believed that instead of accusation without substance, Americans should “teach and preach decency and justice.”\textsuperscript{72} He would spend the ensuing months engaged in rhetoric that time and again demonstrated just what his ideal nation prioritised.

Moral values and spiritual strength defined the speeches Eisenhower delivered that dwelt also on the American freedoms he believed were under threat. Speaking at Defiance College, Ohio, Eisenhower envisaged the nation’s heritage as “an indestructible faith in man’s dignity as a child of God… justice, opportunity, and freedom,” its “most precious possession.”\textsuperscript{73} And, upon receiving the Democratic Legacy Award from the B’nai B’rith, the president expanded upon his idea of the “code” that Americans lived by. All men had the right to meet their accuser, the right to speak their mind, and the right to the protection of their speech. “If we are going to continue to be proud that we are Americans,” he argued, “there must be no weakening of the code by which we have lived.” Eisenhower’s nationally broadcast address focused on the

\textsuperscript{70} Hughes, \textit{The Ordeal of Power}, pp.94-6.
positive elements “of the soul and of the spirit” that made him proud to be an American.\textsuperscript{74} Although Eisenhower made no references to McCarthy during these speeches, his reliance on traditional notions of Americanism suggests the president intended to preserve these national ideals through inspiration and persuasion rather than combatively attacking McCarthy.

In contrast to the positive vision of the United States Eisenhower had constructed, McCarthy’s televised speech on 24 November 1953 pronounced the United States a nation that had “allowed itself to be reduced to a state of whining, whimpering appeasement.”\textsuperscript{75} McCarthy’s speech, roundly perceived as a direct challenge to the president, insinuated that Eisenhower, like Truman before him, had allowed American honour to sink and freedoms to be stolen because they were soft on communism. Regardless of cost, McCarthy argued, the United States must regain its honour. For him, this meant the continuation of flinging around allegations of communist subversion in the hope a charge might stick somewhere. McCarthy hijacked Abraham Lincoln (whom Eisenhower considered the embodiment of American idealism) to support his argument that, contrary to the president’s claim, the United States faced the real threat of destruction from internal communist subversion.\textsuperscript{76} During his press conference the following week, Eisenhower agreed the struggle between freedom and communism was “a life and death matter. To my mind it is the struggle of the ages.”\textsuperscript{77} But, unlike McCarthy, who believed the restoration of freedom was worth any cost, Eisenhower reasserted his conviction that the only way to combat internal communist subversion was to “protect the basic rights of loyal American citizens.”\textsuperscript{78}

The Army-McCarthy Hearings

McCarthy’s apparent break with the administration prompted Eisenhower to transition to a new discursive approach. McCarthy’s attack on Americans’ freedom would be combatted with the positive promotion and implementation of his legislative program. The openly fractured Republican Party also was put on notice by the president’s change of focus as he avowed that only those who supported and fought for his program deserved the respect and support of


\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
Americans. Despite Eisenhower’s best efforts to redirect attention toward his proposed legislative program, the fight McCarthy had chosen to pick with the US Army was too sensational to be ignored. In his various investigations into supposed communist infiltration of the Army, McCarthy had stumbled upon the case of Dr. Irving Peress. Drafted into the Army, Peress was a “Fifth Amendment Communist.” Before being honourably discharged, Peress had been promoted. Although his promotion had been required by the doctors’ draft law, throughout the month of February 1954 news headlines were dominated by McCarthy’s cries of “Who promoted Peress?” Forced to acknowledge the issue during his 3 March 1954 press conference, Eisenhower accepted the Army had erred seriously in its handling of the Peress case. In opposing communism, however, Eisenhower asserted his belief that Americans had to be certain they did not ultimately cause their own destruction if “either by design or through carelessness we use methods that do not conform to the American sense of justice and fair play.” Eisenhower’s constitutionalism was evident also as he implied that it was, in fact, Congress’ responsibility to reign in their junior senator. He was, he pronounced, convinced that as the “conscience of America,” the nation’s congressmen would ensure vigilance toward the communist threat without violating American ideals. The president’s remarks seemed to imply that if Congress did not eventually restrain the senator he would be sure Americans knew who to blame.

The press’ insatiable appetite for all things McCarthy appalled Eisenhower. Eisenhower’s frustration was palpable in his letter to William Robinson as he declared that the United States had “sideshows and freaks where we ought to be in the main tent with our attention on the chariot race.” That “chariot race” was their ideological conflict with the Soviet Union. And he waged Cold War with a heavy reliance upon the United States’ foundational principles to persuade the unaligned nations to ally with the Americans rather than embrace Soviet communism.

Eisenhower had long blamed the media for publishing the worst of McCarthy’s excesses. On the first day of the Army-McCarthy hearings, Eisenhower reproached his audience at the American Newspaper Publishers Association, remarking that he believed “most earnestly that

81 Ibid.
the press should give emphasis to the things that unite the American people equal to that it
gives to the things that divide them.” The president, who refused to bow to demands he
denounce McCarthy, seemed convinced that if the media continued to prioritise personal
conflicts over “honest debate on great policy [then] the flame of freedom will flicker low
indeed.” Veteran journalist Walter Lippmann took umbrage at Eisenhower’s speech.
McCarthy’s claims, he argued, were serious, could not be ignored, and should be published.
Tackling Eisenhower’s request for balanced reporting Lippmann contended the balance must
come from the president himself, echoing a *Time* magazine article of the previous month.
Eisenhower spoke with more restraint at the National Editorial Association dinner, yet his
remarks reinforce the strength of his belief the media had a responsibility to the American
people to publish truth and protect the freedom that defined the United States.

An air of expectation surrounded the president as McCarthy’s conflict with the Army
intensified. Eisenhower refused to denounce the senator, but, in Hodgenville, Kentucky, on the
second day of hearings, Eisenhower hit back at critics who deplored his refusal to repudiate
McCarthy. At the shrine of Abraham Lincoln, Eisenhower declared there had been no instance
where Lincoln could be found to have “stood up in public and excoriated another
American…where he…struck the pose of a pseudo-dictator.” The president may have refused
to publicise his feelings about McCarthy, yet an examination of his private remarks leaves little
doubt he was disgusted by the senator’s actions. Eisenhower believed McCarthy had engaged
the pretence of fighting communism in order to “deliberately subvert” those who had sworn to
protect the Constitution and obey the law. This, in Eisenhower’s view, was “the most disloyal
act we have ever had by anyone in the government of the United States.”

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York City,’ 22nd April 1954, Gerhard & Woolley Peters, John T., *The American Presidency Project*,
84 Ibid.
86 Edward T. Folliard, ‘Victory Will Avert “Political Fiddling While World Burns,” He Tells Backers,’ *The
87 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Remarks at the National Editorial Association Dinner,’ 22nd June 1954, Gerhard
88 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Remarks at the Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, Hodgenville, Kentucky,’ 23rd April
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10218.
Speaking at the Columbia University Bicentennial dinner the president came close to an open and direct repudiation of McCarthy. He had embraced the university’s theme of “Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof” to restate his conviction that “truth is the bulwark of freedom, [just] as suppression of truth is the weapon of dictatorship.” To support his argument the president invoked Thomas Jefferson and John Adams as he beseeched his audience to remember:

As we preach freedom to others, so we should practice it among ourselves. Then, strong in our own integrity, we will be continuing the revolutionary march of the Founding Fathers...Through knowledge and understanding, we will drive from the temple of freedom all who seek to establish over us thought control – whether they be agents of a foreign state or demagogues thirsty for personal power and public notice.

Emotionally persuasive and lacking the ambiguity that typically characterised his discourse, Eisenhower portrayed those who utilised what he considered to be un-American methods of investigation as in opposition with the most precious elements of their republic: freedom; liberty; and integrity. Eisenhower implied McCarthy was no patriot as he alleged “the dishonest and the disloyal know exactly what they are attempting to do – perverting and undermining a free society while falsely swearing allegiance to it.”

The New York Times reported the president’s speech was interrupted by “twenty bursts of applause.” The longest and loudest cheer had supposedly come when Eisenhower denounced those “demagogues thirsty for personal power.”

What an exploration of the McCarthy episode illuminates, beyond Eisenhower’s attempt to defend Americans’ freedoms from the senator’s incursions, is the contrast between the language he used in public and his private remarks. Eisenhower’s refusal to “get in the gutter” with McCarthy allowed him to maintain the idealised presidential persona he had constructed.

Americans remained glued to their television sets as they watched McCarthy unwittingly orchestrate his own downfall. The nation finally witnessed for themselves McCarthy’s utter disregard for the civil liberties of his fellow Americans. Combined with his constant challenges

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to the prosecution, increasingly outrageous charges and his confusion of information, not only did the senator’s case collapse, so too did his power.92

Eisenhower disregarded the press’ frenzied coverage of the Army-McCarthy hearings. He stepped easily into the vacuum left by the downfall of the senator as he proclaimed to his audience at the American Legion Convention his administration waged an unrelenting battle against subversion and infiltration. Their battle, however, would protect American liberties by respecting the limits of their constitutional authority. For, the president affirmed, the United States simply was too strong to indulge in “hysterical fear,” which allowed the nation’s foundational principles to be undermined.93 In the end McCarthy, as Eisenhower had predicted he would, had been the cause of his own demise.

**Conclusion: The Greatest Force**

Because of the fixation, then and now, on Dwight Eisenhower’s refusal to openly repudiate Senator Joseph McCarthy, what the president did say in response to the senator’s actions has been often overlooked. As this chapter has shown, Eisenhower’s respect for the dignity of his office precluded the president from engaging in a war of words with a senator. The language Eisenhower used to combat what he perceived as McCarthy’s attack upon Americans’ freedoms emphasised his commitment to the preservation of the principles that defined his ideal nation. In the president’s own words, the values which would carry the United States safely to victory in their battle against communism were “the American belief in decency and justice and progress, and the value of the individual liberty, because of the rights conferred upon each of us, by our Creator.”94 Through an investigation of Eisenhower’s public speeches, press conferences and private correspondence, this chapter has established that in defending the United States and its freedoms from McCarthy’s attacks, Eisenhower allied himself with fundamental and revered icons of the nation.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Misperception of American Intentions: Principle in the Hungarian and Suez Crises

My words apply with special force to the troubled area of the Middle East. We will do all in our power – through the United Nations wherever possible – to prevent resort to violence...We are determined to support and assist any nation in that area which might be subjected to aggression.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 21 April 1956.

But this we know above all: there are some firm principles that cannot bend – they can only break. And we shall not break ours. We believe that integrity of purpose and act is the fact that must, most surely, identify and fortify the free world in its struggle against communism.


Much of Dwight Eisenhower’s foreign policy decision-making was driven by his dismay at what he considered the distorted perception of the United States’ international intentions. In 1946, faced with a decolonising world, American officials had acknowledged the vast uphill battle Washington faced in challenging the perception of the United States as an imperialist nation.¹ Ten years later, two crises that occurred in the final months of Eisenhower’s first term provided the president with the opportunity to refute successful Soviet propaganda and prove his nation’s anti-imperialist credentials. Hungarian discontent with Soviet rule erupted in late October 1956. Although his actions exposed the fatal flaw in the Republican Party’s liberation policy, Eisenhower’s decision to abstain from intervention enabled the president to exploit the image of a brutal, imperialist Soviet Union intent on crushing Hungarians’ right to self-determination. An issue that had been simmering for months, however, overshadowed the uprising. On 29 October, in collusion with Britain and France, Israel invaded Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula in retaliation for Egypt’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal. Outraged by his allies’ deceit and naked aggression against Egypt, Eisenhower was nevertheless in a difficult position for he believed Gamal Abdel Nasser was at the core of many of the region’s problems. Eisenhower’s principled response to the Suez Canal crisis strengthened the United States’ international prestige for he broke publicly with his allies, refusing to support an overtly imperialist reaction. The president’s actions were shaped by the United States’ traditional, if complicated, history of belief in anti-colonialism, support for the right of self-determination

and resistance to tyrannical, totalitarian rule. The battle for the hearts and minds that dominated Eisenhower’s thinking about the Cold War required the president respond based on historic national ideals. The policies that guided his administration are re-examined here within the context of Eisenhower’s attempts to create the ideal American identity in the eyes of the developing world.

This chapter opens with a succinct exploration of the complicated relationship the United States has with the linked principles of self-determination and anti-colonialism. The problematic nature of its commitment to these ideals is too vast to properly delve into, yet its inclusion allows for an understanding of Eisenhower’s engagement with the nation’s traditional myths. A brief examination of the lead up to the Canal crisis provides the analysis with historic context and acknowledges also the geopolitical realities of the Cold War. The chapter then shifts focus to the Hungarian uprising and the problems inherent with Republicans’ liberation policy. With the two crises occurring concurrently, the investigation of Eisenhower’s responses merges and incorporates also his re-election campaign. Throughout this chapter Eisenhower’s battle for international influence features prominently. Faced with the arduous task of refuting Soviet propaganda that accused the United States of imperialist ambitions, Eisenhower’s refusal to side with his allies in their vendetta against the Egyptian president, or to allow himself to be drawn into armed conflict over Hungary, was an attempt to demonstrate his nation’s anti-imperialist credentials. The emphasis on principle that guided his decision-making is considered part of Eisenhower’s intention to curry favour with newly independent neutral nations, sceptical of the United States’ international intentions. Plentifully covered in the scholarship already are the condemnations and defence of Eisenhower’s actions. This chapter engages with neither and instead shifts the perspective to the president’s engagement with traditional American ideals.

**Anti-Imperialism and the Right of Self-Determination**

Brad Simpson defines the way Americans and their leaders perceive the concept of self-determination to be “peculiarly American.” Self-determination is not, of course, the sole domain of the United States. Nevertheless, what is distinctive is the way Americans identify with this principle as part of the narrative of American exceptionalism. United States

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governments, however, have been inconsistent supporters of this ideal in practice. They have sought to simultaneously embrace a people’s right to self-determination at the same time as they seek to thwart it (such as in Vietnam and Guatemala, covered briefly in chapter five); they have demanded it for some while condemning the excesses committed by others in their pursuit of the same right. The linked principles of self-determination and anti-imperialism thus occupy a complicated and ambiguous place in the history of American foreign relations.

The first assertion of humanity’s right to national and democratic self-determination, the revolt of the American colonists, was concerned not only to throw off the yoke of foreign domination, but also to ensure the will of the people was supreme. The creation of the independent United States of America established a new standard of legitimacy: the “consent” of a sovereign people to their own government. In 1796, George Washington declared his best wishes were “irresistibly excited” whenever any oppressed nation unfurled the banner of freedom. With the American Revolution the original example of the modern principle of self-determination, all American presidents have unfailingly expressed their sympathy for this idealised national principle. According to Gerlof Horman, because the United States was born during revolt any form of imperialism represents “a flagrant abuse of the fundamental principles upon which the government of the United States was based and constituted a moral wrong and a negation of the American ethos.” In his message to Congress on 2 December 1850, President Millard Fillmore declared the principle of self-determination belonged to all nations. If the United States was to claim this right for itself and others, the nation ought not to intervene in the sovereign affairs of other nations. Non-intervention became the United States’ official policy.

As the first “idealists,” American patriots’ self-understanding became the foundation for the American creed. Peter Onuf describes this creed as an “inspiring conception of the new nation’s exalted role in world history.” Memorably articulated by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg

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6 Unterberger, ‘The United States and National Self-Determination,’ p.927.
8 Unterberger, ‘The United States and National Self-Determination,’ p.928.
Address, this creedal nationalism identified the nation with the foundational ideals of liberty, equality and union. In the midst of civil war, Lincoln’s creed contrasted with his image of secession as the embodiment of regressive imperial ambitions. The essence of Lincoln’s American exceptionalism was a great democratic nation crafted in opposition to empire and tyranny wherever it appeared in the world.\(^5\) Thus, when William McKinley chose to annex the Philippines in 1898, anti-imperialists argued this went against everything the United States had championed: liberty; democracy; equality; and self-government.\(^6\)

For Woodrow Wilson, the First World War represented an affront to the principles of democracy and self-determination. Wilson argued the United States must enter the war in order that: “the world…be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty.”\(^7\) In fact, Betty Unterberger argues Wilson’s concept of self-determination can be understood only in the context of its historic evolution in the American experience. At the core of Wilson’s understanding, self-determination was the moral necessity for government by consent of the governed. His presidential rhetoric echoed Lincoln’s belief in “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” He embraced also the assertion in the Virginia Bill of Rights that “all power is vested in and consequently derived from the people.” For Wilson, self-determination was simply another word for popular sovereignty: “\textit{vox populi was vox dei}.”\(^8\) Yet, after the signing of the “self-determining” Atlantic Charter in the midst of the Second World War, Washington endeavoured to narrow the scope of self-determination even as it embraced the ideal as a basic principle of the desired global order. American foreign policy displayed a marked ambivalence towards increased demand for self-determination, especially when the results appeared to strengthen the influence of the Soviet Union.\(^9\) In fact, among the most difficult foreign policy issues confronting the nation in the aftermath of the Second World War was the issue of colonialism and the rapidly collapsing imperial structures.

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\(^5\) Ibid., pp.23 & 40.


\(^8\) Unterberger, ‘The United States and National Self-Determination,’ pp.926, 929-30 & 933.

In February 1947, US intelligence analysts revealed the findings of their exhaustive study of anti-American communist propaganda: The Soviet Union’s radio broadcasts and printed materials shouted that US policymakers were “supporting and encouraging reactionary forces in all parts of the world” in order to achieve economic and political hegemony. The promotion of democratic capitalism required Washington to successfully refute Soviet accusations of their imperialist intentions. Absent a concerted American effort to counter Soviet propaganda, the analysts concluded it an impossible task to convince the developing world of the United States’ commitment to anti-imperialism. As an ardent supporter of psychological warfare, President Dwight Eisenhower did not restrict himself to what he considered simple propaganda. As Kenneth Osgood asserts, for Eisenhower the battle for the “minds and wills of men” was the Cold War’s principal battleground.

American policy sought an increased national prestige in the Middle East. Eisenhower developed a set of policy goals that reflected his Cold War aims: promoting regional stability; guaranteeing flow of oil to western Europe; supporting Arab nationalism and Israeli independence; improved relations with the Arab states; filling the vacuum left by the fading influence of the imperial powers while disavowing colonialism and maintaining the Western alliance and avoiding an arms race between Arab nations and Israel. At the heart of his policy, however, was his desire to convince the unaligned nations within this vital region to accept that the United States had no imperial ambitions. For Eisenhower, it was crucial to stop the Soviet Union from gaining a foothold in any Middle Eastern country.

**Crisis: The Canal, The Allies and The Use of Force**

Compelled by the Khedive Ismail’s economic mismanagement, in 1875 the Egyptians sold their share in the Suez Canal Company to Britain. Egypt’s economic sovereignty was compromised further by the sale of 15 percent of the company’s profits to France. And, in September 1882, Britain snatched the country’s political and economic institutions from the decaying Ottoman Empire. The British maintained control of the vital waterway for decades, able to deny Axis forces in North Africa easy access to Middle Eastern oil fields and facilitate

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15 Belmonte, ‘Promoting American Anti-Imperialism in the Early Cold War,’ p.188.
16 Kenneth A. Osgood, ‘Form before Substance: Eisenhower’ Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy,’ *Diplomatic History*, 24/3, 2000, p.405.
19 Ibid., p.18.
crucial communications between the allies during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{20} The British Empire, however, fell victim to the forces of decolonisation that followed its war victory and Egypt seized the opportunity to press for the removal of any remnants of imperialism. Even as their empire crumbled, Suez remained vital to Britain. To lose control of the Canal would be proof the United Kingdom no longer possessed its previous imperial power. And, crucially, nearly two-thirds of Britain’s oil supply reached them via the Canal. In 1955, nearly fifteen thousand British ships passed through the waterway. Any disruption would be certain to bring Britain to its knees.\textsuperscript{21}

At the same time, the Egyptian government led by Gamal Abdel Nasser was determined to undertake rapid national development, of which the Aswan Dam project was its ambitious undertaking. Egypt required substantial foreign investment for it to succeed. Although the United States, Britain and the World Bank proposed a joint offer of finance, Nasser’s apparent regional ambitions jeopardised the aid proposal. The announcement on 27 September 1955 that Egypt had signed a deal to purchase Czech-made arms alarmed the Eisenhower administration. By mid-March 1956, Eisenhower remarked to the State Department that he believed it would be prudent to seek out a rival to Nasser the United States could support. Eisenhower’s preferred choice was King Saud of Saudi Arabia, home to Islam’s holiest sites.\textsuperscript{22} When Nasser recognised Red China in May 1956, Washington feared Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen would soon follow.\textsuperscript{23} Nasser’s public denouncement of British and French opposition to nationalist movements in Cyprus further impelled the Americans to rethink their offer of finance.\textsuperscript{24} Crucially, however, the Aswan Dam project was jeopardised by profound domestic opposition. The Czech deal was considered by a number of Congressmen to signify Egypt’s communist allegiance. If Congress approved money for the project they would open themselves up to charges of being soft on communism.\textsuperscript{25} In the second week of July 1956, Eisenhower revealed


\bibitem{23} Neff, \textit{Warriors at Suez}, p.253.


\bibitem{25} As examined in the previous chapter, in the 1950s Americans were gripped by the excesses of McCarthyism. Any charge of being soft on communism opened one up to the kinds of slanderous accusations that made Joseph McCarthy such a dangerous politician.
his decision to withdraw the offer of aid for the Aswan Dam during meetings with the National Security Council at Camp David. The United States formally withdrew their offer of finance on 19 July 1956. Although the decision was Eisenhower’s, it was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who was sharply criticised for what was considered an abrupt, fickle policy shift.\(^{26}\) Eugene Black, president of the World Bank, had reportedly warned Dulles “all hell would break loose” if the Americans went ahead and withdrew their offer of aid for the Aswan Dam.\(^{27}\)

With the erosion of their traditional political influence, Britain and France blamed Nasser for their troubles in the Middle East. Nasser, however, was determined to remove any vestige of colonial influence from within Egypt. In a blistering speech aimed directly at the Western powers on 26 July, Nasser formally nationalised the Suez Canal Company. An entirely legal move, nationalisation would enable Nasser to fund his ambitious Aswan Dam project with profits from the Canal Company. The British and the French seized on Nasser's action, using it as the pretext for an impending confrontation with deep historical roots.\(^{28}\) US Deputy Under-Secretary of State Robert Murphy was sent immediately to London to confer with Whitehall. Murphy’s private meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Eden prompted him to send an urgent cable to the president. The British government saw no alternative to an “inevitable” military action. They envisaged the preparations to remove Nasser would require six weeks. Eden was, Murphy reported, “determined to use force.”\(^{29}\) Eisenhower declared that if Britain engaged in an unwarranted use of force, then:

> we must consider what the end could be. It might well be to array the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us...The President said we must let the British know how gravely we view this matter, what an error we think their decision is.\(^{30}\)

Eisenhower wrote to Eden that day to express the same opinion he had articulated during his earlier presidential meeting. He was unable to “over-emphasize the strength of my conviction”


\(^{28}\) Kingsseed, *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*, p.44.


that alternate options be fully explored before this decision was taken. The president’s letter reaffirms his most pressing concern was the negative publicity the British were likely to receive within the developing world. Should the British act in this way Eisenhower considered the result would be disastrous – for the British, but also for the United States and Eisenhower’s Cold War aspirations.\textsuperscript{31}

For Eden, Nasser was a threat to Britain’s interests and influence in the region. The only way to remove the threat was through the use of force. Eisenhower, who considered Eden to be exaggerating Nasser’s power, maintained that the only proper way to resolve the tension that stemmed from the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company was through peaceful means.\textsuperscript{32}

The press was quick to seek the president’s opinion on whether a peaceful resolution was really possible in the face of increasing international tensions. Eisenhower seized the opportunity to express the path his administration would take. He could not see how force could be considered a wise solution, hoped to see the situation resolved through peaceful means and believed that “good sense will prevail.”\textsuperscript{33}

Focused on the Suez situation during a presidential meeting, Eisenhower voiced his concern over the possible consequences if Nasser maintained Canal operations and Britain resorted to force. Dulles stressed how crucial it was they not mislead their allies into believing the United States would willingly support “any kind of precipitous action they may take.”\textsuperscript{34} Eisenhower allowed for no misunderstanding of his intentions in a letter to Eden on 2 September. The United States would not support Britain’s use of force to resolve the dispute. Eisenhower feared any use of force by their allies would unite “the peoples of the Near East and of North Africa...against the West to a degree which, I fear, could not be overcome in a generation and, perhaps, not even in a century.”\textsuperscript{35} While Eisenhower stood with Eden over the need to “deflate the ambitious pretensions of Nasser,” the president reaffirmed less than a week later his apprehension that without probable cause any use of force would itself force the rest of the Arab world to support Egypt and inflate Nasser’s power and popularity.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{32} Bowie, ‘Eisenhower, Dulles and the Suez Crisis,’ p.196.


\textsuperscript{34} Memorandum for the Record, 12th August 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 17, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, 1953-1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (hereafter DDELI).


As Nasser maintained efficient control of the Suez Canal, on 2 August 1956 the United States, Britain and France released a joint statement inviting states that used the Canal regularly to meet in London for a conference. Although the British and French were unenthusiastic about the conference, they were for the moment prepared to follow the United States’ lead. Two days later, the Egyptian ambassador in Washington reported no Egyptian representative would attend. The 22 nations in attendance considered two possible options. On 21 August, eighteen nations agreed to the American suggestion that a public international authority be established to regulate Canal usage. Although the majority of participants were convinced Nasser would reject the proposal, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies headed a delegation to Cairo to seek acceptance from the Egyptians. British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd warned Dulles his government would resort to force if Egypt did not agree to the demand by 10 September. When it became clear Menzies’ diplomatic mission had been unsuccessful, Eisenhower seemed to blame the Egyptian president for the lack of a peaceful solution. Asked directly during a press conference the day after Eden’s deadline if the US would back the British and French in the event they used force, Eisenhower deflected, turning the responsibility to declare war over to Congress. Although the president allowed for the possibility of American support if Egypt acted aggressively and disrupted the use of the Canal, he avowed the United States would not “be a party to aggression” if it was possible to avoid it. Reflecting on the “long and intricate” history of the Suez affair, Eisenhower’s diary notes of the same day reflect his uncertainty over the possibility of resolving the issue peacefully. At this stage, Eisenhower was not sure even he could predict what would happen.

Nineteen September, 1956, was intended initially to mark the official commencement of Eisenhower’s re-election campaign. His planned television speech was altered, however, to focus instead on the crisis brewing over the Suez Canal. The address alluded to his privately expressed uncertainty whether the United States could facilitate a resolution that ensured “justice and fairness to all.” The president was meant to be speaking to the American people, pleading his case for a second term. What he delivered was a plea for alliances within the developing world:

We witness today, across a vast middle-area of our earth, an historic struggle by its peoples for freedom – freedom from foreign rule or freedom from domestic poverty. In this great belt, from the deserts of Northern Africa across to the islands of the South Pacific, there live 800 million persons – one third of the world's population. And through all these lands, Communist voices cry out to all men – hate the West. We act in this area by a few clear principles. We respect the right of all peoples, able and ready to govern themselves, to be free to do so. We realize that the future role of the West, with all these peoples, must ultimately be one not of rule – but of partnership. And we know that this role will require us – for the sake of the peace of the world – strive to help these struggling peoples to rise from poverty and need…And we must practice this truth: the honor and strength of our own national life offer the clearest proof of the kind of world and the kind of peace in which we believe.40

Eisenhower declared his administration’s commitment to a US foreign policy that idealised what he considered the nation’s historic principles of anti-imperialism and the right of a people to self-determination. Eisenhower’s language suggests his speech was meant to distance the United States from their imperialist allies in the eyes of the developing world. He made no direct reference to the Soviet Union or their ideological battle for influence, yet his assertion that the American government desired respect, partnership and assistance amongst all peoples should nonetheless be considered an appeal for influence and allies among the neutral nations.

The British press accused the Americans of vacillating over the issue of the Suez Canal. Eisenhower refuted the accusation. The president argued his position had been firm from the beginning, guided by four principles. These four principles, the same as those expressed within the 18-power agreement, respected Egyptian sovereignty, sought the efficient operation of the waterway, removed politics from the question of operation and gave fair and increasing profits to Egypt. “Those are the principles,” the president declared, “that have guided us throughout.”41

Before taking questions in the televised “The People ask the President,” Eisenhower’s declaration of the gratifying progress made in the Suez dispute provided another opportunity for him to emphasise the United States’ anti-imperial credentials. Contradicting his privately expressed uncertainty, the president declared his conviction that he had been certain from the

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beginning that negotiation could resolve the problem. Eisenhower defined the American agenda as peace based on justice, which required fairness for their Western allies but just as importantly to “all the Arab world.” The “one long step forward” towards peace would quickly become two big steps backward.42

Eisenhower’s attention was temporarily diverted from Egypt in the middle of October by evidence the Israelis were mobilising their armed forces. Unaware of their allies’ collusion, the administration concluded that Israel was preparing for a large-scale attack on Jordan. Dictating a memorandum on 15 October, Eisenhower insisted Dulles warn the Israeli ambassador that “no considerations of partisan politics will keep this government from pursuing a course dictated by justice and international decency in the circumstances, and that it will remain true to its pledges under the United Nations.” Convinced Israel was taking advantage of the upcoming presidential election to count on American acquiescence in the face of Israeli aggression, Eisenhower advised Dulles also to point out David Ben Gurion’s “grave mistake” if he believed that “winning a domestic election is as important to us as preserving and protecting the interests of the United Nations and other nations of the free world in that region.” Dulles was further tasked to warn Ben Gurion that even if Israel scored an immediate advantage, their aggressive actions could bring only disaster to Israel. The most important aspect of the message Eisenhower wanted Ben Gurion to receive, however, was his unambiguous assertion that Israel’s friends would not be able to do anything to help if Israel chose to go down this path.43

The Hungarian Uprising: Discontent Boils Over

For Eisenhower, Cold War victory would be achieved through the cultivation of influence and alliances throughout the developing world. In 1952, however, the Republican Party’s election platform had placed the liberation of the Soviet satellite states at the forefront. Eisenhower stood at the head of a political party that excoriated the Truman administration for having “abandoned friendly nations such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Czechoslovakia to fend for themselves against the Communist aggression which soon swallowed them.”44

43 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Memorandum for the Record,’ 15th October 1956, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 8, DDEL.
Eisenhower had been a cautious adopter of the Republicans’ liberation policy, always prefacing his calls for liberation with some variation of the words “by peaceful means only.” As the president’s special assistant for psychological warfare strategy, C.D. Jackson sought the immediate implementation of an aggressive rollback of communism. Sceptical of the practicality of Jackson’s plan, Eisenhower was still deliberating when in June 1953 East Germans protested against Soviet rule. Swift suppression by Soviet troops shattered any notion of the feasibility of aggressive rollback. Eisenhower was unwilling to risk the direct confrontation that stronger action against the Soviets likely would have involved.

The US Legation in Budapest outlined their psychological warfare goals in the month following Eisenhower’s inauguration. Hungarian dissatisfaction with Soviet domination was strong and the Legation intended to cultivate this spirit of opposition. Although they would continue to stoke the fires of discontent, the Legation nonetheless concluded that no resistance movement or active opposition they could encourage would be enough to overthrow the present regime. Two years later, but eighteen months before the Hungarian people rose up in rebellion against Soviet oppression, a National Intelligence Estimate reported that Hungary, of all the Soviet satellites, expressed “the most consistent symptoms of political disharmony, economic dislocation, and popular unrest.” The NIE report concluded, however, that the current regime maintained a firm grip on power.

On 21 October 1956, students at the University of Szeged and the Technical University in Budapest defied authorities and re-established, for the first time since 1948, the independent organisation known as the Association of Hungarian University Students (MEFESZ). Two days later, in an act that ignited the Hungarian uprising, thousands of young Hungarians walked to the statue of Jozef Bem. A revered Polish General, Bem had fought for Hungarian independence in 1848. For the students, Bem’s statue offered an opportunity to show solidarity with the current Polish struggle in a public way. Although they soon yielded, communist party leaders initially forbade the planned demonstration. The protest, however, rapidly turned

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46 Ibid., p.279.
into a mass demonstration against communist rule.\(^{49}\) The resultant uprising, a spontaneous eruption of feeling, spread from Budapest to the rest of Hungary in a matter of days. Hungarians demanded their democratic freedoms and the right to national independence. Theirs was the first modern anti-totalitarian revolution in Europe.\(^{50}\)

The Hungarian revolt took the Eisenhower administration by surprise. The result was what Gunter Bischof argues were over-cautious and passive actions. In spite of years of liberation propaganda, no concrete plan of action had been developed for an American response to crisis within the Soviet bloc.\(^{51}\) On the same night as the demonstrations in Kossuth Square, Budapest, Eisenhower addressed the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in Washington, DC. Focused on the recent success of the Polish uprising, Eisenhower’s speech was an attempt to reshape the imperialist debate. The truth, Eisenhower proclaimed, was marked by a false façade of material accomplishment. The image of communism’s advantages was depicted by the president as illusory – no possible substitute for freedom and independence. Faced with discontent, unrest, riots and demonstrations, the Soviets were facing now the “fruits of imperialism.” The president declared the United States would never compromise on the fundamental principle that all people, “capable of self-government” could rightfully determine their own government. Yet, the liberation of the Hungarian people had to be postponed if force made protest “suicidal.”\(^{52}\) Notable for the lack of provocative remarks about the Soviet Union, Eisenhower’s speech made no reference to any forthcoming American military assistance to the rebels. Concerned about the extreme measures the Kremlin might take to suppress the uprising, the Eisenhower administration acted with supreme caution.\(^{53}\) Already the argument against the use of force was overwhelming. Military intervention would violate either Austrian neutrality, or Czechoslovakian or Yugoslavian sovereignty. And with the British and French consumed by the Suez crisis their participation was unlikely.\(^{54}\) As Eisenhower’s press secretary

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\(^{49}\) Janos M. Rainer, ‘The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Causes, Aims, and Course of Events,’ in (eds.) Christopher Adam et al., The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Hungarian and Canadian Perspectives, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 2010, p.18. Rainer’s chapter offers a more detailed account of the events leading up, and the uprising itself than is detailed here.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p.12.


\(^{54}\) Kovrig, The Myth of Liberation, p.189.
James Hagerty put it in 1968, “to be perfectly practical about it, the United States could do little about Hungary unless it wanted to go to war.”\(^{55}\) And for a president bent on achieving a just and permanent international peace – a theme developed in the following chapter, war was the last thing Eisenhower wanted.

**Clashing Priorities: Deceit at Suez and Repression in Hungary Amidst a Campaign for Re-election**

In April 1956, Eisenhower declared that he would focus on principle during his upcoming re-election campaign. According to the president, principle formed the only solid foundation for a nation’s policies and practices. Any actions that were not based on principle retreated to “expediency.”\(^ {56}\) And for the president, expediency was a betrayal of the trust the American people had placed in him. Just as he had conducted his presidency, his campaign would be “dedicated and inspired by principles, by political integrity.”\(^ {57}\) The two concurrent international crises provided Eisenhower an ideal platform upon which to prove his dedication to principles which he considered had defined his presidency thus far. Eisenhower’s electioneering has been analysed already in chapter one. With the rapidly unfolding events in Suez and Hungary occurring in the final weeks of the campaign, the election comprises part of this analysis also.

Eisenhower spent the better part of 24 October participating in the banal but nationally broadcast campaign program, “The Women Ask the President.” Eisenhower’s allies met in secret to sign the Sèvres Protocol, formalising their intention to topple Nasser. In signing the document, Israel pledged to open hostilities against Egypt with a “real act of war.” Thus, the Israeli invasion of the Sinai Peninsula was set for 29 October. Thirty-six hours after the invasion, the RAF would attack Egyptian airfields.\(^ {58}\) The same day Egypt, Syria and Jordan announced publicly their adoption of a military agreement aimed at the “joint defense of the Arab front under a unified command to repulse any attack launched at any of the three states.”

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\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p.363.
And, in response to Hungarian protests, the Soviet Union ordered ten thousand troops along with tanks, artillery and armoured cars into Budapest.\footnote{Nichols, \textit{Eisenhower 1956}, pp.188-9.}

In the middle of a day of plane travel, rapid pit stops and short speeches, Eisenhower learned of the Israeli invasion. His final stop was Byrd Field airport in Richmond, Virginia. In a speech emphasising honesty, integrity and his administration’s unending search for peace, the events in the Middle East blended easily into Eisenhower’s language. He insisted that even as fear and hatred divided nations, the United States “would be, hopes to be, and seeks to be, a friend” to all nations. Consistent with his presidential peace rhetoric, Eisenhower offered a solemn pledge to work towards a just and lasting peace.\footnote{Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Address at Byrd Field, Richmond, Virginia,’ 29\textsuperscript{th} October 1956, Gerhard & Woolley Peters, John T., \url{http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10683}.} Back in Washington, Eisenhower met with members of his administration. The notes taken by General Goodpaster provide an image of a president determined to stake his reputation and the reputation of the nation on a principled approach to the crisis. Eisenhower refused to consider any retreat from their commitment to the Tripartite Agreement.\footnote{Signed by the United States, Britain and France on 25 May 1950, the Tripartite Agreement was intended to halt an arms race within the Middle East. The three powers pledge to aid any regional victim of aggression yet none of the Middle East nations were signatories.} The president asked his press secretary James Hagerty whether it might even be possible to make a statement “letting the information out that we are considering what steps we could take to support Egypt and redeem our pledge in this matter – including consideration of calling Congress back.” Even if their commitment to the agreement meant the United States had to break publicly with its traditional allies, Eisenhower could see no other option for they had to “make good on our pledge.” Goodpaster’s notes indicated also Eisenhower’s conviction that impending British and French intervention was a foregone conclusion. Already Eisenhower had decided his allies would receive no American support. The president could not conceive of any positive result for the United States if, by aiding their allies, it could be “justly said that we are a nation without honor.” Eisenhower was not enthused about the prospect of coming to Egypt’s aid, but in order that their actions be based on principle, there was no other option.\footnote{Noring (ed.), \textit{FRUS}, no.411.}

A flurry of intercontinental messages followed the Israeli invasion as Eisenhower cabled the British and French leaders. Upon learning the French considered the Tripartite Agreement void, the president sought Eden’s views. Eisenhower reasserted his intention to uphold the agreement he considered represented the “policies and determination of our three governments.” Indeed,
many of the United States’ actions in the Middle East had been based upon the agreement. Eden sided with the French. Unsatisfied with this response, Eisenhower maintained he saw no path through which he could violate the pledged word of the United States. Eisenhower’s telephone conversations with Dulles, in the midst of these transatlantic missives, were telling of his attitude. The president discussed the text of his proposed statement meant to reaffirm their pledge to honour the spirit of the Tripartite Agreement. Eisenhower did not believe either country would pay attention to it, but he was convinced it had to be sent in order to establish that the United States had played no part in the deception. Forty minutes later, Eisenhower notified Dulles that he wanted Eden to be made fully aware that “we are a Government of honor, & we stick by it.”

With less than one week before Americans voted Eisenhower distanced himself from his campaign. Characteristic of his desire to be seen as the president of all Americans (a theme developed in chapter one), Eisenhower declared current events too momentous to be mired in partisanship. His report to the nation was brief and evenly divided between eastern Europe and the Middle East. Richard Gregg, who has analysed this speech in depth, asserts the first half, the portion dedicated to Hungary, used language entirely in keeping with American Cold War ideology. The section devoted to the Suez Canal crisis, however, contains only a fleeting reference to Russia and makes no mention of the adversarial relationship between the superpowers. Ostensibly intended as a report to the American people, Eisenhower’s speech was directed instead towards an international audience, consistent with his inclination to use these crises to further his Cold War goals.

In a bid to draw the neutral nations into the United States’ orbit of influence, Eisenhower contrasted the United States’ historic support for freedom, independence, and self-determination with the Soviets’ forceful imposition of Kremlin-controlled governments on the satellite states. Eisenhower’s message was unmistakable: The United States’ long history of anti-imperialism stood in stark contrast to the current display of repressive Soviet imperialism.

65 ‘Phone Calls: President Eisenhower to Secretary Dulles,’ 30th October 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 18, DDEL.
67 Ibid., p.176.
Yet, Hungary was rising anew from their struggle to “know full and free nationhood.” The United States was, its president proclaimed, ready to provide its assistance. But, perhaps conscious the Soviets may try to twist his words, Eisenhower asserted:

> We have also publicly declared that we do not demand of these governments their adoption of any particular form of society as a condition upon our economic assistance. Our one concern is that they be free – for their sake, and for freedom’s sake.\(^6\)

What often has been condemned as giving a green light to the Kremlin, Eisenhower’s assertion the United States acted with “no ulterior purpose” in their support for the Hungarian uprising was part of his propaganda offensive. Aware many neutral nations still believed his nation possessed imperial ambitions, Eisenhower’s language was designed to reassure as he noted that the United States “see these peoples as friends, and we wish simply that they be friends who are free.”

The two sections of the speech were drawn together by Eisenhower’s repetition of the United States’ commitment to principled action in both crises. The president had abstained from the use of force, seeking instead to resolve the issues peacefully. The use of force in Hungary would “have been contrary both to the best interests of the Eastern European peoples and to the abiding principles of the United Nations.” For Suez, the president declared his belief that applying force to bring about a resolution was not a “wise or proper instrument” when confronted with international disputes. The prominence Eisenhower gave to his decision to refuse to apply force in either crisis highlights his preparedness to distance the United States from its allies’ actions in Egypt. His remarks enabled him also to contrast his actions with those of the Soviets in Hungary.

Eisenhower had to balance his speech to avoid irretrievably damaging important national alliances, and his speech was peppered with justifications for his allies’ actions along with a subtle attempt to cast blame towards Nasser. But, intent on keeping Arab nations on side, as well as other neutral nations, his condemnation of Nasser was limited to statements that acknowledged his allies had been “subjected to grave and repeated provocations.” Eisenhower adamantly

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asserted that the US had been neither consulted nor informed of the actions of its allies. In fact, his displeasure over the damage triggered by the invasion of Egypt was articulated:

The present fact, nonetheless, seems clear: the action taken can scarcely be reconciled with the principles and purposes of the United Nations to which we have all subscribed. And, beyond this, we are forced to doubt that resort to force and war will for long serve the permanent interest of the attacking nations.69

Although the British and French had vetoed the American resolution at the UN Security Council, Eisenhower assured his audience the United States remained committed to seeking a peaceful resolution to the situation. By taking the matter to the General Assembly, the president gave an implicit acknowledgment that the great powers no longer had the right to behave at will, without consequences. Injustices had been suffered on all sides (another attempt to minimise his allies’ actions), but the United States would be guided by clear principles. The moral high ground was Eisenhower’s, as he proclaimed there “can be no peace – without law. And there can be no law – if we were to invoke one code of international conduct for those who oppose us – and another for our friends.” Eisenhower declared the United States honoured the “hopes of all men for a world in which peace will truly and justly reign.”70 As Richard Gregg contends, a speech based on idealism, the upholding of principle, law and international commitments was Eisenhower’s attempt to secure peace and alliances in a world of realpolitik.71 The press response to Eisenhower’s report was mixed, appearing to split along partisan lines, a reminder that even with his caveat that he had spoken as president not candidate the close proximity of the upcoming vote turned everything political. 72

Eisenhower delivered his final campaign address at Convention Hall in Philadelphia, an ideal location for a speech that drew on American founding narratives to justify his response to the crises and which continued his refutation of charges of imperialism. Standing in the place “where our forefathers defined the principles by which our nation was born,” Eisenhower spoke of events that had sounded louder and more urgent than the din of the nation’s domestic debate. With brutal repression in Hungary and the “whine of jet-bombers over the deserts of Egypt” the president remained fixed firmly on the past to define his way forward. He recalled that the

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
Declaration of Independence required they “state plainly the purposes we seek, the principles we hold.” He referred also to Richard Henry Lee’s assertion in 1776 that Europe had demanded of the fledgling nation a living example of freedom. These examples represented Eisenhower’s intention to drive home the difference between his nation, the imperialism that defined Soviet rule and the actions of the British and French. With the eyes of the world now fixed upon the United States, Eisenhower drew upon the Founding Fathers who he claimed had understood “the firm ground on which our beliefs must stand…even as each man is his brother’s keeper, no man is another’s master.” Bound by laws that declared the eternal equality of men, the United States could claim the trust of hundreds of millions of the world’s peoples “only as we ourselves hold high the banner of justice for all.” As he directed his comments towards the emergent nations, Eisenhower remained engaged in his rhetorical offensive. Principle, a term that appeared ten times in his address, was the guiding force behind his chosen actions, and for the United States’ unwavering support “for the fate and fortune of those 700 million people – in 18 nations – who have won full independence since World War II.” Speaking from “the heart of our heritage” the United States would maintain its steadfast commitment to ensuring liberty worldwide. Eisenhower had made no direct reference to the Cold War, yet his speech was nonetheless a clear and powerful appeal for influence and alliances. Decisions based on moral principle were to be seen as a direct contrast to the actions of the Soviets in Hungary and a break with their allies in Egypt.

The ambassador to Egypt Raymond Hare’s 5 November telegram to Eisenhower declared the “U.S. has suddenly emerged as a real champion of right...the crisis came and the Russians did nothing. The effect is one of general disillusionment with the Soviets.” The Eisenhower administration had achieved a propaganda victory in the Middle East. The outcome of the Hungarian uprising for Eisenhower’s anti-Soviet agenda was less certain. The Soviets had sent 4,000 tanks and 200,000 troops into Hungary to crush the rebellion, resulting in estimates of 30,000 rebels and innocent bystanders killed. Articulated within a Washington Post editorial was one key reason for concern. The editors expressed their hope that in the face of overwhelming Soviet repression the Hungarian people would not judge the free world too harshly. The inability of the West to lend military support should not detract from the “enduring

74 Ibid.
75 As quoted in Kingsseed, Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956, p.118.
76 Bischof, ‘United States Responses to the Soviet Suppression,’ p.68.
worth and nobility of their revolt against Red tyranny.” As the president himself declared, “this was indeed a bitter bill for us to swallow.” Yet, within the Afro-Asian nations, the Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising had been given little attention. Consumed with the events in the Middle East, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru believed that for Indians what had occurred in Hungary was obscure. Eisenhower, unable to comprehend how any nation still would consider an alliance with the Soviets, instructed those at an NSC meeting how vital it was the United States continue to emphasise the brutal repression in Hungary “so the whole world will see and understand.” Eisenhower considered his administration’s policy of non-intervention a success. The repression in Hungary had served to convict the Soviets of brutal imperialism throughout the world. This was, according to Eisenhower, “the opposite of the old situation when neutral nations would never view Russia as being guilty of either colonialism or imperialism.”

Following Eisenhower’s directive, American policymakers rushed to exploit the brutality of the Soviet repression around the world. The United States Information Agency distributed the film Hungary’s Fight for Freedom to audiences all over the world. A special edition of the anti-communist journal Problems of Communism was published to expose Soviet ruthlessness in suppressing the Hungarian patriots. And Bitter Harvest: The October Revolution in Hungary and its Aftermath was circulated by the agency. Even as he acted according to the ideal vision he had of the United States’ foundational narratives, the propaganda offensive Eisenhower set in motion illustrates also the pragmatic nature of his presidential decision-making. In the midst of Cold War, Eisenhower missed no opportunity to score a victory in the fight for influence.

Scholarly Assessments: Eisenhower’s Cameo Appearance

The caricature of the caretaker presidency has been dispelled, and the academic community has readily accepted that Eisenhower directed his administration’s responses to both crises. Yet, even with this explicit acknowledgement, the president is relegated often to a mere cameo appearance in analyses. As president, Eisenhower did not engage in the day-to-day diplomatic goings-on necessary for crisis resolution. Nonetheless, to disregard his role as the symbol of the United

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78 Keefer, Landa, and Shaloff (eds.), FRUS, no.175.
79 ‘Bipartisan Legislative Meeting,’ 9th November 1956, DDE Diary Series, Box 20, DDEL.
States and his outwardly directed language is to overlook an important aspect of Eisenhower’s Cold War aspirations. The president in fact eagerly seized the opportunity to be the spokesperson for traditional American values. He appeared to believe every opportunity to speak about Suez or Hungary presented him with the chance to refute imperialist impressions of the United States amongst the developing world. To successfully overcome the pervasive Soviet propaganda that accused the United States of imperialist ambitions would enable Eisenhower to gain the upper hand in his battle for international influence against Soviet communism.

The result of American intervention in Hungary undoubtedly would have sparked some kind of military conflict between the superpowers. As such, even as most scholars critique what they see as the utter failure of the administration’s liberation policy, they accept Eisenhower’s decision not to intervene. Hungarian journalist Charles Gati witnessed the breakdown of his people’s uprising. The passage of time seems only to have increased Gati’s condemnation of the Eisenhower administration. In Gati’s telling, the policy of liberation was disingenuous, politically inspired and self-satisfying, amounting to “hypocrisy mitigated only by self-delusion.”

László Borhi has condemned Eisenhower’s response as indicative of the “Janus-faced” attitude his administration took towards the liberation of eastern Europe. Borhi considers the forcible rollback of communism “subordinated” to Eisenhower’s efforts to improve Soviet-US relations. While the misleading policy of liberation is indeed worthy of criticism, Borhi’s argument of improving relations with the Soviet Union overlooks Eisenhower’s approach toward the Cold War. Conflict was to be avoided, but not to better relations with the Kremlin. Eisenhower sought influence and allies across the developing world and the brutal truth was that Hungary rated low on the radar of newly emergent nations. In Eisenhower’s bid for influence, intervention would win him no new allies. And, by not intervening, Eisenhower was able to demonstrate the falsity of Soviet propaganda as the world witnessed the brutal repression of the Hungarian uprising. When Eisenhower and his language are themselves subordinated within a consideration of the crisis, his bid to win over the hearts and minds of the world can be easily overlooked.

Within the vast literature that covers the United States’ involvement in the Suez Canal crisis, Eisenhower and his administration, particularly Secretary of State Dulles, have been blamed

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83 Borhi, “Containment, Rollback, Liberation or Inaction?”, p.269.
for just about every phase of the fiasco. According to interpretations advanced by Robert Bowie, Caroline Pruden and Cole Kingseed, Eisenhower had one goal that drove his decision-making: his administration would resist the use of force to wrest control of the Canal away from Nasser. Bowie and Kingseed contend Eisenhower was intent upon thwarting any Cold War gains the Soviet Union might make in the region in the wake of his allies’ aggression. Yet, Kingseed considers the fundamental principle driving Eisenhower’s actions was his belief he pursued a coherent policy in the Middle East, one founded upon traditional American ideals. Bowie, on the other hand, believes the probability of increased Soviet prestige and influence in such a vital region the key to his decision-making.

This chapter has sought to expand upon the interpretations put forth by these scholars, investigating how Eisenhower used both crises to increase the United States’ influence within the developing world as part of his all-encompassing ideological battle with the Soviet Union.

Conclusion: The United States Prevails and Peace Regained

Academic assessments of the crises over control of the Suez Canal and against Soviet rule in Hungary engage most often in judgments and criticism. When Eisenhower’s language is prioritised within the analysis, however, the academic conversation can be reset. By shifting away from more conventional analysis, this chapter enables a greater understanding of the significance of the ideological conflict with the Soviet Union upon Eisenhower’s presidential decision-making. The examination of the president’s private and public communications evidences his determination to be seen as a man of principle, leading a nation committed to its foundational principles. Both crises represented an opportunity for the United States to gain the upper hand in their battle with the Soviets for the hearts and minds of the world’s peoples.

86 Bowie, Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956, p.3.
87 Kingseed, Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956, p.3.
This chapter has established also that Eisenhower’s rhetorical offensive was intended to distance the United States from its traditional, imperialist allies in the minds of the Afro-Asian bloc. The administration’s response to Suez was an initially decisive turning point in their battle for influence. Eisenhower earned the United States increased goodwill internationally and contributed to the legitimisation of American leadership in the Third World. American actions in Hungary garnered less interest from the developing world, yet Eisenhower’s refusal to intervene and his referral of the issue to the United Nations reinforced the image of leadership and partnership he had begun to successfully construct. Yet, as will be detailed in the final chapter of this section, Eisenhower struggled to overcome the image of the United States propagated by the Soviet Union. The goodwill tours he undertook in the waning months of his presidency were characterised by discourse still engaged in pushing back against negative assessments of the United States’ international intentions.

89 Pruden, ‘Trouble on Two Fronts,’ p.265.
CHAPTER EIGHT
Waging Cold War in Search of “True” Peace

Either the nations work together for the common good or one by one they will perish; slowly in withering decay; or quickly under the impact of total war, as is more likely the way of the future.


We must show the wickedness of purpose in the communist promises and convince dependent peoples that their only hope of maintaining independence, once attained, is through cooperation with the free world.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Diary Entry, 6 January 1953.

One thing that disturbs me greatly is that ever since 1945 hostile propaganda has made us appear as a militaristic and materialistic people. We know ourselves there is no more peaceful nation in the world, we are almost pacifistic.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Record of Conversation between the president and Secretary of State Dulles, 11 July 1955.

No American leader has been more masterful than Dwight Eisenhower in their ability to speak of peace and wage (Cold) war at the same time. Over the course of his eight years as president, Eisenhower referred to peace in more than 1,000 separate public statements and in 92 percent of his formal addresses. For Eisenhower winning peace was indivisible from Cold War victory. The policies he pursued as president reflected the sentiments he expressed to Private Gabriel Stilian in August 1951. Although the communists had proved they respected only military force, the United States was “training and preparing now not to fight a war but to preserve the peace. This I believe with all my heart.” In the Eisenhower administration peace was predicated on the adoption of the American Way of Life by the developing nations. This conviction was prompted by the president’s greatest fear: should the rest of the world fall under communist rule, the United States would be left “an island of freedom in a hostile sea of communism.” But, in order to render communism impotent and defeated without resorting to war, Eisenhower had to convince the international community of his nation’s peaceful intentions, promote the administration’s “New Look” defence policy as the only way to secure peace, cast the Soviets as the aggressors and, most importantly, persuade newly independent

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nations to repudiate communist overtures and ally with the free world. With what Ira Chernus argues was a total lack of hypocrisy, Eisenhower successfully merged his highest goal of peace with the waging of Cold War that dominated his presidency.\(^4\)

This chapter begins with an exploration of the predominance of the language of peace in Eisenhower’s 1952 presidential campaign. While brief, this analysis demonstrates that, already, Eisenhower’s ability to engage peace as a weapon of his Cold War battle was highly developed. Two key speeches, “Chance for Peace” and “Atoms for Peace,” delivered at the dawn of his presidency, provide a clear articulation of Eisenhower’s vision of peace. These speeches invariably appear in any scholarly analysis of Eisenhower’s quest for peace. Within this chapter examination of these speeches neither supports nor disputes the president’s commitment to disarmament. In fact, the debate over disarmament has overwhelmed and obscured Eisenhower’s search for peace. This chapter disentangles the president’s goal of peace from this debate, expanding upon the work of Kenneth Osgood who asserts that throughout Eisenhower’s presidency Cold War psychological strategy was intensely focused on convincing the world of the United States’ peaceful intentions.\(^5\) Examination of the president’s peace-oriented discourse suggests, however, his search for peace went beyond a pressing need to disprove negative Soviet propaganda. Engaged in a battle for the hearts and minds of humanity, Eisenhower sought the collapse of communism through a worldwide embrace of American principles of democracy. Ranging from Eisenhower’s 1952 presidential campaign to the good-will tours undertaken in the twilight of his presidency, this chapter explores how Eisenhower actively waged Cold War in his search for a “true” peace. As with the other themes explored within the thesis, underpinning Eisenhower’s discourse was his integration of peace with other American foundational national narratives.

**The Soldier of War Who Would Secure Peace**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Eisenhower judged that “democracy had arrived at its decade or quarter century of greatest crisis – any global war of the future will be ideological.”\(^6\) Faced with an adversary intent on spreading communism far beyond its borders, Eisenhower believed that to ensure the security of the United States the most effective policy

\(^4\) Ibid., p.605.
they could adopt was to promote in every country where chance or opportunity existed, a
democratic style of government founded upon individualism and the rejection of statism.
Leading others peacefully toward democracy, however, required that the United States be an
example of “the worth of democracy.” 7 In a “battle to extinction” between democracy and
communism, Eisenhower was convinced “if the progress of this disease is not checked, we will
find ourselves an isolated democracy in a world elsewhere controlled by enemies.” 8 In January
1952, six months before he returned stateside to seek the Republican Party’s presidential
nomination, Eisenhower expressed his concern that certain fundamental truths had been lately
discarded in American public life. Those responsible for guarding the nation’s national security
were in danger of forgetting the “purpose of America is to defend a way of life rather than
merely to defend property, homes, or lives.” 9 Thus, to achieve a permanent peace and the
security of American democracy, the United States had to promote the adoption of democracy
in all the newly independent nations.

On the campaign trail Eisenhower was an outspoken advocate for what he called “permanent
peace.” Concerned that war-weary Americans might consider a victorious five-star general an
ill-suited candidate in such a tense geopolitical climate, Eisenhower worked tirelessly to
reinforce his persona as a war hero who, having seen the horrors and destruction of war, was
dedicated to securing a permanent and just peace for all humankind. Eisenhower’s speech
before a Republican campaign rally in Philadelphia marked the official opening of his
presidential campaign. The address, however, appeared intended for those who might be
listening beyond the United States’ borders. At this early stage of the campaign, peace and its
companion theme of freedom were vague and abstract concepts – and perhaps enabled
Eisenhower to avoid alienating potential American voters or unsettling the international
community. The candidate for peace strove to increase the contrast between the United States’
peaceful intentions and aggressive Soviet expansionism. He declared it a “tragic fact” that,
although peace remained the deepest desire of all people, there were millions to whom it was
denied, “forced to help build and man the war machines of dictators.” But it would be the
United States that would not fail to consign war “to the history books.” With peace the
cornerstone of his opening address, Eisenhower outlined a vague-on-the-details ten-point plan
that would secure a just and enduring peace:

7 Ibid., p.137.
8 Ibid., p.144.
We need allies, and those allies must be bound to us in terms of their own enlightened self-interest...[But] we will make it crystal clear that there is no such thing as American imperialism...that there can be no such thing as American aggression against any country, large or small; America’s great dedication is to freedom...and to enduring peace. Then when people understand that, then with real leadership, every ally will be a friend...this crusade is America’s to lead.  

The speech Eisenhower gave in San Francisco a month later visualised just how he intended to bind these new allies to the United States. For, although the world dwelt in “a twilight zone between peace and war – a zone we call ‘cold war,’” Eisenhower dismissed war as a “last desperate resort.” The United States would instead prosecute their ideological battle with “vigor and wisdom.” Eisenhower cautioned, however, that the United States waged “a ‘cold war’ in order to escape the horror of its opposite – war itself.” Indirectly acknowledging the successful Soviet propaganda campaign which depicted the United States as a militaristic power, Eisenhower was determined to prove to the world that the values the United States revered would be what preserved freedom and secured peace. Only “peaceful means,” he asserted, would demonstrate the simple truth that all Americans desired a peaceful world. His electioneering language pointed to the contest this involved – the United States was engaged in an apocalyptic struggle to win “the battle for the hearts and minds of men.”

Eisenhower capitalised on Americans’ frustrations with the stalemated war in Korea to emphasise his peaceful credentials to the American voting public and the international community. In Cincinnati, he delivered an address structured to provide a strong visual contrast to the peace currently enjoyed by those within the United States and the suffering of those on the battlefields. The emotionally charged nature of the Korean War allowed Eisenhower to draw his search for peace into almost any campaign address. In his battle to win the hearts and minds of Americans, Eisenhower scored himself incalculable political points during his campaign speech in Detroit. His pledge, characteristically vague and lacking any claim that he could achieve victory, has come to define Eisenhower’s electioneering. Standing in front of a vast crowd he declared: “I shall go to Korea.” Derided by the Democrats as a disingenuous
campaign ploy, Eisenhower’s pledge cemented his image as the candidate for peace. In his final campaign address, described as an appeal for national unity by The New York Times, he capitalised on the memory of Thomas Jefferson who had spoken of peace as the nation’s passion. His explicit reference to a Founding Father enabled Eisenhower to merge his electioneering discourse with a national heritage that considered peace a fundamental element of their national identity.14

The “Chance” to Counter the Soviet Peace Offensive

Dwight Eisenhower arrived at the White House in January 1953, intent on waging Cold War with the same warlike intensity that had driven him during the Second World War. For Eisenhower the Cold War was primarily a conflict of spiritual and political ideologies. This was not a military battle but a war of persuasion. In this ideological struggle for alliances around the world, Eisenhower appeared intuitively to understand the need to elevate psychological strategy to the forefront of his Cold War policies.15 Thus, the United States’ new president was invested in the construction of an image of his nation as “struggling for peace,” intent on eliminating the pervasive fear of yet another global war.16 In March 1953, a mere two months into his first term, the death of Josef Stalin provided Eisenhower with an ideal opportunity to reset the parameters of the Cold War. Two days after the announcement of Stalin’s death, C.D. Jackson, an expert in wartime psychological warfare, Walt Rostow and other members of the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) convened to plan the president’s response. Their intent was to exploit Stalin’s death with a “dramatic, well-publicized address that targeted audiences in the Soviet Union, the satellites, western Europe, Asia, and of equal importance, the United States.” The men drafted a speech with four strategic purposes: create dissent among the new Soviet regime; present an inspiring “vision” of American purposes internationally; foster greater unity amongst the free world; and rally Americans behind Eisenhower’s leadership.17

Before Eisenhower could exploit Stalin’s passing, Georgy Malenkov, the new Premier and First Secretary of the Communist Party, spoke before a session of the Supreme Soviet. Malenkov’s speech posed a serious dilemma for the Eisenhower administration. Embarking upon a peace offensive, the new Premier declared “there is no litigious or unresolved question which could not be settled by peaceful means on the basis of the mutual agreement of the countries concerned...including the United States of America.”\(^\text{18}\) The speech represented a staggering reversal of Stalin’s hard-line, “no concessions” foreign policy.\(^\text{19}\) Formally apologising to the British government for a fatal air collision over East Germany, loosening traffic blocks around Berlin and admitting a group of American journalists to Moscow, Soviet leaders worked also with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to accept the American proposal to exchange sick and wounded prisoners of the stalemated Korean War.\(^\text{20}\) Although the idea of a peaceful coexistence between the two powers was popular with allied governments abroad, within the United States Stalin’s death coincided with the high tide of McCarthyism. Washington remained deeply suspicious of Soviet motives.\(^\text{21}\) Eisenhower was therefore forced to confront an unpalatable prospect: refuse to alter his rhetoric against the Soviet Union and appear responsible for international tensions or embrace the peace offensive.

Five weeks passed before Eisenhower delivered “Chance for Peace” to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 16 April 1953. The address bore little resemblance to the aggressive “Crusade for Freedom” speech Jackson and Rostow had laboured over. Instead, Eisenhower’s preference for a speech focused on the “simple theme of a higher living standard for all the world” prevailed. In spite of Jackson’s objections, the president considered his appeal to such a universal desire “might really work.”\(^\text{22}\) The speech, which embraced multiple Cold War goals, recycled most of the United States’ demands of the Soviet Union and their claims to innocence that Washington had been making since the conflict began.\(^\text{23}\) Eisenhower opened with an implied accusation. The path taken by the Soviet Union since that hopeful spring of 1945 had diverged sharply from the principles embraced by the United States and its allies, principles that would have led the world toward “true peace.” The path the Soviets had forged

\(^\text{19}\) Kenneth A. Osgood, Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad, University Press of Kansas, Kansas, 2006, p.61.
\(^\text{21}\) Osgood, ‘Eisenhower’s Dilemma,’ p.141.
\(^\text{22}\) As quoted in Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, p.115.
\(^\text{23}\) Ibid., p.119.
had “been tragic for the world.” In a direct appeal to the developing nations, Eisenhower allowed regret to infuse his language as he lamented that Soviet aggression had stolen money that should have been utilised for the development of the Third World. In one of the most oft-repeated sentences from the speech, Eisenhower proclaimed:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone.24

This short section represents for Kenneth Osgood not only a “timeless rhetorical flourish,” but harks back to US wartime propaganda. In their fight against Axis forces, American propagandists had publicised the poverty of the enemy and advocated for the cessation of hostilities in order to secure a better standard of living for all people.25 The vivid imagery of Eisenhower’s language sharpened his accusation that the system of government that “has lived to threaten a third” world war bore full responsibility for the futile but necessary arms race. With an international network of alliances, committed to the free world, however, the president claimed that the destructive and costly arms race could be halted. The funds currently being spent on armaments could then be diverted towards endeavours similar to the Marshall Plan, which had helped Western Europe’s economic recovery. Replete with allegations of the Soviet Union’s responsibility for world tensions, Eisenhower declared that, if the United States’ endeavours toward peace failed, the world would know who had “condemned humankind to this fate.”26

Eisenhower had depicted a future with only two possible outcomes. The war-like behaviour of the Soviet Union would ultimately see the world decimated by atomic war or find the world’s peoples living in “perpetual fear” of its occurrence, drained of wealth and the internal strength to achieve “true abundance and happiness.” This, according to the president, was not “a way of life at all … it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”27 By implication, the developing world was not allowed the option of neutralism. Those nations not formally aligned with the Soviet Union would, by necessity, find themselves in the “free world” alliance led by the United States. Consequently – and at the heart of Eisenhower’s peace

25 Osgood, Total Cold War, p.63.
26 Eisenhower, ‘Address “the Chance for Peace.”’
27 Ibid.
offensive – to achieve a “true” peace without resort to war, the global adoption of the American Way of Life would secure the defeat of the Soviet Union. Observing that the president had extended towards the Kremlin “an olive branch held in a mailed glove that covered the hand of friendship,” the Houston Chronicle and Herald perhaps most accurately captured the spirit of Eisenhower’s speech. The paper put the blame where it believed it belonged: Moscow’s failure to “turn from the ‘dreaded road’” would put the lie to their “protestations of desire for peace,” driving a wedge between the Soviet rulers and its oppressed subjects.\textsuperscript{28}

To dismiss “Chance for Peace” as nothing more than propaganda overlooks Eisenhower’s objective. Grumbling to speechwriter Emmet Hughes that he was tired of “just plain indictments of the Soviet regime,” Eisenhower instead sought an alternative to counter the Soviet Union’s appeal. According to the president, only one thing mattered: what were they ready to do to advance the process of peace? For Eisenhower, the best possible outcome of the current arms race would be to rob “every people and nation on earth of the fruits of their own toil.”\textsuperscript{29} Disarmament enabled the president to dangle the promise of further assistance once the economic burden of arms manufacture was eased. Disarmament, however, cannot be considered a wholly misleading proposal. For this particular speech, disarmament was the olive branch Eisenhower extended toward unallied nations. In the longer-term, however, disarmament would reduce the United States’ substantial economic burden. As a staunch fiscal conservative (a theme developed in chapter two) Eisenhower was convinced indefinite deficit spending could topple democracy making disarmament a worthy goal. Nonetheless, disarmament was the longer-term goal. The more immediate aim of “Chance” seems to have been to remedy the international perception of the United States as the greatest obstruction to lasting peace.

The Soviets responded to Eisenhower’s speech with additional deeds to demonstrate the sincerity of their peace offensive. They relinquished their claims to territory in Turkey, military control of the Dardanelles and the Bosporus and agreed, after months of refusal, to the appointment of Dag Hammarskjold as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The


Kremlin implemented a series of democratic reforms in East Germany which many in the international community perceived as the first step toward possible German reunification.\textsuperscript{30}

The live broadcast of “Chance for Peace” in the United States and Britain was just the beginning of Jackson’s propaganda offensive. With copies delivered to American embassies, Jackson professed the US’ Ambassadors and Ministers had to be “made to understand that they are responsible for an immediate merchandising-in-depth of this Message to friend and foe.”\textsuperscript{31} Foreign government and media outlets received multiple copies of the president’s speech. In Germany alone, the speech was distributed to 921 newspapers and magazines. US legations in Hungary, Yugoslavia and other areas in the communist world handed out free translations by the thousands. Over three million pamphlets, containing either the whole speech or excerpts, were distributed in Europe and Latin America. One hundred and five thousand handbills in eight languages were distributed in New Delhi. The Voice of America carried it live, translating it into 45 languages and Radio Free Europe repeatedly broadcast the speech in multiple eastern European languages. Kinescopes of the address were flown to twelve countries on three continents to be telecast. Nixon, Dulles and other cabinet officers delivered companion speeches and American diplomats were instructed to draw attention to particular points of the speech. The highest priority for American psychological strategy during the Eisenhower presidency was to convince the world of the United States’ peaceful intentions. Jackson’s monumental undertaking celebrated Eisenhower’s words of peace and distributed them to almost every corner of the globe.\textsuperscript{32}

**Atoms for Alliances**

Delivered in front of the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December 1953, Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace” speech suffered from questions of sincerity and purpose, then and now.\textsuperscript{33} The public nature of the president’s proposal put the Russians deliberately on the spot, caught between acceptance, which would acknowledge that the United States sincerely sought peace,
or rejection, which would damage their carefully executed peace offensive.\textsuperscript{34} As with “Chance,” however, Eisenhower’s search for collaboration and alliances as the way to achieve global peace without resort to war has been overlooked in scholarly analyses. Eisenhower spoke once again of achieving peace as the primary means to avert global catastrophe. The rhetoric of “Atoms” was designed also to advance the United States’ Cold War peace objectives by equating the universal desire for peace with American values and desires.\textsuperscript{35} Attuned to public opinion, which increasingly demanded disarmament as the only way to free the globe from fear of another war, Eisenhower was nevertheless committed to his administration’s “New Look” defence policy that prioritised nuclear weapons over more costly ground forces. Relying on a discourse of dualism, “Atoms” offered Eisenhower an opportunity to speak of disarmament while persuading developing nations to ally with the United States.

Although Eisenhower professed he would have preferred never to speak the “language of atomic warfare,” his rhetoric embraced a dichotomy between the peaceful intentions of the United States and the grave danger allegedly posed by the Soviet Union. The litany of facts about the terrible, destructive power posed by atomic weapons, was recited by the president in order, he argued, to assist the world’s peoples “conduct an intelligent search for peace…armed with the significant facts of today’s existence.”\textsuperscript{36} The United States’ atomic monopoly was no more, the “dread secret, and the fearful engines of atomic might” were now known by the Soviet Union. Yet, the United States possessed “retaliation capabilities…so great that such an aggressor’s land would be laid waste.” Having delivered his threat to the Kremlin, Eisenhower pivoted quickly. Although he claimed to speak the truth, these facts were apparently not representative of the United States’ true purpose. Instead:

\begin{quote}
Occasional pages of history do record the faces of the “Great Destroyers” but the whole book of history reveals mankind’s never-ending quest for peace...It is with the book of history, not with the isolated pages, that the United States will ever wish to be identified. My country wants to be constructive, not destructive. It wants agreements, not wars, among nations…So
\end{quote}

my country’s purpose is to help us move out of the dark chamber of horrors into the light, to find a way by which the minds of men...can move forward toward peace.\textsuperscript{37}

Eisenhower connected mankind’s universal quest for peace with religious language to seek out the abolition of evil.

The president had to turn quickly from threats of nuclear armageddon towards the main purpose of his speech: a direct appeal to the developing nations. He put forth a plan for atomic energy designed “to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind.” If the proposal were adopted it would “provide abundant electrical energy in the power-starved areas of the world.” Regardless of the outcome, Eisenhower scored himself a propaganda victory as he noted that the Soviet Union would of course have to be involved in the dedication of “some of their strength to serve the needs rather than the fears of mankind.” A Soviet rejection would have contradicted Eisenhower’s claim that the project would “allow all peoples of all nations to see that, in this enlightened age, the great powers of the earth, both of the East and of the West, are interested in human aspirations first, rather than in building up the armaments of war.”\textsuperscript{38} With Malenkov’s peace offensive already amply demonstrated with deeds, Eisenhower’s focus on arms control was likely a strategic choice. “Atoms” enabled Eisenhower to present his nation’s peace credentials and stake out the moral high ground when the Soviets inevitably rejected the proposal. Eisenhower accomplished his Cold War goals with both implicit and explicit argumentative techniques. As Chernus suggests, the “salvific narrative of the speech became a harbinger of history’s movement not only from war to peace, but from cold war to total victory over Communism.”\textsuperscript{39} Hailed as a great psychological victory, “Atoms” was seen by the Eisenhower administration as a step toward peace and the defeat of the Soviet Union.

**Losing the Battle: The United States’ Peaceful Intentions**

Eisenhower’s reason for waging peace was simple. The president was convinced that the American system, which he was certain held a greater appeal to people everywhere, would “in the long run…win out.” All forms of “dictatorial government” would be defeated by the United States because it held a “greater appeal to the human soul, the human heart, the human mind.”\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Chernus, *Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace*, p.117.
The staff of the United States Information Agency, responsible for disseminating what Washington considered the truth about the United States abroad, found themselves on the receiving end of the president’s frustration in October 1953. Eisenhower complained that many people around the world, including those he considered to be well-educated, were ignorant of the United States’ purpose. Eisenhower reiterated his concerns during a private conversation in early 1954, noting how hard it was to “get across to the rank and file of the world” what the United States stood for. Yet, as Eisenhower acknowledged, the United States faced “quite a job to get folks in the four corners of the world to really understand the United States.” If the United States was going to win the war, they had to successfully convince the world of their peaceful intentions.

Eisenhower was “appalled” at communist successes in distorting his administration’s views. Anti-American propaganda was only part of Soviet successes. Under Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev, the Kremlin’s peace offensive had achieved a relaxed diplomatic style. Bulganin and Khrushchev had toured India, Burma and Afghanistan in late 1955 with promises of trade and economic assistance, and by February 1956 the Soviets had offered assistance also to Pakistan and numerous countries within Latin America. In the eyes of many in Washington and around the world, the Soviets appeared to be winning the war for peace. Committed to getting what he considered the truth of their purpose to the world, by 1958 Eisenhower had come to believe he ought not to “spend his time on a speech that did not deal with peace, disarmament, mutual aid, freer trade, or the like.” For the remainder of his presidency, Eisenhower insisted his most important responsibility was achieving peace.

In the midst of a developing crisis over the Suez Canal (examined in the preceding chapter), Eisenhower’s re-election campaign provided an ideal opportunity to boast of the progress the United States had made toward securing lasting peace under his leadership. This speech marked the official commencement of his campaign, yet the focus of Eisenhower’s address was not his

41 Ibid.
46 ‘Diary Entry,’ 26th March 1958, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 9, DDEL.
domestic achievements but instead emphasised how improved the international situation was after four years in the White House. He recalled for his audience Korea, Iran, West Germany, Trieste, Austria and Guatemala and proclaimed that the efforts of his administration in these countries, which “circle the globe,” testified to his nation’s greatest goal: waging Cold War, “in the world, as in our own land,” to secure peace for all people:

Not a single nation has been surrendered to aggression. We have maintained this defense of freedom without recourse to war…the pledge of peace, made to you upon the day of my inauguration, has been pursued – firmly and effectively.47

Peace dominated Eisenhower’s speech in the same way it dominated his presidential policies. And for the president, peace was not a prize but a quest, not a present to receive but a principle to respect. It required resourcefulness not relaxation, stamina instead of stagnation, but above all to achieve true peace required the “practice and fulfilment of our whole faith.”48

The United States was, however, being outmatched and outspent by the Soviets’ assiduous propaganda offensive. “Americans know that we are peaceful,” Eisenhower had admitted in 1954, but the “job of getting other people to believe that is terrific – we know that the Soviets are spending literally billions in different kinds of propaganda.”49 For the president, there was nothing “more dangerous to our cause than to expect America’s message to be heard if we don’t bother to tell it.”50 The countless hours Eisenhower had devoted to this problem of peace had convinced him the only way to secure the long-term foundation of American democracy was to promote and develop alliances that encircled the globe. Eisenhower affirmed to Senator Styles Bridges in May 1957 his intention to “wage the cold war in a militant, but reasonable style whereby we appeal to the people of the world as a better group to hang with than the Communists.”51 In order for the president to wage reasonable cold war he required a constantly shifting approach to his discourse of peace. The president’s dual and often contradictory aims meant that at the same time as he warned the Kremlin not to underestimate the strength of the

48 Ibid.
51 ‘Conversation between the President and Senator Styles Bridges,’ 21st May 1957, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 9, DDEL.
United States and their commitment to arms manufacture and national security, he had to reassure the neutral nations of his absolute commitment to peace. He reminded his audience that even though his only objective was to achieve a just peace, the United States was “determined to remain secure.” Eisenhower’s commitment to pursuing the Cold War, to achieving victory based on a secure peace, and to his “New Look” defence policy resulted in oftentimes hard to reconcile assertions. His declaration that the United States would continue to maintain its impressive nuclear stockpile only until their peaceful approach to the Cold War had forced the internal collapse of the Soviet Union, for example, cannot have helped dislodge the Soviet depiction of the United States as a militaristic nation.52

Eisenhower’s commitment to peace conflicted with the maintenance of what he called an “adequate” level of national defence and his pressing need to balance the nation’s budget. Eisenhower’s “New Look” defence policy became one of his biggest obstacles in the battle for global alliances. In the face of what the president considered the Soviet Union’s express purpose of achieving communist domination worldwide, Eisenhower seemed to have believed he had no choice but to continue nuclear weapons production.53 Eisenhower sought to justify the United States’ reliance on nuclear arms by depicting the Soviet Union as a “predatory force, seeking to destroy our form of government.” According to the president then, not only was their obligation to the “New Look” defence policy appropriate but when faced with an enemy he proclaimed respected only force, it became a necessary component of the US’ national security obligation.54 Depicting the Soviets as aggressors who worshipped at the altar of weapons, Eisenhower announced that it was not: “paradoxical in our peaceful efforts that we maintain powerful military forces. For in a world partly dominated by men who respect only guns, planes, and tanks, these weapons are essential to our survival.”55 Even as they contributed to the pervasive fear of a possible nuclear holocaust sometime in the near future, the Eisenhower administration remained locked in competition with the Soviet Union for the “friendship, loyalty, and support of the

52 Eisenhower, ‘Address at the American Legion Convention.’
world’s peoples.”

“Peace in freedom” was his nation’s declared national policy, the fundamentals of which Eisenhower believed should be clear to all:

The peace we seek is a secure and a just peace, not bought at the expense of others, not bought at the expense of principle…Peace so bought would at best be an illusion, and at worst a permanent loss of all that we hold most dear.

Both superpowers had identified themselves with humanity’s deep-seated hunger for peace, and each claimed only they were committed to securing an enduring peace for all people. Eisenhower believed their cases were “on trial before the bar of world opinion.” It was crucial, then, to the American president that those hundreds of millions who would determine the victor understood the only possible path to a “true” peace was to embrace the freedom and democracy represented by the United States.

“Welcome, the Prince of Peace”

Vicious displays of anti-Americanism drew worldwide attention in May 1958. United States Information Agency libraries in Tripoli and Beirut were burnt by Arab nationalists, and in Venezuela a seething mob had attacked Vice President Richard Nixon’s motorcade. The unrest in Latin America subsided, but in the Middle East pan-Arab activities persisted. By July, Iraqi nationalists succeeded in overthrowing the western-supported Hashemite monarchy. Eisenhower’s decision to send some 14,000 US Marines into Lebanon the following day was subjected to harsh criticism, domestically and internationally. The same month USIA researchers reported that American prestige appeared to have plummeted internationally. Widespread contempt for the United States appeared pervasive in western Europe, Japan and India. The events of Little Rock the previous year (examined in chapter four), had confirmed for many of the developing nations that racist sentiment was entrenched within the United States. The United States’ commitment to disarmament also was reported to be questioned. As

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58 Eisenhower, ‘Address at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association.’
the United States suffered on the international stage, the Soviets looked to have made a stunning recovery following their brutal response to the Hungarian uprising in 1956.\(^5^9\)

An extended campaign of personal diplomacy – the culmination of his presidential aspirations for peace – marked Eisenhower’s final months in office. Secretary of State Christian Herter had persuaded the president his cause for peace would benefit if he visited the developing nations. Press Secretary James Hagerty suggested the president’s travels would assist his domestic policies. Convinced by their arguments, over the space of six months Eisenhower undertook three goodwill tours. In December 1959, he embarked upon his first tour. The nineteen-day tour took Eisenhower to eleven different countries in Europe, Asia and North Africa.

Defined by the president as a “Mission of Peace and Goodwill,” Eisenhower claimed he went abroad with only one goal. He intended his trip to dispel any doubts about the United States’ intentions. Because there remained many people around the world who viewed the United States as another colonial power, the president’s trip would allow him “to pay them the personal compliment of visiting them in person and to tell them in person what our true beliefs are.”\(^6^0\)

Before he departed, Eisenhower used the opportunity of his address before the American people to declare his nation desired “a world in which all nations may prosper in freedom, justice, and peace, unmolested and unafraid…I hope to make this truth clear.” Implicit was Eisenhower’s acknowledgment that the United States had been unsuccessful in countering successful Soviet propaganda:

> We in America know that for many decades our Nation has practiced and proclaimed these convictions and purposes. But this is not enough. For years doubts about us have been skilfully nurtured in foreign lands by those who oppose America’s ideals. Our country has been unjustly described as one pursuing only materialistic goals…as prizing wealth above ideals, machines above spirit…and war above peace.\(^6^1\)

Eisenhower’s final thought was to suggest that the expression of the United States’ aspirations for “Peace and friendship” was incomplete. Instead, the real message had to be “Peace and

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\(^6^0\) ‘Memorandum for the Record,’ 5th December 1959, DDE Diary Series, Box 45, DDEL.

friendship, in freedom.”\textsuperscript{62} The first stop on Eisenhower’s odyssey was Rome, where he professed the United States sought to “live in peace and friendship – in freedom.” Eisenhower repeated this to every country he visited, and, in a dig at Soviet censorship, declared his hope that his message would be heard everywhere governments allowed free communications.\textsuperscript{63}

Arriving in New Delhi his motorcade inched slowly through crowds estimated at a million people and under banners reading “Welcome, the Prince of Peace.”\textsuperscript{64} In his speech before India’s Joint Session of Parliament he appeared conscious of the negativity the United States’ recent foray into Lebanon had created. Eisenhower proudly announced he represented “a nation that wants not an acre of another people’s land…that pursues no program of expansion in commerce or politics or power of any sort at another people’s expense.” Eisenhower relied on history to seek a commonality between the two nations that would allow him also to refute the single system of government demanded by the Soviets. He linked India and the United States together as he referred to their shared commitment to democracy. Yet, perhaps conscious he not be seen as seeking to force the worldwide adoption of democracy, he asserted that neither nation boasted that theirs was “the only way.” They were, in fact, “conscious of our weaknesses and failings.” For Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, a vocal advocate for disarmament, the United States’ most glaring weakness was their commitment to nuclear weapons. Aware of Nehru’s feelings, Eisenhower maintained his argument that the “aggressive intentions of an alien philosophy backed by great military strength” justified his nation’s nuclear commitment. And, according to Eisenhower, when faced with this “truth,” the United States had made clear their determination to resist aggression with a strong policy of deterrence. Pivoting to a more reassuring tone, Eisenhower was clear: “My nation is committed to a ceaseless search for ways through which genuine disarmament can be reached…But armaments of themselves do not cause wars – wars are caused by men.”\textsuperscript{65} The American president left his Indian audience with little doubt that he believed those men resided in Moscow.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
Eisenhower’s first goodwill tour validated Hagerty’s thinking about its likely domestic impact. At the beginning of 1960, Gallup polls saw Eisenhower’s approval rating soar to 71 percent, close to its peak three years earlier. The images captured within mostly third world countries of vast cheering crowds proved a public relations triumph for the Eisenhower administration. The USIA publicised the president’s journey around the world, with press articles, films, newsreels, photographs and radio broadcasts all intent on promoting Eisenhower’s words of peace.

A two-week tour of Latin America came next in the president’s quest for peace. Eisenhower’s trip was an implicit acknowledgment of growing anxiety in Washington about the unsettled political conditions to the south. Addressing the nation on the eve of his tour, Eisenhower recognised that an opportunity existed to smooth over the at times tense relationships the United States shared with some of its close neighbours. Although they shared many principles and convictions, the president conceded that friendships often were seen to be taken for granted. He did not want to give the people of Latin America cause to believe this of the United States. The close proximity between the nations enabled Eisenhower to reimagine the American nuclear program as an “umbrella” of military strength which allowed real progress to be made toward an “enduring and just peace.” With only five years having elapsed since American involvement in the overthrow of Guatemala’s democratically elected government, it was crucial Eisenhower succeeded in characterising the United States as the protector, not aggressor, in the region:

We have forged a trustworthy shield of peace – an indestructible force of incalculable power, ample for today and constantly developing to meet the needs of tomorrow. Today, in the presence of continuous threat, all of us can stand resolute and unafraid – confident in America’s might as an anchor of free world security.

The overwhelmingly friendly crowds that met Eisenhower at each stop along his tour did indeed give the impression the United States was much loved and admired all over Latin America. Yet, no matter the crowds that continued to greet the president on his journey around the world, strong suspicion of US intentions in the developing world persisted.

Travelling over 15,000 miles, Eisenhower visited Puerto Rico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. In each country, Eisenhower linked their nation’s progress with the United States’ history. The president emphasised their “common heritage” in an effort to bind the region ever closer together. Eisenhower’s self-professed mission mirrored his December journey, with his “one paramount interest [to] assure everybody of my Nation’s peaceful intent and to do what I can to promote the cooperation of all in the cause of peace and freedom.” The United States did not seek to impose peace by domination, preferring a system of collective security in which the people of each nation possessed the freedom to make its own choice. 70 During a visit to Brazil’s Naval Ministry, Eisenhower articulated his lofty aspirations for collaborative peace:

I come here as the representative of 180 million citizens of the United States. They share with you this fervent wish: that war and all forms of coercion be forever banished from the earth; that leaders of all nations hearken to the prayers of their peoples for peace—for a peace founded on mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration—a peace in which the race of armaments will give way to a constructive, cooperative attack against disease, ignorance, and poverty—a peace which makes neighborliness such as that enjoyed by our two countries a reality throughout the world. 71

In Latin America military strength was reimagined as a cooperative effort, for together “the nations which cherish independence can command a power so great that no potential aggressor could violate the peace without inviting his own destruction.” 72 With his presidency drawing to a close, Eisenhower engaged more evocative imagery in his pursuit to defeat communism. Calling this “truly a time of fateful decision,” Eisenhower declared war “now utterly preposterous.” With “fields of earth” stained with the blood of previous generations, war “would not yield blood – only a great emptiness for the combatants, and the threat of death from the skies for all who inhabit the earth.” In a time of ideological conflict, all nations faced the decision of whether to choose democracy and freedom or allow the tyranny and oppression of totalitarianism to invade their borders. Inseparable from the choice of freedom or slavery the world faced the issue of whether to embrace the United States who, Eisenhower asserted,

adhered to belief in “common sonship, of human dignity, and of moral law,” or to accept “an environment permeated with a philosophy which denies the existence of God.” Eisenhower was determined to convince his audiences to embrace the former.

By the time of this third goodwill tour, Eisenhower was deeply aware of the power of new nationalism in former colonial states. Before the Joint Session of the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives, Eisenhower was full of praise for the “functioning democracy” its people had created. As he sought to persuade his audience that democracy was not at odds with nationalism, his language made clear the United States supported “a sovereign people directing their own destinies” only when that destiny did not involve the adoption of the communist doctrine. The president proceeded to articulate the ways communism would stifle the newly independent nations:

Nationalism is a mighty and a relentless force. No conspiracy of power, no compulsion of arms can stifle it forever…Communist leaders fear constructive nationalism as a mortal foe. This fear is evident in the continuing efforts of the Communist conspiracy to penetrate nationalist movements, to pervert them, and to pirate them for their own evil objectives.

Instead of pleading for alliances, Eisenhower focused his energies on the negative impact of communism. He pronounced that communism demanded “subservience to a single ideology, to a straitjacket of ideas and approaches and methods.” Eisenhower pushed back against the image of the United States as an imperialist nation, instead accusing the Soviet Union of having taken over the mantle of coloniser. Eisenhower contested Soviet propaganda, arguing that since 1945 “thirty-three lands that were once subject to Western control have peaceably achieved self-determination.” The same could not be said for the twelve countries in the “Sino-Soviet sphere [who] have been forcibly deprived of their independence…Who today are the colonialists?” Eisenhower’s discourse of peace was expansive as he used the opportunity provided by speaking in front of an American ally to reinforce the historic commitment of the United States to peace and self-determination. Unsurprisingly, in condemning the imperial

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74 Eisenhower, ‘Address before a Joint Session of the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives.’
75 Ibid.
nature of recent Soviet actions, Eisenhower made no reference to his nation’s annexation of
the island nation in 1898.

During his visit to Taipei, Eisenhower expanded upon his theme of peace and self-
determination, restating his nation’s support for those countries “recently emerged from
Colonial status.” The United States was determined to respect their sovereignty by refusing to
impose upon these nations “our own way of life or system of government.” Any move such as
that, would be, according to this speech, a “betrayal of America’s own traditions.”76 Yet,
Eisenhower’s actions as president had demonstrated the United States would support and
protect the right of nations so long as they did not embrace communism.

The cancellation of Eisenhower’s visit to Tokyo tarnished the image of his final goodwill tour.
Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi had forced a proposed defence treaty between the two nations
through the Japanese Diet after 107 days of deliberation that Merriman Smith described as “so
heated that at one point the opposition Socialists held the house speaker as prisoner.”77 Protests
against the new treaty had begun the month prior to Eisenhower’s visit, and as Smith
concluded, it had been “foolhardy” for Washington to believe the protesters would cease if
Eisenhower and Kishi rode through the streets of Tokyo.78 The cancellation dominated the
headlines and obscured the overwhelmingly positive receptions he had otherwise received
abroad. For almost eight years, Eisenhower had waged cold war in order to secure an eternal
and just peace. Beyond that, he had linked firmly his personal prestige with this pursuit. Upon
his return, Eisenhower used his address to the American people to reaffirm his conviction that
his mission of peace had afforded him the opportunity to:

emphasize and re-emphasize America’s devotion to peace with justice; her determination
to sustain freedom and to strengthen free World security through our cooperative
programs; her readiness to sacrifice in helping to build the kind of world we want.79

What Eisenhower understood better than most was that waging cold war required what Osgood
calls the moral legitimacy of his pursuit of peace. Since war’s end, Eisenhower had presented

78 Ibid., p.209.
79 Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Trip to the Far East,’
27th June 1960, Gerhard Peters & John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project,
himself as a man of peace. Nothing received greater attention in his presidential language than the theme of peace. Eisenhower is not remembered for his soaring oratory, yet there were few Americans who spoke as eloquently as the nation’s 34th president did of the need for a just and lasting peace. Yet, when Eisenhower spoke of his crusade, peace was never something he visualised as being won before he left the White House.\textsuperscript{80}

Eisenhower viewed the Cold War as a long-term conflict and, as such, was deeply concerned about the possible course US foreign policy might take once he had left the White House. He warned Americans of the need to stay the course he had set them upon in 1953: “Let me stress, however, that all the profit gained by past and any possible future trips will be quickly dissipated should we Americans abandon our present course in foreign relations or slacken our efforts in cooperative programs with our friends.”\textsuperscript{81} Should the United States take their troops out of Europe, for instance, Americans would be forced to accept, and live with, communism. That, for Eisenhower, was “too big a price to be alive.” He would not want his children or grandchildren to live “in a world where we were slaves of a Moscow Power.”\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{Conclusion: The Impacts of Waging Peace}

This chapter has explored the development of Eisenhower’s use of the language of peace as a Cold War weapon. From the successful construction of his image as a soldier of peace, to the goodwill tours that represented the culmination of his presidential aspirations for “true” peace, Eisenhower crafted a consistent strategy designed to convince the world of the United States’ peaceful intentions. The developing nations were increasingly the battleground for influence in the Cold War. But, given their long histories of colonial subjugation most of these nations were wary of any formal alliance with the West, an attitude exploited by the Soviets anti-American propaganda. In order to counter Soviet propaganda and weaken the Soviet system Eisenhower adopted a universal approach to his rhetoric of peace.\textsuperscript{83} Whether he spoke to American or international audiences Eisenhower continually reaffirmed his belief that peace could not be achieved through resort to war. Every occasion to speak, whether truculent or conciliatory, was another opportunity for the United States to “win World War III without having to fight it.”\textsuperscript{84} Eisenhower’s many speeches on peace illustrated the president’s vision: a

\textsuperscript{80} Osgood, \textit{Total Cold War}, pp.361-2.
\textsuperscript{81} Eisenhower, ‘Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Trip to the Far East.’
\textsuperscript{82} ‘Conversation with Queen Frederika of Greece,’ 9th December 1958, DDE Diary Series, Box 38, DDEL.
\textsuperscript{84} As quoted in Chernus, \textit{Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace}, p.26.
free world, committed to democracy, independence, freedom and collective security as the only basis for his “true” peace. Every presidential message Eisenhower delivered about peace contained several goals. Yet, the most overlooked and also most important, was Eisenhower’s determination to achieve total Cold War victory by convincing the underdeveloped world to commit themselves to a program of democracy, refuting Soviet advances and embracing the American Way of Life. As he gave his last press conference on 18 January 1961, Eisenhower proclaimed his biggest disappointment during his eight years as president had not been one single incident. Rather, his regret stemmed from his belief that the United States had been unable to reach a position where they could say with confidence that a “permanent peace with justice” finally was in sight.85

Conclusion: The National Ideal

Now, my friends, in these days and times we know how necessary it is that we don’t forget the spiritual strength of America. We know how necessary it is that we inform ourselves of the facts of the world situation and how we rededicate ourselves to the status of our country in order that we may stand fearless, unafraid, and secure in this troubulous time, when we are threatened both from without and from within.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Closure Ceremonies at Garrison Dam, 11 June 1953.

We shall continue to hold ever higher the flame of liberty so that men everywhere may see clearly by its light and cherish its values.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Statement by the President: Know Your America Week, 29 September 1959.

Eisenhower’s approach to the Cold War and his battle for the hearts and minds of humankind reflect his understanding of the nation’s history and highlight the importance he placed upon tradition and myth. For the president, the United States’ “democratic civilization” relied upon values and beliefs that bound its people together. Among those were “personal liberty, human rights, and the dignity of man.” But it was what Eisenhower believed to be the heart of the American Way of Life that was the most crucial in the conflict with the Soviet Union – what he considered their “deeply held religious faith.”1 In order to preserve the United States of the Founding Fathers’ imaginings and secure a Cold War victory, Eisenhower believed he had to convince the world that the American republic embraced and embodied the principles and ideals it espoused. According to Thomas McInerney, a deeply rooted element of Eisenhower’s political philosophy was his conviction that the United States’ ability to fulfil its responsibilities as the world’s leader could not be achieved through imperial fiat. Rather, for Eisenhower, true leadership could be accomplished only by force of example. Before his ascension to the White House, Eisenhower had spoken regularly of his belief that the United States must prioritise peaceful persuasion and example rather than the imposition of the American system and ideas throughout the world by force.2 The themes explored within this section illustrate Eisenhower’s complicated efforts to construct what he believed was an idealised response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union, and (re)construct his vision of the ideal United States.

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Awash with religious imagery, Eisenhower’s Inaugural Address launched a presidency defined by the belief that without a solid spiritual foundation, democratic government could not thrive or even survive. His support for the alteration of the Pledge of Allegiance and repeated references to spiritual faith illustrate that in Eisenhower’s romanticised imaginings, the United States’ strength stemmed from its deeply-felt religious faith. And, for eight years he consistently fused religion with ideals of Americanism to (re)construct what he believed was the unbreakable link between spiritual faith and the nation’s foundations. This exploration confirms Eisenhower also engaged spiritual language because he believed that faith in God was the United States’ best defensive and offensive weapon against the Soviet Union. As Merlo Pusey observed in 1956, Eisenhower saw himself locked in a “life-or-death struggle with a godless system.” Faced with the “atheism and inhumanity of the Communists,” the president consistently linked his appeals for a recommitment to spiritual faith to the nation’s security.3 This exploration of the centrality of faith to Eisenhower’s presidency further demonstrates his commitment to the myth that the United States was on a divine mission to remake the world in its image. Surveying his foreign policy decision-making in 1954 reveals, however, the problematic nature of religion’s influence. For, although Eisenhower professed his commitment to the principle of self-determination (and used this myth to achieve a propaganda victory over the Soviet Union in 1956), Cold War geopolitics saw religion appropriated as part of a covert operation to sweep the Guatemalan government from power and prompted the support of an unpopular but religious leader in Vietnam.

If spirituality was the heart of the United States, then freedom, for Eisenhower, was the foundation of its democracy. Inscribed into the Declaration of Independence were the immortal words of Thomas Jefferson who had proclaimed that the United States held as a self-evident truth the conviction that all men were created equal. They also were all “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” Among these were life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.4 Freedom, then, was an ideal Eisenhower valued above almost all else. In this study of Senator McCarthy, analysis focused on exploring the strength of Eisenhower’s belief that the preservation of freedom was fundamental to the survival of the American system as it faced its ideological enemy. Eisenhower’s responses indicate his belief that any attack upon freedom within the United States would be just as damaging to his aim of a free world as was any loss

of freedom at the hands of the Soviet Union. This analysis reveals also that Eisenhower believed the proper way to respond to McCarthy, and, indeed to the Soviet threat, was through a positive promotion of American ideals. Eisenhower’s language suggests that his commitment to the ideals of Americanism also was a conscious attempt to contrast his behaviour with that of the senator he saw as trampling upon Americans’ liberties. What emerges is Eisenhower’s certainty that the protection and, more importantly, the embrace of the nation’s foundational ideals were the key to securing victory over the Soviet Union.

The United States has a complicated relationship with the related principles of anti-imperialism and self-determination. This study reveals how Eisenhower seized upon the concurrent crises in Hungary and over the Suez Canal to construct an idealised response that prioritised these American principles. The exploration of Eisenhower’s response indicates his determination to be seen as a president whose decisions were based on principle, integrity and a commitment to American historical ideals. Although analysis suggests Eisenhower sincerely believed the United States was a nation of integrity, this chapter shows also how he engaged these principles to gain a Cold War propaganda victory. While Hungary exposed the fatal flaw in the Republican Party’s policy of liberation, Eisenhower’s decision to abstain from intervention allowed him to expose the brutality of the Soviet Union’s oppression of the uprising. The battle over the Suez Canal also put the president in a difficult position. Yet, Eisenhower’s opposition to his allies’ effort to restore imperialism by force was, as Blanche Wiesen Cook defines it, one of his wisest decisions. Standing against the invasion enabled Eisenhower to demonstrate that anti-imperialist principles characterised US foreign policy. His actions demonstrate his awareness that to successfully promote the worldwide adoption of democracy he had to convince foreign audiences the United States was not, as the Soviets consistently alleged, an imperial nation.

Eisenhower waged peace with the same intensity he had devoted to his “crusade” in Europe. This study reveals that, engaged in a battle for the hearts and minds of humanity, the president was convinced “true” peace could be achieved only through the worldwide adoption of the American Way of Life. This global embrace of democracy would, according to Eisenhower, force the internal collapse of the Soviet Union allowing him to “win” the Cold War and secure

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his elusive permanent peace. Although the debate over disarmament has overshadowed Eisenhower’s search for influence and alliances, analysis establishes the president as engaged in an all-out war of persuasion. Yet, Eisenhower’s rhetorical peace offensive oftentimes had to reconcile seemingly conflicting priorities for peace. Determined to prove the Soviets were the greatest obstruction to the achievement of a secure peace, Eisenhower’s commitment to his “New Look” defence policy complicated his attempts to challenge Soviet accusations of American militarism. Unpacking Eisenhower’s language of peace during his goodwill tours indicates that he engaged a strategy that capitalised on the esteem and respect he enjoyed around the world and fused that prestige with his idealised image of the United States in a last-ditch effort to win the peace through the persuasive vision he constructed – a free world, committed to democratic principles, to independence and to freedom.

Eisenhower believed in American exceptionalism. He believed in the principles of life, liberty and happiness. He believed in popular sovereignty and that all men were created equal. He believed that without spiritual faith there could be no United States and he advocated what Scott Nearing defines as “the meaning of America [and] the promise of 1776.”7 The themes explored within this section illuminate the all-encompassing nature of Eisenhower’s battle for the hearts and minds of people at home and abroad. Eisenhower worked diligently to persuade the world that the United States honoured its cherished ideals and was the embodiment of an ideal democratic, capitalist society – even when aspects of US foreign and defence policies made idealism look problematic. The examination of Eisenhower’s language of faith lays bare his conviction that binding the free world to the United States required a national recommitment to its spiritual heritage. The exploration of Eisenhower’s defence of freedom reveals a president determined to ensure that if Americans were to stand for freedom around the world he could not allow the internal destruction of their own freedom. Considering Eisenhower’s response to two international crises illustrates that, in order to secure alliances, he was convinced the world had to witness a principled response based on historic ideals of anti-imperialism and resistance to tyrannical rule. And, underpinning everything he did as president, to win the peace Eisenhower waged cold war.

Conclusion: The Ideal America(n)?

Have we the courage, the stamina, the sense of duty, and the understanding of what freedom and peace truly mean? Have we got the courage and the stamina to continue everlastingly to carry on the search for peace, a peace with justice? There is nothing jingoistic in America's ambitions. She seeks only for others the rights, the privileges, and the freedoms that she maintains for herself and will defend with everything she has. This, it seems to me, is the one thing we must keep always in our understanding and in our hearts.


There can be no doubt that America has not reached perfection in attaining the lofty ideals laid down for us in our founding documents and in the amendments that have been made to our Constitution. The important thing is that we go ahead, that we make progress. This does not necessarily mean revolution. In my mind it means evolution.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Remarks at the National Conference on Civil Rights, 9 June 1959.

Eisenhower’s presidential approval ratings are impressive. It was, in part, the overwhelming popularity of Dwight Eisenhower amongst Americans and around the world, that inspired this investigation. For, while liberal intellectuals constructed a caricature of a president who garbled his syntax, spoke in banal platitudes and made regular grammatical errors, in reality Eisenhower possessed a profound understanding of the power of language and understood how best to employ it to achieve his presidential goals. Eisenhower dismissed rhetorical flourishes in favour of a deliberate simplicity that strengthened his connection with the American people. He went to great lengths to ensure that even as he sounded presidential, his easy-to-understand speeches enabled him to reach the broadest possible audience. Scrutinising Eisenhower’s language illuminates the consistency with which Eisenhower infused his discourse with key national symbols. Yet, perhaps because Eisenhower’s language was so overtly “American,” engaging with such fundamental tropes as the Declaration of Independence, the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, and referring to traditional ideals of freedom, peace and religion, the conscious application of these ideals was rendered opaque to most Americans, then and now. As an Australian historian, an “outsider” to the myths of Americanism, I found this aspect of Eisenhower’s presidency distinctive – and it provided the impetus for a historically grounded exploration connecting the idealist ideology of Eisenhower’s discourse with his approach toward the presidency and the Cold War.

Raised in the rural Midwest at the dawn of the twentieth century Dwight Eisenhower believed wholeheartedly in the idea of America. Indeed, according to Herbert Parmet, the American
ideals portrayed in his school textbooks were as “sacred as the truths of the Bible.”¹ And, more than three decades after he had left Abilene, Kansas, Eisenhower reflected that his hometown was “a society which, more nearly than any other I have encountered, eliminated prejudices based upon wealth, race or creed, and maintained a standard of values that placed a premium upon integrity, decency and consideration for others.”² Elected president in a landslide in November 1952, Eisenhower brought with him to the White House a romanticised vision of the United States – an idealised understanding of the nation as he believed the Founding Fathers had imagined it. This innovative reconsideration of Eisenhower’s idealist construction of his presidency, and his attempt to (re)construct his vision of an ideal nation, has tapped into a way of viewing the United States that, to date, has been almost entirely overlooked in Eisenhower scholarship. Yet, each of the themes surveyed within this thesis reveals in great detail Eisenhower’s strategic use of language to construct an ideologically persuasive vision of the United States meant to unify Americans behind his presidency. And, as this analysis has demonstrated, Eisenhower’s (re)construction of the ideal United States required that Americans embrace and embody this idealised vision in order to secure the future of his beloved American republic.

Eisenhower’s ambitious attempt to (re)construct his vision of an ideal United States, led by an ideal president, takes on a greater significance when framed within the context of superpower conflict. This study has revealed that Eisenhower’s idealist imaginings of the United States underpinned his ideological battle with the Soviet Union for the hearts and minds of the world’s peoples. It is not uncommon to find a portrayal of Eisenhower as an ardent Cold Warrior. The fact that he consistently merged foundational narratives with contemporary issues in order to persuade Americans that a recommitment to these national ideals represented the clearest path to Cold War victory has, however, been under-appreciated. Eisenhower’s commitment to psychological warfare as a key component of US Cold War strategy has been extensively unpacked in the works of Kenneth Osgood. Nonetheless, scant attention by the academic community has been given to Eisenhower’s belief that the United States had to become the exemplar of the ideals it professed to revere in order to persuade the unaligned nations to embrace democracy and formally bind themselves to the free world. The subsequent worldwide

rejection of communism, according to Eisenhower, would have forced the internal collapse of
the Soviet Union, thus winning for the United States a permanent and “true” peace based on
the American Way of Life. For this historian, Eisenhower’s idealism is the defining element of
his presidential legacy.

Where to From Here?

During a Republican debate in November 2015, Donald Trump invoked Dwight Eisenhower,
calling him a “good president, great president, people liked him. I like Ike.” Since Trump’s
election in November 2016 there have been plenty of signs that the United States’ new president
aspires to be the Eisenhower for his time. His rallying cry – and persistent twitter hashtag – is to
“Make America Great Again” (#MAGA) and revolves around his declared ability to restore the
nation’s confidence, shaken by international tensions and domestic anxieties. Trump has pledged
the restoration of a prosperous United States, engaging American myths and evoking the
nostalgic image of the Eisenhower era to support a divisive presidency mired in racism, plagued
by scandal and ruled by chaos. Americans, however, had chosen Eisenhower because he unified
not divided. Elected as Cold War tensions increased, Eisenhower’s presidency was defined by
his attempt to create an ideal United States based soundly on the foundational narratives of the
Founding Fathers. For Eisenhower, these myths of Americanism had to be wholeheartedly
embraced if the United States was to emerge victorious from the Cold War. For Trump, these are
ideals to be discarded if inconvenient or manipulated to shape an alternative vision of the United
States to the one Eisenhower clung fervently to.

Historically, American presidents have been perceived as the ideal embodiment of the United
States, looked upon to perpetuate the idea of exceptionalism around which the nation can rally.3
In the Trump era this has become a highly-topical and intensely debated issue. For, as their
nation’s chief story-teller, American presidents are uniquely placed to have a profound impact
on a radically diverse group who seek unification behind the notion of Americanism. And, as
Tami Davis and Sean Lynn-Jones asserted in the late-1980s, deeply-rooted “myths cannot
easily be expunged from the American psyche.”4 As such, nationalism always is a double-
edged sword. National identity is, as Benedict Anderson suggests, an “an imagined political

3 Jason Gilmore, ‘Translating American Exceptionalism: Comparing Presidential Discourse About the United
community.” It is based, not on the historical, geographical or ethnographic markers of identity, but rather on what Mary Stuckey believes is “the power of rhetoric to form and focus allegiances.” Yet, the creation of an “us” requires the inevitable creation of an “other.” At the time of this writing, Trump appears intent upon exacerbating division amongst Americans, creating “others” within as well as outside the nation’s borders. The “us” in Eisenhower’s ideal included not just every American citizen, but all those who loved freedom and democracy around the world.

Barbara Hinckley has claimed that when presidents address the nation, “it is America speaking.” When it came to the (re)construction of his ideal United States, a problematic element of Eisenhower’s presidential legacy is exposed. For eight years Eisenhower engaged in nation building designed to impress upon all Americans which values he believed they should revere, who he wanted them to be and how they would wage peace in order to win the Cold War. Eisenhower’s language emphasised his conviction that Americans could achieve peace on their own terms – that in order to emerge victorious all that was required was for them to be American, to become the nation the Founding Fathers had imagined. Drawing on national history, Eisenhower preached a message that declared if Americans embodied the very best of America and were as Abraham Lincoln defined them as “the last, best hope of Earth,” they could never be anything but victorious.

In his 2017 *Three Days in January: Dwight Eisenhower's Final Mission*, the chief political anchor for the Fox News Channel Bret Baier wrote that although he had grown up in an era that believed the world had “skipped a beat during Ike’s years,” his research into Eisenhower’s presidency had led him to conclude that Eisenhower was in fact the “buried treasure” of the previous century – a man of underappreciated influence in a century of great individuals all clamouring for attention. Indeed, the continuing impact of Eisenhower’s ideological idealism on the United States has prompted recent scholarship to begin to clarify his position as a persuasive political strategist. The need remains for further analysis of the ways Eisenhower

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engaged with the history and myths of the United States during his presidency. The investigation of Eisenhower’s idealism presented here represents only a step in this direction. For, although little thought appears to have been given to Eisenhower’s role in naturalising the discourse of American national identity and in extending the notions of Americanism, the long-term effects of his impact upon the way Americans perceive of themselves in crisis are still being felt in the United States. Because even though the 1950s have long been considered a bland era defined only by a supposed consensus and conformity amongst Americans, they were emphatically more than that. The fear of nuclear war, Soviet expansionism and the perceived threat to the American Way of Life were entirely real for a majority of Americans. Yet, they were led for eight years by a popular and revered president who consistently reinforced his belief that the American way was infinitely superior to anything else and thus would always, always secure the final victory. It does not seem feasible that Eisenhower’s idealist rhetoric had no lingering influence. It does not seem possible that Eisenhower had no effect on the way Americans see themselves in crisis. Looking beyond the need for a re-examination of Eisenhower’s presidency, what could a better understanding of his use of American ideals tell us about the way successive American presidents waged Cold War? In light of what this exploration of Eisenhower’s idealism has revealed about the way the United States is imagined, and constantly reimagined by its leaders, further study awaits.
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CONCLUSION


**Book Sections**


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