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**THE LONG TWILIGHT STRUGGLE: PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC AND  
NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE COLD WAR, 1945-1974**

A Dissertation in  
Communication Arts and Sciences

by

Sara Ann Mehlretter Drury

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The dissertation of Sara Ann Mehlretter Drury was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

J. Michael Hogan  
Liberal Arts Research Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Jeremy Engels  
Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

J. Philip Jenkins  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Humanities  
Department of History and Religious Studies

Thomas W. Benson  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Rhetoric  
Head of Department of Communication Arts and Sciences

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the discourse of U.S. presidents as they defined and redefined the concept of “national security” during the Cold War. As commander-in-chief and the most visible spokesman for the United States in world affairs, the president has enormous power to shape understandings of national security strategy and foreign policy. The project consists of a series of four case studies in presidential speech making on national security: Harry S. Truman’s “Truman Doctrine” speech; Dwight Eisenhower’s “Age of Peril” radio address; John F. Kennedy’s “Inaugural Address”; and the speeches of Richard Nixon during his February 1972 trip to the People’s Republic of China. I argue that each of these episodes marked a significant moment in the rhetoric of national security, as each president promoted a new understanding of the nature of the threats to U.S. national security interests and the motives and ambitions of the nation’s enemies. Each president’s national security rhetoric in turn had significant implications for the nation’s diplomacy, defense policy, economic policy, and role in world affairs. The study demonstrates how national security has been a rhetorically malleable construct, and it contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about the rhetoric of foreign policy, the history of the Cold War, the intersections of foreign policy and political campaign rhetoric, and the implications of national security rhetoric for democratic theory and practice.

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
UNDERSTANDING PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC	7
PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC DURING THE COLD WAR	12
OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION	17
ENDNOTES	23
<b>CHAPTER TWO TAKING “IMMEDIATE AND RESOLUTE ACTION”: HARRY S. TRUMAN AND THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE SPEECH</b>	<b>31</b>
THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE ORIGINS OF CONTAINMENT, 1946-1947	33
THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE SPEECH	47
RESPONSES TO THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE	55
CONCLUSION	60
ENDNOTES	61
<b>CHAPTER THREE SECURITY IN THE “AGE OF PERIL”: DWIGHT EISENHOWER, AMERICAN VALUES, AND NATIONAL SECURITY</b>	<b>73</b>
EISENHOWER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW LOOK	76
FINDING SECURITY IN AN AGE OF PERIL	87
EISENHOWER AND THE EXPANSION OF NATIONAL SECURITY	96
CONCLUSION	100
ENDNOTES	102
<b>CHAPTER FOUR “PAY ANY PRICE, BEAR ANY BURDEN”: NATIONAL SECURITY IN JOHN F. KENNEDY’S INAUGURAL ADDRESS</b>	<b>112</b>
KENNEDY, THE MISSILE GAP, AND THE ELECTION OF 1960	114
NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE NEW FRONTIER	122
THE LONG TWILIGHT STRUGGLE	133
CONCLUSION	140
ENDNOTES	141
<b>CHAPTER FIVE “BUILDING A BRIDGE” TO CHINA: RICHARD NIXON’S NATIONAL SECURITY RHETORIC</b>	<b>151</b>
PLANNING THE TRIP TO CHINA	153
NIXON’S TRIP TO CHINA	167
MUTUAL INTERESTS AND NATIONAL SECURITY	178
CONCLUSION	181
ENDNOTES	183
<b>CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION</b>	<b>195</b>
NAMING AND FRAMING THE NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT	201
NATIONAL SECURITY AND U.S. ELECTORAL POLITICS	205
THE SCOPE OF NATIONAL SECURITY RHETORIC	209
THE LEGACY OF THE COLD WAR NATIONAL SECURITY RHETORIC	215
ENDNOTES	219
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>VITA</b>	<b>242</b>

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

On March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman addressed a concerned and somewhat hostile joint session of the United States Congress. The speech was the culmination of the Truman administration's efforts to convince Congress that Soviet expansion threatened the national security of the United States. In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union had rapidly established "satellite" states—communist nations in Eastern Europe that expanded Soviet power and influence. In early 1947, it appeared that Greece and Turkey would be the next two nations overtaken by Soviet-backed communist forces. According to a memo written by State Department official Joseph M. Jones, the Truman administration was determined to respond to this situation with "prompt and vigorous action."<sup>1</sup>

Key members of Truman's cabinet met with congressional leaders on February 27, 1947. During that gathering, Secretary of State Dean Acheson grew frustrated with the Congress's failure to fully appreciate the communist threat. When faced with a less-than-positive response from the congressional leadership, Acheson launched into "a full analysis" of "the situation throughout the world, the pressure of communist parties everywhere, and the necessity, in the interest of the security of the United States, in taking a firm stand." Jones wrote that Acheson's analysis left the congressional leadership shaken and concerned about the future of democracy abroad. In turn, the congressional leaders promised to support the Truman administration's

plan to offer aid to Greece and Turkey “*on the condition* that the President should explain the situation to Congress in a special message and to the people by radio.”<sup>2</sup> Over the next two weeks, the administration rushed to prepare that special message. On March 12, Truman took his plan to Congress, to the U.S. public, and to the world.

The speech would later be known as “The Truman Doctrine.” In it, Truman made the case for U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey. He explained that World War II had left these two nations devastated and in need of assistance if they were to remain democracies. Truman argued that “totalitarian regimes”—and clearly he meant Soviet-supported regimes, though he diplomatically refrained from blaming the Soviets directly—had been “forced” on nations “against their will.” Truman pledged the United States to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation” around the globe, thereby generalizing the policy of support given to Greece and Turkey to other democracies resisting communist domination.<sup>3</sup> Most significantly, he argued that failure to enact such a policy would “endanger the welfare” of the United States.<sup>4</sup> In this speech, Truman thus repudiated America’s tradition of isolationism, insisting that the Cold War dictated a new, more internationalist understanding of U.S. national security.

The period known as the Cold War—lasting roughly from 1945 to 1991—was an era when the very meaning of U.S. “national security” underwent a radical transformation. Although the final months of World War II planted the seeds of the Cold War, Truman’s speech on March 12, 1947, was an era in which U.S. national security depended not only on events at home, but also on the global environment and political events abroad. Truman referred specifically to “national security” only in the



opening passage of his Truman Doctrine speech,<sup>5</sup> but the implications of his plan for U.S. global leadership were clear. His administration intended to aggressively counter Soviet expansionism diplomatically, economically, and even militarily. The Truman Doctrine suggested a clear leadership role for the United States, one where actions abroad secured the nation at home. Truman led the way, inaugurating what President John F. Kennedy would later call the “long twilight struggle” against the forces of communism around the world.<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation investigates the discourse of U.S. presidents as they defined, reinterpreted, and occasionally completely transformed the meaning and applications of the concept of “national security” during the early Cold War. Presidents have invoked the concept of national security to justify a variety of foreign and domestic policy initiatives. As a result, the meaning of the term has been in constant flux. Put another way, national security has been a *rhetorically malleable* construct that has been marshaled by succeeding presidents to justify or rationalize a wide variety of foreign and even domestic policy initiatives.

Although they tend not to talk about it in rhetorical terms, historians have noted the variable usage of the term “national security” in U.S. history. Joseph Romm has argued that the term has been used in U.S. politics since the 1790s, but it was not widely invoked until after the 1947 National Security Act.<sup>7</sup> Mark R. Shulman, on the other hand, located the origins of contemporary understandings of national security in the Progressive Era. Shulman traced the history of the National Security League, a political organization in the early twentieth century that wanted to replace a “defense” orientation to foreign policy with a “security” orientation. Defense had its roots in

Jeffersonian philosophies of foreign affairs, which suggested military “sufficiency” through a small standing army, limited engagement with other nations, and deference towards the international nation-state system. Security, on the other hand, represented a Hamiltonian perspective, suggesting policies that would create and sustain a world that protected and promoted U.S. interests. “Security” was more activist and engaging, whereas “defense” was protective and isolationist.<sup>8</sup> Shulman argued that the adoption of the 1947 National Security Act—and the orientation of U.S. foreign policy towards security rather than defense—was largely the result of the National Security League’s efforts to promote a more proactive alternative to Wilsonian idealism and a more engaged foreign policy to replace the nation’s tradition of isolationism.<sup>9</sup>

Other historians have linked U.S. national security with articulations of U.S. grand strategy—the strategic mobilization of a nation’s economic, political, and military resources to protect against security threats.<sup>10</sup> Historian John Lewis Gaddis has argued that since the founding of the nation, the overall goal of U.S. grand strategy has remained the same: to protect U.S. hegemony and minimize threats to the nation’s interests.<sup>11</sup> Following these principles, Gaddis argued that the United States tended to respond to threats by “taking the offensive, by becoming more conspicuous, by confronting, neutralizing, and if possible, overwhelming the sources of danger rather than fleeing from them.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally, during the Cold War, the grand strategy and interests of the United States “expanded” from the more defensive Western hemispheric focus to protecting freedom around the world.<sup>13</sup>

Historian Emily S. Rosenberg, however, has articulated one problem of equating national security with the grand strategy behind U.S. foreign policy. Rosenberg has noted that national security has encompassed a variety of issues, including social, economic, political, military, and cultural elements. These elements, in a given historical moment, are believed to allow the nation to prosper. In Rosenberg's view, historians should not make "the same discursive turn that Cold War policymakers [*sic*] themselves made: conflating a wide variety of contexts and complexities into a symbolically powerful but increasingly diffuse phrase—national security."<sup>14</sup> This conflation only results in semiotic confusion and contradiction. At the same time, Rosenberg's observation that policy makers have invoked national security to promote a variety of purposes and policies points to the rhetorical richness and power of the term.

In this study, I more fully account for the richness of the concept of "national security" in U.S. public discourse. Through rhetorical criticism, my analysis sheds light on the meanings and evolution of national security as used in presidential rhetoric during the Cold War. This was a frightening and volatile period, when many within the United States viewed their day-to-day security—indeed, their very survival—as threatened by an ideological and sometimes military struggle against the Soviet Union. Of course, the Cold War itself was arguably a rhetorical construct, resting upon sometimes exaggerated threats and stereotypical portraits of "the enemy." Nevertheless, for most of the public, the threat seemed very real, and presidents interpreted U.S. national security interests in the context of that threat.

The rhetorical criticism of public address is a particularly apt way to study the presidential discourses of national security and how they framed U.S. policies during the Cold War. As the commander-in-chief, the president has unchallenged access to intelligence on issues of national security. Since the 1947 National Security Act, the president also remains in control of the major institutional players in national security policy-making: the Department of Defense (DOD), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Joint Chiefs. One of most important jobs of the president is to communicate to the U.S. public about the national security interests of the nation. As chief executive, the president also serves as communicator-in-chief.<sup>15</sup>

The focus of this dissertation is on how presidents—the primary rhetorical agents of foreign policy discourse in contemporary U.S. politics—have utilized a framework of national security in their public rhetoric to justify a wide variety of practices and policies throughout the Cold War. Presidential rhetoric was not the only force influencing definitions and understandings of national security, of course. Elite discourses, policy proposals, and analyses of strategic threats substantially inform the historical contexts of each case study. Furthermore, U.S. military actions abroad and the development and deployment of nuclear weapons certainly impacted the rhetorical situations faced by the presidents as they addressed concerns over national security. Many scholars have considered these elements and their relation to the rhetoric of the Cold War, and where appropriate, I draw from these analyses. An in-depth consideration of all these factors, however, is beyond the scope of this project. To better explore the nature and character of the term “national security” in U.S.

presidential discourse, the central texts of this project are major public statements by the president of the United States. I analyze four significant “moments” when presidential rhetoric significantly reshaped the meaning or scope of U.S. national security. As commander-in-chief and the most visible spokesman for the United States in world affairs, presidents have the power to shape popular understandings of U.S. foreign policy. This study examines four examples of how Cold War presidents invoked, redefined, and occasionally transformed the meaning of “national security” while arguing for new approaches to U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

### **Understanding Presidential Rhetoric**

Scholars of political communication and U.S. public address have produced a rich literature on presidential communication. In political science, scholars have focused primarily on how the institutional structure of the presidency affects the president’s public communication and how those communications in turn influence—or do not influence—public opinion. Scholars of public address, on the other hand, have directed most of their research toward interpreting the rhetorical strategies and symbolic significance of presidential discourse.

Political scientist Jeffrey Tulis’s 1987 book, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, proposed a new understanding of the modern presidency centered on the power of presidents to rally public opinion behind their policy agendas. “Since the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson,” Tulis argued, “popular or mass rhetoric has become a principal tool of presidential governance.”<sup>16</sup> According to

Tulis, the rhetorical presidency represented a radical change in how the presidency worked, a change so radical that it created, in effect, a “second constitution.”<sup>17</sup> No longer did the president deliberate with Congress, as envisioned by the Founders, but rather went over the heads of legislators with direct appeals to the people. Indeed, Tulis contended that presidents have come to feel that they “have a *duty* to constantly defend themselves publicly, to promote policy initiatives nationwide, and to inspire the population.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the president became the rhetorical leader of the nation, expected not only to advocate for policies but also to inspire confidence and promote the general welfare.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the presidency has become an office of symbolic leadership in which “personal or charismatic power” is more important than the president’s constitutional or legal authority.”<sup>20</sup>

Other political scientists have argued that, while presidents may feel they have a duty to address the public, presidential rhetoric has few discernable effects on public opinion. George C. Edwards III, for example, has questioned the “potential of persuasive leadership” in the presidency,<sup>21</sup> arguing that a president’s rhetoric has little ability to “reshape the political landscape” and “pave the way for change.”<sup>22</sup> While he agreed with Tulis that “leading the public is at the core of the modern presidency,” Edwards’ statistical analysis found the “bully pulpit” to be “ineffective” at changing public opinion.<sup>23</sup> For Edwards, “[p]residential power is *not* the power to persuade,” but rather, the ability to “facilitate change by recognizing opportunities in their environments and fashioning strategies and tactics to exploit them.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, Edwards has contended that presidential communication is rarely effective at

changing public opinion, although presidents can seize opportunities to build their policy initiatives upon the foundation of already existing beliefs and values.

Scholars of rhetoric and public address typically reject both of these perspectives on presidential rhetoric. Martin J. Medhurst has that argued the concept of the “rhetorical presidency” is an essentially negative view, portraying rhetorical leadership as a distortion of the constitutional powers of the executive branch and as a mode of leadership reliant upon “emotional appeals to ignorant audiences.”

Advocating a broader, more positive perspective on “presidential rhetoric,” Medhurst instead urged researchers to study how the president’s words manifest “the principles and practices of rhetoric, understood as the human capacity to see what is most likely to be persuasive to a given audience on a given occasion.” As Medhurst conceived it, the study of presidential rhetoric entails “how those principles function to allow the speaker or writer—who happens to be a U.S. president—to achieve his or her ends by symbolic means.”<sup>25</sup> This orientation focuses scholarly attention on how presidents help set the political agenda for the nation, define the terms of major public debates, and generally influence the character of public discourse about important public issues in the United States. By illuminating these more subtle or indirect effects of presidential rhetoric, Medhurst argued that the study of presidential rhetoric can make important contributions to our understanding of U.S. history, and encourage us to think about rhetoric “as a way of doing, a way of knowing, and a way of being.”<sup>26</sup>

David Zarefsky has elaborated on one of those ways in which presidents use rhetoric to influence policy debates: the power of definition. According to Zarefsky, the rhetoric of the president defines “political reality” by shaping how the media and

other political actors respond to an issue. “Because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication,” Zarefsky argued, the president, in “defining a situation,” also “might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public.” Through his communication, the president defines the range of options available “from among multiple possibilities.”<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Roderick P. Hart has identified twelve possible effects from presidential speeches and pronouncements that affirm the rhetorical power of the presidency. Hart argues that presidential rhetoric may (1) crystallize vague concepts, (2) alter the national imagination, (3) change definitional habits, (4) shift people’s presuppositions, (5) relocate sources of authority, (6) change the arc of time and (7) space, (8) shorten the political agenda, (9) shift the locus of controversy, (10) alter our political metrics, (11) model specific attitudes, and (12) instantiate new possibilities. According to Hart, presidential discourse does not “fall on deaf ears,” but instead has effects that are “broader and deeper than can be captured by paper and pencil measures.”<sup>28</sup>

Defining events and interpreting history are aspects of what Leroy Dorsey has called the president’s “rhetorical leadership”—the “process of discovering, articulating, and sharing the available means of influence in order to motivate human agents in a particular situation.”<sup>29</sup> As Jason A. Edwards has observed, U.S. presidents historically have been the “center of American political culture,” serving as the symbol of our government, the dominant actor in policy debates, and the chief communicator.<sup>30</sup>



Particularly in matters of foreign affairs, the president's power to define the situation and outline the options available is unmatched by any other political actor. Few citizens have first-hand experience with foreign affairs, so they look to the president for information about the state of the world and U.S. foreign policy interests. Because of his position as commander-in-chief, the president has not only the legal power to send U.S. troops to war, but also the rhetorical power to portray situations as threats or crises warranting diplomatic or military action.

Much of the president's influence over U.S. foreign policy rests in his ability to define our national security interests. As commander-in-chief, the president has more access to intelligence information than other political actors, and this was especially true during the Cold War era, when the executive branch gained more control over national security matters.<sup>31</sup> As the head of state, the president gives meaning to the concept of national security by defining the threats to the nation, identifying friends and foes, and articulating a vision of the nation's role in global affairs. This is not to say that the president has sole or unchallenged authority over U.S. foreign policy, of course. As J. Michael Hogan has noted, the president may be challenged by a "variety of individuals and groups," some of which may become "formidable opponents of the administration." The "skepticism and criticism" of these critics can even undermine the president's policies on occasion.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the president's power to define our national security interests remains considerable. When the president declares that the United States faces a serious international threat, that statement makes headlines and mobilizes the political, economic, and military

resources of the nation. The president typically has the first and most important words—if not the last word—about U.S. national security.

### **Presidential Rhetoric During the Cold War**

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to analyzing presidential rhetoric during the Cold War. The Cold War may have been a “war of words,” but as Medhurst has emphasized, it was no “less real or less significant for being rhetorical.”<sup>33</sup> The key weapons in the Cold War were words and images—the realities shaped by symbolic action—with only an occasional physical confrontation between the primary antagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union. Many scholars have focused on moments of crisis or high drama,<sup>34</sup> while others have focused upon how presidents have justified their foreign policy agendas to the U.S. public. All of this research helps to frame a discussion of national security, yet still leaves open the question of how presidents interpreted the concept of national security during the Cold War.

Rhetoric played an important role in forging the political culture of the Cold War. Martin J. Medhurst has noted that even the most “material manifestations” of the Cold War—“armaments, armies, air forces, agreements, et cetera”—depended upon presidential rhetoric to build public support or interpret their significance and meaning.<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Ivie has argued that Eisenhower’s Cold War rhetoric, which emphasized the need for atomic superiority, “indefinitely” prolonged the Soviet-U.S. rivalry and frightened the U.S. and global publics.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Rachel Holloway has

argued that Ronald Reagan “reinvigorated the technological sublime”—a “vision that merges technological mastery of the environment with religious fervor and nationalism”—and linked the development of exponentially more powerful weapons in the late Cold War to the “moral enlightenment” of the nation, and to further “movement along America’s destined path.”<sup>37</sup> Throughout the Cold War, presidents also organized and approved secret, systematic, and coordinated propaganda campaigns, which further heightened East-West tensions. Examining the massive propaganda campaigns conducted by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, for example, Shawn J. Parry-Giles has concluded that such covert efforts became a powerful and “standard mode of rhetorical influence” for these presidencies and contributed significantly to the Cold War mentality of hostility, suspicion, and fear.<sup>38</sup>

A number of rhetorical critics have examined the rhetoric of foreign policy “crises” during the Cold War era. Arguing that the rhetoric of international crisis was a recurrent theme of presidents during this time, Theodore Otto Windt concluded that most Cold War “crises” were not defined by any “real” or objective criteria, but by “the President’s perception of the situation and the rhetoric he use[d] to describe it.” During such crises, presidents have tended to respond by defining an enemy, unifying the nation around shared principles and beliefs, and calling upon the public to rally behind the president’s response to the situation.<sup>39</sup> Richard A. Cherwitz, for example, has argued that in responding to the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Lyndon Johnson used a rhetoric of crisis to limit “the foreign policy alternatives of the United States in Vietnam.”<sup>40</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff has concluded that presidents find the language of

crisis “alluring” because it allows them to more easily rally the public behind their foreign policy decisions.<sup>41</sup>

Presidential war rhetoric has also attracted considerable attention from rhetorical scholars. Campbell and Jamieson have explained that when faced with involving the nation in war, presidents “ordinarily set forth the evidence and arguments for that conclusion in a detailed narrative, requesting congressional action empowering them to wage war and exhorting the nation to mobilize.”<sup>42</sup> In the process, presidents have expanded the powers of the executive branch vis-à-vis Congress by rallying public opinion behind their policies. In the Cold War, Leroy Dorsey has shown how even “nonmilitary” objectives have been promoted with a presidential rhetoric of war. John F. Kennedy successfully promoted his “Peace Corps” by casting the young volunteers in the program as “the reincarnation of America’s martial pioneers” braving a “new world of dangers” in the pursuit of world peace.<sup>43</sup>

Much of the scholarship on presidential war rhetoric has emphasized the use of fear appeals and demonization. In his work on rhetorical metaphor, Robert L. Ivie has identified “victimage” as a consistent motif in presidential war rhetoric, exonerating the United States and its actions while demonizing the Soviet Union. Throughout the Cold War, presidents have portrayed the United States as a “rational, tolerant . . . and pacific nation,” according to Ivie, while the communist enemy was portrayed as evil and savage.<sup>44</sup> G. Thomas Goodnight has argued that Ronald Reagan used fear of the Soviet enemy to rehabilitate nuclear weapons as “traditional instruments of power politics,” which according to Goodnight created an even greater

threat to world peace. After Reagan's "Evil Empire" address, Goodnight contended, "the world was called upon to play out an eternal drama where implacable evil always demands heroic sacrifice." Such a conflict necessitated a continued build-up of a superior nuclear force.<sup>45</sup>

Scholarship on presidential rhetoric has contributed significantly to our understanding of the Cold War, particularly in the areas of presidential crisis and war rhetoric. However, there is still much that we do not understand about how presidential rhetoric shaped understandings of Cold War national security. Indeed, scholars have sometimes mistakenly characterized the rhetoric of national security during the Cold War as unchanging or monolithic. For example, in his analysis of how U.S. presidents interpreted post-Cold War national security, political scientist David Campbell labeled the security discourses of the Cold War as "long-standing and well-established modes of interpretation," implying that national security had a fixed meaning throughout the era.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Ivie has suggested that the rhetoric of national security, even during the recent War on Terror,<sup>47</sup> invariably "defaults" to what Ivie terms "a discourse of *insecurity*—to a political ritual of affirming national identity by articulating fear and loathing of a demonized enemy."<sup>48</sup> According to Ivie, the rhetoric of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign offered an alternate conception to this discourse of *insecurity*, but Obama was not the first to move away from the rhetoric of demonization and victimage. As this study will show, the rhetoric of national security underwent a number of transformations throughout the early Cold War.

Paul A. Chilton has begun the process of analyzing and understanding the metaphors associated with national security rhetoric. He argued that “security is embedded in language and culture,” and he suggests that the “initial problem is to disentangle it.”<sup>49</sup> His analysis illustrates how politicians and policy makers have often connected *security* to the metaphors of *container*, *link*, *path*, and *force*, and he argues that political actors often use these metaphors to explain national security to the public. For example, in the early Cold War, the dominant metaphor was “containing” communism. Chilton admitted, however, that his essay is only a beginning, and suggested that scholars may need to analyze “the many conceptual and discursive connections” that are a part of the discourses of security.<sup>50</sup> Additional scholarly work is needed to investigate the richness and complexity of “national security” during the Cold War, as the concept has expanded and contracted dramatically depending on the historical moment and situation.

Taking up these challenges, this dissertation focuses on a variety of different rhetorics of U.S. national security, as articulated by a series of presidents, in an era of fear and uncertainty. For more than forty years, the United States dealt with occasional crises and a seemingly perpetual cold “war.” In this project, I identify and analyze four significant “moments” when the meaning of U.S. “national security” was somehow redefined or even transformed by presidential rhetoric. Each chapter considers a specific case study of presidential rhetoric: Harry Truman’s 1947 Truman Doctrine speech, Dwight Eisenhower’s Age of Peril radio address in 1953, John F. Kennedy’s 1961 Inaugural Address, and Richard Nixon’s discourse during his trip to China in 1972. These case studies represent moments when presidents challenged

and, in some cases, radically altered prevailing understandings of U.S. national security.

In each chapter, I engage in close analysis of a particular speech (or speeches, in Nixon's case) in an effort to illuminate how Cold War presidents have invoked national security and defined it for specific conditions and purposes. I first discuss the historical context that influenced and was influenced by each president's rhetoric on national security. In some cases this includes antecedent rhetorical texts that help account for the development of new policy initiatives, such as George Kennan's "Long Telegram" or Richard Nixon's writings on U.S.-Chinese relations. These discourses, along with declassified documents from presidential archives, will help illuminate how each president understood the rhetorical challenges he faced in articulating a new conception of national security. I then closely analyze the speeches themselves, illuminating how each president defined or redefined national security and attempted to build political support for his new policy initiatives. Finally, I conclude each chapter by tracing how each president's rhetorical strategies altered—in some cases dramatically—understandings of U.S. national security. In other words, I reflect on how each president's rhetoric contributed to the continuities and changes in national security rhetoric during the Cold War.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

In describing the period immediately after World War II, historian John Lewis Gaddis writes about "the return of fear" in the rhetoric of U.S. foreign policy—a

seemingly ironic observation considering that his book, *The Cold War: A New History*, begins with the Grand Alliance's defeat of the Axis powers in 1945.<sup>51</sup> What Gaddis is referring to, of course, is the desperate search by both the United States and Soviet Union for new security arrangements in the postwar world. Joseph Stalin apparently believed that the capitalistic states would eventually destroy one another, and he envisioned security coming from the spread of socialism.<sup>52</sup> Postwar Soviet diplomacy "baffled" the West, and Truman struggled to find ways to create a secure peace with the Soviets after the war.<sup>53</sup> Arguments over the development of nuclear weapons, Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe, and the division and occupation of Germany quickly cooled relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Truman's staff furiously researched the Soviets' history and actions and drafted detailed analyses of their motives, aspirations, and economic and military capabilities.<sup>54</sup> The most famous of these, of course, was George Kennan's Long Telegram, penned under the pseudonym "X" and published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947.<sup>55</sup>

In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I analyze how the events of 1946, including Kennan's Long Telegram, set into motion a process of redefining U.S. national security during the Truman administration. Despite growing concerns about Soviet ambitions in the immediate aftermath of the war, Truman did not speak publicly about the threat until March 12, 1947, when he delivered his famous "Truman Doctrine" speech to the U.S. Congress.<sup>56</sup> In that speech, Truman redefined the obligations of the United States in world affairs, dashing the hopes of those in Congress who hoped for a return to isolation after World War II.<sup>57</sup> Truman's



articulation of U.S. security interests extended well beyond our own borders, and he vowed to defend the rights of free peoples against communist threats. The Truman Doctrine challenged citizens to think of national security in more global terms, and encouraged a unilateral leadership role for the United States amongst free nations. Finally, Truman's address paved the way for the implementation of the Marshall Plan and, later, Truman's national security strategy of containment.

In Chapter Three, I turn to Eisenhower's expansion of the rhetoric of national security beyond Truman's metaphors of "containment." Invoking national security to justify a variety of foreign and domestic policy initiatives, Eisenhower envisioned deterring Soviet aggression through the threat of "massive retaliation" and proposed that the United States might, over time, win the "war of ideas" and eventually "roll back" the Iron Curtain of communism. Eisenhower's national security strategy, the so-called New Look, encompassed a host of military, political, and propaganda initiatives designed to counter the Soviet threat around the world.<sup>58</sup> Eisenhower laid the groundwork for this expansion in the scope of national security in his May 1953 radio address, "Age of Peril," by depicting the "American spirit" as under attack. He warned the nation to prepare for a prolonged and multifaceted struggle against the Soviet Union. To protect the nation, Eisenhower advocated a massive build-up of U.S. "air power," along with a greater reliance on atomic weaponry. This, Eisenhower assured the nation, would be the most effective and economical way to defend the nation and ultimately prevail in the Cold War.<sup>59</sup>

In the fourth chapter, I argue that the national security rhetoric of John F. Kennedy further escalated the Cold War by depicting the Soviet threat not only as an

enduring conflict, but also as an immediate threat that needed to be countered through conventional military means. In contrast to his predecessor's patient and frugal approach to national security strategy, Kennedy pledged to meet any sort of military challenge the Soviets might pose. In his "Inaugural Address," Kennedy depicted the fight between the free and the communist worlds as an imminent apocalyptic battle. Whereas Eisenhower had looked to enduring a prolonged "age of peril," Kennedy talked of the present as the "maximum hour of danger" in a "long twilight struggle" with communism.<sup>60</sup> Kennedy's characterization of the national security threat necessitated that the United States be prepared for any challenge, and his national security strategy was designed to equip the United States to defend freedom around the globe. Kennedy's bold, even confrontational rhetoric put the Soviets on notice that his administration would act quickly to counter any threat, and that commitment led to a series of confrontations, including the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and a rapidly escalating war in Vietnam.

In Chapter Five, I focus on Richard Nixon's turn away from the confrontational rhetoric of earlier Cold War presidents and his promotion of a vision of national security that rested upon mutually beneficial diplomatic and economic relations with the communist world. Nixon charted a new path between the democratic and communist worlds when, in 1971, he announced that he would begin efforts to normalize diplomatic relationships with the People's Republic of China. This was a dramatic change coming from a man who had made his political reputation as an anticommunist crusader.<sup>61</sup> In 1972, Nixon not only visited and recognized China, but also began an era of *rapprochement* and *détente*—the bringing

together of opposing factions and a relaxing of tensions. During his trip to China, his rhetoric suggested to the U.S. and global publics that even when ideologies differed, great powers could find common ground, easing military tensions and co-existing in a more peaceful world. Nixon's speeches before and after his departure from the United States, his statements to reporters while in China, and the Shanghai Communiqué that came out of the visit all contributed to a new, more cooperative paradigm in U.S. relations with the communist world.<sup>62</sup>

Taken together, these case studies illuminate how various presidents have defined and invoked national security for a variety of different purposes and policies. In the post-9/11 era of terrorist threats, it is more important than ever that we understand how presidents have rhetorically constructed the concept of national security throughout our history. My goal is not to develop a new theory of national security rhetoric, but to illustrate how the concept has functioned to frame U.S. foreign policy debates, constrain or inspire particular policies, and mobilize public support in particular moments in history.

This project makes several contributions to the fields of rhetorical studies, presidential studies, and the history of the Cold War. First, it adds to the research on foreign policy rhetoric through an examination of the rhetoric of U.S. national security in four significant moments. Each chapter identifies a specific presidential deployment of national security rhetoric in a particular context. My textual analysis of the speeches draws from a critical consideration of primary materials in presidential archives, as well as from government agency archives and secondary source material. These materials, largely declassified, allow me to look at the relationship between the

rhetor and text “as a historical matter” and attempt to account for the rhetorical choices each president made.<sup>63</sup> In doing so, I show how Cold War presidential rhetoric functioned to redefine national security and the proper U.S. role in the world in particular historical contexts.

Second, these case studies represent a move forward in the longitudinal study of a major concept in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric. Taking an approach inspired by the tradition of ideographic criticism in rhetorical studies,<sup>64</sup> I examine the shifts and continuities of national security rhetoric across time, contributing to our understanding of this central concept in the rhetoric of U.S. foreign policy. As my study shows, national security is not a “high-order abstraction representing collective commitment” to a particular political commitment or ideology,<sup>65</sup> but rather is a rhetorically malleable term with multiple applications and meanings. My project investigates the significance of those changes in meaning originating from the bully pulpit of the White House. While national security has remained a constant concern of U.S. foreign policy, my study shows how presidents differed in their specific invocations of the term and explore the implications of those differences for U.S. diplomacy, military policies, economic assistance programs, and even domestic security measures. National security, I conclude, is not only a malleable but also an expansive rhetorical construct.

Finally, my project illuminates the stakes for U.S. citizens and for our democracy implicit in the rhetoric of national security, both during the Cold War and in our own day. The analysis draws attention to the relationships between policy decisions made by elite government actors and the public rhetoric presidents use to

justify or, at times, to conceal the reasoning behind these actions. My analysis focuses on some presidential speeches that were in some ways deceptive or manipulative, as well as others that were more transparent.

In the conclusion, I reflect on the stakes for democracy implicit in the rhetoric of national security. National security discourses demonstrate the tremendous potential of presidential rhetoric to shape our understanding of the nation's role in world affairs. Presidential rhetoric that demonizes the enemy and forecasts a threat to the homeland often functions to solidify support for more aggressive national security strategies. Yet the rhetorics of national security do have limits, which often emerge when national security appears to clash with what Eisenhower called "the true treasure of our people": the "spiritual values and moral ideals" of freedom and liberty.<sup>66</sup> This tension between national security and liberty remains a critical element in our political tradition and helps to account for the highly contested nature of national security rhetoric in contemporary public discourse.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph M. Jones, "Memorandum for the File, The Drafting of The President's Message to Congress on the Greek Situation," March 12, 1947, Joseph M. Jones Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=7-2&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=7-2&pagenumber=1).

<sup>2</sup> Jones, "Memorandum for the File, The Drafting of The President's Message to Congress on the Greek Situation," emphasis in original.

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<sup>3</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 178.

<sup>4</sup> Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," 180.

<sup>5</sup> Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," 176.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961-1963*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph J. Romm, *Defining National Security: The Nonmilitary Aspects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Mark R. Shulman, "The Progressive Era Origins of the National Security Act," *Dickinson Law Review* 104 (2000): 291-292.

<sup>9</sup> Shulman, "The Progressive Era Origins of the National Security Act," 329.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin Earle Mead, editor, *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943), viii. Mead wrote that a "grand strategy" is the "highest type of strategy," and that it "so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory." See also Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Towards a Broader Definition," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul Kennedy (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, 16-27.

<sup>12</sup> Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, 64.

<sup>14</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, "Commentary: The Cold War and the Discourse of National Security," *Diplomatic History* 17 (1993): 283-284.

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<sup>15</sup> The term “communicator-in-chief” derives its origin from a 1981 article by Sidney Blumenthal about Ronald Reagan. See Sidney Blumenthal, “Marketing the President,” *New York Times Magazine*, September 18, 1981.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 175.

<sup>20</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 190.

<sup>21</sup> George C. Edwards, *The Strategic President: Persuasion and Opportunity in Presidential Leadership* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Edwards, *The Strategic President: Persuasion and Opportunity in Presidential Leadership*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> George C. Edwards, *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 4, 241.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, *The Strategic President*, 188.

<sup>25</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, “Introduction, A Tale of Two Constructs: The Rhetorical Presidency Versus Presidential Rhetoric,” in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), xiv.

<sup>26</sup> Medhurst, “Introduction, A Tale of Two Constructs: The Rhetorical Presidency Versus Presidential Rhetoric,” 220. This configuration of rhetoric, Medhurst noted, was originally found in Thomas W. Benson, “Rhetoric and Autobiography: The Case of Malcolm X,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 1-13.

<sup>27</sup> David Zarefsky, “Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2004): 611.

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<sup>28</sup> Roderick P. Hart, "Thinking Harder about Presidential Discourse: The Question of Efficacy," in *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 244-246.

<sup>29</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey, "Introduction," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, ed. Leroy G. Dorsey (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>30</sup> Jason A. Edwards, "Defining the Enemy for the Post-Cold War World: Bill Clinton's Foreign Policy Discourse in Somalia and Haiti," *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 832.

<sup>31</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 496.

<sup>32</sup> J. Michael Hogan, *The Panama Canal in American Politics: Domestic Advocacy and the Evolution of Policy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Introduction," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see Thomas W. Benson, *Writing JFK: Presidential Rhetoric and the Press in the Bay of Pigs Crisis* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), Richard A. Cherwitz, "Lyndon Johnson and the 'Crisis' of Tonkin Gulf: A President's Justification of War," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 42 (1978): 93-104, and Denise M. Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> Medhurst, "Introduction," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Robert L. Ivie, "Eisenhower as Cold Warrior," in *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetorical Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Holloway, "The Strategic Defense Initiative and the Technological Sublime: Fear, Science, and the Cold War," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 219-220.



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<sup>38</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 185.

<sup>39</sup> Theodore Windt, "The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises: Repeating the Rhetorical Past," in *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. Theodore Windt and Beth Ingold (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1987), 126.

<sup>40</sup> Cherwitz, "Lyndon Johnson and the 'Crisis' of Tonkin Gulf: A President's Justification of War," 94.

<sup>41</sup> Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis*, 5-6.

<sup>42</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 252-253.

<sup>43</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey, "The Myth of War and Peace in Presidential Discourse: John F. Kennedy's 'New Frontier' Myth and the Peace Corps," *Southern Communication Journal* 62 (1996): 44, 53.

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<sup>45</sup> G. Thomas Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War: Analysis of the 'Zero-Option,' 'Evil Empire,' and 'Star Wars' Addresses," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 408.

<sup>46</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>47</sup> See Robert L. Ivie, "Fighting Terror by Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 221-248 and Robert L. Ivie, "More Good, Less Evil: Contesting the Mythos of National Insecurity in the 2008 Presidential Primaries," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12 (2009): 279-302.

<sup>48</sup> Ivie, "More Good, Less Evil: Contesting the Mythos of National Insecurity in the 2008 Presidential Primaries," 279.

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<sup>49</sup> Paul A. Chilton, "The Meaning of *Security*," in *Post-Realism: The Rhetorical Turn in International Relations*, ed. Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996), 193.

<sup>50</sup> Chilton, "The Meaning of *Security*," 212.

<sup>51</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 41.

<sup>54</sup> Clark Clifford, "Draft of Letter to Robert Patterson," January 1946, Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011,

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?documentid=1946-00-00&documentid=7-7&studycollectionid=&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?documentid=1946-00-00&documentid=7-7&studycollectionid=&pagenumber=1).

<sup>55</sup> Mr. X [George Kennan], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25 (1947): 566-582.

<sup>56</sup> Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," 176-180.

<sup>57</sup> Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time When America Helped Save Europe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 54.

<sup>58</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: Revised Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 145.

<sup>59</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 306-316.

<sup>60</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1-3.

<sup>61</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 569.

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<sup>62</sup> Richard Nixon, "Remarks on Departure from the White House to a State Visit to the People's Republic of China, February 17, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 367-368; Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of the People's Republic of China at a Banquet Honoring the President in Peking, February 21, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 368-369; Richard Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters on the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 370-372; Richard Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters at the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, February 24, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 372-373; Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 373-375; Richard Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 376-379; Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Chairman Ch'un-ch'iao at a Banquet in Shanghai, February 27, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 379-381; and Richard Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning from the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 381-384.

<sup>63</sup> Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," 609.

<sup>64</sup> See Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 1-16. The method of ideographic criticism, however, has tended towards what Jim A. Kuypers has called "activist criticism," or an orientation that results in a

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“*performance* of the rhetorical knowledge of the critic” rather than “criticism that *produces knowledge* about rhetorical transactions.” This sort of performative criticism, Kuypers argued, has the effect of relegating the “discourse produced by a rhetorical actor” as secondary to the “discourse (text) created by the critic.” See Jim A. Kuypers, “The Rhetorical River,” *Southern Communication Journal* 73 (2008): 352-354.

<sup>65</sup> McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” 15.

<sup>66</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 306.

## Chapter Two

### Taking “Immediate and Resolute Action”: Harry S. Truman and the Truman Doctrine Speech

In the first few months of 1946, George Kennan, the *chargé d'affaires* for the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, began to send urgent cables to the State Department. In these messages, Kennan argued that the Soviet Union was preparing for a long struggle between socialism and capitalism, posing a growing threat to the United States. In one telegram, Kennan urged the State Department to “bear in mind” that the Soviets were determined to “overthrow capitalism,” establish “Soviet power,” “free colonies from slavery,” and organize a “world wide defense of the first worker’s republic in history.”<sup>1</sup> In another, he reported that Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, gave “little or no indication that Soviet leaders place any serious reliance on [the] future of international collaboration.” Senior Soviet officials already had declared that they had “no intention of permitting others to harvest the fruit” of their victory over the Germans in World War II.<sup>2</sup> With the Nazis defeated, Kennan concluded that the Soviet Union was now returning to its quest to spark a global proletarian revolution against capitalist nations.

So much for the grand political alliance that won World War II. Even before the war ended, the Soviets took steps to distance themselves from their Allied partners—the United States and Great Britain. Truman’s decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan heightened Soviet suspicions of its ally.<sup>3</sup> After World War II, tensions over the Soviet occupation of East Germany and Eastern Europe fueled

anger and distrust on both sides.<sup>4</sup> Less than two years after the war, the U.S.-Soviet alliance had deteriorated into hostile suspicions and strained diplomatic relations.

Key players in the Truman administration agreed with Kennan's analysis of the Soviet threat. Special Counsel to the President Clark Clifford, for example, wrote in a 1946 advisory report that the Soviet Union "appeared to be conducting" their affairs "on a course of aggrandizement designed to lead to eventual world domination."<sup>5</sup> In a speech before Congress in March of 1947, Truman confronted the situation, denouncing the "terrorist activities" of communists in Greece and Turkey and pledging "immediate and resolute action" to aid struggling democratic governments across Europe and the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> In this speech, which came to be known as the "Truman Doctrine" speech, the president signaled the beginning of a series of policies designed to contain the spread of communism.

The Truman Doctrine speech called on the United States to embrace new obligations in the postwar world and constructed "national security" as a global concern rather than a defensive strategy. Truman's approach to national security was offensive rather than defensive, unilateral rather than collaborative, and economic as well as military. In his speech, the president depicted communism as an expanding threat in the struggle between democratic good and totalitarian evil, and he challenged the U.S. traditions of isolationism. He also characterized the United States as the sole nation capable of advising, assisting, and leading the democratic world after World War II. Truman's doctrine of national security rhetoric established national security as more than traditional military defense, opening the door for later presidents to interpret national security even more broadly.

To guide my analysis of this first significant moment in the presidential rhetoric of national security during the early Cold War, I begin by considering the historical and political contexts that influenced the Truman Doctrine speech, namely the rise of concerns over the potential for a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Next, I evaluate Truman's rhetorical strategies in the speech itself, showing how Truman constructed national security as global and proactive. I then reflect on reactions to Truman's speech from the press and Congress, demonstrating how Truman's more activist role for the United States was largely embraced as a necessary response to communist aggression. Finally, I consider the implications of the Truman Doctrine for the national security rhetoric of the Cold War, arguing that Truman's more assertive rhetoric altered conceptions of how the United States should behave in the world. As the United States began to pursue its national security strategy through preemptive, unilateral, and economic means, it assumed the mantle of the leader of the free world, dictating how the rest of the world was to respond to the growing communist threat.

### **The Truman Administration and the Origins of Containment, 1946-1947**

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's hopes of international cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States after the Yalta conference were dashed by the end of Harry S. Truman's first year in office. During World War II, U.S. politicians had publically softened their criticism of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, though

government officials privately kept a wary eye on the man Roosevelt called “Uncle Joe.”<sup>7</sup> The U.S.-Soviet alliance was forged of necessity, as historian Mark Stohler has explained: the Soviets needed a second front in Europe to repel the Nazis, and despite doubts about Soviet communism, U.S. strategists “repeatedly emphasized the critical importance of Russia to the Allied war effort.”<sup>8</sup> Yet after World War II, relations rapidly cooled. Historian John Lewis Gaddis attributed early disputes between the United States and the Soviet Union to fundamentally conflicting postwar interests. The United States and Great Britain wanted an international security organization to “prevent any new war by avoiding the mistakes that had led to World War II.” Stalin, on the other hand, desired “a settlement that would secure Soviet security while simultaneously encouraging the rivalries among capitalists.”<sup>9</sup>

Events in 1946 reflected the troubled relationship between the United States and Soviet Union. First, on the eve of the Soviet elections in February, Stalin announced a new economic and military plan—a five-year-plan that the U.S. press interpreted as a bold challenge to the United States.<sup>10</sup> Then, U.S. diplomat George Kennan sent his so-called “Long Telegram” to the State Department, warning of the dangers of Soviet aggression. Next, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered his famous speech at Fulton College in Missouri, declaring that an “iron curtain has descended across the continent” and calling upon the United States to intercede on behalf of the free world.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the Clifford-Elsey report, written by Special Counsel to the President Clark Clifford and his assistant, George M. Elsey, persuaded President Truman to reconsider U.S. strategy toward the Soviet Union. By the end of the year, there was growing fear within the U.S. foreign policy community



that the United States might have to confront Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union's growing ambitions, either diplomatically or with military force.<sup>12</sup>

### **Stalin's 1946 Election Speech**

A February 9, 1946, speech by Stalin heightened the West's growing fears of Soviet power. The Soviet leader began to position his country as a rival to the United States and Great Britain in postwar leadership. Speaking the evening before the 1946 Soviet "elections" (although Stalin was, in fact, the only candidate for the Supreme Soviet position),<sup>13</sup> Stalin issued a public declaration of his plans for Soviet recovery. He applauded the Soviet victory in World War II and called for strong economic, scientific, and technical advances in the next five years. Yet reports by the U.S. press portrayed the speech as an aggressive challenge to the United States and its capitalist allies.

Stalin portrayed victory in World War II as a validation of the Soviet nation and its system of government. He characterized the war as the "most cruel and hard of all wars ever experienced in the history of our motherland," yet the Red Army had "heroically withstood all the adversities of war, routed completely the armies of our enemies, and emerged victoriously from the war." The Soviets had won acclaim from "friend and foe" for their victory over the "German army—the terror of all the armies of peace-loving states."<sup>14</sup> Reflecting on the lessons of the war, Stalin concluded that the Soviet socialist system of government had "stood the test": the war left the Soviet

Union “stronger” and “a vital state system.”<sup>15</sup> This was hardly an objective portrayal of the devastating loss of life and property suffered by the Soviet Union during World War II. But as historian Frank Costigliola has noted, Stalin’s speech attempted to reshape “the Soviet people’s memory of World War II and the 1930s” to downplay feelings of “Soviet vulnerabilities.”<sup>16</sup>

After congratulating his people on their victory, Stalin turned to the future, outlining a new Five Year Plan for Soviet development. He promised improvements in industry and agriculture, forecasting a quick return to “the pre-war level” of production and promising to exceed even that level. He pledged to abolish the wartime rationing system and expand the “production of goods for mass consumption,” thereby “raising the standard of life” through “consistent and systematic reduction of the cost of all goods.” Stalin listed the achievements in Soviet weapons and munitions production in the past, and promised that, in the future, the Soviet Union would produce even more iron, steel, coal, and oil. This “mighty upsurge” in the economy would increase Soviet production “three-fold as compared with the pre-war level.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the plan would substantially add to the economic and military power of the Soviet Union.

Newspapers and magazines in the United States reacted fearfully to Stalin’s plans to increase Soviet power. Quoting almost exclusively from the final section of the speech, they suggested that Stalin’s real goal was to undermine capitalist economies around the globe.<sup>18</sup> An editorial in *Time* magazine, for example, noted that while Stalin’s address “contained no threats,” its “truculent exaggeration” of the dangers of capitalist nations “was the most warlike pronouncement uttered by any

top-rank statesman” since the end of World War II. The editorial worried that Stalin’s speech hardened the “world Communist line” by returning to “the tactics and slogans of world revolution,” and that “comrades everywhere could be expected to take a tip from Uncle Joe’s speech and sharpen their opposition to non-Communist governments.”<sup>19</sup> The day after the speech the *New York Times* headline warned of Stalin’s threat to compete with the United States, even in science, declaring: “Stalin Sets a Huge Output Near Ours in 5-Year Plan; Expects to Lead in Science.”<sup>20</sup> *Times* writer Brooks Atkinson reminded readers that the industrial strength of the Soviet Union and the success of the Red Army in World War II proved that the Soviet Union was a power to be reckoned with, not a “colossus with feet of clay.” After all, “the Red Army had defeated the German Army, which had been the terror of Europe.”<sup>21</sup> And while an Associated Press story about Stalin’s announcement of “a new Five-Year Plan for the Soviet Union” assured readers that even with “huge production boosts” the Soviets would not surpass the United States, it did warn that Soviet industrial output might soon be “close to the output of the United States.”<sup>22</sup>

Thus, it seemed that the United States was locked in a new economic and political competition with the Soviet Union. More worrisome still, the postwar Soviet Union increasingly appeared to be an aggressive, expansionist state bent on spreading totalitarianism and supplanting capitalism with communism around the globe—through the use of “military power” if necessary.<sup>23</sup> That, at least, was the message of perhaps the most influential portrait of the Soviet’s postwar ambitions, the Long Telegram written by an experienced U.S. diplomat working in the Soviet Union, George Kennan.

## George Kennan and the Long Telegram

As Stalin moved away from international cooperation and emphasized Soviet recovery and strength, U.S. government policy-makers and analysts grew increasingly alarmed about his motives and intentions. On February 3, 1946, H. Freeman Matthews, the State Department's Director of the Office of European Affairs, asked Kennan if he might shed light on recent Soviet behavior, notably Stalin's unwillingness to participate in international conferences on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.<sup>24</sup> Before submitting his response on February 22, Kennan reportedly remarked to Martha Mautner, the diplomatic clerk on duty in Moscow, "They've asked for it . . . And now they are going to get it."<sup>25</sup> Kennan then responded with a cable of more than 5,300 words. The Long Telegram "combined the weight and breadth of any essay with the clipped urgency of a telegram."<sup>26</sup> In it, Kennan issued an urgent plea for the United States government to take seriously the growing Soviet threat and reorient U.S. foreign policy toward containing the spread of communism.

Kennan painted a portrait of the Soviet Union as a determined rival to the United States. The Soviets were bent on the ultimate destruction of capitalism, but they were patient enough to wait for their enemies to destroy themselves. Soviet aggression was, Kennan argued, based on a "traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity." This led to a deep fear of "foreign penetration," which explained Stalin's anti-Western behavior after World War II.<sup>27</sup> Stalin was prepared to lead his nation into a "deadly struggle" with "rival powers," and he was not inclined to agree

to “compacts and compromises.”<sup>28</sup> Kennan concluded that the Soviet Union would always pursue its own interests over the collective interests of the wartime alliance or the larger global community.

Kennan’s analysis reflected an early Cold War realist understanding of foreign affairs, or the assumption that all nations act primarily out of concern for their own interests and security. The Truman administration could not trust the Soviet Union to adhere to any decisions made by an international organization. The newly formed United Nations (UN) would not subdue the desires of the Soviets in the postwar world, for Moscow had no “abstract devotion” to global security and did not see the advantages of being partners with other nations under the UN structure. Kennan concluded that the Soviets would “participate officially in international organizations” only when they saw the “opportunity of extending Soviet power” or the potential “of inhibiting or diluting power of others.” Kennan predicted that the Soviets would adhere to international alliances and treaties only so long as those agreements advanced Soviet aims.<sup>29</sup>

Kennan closed the Long Telegram by urging the United States to treat the Soviet Union as a serious threat to U.S. national security. In the final section of the document, he argued that the Soviet Union was “fanatically committed” to the ultimate defeat of the United States and all other capitalist nations. The Soviets were thus committed to disrupting the “internal harmony of our society,” destroying “our traditional way of life,” and breaking the “international authority of our state.”<sup>30</sup> Faced with an enemy bent on destroying the U.S. economic system and its way of life, Kennan urged a firm and vigilant response. Although the Soviets had grand

ambitions, they were “still by far the weaker force.” Thus, the United States could contain the Soviet threat by acting with “cohesion, firmness and vigor” *before* the Soviets could extend their influence and increase their power.<sup>31</sup>

Kennan’s Long Telegram was widely circulated within the U.S. government, and it had a significant influence on the development of early Cold War foreign policy. Although it was initially classified as secret, many government employees—especially in the Departments of State and Defense—read the document. A copy was sent to every U.S. embassy, and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal reportedly distributed it to hundreds of colleagues.<sup>32</sup> The telegram eventually reached the desk of President Truman via his Special Counsel’s assistant, George Elsey. Elsey and the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief,<sup>33</sup> Admiral William Leahy, discussed Kennan’s views and recommendations with Truman.<sup>34</sup> Rhetorical critic Denise M. Bostdorff has argued that the Long Telegram “did not immediately lead to a change in U.S. foreign policy,” but it did plant “the seeds for such a change.”<sup>35</sup> Kennan’s analysis of the Soviet Union increased the anxieties of all who read it, especially those more hawkish officials who already saw the Soviets as a serious threat to U.S. hegemony in Western Europe.

### **The Iron Curtain Descends**

As Kennan’s document was circulating through the upper levels of the U.S. government, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered a dire

warning about Soviet ambitions in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. On March 5, 1946, Churchill delivered his famous “Iron Curtain” speech, using the metaphor of an “iron curtain” descending upon the European continent to emphasize the severity of the Soviet threat and the need for immediate action to stop the spread of Soviet influence in Western Europe.<sup>36</sup> Acknowledging that the United States stood “at the pinnacle of world power,” Churchill advised that if the United States did not act soon, it might be called again to come to the rescue of the European continent—as it had in the two previous world wars.<sup>37</sup>

Promising simply to relate “certain facts” about the situation in Europe, Churchill actually spoke ominously about the “expansive and proselytizing tendencies” of the Soviet Union. Churchill reported that all the great capitals of Central and Eastern Europe had now fallen under the “iron curtain” of Soviet domination. Behind that curtain, nations freed after World War II were now part of “the Soviet sphere” of power and “subject” not only to “Soviet influence,” but also an “increasing measure of control from Moscow.”<sup>38</sup> Churchill compared Soviet expansionism in the postwar era to the spread of Nazi power in the 1930s, and he cautioned his audience that if only other nations had stood up to Hitler earlier, World War II “could have been prevented . . . without the firing of a single shot.” Churchill concluded, “surely, we must not let that happen again,” and he urged the United States and all “Western democracies” to stand up to the Soviet Union and reach “a good understanding” about the need for the Soviets to check their ambitions.<sup>39</sup>

President Truman had accompanied Churchill to Fulton, and many assumed that Churchill’s speech had the president’s blessings. In her analysis of the speech,

Bostdorff noted that Truman *had* read a copy of Churchill's remarks and approved of its overall content. When pressed on the matters, however, the president was quick to "distance himself" from Churchill.<sup>40</sup> In a March 8 press conference, for example, Truman dismissed reporters' questions about whether the White House endorsed the message by remarking, "This is a country of free speech. Mr. Churchill had a perfect right to say what he pleased." In response to a second question about the speech, Truman was even more evasive: "I have no comment."<sup>41</sup> For a time, at least, it appeared that the Truman administration hoped to stay clear of the debate over the implications of Churchill's speech.

Historian Fraser J. Harbutt has analyzed reactions to Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, concluding that U.S. public opinion "immediately crystallized into four groups": "'realist,' 'left-liberal,' 'isolationist,' and 'moderate.'"<sup>42</sup> Using public opinion polls and quotations from the U.S. press, Harbutt characterized the concerns of each group and noted their different perspectives on the role of the United States in the world. Yet, despite these differences, according to Harbutt, they all reacted similarly to Churchill's speech. The "most important domestic consequence" of the Fulton speech, he argued, was "the acceleration of a widespread hostility to the Soviet Union and its recent policies" among the U.S. public. Across all four groups, Churchill's speech provoked concern over the "menace of Soviet totalitarianism" and its "threat" to western democracies.<sup>43</sup>

In the U.S. press, the focus was not so much on Churchill's proposal for an Anglo-U.S. alliance as on his warnings about the "growing challenge" to "Christian civilization" posed by "Communist fifth columns."<sup>44</sup> A week after the speech, the



*New York Times* posed the question that seemed to be on everybody's mind: "What does Russia want?" In trying to answer that question, the *Times* statistically summarized the frightening expansion of Soviet influence since the end of World War II: a total of thirteen nations, 273,947 square miles, and more than twenty-four million people had now fallen under communist domination. While the Soviets justified this apparent land grab as necessary for their own national security, the *Times* disputed their claim that they were "encircled by a hostile and war-breeding 'monopoly capitalism.'" The *Times* then concluded: "The world is justified in asking: Where does the search for security end and where does expansion begin?"<sup>45</sup> For most observers in the United States, the answer was clear: the Soviets had expanded well beyond what was necessary for their own national security and were intent on spreading communism across the globe.

### **The Clifford-Elsey Report**

Despite the growing public anxiety about the Soviet threat, President Truman remained relatively silent on U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union through the rest of 1946 and the first three months of 1947. Rhetorical critic Martin J. Medhurst has argued that during this time, Truman "failed to inform the American public about the growing problems of Soviet expansionism, intimidation, and support for indigenous armed minorities." Instead, the president continued to cultivate "a rhetorical image" of "mutual respect and toleration" in U.S.-Soviet relations.<sup>46</sup> Behind closed doors,

however, tolerance for Soviet expansion was waning, as Truman became increasingly concerned about a report by his advisors George Elsey and Clark Clifford. Entitled “American Relations with the Soviet Union,” the seventy-nine page report, which Truman first read in September 1946, synthesized opinions on the dangers of Soviet aggression from a variety of top governmental officials, including the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Navy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>47</sup> In the report, Clifford and Elsey concluded that Soviet aggression and communist ideology posed serious threats to the United States and its democratic allies.<sup>48</sup> They recommended that the United States “maintain military forces” in Western Europe in order to “restrain the Soviet Union and confine Soviet influence to its present area,” and that nations outside the sphere of Soviet influence receive “generous economic assistance and political support” to aid their resistance to “Soviet penetration.” Clifford and Elsey also suggested that the president authorize a domestic propaganda campaign to educate the U.S. public about the “record of Soviet evasion, misrepresentation, aggression, and militarism.”<sup>49</sup>

The Clifford-Elsey report reportedly shocked the president, and it prompted an acceleration in White House foreign policy planning.<sup>50</sup> Truman told Clifford that the report was a “valuable” assessment of the Soviet situation, but “if it leaked it would blow the roof off the White House, it would blow the roof off the Kremlin.”<sup>51</sup> Elsey later recalled that “the President felt it was much too explosive a document” to be released to the public or even to officials within the administration because it detailed the many reasons that the United States should not trust the Soviet Union,

our former wartime ally.<sup>52</sup> For example, in the final section of the report, Clifford and Elsey argued that the “future security” of the United States depended on the Truman administration working to “prevent additional Soviet aggression” around the world.<sup>53</sup> After reading the report on September 24, Truman called Clifford and requested that all twenty copies of the report be turned over to the White House for safekeeping. The report, therefore, did not circulate widely among administration officials. Bostdorff has argued that the report “nonetheless” represented “the degree to which a consensus was developing within the administration about the threat the USSR posed and how the United States should respond to that threat.”<sup>54</sup> Despite the secrecy surrounding the report, it clearly had a major impact on diplomatic efforts to contain Soviet power and on U.S. foreign policy in general.<sup>55</sup>

Although Truman did not speak publicly about the Clifford-Elsey report, the winter of 1946-1947 brought new developments that deeply concerned the president and his advisors. The Soviets seemed to be gaining momentum in their efforts to build a security buffer of communist satellite nations. Communist party factions appeared to be making inroads across the European continent. In France and Italy, for example, postwar economic recovery had ground to a halt, and agricultural failures, poor industrial recoveries, and economic inflation increased political uncertainties across the continent, threatening the fragile democratic governments of Western Europe.<sup>56</sup> In Greece, the departure of the Nazis after World War II had left economic ruin, and communist forces were gaining the edge in the bitter civil wars that ensued. To make matters worse, the recession forced Great Britain to discontinue its financial

and military support to democratic factions in Greece and Turkey after March of 1947.<sup>57</sup>

In the eyes of many within the foreign policy establishment of the U.S. government, with Great Britain no longer supporting Greece and Turkey, it now fell to the United States to assume more global responsibility. According to historian Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, President Truman “had come to think” of Greece and Turkey “as parts of a whole”; the “importance of one” was “linked inextricably to the importance of others.” These nations were the “dividing line between East and West, more crucial than ever in the Cold War.”<sup>58</sup> On February 27, Truman and his foreign policy advisors met with congressional leaders, including the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), to discuss the U.S. response to the situation in Greece and Turkey.<sup>59</sup> After hearing presentations from the White House staff, the congressional delegation, according to State Department official Joseph M. Jones, promised to “support a program designed to strengthen Greece and Turkey.”<sup>60</sup> The consensus of the meeting was that the United States must take a more “public approach” to confronting the Soviets.<sup>61</sup> The theme of that approach would be that “the security of the United States” depended on the United States “going to the aid of any and all democratic governments.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, it fell to President Truman, in his speech on March 12, 1947, to begin making that case to the public.

## The Truman Doctrine Speech

In perhaps his most famous speech before Congress, the Truman Doctrine speech on March 12, 1947, Harry S. Truman depicted national security as an ongoing global concern, not just a defensive response to a particular threat. Through his characterizations of communism, his discussion of the failures of isolationism, and his vision of the U.S. role in the postwar world, the president made the case that events in faraway places—in this case, Greece and Turkey—could one day affect the safety of each and every citizen of the United States. Truman thus announced a new role for the United States in world affairs, calling upon the nation to provide advice and, when necessary, economic and military assistance, for governments anywhere in the world threatened by communist insurgencies. The president's depictions of the communist threat, along with his vision of U.S. leadership, invoked American exceptionalism as a rationale for leading the anticommunist crusade and for assuming the role of a world "superpower" in the fight against communism.

The drafting of the Truman Doctrine speech took just under two weeks and involved administration aides and other foreign policy experts, along with the president himself. Initially, the responsibility for writing the president's speech fell to three State Department officials: Joseph M. Jones, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, and two members of the Near Eastern and African Affairs office, Loy W. Henderson and Gordon Merriam. Jones combined material drafted by all three into a single first draft and gave the speech to Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson.<sup>63</sup> From March 4 through March 8, Acheson, Jones, and others labored over the draft,

debating the focus and emphases of Truman's appeal to Congress and the public.<sup>64</sup> Jones credited Acheson with the decision to "make a statement of global policy" while limiting the call for direct intervention "to Greece and Turkey" for now.<sup>65</sup> After a White House staff meeting on March 8, Clark Clifford became involved in the drafting process, working with Jones and other State Department officials to create later drafts.<sup>66</sup> George Elsey and other White House staff members altered much of the State Department's prose to fit Truman's plain-style speaking.<sup>67</sup> The president began reviewing drafts on March 10, but as rhetorical critic Denise M. Bostdorff has noted, it is difficult to determine what Truman thought of the draft, "as most of his sparse longhand comments" repeated what his staff had suggested.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, the final draft of the Truman Doctrine speech reflected contributions from many individuals in the White House, the State Department, and other agencies within the executive branch, along with contributions from the president himself.<sup>69</sup>

Truman began his March 12 address to Congress by emphasizing the seriousness of his topic. In the opening sentence, the president stated, "The gravity of the situation which confronts the world today necessitates my appearance before a joint session of the Congress," a "situation" that involved "the foreign policy and the national security of this country." From the start of the speech, Truman dramatized the severity of the threat, connecting the situation in Greece and Turkey to the national security of the United States. The request from the Greek government was an "urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance," Truman noted, and he substantiated his claim of urgency by noting that "the American Economic Mission"

and the “American Ambassador in Greece” both reported that U.S. assistance was “imperative if Greece” was “to survive as a free nation.”<sup>70</sup>

The president connected the problems in Greece to the spread of communist-influenced revolutionary forces throughout Europe. He reported that the “very existence” of the Greek democratic state was “threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists.” These forces defied “the government’s authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries.” Truman then mentioned areas where the UN Security Council was investigating “disturbed conditions,” including along the Greek border with “Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia.”<sup>71</sup> Although the president did not blame the Soviet Union directly, Albania and Bulgaria already had fallen under the influence of the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia was also a communist state. In other words, Truman’s mention of these border nations suggested that Greece would be the next country to fall under the “iron curtain” of Soviet communism.

Truman suggested that, without U.S. action, the communist threat would continue to grow. He reported that “a number of other countries” were now faced with the imminent threat of communist infiltration and revolution. “At the present moment,” Truman declared, “nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life.” Worse, “too often” this choice was not “a free one.” Totalitarian factions forced “the will of a minority” onto the majority, relying on “terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.” If the United States did not act immediately to support these democracies, one nation after another would fall under the influence of Soviet

communism. It “must be the policy of the United States,” Truman argued, “to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation.”<sup>72</sup> The United States needed to commit to supporting these nations struggling to establish democratic governments after World War II—and to containing communism within its current boundaries.

The president also warned that the threat of communism in these troubled states could spread even to the more stable democratic nations. “If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority,” Truman warned, “confusion and disorder” could spread throughout “the entire Middle East,” and the fall of Greece could also “have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe” that were “struggling” to “maintain their freedoms and their independence.” The “collapse of free institutions and loss of independence” in these areas would be “disastrous,” according to Truman, not only for the nations involved but “for the world.” The effects of Greece’s fall would “be far reaching to the West as well as to the East,” he concluded.<sup>73</sup>

Scholarly assessments of the Truman Doctrine speech have emphasized how Truman’s use of metaphors demonstrated the severity and proximity of the communist threat. Rhetorical critic Robert L. Ivie, for example, has argued that Truman employed highly deceptive disease metaphors that cast the United States in “the heroic role of a doctor” trying to protect a patient from “the ravages of world communism.”<sup>74</sup> Ivie also noted that Truman’s metaphors of disease left “only the United States” in a position to come to the aid of Greece and Turkey.<sup>75</sup> Bostdorff similarly concluded that Truman’s “embedded metaphors of disease, violation, and chaos,” and his “unadorned style and sense of delivery,” lent “a sense of realism to



the president's claims."<sup>76</sup> Truman's use of metaphors emphasized the urgency of the communist threat not only to the United States but to the entire free world.

Truman faced a difficult rhetorical task in overcoming the U.S. historical tradition of isolationist foreign policies. Isolationist tendencies ran deep in the United States, harkening back to President George Washington's warning against foreign alliances and entanglements in his "Farewell Address."<sup>77</sup> During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the foreign policy interests of the United States expanded beyond the nation's own borders to encompass a broader interest in the Western hemisphere, most notably with the Monroe Doctrine. The move towards broader interests, however, was not without controversy. As historian John Lewis Gaddis has noted, the question remained: "How far did the American sphere of responsibility have to extend in order to ensure American security?" The technological innovations in transportation and weaponry at the time meant that threats to national security could now come from anywhere on the globe. But as Truman addressed Congress in March of 1947, as Gaddis has argued, these "technological innovations" had yet to produce a "revolution in American thinking about national security" beyond the nation's own borders.<sup>78</sup> That would soon change.

Still, a small, bipartisan minority in Congress remained vocally opposed to virtually any U.S. involvements abroad, even after the experiences of World War II. On the left, progressives continued to oppose efforts to "deploy America's vast economic and military power throughout the world," urging the nation instead to focus on needs at home.<sup>79</sup> On the right, some Republicans, led by Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, questioned the expanded role of U.S. leadership in international

organizations and complained that the Truman administration's Cold War policies overextended the nation's limited resources.<sup>80</sup> No matter what the president had to say, these groups could be expected to oppose the Truman Doctrine.

Nevertheless, the president made the case against the U.S. tendency towards isolationism and involvement only in the Western hemisphere. He argued that the United States had an obligation to promote "conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion." Truman drew on the recent historical example of World War II, still very present in the national consciousness. He framed the "fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan" as encouraging the development and protection of democratic nations. Having sacrificed much to help other nations to "maintain their free institutions and their national integrity," the United States now had a responsibility to resist the spread of totalitarian communism.<sup>81</sup> Nearly all of the isolationists in Congress had supported U.S. involvement in World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor; Truman argued that they had the same responsibility to support aid to Greece and Turkey. The president also noted that the United States had spent 3.1 billion dollars "winning World War II," and he called that money "an investment in world freedom and world peace." For Greece, he was now asking for a mere fraction of that investment—a little more than "1/10 of 1 percent" of the money spent on World War II—to "safeguard" that victory. Deploying a rhetorical strategy common in the rhetoric of war, Truman argued that to abandon that obligation now would mean that all the sacrifices of the last world war had been "in vain."<sup>82</sup>

Truman also invoked American exceptionalism to make the case for unilateral U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey. As rhetorical critics Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner have written, American exceptionalism “typically evokes attitudes of national autonomy and superiority” and encourages “independence of action on the world scene.”<sup>83</sup> In the Truman Doctrine speech, Truman affirmed the position of the United States as the leading democracy in the world, and he characterized the United States as the only nation capable of saving Greece and Turkey. Greece’s request for assistance recognized the United States as the one nation capable of coming to its rescue, since the British Government was unable to give “further financial or economic aid,” and the UN was “not in a position to extend help of the kind that is required.”<sup>84</sup> By acting to protect Greece and Turkey, the United States would “be giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”<sup>85</sup> It fell to the United States—and the United States alone—to protect the peace and respond to this world crisis.

Truman made it clear that, in the postwar world, upholding national security would involve more than defensive military actions. In addition, the United States would need to challenge the communists through monetary means and by providing U.S. administrative and technical support. Greece requested not only financial aid, but also the advice of U.S. “administrators, economists, and technicians.”<sup>86</sup> These “American civilian and military personnel” would supervise “the use of such financial and material assistance,” as well as provide “instruction and training” for the Greek and Turkish officials to complete the physical and economic “reconstruction” of their nation.<sup>87</sup> For Truman, protecting national security meant more than rescuing

threatened allies through military interventions. It meant using the power of U.S. dollars and economic expertise to foster “a stable and self-sustaining economy” in Greece.<sup>88</sup> The first line of offense was economic, accompanied by U.S. supervision of the Greek and Turkish governments to ensure their democratic development.

Throughout the speech, Truman emphasized that U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey would be defined to specific parameters. The president put parameters around his request for aid, asking for the “amount of \$400,000,000 for the period ending June 30, 1948.”<sup>89</sup> Truman’s rhetoric depicted the national security of the United States as proactive, but not unrestrained. This characterization was consistent with what would come to be called the doctrine of “containment,” or stopping the expansion of communism from its current boundaries. The goal was, as Truman had put it in its speech, to protect and maintain the “*status quo*” in the global balance of power.<sup>90</sup>

In concluding his remarks, Truman again invoked American exceptionalism by reminding his audience that the United States remained the world’s best hope for freedom. For many around the world, he argued, freedom meant the potential for economic opportunity and a better way of life. “The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want,” he argued. “They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died.” The United States had an obligation to “keep that hope alive” because other nations still looked to the United States “for support in maintaining their freedoms.” The United States would bear “great responsibilities” in the postwar world, Truman concluded, but he was “confident” that Congress and the American

people would “face these responsibilities squarely.”<sup>91</sup> To fulfill its destiny as a great nation, the United States simply *had* to come to the aid of Greece and Turkey.

Thus, the Truman Doctrine fundamentally redefined the national security interests of the United States to include not just military defense but also administrative and economic leadership in the fight against communism around the globe. The United States would lead *all* democratic nations in the effort to contain the expanding threat of Soviet-led communism. In Truman’s definition of national security, the United States would not wait, as it had in World War II, to be attacked on its own soil. Nor would the United States retreat from the global arena. Instead, Truman demanded the proactive response of aid to Greece and Turkey to assure the containment of communism and the maintenance of U.S. national security.

### **Responses to the Truman Doctrine**

In the Truman Doctrine speech, the president emphasized the growing communist threat and announced a global leadership role for the United States. To some, the speech was shocking, perhaps because of Truman’s earlier reticence on the subject.<sup>92</sup> Rhetorical critic Martin J. Medhurst noted that the Truman administration had been working behind the scenes on the new policy of containment for some time, but the president and his staff remained relatively silent on foreign policy from the end of World War II until announcing the new doctrine in March of 1947. Thus, the president’s words were not only frank but surprising. As Medhurst argued, “Never

before had the President of the United States spoken so bluntly to the public.”<sup>93</sup> The speech thus “created a sense of urgency” about Soviet intentions and “seemed to vindicate rightwing [*sic*] charges of Soviet treachery and subversion.”<sup>94</sup>

The reactions of the U.S. press were mostly favorable toward Truman’s speech. Noting that members of Congress “arose as a body and applauded heartily” at the end of the speech, the *New York Times* reported widespread agreement that “decisive action under the bold recommendations of the President must be taken.”<sup>95</sup> Two days later, the *Times* editorialized in support of the president’s plan, calling it “a program which infringes upon the legitimate interests of no other nation—a program designed in the interest of European peace, of our own security, and of the right of small nations to shape their own future for themselves.”<sup>96</sup> The *Kansas City Star* praised Truman for speaking “frankly, clearly and yet moderately” on the “emergency character of the situation” in Greece and Turkey, noting that his argument “that the United States is the only single power now able to extend the help desperately needed” was “conclusive.” The *Buffalo Courier Express* countered potential objections from isolationists, predicting that if “Congress heeds Mr. Truman’s statesmanlike advice,” there would be “no World War III.” Even more positively, the *Portland Press Herald* of Maine endorsed Truman’s plan, proclaiming, “Let the Congress back him to the limit.”<sup>97</sup>

Only a few more conservative papers expressed concern that Truman’s position would “inevitably” lead to a third world war.<sup>98</sup> The *Chicago Tribune*’s editorial implored Congress to “think of America’s interest first” and refuse to be drawn into another war by “alien interests.”<sup>99</sup> The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* articulated

doubts about feasibility, arguing that the United States must “abandon the idea” to “support free institutions and restore democracy” in nations where the government had already “turned away” from democracy.<sup>100</sup> These papers, however, stood relatively alone in editorializing against Truman’s plan to aid Greece and Turkey.

Congress debated the aid to Greece and Turkey for less than two months. Bipartisan support developed around the president’s plan to aid Greece and Turkey, led by Republican Senators Arthur H. Vanderberg (MI), H. Alexander Smith (NJ), and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (MA). During the debate, these three men “not only rhetorically challenged administration critics, but also undercut the opposition through amendments.”<sup>101</sup> *Newsweek* magazine reported that Vanderberg’s influence on foreign policy was “so decisive that it amounts, at moments, to virtual control.”<sup>102</sup> Congress eventually passed Truman’s aid package, and the president signed the bill into law on May 22, 1947.<sup>103</sup> The language of the bill reflected Truman’s March 12 speech. It stated that the “national integrity and survival” of Greece and Turkey were of “importance to the security of the United States and of all freedom-loving peoples” and pledged that the United States would “contribute to the freedom and independence of all members of the United Nations.”<sup>104</sup> The Truman Doctrine’s definition of national security as global and proactive rather than simply defensive was thus codified in legislative action.

Truman’s transformation of national security from a defensive concern into a policy of global economic and political leadership inspired a series of subsequent actions designed to contain the communist threat. Under the strategy of containment, the United States not only came to the aid of Greece and Turkey, but also helped prop

up fragile economies all across Europe.<sup>105</sup> The Marshall Plan, which Secretary of State George Marshall announced in a June 5, 1947, speech at Harvard University, was implemented beginning in April of 1948. The plan provided more than thirteen billion dollars of monetary aid to Western Europe.<sup>106</sup> Paul G. Hoffman, director of the Marshall Plan, argued that the program's goal was to "stop the spread of communism" by encouraging the recovery of the social and industrial structure of postwar Western Europe.<sup>107</sup> As the British magazine *The Economist* put it in 1953, two years after the conclusion of the Marshall Plan, the United States had fostered "the remarkable, and now complete, recovery of Western Europe from Hitler's war," and in the process it had stopped Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe.<sup>108</sup> Today, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are counted among the most successful U.S. policy initiatives of the Cold War, for they did keep Greece and Turkey—and arguably, all of Western Europe—from falling under Soviet domination. They also contributed to the reputation of the United States as the world leader in the fight against communism.

Truman struggled, however, to limit his administration's policy of containment to political and economic assistance during his final years in office. The conflict in Korea tested the administration's doctrine of containment—of maintaining the status quo boundaries, as Truman had suggested in his Truman Doctrine speech. The Korean peninsula had been divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel since World War II, with the North under Soviet influence, and the South under U.S. influence. On June 25, 1950, communist forces from North Korea, backed by the Soviet Union and China, crossed into South Korea in an effort to unify the country under a communist



regime.<sup>109</sup> After a few hours of meeting with advisors, the Truman administration decided to seek a UN Security Council resolution condemning North Korea and requesting that the UN send forces to the Korean peninsula to restore the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel boundary as the dividing line between North and South Korea.<sup>110</sup> With UN backing, Truman authorized General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of U.S. forces in East Asia, to engage and repel the incursion, and for the next three years U.S. troops would lead the UN contingent in a bloody yet indecisive war against communism in Korea.<sup>111</sup>

Historian Arnold Offner has argued that Truman “had long subscribed to the overblown conclusion that Korea was a crucial ‘ideological battleground’” and a test of his policy of containment.<sup>112</sup> For the first five months of the conflict, UN forces had some success in the war, pushing the North Korean communists back almost to the Chinese border. In December of 1950, however, North Korean troops, backed by Chinese reinforcements, overwhelmed U.S. and South Korean forces and retook the offensive. By early 1951, the conflict in Korea had become a stalemate, with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel once again as the battle line.<sup>113</sup> After criticism of his “no-win” strategy by MacArthur, Truman removed the popular World War II general from his command and reaffirmed his commitment to the doctrine of containment.<sup>114</sup> This decision, however, drew much criticism from Republicans and even from Truman’s own party, leading to widespread accusations that the president was not doing enough to contain communism. Truman’s presidency drew to a close amidst cries that the United States was losing the Cold War.

## Conclusion

In the Truman Doctrine speech, Truman constructed a global and proactive understanding of national security in the United States. He reframed the United States as the postwar leader of Western democracies, and he used urgent language to depict the crisis in Greece and Turkey as an imminent threat to the national security of the United States. In response to that threat, he advocated the containment of communism within its current boundaries, establishing the United States as a leader—indeed, *the* leader—of the free world’s effort to halt the spread of Soviet influence. Truman’s rhetoric laid the foundation for a new understanding of national security that emphasized a proactive, unilateral, and global approach to U.S. foreign policy utilizing economic and political as well as military assistance. Communism, and specifically the Soviet Union, would continue to be seen as the primary threat to the United States and its democratic allies for years to come, and Truman committed the U.S. to economic and military policies designed to “contain” that threat to U.S. national security interests at home and abroad.

Presidents who came after Truman, however, would look back on his “containment” policy as inadequate and ineffective. Whether to gain political advantage or out of more hard-line ideological commitments, Dwight D. Eisenhower would proclaim the Democratic president soft on communism, exploit unhappiness over the Korean stalemate, and begin to develop a long-range plan not merely to contain communism but to defeat it and ultimately win the Cold War. In the new age known as the Cold War, the concept of “national security” thus came to mean much

more than military defense of the homeland. In advocating the containment of communism, Truman had laid the groundwork for a more global and more proactive sense of the term. With the election of Eisenhower to the presidency, the rhetoric of national security assumed even more aggressive connotations, with talk of “massive retaliation” in response to Soviet military threats and “liberation” of peoples already living under Soviet domination.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> George Kennan, “Telegram, George Kennan to James Byrnes, January 29, 1946,” Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-01-29&documentid=6-3&studycollectionid=coldwar](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-01-29&documentid=6-3&studycollectionid=coldwar).

<sup>2</sup> George Kennan, “Telegram, George Kennan to James Byrnes, February 12, 1946,” Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-02-12&documentid=6-5&studycollectionid=coldwar](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-02-12&documentid=6-5&studycollectionid=coldwar).

<sup>3</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 25. Gaddis highlighted the tension between the United States and Britain on one side, and the Soviets on the other: “The Manhattan Project had not been secret enough, though, to keep Soviet intelligence from discovering a lot about it through espionage: there were at least *three* separate and successful Soviet efforts to penetrate security at Los Alamos, where the bomb was being built.” The Soviets spied

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on the United States throughout the war, while the United States shared information about the atomic bomb with their British allies but not with the Soviets.

<sup>4</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler gives an excellent account of the diplomatic missteps by Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes in late 1945. Byrnes expected that he could compel the Soviets to submit to U.S. demands by using the atomic bomb as a threat. After a disastrous meeting with Soviet officials that ended with the Soviets refusing to yield on their establishment of communist governments in Eastern Europe, “Byrnes returned to Washington chastened. The Russians would not be intimidated, he realized.” See Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> Clark Clifford, “American Relations with the Soviet Union,” [Clifford-Elsey Report], Rose A. Conway Files, Truman Papers, September 24, 1946, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/sectioned.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-09-24&documentid=4-1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/sectioned.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-09-24&documentid=4-1).

<sup>6</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947” *The Public Papers of the President of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), 177, 179.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew C. Price, *The Advancement of Liberty: How American Democratic Principles Transformed the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 190.

<sup>8</sup> Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Grand Alliances, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, The Associated Press, “Stalin Sets a Huge Output Near Ours in 5-Year Plan; Expects to Lead in Science,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1946; Brooks Atkinson, “Hails Socialist Economy,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1946; and *Time Magazine*, “Russia, Looking Outward,” February 18, 1946, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,792593-1,00.html>.

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<sup>11</sup> Winston Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace” (The Iron Curtain Speech), in James W. Muller, ed., *Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain Speech’ Fifty Years Later* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 1-13.

<sup>12</sup> For other accounts of the lead-up to this speech, see Denise M. Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008) and Denise M. Bostdorff, “Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine (12 March 1947),” *Voices of Democracy* 4 (2009): 1-22.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Costigliola, “The Creation of Memory and Myth: Stalin’s 1946 Election Speech and the Soviet Threat,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 41.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Stalin, “New Five-Year Plan for Russia,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 12 (1946): 301.

<sup>15</sup> Stalin, “New Five-Year Plan for Russia,” 301.

<sup>16</sup> Costigliola, “The Creation of Memory and Myth: Stalin’s 1946 Election Speech and the Soviet Threat,” 40. Costigliola concluded that Stalin’s speech was a “memory project from above;” it “established” a “usable, mythologized history that could reconfigure popular memory and so legitimate Soviet rule” after the war (41).

<sup>17</sup> Stalin, “New Five-Year Plan for Russia,” 303.

<sup>18</sup> Costigliola, “The Creation of Memory and Myth: Stalin’s 1946 Election Speech and the Soviet Threat,” 45.

<sup>19</sup> *Time Magazine*, “Russia, Looking Outward.”

<sup>20</sup> The Associated Press, “Stalin Sets a Huge Output Near Ours in 5-Year Plan; Expects to Lead in Science.”

<sup>21</sup> Atkinson, “Hails Socialist Economy.”

<sup>22</sup> The Associated Press, “Stalin Sets a Huge Output Near Ours in 5-Year Plan; Expects to Lead in Science;” see also The Associated Press, “Stalin Blames Capitalism for 2 World Wars,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1946. According to the *Tribune* article, in 1944, the United States

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produced more than the Soviet five-year plan called for: 61,007,000 tons of iron, 89,641,000 of steel, and 683,700,000 tons of coal.

<sup>23</sup> George Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946,” in Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011,

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-02-22&documentid=6-6&studycollectionid=coldwar](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1946-02-22&documentid=6-6&studycollectionid=coldwar). Kennan argued that the Soviets would have to rely on “military power” to support their corrupt “weak regimes.”

<sup>24</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 29.

<sup>25</sup> George Kennan as quoted in Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2009), 58.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946.”

<sup>28</sup> Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946.”

<sup>29</sup> Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946.”

<sup>30</sup> Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946.”

<sup>31</sup> Kennan, “Telegram to James Byrnes [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946.”

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*, 59.

<sup>33</sup> The position of Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief became known as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Leahy was the first to hold this position, and his successor, General Omar Bradley, took on the title Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This position is the highest-ranking official in the military forces, sits above the heads of each U.S. Armed Service branch, and is the principle military advisor to the president.

<sup>34</sup> There was discrepancy about whether Truman actually read the document for quite some time. However, as Denise M. Bostdorff noted, “[George] Elsey, however, had been troubled by Truman’s lack of alarm over Soviet behavior and recalled passing Kennan’s missive to the president.

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In October 2003, he looked through his files at the Truman Library in search of evidence to support his memory. There Elsey found his copy of the Long Telegram, bearing the initials of Admiral Leahy and a “P” to indicate that Elsey and Leahy had talked about it, that Leahy had discussed Kennan’s report with the president.” In Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” 8.

<sup>37</sup> Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” 2.

<sup>38</sup> Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” 12.

<sup>40</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 27. Bostdorff uses memoirs from Clifford and Elsey to suggest that the president had strategically read a *copy* of Churchill’s speech so that “he could, if necessary, disavow advance knowledge of its contents.”

<sup>41</sup> Truman, quoted in Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 26-27. See also Paul Rahe, “The Beginning of the Cold War,” in James W. Muller, ed., *Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain Speech’ Fifty Years Later* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 49-67.

<sup>42</sup> Fraser J. Harbutt, *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 197.

<sup>43</sup> Harbutt, *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold War*, 200-201.

<sup>44</sup> Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” 10.

<sup>45</sup> *New York Times*, “What Does Russia Want?” March 14, 1946.

<sup>46</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, “Truman’s Rhetorical Reticence, 1945-1947: An Interpretive Essay,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 55-56.

<sup>47</sup> Clifford, “American Relations with the Soviet Union,” [Clifford-Elsey Report].

<sup>48</sup> Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 77.

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<sup>49</sup> Clifford, "American Relations with the Soviet Union," [Clifford-Else Report]. The report was divided into six chapters: Soviet Foreign Policy, Soviet-American Agreements 1942-1946, Violations of Soviet Agreements with the United States, Conflicting Views on Reparations, Soviet Activities Affecting American Security, and U.S. Policy Toward the Soviet Union.

<sup>50</sup> I offer three examples of this characterization. In oral history interview, conducted by Jerry N. Hess, with Clark Clifford, the former White House official reflected, "Even though President Truman was startled and shocked by the conclusions that that memorandum reached, I knew it had had a very real impact on him. Witness all that took place in 1947, starting with the Truman Doctrine, leading on to the Marshall plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and so forth. These are developments which, to some extent, could be traced back to that analysis of the thinking of our senior officials as presented in the memorandum of September 1946." See Clark M. Clifford, "Oral History Interview with Clark Clifford," by Jerry N. Hess, May 10, 1971, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/cliford4.htm#213>. Historian Arnold Offner has written that "Truman found the Russian Report so 'hot' that he immediately ordered Clifford to lock all twenty copies in the president's office safe." See Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 181. Historian Melvyn P. Leffler similarly argued that the report heightened Truman's concerns about Soviet power: "Truman's closest aides, Clark Clifford and George Elsey, drew up a long report in the summer of 1946 claiming that the Soviet Union was not simply chiseling on its earlier agreements, as the presidential already believed, but intent on world domination. When Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace remonstrated against this view and spoke publicly in behalf of a more conciliatory policy to the Kremlin, Truman fired him." See Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Harry Truman, as quoted in Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 59.



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<sup>52</sup> George M. Elsey, interview by Jerry N. Hess, April 9, 1970, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/elsey6.htm#265>.

<sup>53</sup> Clifford, "American Relations with the Soviet Union," [Clifford-Elsey Report].

<sup>54</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Several works reflect this conclusion, including John Acacia, *Clark Clifford: The Wise Man of Washington* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 36-37; Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 40-41, and Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 130-138.

<sup>56</sup> Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time when America Helped Save Europe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 24-25.

<sup>57</sup> Bostdorff, "Harry S. Truman: 'Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine,'" 7-8.

<sup>58</sup> Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph M. Jones, "Memorandum for the File, The Drafting of The President's Message to Congress on the Greek Situation," March 12, 1947, Joseph M. Jones Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=7-2&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-12&documentid=7-2&pagenumber=1).

<sup>60</sup> Joseph M. Jones, "Meeting Notes, February 1947," Joseph M. Jones Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-02-00&documentid=8-4](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-02-00&documentid=8-4).

<sup>61</sup> Joseph M. Jones, "Chronology, Drafting the President's Message of March 12, 1947," Joseph M. Jones Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-03-00&documentid=7-3](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-03-00&documentid=7-3).

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<sup>62</sup> Jones, "Meeting Notes, February 1947."

<sup>63</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 94-95. See also Loy W. Henderson, "Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson," by Richard D. McKinzie, June 14, 1973, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/henderson.htm>.

<sup>64</sup> The drafting process is described in Jones, "Memorandum for the File, The Drafting of the President's Message to Congress on the Greek Situation."

<sup>65</sup> Jones, "Chronology, Drafting the President's Message of March 12, 1947."

<sup>66</sup> Jones, "Chronology, Drafting the President's Message of March 12, 1947." See also Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 100-101.

<sup>67</sup> George M. Elsey, "Oral History Interview with George Elsey," by Jerry N. Hess, April 9, 1970, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/elsey6.htm#297> and <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/elsey6.htm#298>. Elsey recalled, "Now, I know Joe [Joseph M.] Jones who then was of the State Department, wrote a book later mostly for which he patted himself on the back for the great speech he had written, and for his fine style that he thought the White House staff had messed up."

<sup>68</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 106.

<sup>69</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 108.

<sup>70</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 176.

<sup>71</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 177.

<sup>72</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 178.

<sup>73</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 179.

<sup>74</sup> Robert L. Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors in the Global Emergency of the Truman Doctrine," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1999): 573.

<sup>75</sup> Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors in the Global Emergency of the Truman Doctrine," 579.

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<sup>76</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 109.

<sup>77</sup> George Washington, "Farewell Address," 1796, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp).

<sup>78</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 39-40.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Griffith, "Old Progressives and the Cold War," *Journal of American History* 66 (1979): 340. These progressives were largely from the northern Midwest states, such as North Dakota and Wisconsin, and included Senator William Langer (ND) and Representatives William F. Lemke (ND), Usher L. Burdick (ND), Garder R. Withrow (WI), and Merlin Hull (WI) (337).

<sup>80</sup> Henry W. Berger, "Bipartisanship, Senator Taft, and the Truman Administration," *Political Science Quarterly* 90 (1975): 231. In 1946, for example, Taft spoke against the Truman administration's support for the International Monetary Fund, saying that the administration had an "itching desire" to "tell the rest of the world how it shall run its affairs."

<sup>81</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 178.

<sup>82</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 180.

<sup>83</sup> Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, "American Exceptionalism in a Democratic Idiom: Transacting the Mythos of Change in the 2008 Presidential Campaign," *Communication Studies* 60 (2009): 360.

<sup>84</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 176.

<sup>85</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 179.

<sup>86</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 177.

<sup>87</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 179.

<sup>88</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 177.

<sup>89</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 179.

<sup>90</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 179.

<sup>91</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," 180.

<sup>92</sup> Medhurst, "Truman's Rhetorical Reticence, 1945-1947: An Interpretative Essay," 53.

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<sup>93</sup> Medhurst, "Truman's Rhetorical Reticence, 1945-1947: An Interpretative Essay," 64-65.

<sup>94</sup> Medhurst, "Truman's Rhetorical Reticence, 1945-1947: An Interpretative Essay," 66.

<sup>95</sup> C. P. Trussell, "Congress is Solemn: Prepares to Consider Bills After Hearing the President Gravely," *New York Times*, March 13, 1947.

<sup>96</sup> *New York Times*, "Support for the President," March 15, 1947.

<sup>97</sup> *New York Times*, "Extracts From American Editorial Comment on President Truman's Message," March 13, 1947.

<sup>98</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, "Here We Go Again," March 13, 1947.

<sup>99</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, "Here We Go Again."

<sup>100</sup> *New York Times*, "Extracts From American Editorial Comment on President Truman's Message," March 13, 1947.

<sup>101</sup> Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16-18.

<sup>102</sup> *Newsweek*, April 7, 1947, as quoted in Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 22.

<sup>103</sup> Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*, 142.

<sup>104</sup> "Public Law 80-75, Assistance to Greece and Turkey, May 22, 1947," President's Secretary Files, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011,

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?page\\_number=1&documentdate=1947-05-22&documentid=5-2](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?page_number=1&documentdate=1947-05-22&documentid=5-2).

<sup>105</sup> For more about the actions and results of U.S. aid in Greece, Turkey, and Europe, see Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time when America Helped Save Europe*; Howard Jones, "A New Kind of War": *America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War*; and Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism*.

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<sup>106</sup> Garry Wills, *Bomb Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State* (Penguin Press: New York, 2010), 77.

<sup>107</sup> Paul G. Hoffman, as quoted in Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time when America Helped Save Europe*, 182.

<sup>108</sup> *The Economist*, as quoted in Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time when America Helped Save Europe*, 333.

<sup>109</sup> Craig and Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 43. This decision is reflected in several declassified administration documents, including George Elsey, "Note Regarding General Douglas MacArthur, June 25, 1950," Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-25&documentid=ki-1-14&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-25&documentid=ki-1-14&pagenumber=1) and "Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950," Secretary of State File, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-26&documentid=ki-12-3&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-26&documentid=ki-12-3&pagenumber=1).

<sup>111</sup> Craig and Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 118. Although the United States technically was acting under a UN "police action," 50% of the allied South Korean forces were from the United States, 40% from South Korea, and just 10% from other UN countries.

<sup>112</sup> Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953*, 348.

<sup>113</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 45-46.

<sup>114</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Diary Entry, April 5, 1951," President's Secretary Files, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-04-05&documentid=ma-1-17&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-04-05&documentid=ma-1-17&pagenumber=1). The handwritten entry from Truman's diary reads, "The situation with regard to the Far Eastern general has become a political one."

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MacArthur has made himself a center of controversy, publicly and privately.” See also Craig and Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 120-121.

## Chapter Three

### Security in the “Age of Peril”: Dwight Eisenhower, American Values, and National Security

Dwight D. Eisenhower’s presidential campaign began as a foreign policy critique. Eisenhower was a five star general, a well-known World War II hero, and Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe when he began his 1952 presidential campaign.<sup>1</sup> On the campaign trail, Eisenhower argued that President Harry S. Truman and the Democrats had sacrificed U.S. national security by not acting swiftly enough to prevent the spread of communism, especially in Asia. Indeed, as rhetorical critic Martin J. Medhurst has noted, Eisenhower’s most famous 1952 presidential campaign speech focused almost entirely on Truman’s failed policy in Korea, concluding with his famous pledge, “I shall go to Korea.”<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower promised that if he were elected to the presidency, he would finish the job in Korea and chart a safer, more secure course for the United States.

Once in office, Eisenhower adopted a national security strategy that combined military, economic, and political initiatives into a comprehensive package that came to known as the “New Look” in U.S. foreign policy. His strategy was one that, in historian Martin Walker’s words, aimed to “confront” and “defeat” communism around the globe, not just “contain” it.<sup>3</sup> The New Look rested on the strategic use of alliances to isolate the Soviet Union, a build-up of nuclear weapons, and both international and domestic propaganda campaigns. With each new policy initiative, Eisenhower publically made the case for his New Look, arguing that this new

approach would be both more economical and more effective in combating the communist threat.

Eisenhower's rhetoric of national security went beyond Truman's metaphors of "containment," instead preparing U.S. citizens for a long struggle culminating in freedom's victory over communism and the liberation of those under communist domination. In the "Age of Peril" speech, his May 19, 1953, radio address on national security, Eisenhower warned the public that the Cold War would not be merely a short-term military and economic challenge, but rather a long-term threat to the nation's most basic ideals—democracy and freedom—and its way of life.<sup>4</sup> He amplified the danger of communism in preparation for a massive build-up of nuclear weapons. Although the Age of Peril speech is not as famous as some of Eisenhower's other foreign policy speeches, it arguably reveals more about the philosophy and worldview underlying his national security rhetoric. Just two months earlier, Eisenhower's "A Chance for Peace" address had identified the Soviet Union as the enemy of freedom.<sup>5</sup> In the Age of Peril, Eisenhower went further, preparing his audience for his New Look strategy. He redefined the Cold War as a long-term threat aimed mostly at undermining the economic viability of the West and proposed a whole new approach to this new age of peril relying upon "air power" rather than conventional military forces.<sup>6</sup> In later speeches, Eisenhower made clear that by "air power," he really meant a reliance on atomic weapons and a doctrine of massive retaliation in response to Soviet aggression. Meanwhile, he envisioned the United States winning the Cold War and liberating those under communist domination over



the long run by using a massive and sophisticated campaign of global propaganda to win the war of ideas against communism.

In this chapter, I first identify and examine important events and key individuals that influenced Eisenhower in the 1952 campaign and in his early presidency and led to the development of the New Look strategies for national security. I then provide a close reading of the Age of Peril speech, which laid the groundwork for Eisenhower's new national security strategy. In this speech, Eisenhower prepared the public for an expansion in the scope of national security, asserting that the United States needed a long-term and comprehensive strategy for prevailing over the Soviets. He emphasized the economic and ideological threats of the Cold War and laid the foundation for his administration's transformation of national security doctrine. I argue that Eisenhower moved from "containment" to a doctrine of deterrence through "massive retaliation" and, ultimately, the "liberation" of those under Soviet domination by portraying conventional military preparedness as inadequate and too expensive over the long run. Eisenhower cast a build-up of nuclear missiles as the best road to lasting peace. He also championed aggressive foreign and domestic propaganda as a critical component of national security, crucial for winning the "war of ideas."<sup>7</sup> Finally, I demonstrate how, in his Farewell Address, Eisenhower seemed to have second thoughts about the New Look, implying that the massive build-up of technologically sophisticated weapons over which he presided had created a different kind of threat to U.S. democracy: the domination of the nation's political system by a new "military-industrial complex."<sup>8</sup>

### **Eisenhower and the Development of the New Look**

In the final years of the Truman presidency, two major events undermined the administration's policy of containment and limited engagement of communism. Eisenhower and other Republicans used these events as opportunities to argue that containment had failed and to propose a new, more aggressive approach to Cold War policy. First, on August 29, 1949, U.S. airplanes detected "large quantities of radioactive material" in Soviet territory, a sure sign that the Soviet Union had tested an atomic weapon.<sup>9</sup> Both sides now had "the bomb" and were capable of destroying each other's cities. Second, on October 1, 1949, China became a communist nation, as the civil war between the U.S.-backed nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the Soviet-backed Chinese communists, led by Mao Zedong, ended in a victory for the communists. The loss of China to the communists heightened feelings in the United States that Truman was not doing enough to defend freedom around the world. Historian John Lewis Gaddis has argued that while these two events may not have reversed the West's substantial gains after World War II, "[t]hose who lived through these events . . . had no way of knowing this: to them, it looked as though the European victories the West had won had been outweighed by an unexpected expansion of the Cold War, almost simultaneously, onto several broader fronts—in none of which the prospects seemed favorable."<sup>10</sup> These events seemed to suggest the deficiencies in the policy of containment.

## **The Failure of Containment in Korea**

Then came the Korean War. As the first significant military confrontation of the Cold War, the fighting on the Korean peninsula between communist forces—backed by China—and democratic South Korean forces—backed by the United States and the United Nations (UN)—raised new fears of another world war, this one perhaps involving atomic weapons. The Korean War had its foundations in the power struggles between the United States and Soviet Union after World War II. At the close of the war, the Soviet Union had occupied the northern portion of the Korean peninsula, and the United States occupied the southern portion. The UN attempted to unify the nation and conduct free elections in 1947, but the Soviet Union refused to yield their occupation of the north. Armed conflict between the two Koreas escalated on June 25, 1950, when more than 89,000 North Korean troops crossed the dividing line of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into South Korea.<sup>11</sup>

The Truman administration quickly sought a UN resolution condemning the communist invasion and moved to support South Korea with U.S. military forces.<sup>12</sup> On June 30, 1950, the Truman administration issued a press statement indicating that the president had authorized U.S. bombings of “military targets” in North Korea, a “naval blockade of the entire Korean coast,” and the use of U.S. “ground units” to restore peace. The White House emphasized that Truman’s actions accorded with a UN Security Council resolution calling for aid to repel the “North Korean invaders” and restore “peace in Korea.”<sup>13</sup> Korea was not, however, an easy war for the United States, and the administration vacillated on strategy. Historian Steven Casey has

argued that Truman “fluctuated between defending South Korea in June, liberating North Korea in October, and effectively accepting a division of the peninsula by the following March.”<sup>14</sup>

General Douglas MacArthur, the military commander of the Korean conflict, was quick to criticize Truman’s changes in strategy. MacArthur was perhaps the most popular war hero in the United States and already had been celebrated as the military genius behind the only major UN victory in the Korean conflict—a surprise attack on the port of Inchon on September 15, 1950, that had pushed the communists back beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>15</sup> But an October counteroffensive by Chinese-led forces had caught the United States and its allies off-guard, and by the end of November the U.S.-led forces had retreated south of the dividing line, with thousands of soldiers and marines killed in battle or dying from hypothermia or pneumonia. Toward the end of November, MacArthur gave an interview to *U.S. News & World Report*, calling the White House’s refusal to send more troops an “enormous handicap, without precedent in military history.” The general wanted two hundred thousand men to avoid what was, in his evaluation, a potentially humiliating defeat.<sup>16</sup> Truman promptly put a gag order on MacArthur, issuing a presidential order that required all military commanders to obtain White House approval for any public statements. MacArthur blatantly violated this edict several times, giving interviews to the press about his dissatisfaction with the president—even going so far to call Truman’s strategy “ludicrous”—and writing a letter to the Speaker of the House condemning Truman’s desire to end the war with an armistice rather than victory.<sup>17</sup> On April 11, 1951,

Truman recalled MacArthur from Korea and relieved him from command because of his insubordination.<sup>18</sup>

Truman had stood strong against a rogue general, but his removal of support for MacArthur seemed to confirm the general's criticism that the White House had no strategy for winning the Korean War. After his removal, MacArthur returned home to a hero's welcoming, complete with parades and a famous speech before a Joint Session of Congress on April 19.<sup>19</sup> In that speech, MacArthur chastised Truman for his handling of the Korean War and argued that, in war, there was "no alternative" to using "every available means to bring it to a swift end." The "very object" of war, MacArthur maintained, was "victory—not prolonged indecision."<sup>20</sup> By the summer of 1951, MacArthur's words seemed prophetic, as the war reached a stalemate.<sup>21</sup> The impasse in Korea suggested to some that the United States did not have the capacity even to contain communism, much less defeat it. Coupled with MacArthur's critique, Truman's decision to prohibit U.S. troops from crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and his efforts to seek a ceasefire rather than victory appeared weak rather than prudent.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Korean conflict became a political liability for Truman and his party as the 1952 election approached, leaving Democrats vulnerable to accusations that they had been weak on communism.

### **Eisenhower's Foreign Policy Critique**

During this time, Eisenhower was still serving in the military, but he became increasingly concerned—and increasingly vocal—about the threat communism posed

to U.S. national security. As a celebrated five-star general, he was a highly popular public figure both in the United States and abroad, and President Truman, Congress, and the press often consulted him about U.S. military and foreign policy matters.<sup>23</sup> According to Eisenhower's own account, his professional assessment of declining U.S. military readiness was what motivated him to run for the 1952 Republican presidential nomination in the first place. In his memoir, *Mandate for Change*, he recalled that he had no objections to the Truman Doctrine or the Marshall plan per se, but he felt that Truman had failed to maintain the military strength to back up his Cold War policies: "There were too many who did not yet understand that without strength we could neither be isolated nor honorably involved in world councils. While we accepted such necessary measures as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, and continued to support the United Nations, we had also allowed our military defenses to fall far below an adequate strength."<sup>24</sup> For Eisenhower, Truman's failure to maintain adequate military strength represented a serious failure of presidential leadership.

Despite having served under Truman as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe after World War II, Eisenhower thus began to distance himself from the administration in preparation for a presidential campaign of his own. As his role changed from military commander to presidential candidate, his rhetoric grew even more critical of Truman. In February of 1951, Eisenhower delivered an address at the Pentagon, calling for a more assertive effort to halt the spread of communism in Europe. The "aggressive imperialism" of the communists posed a serious threat to U.S. national security, he argued, and the Soviet Union had "more than once

announced its implacable hostility to free government.” Thus, he advised, the United States needed to build up its military strength and “erect a wall of security for the free world behind which free institutions can live.”<sup>25</sup>

While Eisenhower’s remarks might have been interpreted as support for Truman’s policy of containment, Eisenhower apparently had something much bolder in mind to counter the communist threat. Soviet communism did not just threaten Western Europe; it posed a serious threat to the very survival of liberty and democracy around the globe. There could be “no question,” Eisenhower explained in his Pentagon speech, that the “solidarity” of free nations was essential to effectively “opposing Communistic aggression.”<sup>26</sup> Speaking to the British Parliament on January 15, 1952, he again argued that the Soviets posed a serious threat to all free nations because “Communist doctrine states that it cannot co-exist with free governments.”<sup>27</sup> He reiterated that theme again in a campaign speech in Milwaukee in October, warning that democracy and communism were as “opposed as danger is to safety, as sickness is to health, as weakness is to strength, as darkness to light.”<sup>28</sup> For Eisenhower, who had enormous credibility on foreign policy matters, it was not enough to merely “contain” the communist threat. In the long run, either communism or democracy would prevail, so he looked for ways to “roll back” communism’s advances and ultimately defeat it altogether.

## Massive Retaliation and the Rhetoric of Liberation

Eisenhower's more comprehensive and long-term national security strategy has often been attributed to—or blamed on—one man: John Foster Dulles. Dulles was an experienced diplomat who began his career as an aide to the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I.<sup>29</sup> In the early Cold War, Dulles was outspoken about the need for a more aggressive foreign policy toward the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> According to historian Richard Immerman, Dulles hoped to be Eisenhower's "clear choice for secretary of state" and solidify the Republican foreign policy platform.<sup>31</sup> Despite only a casual acquaintance with Eisenhower, Dulles contacted the general during the 1952 campaign and sent him a memorandum outlining his ideas for a new approach to countering the Soviet threat. In that memo, Dulles stressed the need to fight communism with every available weapon, whether military, political, cultural, or economic. Eisenhower and Dulles subsequently corresponded about the memo, with Eisenhower expressing his reservations about Dulles's emphasis on a doctrine of "retaliation" in response to Soviet aggression.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the General's concerns, Dulles continued to advocate for a more aggressive U.S. posture. Six months before the presidential election, Dulles took to the pages of *Life* magazine, criticizing the Truman Doctrine and calling for what would become known as the doctrine of "massive retaliation." The United States, he explained, must "seek a military formula more effective than any devised to date—that we may no longer be so overridingly preoccupied with military necessity."<sup>33</sup> Elaborating on that "formula," he argued that the United States needed to develop



*“the means to retaliate instantly against open aggression by Red armies,”* so that the United States *“could and would strike back where it hurts by means of our choosing.”*<sup>34</sup> With the development of what Dulles euphemistically referred to as the “community punishing power” of the free world, the United States would be able to “deter potential aggressors by making it probable that if they aggress, they will lose in punishment more than they can gain by aggression.”<sup>35</sup>

Dulles warned that the “old methods” of conventional military defense could not provide that “punishing power” across the “20,000-mile scope of the present military peril.” With the Soviets posing threats all over the world, the “strain” to build conventional forces adequate to respond to every communist threat would drive the United States into bankruptcy. With atomic weapons, on the other hand, the United States might deter Soviet aggression against democratic nations by threatening retaliation against the Soviet Union itself. If that threat were “known” to the enemy, even atomic weapons that were never used could be “effective weapons in defense of the peace.” Thus, the most “effective and enlightened way to proceed” in building a safer, more secure world was to build enough atomic weapons to deter Soviet aggression through the threat of retaliation.<sup>36</sup>

Once Dulles’s proposed nuclear deterrent was in place, the United States could then “undertake a political offense” against communism.<sup>37</sup> The United States should not be content with the “negative policy of ‘containment’ and ‘stalemate,’” Dulles argued with clear reference to the Truman doctrine and the war in Korea. Instead, Dulles argued for a policy designed ultimately to promote “liberation from the yoke of Moscow.” In other words, Dulles envisioned liberating these people

already under Soviet domination not through the limited economic and military assistance of the Truman doctrine, but by using “*ideas as weapons*,” particularly those ideas rooted in the “*moral principles*” of democratic life.<sup>38</sup>

Dulles stressed that the United States, by merely announcing such a political offensive, could strike a devastating psychological blow against the Soviets and communism. He forecast that the “mere statement” of the “wish and expectation” that all peoples should be free would “change, in an electrifying way, the mood of captive peoples. It would put new heavy burdens on the jailers and create new opportunities for liberation.” The United States needed to “make it clear, on the highest authority of the President and the Congress,” that U.S. foreign policy sought “the eventual restoration of genuine independence in the nations of Europe and Asia now dominated by Moscow.”<sup>39</sup> For Dulles, “containing” communism was not enough; it was time to announce that the United States was committed to ultimate victory over the communism and the “liberation” of those enslaved under its doctrines.

Dulles’s article in the widely read *Life* magazine strengthened his influence in the Republican party and, once elected, Eisenhower appointed him Secretary of State. The president did not, however, give Dulles free rein to implement his “policy of boldness.” As Immerman noted, “Eisenhower entrusted Dulles with great power,” but the president always “reserved final decisions for himself.”<sup>40</sup> Gaddis has characterized the relationship between the president and his Secretary of State as that of “two personally friendly but temperamentally very different men,” with “strains and compromises as well as forbearance, cooperation, and mutual respect.”<sup>41</sup> After he settled into office, Eisenhower did not simply defer to Dulles’ expertise in foreign

affairs, but instead ordered a complete review of the nation's Cold War policies in the spring of 1953.<sup>42</sup> That review culminated in National Security Council document 162/2 (NSC 162/2), which proposed what would come to be known as the “New Look” in U.S. Cold War policy.

NSC 162/2, approved by Eisenhower on October 30, 1953, stated that the “basic problems of national security policy” were more complex and multi-faceted than the nation had faced in the past. The challenge, according to the report, was “to meet the Soviet threat to U.S. security” without “seriously weakening the U.S. economy or undermining our fundamental values and institutions.”<sup>43</sup> To meet this challenge, Eisenhower's NSC called for an increase in U.S. military power and readiness, primarily relying upon an atomic capability that could inflict “massive retaliatory damage” on the Soviet Union with its “offensive striking power.” The United States also needed to develop the ability to respond “rapidly” to any threat from the Soviets or communist bloc around the world.<sup>44</sup> The entirety of the U.S. national security strategy was “valid only so long as the United States” maintained “a retaliatory capacity” that could not be “neutralized” by the Soviets.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to expanding its military capabilities, NSC 162/2 stressed the importance of fiscally conservative economic policies and the need for more effective U.S. government propaganda. A “sound economy based on free enterprise” would enable the United States to pursue its goals of “high defense productivity” while maintaining the “living standards and free institutions” of the United States.<sup>46</sup> Yet it was not enough to have strong military and economic policies; NSC 162/2 also called for a more vigorous propaganda campaign designed to “create and exploit

troublesome problems for the USSR, impair Soviet relations with China, complicate control in the satellites, and retard the growth of the military and economic potentials of the Soviet bloc.”<sup>47</sup> More surprisingly, NSC 162/2 seemed to advocate that the propaganda campaign be extended to domestic audiences as well, arguing that the U.S. public “must be informed of the nature of the communist threat” and persuaded to mobilize “the spiritual and material resources necessary to meet the Soviet threat.”<sup>48</sup> NSC 162/2 thus not only endorsed Dulles’s doctrine of massive retaliation, but also suggested that national security required sound economic policies and both foreign and domestic propaganda. Under the New Look, national security became a comprehensive and integrated collection of political, economic, and propaganda initiatives designed to ultimately win the Cold War.

As president, Eisenhower faced the challenge of building public support for this bold new vision of U.S. national security. Although “Eisenhower’s oratorical abilities” are not typically thought of as “a part of his historical legacy,” he was, as Martin J. Medhurst has noted, an astute and strategic public communicator.<sup>49</sup> For Eisenhower, Medhurst writes, rhetoric was an important “weapon in the arsenal of democracy.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, J. Michael Hogan has argued that Eisenhower consistently pursued a “rhetorical strategy premised upon the notion that the Cold War would be won, not with bombs and bullets, but through persuasion.”<sup>51</sup> These rhetorical scholars contend that Eisenhower was fully aware of the need to build public support for these bold departures from the U.S. history of isolationism and, more recently, the policy of containment. Moreover, he had a very sophisticated understanding of the importance of persuasion and propaganda in the Cold War itself.

The Age of Peril speech was an important moment in Eisenhower's efforts to build support for the New Look in U.S. foreign policy. The New Look would require that the U.S. public put aside their understandings of national security as a military concern and instead think of how every aspect of governmental policy and the U.S. way of life influenced the security of the nation. Remaining secure was no longer about containing communism within its existing boundaries, but rather developing a strategy that might ultimately roll back communism and defeat it once and for all. The United States could not pursue such a strategy solely through conventional military means, but rather required a large increase in the number and strength of atomic weapons, a doctrine of deterring the Soviets with the threat of massive retaliation, and a "war of ideas" carried on via an unprecedented propaganda campaign, both at home and abroad. Liberating the entire world from the communist threat, in other words, would require radical changes, and Eisenhower began making the case for those changes in his "Age of Peril" speech.

### **Finding Security in an Age of Peril**

Eisenhower's "Radio Address to the American People on National Security and Its Costs," popularly known as the Age of Peril speech, represented the beginning of a rhetorical campaign to prepare and persuade the U.S. public to support Eisenhower's New Look. When Eisenhower gave the speech, key members of the president's administration, including Eisenhower's National Security Council (NSC) assistant Robert Cutler, Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, CIA Director

Allen Dulles, Special Assistant to the President C.D. Jackson, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, were still debating the specifics of the administration's new national security strategy.<sup>52</sup> NSC 162/2 had not yet been written, and there was some disagreement among administration officials about the best course of action in response to the Soviet threat.<sup>53</sup> But Eisenhower "had been thinking about [security] matters for some time already," as rhetorical critic Meena Bose has noted, and he likely hoped to persuade members of his own administration to go along with the general direction and character of his new approach.<sup>54</sup> In the Age of Peril radio address, Eisenhower prepared the citizens of the United States for the coming dramatic transformation of national security strategy, introducing "air power" as an economical strategy to maintain national security and protect American values. The speech also was an early example of how Eisenhower relied on rhetoric to fight—and win—the war of ideas.

Eisenhower opened the address by characterizing the ideological threat to the United States as the key defining aspect of the Cold War. The defense of the nation was, according to Eisenhower, "really" about the "defense of those the spiritual values and moral ideals cherished by generations of Americans." These values and ideals were the "true treasure of our people," he explained, and he went on to clarify the shared commitment needed to defend them: "This treasure of the spirit must be defended, above all, with the weapons of the spirit: our patriotism, our devotion, and our readiness to sacrifice."<sup>55</sup> Here Eisenhower clearly defined the Cold War as a war of ideas, and he suggested that America's "treasure"—its most fundamental ideals and its way of life—was under attack. The "long record of deliberately planned

Communist aggression,” he argued, indicated that the “hope and purpose” of Soviet policy was “the destruction of freedom everywhere.” Yet the “defense of America” demanded “still other weapons” to protect the nation against communism.<sup>56</sup>

Against this terrifying attack of the very way of life in the United States, Eisenhower explained that the U.S. definition and understanding of national security must expand. First, Eisenhower stated that the “national security” of the United States was “affected by almost everything that your government does, things far removed from the building of planes or the training of troops.” It included “the plain honesty and competence of government itself,” Eisenhower elaborated, “for no nation is secure whose government does not command respect at home and honor abroad.” Second, national security was dependent on “healthy two-way trade with our allies and friends—for this nation could not for long enjoy either freedom or prosperity alone in a hostile world.” Ensuring the economic security of the United States meant “that we never forget or neglect the military and economic health of these indispensable allies.” Third, national security required “an industrious and productive America,” as the economy was “the vital source of all our military strength.”<sup>57</sup> Finally, Eisenhower implored his audience to “see, clearly and steadily, just exactly what is the danger before us,” warning that it was “more than merely a military threat.” The “Soviet leaders . . . hoped to force upon America and the free world an unbearable security burden leading to economic disaster” that would destroy the American way of life. The Soviets had “plainly said that free people cannot preserve their way of life and at the same time provide enormous military establishments.”

Soviet “Communist guns,” Eisenhower concluded, had “been aiming at an economic target no less than a military target.”<sup>58</sup>

Eisenhower stressed that the Soviets posed an enduring threat to the American way of life. While Eisenhower confessed that he believed “that the United States, if forced to total mobilization today, could meet and win any military challenge,” he also professed that the “full nature of the present and future danger” posed by the serious Soviet threat to national security dictated “the nature of the defense we summon.” The United States must defend its free way of life against the communist threat “for a long and indefinite period of time,” since the communist threat could not “be fixed or confined to one specific instant.” The citizens of the United States lived in an “age of peril;” the term “age” suggesting a lengthy conflict, potentially spanning generations. Eisenhower’s world was beset by a “prolonged tension and struggle” that endangered the liberty and freedom of the United States.<sup>59</sup> By labeling that prolonged period of tension and struggle the “age of peril,” Eisenhower also suggested that the struggle between communism and the United States was an epic battle of lasting significance for the free world. A threat to U.S. military forces abroad may have been a frightening prospect to a generation of the U.S. public who had lived and fought in World War II. But a threat to the American way of life was even more ominous and targeted the people’s own identity—the everyday security of U.S. citizens. Only by responding comprehensively to such a threat would the United States be able to maintain its character, values, and way of life.<sup>60</sup>

Eisenhower depicted his approach to national security as a well-planned response that would protect the United States throughout the age of peril. He



explained, “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.”<sup>61</sup> If the government was forced to respond with “rigid government controls, indefinitely or permanently continued,” Eisenhower warned, “where then would be the freedom we defend?” The national security strategy must be “carefully planned and steadfastly sustained,”<sup>62</sup> so as to protect the “spiritual values” that Eisenhower had identified earlier as America’s greatest “treasure.”

Eisenhower blamed the current struggles on the previous administration’s irresponsible fiscal policies and lack of careful planning for national security. The previous administration had “over-estimated tax collections . . . by some 1.2 billion dollars” and under-estimated the costs of the Korean War and military buildup needed to counter the Soviet Union. “No specific budgetary provision was made for the continuance of this conflict,” Eisenhower declared, attacking his predecessor for his neglect of the economics of national security. The Truman administration had financed a war through “C.O.D.”—cash on delivery—assuming that the nation could just pay for it once it was all over. As a result, the Eisenhower administration and the U.S. public now faced “payment” on “81 billion dollars C.O.D. over the next several years.”<sup>63</sup> The new administration thus had to shoulder the burden of paying for past wars and for rebuilding the military in this new age of peril. Complaining about special pleading by various advocates of supposedly “essential” and “indispensable” military weapons, Eisenhower assured his listeners that his administration had given the situation “careful, personal study and analysis” and come up with a plan that would protect “what is truly vital to our security.”<sup>64</sup>

Eisenhower spent the bulk of his Age of Peril speech explaining his administration's comprehensive approach to national security in economic terms. Assuring his listeners that he would not cut corners when it came to defense, he called instead for a "speeding, a sharpening, a concentration that will exact the last cent of value from every dollar spent" in the military budget.<sup>65</sup> The United States could not afford "total mobilization of all our national resources," as in a conventional war, as that would not only break the U.S. economy but also "compel" the United States to "imitate the methods of the dictator."<sup>66</sup> Eisenhower refused to "devote our whole nation to the grim purposes of the garrison state," stating that such a plan was "not the way to defend America."<sup>67</sup> An "honest, workable formula" for national security demanded "a defense strong enough both to discourage aggression and beyond this to protect the nation—in the event of any aggression—as it moves swiftly to full mobilization."<sup>68</sup> This call for a more economical military defense that discouraged aggression prepared the way for the administration's strategy of massive retaliation, the reliance upon atomic rather than conventional military forces in Eisenhower's New Look national security strategy.

The "full mobilization" that Eisenhower called for in his Age of Peril speech was, in fact, a demobilization of conventional forces in favor of a more efficient—and frugal—approach to national security: a reliance upon "air power." In the age of peril, he argued, maintaining an adequate conventional force was simply too costly. The time had come for the United States to eliminate "non-essential" military forces in order to "concentrate" on what was really "vital" for national security in the atomic age.<sup>69</sup> As Eisenhower explained, air power had become "a more important factor in

war,” and he called for devoting “60 cents out of every dollar” of the defense budget “to air power and air defense.”<sup>70</sup> Eisenhower dubbed his plan merely a “revised budget,” but what he really proposed was a complete reorientation of U.S. defense policy toward an almost complete reliance upon nuclear weapons and a doctrine of deterrence.<sup>71</sup> The “developing program” would mean “a steady growth in the size and efficiency of the air defense,” until the United States had “an adequate level of security.”<sup>72</sup>

Yet Eisenhower never once mentioned atomic or nuclear weapons in the speech. Speaking only vaguely of “air power” and “air defense,” he laid the groundwork for Dulles’s plan for a massive build-up of nuclear bombers and missiles. Eisenhower mentioned “missiles” twice, characterizing the development of such weapons as a “technological advance,” and he also talked about “similar advances in civil defense.” Yet the closest he came to admitting that he was actually talking about a nuclear build-up was when he acknowledged that three planes with “modern weapons” could “duplicate the destructive power of all 2700 [Allied] planes . . . unleashed” during the Normandy invasion.<sup>73</sup>

Eisenhower presented his plan as a “middle way” between reckless military spending and a “penny-wise, pound foolish” policy of skimping on defense. His plan had “sense and strength” rather than “drama and sensation,” he insisted; it would not “scream with shrill crisis and emergency,” but instead speak “with conviction and realism.”<sup>74</sup> Rejecting the advice of some of his more hawkish advisers, Eisenhower did not try to scare the U.S. public with talk about the threat of nuclear war. Over the next year, he would debate with his advisors the best way to sell the new reliance on

nuclear weapons to the public. Eisenhower “seemed to sense,” as J. Michael Hogan has written, that “scaring the public simply would not work” to advance his political goals, and Eisenhower’s rhetoric in the “Age of Peril” was grounded in appeals to stability, economy, and sensibility.<sup>75</sup> Eisenhower’s full answer on how to persuade the public into accepting a nuclear missile build-up would come later, in his “Atoms for Peace” speech.<sup>76</sup>

In the Age of Peril speech, Eisenhower asked that his fellow citizens to moderate their own demands for government spending. “You and your fellow-citizens who want your government to spend less,” he said, “must yourselves practice self-restraint in the demands you make on the government.” He criticized those citizens who wanted “economy for every group except the one to which you belong,” suggesting that their selfishness endangered the nation’s economic stability.<sup>77</sup> All citizens had to unite behind Eisenhower’s plan for a more frugal government—at least if the United States hoped to establish the kind of fiscal responsibility that he now deemed essential to national security.

This appeal represented a consistent rhetorical strategy throughout Eisenhower’s presidency: asking the people to sacrifice while trusting in him—the famous General—to safeguard their national security. Speaking as the military expert, he emphasized that national security would no longer involve “fire-alarm” military responses,<sup>78</sup> but would instead be a prolonged struggle to protect the American way of life against an enemy bent on their destruction. Eisenhower’s plan would, the president stated near the close of his speech, “work for national security—in the full, true sense” and create “an age of productive freedom, unmatched in all man’s

history.”<sup>79</sup> In closing, he spoke optimistically of the future, promising that the United States would meet the challenge of this new age of peril “boldly, vigorously, and successfully.” And in the last sentence of the speech, he asked—somewhat awkwardly—for the public’s help in this endeavor: “This is what I ask all of you to help to do.”<sup>80</sup>

The Age of Peril address was a classic example of one of Eisenhower’s key rhetorical strategies throughout the Cold War: strategic ambiguity. Medhurst has written that Eisenhower’s “strategic use of ambiguity” was “more important” than all the other language strategies the president used during his administration.<sup>81</sup> Eisenhower frequently would refrain from defining a specific situation, or would allow audiences to interpret his statements in multiple ways. In his Age of Peril speech, Eisenhower asked for broad trust in the federal government’s abilities to meet future threats to national security. But he did not—and perhaps at that time could not—anticipate all the specific programs or policies that might be necessary to defend the American spirit. Instead, he oriented the public towards a general attitude or frame of reference for thinking about the challenges of the Cold War. Yet after the Age of Peril speech, Eisenhower’s own New Look policies began to threaten the American values—the true treasures that needed to be protected through a strong national security strategy. Upon leaving the office of the presidency eight years later, Eisenhower cautioned in his Farewell Address that perhaps the ambiguities of the New Look had facilitated the development of a dangerous “military-industrial complex.”<sup>82</sup>

### **Eisenhower and the Expansion of National Security**

As Eisenhower implemented the New Look, his transformation of national security rhetoric continued. Over his two-term administration, Eisenhower's rhetorical shift from containing communism to protecting the United States through a doctrine of nuclear deterrence and massive retaliation was reflected in a variety of initiatives that expanded the definition of national security in the United States. Casting a massive nuclear build-up as a peace initiative, Eisenhower expanded the domestic national security infrastructure and began a massive campaign of domestic and international propaganda designed to both build public support for his policies at home and weaken and defeat the Soviet Union abroad.

As laid out in the Age of Peril speech, the rhetorical framework of the "New Look" cast the development of strategic air power as the most economical means of ensuring the peace in the "age of peril." In his December 1953 Atoms for Peace speech before the United Nations General Assembly, Eisenhower revealed still more of his evolving strategy for winning the Cold War. Rhetorical critic Martin J. Medhurst concluded that Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace speech was "a masterpiece of 'realpolitik'" with "[e]very line" accomplishing the "strategic advantage" of "placing the Soviet Union at a psychological disadvantage," or further "preparing the American audience" for the "'age' of peril," or "ingratiating the foreign audience" to U.S. foreign policy goals.<sup>83</sup> The speech first warned the international audience about the power of the U.S. military arsenal to devastate any enemy. Eisenhower cautioned that if an "atomic attack" were to "be launched against the United States," the

“reactions would be swift and resolute.” The United States had the ability to cause “terrible losses upon an aggressor,” to ensure that “such an aggressor’s land would be laid waste.”<sup>84</sup> He delivered a warning loud and clear: the United States had developed enough atomic weapons to protect the nation against any threat. Eisenhower then used historical narrative to garner favor for the United States, reminding of the past “willingness of the Western powers to negotiate” and “the intransigence and bad faith of the U.S.S.R.”<sup>85</sup>

In the last section of the speech, Eisenhower proposed an “atoms for peace” initiative where the two nuclear powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—would share their technology with other nations, in the name of global peace. The United States challenged the Soviet Union to work towards international disarmament, implying that this goal would be realizable if only the Soviets would cooperate. In reality, however, disarmament was not an “immediately realizable goal” for the Eisenhower administration.<sup>86</sup> In fact, the administration was already engaging in a massive build-up of nuclear weapons, not working towards disarmament. Medhurst argued that Eisenhower’s rhetoric was really aimed at a “psychological victory” over the Soviets by positioning the United States as more open to “peaceful uses of atomic energy”—even as the nation engaged in a massive build-up of atomic weapons.<sup>87</sup> Historian and religious studies scholar Ira Chernus has been even more critical of the speech, contending that Eisenhower first frightened the public by offering a terrifying “assertion of U.S. ability and will to wage nuclear war,” and then practiced “emotion management on a universal scale” with his appeals to a more peaceful future secured by U.S. nuclear weapons.<sup>88</sup>

Eisenhower's New Look also had a number of implications for domestic policy. In the Age of Peril, Eisenhower had warned that national security was affected by every act of the government, and that was reflected in a number of his policies at home. For example, transportation became a national security issue. Eisenhower worked to prepare the United States for rapid mobilization during a national security threat by creating the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, commonly called the Interstate Highway System.<sup>89</sup> The interstates would facilitate—assuming some warning from the government—evacuation in the event of a nuclear attack. They also provided a more efficient network for the transportation and mobilization of military equipment and personnel in the event of an attack on the United States.<sup>90</sup>

Eisenhower also expanded the advisory power of the National Security Council (NSC), giving the White House more control over foreign policy without the interference of Congress. Although Truman had established the NSC as part of the 1947 National Security Act, political scientist Bryan Mabee has argued that Eisenhower's direction of the NSC fused "civilian and military functions" in national security.<sup>91</sup> The NSC became the primary mechanism for developing national security policy, functioning at the discretion of the president and outside the bounds of the traditional checks and balances of the federal government. Protected by the "classified" status of most national security matters, the NSC met some 145 times during Eisenhower's first term, while the president's regular cabinet met only 112 times during the same time frame.<sup>92</sup>



The growing power and autonomy of the White House and the NSC facilitated Eisenhower's ability to pursue an aggressive propaganda campaign, or "psychological" strategy, during his time in office. Following Dulles's recommendation in his *Life* magazine article, the Eisenhower administration launched a major "political offensive" along with its nuclear build-up, following a strategic plan developed by the President's Committee on International Information Activities, more commonly known as the Jackson Committee.<sup>93</sup> As rhetorical critic Shawn J. Parry-Giles has argued, the Jackson Committee centralized U.S. propaganda at home and abroad, directing "official" channels of propaganda, such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, to assume "a more positive tone" focusing on straight news, while covert and clandestine channels were developed to disseminate more "combative" anti-Soviet propaganda. The newly established United States Information Agency (USIA), an agency reporting to the NSC and under direct control of the president, "essentially became a 'news' organization that masked the intricate and massive covert propaganda activities that were publically disassociated from the U.S. government."<sup>94</sup> Eisenhower recognized the importance of propaganda in the promotion of the "American values," and he authorized massive propaganda campaigns both to help defeat communism abroad *and* build public support for his policies at home.<sup>95</sup>

Ironically, Eisenhower's final public statement as president—his famous Farewell Address on January 17, 1961—reflected a melancholy sense that perhaps his own redefinition of U.S. national security needs had created a new threat to American character and values—to those very "treasures" he had pledged to protect in the Age

of Peril. Reflecting on the connections between the government, the military, and big business that had been forged in the effort to create a technologically advanced nuclear deterrent, Eisenhower conceded that the size and scope of that effort had exceeded anything he had imagined. “This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience,” he noted, and he warned the public to “guard against” the growing and “unwarranted influence” of “the military-industrial complex.” The combination of the military establishment and the arms industry had created the “potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power,” and he warned that only an “alert and powerful citizenry” could “compel” the nation to use its “industrial and military machinery of defense” for “peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”<sup>96</sup> Eisenhower rebuked the idea of allowing a new “scientific-technological elite” to create public policy without regard for democratic values.<sup>97</sup> As he prepared to hand over responsibility for U.S. national security to the newly elected president, John F. Kennedy, Eisenhower thus suggested that the very “spiritual values” he pledged to protect when he first assumed office might now be threatened by political forces from within.

### **Conclusion**

In the Age of Peril speech, Eisenhower characterized national security as more comprehensive in nature and scope than his predecessor. He emphasized that American values were under attack and cultivated public support of his carefully

planned policies for strengthening U.S. national security over time through economic strength and a reliance on air power. The speech represented a transformative moment in the rhetoric of national security policy because it developed a rationale for Eisenhower's aggressive build-up of a nuclear deterrent instead of conventional military forces—the so-called New Look in U.S. defense policy. As Eisenhower unveiled the plan gradually over a year or more, he rhetorically portrayed it as a cautious and economical response to a long-term Soviet threat to U.S. economic stability and way of life. Yet the New Look actually involved not only a massive expansion of U.S. nuclear capabilities, but also unprecedented propaganda campaigns directed at both foreign and domestic audiences.

Eisenhower did not begin the Cold War by himself, and he alone is not responsible for the creation, expansion, and protection of the national security state that occurred during the Cold War. He did, however, alter the rhetoric of national security in potentially dangerous ways. His national security rhetoric switched the emphasis from “containing” communism to protecting U.S. economic and political interests through nuclear deterrence and the threat of “massive retaliation.” His Secretary of State's talk of “liberating” those under communist domination put the Soviets on the defensive. Eisenhower also approved propaganda programs aimed at undermining Soviet influence around the world and targeting U.S. audiences at home. In calling upon Americans to prepare for the “age of peril,” Eisenhower asked them to trust him and his Republican advisors—many even more hawkish than him—to make the right choices in a long-term effort to undermine Soviet influence and roll back the Iron Curtain. In the process, he facilitated the growth of a powerful military-

industrial complex that Eisenhower himself would come to fear. It remained to be seen if the young Democrat president who followed in his footsteps would be up to the task of managing that massive defensive establishment and carrying on the fight against communism without further compromising American values.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 267. Ambrose summarized that Eisenhower “was supremely self-confident” in 1952, and believed “that of all the candidates for national leadership, he was best prepared for the job.” He was “the right man to lead America through the world crisis.” See also William B. Pickett, *Eisenhower Decides to Run: Presidential Politics and Cold War Strategy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 90-91, and “The Eisenhower Campaign is Born,” *Life*, January 21, 1952, 22-25. *Life* magazine reported that Eisenhower felt he had a “clear-cut call to political duty” to chart a better course for the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, “Text and Context in the 1952 Presidential Campaign: Eisenhower’s ‘I Shall Go to Korea’ Speech,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (2004): 480.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: H. Holt, 1995), 83.

<sup>4</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 306-316.

<sup>5</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “The Chance for Peace, Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16, 1953,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 179-188.

<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 311.

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<sup>7</sup> The “war of ideas” is a term that comes from Eisenhower’s Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. See John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 249.

<sup>8</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1038.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Atomic Energy Office, Section 1, “TOP SECRET U.S. Weather Bureau Report on Alert Number 112 of the Atomic Detection System,” September 29, 1949, The National Security Archive, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb286/doc08.PDF>.

<sup>10</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 35.

<sup>11</sup> See Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20; and Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 115. Craig and Logevall noted that the “Korean War,” as the United States calls it, began as a civil war in the Korean peninsula that claimed more than 100,000 lives from 1945-spring 1950.

<sup>12</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 43. This decision is reflected in several declassified administration documents, including George Elsey, “Note Regarding General Douglas MacArthur, June 25, 1950,” Harry S. Truman Administration File, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-25&documentid=ki-1-14&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-25&documentid=ki-1-14&pagenumber=1) and “Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950,” Secretary of State File, Dean Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-26&documentid=ki-12-3&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-26&documentid=ki-12-3&pagenumber=1).

<sup>13</sup> “Press Release, June 30, 1950,” George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011,

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[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-30&documentid=ki-4-23&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-06-30&documentid=ki-4-23&pagenumber=1). The UN Resolution was able to be passed in the Security Council without Soviet or Chinese veto because China was still represented by the U.S.-allied Taiwanese government, not communist China, and the Soviet Union was not attending Security Council meetings to protest communist China not being given their seat.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Casey, "White House Publicity Operations during the Korean War, June 1950-June 1951," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (2005): 698.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Random House, 1996), 548.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas MacArthur, as quoted in Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur*, 565.

<sup>17</sup> Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur*, 567-568; Bernard K. Duffy and Ronald H. Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 31.

<sup>18</sup> Truman's press secretary, Joseph Short, held a press conference to announce the decision at 1:00 A.M., giving the press Truman's written dismissal and background documents supporting MacArthur's relief. See Duffy and Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Dallek, *The Lost Peace: Leadership in a Time of Horror and Hope, 1945-1953* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 334. Millions of Americans lined the streets to welcome MacArthur home and show their support, including along a nineteen-mile parade route in New York City that "greatly exceeded the 1945 celebration of Eisenhower's return from victory in Europe."

<sup>20</sup> Douglas MacArthur, "Joint Meeting of the Two Houses of Congress," April 19, 1951, in Duffy and Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith*, 177-183.

<sup>21</sup> Meena Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 24.

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<sup>22</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), Kindle Edition, chapter 4, “NSC-68 and the Korean War,” section V.

<sup>23</sup> See Dwight David Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1970). Eisenhower’s relevant congressional testimony is cited in volumes 11 and 12.

<sup>24</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change: 1953-1956* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), 8.

<sup>25</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Report to the Nation from the Pentagon, February 2, 1951,” *Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, Eisenhower’s Speeches*, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/speeches/19510202%20Report%20to%20the%20Nation%20from%20the%20Pentagon.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenhower, “Report to the Nation from the Pentagon, February 2, 1951.”

<sup>27</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Address to Members of British Parliament, January 15, 1952,” *Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, Eisenhower’s Speeches*, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/speeches/19520115%20Address%20to%20British%20Members%20of%20Parliament.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Communism and Freedom, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 3, 1952,” in Martin J. Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 145-150.

<sup>29</sup> Richard H. Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999), 7-10. *Life* magazine profiled him as the likely Secretary of State had Dewey been elected in 1948. They wrote of his diplomatic experience and accomplishments, explaining “no American alive today, in or out of office, has had longer or more intimate first-hand association with past and present peace problems than John Foster Dulles.” See James B. Reston, “John Foster Dulles and His Foreign Policy,” *Life*, October 4, 1948, 131.

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<sup>30</sup> In his 1950 book, *War or Peace*, Dulles harshly criticized Truman's foreign policy record and called for a stronger U.S. military presence around the globe.

<sup>31</sup> Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Strategy During the Cold War*, Kindle Edition, chapter 5, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and the New Look," introduction.

<sup>33</sup> John Foster Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," *Life*, May 19, 1952, 148.

<sup>34</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 151, emphasis in original.

<sup>35</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 151.

<sup>36</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 152.

<sup>37</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 152.

<sup>38</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 154, emphasis in original.

<sup>39</sup> Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," 154, emphasis in original.

<sup>40</sup> Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 46.

<sup>41</sup> Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Kindle Edition, chapter 5, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and the New Look," introduction.

<sup>42</sup> Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security," National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, accessed May 13, 2010, Digital National Security Archive, 1.

<sup>44</sup> "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, 5.

<sup>45</sup> "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, 25.

<sup>46</sup> "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, 14.



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<sup>47</sup> “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council,” National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, 25.

<sup>48</sup> “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council,” National Security Council Report, NSC 162/2, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, “Eisenhower’s Rhetorical Leadership: An Interpretation,” in *Eisenhower’s War of Words*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 289.

<sup>51</sup> J. Michael Hogan, “Eisenhower and Open Skies: A Case Study in ‘Psychological Warfare,’” in *Eisenhower’s War of Words*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 138.

<sup>52</sup> Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy*, 29. These men met with Eisenhower throughout the spring and summer of 1953, formulating the specifics of national security strategy that would become NSC 162/2.

<sup>53</sup> Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146.

<sup>54</sup> Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy*, 40.

<sup>55</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 306.

<sup>56</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 306-307.

<sup>57</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 306.

<sup>58</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 307.

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<sup>59</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 307.

<sup>60</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 307.

<sup>61</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 307.

<sup>62</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 308.

<sup>63</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 309.

<sup>64</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 310-311. Eisenhower emphasized that citizens should not trust the numbers that others are giving, saying, “I most deeply believe that it is foolish and dangerous for any of us to be hypnotized by magic numbers in this type of analysis. There is no given number of ships—no specific number of divisions—no magic number of wings in the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps—no special number of billions of dollars—that will automatically guarantee security.”

<sup>65</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 309.

<sup>66</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 310.

<sup>67</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 310.

<sup>68</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 311.

<sup>69</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 311.

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<sup>70</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 311-312.

<sup>71</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 311.

<sup>72</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 312.

<sup>73</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 312.

<sup>74</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 312.

<sup>75</sup> J. Michael Hogan, "The Science of Cold War Strategy: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Eisenhower administration's 'War of Words,'" in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 158.

<sup>76</sup> For more on Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" address, see Ira Chernus, *Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

<sup>77</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 313.

<sup>78</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 309.

<sup>79</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 315-316.

<sup>80</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 316.

<sup>81</sup> Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator*, 77.

<sup>82</sup> Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961," 1038.

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<sup>83</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communication Monographs* 54 (1987): 207.

<sup>84</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address Before the General Assembly of the United Nations on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, New York City, December 8, 1953," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 816-817.

<sup>85</sup> Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace': A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," 213.

<sup>86</sup> Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace': A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," 218. Medhurst contended that "The speech, as delivered, reflected on the Jackson-Strauss position which held that disarmament, while desirable, was not an immediately realizable goal."

<sup>87</sup> Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace': A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," 218.

<sup>88</sup> Chernus, *Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace*, 103.

<sup>89</sup> Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1939-1989*, revised edition (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990), 70.

<sup>90</sup> Norman Friedman, *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 199.

<sup>91</sup> Bryan Mabee, "Historical Institutionalism and Foreign Policy Analysis: The Origins of National Security Council Revisited," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2011): 38. Eisenhower did much, Mabee noted, to "institutionalize the formal, statutory NSC system," laying the foundation for his successor John F. Kennedy to push the NSC into a "policy-making" capacity (39).

<sup>92</sup> Robert Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council," *Foreign Affairs* 34 (April 1956): 442.

<sup>93</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (New York: Praeger, 2001), 151. The committee was named after Special Assistant to the President Charles Douglas (C. D.) Jackson, who oversaw Eisenhower's propaganda program.

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<sup>94</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Militarizing America's Propaganda Program," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 111.

<sup>95</sup> For more on Eisenhower's approach to propaganda, see Hogan, "The Science of Cold War Strategy: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Eisenhower administration's 'War of Words,'" 134-168.

<sup>96</sup> Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961," 1038.

<sup>97</sup> Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961," 1039.

## Chapter Four

### **“Pay Any Price, Bear Any Burden”: National Security in John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address**

It was a cold, blustery January day as the youngest president in U.S. history ascended the podium in front of the U.S. Capitol building. John F. Kennedy—without overcoat, the picture of vigor and strength—addressed the nation for fourteen minutes. Kennedy’s “Inaugural Address” is often remembered for its most famous line: “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.”<sup>1</sup> This phrase is well known and celebrated as one of the greatest moments in one of the greatest presidential speeches in U.S. history.<sup>2</sup> Kennedy’s brief call to ask “what you can do for your country,” however, was part of a longer message that spoke not only to U.S. citizens but to the world.

Following that famous line, Kennedy issued a similar challenge to that broader audience: “My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man. Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you.”<sup>3</sup> Reading the complete speech, including that concluding section, reveals the overall thrust of Kennedy’s Inaugural Address. The president was not only calling on his “fellow Americans” to serve and sacrifice, but also on his “fellow citizens of the world” to commit to freedom. Only a moment earlier, Kennedy had stated that his generation had been charged with “defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.” In his concluding sentences, Kennedy

pledged that the United States would endure the “high standards of strength and sacrifice” necessary for that struggle.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, Kennedy hinted at the great lengths he would go as president to protect his conception of U.S. national security.

Kennedy’s Inaugural Address expanded understandings of national security through the use of more aggressive language than one could imagine coming from Harry S. Truman, or even Dwight D. Eisenhower. In the speech, Kennedy called upon U.S. citizens to embrace what he characterized as the principled battle to bring the ideals of the American revolution—freedom and democracy—to the world. He pledged to fight to protect liberty at home and around the globe, in the farthest corners of the world—wherever it might be threatened. At a time when U.S. citizens were growing increasingly fearful of a drawn-out Cold War, Kennedy warned of a long and difficult global struggle, emphasized the ideological differences between the United States and its enemies, and openly challenged those enemies. Kennedy’s predecessor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, had warned of an “Age of Peril”<sup>5</sup> and implied that the United States could “win” the Cold War by building up its nuclear deterrent and waiting it out, confident that the United States eventually would win the “war of ideas” with the Soviet Union and perhaps even “roll back” communism. Kennedy’s national security rhetoric, in contrast, refocused attention on the immediate threats posed by communism and the need for conventional military responses to threats around the globe.

In this chapter, I argue that Kennedy rhetorically constructed a national security problem during the 1960 campaign, then raised the stakes of the Cold War

even more with the strident anticommunist rhetoric of his Inaugural Address. I turn first to the 1960 presidential campaign and examine how Kennedy's complaints about a "missile gap" cast Eisenhower as weak on national security despite the build-up of nuclear weapons that took place under the Republican administration. Next, I turn to Kennedy's Inaugural Address and show how, despite the epideictic occasion of the speech, the new president made a strong statement about his vision of national security. In the speech, Kennedy depicted the Cold War as an apocalyptic battle between the free world and communism, and he held out little hope for peaceful co-existence. Nor did he suggest, as Eisenhower had, that Soviet aggression could be deterred solely through nuclear weapons and a doctrine of massive retaliation. Kennedy characterized national security as a defense of the United States's most foundational national principles on a global scale, and transformed the rhetoric of national security from the more defensive "massive retaliation" strategy to a more offensive approach to spreading freedom and democracy around the globe, relying on nuclear and conventional military weapons.

### **Kennedy, the Missile Gap, and the Election of 1960**

To understand how Kennedy's Inaugural Address marked a transformative moment in the rhetoric of U.S. national security, one must begin with Kennedy's critique of Eisenhower's national security strategy. As discussed in the previous chapter, Eisenhower transformed the rhetoric of national security with his defense of



the “New Look”—a comprehensive military, economic, and political strategy designed to counter the Soviets through nuclear deterrence and global propaganda. In Eisenhower’s vision of national security, the threat of massive retaliation would deter Soviet aggression, while the United States would fight and win the “war of ideas” with more extensive and sophisticated propaganda campaigns around the world.

Yet despite the massive nuclear build-up under Eisenhower’s “New Look,” Kennedy and the Democrats were able to make the case during the 1960s presidential campaign that the Republicans had been too “soft” on communism and that Soviet expansionism was once again a growing threat. Rather than “win” in Korea, Eisenhower had negotiated an armistice that allowed the communists to remain in power in North Korea.<sup>6</sup> In Europe, a democratic movement in Hungary had been brutally crushed by the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> Close to home in the Western hemisphere, communism had taken hold in Cuba just ninety miles off the coast of the United States.<sup>8</sup> Far from being “rolled back,” communism appeared to be holding steady, if not gaining ground.

Even some of Eisenhower’s own generals had begun speaking out against the administration’s national security strategy. In the 1956 bestseller *Soldier*, for example, Eisenhower’s former Army Chief of Staff, Matthew Ridgway, criticized the doctrine of massive retaliation as a shortsighted defensive strategy that left the United States vulnerable to conventional attacks.<sup>9</sup> Another former Army officer, Lieutenant General James M. Gavin, likewise criticized the administration’s reliance on technological superiority, arguing in *War and Peace in the Space Age* that the United

States was actually losing the technological battle to the Soviets.<sup>10</sup> In 1957, Gavin's critique seemed confirmed when the Soviets launched a tiny satellite called Sputnik. The Soviets were in space, while the United States could barely get a rocket off the ground.<sup>11</sup> These events raised serious questions about the assumption underlying Eisenhower's New Look—that the United States could always count on its technological superiority and that Soviet expansionism could be deterred through the U.S. atomic shield. If anything, the Soviets seemed to be pulling ahead of the United States in missile and weapons technology, and they seemed to be getting even bolder in extending their influence abroad.

### **Kennedy's Challenge**

Kennedy was not the first to criticize Eisenhower for the New Look, but he did elevate the issue to national prominence. Kennedy challenged Eisenhower's "massive retaliation" doctrine in two ways. First, he argued that Eisenhower's limited spending plan had sunk the United States into a recession. Drawing on the critiques of "New Economics" scholars James Tobin and John Kenneth Galbraith, Kennedy argued that the government needed to devote more spending, not less, to build up its defenses and protect national security.<sup>12</sup> Not only would more defense spending foster economic growth generally, but it could bolster local economics by creating jobs for U.S. workers.<sup>13</sup> Second, and more importantly, Kennedy contended that the spending restraints of the New Look had created new defense vulnerabilities. Specifically,

Kennedy complained about a growing “missile gap” between the Soviet Union and the United States, despite U.S. intelligence assessments that still portrayed the United States as superior in the nuclear arena. Relying on projections by newspaper columnist Joseph Alsop, who coined the term “missile gap,” Kennedy picked up and ran with Alsop’s assertion that by 1963, the United States would have just 130 intercontinental nuclear missiles to the Soviet Union’s 2,000.<sup>14</sup>

On August 14, 1958, Kennedy took to the Senate floor to criticize Eisenhower for abandoning “the power foundation that has long stood behind our basic military and diplomatic strategy.”<sup>15</sup> Kennedy invoked General Gavin’s claim that the United States was entering a period when “our own offensive and defensive missile capabilities will lag so far beyond those of the Soviets as to place us in a position of great peril.”<sup>16</sup> In the coming “years of the gap,” Kennedy argued, Eisenhower’s “threats of massive retaliation” would “lose most of their impact,” and U.S. “exercises in brink-of-war diplomacy” would become “infinitely less successful.”<sup>17</sup> To “fix a course for the future,” Kennedy concluded, the Senate would need to authorize increases in the funding of both nuclear missiles *and* conventional forces.<sup>18</sup>

Kennedy attracted considerable attention for his speech about the “missile gap,” and it helped propel him toward the Democratic nomination for president in 1960. In two newspaper columns in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Alsop called Kennedy’s speech “remarkable” and commended the senator for speaking “no more than the truth . . . with no whit of exaggeration.”<sup>19</sup> The Democratic National Committee distributed copies of Kennedy’s speech to key party leaders before the

1958 midterm elections. By the time Kennedy began his 1960 presidential campaign, his criticism of the “missile gap” had established his own credibility on foreign policy issues and had become one of the key components of the Democratic platform.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the missile gap, Kennedy exploited the U-2 spy plane incident to help make the case for the military vulnerability of the United States. The U-2 spy plane controversy began on May 1, 1960, when U.S. pilot Francis Gary Powers was shot down while flying a surveillance mission high over Soviet territory. Powers survived but was held by the Soviet Union for espionage. Eisenhower at first denied the incident, claiming that a weather plane had merely gotten lost over the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> Once Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev went public with photographs of the plane wreckage and Powers on May 7, the president made a statement on May 11 to explain the U-2 surveillance program to Congress and the U.S. public. Eisenhower justified the “need for intelligence-gathering activities” like the U-2 spy plane, arguing that spying was a “distasteful but vital necessity” in national security.<sup>22</sup> But the plane had gone down, and thus was a blow to U.S. prestige.

The U-2 incident displayed not only U.S. technological vulnerabilities but also growing Soviet belligerence. On May 16, Eisenhower and Khrushchev met face-to-face in Paris, France for a summit meeting on arms control. Giving the first speech of the meeting, Khrushchev presented three demands to Eisenhower: an apology from the president for his support of U-2 spy flights, a promise to punish all U.S. citizens and military personnel involved in the program, and a declaration that the United States would no longer “violate the state borders of the U.S.S.R. with its aircraft.”<sup>23</sup>

Eisenhower responded that he would not apologize nor punish those involved, but he did agree to stop U.S. flights into Soviet airspace.<sup>24</sup> The lack of apology was unacceptable to the Soviets. Both delegations left Paris and the summit collapsed. Khrushchev then turned the trial and sentencing of Powers into a propaganda event.<sup>25</sup> Kennedy and other Democrats also took political advantage of the situation, criticizing the Eisenhower administration both for the loss of the plane and for allowing the Soviets to exploit the incident.<sup>26</sup>

### **The New Frontier and the 1960 Campaign**

In his acceptance address at the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, Kennedy proclaimed that the United States was “on the edge of a New Frontier.” This frontier was full of “unknown opportunities and perils,” and it portended both “unfulfilled hopes and threats.” The New Frontier, Kennedy explained, consisted of “a set of challenges” that would determine whether the United States would maintain its position of leadership in the world. Foreshadowing a major theme in his Inaugural Address, Kennedy asked if the United States was “willing to match the Russian sacrifice of the present for the future.” Sacrifice in the present was needed to secure the future. The choice was between “national greatness and national decline,” Kennedy argued, and “all mankind” waited on the “decision” of the United States: “A whole world looks to see what we will do.”<sup>27</sup> If elected, he would lead citizens through the perils—and rewards—of the New Frontier.

Despite the fact that the Eisenhower administration insisted there was no missile gap, the Kennedy campaign attacked the national security strategy of Eisenhower—and, by association, Vice President Richard Nixon, the Republican nominee in 1960. Kennedy argued that the United States had lost “prestige and strength” during Eisenhower’s presidency, and urged U.S. voters to support Kennedy’s plan to “protect our security and help the cause of freedom.” The “great issue” facing the nation, Kennedy explained in the first televised presidential debate, was “can freedom in the next generation conquer, or are the Communists going to be successful?”<sup>28</sup> To ensure the success of freedom, Kennedy argued in the second presidential debate, the United States must become “stronger than we are now” and develop a “stronger military force” of advanced weapons *and* conventional military forces to “increase our strength all over the world.” The U.S. economy needed to be developed “to the fullest,” and Kennedy pledged to commit government funds to growing the nation’s military capacity. This would, he argued, make certain that the United States would “have the resources” to meet its “military commitments” and its “commitments overseas” in the fight for freedom.<sup>29</sup>

After the hotly contested campaign, John F. Kennedy won the presidency, defeating Nixon by an electoral count of 303 to 219. The popular vote, however, indicated that the race was even closer. The people chose Kennedy by a margin of just 118,574 votes, with more than sixty-eight million cast. Kennedy won only 49.72 percent of the popular vote, since a third candidate, Senator Harry F. Byrd, garnered more than 500,000 votes.<sup>30</sup> Kennedy thus came into office with a slim popular

majority, having criticized a famous war hero for being too soft on communism and proposing a more aggressive response to the Soviets.<sup>31</sup>

While we now know that the missile gap was largely exaggerated,<sup>32</sup> Kennedy's campaign rhetoric nevertheless committed him to both an increase in nuclear missile production and a conventional arms build-up. Furthermore, Kennedy's campaign rhetoric tapped into a profound anxiety many U.S. citizens felt, obliging him to somehow reassure the public that the United States could still catch up or even surpass the Soviets—politically, militarily, and economically.<sup>33</sup> As historian David Kaiser has noted, “Kennedy took office with the intention of changing both the style and the direction of many of Eisenhower's foreign policies,”<sup>34</sup> and the Inaugural Address provided his first opportunity to define that new direction. Thus, the inauguration speech became yet another transformative moment in the rhetoric of national security. In a context of both high expectations and rising anxieties, the whole world looked to Kennedy to more fully articulate his new national security vision.

As Kennedy worked on the inauguration speech with his primary speechwriter, Theodore C. Sorensen, the president-elect expressed that he wanted the speech to “focus on foreign policy” and “set a tone for the era about to begin.”<sup>35</sup> There were plenty of reasons for U.S. citizens to feel *less* secure about the future, and thus plenty of anxieties surrounding national security at the turn of the new decade.<sup>36</sup> In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy acknowledged these fears, and he may even have exacerbated them by characterizing the Soviet Union as the enemy not only of the

United States but of freedom around the globe. In his first speech as president, Kennedy employed a polarizing rhetoric that divided the world into two hostile camps: the forces of freedom and the forces of authoritarianism. And he committed the United States to a “long twilight struggle” to defend freedom wherever it might be threatened.

### **National Security and the New Frontier**

The tradition of the presidential inaugural address in the United States is well established: inaugural addresses typically aim to unify the nation after a divisive campaign, and they typically sketch out the new president’s vision for the future. As epideictic speeches, they are expected to be eloquent and pleasing to the ear.<sup>37</sup> Campbell and Jamieson identify four generic elements that distinguish inaugural addresses in particular: First, inaugurals aim to unify their audience after a politically divisive election by rhetorically constructing a portrait of “the people” as committed not to partisanship but the common good. Second, they typically rehearse a set of communal values drawn from the collective memory of the American people. Third, inaugurals set forth the ideals and political principles that will guide the new administration’s policies and actions. Finally, inaugurals demonstrate that the president understands and appreciates the requirements and limits of his executive power.<sup>38</sup>



By these generic standards, Campbell and Jamieson have declared Kennedy's speech "one of the more eloquent inaugurals." According to Campbell and Jamieson, the speech reflected the "ritualistic nature of the occasion," phrasing each assertion as a promise or "a pledge jointly made by leader or people." It also "achieved timelessness" by reflecting on "the history of the cold war" and by expressing "the resoluteness required under any circumstances to sustain a struggle against a menacing ideology."<sup>39</sup> Kennedy is routinely characterized as one of the greatest U.S. orators and his Inaugural Address is generally counted among the great speeches in U.S. history. Virtually all who have commented on the speech have considered it not only eloquent but also a pragmatic success.<sup>40</sup>

Yet Kennedy's speech did more than fulfill the generic and communal functions of a ceremonial address, and its pragmatic effects extended beyond those typically associated with ceremonial speech. Rhetorical theorist Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard has written that epideictic speeches are not only "an invitation and an opportunity for participation and engagement," but also can be seen "as a means of envisioning and urging change for the better."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, rhetorical critic John Murphy has argued that epideictic rhetoric often "provides the backdrop of values and beliefs, heroes and villains, triumphs and tragedies against which and through which deliberative and forensic judgments are made in a ceaseless swirl of discourse."<sup>42</sup> In these broader senses, Kennedy's Inaugural Address was very much a call for change and a precursor to Kennedy's later judicial and deliberative speeches, particularly on foreign policy. The speech created a "backdrop" of a nation—and a

leader—committed to the long struggle of the Cold War, and in some ways, challenged the Soviet Union to test U.S. resolve.

Kennedy's Inaugural Address was a forceful, persuasive response to a particular situation—an escalating Cold War that, in Kennedy's view, would demand strength, commitment, and sacrifice from all U.S. citizens. Kennedy's speech was not *merely* ceremonial or ritualistic. To the contrary, Kennedy boldly announced an ambitious and far-reaching policy of defending America's revolutionary principles around the globe. In dividing the world between the forces of good and evil and dedicated the United States to a "long twilight struggle," Kennedy re-defined what it meant to pursue and maintain security for the nation and the world.

Kennedy portrayed the Cold War as a life-or-death struggle between the forces of freedom and democracy and the forces of totalitarianism and communism. This was not an entirely new characterization; apocalyptic depictions of the United States and Soviet Union had been fairly commonplace in the rhetoric of both Truman and Eisenhower.<sup>43</sup> Yet while others had employed this style of polarizing rhetoric, Kennedy committed the United States to defending freedom wherever it might be threatened—by force if necessary. While Eisenhower had suggested the United States could wait patiently under a nuclear umbrella of safety while fighting a "war of words" with the Soviets, Kennedy proposed a more aggressive, multi-faceted effort to defend the world against the evils of totalitarianism. He also asked all U.S. citizens—even calling on all citizens of the world—to sacrifice in that effort.

Kennedy began his address by invoking the revolutionary heritage of the United States, committing to the spread of U.S. democratic ideals on a global scale. Freedom, Kennedy argued, was a natural right that all citizens of the world possessed, but one that all too frequently had to be defended against oppression and totalitarianism. The “same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought,” Kennedy explained, were “still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.” Addressing his fellow citizens, Kennedy reminded them that they were “the heirs of that first revolution” in the fight for freedom. He pronounced, “Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.” Like their forefathers before them, Kennedy’s generation was prepared for battle. This new generation was “born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed.” Kennedy promised the United States remained “committed” to protecting the rights of mankind, “today at home and around the globe.”<sup>44</sup>

This commitment demonstrated Kennedy’s more aggressive national security rhetoric. In perhaps the most controversial line of the address, he made a forceful pronouncement directed at both U.S. allies and adversaries: “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the

success of liberty.”<sup>45</sup> The repetition of the word “any” suggested a total commitment, a willingness to defend freedom and democracy wherever it might be threatened and by whatever means might prove necessary. The implications of the statement were far-reaching indeed, as they seemed to imply an unlimited, open-ended commitment to come to the aid of nations threatened by any form of totalitarianism. Kennedy, of course, did not start the Cold War, nor did he create the antagonism towards communism that fueled its escalation. Yet while previous presidents had responded to perceived communist threats with economic and military aid or by responding to specific military threats under the auspices of the United Nations, Kennedy seemed to be committing the United States to unilateral intervention anywhere it perceived that “liberty” had come under attack.

Kennedy’s address did not simply warn U.S. adversaries; it also made commitments to the nation’s allies and to emerging democracies in the underdeveloped regions of the world. To the nations in Western Europe, those “old allies” whose “cultural and spiritual origins we share,” Kennedy “pledge[d] the loyalty of faithful friends” and declared that there was “little that we cannot do” in a “host of cooperative ventures.” Kennedy also offered U.S. aid to developing nations in Asia and Africa: “To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny.”<sup>46</sup> This statement reflected an awareness that the Cold War was a battle for world opinion, with nations recently liberated from colonial rule now faced with a choice between aligning with the free

world or the Soviets and their allies. It also marked a change from Truman's more limited approach of providing economic aid to established, traditionally democratic states in Western Europe. Kennedy broadened the scope of U.S. national security to include not only our historic European allies, but the new nations around the globe.

After offering support, Kennedy also gave a warning to those new nations choosing between democracy and communism. While he acknowledged that the United States may not find the new states "supporting our view," he noted that "we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom." Kennedy cautioned the leaders in these new nations not to seek oppressive forms of government, telling them "to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside."<sup>47</sup> During the drafting of this section, Sorensen received feedback from a Kennedy advisor, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, that recommended the elimination of the metaphor of communism as tiger, devouring new nations. Sorensen refused, and Kennedy's comments to "new states" closed with the stark warning that a choice to align with communism would lead to their ruin.<sup>48</sup>

The president also addressed the citizens in the developing world, the people "in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery." He pledged "our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right."<sup>49</sup> Kennedy's words cast the U.S. commitment to

poor, underdeveloped nations in moral terms, but it also implicitly acknowledged the global competition for the allegiances of unaligned nations that defined the Cold War.

Speaking specifically to “our sister republics south of our border,” Kennedy promised to “convert good words into good deeds” and to “assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty.” Kennedy’s assurance to “bear any burden,” it seemed, was no empty oath; it opened the door for a wide variety of ongoing international commitments supporting what he called the “peaceful revolution of hope.”<sup>50</sup> The United States would bear the burden of keeping these revolutions from becoming “the prey of hostile powers,”<sup>51</sup> a gesture toward historical policies of U.S. leadership in the Western hemisphere. The commitment to assure liberty’s survival in the Western Hemisphere was vague, leaving open the possibility of both economic and military assistance.

Turning to address “those nations who would make themselves our adversaries,” Kennedy couched a request for peace in the context of an increasingly dangerous world. He asked “both sides” to “begin anew the quest for peace.” Kennedy argued that both sides should be concerned about the dangerous conditions of the nuclear world, using dramatic language to emphasize this point. The “dark powers of destruction unleashed by science” waited to “engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.” Kennedy characterized the world as needing the increases in U.S. military forces to protect against the dark realities of nuclear war. “Both sides,” he explained, were “rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the

deadly atom.” Yet both sides remained in an arms race, creating an “uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind’s final war.”<sup>52</sup>

Despite the frightening potential of nuclear weapons and his commitment to the quest for peace, Kennedy promised U.S. military strength to deter any attack. “We dare not tempt them with weakness,” he warned, “[f]or only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.”<sup>53</sup> For the Eisenhower administration, national security meant building up the U.S. nuclear arsenal behind a rhetoric of peace—as manifested in the Atoms for Peace campaign.<sup>54</sup> Kennedy may have been less disingenuous but he was certainly no less hawkish than Eisenhower in calling for arms “sufficient beyond doubt.”

Kennedy appealed to “both sides” to begin working together to solve global problems, but continued to reinforce the dangerous, dichotomous worldview he had created. His repeated references to “both sides” subtly reinforced the polarized worldview at the heart of his Cold War ideology. He encouraged both sides to “begin anew” in the search for peace, while “remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof.” Kennedy intoned, “Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us,” and called for “both sides” to “invoke the wonders of science” instead of promoting “its terrors.” Yet Kennedy’s appeals to “both sides” apparently required that the Soviet Union abandon its own communist principles and values and instead embrace the American ideals of freedom and liberty. Moreover, the biblical language and injunctions in the speech—his call, for example, for “both sides” to

heed “the command of Isaiah—to ‘undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free’—hardly seemed conciliatory when addressed to an explicitly atheistic Soviet regime.<sup>55</sup>

Kennedy’s use of antithesis highlighted the dramatic scope of that commitment he made to the free nations of the world. Antithesis as a literary form contrasts two opposing objects or ideas. As rhetorical critic Edward B. Kenny noted in his analysis of the Kennedy inaugural, antithesis is “reminiscent of courtly conceits and self-conscious writers who strove after a deliberate effect.” In contemporary discourse, antithesis sometimes comes across as artificial or trite, but in Kennedy’s speech the prolific use of antithesis—at least fifteen times, by Kenny’s count—emphasized the stark dichotomy between the forces of freedom, led by the United States, and the communist world. Kennedy cast global events in simple terms, as a struggle between two morally opposed forces, freedom and totalitarianism.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, rhetorical critic Sam Meyer observed that Kennedy polarized the world into “two camps with opposing ideologies.”<sup>57</sup> On the one side stood the United States, representing freedom and liberty, while the Soviet Union and its communist satellites stood for, as Kennedy put it, “aggression” and “subversion.”<sup>58</sup> Kennedy may have inherited this basic depiction of the Cold War from his presidential predecessors. Yet unlike Truman, he would not be content to simply contain the spread of communism, nor was he willing, like Eisenhower, to wait patiently for the United States to win the war of ideas.



Kennedy cast the “war” he was calling upon the United States to fight in dramatic, even timeless terms. This was not a war that would end anytime soon with obvious victories or parades in the streets. Instead, it was a war that had gone on throughout history. Just as “each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty,” so too was Kennedy’s new generation of Americans called upon to fight. The battle for freedom would be a difficult struggle. “The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe,” Kennedy declared, suggesting that his fellow citizens needed to be prepared to pay the ultimate price for freedom’s survival. Declaring metaphorically that the “trumpet summons us again,” he characterized his call to serve “not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need,” and “not as a call to battle, though embattled we are,” but rather as a “call to bear the burden” of that “long twilight struggle, year in and year out,” against “the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.”<sup>59</sup> In Kennedy’s dichotomous worldview, the battle was not just about communism versus democracy or totalitarianism versus liberty. It was not about a global political competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was a war against the “common enemies” that had *always* plagued mankind—tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself—and would probably *always* call the United States to battle.

While Kennedy’s reference to “common enemies” might be read as an attempt to find common ground, he made it clear who he blamed for tyranny, poverty, disease, and war in his own generation. In the drafting process of the inaugural,

Sorenson had even replaced a reference to “our enemies” with a more specific reference to communism.<sup>60</sup> At another point in the final speech, Kennedy referred to the “iron tyranny” threatening the developing world, invoking memories of Churchill’s famous Iron Curtain speech. Clearly, the “nations who would make themselves our adversary” were the Soviet Union and its allies.<sup>61</sup> These enemies were opposed to the basic ideals of the United States and therefore could not be appeased or trusted to act in good faith.

In sum, Kennedy’s Inaugural Address was much more than just an eloquent inaugural address. With its polarized worldview and its implicit claims to moral superiority, Kennedy committed the United States to promoting and defending “freedom” and “liberty,” casting his crusade as a defense of American revolutionary ideals on a global scale. This explicit ideology of democracy constituted a rhetoric of U.S. national security that one could imagine the Soviets interpreting as aggressive, even threatening. And, in fact, the Soviets responded to the speech, not with conciliatory gestures, but with defensive maneuvers, including the stationing of strategic nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, however eloquent, marked the beginnings of a significant escalation of Cold War tensions and portended some of the most dangerous and tragic episodes in the history of the Cold War.

### The Long Twilight Struggle

From the start, Kennedy's Inaugural Address was recognized as a well-written and successful speech. Former president Harry Truman told journalists that history would remember it as one of the greatest speeches of all time. The address, Truman proclaimed at a dinner party the night of the inauguration, was "a magnificent political speech."<sup>62</sup> The same day, the *New York Times* quoted Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Montana) calling the speech "magnificent," while Senator Kenneth B. Keating (R-NY) called the speech "brilliant" and opined that the president had "said to both our friends and foes abroad exactly what needed to be said."<sup>63</sup> The *New York Times* also published a collection of largely celebratory editorials on the speech from across the nation. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* called the speech "an inspirational message that should do much to rally the American people and set the Kennedy administration on the high road to the New Frontier." Similarly, Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* editorialized that "seldom has the torch of liberty burned more brightly than it did yesterday" and called the new president "bold, courageous, and confident." Even the conservative *Chicago Tribune* admitted, "Rhetorically, it was very good," although the editors warned Kennedy to be cautious about accepting any "expressions of good will" from the Kremlin.<sup>64</sup>

In some ways, the long-term legacy of Kennedy's speech was even more positive than the immediate reactions. Kennedy's vision of spreading American values and improving the lives of people around the world inspired many young U.S. citizens to dedicate their lives to public service. Heeding Kennedy's call to fight

against the “enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself,” many joined efforts to fight poverty and despair in America’s inner cities and rural areas.<sup>65</sup> Others went overseas as part of the Peace Corps’ effort to “help foreign countries meet their urgent needs for skilled manpower.”<sup>66</sup> By the end of Kennedy’s presidency, more than 7,000 mostly young U.S. citizens were “in the field,” bringing both material aid and “democratic cooperation” to poor, underdeveloped countries around the world.<sup>67</sup>

In retrospect, however, there is also a darker side to the legacy of Kennedy’s Inaugural Address tied to his transformation of national security. While Kennedy’s call to public service was inspirational, his pledge to “pay any price, bear any burden” in the defense of liberty laid the groundwork for a series of foreign policy disasters in the 1960s. Rhetorical critic Philip Wander has characterized Kennedy’s foreign policy rhetoric as “technocratic realism,” suggesting that it moved away from the dualities of the Cold War and instead encouraged “negotiation” around “areas of mutual interest,” such as “a retreat from the horrors of nuclear war.”<sup>68</sup> Yet while the Kennedy administration may have valued “cost-benefit analyses provided by ‘experts,’” the young President’s speeches tended more toward old-fashioned exhortation of moral crusades with trumpets sounding the battle to come.<sup>69</sup> The “military-industrial complex” that Eisenhower warned against was well-represented in the Kennedy administration, but the president seemed to draw his *rhetorical* inspiration from apocalyptic struggles and American revolutionary ideals.

Kennedy’s tendency toward dramatic and combative national security rhetoric was evident not just in his Inaugural Address but also in his first “State of the Union”

on January 30, 1961. In that speech, the president warned, “No man entering upon this office, regardless of his party, regardless of his previous service in Washington, could fail to stagger upon learning—even in this brief 10 day period—the harsh enormity of the trials through which we must pass in the next four years.”<sup>70</sup> He reported that “[e]ach day the crises multiply,” and recited a laundry list of threats to U.S. security: the “relentless pressures of the Chinese Communists,” “Communist agents” in Latin America trying to “exploit that region’s peaceful revolution of hope,” and the communist regime in Cuba, among others.<sup>71</sup> Unlike his Inaugural Address, when he proclaimed the United States should “never fear to negotiate,”<sup>72</sup> Kennedy declared in his State of the Union address that “Communist domination in this Hemisphere can never be negotiated,” implying that the established communist regime in Cuba would not be accepted as the status quo.<sup>73</sup>

In concluding that first State of the Union speech, Kennedy committed the United States to three specific policy objectives to counter these security threats. First, the United States would strengthen the “military tools” to counter the communist threat. Kennedy promised to grow the U.S. conventional military forces, creating a “Free World force” that would be able to fight for freedom around the globe.<sup>74</sup> Second, the United States would use “economic tools” to expand “the economy for the entire non-communist world.”<sup>75</sup> And, third, the United States would “sharpen our political and diplomatic tools” to create a more “enforceable world order.”<sup>76</sup> Kennedy promised a firm and unwavering commitment to these goals, since

“the hopes of all mankind” rested upon the United States and its freedom-loving allies.<sup>77</sup>

A few weeks later, members of Kennedy’s foreign policy team confirmed the administration’s desire to more aggressively combat Soviet influence. The president met with Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Ambassador-at-Large William Averell Harriman, Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn E. Thompson, former diplomats George Kennan and Charles E. Bohlen, and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, and the group reviewed the capabilities of the Soviet Union and U.S. strategy towards the community nation. The Soviet Union was a “strong” government, according to Bundy’s notes, with “formidable” economic weapons to use against the United States. Furthermore, the Soviets were growing “stronger and bolder” in their foreign policy strategy. To counter the Soviet threat, Bundy argued, U.S. policy had to be “both rationally stated and evidently strong.” Stressing the importance of unity among the Western powers, Bundy recorded that the group urged Kennedy to avoid “noisy demonstrations of strength” and instead take a “quiet and courteous tone in direct exchanges with the Soviet government.”<sup>78</sup>

Yet instead of quiet diplomacy, Kennedy’s pledge to “pay any price” and “bear any burden” was manifested in policies that exacted large tolls. First came the Bay of Pigs invasion, when a group of Cuban refugees with support from U.S. advisers launched an ill-planned invasion of Cuba in hopes that it would inspire a popular uprising against Fidel Castro. The invasion proved to be a fiasco.<sup>79</sup> Trained

and equipped by the United States, the 1,400 Cuban rebels landed at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961, and were promptly met by Castro's much larger and better prepared army. The rebels failed to establish their position on the beach, and Kennedy refused to provide U.S. planes for air support.<sup>80</sup> The following day, more than 1,200 of the rebels surrendered to Castro's 20,000 men army. Castro also arrested more than 20,000 Cuban civilians to prevent any sort of an internal uprising.<sup>81</sup> In retrospect, the Bay of Pigs invasion was an ill-conceived and poorly executed military action. Political scientist Piero Gleijeses argues that Kennedy's campaign rhetoric, along with his Inaugural Address, essentially left him no option but to support these "fighters for freedom" in their attempt to overthrow the "Communist menace."<sup>82</sup> Even after the fiasco, according to Gleijeses, Kennedy refused to acknowledge his mistake, choosing instead to "intensify his efforts to overthrow" Castro.<sup>83</sup>

Kennedy quickly faced additional conflicts with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, each bringing the two nuclear powers dangerously close to armed conflict. First, the two leaders clashed over the future of Germany, and specifically, Germany's divided capital, Berlin. At a summit meeting in Vienna, Austria, on June 4, 1961, Khrushchev repeatedly informed Kennedy that the United States must leave West Berlin and cede total control of Berlin to East Germany, a communist nation under Soviet influence. Khrushchev gave the West six months to leave Berlin.<sup>84</sup> The final time that Khrushchev demanded this during the summit, Kennedy ominously replied that if the Soviets kept pushing withdrawal, "it would be a cold winter."<sup>85</sup> On July 25, 1961, Kennedy gave a televised address and promised that the United States

“cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin, either gradually or by force,” and he called for an increase in the U.S. Armed forces to meet defend Berlin.<sup>86</sup> Rhetorical critic Kevin W. Dean has argued that this speech was a triumphant moment for Kennedy, who unified Western audiences against the communist enemy, established “unified support for his administration’s Berlin policy,” and still sought “peace through discourse.”<sup>87</sup> While Kennedy did avoid a “hot” conflict in Berlin, his speech did little to ease Cold War tensions. In fact, a few weeks after his speech, on the morning of August 13, Berlin awoke to discover the overnight erection of what would become an infamous Cold War landmark: the Berlin Wall.<sup>88</sup> Suddenly, the immediate threat from communism—depicted by Kennedy in his rhetoric throughout the first year of his presidency—seemed quite real. Kennedy, however, held his ground and refused to cede control of the western part of the city to the East German and Soviet communists.

A year later, Kennedy would once again be put to the test during the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, a dangerous confrontation between Kennedy and Khrushchev over the Soviet’s stationing of nuclear missiles in Cuba. For nearly two weeks, U.S and Soviet citizens—and the entire world—watched as Kennedy and Khrushchev brought their nations closer and closer to nuclear war. In the end, the Soviets removed the missiles in exchange for assurances from Kennedy that there would be no more U.S.-supported invasions of Cuba.<sup>89</sup> Some characterized the missile crisis as Kennedy’s finest hour, a time when a man of principle stood his ground and forced the Russians to back down. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., for example,



praised Kennedy for seeing “more penetratingly into the mists and terrors of the future than anyone else.”<sup>90</sup> Historian Robert Dallek agreed, writing: “October 1962 was not only Kennedy’s finest hour in the White House; it was also an imperishable example of how one man prevented a catastrophe that may yet afflict the world.”<sup>91</sup> Others, however, have faulted Kennedy for bringing the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation with his provocative anticommunist rhetoric in the period leading up to the crisis. In a 1981 book for example, historian Gary Wills wrote: “If the Russians had made even a *limited* attack in Europe or elsewhere, the Kennedy buildup of crisis rhetoric would have made it hard to refrain from nuclear response.”<sup>92</sup>

Finally, Kennedy’s pledge to defend U.S. revolutionary principles around the world no doubt contributed to the administration’s escalation of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The Vietnamese under communist rule seemed to epitomize Kennedy’s portrait of people in “huts and villages . . . struggling to break the bonds of mass misery.” The United States, therefore, had an obligation to help them “help themselves.”<sup>93</sup> Kennedy received warnings from advisors that South Vietnam was “a can of snakes” and would likely involve years and years of possibly indecisive guerilla warfare, but as historians Lawrence J. Bassett and Stephen E. Pelz have argued, Kennedy “himself personally decided that South Vietnam was strategically important” in the global struggle between communism and the free world.<sup>94</sup> Thus began one of the longest, costliest, and most disastrous wars in U.S. history, and the legacy of that failed attempt to defend freedom in Southeast Asia still haunts the United States today.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

Kennedy's rhetoric of national security further raised the stakes of the Cold War, particularly through his characterization of the proximal nature of the communist threat. His campaign for the presidency bolstered fears that the United States was falling dangerously behind the Soviet Union in the modern weapons of war, and he even managed to portray an administration led by a great war hero as "soft" on communism. In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy spoke of the fearful prospects of nuclear annihilation and committed the United States to "bear any burden" and "pay any price" in the fight against communism. He also pledged to defend freedom and liberty around the globe and promised to help *all* nations struggling to "break the bonds of mass misery." It was an ambitious, far-reaching, and open-ended commitment that, as Kennedy seemed to realize, would require great "sacrifice" from the U.S. public.<sup>96</sup> Kennedy's national security rhetoric escalated the aggressive discourse of the Cold War by depicting communism as an immediate danger to the United States, a characterization that supported Kennedy's national security strategy of building up the U.S. military forces to "oppose any foe" that threatened the "survival and success of liberty."<sup>97</sup> Kennedy's presidency would be fraught with tense confrontations between the United States and communist nations in Cuba, Berlin, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

After Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson continued his predecessor's commitment to defending America's revolutionary ideals around the globe. In 1965, Johnson escalated the conflict in Vietnam, stating in an address to the

nation that “freedom” itself was at stake in Vietnam and that the United States would “never be found wanting” in the defense of freedom.<sup>98</sup> Despite plummeting approval ratings of both the conflict in Vietnam and his handling of the presidency, Johnson stayed the course, carrying out Kennedy’s prescribed role for the United States as global defender of liberty and freedom. Kennedy’s national security rhetoric committed the United States to a Cold War vision of the U.S. role in the world that eventually would cost the nation dearly in both resources and lives.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1961-1963*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Communication scholars have ranked the speech second in a list of the hundred “top speeches” of the twentieth century based on its impact and artistry. See Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst, eds., *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 3.

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 3.

<sup>5</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 306-316.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 82. The conflict in Korea ended in a tragic draw, with more than 600,000 Koreans, close to a million

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Chinese, 3,194 from the United Nations forces, and 54,246 U.S. soldiers perishing in the conflict that maintained the divide between North and South Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

<sup>7</sup> National Security Council, “Interim U.S. Policy on Developments in Poland and Hungary,” NSC 5616/1, November 13, 1956, accessed March 12, 2011, Digital National Security Archive. This document noted the brutal Soviet repression of the democratic movement in Hungary, and committed the United States only to “actions” that would “encourage forces in the satellites moving towards U.S. objectives without provoking counter-action which would result in the suppression of ‘liberalizing’ influences” (5). It is later mentioned that the United States must be careful not to suggest to the Soviet Union that Hungary is a “potential military all[y]” (7).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 475.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher A. Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), 44.

<sup>10</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *The Cold War: A History*, 114.

<sup>12</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 40-43. Tobin believed “that government itself was the key to the growth of the nation’s productive power” (41). In his book *The Affluent Society*, Preble explained, Galbriath argued that “the size of a nation’s economy was directly related to its capacity to wage war.” Thus, the federal government had a responsibility to invest in and grow the economy, not engaged in the frugality of the Eisenhower administration’s New Look (42).

<sup>13</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Alsop, as quoted in Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, speaking on H.R. 13450, Summary Appropriations 1959, on August 14, 1958, 85th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record* 104, pt. 14:17569.

<sup>16</sup> Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, *Congressional Record* 104, Part 14, 17570.

<sup>17</sup> Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, *Congressional Record* 104, Part 14, 17571.

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<sup>18</sup> Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, *Congressional Record* 104, Part 14, 17572. Kennedy stated that the United States must “reduce what General Gavin describes as a ‘critical cut’ in our military manpower begun in 1954.”

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Alsop, as quoted in Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 63-64.

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *The Cold War: A History*, 133.

<sup>22</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “The President’s News Conference of May 11, 1960,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 403-404.

<sup>23</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, as quoted in Aleksandr A. Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 283.

<sup>24</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev’s Cold War*, 284-285.

<sup>25</sup> For an account of Powers trial, see the pilot’s memoir, Francis Gary Powers, with Curt Gentry, *Operation Overflight: A Memoir of the U-2 Incident* (Dulles, VA: Brassey’s, Inc., 2004), Chapter Seven.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2009), 189-190.

<sup>27</sup> John F. Kennedy, “1960 Democratic National Convention, 15 July 1960, Transcript,” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/AS08q5oYz0SFUZg9uOi4iw.aspx>.

<sup>28</sup> Commission on Presidential Debates, “The First Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate, September 26, 1960, [transcript],” accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=september-26-1960-debate-transcript>.

<sup>29</sup> Commission on Presidential Debates, “The Second Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate, October 7, 1960 [transcript],” accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-7-1960-debate-transcript>.

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<sup>30</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Black Dog Publishing, 2005), 118. Kennedy was appalled that the margin was so small but attributed his narrow victory to a false sense of hope and confidence in Eisenhower, as well as to anti-Catholic sentiment.

<sup>31</sup> Kennedy traveled abroad as a young man and later as a congressional representative, and he was “all about” foreign policy according to Clark Clifford, who served as one of Kennedy’s unofficial cabinet members first on the Committee on the Defense Establishment and then headed up the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Kennedy had a near-obsession in the history and details of foreign policy, plenty of experience criticizing Eisenhower during his terms in Congress, and yet remained relatively inexperienced in drafting such foreign policy. He believed that he personally could create better foreign policies than any of the previous Cold War administrations, and thus involved himself very closely in the process once president. For more discussion on Kennedy and his foreign policy experiences, see Thomas Preston, *The President and His Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Affairs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 98-100; and James N. Giglio and Stephen G. Rabe, *Debating the Kennedy Presidency* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 3-14.

<sup>32</sup> Meena Bose, *Signaling and Shaping Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 85. In February of 1961, Kennedy’s own Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, reported to the press that the United States was in no danger of developing a missile gap between itself and the Soviet Union.

<sup>33</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*, 148.

<sup>34</sup> David E. Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 38.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 240.

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<sup>36</sup> Thurston Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech That Changed America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 171. Clarke commented that the 1950s seemed “an era of contentment followed by a time of American drift and apparent Soviet triumphs.”

<sup>37</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 29-30.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, 31.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, 35-36, 47-48.

<sup>40</sup> In a 1965 essay, Edward B. Kenny recalled “the splendor of the occasion and the forceful manner in which the newly elected president delivered his marks.” See Edward B. Kenny, “Another Look at Kennedy’s Inaugural Address,” *Today’s Speech* 13 (1965): 17. In *Speech Education*, Takato Sugino went even further, proclaiming the speech a “success all over the world.” See Takako Sugino, “Stylistic Aspects of John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address,” *Speech Education* 2 (1974): 48. Other rhetorical critics have emphasized the sincerity of the address and Kennedy’s high hopes that it would be remembered as one of the great inaugurals in U.S. history. Sam Meyer, for example, commented, “We can be sure that the inaugural oration was the product of Kennedy’s deepest convictions and embodied his fervent hopes that it would win a high place as one of the lasting documents of American history.” See Sam Meyer, “The John F. Kennedy Inauguration Speech: Function and Importance of Its ‘Address System,’” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 12 (1982): 241.

<sup>41</sup> Cynthia Miecznikowski Shread, “The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric,” *College English* 58 (1996): 788.

<sup>42</sup> John M. Murphy, “Our Mission and Our Moment,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 6 (2003): 610.

<sup>43</sup> For more on Truman and Eisenhower’s cold war rhetoric, see Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott, *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990, 1997), *Eisenhower’s War of Words: Rhetoric and*

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*Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), Robert L. Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors of Global Emergency in the Truman Doctrine Speech," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1999): 570-591, and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>46</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>47</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>48</sup> Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech That Changed America*, 129-130. The quotation was likely modeled after a quotation from Winston Churchill's 1938 book *While England Slept*: "Dictators ride to and fro upon tigers which they dare not dismount. And the tigers are getting hungry." Galbraith, a noted economist and public scholar, had written draft material for the Kennedy inaugural. Sorensen consulted him during the drafting process, seeking feedback on the speech. Clark explained that "Galbraith criticized the tiger metaphor as out of tune with the conciliatory nature of the rest of the speech, but Sorensen refused to delete it."

<sup>49</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>50</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>51</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>52</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 2.

<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 2.

<sup>54</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communication Monographs* 54 (1987): 209-211.

<sup>55</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 2.

<sup>56</sup> Kenny, "Another Look at Kennedy's Inaugural Address," 17.

<sup>57</sup> Meyer, "The John F. Kennedy Inauguration Speech: Function and Importance of Its 'Address System,'" 247.



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<sup>58</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 1.

<sup>59</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 2.

<sup>60</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, “Inaugural Speech Draft,” undated, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, Box 62, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. The draft originally read, “To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break free the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help you help yourself, for whatever period is required—not because *our enemies* are doing it, not because we seek your votes, but because it is right” (emphasis added). The final version of the speech replaced the words “our enemies” with “the communists,” and eliminated the clause about seeking votes: “To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because *the communists* may be doing it, but because it is right” (emphasis added).

<sup>61</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 2.

<sup>62</sup> Harry S. Truman, as quoted in Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech that Changed America*, 205. Truman reportedly elaborated the following day that the speech “was short, to the point, and in language anyone can understand . . . Even I could understand it, and therefore the people can.”

<sup>63</sup> John D. Morris, “Inaugural Widely Praised by Both Sides of Congress,” *New York Times* January 12, 1961.

<sup>64</sup> Quotations are from *New York Times*, “Editorial Comment Across the Nation on President Kennedy’s Inauguration,” January 21, 1961.

<sup>65</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 166.

<sup>66</sup> John F. Kennedy, as quoted in Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 2003), 338.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffmann, *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 143-144.

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<sup>68</sup> Phillip Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 349.

<sup>69</sup> Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," 350.

<sup>70</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961-1963*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 22.

<sup>71</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 21, 1961," 2.

<sup>73</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 23.

<sup>74</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 23.

<sup>75</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 24.

<sup>76</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 25.

<sup>77</sup> Kennedy, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 30, 1961," 27.

<sup>78</sup> McGeorge Bundy, "Notes on the Discussion of the Thinking of the Soviet Leadership, Cabinet Room, February 11, 1961," National Security Files, Box 176, Folder USSR General 2/2/61-2/14/61, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

<sup>79</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 228.

<sup>80</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 364.

<sup>81</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 365.

<sup>82</sup> John F. Kennedy, as quoted in Piero Gleijeses, "Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House, and the Bay of Pigs," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27 (1995): 24-25.

<sup>83</sup> Gleijeses, "Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House, and the Bay of Pigs," 42.

<sup>84</sup> Khrushchev also promised that the Soviet Union would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, effectively ending hopes of German unification under a democratic government.

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<sup>85</sup> John F. Kennedy, as quoted in “Memorandum of Conversation, Vienna Meeting Between the President and Chairman Khrushchev, June 4, 1951,” U.S. State Department, Digital National Security Archive, accessed May 19, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Berlin Crisis, July 25, 1961,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961-1963*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 534-535.

<sup>87</sup> Kevin W. Dean, “‘We Seek Peace, But We Shall Not Surrender’: JFK’s Use of Juxtaposition for Rhetorical Success in the Berlin Crisis,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 21 (1991): 541.

<sup>88</sup> Craig and Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 200.

<sup>89</sup> See Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 715; and Jim Hersberg, “The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: Anatomy of a Controversy,” The National Security Archive, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/moment.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/moment.htm).

<sup>90</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 830.

<sup>91</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 574.

<sup>92</sup> Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Boston, MA: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1981), 270-271.

<sup>93</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 1.

<sup>94</sup> Lawrence J. Bassett and Stephen E. Pelz, “The Failed Search for Victory: Vietnam and the Politics of War,” in *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 223.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew West, Mary Kathryn Barbier, and Glenn Robins, ed., *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>96</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 1-3.

<sup>97</sup> Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961,” 1.

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<sup>98</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, “Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 4, 1965,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964-1969*, vol. 2, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), 3.

## Chapter Five

### “Building a Bridge” to China: Richard Nixon’s National Security Rhetoric

In February 1972, President Richard Nixon opened a new relationship with a nation once viewed as one of the greatest enemies of the United States and the free world. Through the power of new satellite technologies, the world watched as Nixon visited the People’s Republic of China. It was the first visit by a U.S. president to the communist nation. Just a few months later, Nixon visited the Soviet Union—the first president to do so since Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Joseph Stalin during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Through these actions, Nixon began the era of *rapprochement* and *détente*—the bringing together of opposing factions and a relaxing of tensions—between the United States and the communist world. In promoting improved relations with communist nations, Nixon turned away from the national security rhetorics of containment, the New Look, and the New Frontier, and instead promoted a new, more strategic vision of national security. He suggested that nations with sharp ideological differences could still find common ground through their mutual interests in prosperity and peace. This change was most apparent in Nixon’s weeklong visit to China in 1972.

The president’s most difficult rhetorical challenge during his visit to China was to persuade the U.S. public to accept the possibility of peaceful co-existence with communist nations. Two decades of presidential discourse had fostered the belief that communism was an implacable enemy of freedom and democracy. Nixon needed to

alter that perception to obtain support for his policy of establishing diplomatic relations with China and, later, beginning the process of *détente* with the Soviet Union. In order to do this, Nixon minimized the significance of the ideological differences between the two countries and emphasized instead the mutual benefits that might come from diplomacy, trade, communication, and cultural exchanges.

In this chapter, I argue that Nixon abandoned the national security rhetoric of previous presidents that identified communism as an enemy to be destroyed, and instead invoked a rhetoric of realism that articulated the national security strategies of *détente* and mutual self-interest. In his China speeches, Nixon transformed perceptions of the communist Chinese from enemy to adversary, using metaphors of walls and bridges to demonstrate the changed relationship between the United States and China. Nixon advocated better relations and even cooperation with the communist world, prioritizing the shared interests of all nations over the ideological divides of democratic and communist states.

I begin with a discussion of Nixon's commitment to realist, strategic security rather than ideological rivalry, showing how he began his re-visioning of Cold War national security policy during the 1968 presidential campaign. During that campaign, Nixon advocated normalizing diplomatic relations with communist China, a nation the United States had ostracized since its 1949 communist revolution. Then, in his first two years in office, Nixon and his staff worked in secret to bring that difficult goal to fruition. Next, I demonstrate how Nixon used his July 15, 1971, announcement of the presidential visit to the People's Republic of China to argue that

constructive diplomacy with communist nations promoted U.S. national security better than the Cold War policies of past presidents.<sup>2</sup> Using the direct and precise rhetoric of realism, Nixon announced his visit and began transforming the relationship between the United States and the communist world. Third, I analyze Nixon's discourse during his trip to China in February 1972, including his remarks upon departing the White House, his exchanges with U.S. reporters at Chinese cultural landmarks, his banquet toasts and speeches, and his public assessment of what he had accomplished upon returning to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Finally, I consider responses to the China trip and the impacts of Nixon's rhetoric on U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy. Nixon transformed the rhetoric of national security by redefining the status of communist nations from hated enemy to worthy adversary. His realist rhetoric of mutual self-interest opened possibilities for partnerships, reaching across the divides of the Cold War.

### **Planning the Trip to China**

Since the Chinese communist revolution in 1949, the United States had considered the People's Republic of China a threat and used its influence to limit China's role and status in international relations. For more than twenty years after the communist leader Mao Zedong<sup>4</sup> defeated the nationalist—and U.S.-supported—forces of Chiang Kai-shek, the United States refused to recognize Mao's regime as the legitimate government of China. Instead, the United States maintained diplomatic

relations with Chiang's nationalist government, the Republic of China, located in exile on the small island of Taiwan. The United States also used its influence to keep communist China from gaining official recognition by the United Nations. Yet international leaders, especially those from former colonial nations, had long urged that the United States reconsider its policies toward China, particularly the unwavering U.S. support for the Nationalist Chinese. India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, for example, argued that nationalist China's seat on the Security Council was "farcical" because "the old Nationalist government of China has been completely driven out of continental China."<sup>5</sup> As late as 1971, however, the United States was able to maintain enough of a voting bloc in the General Assembly to keep communist China from gaining a seat, thus relegating them to the periphery of the community of nations.<sup>6</sup>

### **Nixon and "Asia after Viet Nam"**

Even before his presidential campaign in 1968, Richard Nixon had been thinking about a radical approach to U.S. relations with communist China. In 1967, Nixon published an essay in *Foreign Affairs* entitled "Asia after Viet Nam." In that piece, Nixon depicted China as a serious challenge to U.S. national security, but he proposed engagement rather than isolation or military confrontation. "Red China," Nixon wrote, was a "clear, present and repeatedly and insistently expressed" threat to the independence of new nations in Asia—and thus a threat to U.S. interests in the



region. Yet the United States would not be able to counter the Chinese threat through military force. The United States had been involved in Vietnam for more than a decade, and Nixon acknowledged that the results of that conflict had left the United States with “a deep reluctance” to “become involved once again” in a military conflict in Asia.<sup>7</sup> After Vietnam, Nixon argued, other nations would need to recognize that “the role of the United States as world policeman” would “likely to be limited in the future.”<sup>8</sup> Yet in the future, the United States would still need to address the Chinese threat to its own national security. Nixon proposed relying upon “subtle encouragement” rather than military involvement and “heavy-handed American pressures.”<sup>9</sup>

Chief among those “encouragements” would be new diplomatic initiatives, including establishing formal diplomatic relations with communist China. Nixon suggested that the U.S. public should view reconciliation with communist China as an opportunity to protect U.S. interests. China was “the world’s most populous nation and Asia’s most immediate threat” to U.S. national security.<sup>10</sup> Yet Nixon contended that engagement would produce better results than continuing efforts to segregate China from the rest of the world. While the United States needed to take seriously “the present and potential danger from Communist China,” Nixon argued that in the “long view,” the United States simply could not afford “to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates, and threaten its neighbors.” With more than a billion people, China was too large a nation to be left alone “in angry isolation.”<sup>11</sup> Instead, Nixon proposed the United States

bring China “back into the world community”—but on terms favorable to the United States. China should be recognized as “a great and progressing nation, not as the epicenter of world revolution,”<sup>12</sup> Nixon argued, and that meant engaging China as a potential partner in the global economic community, not ostracizing it as an ideological enemy of democracy.

Nixon’s justifications for opening relations with communist China relied on a realist orientation to foreign policy. This approach was grounded in the belief that every nation seeks to promote and protect its own self-interests in foreign affairs, and that effective diplomacy must rely on skilled estimations of other nations’ intentions.<sup>13</sup> For Nixon, this meant turning away from the bipolar, ideological battles of the Cold War, and instead pursuing national security through a multipolar balance of power system. As Nixon’s National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, put it in his memoirs, the United States tended to pursue foreign policies along an “idealistic tradition that espouses great causes, such as making the world safe for democracy.”<sup>14</sup> Nixon and Kissinger instead sought a change in U.S. foreign policy grounded in strategic, mutually beneficial relationships between the United States and other nations, including the People’s Republic of China.

### **The Nixon Administration Looks to China**

The opening of a diplomatic relationship with the People’s Republic of China began during Nixon’s first year in office. The president tasked his National Security

Advisor, Henry Kissinger, with initiating the process. Although Kissinger was initially skeptical of approaching China, he was a “dynamic theorist and tactician” who, as political scientist Yukinori Komine has put it, “skillfully conduct[ed] a series of crucial negotiations” necessary to bring Nixon’s vision to fruition.<sup>15</sup> On February 5, 1969, Kissinger began the process by relaying a presidential directive to Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Richard M. Helms, asking each of their agencies to begin “a study” of “U.S. Policy Towards China,” on the “U.S. objectives and interests involved, and the broad lines of appropriate U.S. policies.”<sup>16</sup> The resulting interagency summary report argued that there was “little reason to believe” that tensions between the United States and China would or should “endure indefinitely.” Nixon’s advisors suggested that the “long-range objectives and interests” of the United States could “be set in more flexible terms and in the direction of the achievement of an improved and more relaxed relationship” with China.<sup>17</sup>

The process of creating an improved and relaxed relationship, however, was slow. In June of 1969, Nixon authorized an easing of trade restrictions on China. United States citizens traveling abroad could now purchase Chinese goods, and U.S. companies could export food, agricultural equipment, chemical fertilizer, and pharmaceuticals to China. In National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 17, dated June 26, 1969, Kissinger explained that the goal of the new guidelines was a “gradual development of balanced trade” between the two nations.<sup>18</sup> Other than easing trade restrictions, however, the administration kept fairly quiet about opening

relations with communist China during the summer of 1969 as they struggled to begin official communication with the Chinese government.

Although there was little public acknowledgement of the new China strategy during Nixon's first year in office, he did begin to more clearly articulate his national security strategy. Giving remarks to the press on Guam in July of 1969, Nixon promised to honor U.S. treaty commitments and provide a shield if a nuclear power threatened the freedom of any U.S. ally. He also noted the importance of maintaining U.S. interests in Asia for economic reasons: "the fastest rate of growth in the world is occurring in non-Communist Asia," and Nixon saw Asia as "the greatest hope for progress in the world."<sup>19</sup> He promised an era of "negotiation" with all nations,<sup>20</sup> and most importantly, pledged to no longer allow the U.S. military to bear the primary burden for maintaining peace around the world.<sup>21</sup> The press dubbed these principles the "Nixon Doctrine."<sup>22</sup>

The rhetorical strength of the Nixon Doctrine was its ambiguity, as it enabled the Nixon administration to withdraw from Vietnam while pursuing new, potentially controversial policies of *rapprochement* and *détente* with communist nations under the rationale of regional security and economic development. Historian Jeffrey Kimball has argued that Nixon's policy was "intentionally imprecise." Nixon wanted to "project an image of a foreign-policy [*sic*] leader who was experienced, comprehensive in his thinking, and far-sighted," yet he remained vague about the details of his policy, apparently in an effort to appease a public that both wanted to

withdrawal from Vietnam and yet maintain perceptions of the United States as a strong leader who did not appease its enemies.<sup>23</sup>

During the fall of 1969 and the winter of 1970, the administration continued to communicate with Chinese leaders in secret. The next steps, as expressed in an October 5 State Department memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Marshall Green, was for the Nixon administration to “seek friendlier and ‘more normal relations’ with Peking, and to bring the Chinese out of their international isolation.”<sup>24</sup> By the end of October, the White House had sent secret messages via proxy diplomats from Pakistan and Romania to set up formal conversations with Chinese leaders.<sup>25</sup> When the Pakistani channel received confirmation that the Chinese would be willing to talk,<sup>26</sup> the Nixon administration decided to reopen ambassadorial talks. In January 1970, groups led by U.S. Ambassador Walter Stoessel and Chinese *chargé d'affaires* Lei Yang met several times in Warsaw, Poland.<sup>27</sup> As the meetings became more public, a State Department report expressed optimism that “the Chinese were exhibiting greater activity in their dealings with the U.S. than at any other point in the last decade.”<sup>28</sup>

As the ambassadorial meetings progressed, Nixon finally acknowledged publicly that the administration had embarked on a diplomatic effort to create “better East-West relations.” In his first “Foreign Policy Report” to Congress on February 18, 1970, Nixon proclaimed, “No nation need be our permanent enemy,” regardless of ideology.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile Stoessel continued to meet with Lei in Warsaw to discuss the possibilities of beginning formal, open diplomatic relations. Two days later on

February 20, Lei informed Stroessel that Beijing was willing to receive “a minister-level official or a special envoy representing the president” to “further explore solutions to the fundamental questions in Sino-American relations.”<sup>30</sup> While the U.S. bombing of Cambodia in the spring of 1970 temporarily halted communication between the two nations, Kissinger began directly communicating with the Chinese government in early June.

Relations between the two nations continued to improve over the next year.<sup>31</sup> In October 1970, *Time* magazine quoted Nixon as saying, “If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is to go to China,”<sup>32</sup> signaling his commitment to improving relations with the communist nation. In his second “Foreign Policy Report” to Congress on February 25, 1971, Nixon described establishing “a dialogue” with the Chinese as a high priority. While the United States would never accept China’s “ideological precepts,” he explained, he also did not “wish to impose on China an international position that denies its legitimate national interests.”<sup>33</sup> This statement suggested that, in the eyes of the United States, the communist Chinese government had earned its place in global politics. Clearly, a radical change in the official U.S. attitude in China was in the works.

In April 1971, Nixon announced that the U.S. table tennis team had accepted an invitation to play exhibition matches in communist China—the first group from the United States to visit China under an official banner since the Eisenhower administration.<sup>34</sup> It was, in fact, the ping-pong matches that seemed to move the process forward. On April 27, a few days after the matches, Kissinger received a

hand-written letter from Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, inviting “a special envoy of the President of the U.S. (for instance, Mr. Kissinger) or the U.S. Secretary of State or even the President of the U.S. himself for direct meetings and discussion.”<sup>35</sup> On May 10, Nixon responded to the invitation by proposing “a preliminary *secret* meeting between his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Kissinger, and Premier Chou En-lai or another appropriate high-level Chinese official.”<sup>36</sup> The purpose of the meeting would be to prepare for Nixon’s presidential visit to China. The Chinese agreed, and Nixon sent Kissinger on a clandestine trip to China to begin planning a presidential visit.<sup>37</sup>

The *rapprochement* with China was politically strategic. This was, after all, the Nixon administration. The president saw domestic political advantages to opening the door to China. After years of bad news from Vietnam, here was an opportunity for a public opinion and foreign policy “win” in the eyes of U.S. voters. Nixon reportedly even thought that he could win the loyalties of young voters who favored opening relations with the Chinese—presumably because, as he remarked to some staff members, young people “think everybody’s good, pure.”<sup>38</sup> Nixon was aware that eighteen-year-olds would soon have the vote, and he apparently saw reconciliation with China as an initiative that might attract young voters to his side in the 1972 presidential election.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Nixon may have hoped that opening relations with China would distract the nation from the continuing controversy over Vietnam. In the June of 1971, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* began publishing the *Pentagon*

*Papers*, a previously secret government study of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara commissioned the study in 1968, and it contained more than 7,000 pages of often embarrassing details about how the government, and particularly the White House, had misled the public during the early years of the war. After a former government employee, Daniel Ellsberg, leaked the *Papers* to the press,<sup>40</sup> the administration tried to block their publication, arguing that release of the documents might threaten national security. Yet in *N.Y. Times Co. v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that the government had no basis for prior restraint of the documents's publication. The Court also ruled that the *Times* had a First Amendment right to publish the *Papers*.<sup>41</sup> Nixon's efforts to block publication of the documents also sparked protest from members of Congress and the public.<sup>42</sup> After losing the battle over the *Papers*, the Nixon administration undoubtedly hoped for more positive press from its China initiative and the Nixon administration's more engaged approach to foreign nations.

Economic and military concerns also figured into Nixon's decision to pursue better relations with China. In a July 6, 1971, speech before news media executives in Kansas City, Missouri, Nixon reflected upon the changes that were underway in global politics. Unlike the early Cold War, which was fought primarily through an expensive arms race, Nixon argued that economic competition would mark the last third of the twentieth century. In the future, Nixon argued, there would be "five great economic super powers: the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, Mainland China, and . . . Japan." These five powers, Nixon predicted, would



“determine the economic future and, because economic power will be the key to other kinds of power, the future of the world in other ways in the last third of the century.”<sup>43</sup> To remain a global leader and protect U.S. national security, Nixon argued that United States would need to enhance its competitiveness in global markets, and that would require cooperation with the other great economic powers, including China. Despite his acknowledgement that opening Chinese markets to the world would create “an immense escalation of their economic challenge” to the United States, Nixon concluded that this challenge could best be met through engagement, not continued isolation of China from the rest of the world.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, the Nixon administration made the case for *rapprochement* with China in diplomatic and military terms. A better relationship with China was likely to put additional pressure on the Soviets to negotiate arms control with the United States—something they had been unwilling to do in the past. Nixon may have hoped that improved U.S.-Chinese relations might, as historian Stephen Graubard has written, have two immediate results: First, that it would “make the North Vietnamese more amenable to accepting reasonable peace terms” and bringing a final resolution to the war in Vietnam. Second, that “it would distress the Soviet Union,” thus making the “Kremlin more responsive to compromise” on arms control.<sup>45</sup> Both of these results would advance the national security interests of the United States in what Nixon portrayed as an increasingly interconnected world of diplomacy, military strength, and economic competition.

### **Nixon Announces His Visit to China**

On July 15, 1971, Nixon made a historic announcement: he would be taking a presidential trip to the People's Republic of China. In a live, televised broadcast to the nation from NBC Studios in Burbank, California, the president declared that he had a "major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world." He explained that, in his judgment, there could be "no stable and enduring peace without the participation of the People's Republic of China and its 750 million people." Recounting events leading up to the speech, Nixon informed the nation that he earlier had sent Kissinger to China "for the purpose of having talks with Premier Chou En-lai," and that the result of those talks was the decision that Nixon would personally visit China.<sup>46</sup>

Nixon read the official statement of both governments that had resulted from those talks: "Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China, Premier Chou En-lai, on behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of China, has extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972." Announcing that he had "accepted the invitation with pleasure," Nixon explained that the purpose of the visit would be to "seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides."<sup>47</sup>

In the final section of his brief, three and a half minute remarks, Nixon emphasized how the visit to China would bolster the long-term national security interests of the United States. "In anticipation of the inevitable speculation"

concerning the administration pursued the visit, Nixon wanted to put the visit to China in “the clearest possible context.” He assured his listeners that the new policy would not be “at the expense of our old friends,” but rather would lead to “friendly relations with all nations.” Nixon confessed his “profound conviction” that diplomatic relations between the United States and China would allow all nations to “gain from a reduction in tensions.” The *rapprochement* with China, Nixon “deeply” hoped, would “become a journey for peace, peace not just for our generation but for future generations.”<sup>48</sup>

Nixon’s announcement speech was an example of what rhetorical scholars have labeled the rhetoric of political realism. Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman have defined political realism as a “persuasive discourse” that “communicates not only propositions but also attitudes.”<sup>49</sup> Realist rhetoric “is general, simple, and logical,”<sup>50</sup> with a foundational narrative of all nation-states acting in their own interests. Hariman has argued that the rhetoric of realism constrains public discourse by “keeping deliberation within a vernacular of sovereign powers, calculations of interest, and the like.”<sup>51</sup> In the announcement of his trip to China, Nixon’s rhetoric of realism established himself as the only agent able to make decisions for the nation. He also justified his visit in the “general, simple, and logical” framework of realism. Nixon labeled the Chinese as potential partners, thus they became potential partners. As historian Rick Perlstein put it, Nixon’s announcement made it seem “as if suddenly enemies were a thing of the past,” and that “all those decades of tension” with communist China were “gone.”<sup>52</sup>

While the speech was a surprise to many politicians, reactions were generally positive. As reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, most members of Congress “hailed enthusiastically President Nixon’s plan to visit Communist China,” with many expressing hope that the visit could bring a swifter end to the war in Vietnam. Nixon’s Republican supporters were especially thrilled with the announcement. Senator Robert Dole (R-KS), “the chairman of the Republican National Committee, called the president’s decision ‘a further indication that he is a President who intends to solve problems, not perpetuate them.’” On the other side of the political aisle, influential Senators, including Adlai Stevenson (D-IL) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), endorsed Nixon’s trip, with Stevenson calling it a demonstration of “how earnestly the people of America want peace.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the *New York Times* quoted Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-MT) saying he was “flabbergasted, delighted, and happy” about the visit to China.<sup>54</sup> Commenting on the bipartisan support for the trip, the *Tribune* concluded: “The only nasty thing the Democrats have been able to think of to say is that if a Democratic president had done what Mr. Nixon has done the Republicans would be howling mad.”<sup>55</sup>

Nixon’s *ethos* certainly played a part in mitigating any hostile reactions to the announcement, as did the element of surprise. As rhetoric critic Denise Bostdorff has argued, Nixon gradually revealed the new policy toward China in a series of “written foreign policy reports and news conferences,” and those statements did not draw “the same degree of scrutiny” as his major speeches. As a result, “many listeners were surprised at the president’s announcement.”<sup>56</sup> More importantly, Nixon had a strong

reputation as a tough anticommunist. After all, he was the one who, as Dwight Eisenhower's Vice President, had stood up to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in the famous "Kitchen Debate,"<sup>57</sup> and of course he had played a leading role in the House Un-American Activities Committee investigation of alleged communist spy Alger Hiss.<sup>58</sup> Now, instead of stirring up anticommunist fears, Nixon would become the first U.S. president to visit the most populous communist nation in the world. No longer would the United States attempt to contain communism or liberate those under communism through military means. Instead, the United States would publicly engage China as a legitimate member of the world community.

### **Nixon's Trip to China**

During his visit to the People's Republic of China in February 1972, Nixon began the process of redefining communist China and its relationship to the United States. In his speeches while in China, Nixon spoke of China not as a communist enemy but as a legitimate member of the community of nations—one deserving of U.S. attention and collaboration. He employed metaphors to characterize U.S.-Chinese relations, suggesting that both nations were part of the family of nations and advocating building a new "bridge" to China rather than staying separated behind a "Great Wall." Nixon's realist rhetoric minimized differences of ideology in favor of a new emphasis on cooperation and mutual goals.

The president's visit to China was a highly staged media event. With new satellite technologies enabling people around the world to witness the visit live and in color, Nixon's staff made the most of the opportunity to showcase the president's China initiative. All three of the anchors for the network evening news in the United States—Walter Cronkite of CBS, John Chancellor of NBC, and Harry Reasoner of ABC—journeyed to China along with Nixon, as did 84 other members of the print and broadcast media.<sup>59</sup> In addition to on-location evening news broadcasts, the networks aired special live coverage of major events during the trip, including Nixon's arrival at the Beijing airport and the opening reception at the Great Hall of China.<sup>60</sup> In the past, the U.S. public had relied upon second-hand accounts of presidential visits overseas, or—at best—spotty radio reports or delayed film coverage. Now, as *New York Times* reporter John J. O'Connor commented, events were instantaneously “seen by millions”—something that “would have been unthinkable” only a year before. As O'Connor concluded, the implications of Nixon's China visit were significant for the future of U.S. foreign policy: “[M]ore is being put on camera than ever before. And the future of diplomacy, and history, will no doubt reflect this profound change.”<sup>61</sup>

While the visual images of the President and Mrs. Nixon's visit to China testified to the historical significance of the visit, it remained for Nixon, in the speeches he delivered before and during the trip, to flesh out the implications of the trip for the national security interests of the United States. The discourse of the trip included a variety of rhetorical occasions. Nixon gave speeches at his departure from

and his return to the United States, as well as several toasts during banquets while in China. Rhetorical critic Michelle Murray Yang has written that in the toasts, “Nixon adroitly employed epideictic diplomatic rhetoric” to “craft” a “positive view of Sino-American relations.”<sup>62</sup> Noting that Nixon “did not hold any formal press conferences during his stay in China,” Yang argued that the diplomatic speeches “provided virtually the sole source of public information about the talks.”<sup>63</sup> In addition to these formal occasions, however, Nixon also informally spoke with reporters on visits to great sites in China, giving short prepared remarks and then answering questions. The formal speeches and informal remarks all contributed to Nixon’s message for the United States and the world. For eight days, the U.S. public and the world watched as Nixon employed a rhetoric of realism, emphasizing the beginning of a more open relationship with China that would ultimately uphold the national security of the United States.

Nixon began with a departure speech on February 17, in which he stressed that, despite their “great differences,” the two nations hoped to “find a way to see that we can have differences without being enemies in war.”<sup>64</sup> He credited a new generation of leaders within China for making the breakthrough possible, suggesting that contemporary China was a different kind of global actor than the China of the past. Paraphrasing the remarks of one of these new leaders, “Premier Chou En-lai,” during his “toast” to “Dr. Kissinger and the members of the advance group in October,” Nixon echoed the sentiment that a “vast ocean” and “great differences in philosophy” separated the United States and China, but that these differences need

not “prevent them from finding common ground.”<sup>65</sup> Tempering expectations of a dramatic breakthrough, Nixon cautioned that improved relations with China would take time. The “hostility between the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America” had built up over decades, Nixon observed, and it would not be “swept away by one week of talks.” But Nixon expressed his hope that, over time, the talks might lead to a “much safer world” and give “young children” in the United States and China “the chance” to “grow up in a world of peace.”<sup>66</sup>

Once in China, Nixon continued to praise the new attitude of the Chinese government, and he celebrated the virtues of the Chinese people. In his visits to historic sites, Nixon explained to reporters how the history of China demonstrated the tremendous potential of her people. Visiting the Great Wall on February 24, Nixon characterized the site as “built by a great people.” Nixon used the enduring landmark to reflect on Chinese history as well, declaring that the Chinese had “a great past to be proud of” and adding that a nation with that “kind of a past must also have a great future.”<sup>67</sup> At the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, north of Beijing, Nixon described the site as “a reminder” that the Chinese were “very proud in terms of cultural development and the rest, a rich history of the Chinese people.”<sup>68</sup> These historical sites—known by many and famous around the world—demonstrated the accomplishments of the Chinese in the past and symbolized their potential for a more active role in global affairs. The president stated that both nations must “think of ourselves as members of the family of man.”<sup>69</sup> With the familial metaphor, Nixon



suggested how the two nations were interconnected—related, even—in their hopes for a better future.

While Nixon spent much of his time in talks with Chinese leaders, the First Lady played an important role in introducing U.S. television viewers to the Chinese people. Although Nixon earlier had suggested that the First Lady would come along on the trip as a mere “prop,”<sup>70</sup> she played a major role in the televised visit as she led reporters around the country, visiting still more historic sites and teaching the public about Chinese culture. As *Life* magazine summarized her role on the trip, Mrs. Nixon “seized the opportunity to have a good look at the Chinese—and let the Chinese have a look at her.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, *Chicago Today* praised the First Lady’s “warm, gracious conduct” and credited her with “establishing direct and friendly contact with the Chinese people on a normal human level; the level where children and families and food and service and health are the most important things.”<sup>72</sup> Later, *Life* magazine echoed the view that Mrs. Nixon’s “presence” on the China trip was “particularly notable” and concluded that her efforts “yielded a real political advantage.”<sup>73</sup>

Mrs. Nixon’s tour served to confirm Nixon’s suggestion that the Chinese had changed. Instead of mindless, even brainwashed devotees of communist ideology, those who watched coverage of Mrs. Nixon’s visit saw warm, smiling, courteous, and interesting Chinese people. They not only had welcomed the President and the First Lady to their country, but they appeared to have done so with genuine warmth and respect. Upon the First Lady’s arrival, they presented her with an edible chrysanthemum and a grasshopper carved from a radish, and they cheerfully and

patiently took her around the city of Beijing, visiting famous sites and facilitating visits with ordinary Chinese citizens.<sup>74</sup> Later, Chinese leaders would send two Chinese pandas to the National Zoo in Washington in honor of the First Lady.<sup>75</sup> In short, China appeared to welcome the Nixons—and especially Mrs. Nixon—with open arms. The portrait of the Chinese painted during Nixon’s visit to China stood in sharp contrast to the portrait of the evil communist hordes painted during the early Cold War.

During his visit to China, Nixon frequently relied upon two dominant metaphors to simplify and render more comprehensible the contrast between the old and new China he wished to convey. In the past, he suggested, China and its foreign policy were best understood through the metaphor of a wall—the Great Wall of China, to be more specific. Now, however, Nixon was building a new “bridge” to China. Through the metaphors of “walls” and “bridges,” Nixon used spatial imagery to communicate new understandings of the past, present, and future of U.S.-Chinese relations.

Scholars of rhetoric have noted the power of metaphors to convey complex or unfamiliar ideas in more understandable ways. Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke has argued that metaphor allows the speaker to “substitute for the fact to be described some quite different fact which is only connected with it by a more or less remote analogy.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, rhetorical critic Robert L. Ivie has noted that metaphors intensify an argument because they elaborate “a primary image into a well formed

argument,” which produces an “interpretation of reality with which the intended audience is invited to identify.”<sup>77</sup>

Not surprisingly, Nixon invoked the “wall” metaphor prominently during his speech at the Great Wall of China. The wall, the president explained, was “certainly a symbol of what China in the past has been,” but it was also a symbol of what “China in the future” could “become.” In the past, China built a wall to keep out the outside world. The Great Wall ran for “hundreds of miles, as a matter of fact thousands of miles, over the mountains and through the valleys” of China.<sup>78</sup> It was a major feature of China, a recognizable and enduring symbol of its separation from the rest of the world. The wall was not something that could be dismantled or ignored; but neither was it an insurmountable barrier. “We do not want walls of any kind between peoples,” Nixon declared as he toured the site. Elaborating on the metaphor, he expressed his hope that “one of the results of our trip” would be that “walls that are erected, whether they are physical walls like this or whether they are other walls, ideology or philosophy,” would no longer “divide peoples in the world.” Citizens of different nations, “regardless of their differences and backgrounds,” he continued, should “have an opportunity to communicate with each other, to know each other, and to share with each other those particular endeavors that will mean peaceful progress in the years ahead.” In other words, Nixon concluded, walls—whether real or metaphorical—need not separate people. Despite ideological or even physical barriers, they could still live in an “open world.”<sup>79</sup>

Later, at a banquet in Beijing on February 25, Nixon returned to the metaphor of the Great Wall to forecast the future of U.S.-Chinese relations. The Great Wall, Nixon began, had symbolized “the determination of the Chinese people to retain their independence throughout their long history.”<sup>80</sup> But now the Great Wall was no longer “a wall dividing China from the rest of the world,” but rather a “reminder that for almost a generation, there has been a wall between the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America.”<sup>81</sup> Nixon acknowledged the differences between the United States and China by acknowledging that they were still on opposite sides of that wall. Yet his visit, he argued, was a first step toward dismantling that barrier: “In these past 4 days we have begun the long process of removing that wall between us. We began our talks recognizing that we have great differences, but we are determined that those differences not prevent us from living together in peace.” Once the wall was removed, Nixon concluded, there could be a “new world order in which nations and peoples with different systems and different values” could “live together in peace, respecting one another while disagreeing with one another.”<sup>82</sup> Rather than be divided by a wall of difference, Nixon urged his listeners to focus on the common ground between the two nations.

The “bridge” metaphor served a similar rhetorical function in Nixon’s rhetoric during his trip to China. At the final banquet in Shanghai, for example, Nixon praised the two nations for beginning to “build a bridge across 16,000 miles and 22 years of hostility which have divided us in the past.” He again recognized “areas of difference” as well as “areas of agreement,” but he expressed his hope that the two

nations could “succeed in working together where we can find common ground.” Once they found their mutual interests, the United States and China would be able to “build the bridge between us and build a new world,” and “generations in the years ahead” would “look back and thank us for this meeting that we have held in this past week.”<sup>83</sup> Despite their differences—despite the “walls” that had separated them in the past—Nixon suggested that the United States and China could get beyond their differences—that they could “bridge” their differences—and in the process build a new future of mutual respect and cooperation.

Upon returning to the United States after his visit, Nixon continued to emphasize the need to “bridge” the ideological differences between the United States and China. In his remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on February 28, 1972, Nixon commented on the high price of global conflict and war: “In the last 30 years, Americans have in three different wars gone off by the hundreds of thousands to fight, and some to die, in Asia and in the Pacific.”<sup>84</sup> Characterizing his China trip as a “journey for peace,” Nixon pledged to “prevent that from happening a fourth time to another generation of Americans,” and he promised to continue “building a bridge across” the “gulf” that separated the free world from the communist nations of the world.<sup>85</sup> Again, the “bridge” metaphor served not only to symbolize his own efforts to cross the “gulf” between the two sides, but also the prospects for future cultural exchanges and cooperation. He noted that as a result of the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of his trip,<sup>86</sup> the two nations would “expand cultural, educational, and journalistic contacts between the Chinese and the American people,” and also

“broaden trade between our two countries.”<sup>87</sup> These new connections were possible because Nixon had “bridged” the gulf between the two nations and begun to knock down the “wall” that had divided the communist from the free world.

Nowhere was the commitment to a new, strategic relationship more evident than in the joint Shanghai Communiqué produced at the conclusion of the trip. Published in full in major newspapers such as the *New York Times*,<sup>88</sup> the communiqué announced that the United States and China engaged in “extensive, earnest, and frank discussions” on “the normalization of relations between the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China, as well as on other matters of interest to both sides.”<sup>89</sup> Although both sides admitted that there were “essential differences between China and the United States,” they agreed to “progress toward normalization of relations.” They also both wished to “reduce the danger of international military conflict” and agreed that neither nation should “seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>90</sup> Once enemies, the United States and China now were pledging to promote mutual security with one another, rather than protect their own security against one another.

Not even the issue of Taiwan could lessen the willingness of the two sides to work together. The communiqué confirmed that United States did “not challenge” the status of the exiled Chinese nationalist government on Taiwan as part of mainland—communist—China, although Nixon did insist that there was a U.S. “interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question,” and thus did not agree to a removal of U.S. forces from the island.<sup>91</sup> Still, even after expressing their disagreements on

Taiwan, each side affirmed the desire to “broaden understanding” through exchanges of U.S. and Chinese citizens in “science, technology, culture, sports, and journalism.” Furthermore, both affirmed their commitment to expanding “bilateral trade,” and agreed to “stay in contact through various channels” to reach normalization of diplomatic relations.<sup>92</sup> This communiqué represented the formal, diplomatic commitment of both nations to alter the strained relationship of the past into a more open partnership in the future.

Nixon’s rhetoric during his trip to China reflected what Ivie has called “rhetorical flexibility” in the rhetoric of international relations, or a turning away from the “ideological rigidity” of the Cold War to a more accommodating rhetorical stance.<sup>93</sup> Grounded in a realist philosophy of foreign policy, Nixon’s rhetoric of national security suggested that ideological differences could be surmounted through the pursuit of mutual political, economic, and cultural interests. After a week of “intensive talks at the highest levels,” Nixon boasted that the United States and China had “demonstrated that nations with very deep and fundamental differences can learn to discuss those differences calmly, rationally, and frankly, without compromising their principles.”<sup>94</sup> The ideological differences between the two countries remained. Yet rather than characterizing China as an implacable foe that must be destroyed, Nixon redefined the world’s most populous communist nation as a worthy adversary—even a potential partner—in a search for those mutual interests in peace and prosperity shared by all the nations of the world.

### **Mutual Interests and National Security**

Once a rabid Cold Warrior, Richard Nixon transformed relations between the United States and China—and, later, between the United States and the Soviet Union—by embracing a new rhetoric of U.S. national security in the early 1970s. Instead of talking about irreconcilable differences between the communist and the free world or politically exploiting fears of communists influence in the United States, Nixon now talked about opportunities for positive change in U.S.-Chinese relations and the possibilities for peaceful cooperation in political, economic, and cultural affairs. Nixon the Cold Warrior had become Nixon the peacemaker.

Press reactions to Nixon's visit reflected the historic nature of the dramatic transformation in the rhetoric of U.S. national security. A *New York Times* article after Nixon's return to the United States reported that the two nations "now shared enough common interests on the world scene to forget their ideological obsessions and fears of each other."<sup>95</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* praised Nixon's visit, headlining their editorial "Yes, It Was Worth It." Echoing the President's own words, the *Tribune's* editors called the visit the "week that changed the world" and observed that the world was now a very different place "simply because the visit took place, and because of its effect on world and domestic politics."<sup>96</sup> The press, it seemed, was swept up in the excitement of an historic transformation of the U.S. relationship with the communist world, a transformation made possible by a startling change in the tone and substance of Nixon's rhetoric about China.



The change in Nixon's rhetoric reflected the emphasis of Nixon and Kissinger's realist philosophy. As rhetorical critics Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman have argued, the rhetoric of realism "sets the scene, and in so doing both structures subsequent argument and defines the natural attitude of the discourse—its most reliable, core knowledge of the world."<sup>97</sup> By altering his rhetoric about the Chinese from evil communists to a worthy potential ally, Nixon redefined the discourse of national security. It was not only possible and acceptable for the United States to forge a closer, more collaborative relationship with a communist nation; this new relationship seemed in the best interest of the United States.

The future opportunities for U.S.-Chinese economic growth, cultural exchanges, and scientific advancement would overall result in a strategic connection that brought a former enemy close to the United States, reducing a threat to national security. Times had changed, and Nixon's realist rhetoric both reflected these new realities and *created* new realities rhetorically by transforming the Chinese from an implacable foe to a potential ally. No longer was there a need to contain, roll back, or liberate the communists. Nixon's new portrait of the Chinese communists instead invited negotiations and engagement. Mutual self-interests would not only protect U.S. national security, but allow the United States to prosper.

A few months after his trip to China, Nixon journeyed to Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, continuing his efforts to create a new relationship with the communist world. Addressing Congress and the U.S. public on June 1, 1972, Nixon spoke of the "quickenning pace of change in old international relationships" and about

how people around the world—including in communist nations—had a “genuine desire for friendship for the American people.”<sup>98</sup> Describing his own efforts to engage the communists as the “beginning of a process that can lead to a lasting peace,” Nixon insisted that the transformation taking place was more than merely a repeat of the brief “euphoric mood” produced at past Cold War summits. Instead, he established a “solid record of progress on solving the difficult issues which for so long have divided our two nations and also have divided the world.”<sup>99</sup>

Much as his visit to China had eased tensions, Nixon reported that his trip to the Soviet Union had altered the U.S.-Soviet relationship for the better. He announced new agreements to share knowledge and work together on environmental controls, “medical science and public health,” and “science and technology,” including a “new adventure in the cooperative exploration of space” with a “joint orbital mission of an Apollo vehicle and a Soviet spacecraft.” There would also be new economic agreements to promote trade between “the two largest economies” in the world.<sup>100</sup> Several of these initiatives would eventually come to fruition, including the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) and the subsequent Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with the Soviet Union that restricted further development of nuclear weapons for five years,<sup>101</sup> the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz joint space mission between the United States and Soviet Union, and finally, in 1979, the full, formal recognition of communist China.<sup>102</sup>

Nixon transformed the rhetoric of national security by arguing that U.S. interests were best pursued collectively, even with ideological adversaries like China

and the Soviet Union. Speaking to Congress after his visits to China and the Soviet Union, he promised that the new relationships would not detract from U.S. national security: “No power on earth is stronger than the United States of America today. And none will be stronger than the United States of America in the future.”<sup>103</sup> Nixon argued that to avoid the “deadly impasse” of ideological struggles between nations with enough military power to destroy the entire world, the United States must change its approach to national security, relying on “better understanding, mutual respect,” and “point-by-point settlement of differences with both the major Communist powers.”<sup>104</sup> By fostering connections over shared goals, the United States could entwine their ideological adversaries into mutual goals of global peace and prosperity.

### **Conclusion**

Reconciliation with communist China provided Richard Nixon with a tremendous opportunity to etch his name in history. Once a rabid anticommunist crusader, Nixon transformed the rhetoric of U.S. national security by calling for a new era of openness and diplomacy—a strong contrast from the earlier Cold War rhetoric of fear and “long twilight struggles.” In the case of China, Nixon’s foreign policies matched his presidential rhetoric. Instead of demonizing communists and pledging to fight it across the globe, Nixon stressed engagement and cooperation, despite the ideological differences between communism and the free world. In

Nixon's view, the United States needed to be realistic about the slim chances of defeating communism and about how the United States might best promote its own foreign policy interests. From Nixon and Kissinger's realist perspective, the best way to protect U.S. national security was by engaging *all* nations, communist or free, in diplomatic and trade initiatives that promoted their mutual interests. And the best way to avoid international conflict was not by "containing" or "rolling back" communism, but by working *with* the communists to promote world peace.

Nixon's calls for cooperation and peace might have fallen on deaf ears had his visit also not served to humanize the Chinese rhetorically. Long demonized as implacable "enemies" of the United States, the Chinese communists came across as friendly, industrious, and culturally advanced during Nixon's visit to their country. Instead of enemies, they became adversaries or economic rivals at worst; at best, Nixon opened the possibility that his "bridge" to China might transform the people of that nation into close allies—even friends—of the United States. Whereas past presidents had characterized communism as a divide that could never be overcome, Nixon began to break down the "wall" between East and West, acknowledging that ideological differences still existed, but opening the way for diplomatic exchanges, economic cooperation, and diplomacy. The *rapprochement* with China, and later the policy of *détente* with the Soviets, revealed what seemed a genuinely "new" Nixon and afforded him significant political gains. Indeed, for some scholars, including Louis Liebovich and Stanley Kutler, Nixon's China initiative was little more than a

public relations stunt designed to distract attention from Nixon's political difficulties, most notably Vietnam and Watergate.<sup>105</sup>

There is no doubt some merit to that argument. Even as Nixon opened relations with China, he continued to direct aggressive military campaigns against the communists in North Vietnam and Cambodia,<sup>106</sup> and the positive press from China distracted, at least for a time, attention from the growing controversy over Watergate—a scandal that eventually would bring down Nixon's presidency.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Nixon's rhetoric during his trip to China had a lasting effect on the role of communists and communism in the rhetoric of U.S. national security. Now communism had a face—indeed, two faces, the Soviet Union and China—and shared some of the same economic and political aspirations as the United States. With his realist national security rhetoric of engagement, Nixon convinced many U.S. citizens that even those divided by walls could build bridges, come together, and work towards common goals, protecting U.S. national security while promoting peace and prosperity for all.

### **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> During the course of the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union had numerous summit meetings between the Soviet and U.S. leaders, but these meetings had taken place either in other nations (1955 in Geneva, Switzerland, 1960 in Paris, France, and 1961 in Vienna, Austria) or in the United States (1959 at Camp David). The 1972 summit between Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev was the first of these meetings to take place on Soviet soil since the 1945 summit between

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Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill in Yalta, Ukraine. Nixon had visited the Soviet capital in 1959 as Eisenhower's vice president, but this time, he returned to the Soviet stronghold as president. See Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 391.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Nixon, "Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation To Visit the People's Republic of China, July 15, 1971," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 819-820.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Nixon, "Remarks on Departure from the White House for a State Visit to the People's Republic of China, February 17, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 367-368; Richard Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters at the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 370-372; Richard Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters at the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, February 24, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 372-373; Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 373-374; Richard Nixon, "Toast of the President and Chairman Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at a Banquet in Shanghai, February 27, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 379-380; and Richard Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 381-383.

<sup>4</sup> Anglicized spellings of Chinese words have varied greatly. I will use the contemporary accepted spellings of these words, except when quoting a primary text from the era. For example, the

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contemporary spelling of the Chinese Premiere, Zhou Enlai, was in 1972 typically spelled Chou En-lai; Beijing was spelled Peking. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Chinese surnames such as “Zhou” or “Mao” are printed before the personal first name.

<sup>5</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, as quoted in James Peck, *Washington's China: The National Security World, the Cold War, and the Origins of Globalism* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 128.

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of U.S. actions to keep communist China from being seated in the United Nations, see Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2008), 103-105.

<sup>7</sup> Richard M. Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” *Foreign Affairs* 46 (October 1967): 113.

<sup>8</sup> Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 114. Nixon encouraged the development of Asian regional security networks.

<sup>9</sup> Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 124.

<sup>10</sup> Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 119.

<sup>11</sup> Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 121.

<sup>12</sup> Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 123.

<sup>13</sup> See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 724, and Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 653.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 50.

<sup>15</sup> Yukinori Komine, *Secrecy in U.S. Foreign Policy: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Rapprochement with China* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “National Security Study Memorandum 14, Subject: U.S. China Policy,” February 5, 1969, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm\\_014.pdf](http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm_014.pdf).

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<sup>17</sup> “Response to National Security Study Memorandum 14, August 8, 1969,” Document 23, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1972, China 1969-1972*, vol. XVII (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 62.

<sup>18</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “National Security Decision Memorandum 17, Subject: Relaxation of Economic Controls Against China,” Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, June 26, 1969, accessed May 16, 2011, [http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm\\_017.pdf](http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_017.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Nixon, “Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen, July 25, 1969,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 547.

<sup>20</sup> Nixon, “Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen, July 25, 1969,” 548.

<sup>21</sup> Nixon, “Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen, July 25, 1969,” 549. Nixon explained that in the matters of “internal security” problems, “except for the threat of a major power involving the nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.”

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey Kimball, “The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 64-65. Kimball elaborated on the development of Nixon’s comments to reporters into a doctrine: “Almost immediately following the news conference [on Guam on July 25, 1969], the press began referring to Nixon’s comments as the ‘Guam Doctrine,’ a term that remained in use in some newspapers as late as September 1970. Yet almost as quickly, editorialists and reporters had also begun using ‘Nixon Doctrine,’ placing Nixon in the pantheon of other presidents who had announced doctrines.” Later, Nixon more explicitly stated his doctrine in his “Silent Majority” speech on November 3, 1969. He promised that this strategy would not only “end the war in Vietnam,” but also “prevent future Vietnams.” In the future, Nixon explained, the United States would “look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing manpower for its defense.” See Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on Vietnam, November 3, 1969,” *The Public Papers of the*



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*Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 905-906.

<sup>23</sup> Kimball, "The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding," 65.

<sup>24</sup> Marshall Green, "Next Steps in China Policy," Secret Memorandum, October 5, 1969, U.S. Department of State, Digital National Security Archive, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 144. See also Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, "Memcon, 'Meeting Between the President and Pakistan President Yahya,' 25 October 1970, Top Secret/Sensitive," The National Security Archive, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-03.pdf>. This memorandum of conversation noted that President Nixon met with the Pakistani President Agha Mohammad Yahya on October 25, 1970. During their meeting, Nixon stated that it was "essential" that the United States "open relations with China," and asked President Yahya to convey this to the Chinese. See also Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, "Kissinger to Nixon, 'My Conversation with President Ceausescu, Tuesday, October 27,' with memcon attached, 31 October 1970, Top Secret/Sensitive," The National Security Archive, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-04.pdf>. Kissinger met with Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu on October 27, 1970, and "relayed to him" that Nixon's desire for Kissinger to "reiterate" the U.S. interests in "establishing political and diplomatic communication with the People's Republic of China.

<sup>26</sup> Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, "Kissinger to Nixon, 'Chinese Communist Initiative,' c. 10 December 1970, enclosing draft Note Verbal and message from Zhou Enlai, as conveyed by Hilaly, with comments by Yahya, Top Secret/Sensitive," The National Security Archive, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-06.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972*, 144-145. The Chinese had been looking to renew conversations with the Americans, and Lei was prepared for the meeting. He had been instructed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to "take a closer look at the

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development of Sino-American relations, especially the signs of change in U.S. policy, and to report back on anything significant.”

<sup>28</sup> “U.S. Strategy in Current Sino-U.S. Talks,” January 21, 1970, U.S. Department of State, Digital National Security Archive, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Nixon, “First Report to the Congress of the United States on Foreign Policy for the 1970s, February 18, 1970,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 122.

<sup>30</sup> Lei Yang, as quoted in Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*, 147.

<sup>31</sup> Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Nixon, as quoted in Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Nixon, “Second Annual Report to Congress on United States Foreign Policy, February 25, 1971,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 277.

<sup>34</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 570.

<sup>35</sup> Zhou Enlai, Letter to the President Richard Nixon, as quoted in Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*, 154.

<sup>36</sup> Response from Richard Nixon to Zhou Enlai, as quoted in Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*, 155.

<sup>37</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 46-47.

<sup>38</sup> Richard M. Nixon, as quoted in Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, 571.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 141.

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<sup>40</sup> David Rudenstein, *The Day the Presses Stopped: A History of the Pentagon Papers Case* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Graubard, *Command of Office: How War, Secrecy, and Deception Transformed the Presidency from Theodore Roosevelt to George Bush* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 395. See also *N. Y. Times Co. v. United States*, 403 U.S. 713 (Supreme Court of the United States, 1971).

<sup>42</sup> See Marjorie Hunter, “Kennedy Asks U.S. Data,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1971; *New York Times*, “Rally in Prospect Park Asks That All Ages Protest War,” June 21, 1971; and John Herbers, “Nixon Will Give Secret Study to Congress,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Nixon, “Remarks to Midwestern News Media Executives Attending a Briefing on Domestic Policy in Kansas City, Missouri, July 6, 1971,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 806.

<sup>44</sup> Nixon, “Remarks to Midwestern News Media Executives Attending a Briefing on Domestic Policy in Kansas City, Missouri, July 6, 1971,” 806.

<sup>45</sup> Graubard, *Command of Office: How War, Secrecy, and Deception Transformed the Presidency from Theodore Roosevelt to George Bush*, 396. Graubard argued that Nixon and Kissinger “greatly exaggerated the benefits likely to be realized” from engagement with communist nations.

<sup>46</sup> Nixon, “Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation To Visit the People’s Republic of China, July 15, 1971,” 819.

<sup>47</sup> Nixon, “Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation To Visit the People’s Republic of China, July 15, 1971,” 819-820.

<sup>48</sup> Nixon, “Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation To Visit the People’s Republic of China, July 15, 1971,” 820.

<sup>49</sup> Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman, “Realism and Rhetoric in International Relations,” in *Post-Realism: The Rhetorical Turn in International Relations*, ed. Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996), 10.

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<sup>50</sup> Beer and Hariman, "Realism and Rhetoric in International Relations," 5.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 44. Hariman maintained that the "greatest advantage for the realist comes from constraining the wide array of public discourse."

<sup>52</sup> Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, 582.

<sup>53</sup> Philip Warden, "Called Astute Political Move," *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1971.

<sup>54</sup> John W. Finney, "Support is Bipartisan," *New York Times*, July 16, 1971.

<sup>55</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, "Mr. Nixon Accepts—With Hope," July 17, 1971.

<sup>56</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff, "The Evolution of a Diplomatic Surprise: Richard M. Nixon's Rhetoric on China, 1952-July 15, 1971," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 49-50.

<sup>57</sup> In the "Kitchen Debate" held at the American National Exhibition during then-Vice President Nixon's visit to Moscow. Nixon bluntly informed Communist leader Nikita Khrushchev and his home nation that the United States had a better quality of life than the Soviet Union. Although the original video tape recording of this exchange is lost, the most complete transcript exists in Richard Nixon, *Nixon: Speeches, Writings, Documents*, ed. Rick Perlstein (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 88-96.

<sup>58</sup> Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Aldo Beckman, "Mr. Nixon Goes to China: A \$10,000,000 Show," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1972.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Times*, "TV Networks to Show Nixon's Arrival Live," February 20, 1972.

<sup>61</sup> John J. O'Connor, "TV: Camera in Peking Shows Affairs of State," *New York Times*, February 22, 1972.

<sup>62</sup> Michelle Murray Yang, "President Nixon's Speeches and Toasts during His 1972 Trip to China: A Study in Diplomatic Rhetoric," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14 (2011): 3.

<sup>63</sup> Yang, "President Nixon's Speeches and Toasts during His 1972 Trip to China: A Study in Diplomatic Rhetoric," 6.

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<sup>64</sup> Nixon, "Remarks on Departure From the White House for a State Visit to the People's Republic of China, February 17, 1972," 367.

<sup>65</sup> Nixon, "Remarks on Departure From the White House for a State Visit to the People's Republic of China, February 17, 1972," 367.

<sup>66</sup> Nixon, "Remarks on Departure From the White House for a State Visit to the People's Republic of China, February 17, 1972," 367.

<sup>67</sup> Nixon, "Exchange With Reporters on the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," 370-371.

<sup>68</sup> Nixon, "Exchange With Reporters at the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, February 24, 1972," 372.

<sup>69</sup> Nixon, "Exchange With Reporters at the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, February 24, 1972," 372.

<sup>70</sup> Maurine Hoffman Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 117.

<sup>71</sup> "Nixon's Great Leap into China," *Life*, March 3 1972, 10.

<sup>72</sup> As quoted in Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, 627.

<sup>73</sup> "Pat Nixon on Her Own Home Ground," *Life*, August 25, 1972, 30.

<sup>74</sup> "Mrs. Nixon Tours Peking Hotel Kitchen," *New York Times*, February 22, 1972.

<sup>75</sup> Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, 626.

<sup>76</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 95.

<sup>77</sup> Robert L. Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of the Cold War 'Idealists'," *Communication Monographs* 54 (1987): 166.

<sup>78</sup> Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters on the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," 370.

<sup>79</sup> Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters on the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," 371.

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<sup>80</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," 373.

<sup>81</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," 373-374.

<sup>82</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," 374.

<sup>83</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Chairman Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at a Banquet in Shanghai, February 27, 1972," 380.

<sup>84</sup> Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," 381.

<sup>85</sup> Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," 381-382.

<sup>86</sup> Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 1972," 376-379.

<sup>87</sup> Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," 382.

<sup>88</sup> *New York Times*, "Text of U.S.-Chinese Communiqué," February 28, 1972.

<sup>89</sup> Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 1972," 376.

<sup>90</sup> Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 1972," 377.

<sup>91</sup> Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 1972," 378.

<sup>92</sup> Nixon, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 1972," 378-379.

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<sup>93</sup> Robert L. Ivie, *Democracy and America's War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 8.

<sup>94</sup> Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," 382.

<sup>95</sup> Max Frankel, "Behind the Cold Print: Despite Modest China Communiqué, Journey was a Remarkable Event," *New York Times*, February 29, 1972.

<sup>96</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, "Yes, It Was Worth It," February 29, 1972.

<sup>97</sup> Beer and Hariman, "Realism and Rhetoric in International Relations," 3.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, June 1, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 660.

<sup>99</sup> Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, June 1, 1972," 661.

<sup>100</sup> Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, June 1, 1972," 661-662.

<sup>101</sup> Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente, 1950-1991* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 115. The ABM Treaty was a five-year agreement that restricted both nations to two anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, froze the development of launching facilities for intercontinental missiles (ICBMs), and set limits on the development of nuclear launching systems abroad submarines.

<sup>102</sup> Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972*, 209.

<sup>103</sup> Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, June 1, 1972," 663.

<sup>104</sup> Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland, June 1, 1972," 665.

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<sup>105</sup> Louis Liebovich, *Nixon, Watergate, and the Press: A Historical Retrospective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 41; Stanley A. Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon* (New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1992), 79-81.

<sup>106</sup> Jerald A. Combs, *The History of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 219.

<sup>107</sup> Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon*, 548.



## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

In 1943, before the end of World War II and the dawn of the Cold War, the great public intellectual Walter Lippmann was already writing about the need to strategically rethink U.S. national security policy. In *Shield of the Republic*, Lippmann noted that the “true end” of a foreign policy was to “provide for the security of the nation in peace *and* in war.” He also argued that a nation could have true security only when it did not have to “sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war” and was able, “if challenged, to maintain them by war.”<sup>1</sup> The Cold War epitomized Lippmann’s attitude toward national security. As the United States became a superpower and the leader of the free world, maintaining the peace while communicating the nation’s willingness to defend its interests—by force if necessary—became crucial to U.S. foreign policy. Just a few years after Lippmann wrote *Shield of the Republic*, President Harry S. Truman inaugurated a new era in U.S. foreign policy in which the president’s communication of his willingness to uphold national security became an even more essential component of the chief executive’s duties.

The meaning of “national security,” however, did not remain fixed throughout the Cold War. Writing in 1976 for *The Yale Law Journal*, Robert C. Post summarized the evolution of national security practices after the 1947 National Security Act. Post argued that the “phrase” national security “emerged” during the first three decades of

the Cold War, and referred to the ability to “forestall any attack,” a task potentially implicating “the entire resources of the nation—not only its intelligence apparatus, but its scientific, industrial, and economic capabilities.”<sup>2</sup> Yet this supposedly common understanding left vast openings for interpretation, as the phrase “national security” was “recognized ... as a notoriously ambiguous and ill-defined phrase.”<sup>3</sup> These openings allowed presidents flexibility in how they rhetorically constituted “national security,” and that flexibility invites rhetorical analysis.

In this dissertation, I have shown how four presidents of the United States defined and redefined the concept of “national security” in different ways throughout the Cold War. Each president’s characterization of national security both shaped and reflected the evolving foreign and domestic policies of the United States, and those characterizations in turn affected the public’s sense of what it meant to be secure. Over three decades of Cold War, Harry S. Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Richard Nixon each delivered major speeches that helped to transform the very meaning of national security, not just by announcing new policies but also by a variety of rhetorical choices they made in talking about the subject. From the basic philosophy or attitude toward our enemies behind their conception of national security to the specific words or metaphors they used to talk about the subject, all of these presidents made rhetorical choices with significant implications for how the U.S. public and the world understood the nation’s defense and foreign policy commitments.

As the first Cold War president, Harry S. Truman constituted U.S. national security as a global concern rather than a defensive strategy in his Truman Doctrine speech.<sup>4</sup> Truman argued that the United States had a responsibility to embrace new obligations in the postwar world, and specifically to protect struggling democracies in Western Europe. Challenging the tradition of U.S. isolationism, Truman used urgent language to depict the situation in Greece and Turkey as a “crisis,” and he portrayed that faraway conflict as an imminent threat to the national security of the United States. He also suggested that national security depended on more than military might, as he called for economic and technical aid to struggling democracies in Europe. Grounded in a rhetoric of American exceptionalism, Truman’s national security rhetoric characterized the United States as fundamentally opposed to the communist ideology of its former wartime ally, the Soviet Union, and articulated a role for the United States to protect democracy around the globe. This role as the leader of the free world in an effort to “contain” communism was accompanied by massive economic investments in European democratic governments under the Marshall Plan. The foreign policy of containment expanded as the Truman administration worked to contain communism not only in Europe, but around the world. Truman’s doctrine was tested most seriously by a difficult and protracted military conflict on the Korean peninsula—an undeclared war that left Truman’s national security strategy vulnerable to criticism from Republican presidential challenger Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Eisenhower's transformation of national security began during the 1952 presidential campaign, as the former military General touted his foreign policy experience and criticized the Truman administration for the stalemate in Korea. Rather than contain communism, Eisenhower advocated a "New Look" in U.S. foreign policy, drawn up largely by his top foreign policy advisor, John Foster Dulles. The New Look relied upon a build-up of atomic weapons to deter Soviet aggression, and it envisioned "rolling back" and eventually defeating communism through economic and political means. It also rested on faith in the ability of the United States, through more aggressive propaganda, to win the "war of ideas."<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower laid the groundwork for this transformation of national security rhetoric in his "Age of Peril" speech, in which he portrayed communism as a threat to America's "spiritual values" and warned of a prolonged "age of peril" during which the United States would fight the struggle between communism and the free world on a number of fronts.<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower argued that continued reliance on conventional military forces would only bankrupt the United States in a prolonged Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union. Calling for a more frugal national security strategy, he proposed a more cost effective approach to national security: a reliance on "air power" and, by implication, faith in the U.S. technological advantage in developing more powerful weapons.<sup>7</sup> It was that very reliance on more advanced technologies that led to the rapid growth of the "military-industrial complex," which Eisenhower would caution against in his Farewell Address.<sup>8</sup>

Like Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy also based much of his 1960 presidential campaign on a foreign policy critique. Kennedy condemned Eisenhower's national security strategies as responsible for creating a serious threat to U.S. national security: an alleged "missile gap" between the Soviet Union and the United States. Instead of waiting out the Cold War and defeating the Soviets in a war of ideas, Kennedy's national security rhetoric refocused attention on the more immediate threats posed by communism. In his "Inaugural Address," Kennedy depicted a dark, dangerous world where the United States was called upon to fight a "long twilight struggle" against communism.<sup>9</sup> Invoking America's revolutionary heritage, Kennedy asked his fellow Americans to sacrifice to defend liberty and freedom wherever it might be threatened. That commitment contributed to costly military ventures in Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere around the world. Even as the president called to begin the quest for peace anew, Kennedy's Inaugural Address marked a significant escalation in Cold War rhetoric.

One of the more drastic turning points in the national security rhetoric of the Cold War came with Richard M. Nixon's efforts to establish more cordial relations with communist China. Known as a strong anticommunist, Nixon turned away from the apocalyptic rhetoric of the early Cold War and recast China as a worthy adversary—perhaps even a global partner someday—instead of an evil enemy. As president, Nixon embraced a "realist" philosophy of foreign policy that focused upon areas of potential cooperation between the communist and the free world in the pursuit of their mutual self-interests. By this realist logic, it would be more beneficial

for communist nations and the United States to peacefully coexist than continue a costly ideological struggle that already had resulted in several military conflicts. During his presidential trip to China, Nixon rhetorically transformed public understandings of the Chinese by portraying them as a worthy member of the community of nations.<sup>10</sup> Unlike his predecessors, Nixon did not champion the spread of democracy as a national security goal, but instead called for diplomatic and trade agreements that would encourage all nations—communist and free alike—to avoid international conflict. During his time as president, Nixon shifted the focus of the national security debate from ideological stalemate to political and economic cooperation. Communists would remain our ideological rivals, Nixon suggested, but they did not need to be viewed as mortal enemies.

Each of the presidents studied in this project tried to put his own stamp on the rhetoric of national security. At one level, the rhetoric of national security remained consistent across time: all of these presidents pledged to do everything necessary to protect the U.S. homeland against current and future threats. Yet each of the presidents relied upon different rhetorical and political means to advance that purpose, and each sought to persuade the public to accept his framing of national security and the policies it implied. As my analysis shows, there were significant continuities and differences among these presidents in at least three major areas: the naming and framing of the threats to U.S. national security, the electoral politics of national security, and the scope or reach of U.S. national security concerns.

### **Naming and Framing the National Security Threat**

As the most visible public advocate in identifying and characterizing threats to the nation, the president plays a major role in defining the “enemies” of the United States. Rhetorical critic Jeremy Engels has argued that politics essentially “boils down to a series of practical rhetorical acts in which the enemy is named.”<sup>11</sup> In effect, Engels argues, a nation defines itself in terms of who is—and who is not—its “enemy,” both in domestic and foreign affairs. Who constitutes “the enemy” is thus an important “political question, perhaps *the* political question,” for anybody aspiring to lead the nation.<sup>12</sup> It is hardly surprising that identification and characterization of “the enemy” plays an important role in the rhetoric of national security. What may be more surprising is how differently various Cold War presidents defined the United States’s Cold War “enemy,” and with each new definition of the enemy came a new national security strategy for meeting the threat.

Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy all depicted communism as the primary threat to the United States. Yet Truman, despite being often characterized a “plain-speaking” communicator, described the “enemy” vaguely. He referred to the “terrorist activities” that threatened Greece and Turkey without specifically accusing the Soviet Union of inspiring or orchestrating those activities. For Truman, the “enemies” were “Communists,” but he failed to label them as Soviets.<sup>13</sup> Still, his audience of Congress and U.S. citizens would have been aware that Truman’s vague references pointed to the Soviet Union. Thus, even though Truman did not name the Soviets

directly, his references pointed to the spread of Soviet-allied, communist nations as the primary threat to U.S. national security, and worked to “contain” that threat.

Six years later, Eisenhower more directly criticized the Soviet Union, calling that nation’s economic warfare against the United States a form of “deliberately planned Communist aggression” and an essential component of “Soviet policy.”<sup>14</sup> And he proposed not just to help struggling democracies caught in the middle of the Cold War competition, but to confront the Soviets directly and, after a long struggle, to prevail in what he characterized as a war of ideas. In Eisenhower’s rhetoric of national security, the Soviet Union was a relentless ideological enemy of the United States, one bent on the complete destruction of the nation’s most cherished principles and its way of life. It was not enough to just “contain” such an enemy, Eisenhower argued. It needed to be defeated and its victims “liberated” from its dominance.

Kennedy returned to more veiled criticisms of the Soviets in his Inaugural Address. Unlike Eisenhower, however, Kennedy saw the spread of communism as an imminent threat to the United States. There could be no waiting out the communists behind a shield of nuclear deterrence. The threat to U.S. national security was “very different now,” Kennedy warned, because the proliferation of atomic weapons meant that nations now held in their “mortal hands” the ability to “abolish all forms . . . of human life.”<sup>15</sup> Kennedy’s descriptions of the dark, dangerous world of the atomic age suggested that the global communist conspiracy, led by the Soviet Union, posed a more immediate threat to the “survival and success of liberty” than Eisenhower had suggested.<sup>16</sup> And that urgency would be manifested soon after Kennedy took office,



as he authorized actions to fight back against communist nations, including the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, the brinkmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and a deeper involvement in the war in Vietnam.

Thus, the first three presidents of the Cold War era painted Soviet communism as an implacable foe of the United States and of the ideals the United States represented in world affairs. In contrast, Nixon dramatically changed course by transforming Cold War enemies into adversaries or rivals and by suggesting that nations with different ideologies could still work together in foreign affairs, allowing “history rather than the battlefield” to be “the judge of their different ideas.”<sup>17</sup> Rather than see ideological differences as insurmountable, Nixon called for an “open world,” with no “walls of any kind between peoples.”<sup>18</sup> In a toast to Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, for example, Nixon remarked that despite their lack of “common beliefs,” the United States and communist nations like China shared “common interests” and “common hopes,” and that people “with different systems and different values” could “live together in peace, respecting one another while disagreeing with one another.”<sup>19</sup> By suggesting that the United States and communist nations could peacefully coexist, Nixon opened the door to negotiation and compromise between the United States and the communist world.

Nixon’s characterization of communists as rivals or adversaries rather than enemies dramatically changed the tone of Cold War rhetoric. And later presidents followed in his footsteps by cultivating more cordial relationships with communist nations, even as they continued to criticize those nations’s philosophies and

behaviors. Jimmy Carter, for example, complained about violations of “human rights” in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the communist world,<sup>20</sup> but he did not demonize communists *as* communists, like the early Cold War presidents. Ronald Reagan labeled the Soviet Union an “evil empire” in a famous 1983 speech before the National Association of Evangelicals,<sup>21</sup> but like Nixon, he still pursued negotiations with the Soviets, emphasizing their common interests in reducing nuclear arms and promoting peace. Despite his sometime harsh rhetoric, Reagan established good personal relationships with communist leaders, particularly Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and like Nixon, Reagan actually seemed to benefit from his past reputation as one who had stood up to the communists. Protected from suspicions back home that he might be too “soft” on communism, Reagan was able to negotiate the first treaty in history to actually reduce the nuclear stockpiles of the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

During the recent War on Terror,<sup>23</sup> the rhetoric of national security has, in some measure at least, returned to early Cold War themes about evil enemies and a prolonged struggle with no hope of negotiation or compromise. Even nations that merely harbor terrorists have been denounced as enemies of the United States in this new global struggle. The “war on terror,” declared by George W. Bush in his September 20, 2001 speech to Congress, began “with Al Qaida, but it does not end there,” and it “will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”<sup>24</sup> Like early Cold War rhetoric, the rhetoric of the War on Terror seems to hold out little hope for a quick or decisive end to the war in the

foreseeable future. Nor do negotiations hold out hope that the United States can peacefully co-exist with these new enemies of freedom. The only option for victory—and enduring security—lies in the complete destruction of the terrorists, in what rhetorical critic Robert L. Ivie has criticized as a “spiral of reciprocal violence.”<sup>25</sup> In the increasingly interconnected and complex world of twenty-first century global politics, the War on Terror portends a long and costly conflict with a shadowy enemy and the governments supposedly sympathetic to their cause—a war that may prove even longer and costlier than the “long twilight struggle” against communism during the Cold War.

### **National Security and U.S. Electoral Politics**

One of the dilemmas of U.S. national security rhetoric is that foreign policy issues often get caught up in presidential politics. Whether challenging an incumbent or running for reelection, presidential candidates tend to think that they need to outdo the opposition in talking tough about foreign policy.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, those strong campaign statements can come back to haunt a president, locking the nation into foreign policies that preclude constructive dialogue and negotiated compromise.

When a presidential candidate runs as the “challenger,” the tendency is to attack or criticize the record of the incumbent.<sup>27</sup> Yet as political consultant and author Michael A. Cohen has written, “Americans want something to cast their ballot *for*, as opposed to simply finding something to vote *against*.”<sup>28</sup> Simply criticizing a sitting

politician is usually not enough. Thus, “successful challengers,” as communication scholar Roderick P. Hart has explained, need to fashion “a clear, alternative vision” to the policies of a sitting president and his party.<sup>29</sup> In the realm of national security, those alternatives are rarely calls for compromise or retreat. To the contrary, more hard-line foreign policy stances seem to play better at the ballot box, and thus the rhetoric of national security on the campaign trail tends to be *more* belligerent than what presidents might say after the election.

During the early Cold War, Eisenhower and Kennedy won election in part because they exploited fears that the communists might gain some advantage over the United States. Both advocated more aggressive and far-reaching efforts to secure the nation, including economic and propaganda initiatives as well as military build-ups. Eisenhower, who had supported Truman’s national security policies when he was a high-ranking general in the U.S. Army, campaigned for the White House by accusing Truman of being soft on communism. Early in his campaign, as Cohen has noted, Eisenhower’s positions on foreign policy were “relatively moderate,” but as “the campaign heated up, Eisenhower could tell where the political winds were blowing, and his words began to take a similarly heated tone.” Reprimanding Truman and the Democrats “for their stewardship of American foreign policy,”<sup>30</sup> Eisenhower complained about the President’s handling of the Korean War, insisting that Truman had acted “awkwardly and fearfully” rather than “with sure purpose and firm will.”<sup>31</sup> Once elected, of course, Eisenhower had to follow through on his pledge to do more about the communists in Korea and elsewhere, and the result was a massive buildup

of U.S. air power and atomic weapons. In addition, the Eisenhower administration launched a massive propaganda campaign designed to convince both foreign and domestic audiences that this massive build-up—the so-called “New Look” in U.S. defense policy—was not only more economical but designed to promote peace rather than war.<sup>32</sup>

Just as Eisenhower had criticized Truman, Kennedy criticized Eisenhower’s national security strategy during the 1960 campaign, suggesting it had weakened U.S. national security. Blaming Eisenhower for an alleged “missile gap” between the United States and the Soviets, Kennedy advocated a stronger, more flexible national defense strategy, promising not only to close the “missile gap” but also to strengthen U.S. conventional military forces.<sup>33</sup> In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy challenged U.S. citizens to assume a greater burden for defending freedom around the world, calling them forth with a metaphorical “trumpet summons” to “bear the burden” of a “long twilight struggle” against the communists.<sup>34</sup> Once in office, Kennedy followed through on this promise to defend freedom more aggressively by pumping more than \$7 billion into new defense spending in just the spring and summer of 1961.<sup>35</sup> Kennedy’s rhetoric of national security was thus more than just tough campaign talk; it foretold a massive increase in defense spending and a new willingness to use covert and military means to fight communism in Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere around the world.

During presidential campaigns, challengers expectedly criticize incumbents. But when those campaigns focus on foreign policy and national security, these

criticisms almost always focus on the “weakness” of the incumbent’s foreign policies, and the challengers invariably seem to promise more “aggressive” diplomatic and military policies. Unfortunately, those sorts of campaign statements may commit those challengers to ill-advised policies once elected, and during the Cold War such campaign rhetoric clearly contributed to a rise in tensions. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy called for a tougher attitude toward the Soviets, and both carried through on those promises with more aggressive anticommunist policies. Burdened with the political necessity of convincing voters that they had some “new” approach—a New Look or a New Frontier—both Eisenhower and Kennedy contributed to an escalation of Cold War rhetoric.

Again, Nixon proved the exception to the rule that presidential challengers tend to talk “tougher” than incumbents. While Nixon did attack the Democrats’s handling of the war in Vietnam, he did not try to outdo the Democrats with harsh anticommunist rhetoric. Indeed, as a presidential candidate in 1968, Nixon articulated a “realist” philosophy of foreign policy that emphasized interests over ideology and foreshadowed his attempts, as president, to build more cooperative relationships between the United States and communist nations. As president, Nixon followed through on these promises by visiting the People’s Republic of China in 1972 and by fostering new diplomatic relations with Soviet premiere Leonid Brezhnev, including an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty that limited the development of short-range nuclear missile systems.<sup>36</sup> Nixon’s *ethos* as a strong anticommunist politician in the past afforded him the opportunity as president to negotiate with communists while not

being accused by hard-liners of being “soft” on communism. Nixon framed his policy of *détente*—the relaxing of tensions—as a bold initiative premised on the pursuit of mutual self-interest in the free and communist worlds. Thus, attacking a political opponent as “soft” on national security is not a necessary or inevitable rhetorical strategy in campaign rhetoric. With the right credentials and a more “realist” philosophy, Nixon was able to reframe the rhetoric of national security as a rhetoric of cooperation and peace.

### **The Scope of National Security Rhetoric**

During the Cold War, the scope of presidential national security rhetoric expanded beyond its traditional focus on homeland defense to encompass economic arguments, socio-political initiatives, and expansionist military doctrines. The presidents of the early Cold War transformed the isolationist and hemispheric foreign policies of the United States into proactive interventions around the globe under the auspices of protecting freedom and democracy. As a result, the Cold War presidents significantly broadened the scope of national security rhetoric.

The links between “presidential rhetoric and its relationship to the economy,” as noted by rhetorical critic Davis W. Houck, have remained relatively unexplored “by rhetoricians, economists, historians, political scientists, or biographers.”<sup>37</sup> When scholars do talk about economic rhetoric, they tend to focus on domestic economic crises, not the role of economic arguments in foreign policy debates.<sup>38</sup> All four

presidents studied here developed strong rhetorical linkages between national security and the state of the economy, both at home and abroad. The national security rhetorics of the first and last presidents examined in this study—Truman and Nixon—placed heavy emphasis on the connections between the global economy and U.S. national security, while Eisenhower and Kennedy emphasized the importance of a strong domestic economy to the security of the nation.

For Truman, the economic stability of Europe was central to his strategy of containing communist expansionism. In the Truman Doctrine speech, he concentrated his appeals on “financial and economic assistance” for the nations of Greece and Turkey, suggesting that “experienced American administrators, economists and technicians” could aid Greece in creating “a stable and self-sustaining economy.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, a sound economy was a secure economy, for it was presumed that poverty and economic distress fueled the spread of communism. After the Truman Doctrine speech, the administration’s European Economic Recovery Program, otherwise known as the Marshall Plan, provided more than \$13 billion to help rebuild industry and agriculture in Europe.<sup>40</sup> These efforts prioritized capitalist economic strength as the crucial barrier that would contain the spread of the communist menace, keeping it bottled up behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>41</sup>

Eisenhower’s national security rhetoric also emphasized economic concerns, but he focused more on the long-term health of the U.S. economy. Arguing that part of the Soviet plan was to bankrupt the United States by forcing it to squander its wealth in a long and costly arms race, Eisenhower justified his New Look defense



policies by arguing that it was cheaper over the long run—and thus more economically sound—to rely upon air power and technologically advanced weaponry, including atomic weapons, to deter Soviet aggression. In Eisenhower's view, a conventional military response to the "Age of Peril" was an economic trap: sustaining a conventional military deterrent to Soviet aggression would eventually bankrupt the nation. Eisenhower rejected the idea that military spending was a tool for promoting economic growth and prosperity. Instead, his plan rested upon the technological superiority and greater industrial capacity of the United States—the very "military-industrial complex" that he would later warn against in his Farewell Address.<sup>42</sup>

Kennedy's conception of national security likewise rested upon faith in the U.S. economic and technological superiority, but he was more aggressive than Eisenhower in building up both a nuclear deterrent and conventional military forces. Complaining about an alleged "missile gap" during his campaign for the presidency, Kennedy spent heavily on new weapons during his short presidency, including not only new nuclear missiles and nuclear submarines but also conventional military weapons. For Kennedy, the military-industrial complex benefitted national security. Government support of the economy through defense spending would promote economic strength and, thus, national security. From \$46 billion in Eisenhower's last year in office, defense spending grew to \$54 billion in 1963—Kennedy's last year in office.<sup>43</sup> Eisenhower and Kennedy had much in common when it came to emphasizing economic components of national security. Their differing approaches to

*how* the economy could promote security, however, reflect the malleability of the concept of national security.

Nixon's rhetoric of national security also emphasized the importance of economic concerns, but his emphasis was on trade as a deterrent to war. As he articulated in his 1969 "Inaugural Address," the United States needed to "manage a modern economy to assure its continued growth."<sup>44</sup> Managing the economy was a critical component of national security, Nixon later explained, because "economic power" would become "the key to other kinds of power" and would dictate "the future of the world" in the "last third of the century."<sup>45</sup> Like presidents who came before him, Nixon supported robust trade with democratic allies, but he also argued that the United States could promote both its economic and security interests by creating economic partnerships with communist nations like China and the Soviet Union. As Nixon stated to Congress in 1972, when the "largest economies in the world start trading with each other on a much larger scale," the stakes that those nations "have in peace will increase" because trade, much more than armed conflict, would be in all nations's interests.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to elaborating the economic implications of national security, the presidents of the Cold War era also expanded the military reach of the concept to include more proactive, overseas interventions. Truman not only provided economic aid to Greece and Turkey, he also authorized U.S. military "advisors" to be stationed in a number of foreign nations in the first few years of the Cold War. Later in his presidency, he authorized the deployment of nearly half a million U.S. military

personnel to Korea, first just to “advise” United Nations troops, and then fight a war the administration deemed “limited” but that actually proved quite costly.<sup>47</sup> The term “limited war” became a part of the Cold War lexicon, describing a series of U.S. interventions abroad that began with the deployment of U.S. advisors but almost inevitably led to more direct military involvements. From Eisenhower’s Operation Blue Bat in Lebanon in 1958 to the growing quagmire in Vietnam, the idea that that U.S. national security required not only defense of the homeland but interventions abroad came to define the Cold War policies of all the presidents examined in this study.<sup>48</sup>

The rhetoric of national security during the Cold War also continued to stress nuclear deterrence and the doctrine of massive retaliation. Eisenhower inaugurated this strain of national security rhetoric with his effort to create, in historian John Lewis Gaddis’s words, the “maximum possible deterrence of communism at the minimum possible cost.”<sup>49</sup> Yet the doctrines of nuclear deterrence and massive retaliation—a reliance upon what Dulles called the “punishing power” of nuclear weapons<sup>50</sup>—were embraced by subsequent presidents as well, along with a rhetoric of civil defense that, in retrospect, seemed almost delusional. In some respects, this was the most far-reaching development in the rhetoric of national security during the Cold War, as the advent of—and growing reliance upon—“the bomb” during this time affected virtually every aspect of U.S. foreign and domestic policy and even popular culture.<sup>51</sup>

The increasingly expansive conception of national security during this time did, of course, have its costs. As the Vietnam War dragged on and the nation was torn apart by antiwar protests, Richard Nixon—the rabid anticommunist of the 1950s—ironically became the peacemaker, beginning the gradual withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Vietnam that would be completed in 1973.<sup>52</sup> Nixon urged the nation to heed the lesson of Vietnam: that the Cold War could not be won by fighting “limited” but endless wars against communist nations. Instead, the United States would better promote its national security interests by learning to peacefully co-exist with the communists, building strategic alliances with the major communist powers that served the mutual interests of both sides in the Cold War.

Thus, the Cold War under Nixon again became what John Foster Dulles had called a “war of ideas”—a competition fought not on the battlefield but in the court of world opinion. Like Eisenhower, Nixon was a determined Cold Warrior, but he also was a foreign policy “realist,” persuaded by the war in Vietnam that the Cold War could not be won militarily but instead would have to be fought on political and economic fronts over a long period of time. After Vietnam, few in the U.S. public still thought it possible to “roll back” the Iron Curtain or “liberate” people living under communist control, as Dulles had envisioned. Few citizens were still naïve enough to think, as many did in Kennedy’s day, that the United States could win the “hearts and minds” of the world through altruistic programs like the Peace Corps.<sup>53</sup> But many in the public still viewed the Cold War as a defense of American “spiritual values and moral ideals,” as Eisenhower had put it, against communism.<sup>54</sup> Thus the Cold War’s

ideological components would persist even after Nixon, and later presidents would continue to define—and re-define—the concept of national security as circumstances changed.

### **The Legacy of the Cold War National Security Rhetoric**

Presidents possess the rhetorical power to define and expand the meaning of national security, but there are dangers in that power as well. National security, in its most literal and limited meaning, refers to protecting the nation. But as demonstrated in this study, Cold War presidents expanded the notion of national security well beyond homeland defense, and they often framed discussions of national security in a “crisis rhetoric” that exaggerated the urgency of the threat.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the public’s participation in national security debates is often stifled by the sensitivity and secrecy of information about U.S. foreign policy and the threats posed by other nations. Few citizens have access to the classified information behind some governmental decisions and policies, so they struggle to understand the issues, much less question the decisions of the president. When a president is talking about national security, he thus has a significant advantage over his potential critics in Congress and the mass media.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, U.S. presidents struggled with how to define national security interests in the post-Cold War era. George H.W. Bush proclaimed a “new world order” that would ensure democratic peace in speeches

before Congress and the United Nations, and Bill Clinton promised “a national security strategy of engagement and enlargement” to expand democracy.<sup>56</sup> But conflicts in Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, the former Yugoslavia, and Iraq suggested anything but a more peaceful era of spreading democracy.<sup>57</sup> The War on Terror has further clouded the meanings of “national security,” particularly with the reorganization of the U.S. national security apparatus under a new Department of Homeland Security. Future research might continue to investigate how definitions of national security have evolved since the end of the Cold War. Other research might consider the interplay between presidential national security rhetoric and voices of opposition—in Congress, in the media, and elsewhere. At any particular moment, as we have seen from this study, the president may define national security in terms that emphasize economic issues, military or economic interventions abroad, “homeland security” measures, or even covert operations or propaganda. All of these issues push the boundaries of what “national security” means, and therefore invite rhetorical analysis.

In recent years, it seems that presidential rhetorics of national security have been more frequently—and more vocally—challenged and debated. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, for example, the Bush administration appealed to national security to gain quick congressional approval for the USA PATRIOT Act, which authorized a variety of measures, including increased domestic surveillance, to aid law enforcement agencies in their fight against terrorism.<sup>58</sup> The official title of this controversial law—the **Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing**

**Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act**—itself speaks to the broader scope of national security in this new age of terrorism. But difficult questions remain: What qualifies as an *appropriate tool* in the fight against terrorism? And who is to say which “tools” are *required* in this new type of war? And how proactive can any nation be in *intercepting* or *obstructing* terrorism? Critics questioned the Bush administration’s expansion of surveillance measures, the power it granted to intelligence agencies, and—above all—its decision to take military action in Iraq and Afghanistan—all actions the Bush administration defended as necessary to protect U.S. national security.<sup>59</sup> The current debate over U.S. national security has been, as rhetorical critic Herbert W. Simons has written, a series of “verbal battles . . . over whose words are ‘mere rhetoric’ and whose were credible, over who said what when and with what motives, over what should have been said but wasn’t, and over meanings of politically sensitive words like *democracy*, *patriotism*, *terrorism*, and *torture*.”<sup>60</sup> In the final analysis, however, this most recent debate is really a continuation of the debate over “national security” examined in this study.

More recently, President Barack Obama reinvigorated the debate by questioning whether the intelligence-gathering measures authorized by the Bush administration in the War on Terror were consistent with American values. Speaking at the National Archives on May 21, 2009, Obama argued that the so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques,” employed to gain information from enemy combatants held at Guantanamo Bay, undermined the U.S. national security

strategy.<sup>61</sup> Arguing that the United States could keep itself “safe” only by enlisting “the power of our most fundamental values,” Obama labeled the techniques “torture” and declared them inconsistent with the nation’s history and principles, as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.<sup>62</sup> The United States should “not sacrifice our security for our values, nor sacrifice our values for our security,” Obama argued, but should instead create “a strong and durable” national security framework that would allow the United States to “fight terrorism while abiding by the rule of law.”<sup>63</sup> The best way to combat terrorism, he concluded, was to “stay true” to American values, forging “tough and durable approaches to terrorism that are anchored in our timeless ideals.”<sup>64</sup>

Not surprisingly, Obama’s criticism did not go unanswered. The very same day that Obama spoke at the National Archives former vice president Dick Cheney provided a spirited defense of his administration’s use of enhanced interrogation techniques. Speaking at the American Enterprise Institute, Cheney argued that such interrogations were essential to national security, for they allowed the government to obtain “information known only to the worst of the terrorists.” Suggesting that Obama was naïve about the national security threats facing the United States, Cheney argued that these “tough interrogations” of “hardened terrorists” were “legal, essential, justified, and the right thing to do.” They “prevented the violent death of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of innocent people,” Cheney asserted, and he warned that “in the fight against terrorism” a refusal to use such methods would leave the United States “exposed” to future threats. President Obama, Cheney concluded,



was pursuing a “political strategy, not a national security strategy” in criticizing the interrogations, and in doing so he was compromising the “lives and safety of the American people.”<sup>65</sup>

In these speeches, both Obama and Cheney claimed to be defending the national security of the United States. Yet they advocated diametrically opposed policies, illustrating once again the rhetorical malleability of the concept of national security. The “long twilight struggle” of the Cold War may be over, but the struggle to define U.S. national security will continue; indeed, it has been further complicated by the shadowy nature of the “enemies” in the War on Terror. The president, as the “Interpreter-in-Chief” of U.S. politics,<sup>66</sup> will continue to play a key role in defining U.S. national security interests. In an era of significant threats but less clearly defined enemies, the concept of “national security” continues to be politicized and rhetorically contested—perhaps more than ever before. The potential for and tensions in the rhetoric of national security will continue to engage presidents, the media, and citizens in an on-going struggle to define, interpret, and safeguard U.S. national security.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1943), 51.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. Post, “Note, National Security and the Amended Freedom of Information Act,” *The Yale Law Journal* 85 (1976): 410.

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<sup>3</sup> Post, “Note, National Security and the Amended Freedom of Information Act,” 408.

<sup>4</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 176-180.

<sup>5</sup> The “war of ideas” was Dulles’s term for the political and social initiatives aimed at liberating communist nations. See John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 249.

<sup>6</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 306-316.

<sup>7</sup> Eisenhower, “Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953,” 311.

<sup>8</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961*, vol. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1038.

<sup>9</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1961-1963*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Nixon, “Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation to Visit the People’s Republic of China, July 15, 1971,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 819-820; Richard Nixon, “Remarks on Departure from the White House for a State Visit to the People’s Republic of China, February 17, 1972,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 367-368; Richard Nixon, “Exchange with Reporters at the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing

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Office, 1973), 370-372; Richard Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters at the Tombs of the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty, February 24, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 372-373; Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 373-374; Richard Nixon, "Toast of the President and Chairman Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at a Banquet in Shanghai, February 27, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 379-380; Richard Nixon, "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning From the People's Republic of China, February 28, 1972," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 381-383.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Engels, "Friend or Foe? Naming the Enemy," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12 (2009): 40.

<sup>12</sup> Engels, "Friend or Foe?: Naming the Enemy," 55.

<sup>13</sup> Truman, "Special Message to Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," 177.

<sup>14</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 306-307.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 1.

<sup>17</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," 374.

<sup>18</sup> Nixon, "Exchange with Reporters at the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972," 371.

<sup>19</sup> Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking, February 25, 1972," 374.

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<sup>20</sup> See Mary E. Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 73. Stuckey argued that Carter's rhetoric prompted the development of <human rights> into an ideograph, a phrase connected to "key values deeply embedded in the American mythos." Stuckey concluded that Carter is largely responsible for introducing the term into national discourse and that it remains an important component of U.S. foreign policy rhetoric today.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989*, vol. 3, bk. 1, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984-1985), 364.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Reagan's commitment to democratic reform being tempered by his pragmatic desires for the Soviet Union and United States to work together, see John M. Jones and Robert C. Rowland, "Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate: Moral Clarity Tempered By Pragmatism," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 21-50. For more on the arms negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations at the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994); and Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev* (New York: Random House, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> The War on Terror has been referenced as the War on Terrorism and the Global War on Terror, and has recently been referred to by the Obama administration as the "Overseas Contingency Operations." See Scott Wilson and Al Kamen, "'Global War on Terror' is Given New Name," *Washington Post*, March 25, 2009, accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html>.

<sup>24</sup> George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, September 20, 2001," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2001-2005*, vol. 1, bk. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2002), 1141.

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<sup>25</sup> Robert L. Ivie, *Democracy and America's War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 137.

<sup>26</sup> Melvin Small, "Presidential Elections and the Cold War," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert D. Schulzinger (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 404-405.

<sup>27</sup> William L. Benoit, *Communication in Political Campaigns* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 36-37. Benoit writes that a primary way for candidates to increase favorability "is to attack or criticize the opponent(s). Stressing an opponent's undesirable attributes or policy missteps should reduce that opponent's desirability, particularly for voters who value the attribute or policy discussed in the attack."

<sup>28</sup> Michael A. Cohen, *Live From the Campaign Trail: The Greatest Presidential Campaign Speeches of the Twentieth Century and How They Shaped Modern America* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2008), 13, emphasis in original.

<sup>29</sup> Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good for Us*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 89.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, *Live From the Campaign Trail: The Greatest Presidential Campaign Speeches of the Twentieth Century and How They Shaped Modern America*, 233.

<sup>31</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, "I Will Go To Korea," in Cohen, *Live From the Campaign Trail: The Greatest Presidential Campaign Speeches of the Twentieth Century and How They Shaped Modern America*, 247.

<sup>32</sup> See J. Michael Hogan, "The Science of Cold War Strategy: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Eisenhower Administration's 'War of Words,'" in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 134-168; Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Militarizing America's Propaganda Program," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 95-133; and

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Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Christopher A. Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), 115.

<sup>34</sup> Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," 2.

<sup>35</sup> Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), 150.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of how the ABM Treaty fit into the Nixon administration's *détente* strategy, see B. K. Shrivastava, "American Perspectives on Détente," *International Studies* 13 (1974): 577-607. The 5-year agreement, entitled the "Interim Agreement on Some Measures Limiting Strategic Offensive Weapons," agreed that the United States and Soviet Union would not build any additional inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and limited the development of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The agreement was not a reduction in missiles, but rather a "freeze" on future development (585-586).

<sup>37</sup> Davis W. Houck, "Rhetoric as Currency: Herbert Hoover and the 1929 Stock Market Crash," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 160.

<sup>38</sup> See James Arnt Aune, "The Econo-Rhetorical Presidency," in *The Prospects of Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 46-68. Aune cites the work of Davis Houck and Amos Kiewe as the rare examples of studies of presidential economic rhetoric. After the economic devastation of World War II, the opening of U.S. markets abroad—and the economic alliances between free, democratic nations—became a critical part of the Eisenhower administration's plans to defeat and roll back communism in Eastern Europe. Recently, rhetorical critic Ned O'Gorman offered a more critical assessment of the Eisenhower administration's "rhetorical reconstruction of liberation as a political-economic adventure," arguing that Eisenhower orchestrated a fusing of foreign policy and economic rhetoric during the Cold War era. See Ned O'Gorman, "'The One Word the Kremlin Fears': C. D.

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Jackson, Cold War 'Liberation,' and American Political-Economic Adventurism," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12 (2009): 391.

<sup>39</sup> Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," 177-178.

<sup>40</sup> Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time When America Helped Save Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 127.

<sup>41</sup> Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time When America Helped Save Europe*, 332. Behrman has argued that the Marshall Plan also launched "America forward in its postwar incarnation as a modern superpower," establishing a foothold in Europe for American leadership and dominance during the Cold War.

<sup>42</sup> Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17, 1961," 1038.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, "John F. Kennedy and the World," in *Debating the Kennedy Presidency*, James N. Giglio and Stephen G. Rabe (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Nixon, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1969," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Nixon, "Remarks to Midwestern News Media Executives Attending a Briefing on Domestic Policy in Kansas City, Missouri, July 6, 1971," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 806.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969-1974*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 662.

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 358.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the Eisenhower Doctrine and the U.S. military in Lebanon, see Harry N. Howard, "The Regional Pacts and the Eisenhower Doctrine," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 85-94. In July of 1958, Eisenhower sent 15,000 U.S. military personnel to Lebanon to halt a potential communist takeover.

<sup>49</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), Kindle Edition, Chapter Six "Implementing the New Look."

<sup>50</sup> John Foster Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness." *Life*, May 19, 1953, 152.

<sup>51</sup> For an in-depth look at the policies and propaganda of civil defense under Eisenhower, see Guy Oakes, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> Under the "Vietnamization" plan, Nixon began replacing U.S. military forces with units from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnamese Army). From 1969 to 1973, Nixon reduced the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam from more than 500,000 to just a few thousand civilians and military personnel at the U.S. embassy. See A. J. Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), "Chronology" 674-676.

<sup>53</sup> Leroy Dorsey, "The Myth of War and Peace in Presidential Discourse: John F. Kennedy's 'New Frontier' Myth and the Peace Corps," *Southern Communication Journal* 62 (1996): 42-55. Dorsey argued that the Peace Corps was not merely an altruistic program designed to fight poverty in the developing world, but rather a propaganda campaign designed by the Kennedy administration to gain public support for the waging of "peace indefinitely" through a civilian program designed to meet the "unceasingly challenges" of the fight against communism (53).

<sup>54</sup> Eisenhower, "Radio Address to the American People on the National Security and Its Costs, May 19, 1953," 306.



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<sup>55</sup> For more on presidential crisis rhetoric, see Theodore Windt, “The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises: Repeating the Rhetorical Past,” in *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. Theodore Windt and Beth Ingold, (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1987), 125-134; Amos Kiewe, ed., *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Prager, 1994); Denise M. Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); and Denise M. Bostdorff, Martin Carcasson, James M. Farrell, Robert L. Ivie, Amos Kiewe, and Kathleen B. Smith, “Report of the National Task Force on Presidential Rhetoric in Times of Crisis,” in *Prospects of Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008) 355-378.

<sup>56</sup> For Bush’s foreign policy and “New World Order,” see George Bush, “Foreword,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, 1989-1993*, vol. 2, bk. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), v; George Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit, September 11, 1990,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, 1989-1993*, vol. 2, bk. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1218-1222; and George Bush, “Address Before the 45<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York, October 1, 1990,” *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, 1989-1993*, vol. 2, bk. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1330-1334. For more on Clinton’s early national security strategy, see William Jefferson Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 1995), accessed May 16, 2011, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/nss/nss-95.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> For more on Bush’s foreign policy rhetoric, see Rachel Martin Harlow, “Agency and Agent in George Bush’s Gulf War Rhetoric,” in *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst, 56-80 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006); Roy Joseph, “The New World Order: President Bush and the Post-Cold War Era,” in *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst, 81-101 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006); and

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Mary E. Stuckey, "Competing Foreign Policy Visions: Rhetorical Hybrids after the Cold War," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 59 (1995): 214-227. For more on Clinton's foreign policy rhetoric, see Jason A. Edwards, *Navigating the Post-Cold War World: President Clinton's Foreign Policy Rhetoric* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); Kathryn M. Olson, "Democratic Enlargement's Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms: An Analysis of Clinton's Use of a Post-Cold War Symbolic Frame to Justify Military Interventions," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2004): 307-340; and Stuckey, "Competing Foreign Policy Visions: Rhetorical Hybrids after the Cold War," 214-227.

<sup>58</sup> *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001*, Public Law 107-56, 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (October 26, 2001), accessed May 16, 2011, [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Bush argued that the "security of the world" required disarming Saddam Hussein, and so the United States military would invade Iraq if Saddam would disarm peacefully. George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation on Iraq, March 17, 2003," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2001-2005*, vol. 3, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 279. On March 19, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq.

<sup>60</sup> Herbert W. Simons, "From Post-9/11 Melodrama to Quagmire in Iraq: A Rhetorical History," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 183. Simons is primarily addressing the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but his observations could easily be applied to the decade of the War on Terrorism after September 11, 2001.

<sup>61</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration, May 20, 2009," *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2009-2013*, vol. 1, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 691.

<sup>62</sup> Obama, "Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration, May 20, 2009," 690.

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<sup>63</sup> Obama, “Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration, May 20, 2009,” 697-698.

<sup>64</sup> Obama, “Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration, May 20, 2009,” 698.

<sup>65</sup> Richard B. Cheney, “Remarks by Richard B. Cheney, Thursday, May 21, 2009,” The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, accessed May 16 2011, <http://www.aei.org/print?pub=speech&pubId=100050&authors=Richard%20B.%20Cheney>.

<sup>66</sup> See Mary E. Stuckey, *The President as Interpreter-In-Chief* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1991), 1. Stuckey argued that the president serves the role of “chief storyteller” for the nation, the “interpreter-in-chief,” as he tells us stories about ourselves, revealing who we are, what problems we face, and what solutions are possible.

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## VITA

### Sara Ann Mehlretter Drury

#### Education

Ph.D. Communication Arts and Sciences (2011)

The Pennsylvania State University

Dissertation: "The Long Twilight Struggle: Presidential Rhetoric, National Security, and the Cold War, 1945-1974"

M.A. Communication Arts and Sciences (2007)

The Pennsylvania State University

Thesis: "Catholic Pacifism in the United States: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Catholic Worker Movement"

B.A. Communication, B.A. Political Science (2005)

Boston College, *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa

#### Employment

ABD Research Associate, August 2010-present. The Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio.

Graduate Assistant, fall 2005-spring 2010. Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, The Pennsylvania State University.

#### Selected Publications

Mehlretter, Sara Ann. "Tim Kaine and the Rhetoric of Catholic Evangelism." In *What Democrats Talk about When They Talk about God*, edited by David Weiss, 177-192. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.

Mehlretter, Sara Ann. "Dorothy Day, the Catholic Workers, and Moderation in Protest during the Vietnam War." *Journal of Communication & Religion* 32 (2009): 1-32. Lead essay.

#### Awards and Fellowships

Top Paper in American Studies. "Walter Lippmann and the Push for a Democratic Foreign Policy in the Early Cold War." National Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, California, November 2010.

Carroll C. Arnold Award for Scholarly Excellence. Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, The Pennsylvania State University, 2009.

Center for Democratic Deliberation Dissertation Fellowship. The Pennsylvania State University, 2009-2010 (\$1500 research fund, semester teaching release).