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THE IMPACT OF THE COLD WAR AND THE SECOND RED SCARE ON THE 1952
AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BY

DANA JOHNS

THESIS APPROVED:



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THE IMPACT OF THE COLD WAR AND THE SECOND RED SCARE ON THE 1952
AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BY

DANA JOHNS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1952, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson II faced off in a heated Presidential Election. The reputations of the two men followed them throughout the campaign cycle. Eisenhower was perceived as the general who defeated the Germans on the European front of WWII and was also skilled in managing the press. Stevenson was a relative unknown on the national stage, but was perceived as an intellectual who helped to reform the State Government of Illinois, becoming a favorite candidate of the Democratic Party. The fear of the spread of communism, the looming threat of another global war, and public perception all played a role in the outcome of the 1952 Election, despite both candidates holding similar views, so in the end General Eisenhower prevailed. The General's victory can be largely attributed to this military record and determination to end the Korean War quickly, while Stevenson held similar views to those of Eisenhower but varied in his strategies. Eisenhower was viewed as a strong and trustworthy leader, making him the most popular candidate among the nervous and fearful American electorate in 1952.

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Introduction

From the time of the Great Depression, Democrats had occupied the White House. Republican President Herbert Hoover won election in 1928, following years of economic success and growth under Republican leadership. However, when the stock market crashed shortly after his election, launching the Great Depression, Americans began to turn away from the Republican Party. Hoover was perceived by much of the American population to be the leader who allowed the market to crash and then did very little to resolve the issue and help the everyday American. In 1932, the majority of the American voters turned to Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt to help them. They believed that the Republicans were not the party to bring them out of the Depression and that FDR may be the solution. The majority of voters were proven correct, as FDR was elected to the presidency four times, occupying the White House as the Depression ended and WWII began. Shortly after his final election, FDR passed away, leaving his Vice President, Harry Truman, to lead the country into the close of WWII. After an allied victory in WWII, largely credited to the hotly debated dropping of the atomic bombs in Japan closing the second front of a 2 front war, the Cold War with the Soviet Union began. Truman occupied the White House until 1953, facing an onslaught of criticism as he attempted to navigate the new Cold War culture and level of internationalism now facing the world. In 1952, he witnessed the election that would bring an end to his time in the White House.

The presidential election of 1952 paired two candidates against each other who seemed to have very little interest in occupying the White House. President Truman, who was unpopular among the American electorate, had decided not to seek reelection in

1952, because he realized that he was likely to lose. Truman courted both Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson II to take his place as the Democratic Party nominee. Although both initially rejected his recruitment attempts, the same two men Truman attempted to court eventually ran against each other in the 1952 general election. Stevenson ran as the candidate for Truman's Democratic Party, while Eisenhower ran as the Republican candidate. In examining these two candidates it becomes very important to understand their personal backgrounds and motivations before delving into campaign analysis. The most vital aspects of the 1952 campaign that emerged centered on how each candidate would handle the containment or elimination of communism and his ability to work with leaders from foreign nations on an international scale in order to prevent further global conflict. These issues were enhanced by the public perception of the two individuals. The two candidates had similar ideas of the role the United States should play in the post WWII world order, but they expressed different paths to reach these goals.

Neither candidate appeared particularly excited about the nomination process, and felt disinterested in occupying the office of the President, at the onset of the campaign. General Eisenhower held the position of Supreme Allied Commander of NATO when both the Democrats and the Republicans began to urge him to seek the nomination for their respective parties. Eisenhower made it known that he was happy in his NATO post; he had previous experience working with international leaders during World War II when he led the coalition of allied forces in Europe. Eisenhower expressed very little desire to return to a domestic leadership role, as he believed NATO to be vital to maintaining a

secure and peaceful world order and found himself personally invested in the new international organization.

While Eisenhower was serving overseas leading the new NATO organization, Stevenson was coming to the end of his first term as governor of Illinois. Governor was a position that suited Stevenson, and he had already declared himself a candidate for re-election for that office in 1952. He felt that he still had work left to do in Illinois and that his job was not yet finished, and his political calling was to his home state. Stevenson had served in various administrative offices under the FDR administration before returning home to Illinois, and that was where he felt that he made the greatest impact.

Both candidates had served their nation during WWII, Eisenhower as a commander in the Army and Stevenson in various administrative roles. The two men met for the first time in 1943, although neither of them would have foreseen themselves as rivals in the Presidential campaign of 1952. Eisenhower was in Naples when Stevenson arrived to work on a study for FDR. Stevenson had been tasked with examining the ways and means of restoring businesses, farming, and local government in regions of Europe that had been liberated by allied forces, and Eisenhower often led those forces.¹ This meeting not only illustrated how closely the two individuals careers ran to each other, while still allowing them to take two very different paths to their party nominations, but it also fueled the images that would follow them through their political careers. Historians and even Stevenson biographers unanimously describe Stevenson's public image as the "egghead," most easily defined by Stevenson biographer Bill Severn as an academic who was too intellectual to be relatable to the everyday American. In his early Washington

¹ Bill Severn, *Adlai Stevenson: Citizen of the World* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1966), 78.

experience, Stevenson was often delegated scholarly, research-oriented tasks by the administration, tasks which contributed to his image. In contrast to Stevenson's "egghead" image, historians paint Eisenhower's reputation as one of a strong, moral leader who led forces into battle to physically defeat the enemy, an image only enhanced within historiography by Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose. Eisenhower's distinction was further fueled by his successful D-Day landing in Normandy, creating a strong sense of trust in him throughout the American population.

Historian John Robert Green argues in his work, *I like Ike: The Presidential Election of 1952*, that both Eisenhower and Stevenson were reluctant in the initial days of the campaign, but they eventually accepted their path within the American political system. Green also acknowledges that both candidates recognized the importance of the use of television and news coverage in a changing method of campaigning and expressing their goals surrounding the containment of communism and bringing an end to the war in Korea.² While Green makes strong arguments in discussing the changing of campaign methods and how the candidates embraced the new style of campaigning, he also argues that Eisenhower won in a landslide. A landslide victory is absolutely true in the number of Electoral College votes that Eisenhower received, but to simply take that stance ignores much of the support that Stevenson had throughout the campaign cycle, as demonstrated in the much closer vote count in the Popular Vote. Green's work appears very supportive of Eisenhower, but the electorate was much more divided than his work would lead a reader to believe.

² John R. Greene, *I Like Ike: The Presidential Election of 1952* (Lawrence: University Press Of Kansas, 2017), 2.

Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest published a book in 2017 that addressed the connections between foreign policy and presidential campaigns, and in this work they present substantial discussion of the election of 1952. They argue that Stevenson distanced himself from the Truman administration because of the impact of foreign policy on the sitting president's rapidly falling popularity. Instead, Stevenson chose to focus on "educating and elevating" the American public by selling a positive liberal program and promoting bipartisanship.³ They argue that Stevenson spent much of his campaign focused domestically rather than internationally, presenting Eisenhower as the internationalist candidate who became the logical choice, which is arguable. Stevenson was the founder of various internationalist organizations and firmly believed in the internationalist ideas of former President Woodrow Wilson, who had presented the League of Nations to the world.⁴ Stevenson focused on international cooperation within organizations like NATO, but he lacked a plan to bring an immediate end to the Korean War, which was a major concern for the American voters. The argument that Stevenson was focused on "educating and elevating" the public may have been derived the Stevenson's "egghead" image amongst historians, but the depiction of Stevenson presented by Johnstone and Priest ignores critical aspects of Stevenson's internationalist positions.

Johnstone and Priest also argue that Eisenhower met with Taft prior to his nomination specifically to address Eisenhower's concerns with Taft's foreign policy ideas. As the two potential Republican nominees could not reach an agreement

³ Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest, *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Clinton* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 4.

⁴ Stevenson's internationalism will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

concerning foreign policy, Eisenhower chose to run. The Eisenhower campaign then went on to battle against the far right critiques of the Truman administration's policies while promoting a moderate stance to Cold War global politics.⁵ The argument that they present discussing the primaries is logical and falls in line with the presentation of Eisenhower's image before the American public in which the general followed his sense of duty to country. In not believing that Taft's foreign policy was best for the nation, Eisenhower felt compelled to challenge the senator for the nomination. However, a moderate stance considering global Cold War policy was not exactly what Eisenhower had in mind. He promised the American voters that he would go to Korea to bring an end to the war himself. The General made NATO a priority from the minute he opened himself up to the idea of the nomination. These promises do not demonstrate Eisenhower holding a moderate stance. That may have been the image that the Party sought to promote, but it was not the reality of Eisenhower's beliefs considering international cooperation.

The purpose of this work is to address the electoral impact of key Cold War factors of communism and the Korean War, while also examining the ways in which television and public perception led to the election of the most popular man in the nation, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower did not win the election of 1952 because he was a Republican or because of his specific policy views. He won because a large portion of the electorate viewed him as the strong general who led allied forces to victory in WWII. His reputation was desirable by the majority of the electorate because they feared the spread of communism and a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. This narrative is intended to

⁵ Johnstone and Priest, *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy*, 4.

discuss who Eisenhower and Stevenson were as people, how they became involved in such a high profile election, and in turn how the campaign itself unfolded. 1952 was the first election in which television was used on a large scale, allowing candidates to create a brand around their image. The candidates' images were magnified by the fear tied to the Cold War and the Korean War, as Eisenhower was presented to be the strong general and Stevenson was presented to be the intellectual who would find a way to discuss solutions related to containment and Korea.

Much of the information surrounding candidate image came from various biographies, and all of these biographers appear to have been written in a very positive manner surrounding their subjects. In particular, Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose has been openly criticized for inaccuracies in his work, but never failed to present Eisenhower in a positive light during any period of the General's life. Biographer Bill Severn published a biography of Stevenson that openly claims to be warm and timely, depicting a very positive image of the governor. This biography was published a year after Stevenson's death and seeks to describe the positives of his life. Favorable biographies of the men involved in both the Republican and Democratic primaries are also used in the chapters describing the nomination process, as biographers tend to put a positive spin on their subjects. The spin placed on each candidate may be how their biographers would like the public to remember them.

These images, along with the two candidates' individual backgrounds, were what initially led their respective parties to court them for the nomination. Eisenhower appeared more willing to receive the nomination than Stevenson by the end of the convention process, but neither man initially sought the nomination of his own accord.

Initially both parties attempted to draft Eisenhower, but he quickly declined the Democrats. Eisenhower eventually accepted the Republican nomination, claiming that he feared a leader from the old right, especially Ohio Senator Robert Taft. By the time the Republican national convention met in Chicago, Eisenhower and his supporters began actively attempting to sway delegates in his favor. After Eisenhower declined Truman's attempts to run as the Democratic Party nominee, Truman refocused his efforts on Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson was content to serve as Governor of Illinois, but his party viewed him as a near perfect balance between Northern Democrats and Southern Democrats. Stevenson did not want to pursue the presidency, but he also never openly stated that he would not accept the nomination, allowing himself to be drafted on the third ballot at the Democratic National Convention. Eisenhower pushed for the nomination within his party, feeling that he was the best Republican option, while Stevenson felt that others were better suited to seek the presidency on behalf of the Democrats. Eventually both men accepted the nominations of their respective parties and began a heated campaign cycle surrounded by debate over communism, internationalism, and American involvement in the Korean War.

Much of the evidence related to public perception of the two candidates' pursuit of the presidency can be found in 1952 newspapers. Many newspapers from 1952 printed stories about the election, and the Associated Press often distributed those stories to local papers. This created a situation in which articles were the same across all geographic regions of the nation, but the *New York Times* was often the paper in which many of the stories originated, as urban reporters documented events that they viewed as important throughout the campaign. Beyond these unified stories, campaign machines presented

their respective candidates in television spots, many of which are made available on the website “The Living Room Candidate” and are included in chapter five of this work. Campaign speeches provide further information that came directly from the candidates’ mouths, and although these speeches often articulate the candidates’ views and opinions, they often seem to lack specific details as to how the candidates would reach their expressed goals.

Eisenhower and Stevenson were selected to pursue the presidency on behalf of their respective parties because their parties believed them to be strong leaders in the eyes of the American population. Following the conclusion of WWII, a race began between the United States and the Soviet Union as to which could amass the largest stockpile of atomic weapons. The Americans completed their weapons prior to the end of WWII, and used them on behalf of the allied forces. The Soviets developed their own weapons soon after. In witnessing the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the American atomic bombs were used, the general feeling among the American population became one of fear. The Soviet Union closed off its borders and communications from much of the western world, keeping communism encased behind an Iron Curtain, as Winston Churchill famously described Eastern Europe. A reclusive nation with atomic weapons was an unsettling idea to the American voters. In 1952 they were required to select their next president, placing their faith in a leader who would protect them from the Soviet threat.

Americans feared the spread of communism because it was a system of governance that threatened the democracy many cherished. This fear was fueled by men like Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republican who made a spectacle of

searching for communists in the United States. He was elected to the Senate in 1946 and pursued communists in such an aggressive and public manner that his tactics even took on his name. McCarthyism quickly took on a life of its own. The Senator found support in both political parties, but primarily among his own Republicans. He made wild and very public accusations of alleged communists, many of whom were members of the Truman administration. McCarthy attacked Adlai Stevenson on many occasions throughout the 1952 campaign, but he also put Eisenhower in a precarious position by denouncing individuals that the general was close with. Eisenhower never approved of McCarthy's tactics, but he was also unable to speak out against a member of his own party during an election cycle.

Even with the challenge of McCarthyism, Eisenhower began the election cycle with a clear advantage. A Gallup poll from the spring of 1951 showed that forty percent of Democrats favored Eisenhower, while only twenty percent favored Truman, even as Eisenhower refused Truman's request to run as a Democrat. Eisenhower led the polls among Republican voters with thirty percent, while Taft carried twenty two percent, Dewey with sixteen percent and Earl Warren lagged behind at thirteen percent.⁶ The campaign became heated and competitive, as Republicans fiercely tried to reclaim a White House that they had not occupied to two decades.

Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose, with his gift for exaggeration, referred to the 1952 campaign as "one of the bitterest campaigns of the twentieth century, one that featured the most mudslinging. Few, if any, of the participants could look back on it with

⁶ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," In *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3215.

pride.”⁷ As the methods of campaigning transitioned and used new technology to communicate the more negative aspects of a modern campaign, Ambrose is correct. 1952 was a campaign that began with two reluctant candidates quickly became highly competitive and invaded the lives of the American electorate via television. Once their respective parties placed them at the top of the ticket, both candidates pursued victory to the best of their abilities. Many issues surrounding the Korean War and the spread of communism were the focus of the campaign cycle, but the candidates’ views were not significantly different, creating a campaign based on reputation and personal image rather than policy views. However, this campaign did not hold up as one of the bitterest of the twentieth century. Campaigning has become more aggressive and the candidates have become more vicious over time, and this particular campaign simply added the technology of television to traditional tactics.

The November general election, as well as the campaign leading up to Election Day, came down to a difference in perceived tactics in handling the two most important issues to the American population. Eisenhower’s grandfatherly image, combined with his military record, caused many voters to view him as being more relatable than the distant, intellectual, “egghead” image of Stevenson. The American voters tend to select candidates who have a more relatable image, not necessarily who will be the strongest leader. This is not to say that the electorate chose wrongly in 1952, it is simply an acknowledgement that voters are more likely to chose the more relatable or positively viewed candidate than to learn about every position each candidate holds. The 1952 campaign was a clear illustration of this phenomenon, but it was hardly the first time that

⁷ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier And President* (New York: Simon And Schuster, 1991), 285.

it took place. In previous campaign cycles, FDR could not even be photographed in his wheelchair because it presented an image of weakness before the American electorate. Image proved once again to override policy with many American voters.

Predictions regarding the outcome of presidential elections are common, but the 1952 election was difficult for anyone to predict. Stevenson himself believed that Eisenhower could not be beaten, even as he accepted the Democratic Party nomination, but that view did not stop him from attempting to win for his party. Various groups attempted to predict the outcome of the election, and their predictions were based on a variety of factors. University of Louisville economist Carl E. Abner argued in the *Louisville Courier Journal* that economics would be the primary indicator of the outcome in the general election, and in that sense, Stevenson would be the logical victor. Abner's research followed trends that linked economic prosperity and political party in the White House. He argued that no single issue the Republicans could raise would have been able to override the desire of the American electorate to maintain economic prosperity.⁸ Abner's research made sense in theory, but the electorate had voted in favor of economic prosperity when they selected Herbert Hoover as president, which may have made them hesitate to vote based on the economy with the memory of the Depression still relatively fresh in American minds.

Abner's argument was countered on the very same page of the *Louisville Courier Journal* by an article with an election prediction from the *U.S. News and World Report* stating: "war and its political effects more than offset the effects of good times."⁹ This

⁸ Carl E. Abner, "Prosperity is the Key Factor, Says U. of L. Economist Abner in Predicting 'It's Stevenson'," *Louisville Courier Journal*, (Louisville, KY), October 26, 1952.

⁹ "The Political Effects of War Will More Than Offset Prosperity, so it Looks Like Ike, Says U.S. News and World Report Analysts," *Louisville Courier Journal*, (Louisville, KY), October 26, 1952.

article argued that war hurts the party in power, indicating that the Republicans had their first real opportunity for an electoral victory since the conclusion of WWII. American military involvement in Korea, and the fact that Truman had committed American troops to a foreign nation without express approval from Congress, worked against the Democratic Party in 1952. The development and advancement of the Cold War, combined with the situation in Korea, placed the Democrats at a disadvantage from the beginning of the campaign because they were the party blamed for the Korean War, while Eisenhower was perceived to be the candidate who could bring an end to that conflict. These two articles, while predicting different outcomes, demonstrate that the media was relatively objective in covering the 1952 election, and that the race was much closer than the landslide that some historians argue Eisenhower's first electoral victory achieved.

Wildly varying predictions regarding the election outcome continued all the way through the eve of Election Day, when the *Tampa Bay Times* reported that many states electoral college votes were still unpredictable. These states included New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maryland, California, Texas, South Carolina, and Illinois.¹⁰ As some of these states are clearly located in the South, the level of unpredictability indicated a movement of white southern voters away from the Democratic Party, although it would take many election cycles to learn if this transition was due to party platform or simply the appeal of General Eisenhower to many voters across the nation.¹¹

¹⁰ "Issue In Doubt In Many States On Election Eve," *Tampa Bay Times*, (Tampa, FL), 3 Nov 1952.

¹¹ Southern voting practices will be further examined in Chapter 3.

By the end of Election Day, November 4, 1952, those groups who predicted an Eisenhower victory from the days before the party national conventions were proven correct. Eisenhower's image and reputation overshadowed his weakness in standing up to more radical members of his own party, leading to the first Republican victory in two decades. The 1952 campaign took off in a manner that had never before been presented to the American public as the Cold War unfolded. Eisenhower stumped via train for months in the traditional campaign manner, but he also took full advantage of television spots in order to reach a broader swath of the electorate. Stevenson was less enthusiastic about the use of television, but his campaign staff attempted to create television advertisements on his behalf to keep him from falling behind. The campaign consumed more time and money than previous elections, and began earlier than the American electorate was accustomed to. In that sense, the 1952 campaign took over American lives for the better part of a year, a trend that would only continue into the future.

By election day on November 4, 1952, it became clear that image and public perception determined the outcome of the election, as both candidates were qualified and proven leaders who sought to find a way to end the Korean War and contain communism both at home and abroad. Eisenhower's reputation as a victorious general made him more popular than Stevenson in the eyes of the American electorate who feared the spread of communism and an extended military conflict in Korea. Stevenson was an intelligent and logical man, but Eisenhower simply proved more popular among the American voters.

In the coming chapters, this work will examine the background of both candidates, considering their personal upbringings and career experience prior to receiving the nominations of their parties. The primaries that led up to the heated

campaign cycle of 1952 must be considered before examining the issues related to the general election. Moving beyond the primaries, issues developed by Senator McCarthy regarding communism, challenges of the Korean War, and the public images of both Eisenhower and Stevenson will be addressed in order to understand how the threat of nuclear war and public perception allowed the Republicans to reclaim the White House for the first time in two decades.

Chapter 1

Meet the Candidates and Understand the Party Platforms

The individual backgrounds of the two candidates played a defining role in their eventual presidential nominations and also played vital roles in shaping their individual positions and beliefs. Both the Republicans and Democrats sought to nominate individuals who had relatable backgrounds to large segments of the American population, some level of experience in order to ensure that they were qualified to hold the highest office in the federal government, and personal beliefs that aligned with their party platforms. The upbringings, educational backgrounds, and career experience of both Eisenhower and Stevenson must be examined in order to understand why were nominated by their respective parties for the presidency in 1952.

Governor Stevenson came from an urban upbringing in Illinois. His wealthy family was heavily involved with the Democratic Party throughout his entire life, instilling in Stevenson a strong party connection and interest in politics from a very young age, as well as a detailed knowledge of the American political system. His family political ties ran all the way into high-level federal government offices, and Stevenson's Grandfather, Adlai Ewing Stevenson, served as Vice President during Grover Cleveland's second term as President. He later became William Jennings Bryan's running mate in the 1900 Presidential election.¹² Stevenson gained his early political experience on both his father's campaign, when he ran for Illinois Secretary of State, as well as when he worked as an errand boy for Woodrow Wilson's Presidential campaign.¹³ Woodrow Wilson was one of the earliest advocates for internationalism to occupy the White House,

¹² Bill Severn, *Adlai Stevenson: Citizen of the World* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1966), 1.

¹³ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 31.

and his ideas of international cooperation clearly influenced Governor Stevenson during his early years of political involvement.

Eisenhower had a very different upbringing from that of Governor Stevenson. The General grew up with a modest family in the rural town of Abilene, Kansas. Eisenhower was focused on sports, particularly football, from a young age, not politics. When a football injury sidelined Eisenhower, he moved into coaching. His dedication to the game taught him to focus on teamwork, skills that would later translate into his position as a general in the Army.¹⁴ His success as a general eventually pushed Eisenhower into national politics.

Eisenhower claimed to not have a political affiliation throughout his military service, but Stevenson was an active Democrat from a young age. He attended school with around 200 boys, only three of whom were Democrats. He often engaged in political arguments with Republican students,¹⁵ which helped to prepare him for a lifetime of supporting and campaigning for the Democratic Party. After completing his secondary education, Stevenson attended Princeton University for his undergraduate degree, and went on to Harvard Law School after he graduated from Princeton. Stevenson had dropped out Harvard due to family issues, but he eventually completed his law degree at Northwestern University in June of 1926 and became a member of the Illinois Bar.¹⁶

Like Stevenson, Eisenhower also wanted to pursue a law degree. Eisenhower's ideal school was the University of Michigan, as they had a top football program. However, instead of enrolling at Michigan, a friend convinced him to attend West Point

¹⁴ Paul Johnson, *Eisenhower: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 4.

¹⁵ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 32.

¹⁶ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 55.

Military Academy. Attending West Point caused Eisenhower to develop a sense of duty and loyalty to his country. The focus at West Point was more on courage and military leadership than on intellectual accomplishments, as Michigan law would have been, so Eisenhower hid his intellectual side to cultivate an image focused on teamwork and military leadership.¹⁷ This image and reputation followed Eisenhower through his military career and eventually led to his presidential nomination with the Republican Party. Ultimately this image propelled Eisenhower into the White House.

Prior to World War II, Stevenson had developed clear internationalist views. These views were enhanced by a trip Stevenson and his friends took through Europe during a summer break at Princeton. He witnessed firsthand the devastation left behind by WWI and became further convinced that President Wilson was correct in pushing for the League of Nations.¹⁸ Severn's description of this trip is the first time that Stevenson is presented firmly developing his own political views based on his firsthand experiences. Stevenson clearly felt that some form of international cooperative organization was required to maintain national security and global peace. His internationalist views were vital to the Democratic Party platform and contributed to his nomination in 1952. Following his various trips to Europe, Stevenson served as President of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, as well as the head of the Chicago Chapter of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. Stevenson was set in his convictions regarding international cooperation, but was often attacked by isolationists for being an errand boy for foreign nations. Many isolationists felt that the Committee to Aid the

¹⁷ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 6.

¹⁸ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 45.

Allies was a treasonous organization.¹⁹ Stevenson paid little attention to the views of isolationists and continued to international cooperation throughout WWII, believing that the aggressors in Europe were also likely anti-American. He helped to promote American involvement in the war and supported programs like Lend-Lease to aid the allied forces.²⁰ Stevenson believed that American isolationism was impossible to maintain in the increasingly connected global culture and that international cooperation was becoming a necessity for global peace and prosperity.

Stevenson's European travels also took him to Russia, where he worked as a newspaper correspondent after his 1926 graduation from Northwestern Law School. While in Russia, he discovered poverty filled streets and met Russian citizens in Moscow who would barely speak to him because they feared prosecution, or even violence from the Bolsheviks in power. He became convinced that no one should ever follow the same path as Bolshevik Russia.²¹ This experience fueled his belief that communism must be contained and western democracy must be protected, otherwise people around the world would live in fear like those in Moscow.

Following his initial European travels, Stevenson began to serve in various roles in Washington. He worked as a special assistant for general council in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for several months in 1933, a New Deal organization under the administration of FDR.²² According to biographer Johnathan Gowden, President Roosevelt became a role model for Stevenson, and Stevenson returned to the campaign

¹⁹ Johnathan A. Gowden, "Adlai Stevenson: A Retrospective," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 61, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 327.

²⁰ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 69.

²¹ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 58.

²² Gowden, "Adlai Stevenson: A Retrospective," 327.

involvement that he had engaged in from an early age, this time in support of FDR. The idea that Stevenson would aspire to be like FDR is a logical conclusion, and was demonstrated by the fact that Stevenson delivered his first political speech during the 1936 presidential campaign in which he addressed students at Carleton College and speaking in favor of FDR.²³ This speech became the first of many speeches Stevenson presented in favor of the Democratic Party. After his time with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration came to an end, Stevenson returned home to Illinois, having built on his resume in support of the Democratic Party. Stevenson returned to Washington in 1941 to serve as a special assistant to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. He travelled globally in this position to fix issues with supplies or personnel, as well as write speeches for Knox and helping to work through various legal issues.²⁴ Serving as a speech writer developed Stevenson's skills in addressing the public, although by the end of his campaign in 1952 he was criticized for being unable to find time to write his own public addresses. These two Washington positions allowed Stevenson to combine his political experience and ambitions with his law degree, building on both his reputation within the Democratic Party as fueling the "egghead" image that would haunt him throughout the 1952 campaign.

In contrast to Stevenson's extensive involvement in Washington during the FDR administration, Eisenhower's Washington experience was more minimal, at least prior to his service in the European theater. The General's initial Washington experience took place while he was serving under General Douglas MacArthur. Eisenhower was with General MacArthur when President Hoover sent in the military to break up the bonus

²³ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 65.

²⁴ Gowden, "Adlai Stevenson: A Retrospective," 327.

marchers in Washington during the Great Depression.²⁵ This heavy-handed military response was a public relations nightmare for President Hoover, as the public viewed the response as denying WWI veterans their benefits during the Great Depression.

Eisenhower documented all of the events that he was involved in with regard to the bonus marchers, and those documents were later widely circulated with MacArthur claiming them as his own work in an attempt to justify their involvement in bringing an end to the protests. As the backlash over dispersing the bonus marchers began, Eisenhower realized the value of documenting as many events as possible throughout his career.²⁶ This created a comprehensive collection of documents describing Eisenhower's personal feelings and experiences throughout his life, and these documents have since been published to further our understanding of the general. The breakup of the bonus marchers became a negative campaign issue used by the Democrats in the 1952 Presidential election. The Republican Party was already in a situation in which they had to overcome the negative image of President Hoover, the last Republican President prior to the Democratic administrations of FDR and Truman, but Eisenhower's reputation stemming from his WWII service helped overcome the issue. As the 1952 campaign became increasingly hostile, any negative issue that could be raised became very public as candidates attempted to tear each other down.

Eisenhower's rise to public recognition stemmed from his military involvement rather than any serious involvement in Washington. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 and brought the United States into the war, Eisenhower became immediately heavily involved in the American military effort as a general. He endorsed the military

²⁵ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 13.

²⁶ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 13.

prioritization of Europe over the Pacific, and by April 1942 Eisenhower was given command of all allied forces in the European theater, not just his American troops. Later in that same year, Eisenhower met British Prime Minister Winston Churchill for the first time, and it was at that meeting that Churchill coined the phrase “I like Ike,” that later became a campaign slogan.²⁷ In describing how the slogan came into existence, it is easy to see how the Eisenhower campaign could so easily spin his international connections. Churchill supported the leadership and teamwork ideology that Eisenhower brought to the Allied war effort and often supported the decisions that Eisenhower made in dictating the allied troop movements and plans, creating a close working relationship between the highly regarded general and the British prime minister. Their relationship was the first in an expansive network of international relationships that Eisenhower built throughout his military service, NATO involvement, and later the presidency.

Eisenhower’s devoted leadership in Europe created discomfort for his wife back home, but she did not present any of her challenges before the American public. As Eisenhower continued developing close relationships with foreign leaders during his time in Europe, his wife, Mamie, was patiently waiting at home for him. Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose discussed Eisenhower’s relationship with Mamie throughout his military service in great detail. Mamie felt personally frustrated by the press, but hid her distaste for the press well and became as beloved by much of the American population as her husband. The General worked hard to make her feel comfortable. In one letter, Eisenhower attempted to assure Mamie that someday he would retire and they would get a break from public life, Ambrose even quoted Eisenhower as

²⁷ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 27.

staying, “at least no crack-brain has yet started running me for political office.”²⁸ Little did the General know how wrong he was in his discussions with Mamie. However displeased she may have been with the press and all of the public attention, Mamie proved to be an invaluable asset during the campaign, fueling his positive public image of blissful domestic American life before the campaign kicked off and throughout his time seeking office. The manner in which Mamie hid her discomfort and presented herself in a positive light was the key to the campaign, and she recognized that putting on a positive face for the American people was the best way that she could contribute to her husband’s success.

Eisenhower’s lack of political affiliation during his military service contributed to his success as a military leader, and that same success that eventually led him to the top of the Republican ticket. Eisenhower was able to work with anyone, no matter what their party affiliation, and helped to reinforce his friendly and relatable image for anyone he came in contact with. Democratic President FDR specifically selected Eisenhower to lead the allied troops because of the leadership experience and focus on teamwork that followed Ike from his football career to West Point. The sitting president never even considered that one day his selected general would be running for president on the opposing party ticket. Nearly everyone liked Eisenhower, from American troops to foreign leaders. Biographer Stephen Ambrose described Ike as FDR’s best option to work in a coordinated effort with foreign military leaders, and in that description of Eisenhower, Ambrose was correct.²⁹ Eisenhower was not only a smart and effective military leader, but he had a likable personality that helped propel his career and political

²⁸ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier And President*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991), 102.

²⁹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier And President*, 115.

relationships forward, as evident in examining his relationships with both political parties, foreign leaders, and even letters written in his personal papers.

As the war came to a close, the allied leaders agreed on the goal of unconditional surrender for their enemies. Eisenhower imposed unconditional surrender on the Italians on September 3, 1943.³⁰ Americans took pride in Eisenhower forcing the Italians into surrender, but fellow military service members, political opponents, and even everyday citizens later criticized him for not racing the Russians to Berlin in 1945. Eisenhower biographer Paul Johnson argues that the General believed that the Russians had made a vital contribution to the war effort and that racing them to Berlin would appear undignified.³¹ This view makes logical sense, but not for the noble reasons that Johnson would have his readers believe. Eisenhower was focused on international cooperation and believed that a global coalition was the only way to achieve peace. He made a symbolic decision in the moment, and demonstrated his positive intentions for international collaboration, but this decision was diplomatically fueled, not simply a gesture of good will. He allowed the Russians to experience a major victory after the heavy losses they suffered at the hands of the German troops and German allies prior to American involvement in the European theater, a clear demonstration of Eisenhower's ability to see the value in long-term international cooperation rather than simply focus on immediate glory for American forces. The criticism of Eisenhower's cooperation and consideration of the Russians in the closing months of WWII later bled into the 1952 presidential campaign, as the Democratic Party exploited the action as a moment of weakness, especially as the Cold War unfolded and the Soviet Union became the new enemy.

³⁰ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 43.

³¹ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 55.

Despite criticisms of how he handled Berlin, his role as the leader of the allied forces helped Eisenhower to develop public relations skills and an ability to address that press that followed him for the rest of his career, always working to his advantage. Eisenhower successfully engaged the press and developed his image before the American population throughout WWII. His uniform was always freshly pressed, he stood up straight, held his head high, spoke clearly, and looked directly into the camera.³² These descriptions of Eisenhower permeate the historical discussion of the General, and the majority of the American population viewed Eisenhower as a relatable man who was put together and would be up front and honest with them. Following the conclusion of the war in Europe, Eisenhower received honors and decorations from around the world, building on his ties with the international community. Paul Johnson describes that on June 12, 1945, Eisenhower was given a specially designed ceremonial sword in London, illustrating the affection and respect that the British had for him.³³ This argument of respect and support from the international community is further reinforced throughout Eisenhower's personal documents in his correspondence with international leaders and diplomats, especially those involved with NATO. Eisenhower's image as the strong international leader was pushed heavily on the American electorate in 1952, but it was far from untrue, he was clearly welcomed into the international community after his contributions to WWII.

Stevenson did not receive the same types of international honors that Eisenhower did, but he was no less involved with the development of international cooperation. In 1944, Stevenson returned to Washington again to help head the PR campaign for the

³² Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 29.

³³ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 62.

newly forming United Nations. He ended up smoothing ruffled feathers and was sent to London to help determine the distribution of power within the early UN.³⁴ This role allowed Stevenson to develop and demonstrate his skills as a diplomatic leader on the world stage. Stevenson was involved with the establishment of NATO and cooperation between nations, but he was never as beloved as Eisenhower around the globe. After the UN was established, Eisenhower remained in Europe, serving as the Supreme Allied commander of NATO. In May 1946, once he felt that the UN was successfully established, Stevenson resigned his position and returned home to his family in Illinois.³⁵

As Stevenson removed himself from international diplomacy, Eisenhower continued to build on his already strong relationships with European leaders. Eisenhower was also involved in domestic service after the conclusion of WWII, and he served as President of Columbia University. The General used his authority at Columbia to further his ideas of international cooperation, establishing the “Institute of War and Peace Studies,” as well as the American Assembly that brought together academics and business leaders along with other opinion formers. These prominent individuals worked toward the common goal of protecting western democracy from communist influence, which meant either containing communism to ensure that it did not spread, or finding ways to eliminate any communist influence in their respective spheres.³⁶ In establishing these organizations at Columbia, Eisenhower demonstrated his goals of containment or eradication of communism domestically as well as internationally.

³⁴ Gowden, "Adlai Stevenson: A Retrospective," 328.

³⁵ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 86.

³⁶ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 68.

While at Columbia, Eisenhower opposed the appointment of known Marxists to teaching positions. Communists were viewed as “unfit” to teach and Eisenhower worked to prevent appointing them to any position of influence, but he did not actively obsess over pursuing communists all over the United States.³⁷ Eisenhower was not concerned with communists living throughout the nation in relatively small numbers, and was particularly unsupportive of the tactics used by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, but he would do all that he could to prevent known communists from having any influence over vulnerable populations. Permitting communists to assume teaching positions at Columbia would give them a platform from which they could influence students with their personal beliefs, a platform which Eisenhower fought to keep from them. He, and many others, believed in eliminating communist expansion domestically as well as internationally. Preventing communists from spreading their views would help to diminish their domestic influence, a stance that Eisenhower firmly supported. His efforts toward containment caused both political parties, as well as a large portion of the American electorate, to see that Eisenhower would make attempts to manage or eliminate communism domestically as well as internationally.

As Eisenhower was working full steam ahead to engage as much of the domestic and international community in his goal of international cooperation, Adlai Stevenson was moving toward his first true elected office, the position of Governor of Illinois. The Illinois Democratic Party chose Stevenson as their 1948 Candidate for State Governor as a relative unknown because they wanted a reformer to make changes and run in their state. Generally, outside Chicago the state voted Republican, so Stevenson was an

³⁷ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 71.

underdog from the start. Even the Democratic Party machine questioned who he was, as he had been involved in campaigns but on low levels. Stevenson's political experience did not make him a well-known candidate during his campaign for the Governorship, and even after his election in Illinois he remained a relative unknown nationally, putting him at a disadvantage in 1952 against the widely known General Eisenhower. His 1948 campaign was consistently out of money and Stevenson was the clear underdog candidate, lagging behind the well funded and well recognized Republican Party in Illinois.³⁸

Prior to the 1948 election cycle, Stevenson had no real election experience; he had only served administrative roles. He originally returned to Illinois after his European travels following the war with the intention of running for Senate, but the Illinois Democratic Party machine felt that Stevenson was a better fit for governor. Severn, continuing with his positive description of Stevenson, explained that Stevenson won his election by the largest plurality in Illinois history.³⁹ However, his significant victory is important to discuss because it brought Stevenson into the outside edge of the political spotlight, demonstrating his ability to win voters without being a well-known candidate during the beginning of an election cycle. Without his election to Governor, he would never have been nominated for the presidency in 1952 because no one would have known who he was, nor would anyone have ever expected him to have a chance of defeating Eisenhower in 1952. In this sense, Severn is right to draw attention to the large victory in Stevenson's first election. As Stevenson brought a new face and new image to the Democratic Party in Illinois, even in the rural areas that had previously voted Republican,

³⁸ Gowden, "Adlai Stevenson: A Retrospective," 328.

³⁹ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 89.

he moved voters toward the Democrats. The shift that he began helped to carry the entire state of Illinois for Truman in his 1948 campaign, as well as creating a trend of continued contributions to the Democratic Party nationally.⁴⁰ Stevenson, while lagging behind Eisenhower in the arena of public recognition, had proved himself as a candidate who could promote himself and win over voters without a pre-existing reputation. The Democrats needed someone who could win over voters in 1952 if they wanted to have any hope of defeating the popular Republican candidate.

Eisenhower began his political career without much less enthusiasm. While Stevenson pursued the office of Governor, Eisenhower maintained the stance that he had no interest in seeking elected office. As the war efforts in the United States began to slow, General MacArthur told Eisenhower that one of them would someday become President. Johnson describes Eisenhower's response to MacArthur as strong and firm, stating that he did not feel the military had any business in politics.⁴¹ This position can easily contribute to the image of the reluctant candidate, and may have been true of Eisenhower's personal beliefs at the time, but it did not stop him from requesting a retired status in 1952 in order to pursue the Republican nomination when he determined that he should attempt to defeat Senator Taft. Eisenhower turned down various offers of political positions following WWII, including a push for him to run for the United States Senate in New York. He was more drawn toward military appointments, and accepted the position of Supreme Allied Commander of NATO.⁴² Eisenhower was already recognizable and influential on an international level, but this was the most political of any appointment he

⁴⁰ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 94.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 70.

⁴² Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 70.

held previously, which permitted him to further explore his belief in international cooperation in order to prevent global conflict. His strong belief in international cooperation drove the General's desire to continue with his NATO involvement rather than seek any domestic political office.

Eisenhower's political career began to develop while he was serving in the early stages of NATO. The old right of the Republican Party remained generally opposed to NATO, making Eisenhower's presidential nomination even more unexpected.

Eisenhower was clear in his belief that international cooperation was the only way to maintain global security, making the possibility of a president from the old right even more terrifying in his eyes. On February 1, 1951, Eisenhower addressed a joint session of Congress to discuss the needs of Europe. He was given credit for presenting NATO to Congress better than any member of the Truman administration, which drew members of both political parties to push the General to run for the presidency on behalf of their party. His successful presentation of NATO continued to demonstrate his strong belief in international cooperation, but also pushed him into the political spotlight. Eisenhower went on to deliver addresses internationally while leading NATO, including addressing the English Speaking Union at Grosvenor House in London. This particular speech only added to Churchill's admiration for the General, as he called the address "one of the greatest speeches delivered by any American in my lifetime."⁴³ Eisenhower found himself accepted and admired by nations friendly towards the United States on a major international scale, which emphasized not only his military leadership abilities but also his foreign relations and public relations knowledge.

⁴³ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 72.

Eisenhower remained dedicated to the success of NATO, even as the Republican Party began pushing for him to run for the presidency in 1952. Eisenhower made his loyalty to the new international organization clear in a letter to Canadian Diplomat Lester Bowles Pearson on May 30, 1952, when he wrote “wherever I go and whatever I may do, you may rest assured that I will always follow with the closest interest the progress of NATO. I shall always remember with pride my association with this great collective effort of the free nations to remain free.”⁴⁴ This letter was a strong indication that even if Eisenhower were to accept the nomination to run for President, NATO would remain a key priority within his administration. The wording may have been strong in order to ensure foreign leaders that Eisenhower would continue to support them even if he became president, and it was later proven true as Eisenhower continued to support international cooperation throughout his presidency. He held strong beliefs in international cooperation and NATO was a key component to his goals of maintaining a peaceful and cooperative world order.

As Eisenhower’s political prestige began to develop, both political parties courted him, recognizing his growing status and prominence around the world. As the 1952 campaign season began to approach, President Truman recognized that his popularity amongst the American electorate was not strong enough to support a bid for reelection. Historian Barton J. Bernstein published a comprehensive collection of essays describing American presidential elections, in which he explained that many voters blamed Truman for American involvement in the Korean War, Chinese aggression, the spread of

⁴⁴ Letter to Lester Bowles Pearson, May 30, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1241.

communism, high taxes, and inflation in the American economy.⁴⁵ With the onset of the Cold War following WWII, the dissatisfaction that the majority of the American electorate felt toward their sitting President logically pushed him to withdraw from consideration. Truman approached Eisenhower to run as his successor on the Democratic ticket, believing that with Eisenhower at the top of the ticket the Democrats could continue to extend their twenty year hold on the White House. Eisenhower refused Truman's offer, not only because he did not believe that the military had any business in politics but also because he believed himself to be a lifelong Republican. Eisenhower had never registered with a political party, nor had he voted in a federal election, but he held personal beliefs that were more in line with the Republican Party.⁴⁶ He supported fiscal responsibility rather than strong welfare programs, aid to European allies, and a quick end to the Korean War. His views were firmly in place and supported throughout his life, as most of his friends and family were Republican, as well as many of his fellow military leaders. The General felt much more comfortable with the Republicans and that comfort was a necessity when Eisenhower finally did agree to run. He would not have run for any political office that did not permit him to pursue his personal beliefs.

After Eisenhower declined Truman's offer to run as his successor, the Democratic Party was forced to look elsewhere for a candidate. In January of 1952, Truman told Adlai Stevenson that he would not be seeking reelection and expressed his desire that Stevenson run as the Democratic Party candidate.⁴⁷ Stevenson, like Eisenhower, refused

⁴⁵ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," In *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3215.

⁴⁶ John P. Diggins, *Proud Decades: American In War And Peace, 1941-1960* (New York: Norton, 1989), 124.

⁴⁷ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 105.

Truman. On January 5, 1952, Stevenson announced, “after long and prayerful consideration I have decided to be a candidate for reelection as Governor in 1952.”⁴⁸ Clearly the Governor wanted to remain in his home state, making what he believed to be positive change in Illinois. He was not ready to step onto the national stage, nor did his public recognition come close to the recognition of Eisenhower.

In contrast to Eisenhower, Governor Stevenson was a registered member of his political party, had served on various campaigns prior to 1952, and was already serving in a political office. Stevenson also failed to make any public statement that he would not accept the nomination for president by the Democratic Party; his key public announcement was that he sought reelection for governor. He was eventually drafted by the Democratic Party, when leadership entered his name was entered in the Oregon primary and he won. Even after Stevenson found his name on the ballot for the nomination process, he stated publically that, “he wished he had to the right to withdrawal it.”⁴⁹ This public statement demonstrated how much Stevenson wanted to continue serving as governor and that he felt that his work was not yet complete in Illinois. He had already declared himself a candidate for Governor, and he firmly believed that if Eisenhower received the Republican nomination, no Democrat could beat the respected war hero.⁵⁰ Stevenson was clearly aware of the fact that public image and reputation could play a role in the general election, and if that were the case, Eisenhower would be difficult to defeat. Stevenson insisted that his desire was to remain in state

⁴⁸ Lillian Ross, *Adlai Stevenson* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), 23.

⁴⁹ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 122.

⁵⁰ Ross, *Adlai Stevenson*, 23.

government, not pursue the Presidency, but the Democratic Party would not accept his response.

Just as Stevenson was committed to his role of Governor, Eisenhower was committed to his position in NATO. The General wanted to stay with NATO and further the development of international cooperation, which would have permitted him to continue his military service. However, he had a tightknit group of friends who began to push him to run as the Republican nominee. They advocated for the idea by explaining that the presidency was the next step in his duty to his country. While the idea of duty to country played a factor in Eisenhower's eventual acceptance of the Republican nomination, he also feared the idea of Senator Robert Taft in the White House. Eisenhower and his supporters believed that Taft, who held more isolationist views than either Eisenhower or Stevenson, would lead a more reactive administration that did not work smoothly on an international scale. Johnson describes Eisenhower's supporters' beliefs that Eisenhower would be able to balance the budget, be firm with the Soviets while not furthering conflict, and protect democracy.⁵¹ While many of these factors were true, none of them were the reason why Eisenhower finally committed to run. The debates with Senator Taft ultimately became the factor that pushed Eisenhower to seek the nomination, as he remained firmly committed to the ideas on international cooperation and did not believe that Senator Taft would continue on that path.

Eisenhower polled well as he entered the Republican Primary. In July of 1952, Gallup polls predicted that Eisenhower would be able to defeat Stevenson in the general election with fifty-nine percent of the vote. If the Democrats selected Stevenson's biggest

⁵¹ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 79.

competition, Senator Estes Kefauver, Eisenhower was predicted to win with fifty-five percent of the vote. In contrast, if Taft were to win the Republican nomination, either potential Democratic nominee would have defeated him, creating a situation in which the Republicans were likely to continue to lose in the general election. Stevenson polled at receiving forty-five percent, to Taft's forty-five percent, a virtual stalemate, while Kefauver was predicted to win fifty-five percent to Taft's forty-one percent.⁵² Although early polls have always been faulty, Eisenhower was clearly the more popular choice for the Republican Party in both the primary and general elections, creating the most likely scenario for a Republican victory in nominating Eisenhower to run against either Democrat. The Republican Party remained divided up through the Republican National Convention in July of 1952, with the eastern Republicans who disliked Taft supporting Eisenhower, while mid-western Republicans were generally more conservative and more supportive of nominating Senator Taft. Eisenhower agreed to run after some debate over international cooperation with Taft, but the general could not campaign for the nomination himself while still in an active military status.⁵³

Eisenhower did not protest the nomination in the vocal manner that Stevenson did, but he did not actively campaign to become the candidate until after he was placed on retired status with the military. He also did not speak about the nomination until the Republican National Convention, where he became the official nominee.⁵⁴ Eisenhower allowed the Republican Party to nominate him in the New Hampshire Primary in March of 1952, nearly entirely because he did not want to sit back and allow Taft to become the

⁵² Bernstein, *History of American Presidential Elections*, 3229.

⁵³ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 124.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 79.

nominee. Eisenhower won the New Hampshire Primary without campaigning, leading the Republican financial donors to shift their funds to the Eisenhower campaign.⁵⁵ His national appeal was quickly recognized by much of the Republican Party, which led to the shift in finances. Eisenhower was less polarizing than Taft, and this realization benefitted Eisenhower throughout the nomination process.

Stevenson was not nominated as quickly as Eisenhower, but he immediately distanced himself from the existing Democratic administration under Truman after receiving the nomination on the third ballot of the Democratic National Convention. Like the Truman administration, Historian John Diggins argues that Stevenson wanted to balance the budget and speak out in opposition to Senator McCarthy's red baiting tactics, but beyond those similarities Stevenson wanted to run his own campaign with minimal ties to Truman and his advisors.⁵⁶ Diggins was right in that Stevenson began to work to develop his own identity within the national Democratic Party, apart from unpopular Truman, but Stevenson also permitted Truman to campaign in his favor. As Truman was so unpopular, in some cases the support of Truman hurt the Stevenson campaign.

Following the Republican National Convention, the Eisenhower campaign took off on their own quick trajectory, as the General promised to end the war in Korea and lead the American people in the movement against communism.⁵⁷ One week before the election, Eisenhower promised the American electorate at an address in Detroit, Michigan that he would go to Korea himself.⁵⁸ This speech became a defining moment in

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 81.

⁵⁶ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 126.

⁵⁷ Melvyn P. Leffler, *For The Soul Of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, And The Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 97.

⁵⁸ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 125.

the Eisenhower campaign, and voters did not need an explanation as to how Eisenhower would end the conflict in Korea; they simply trusted that a successful military leader would be able to easily bring an end to the stalemate.⁵⁹

While clearly affiliating himself with the Republicans, Eisenhower demonstrated respect for former Democratic President FDR. The Republican nominee spoke highly of FDR when he discussed WWII, expressing, “I admired him as a world leader. The man exuded an infectious optimism; indeed, the thought of defeat apparently never crossed his mind, despite the fact that we were fighting two great wars simultaneously on opposite sides of the earth.”⁶⁰ Eisenhower made it clear that the popular president and the popular general were on the same side. This tactic was clearly political, as Eisenhower would need to win voters over from the Democratic Party if he wanted to win the election. The relationship between the two men bled into their families as well, FDR’s family favored Eisenhower prior to the nomination process, and in 1948 FDR Jr. joined the movement to draft Eisenhower to run as a Democrat. Even though that movement failed, the two families remained supportive of each other, tying Eisenhower, the Republican nominee, to a prominent family of Democrats. This is not to say that Eisenhower believed FDR was perfect, but he did seek to learn from FDR’s mistakes. He felt that Truman was unfit to take over after FDR’s death, which contributed to the level of unpopularity Truman found. In order to avoid similar issues, Eisenhower wanted to involve his running mate, Richard Nixon in all policy-making councils as to avoid a similar situation in his own administration.⁶¹ While the argument presented by William Leuchtenburg in favor of

⁵⁹ Eisenhower’s “I Will Go To Korea Speech” will be further examined in Chapter 5.

⁶⁰ William E. Leuchtenburg, *In The Shadow Of FDR: From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1983), 44.

⁶¹ Leuchtenburg, *In The Shadow Of FDR*, 52.

including Nixon in policy-making councils was accurate after Eisenhower's 1952 victory, the two men were often separate during the campaign and did not discuss personal views or goals to fulfill promises made during the campaign.

Beyond connections and the grueling nomination process, anti-communism remained a driving force during the election cycle of 1952, as fears of the global spread of communism permeated the American public. Senator McCarthy had repeatedly attacked the Truman administration, blaming them for setbacks against communism, as well as the communist infiltration into the American government.⁶² Stevenson made himself a prime target for the Senator when he vetoed a bill during his time as Governor of Illinois that required teachers and state officials to sign oaths swearing that they were loyal Americans and not at all affiliated with the Communist Party.⁶³ Cold War historian Melvyn Leffler argued that Eisenhower viewed McCarthyism as detrimental to the American image abroad and contributed to feelings of doubt in the American institution of democracy.⁶⁴ While Leffler's argument is accurate, in this particular work he does not go into great detail in discussing how Eisenhower handled the red baiting Senator. Eisenhower struggled to manage the McCarthy issue, as he could not openly denounce a member of his own party during an election year. Instead of taking on the support or open disapproval of McCarthy, Eisenhower allowed that aspect of the campaign to fall on his vice-presidential nominee, Richard Nixon. McCarthy supporters did not think that either candidate was firmly on their side, but Eisenhower managed to appeal to McCarthy's

⁶² Leffler, *For The Soul Of Mankind*, 97.

⁶³ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 99.

⁶⁴ Leffler, *For The Soul Of Mankind*, 137.

supporters with his quiet position on the issue, while Stevenson repelled those voters with his outspoken disdain for the Senator's tactics.⁶⁵

Republicans were divided on the issue of McCarthyism, which stemmed from their own party, but they did attempt to present a unified platform. Bernstein's work on Presidential elections specifically lays out the Party Platforms. The Republican Party platform in 1952 focused on anti-communism, military preparedness, and aid to Europe, all strengths of General Eisenhower both in the public eye and in his personal beliefs and experience. The Republican Party accused Democrats of permitting corruption in high-level government offices, shielding traitors, appeasing communism, and entering a war without congressional approval. They also blamed Democrats for allowing Mao to take power in China. The fall of China to the communists projected an image that the Democrats were not only soft on communism, but they allowed it to expand. Senator Taft, while blaming the Democrats for not preventing the fall of China, was also outspoken when voicing his disapproval of Truman and the Korean War, as the president had gotten involved in foreign conflict without an official declaration of war from Congress.⁶⁶

As they made their views of anti-communism known, Republicans also promised military preparedness at a lower cost than Democrats and they endorsed collective security.⁶⁷ Eisenhower's NATO involvement further fueled the collective security idea that the Republicans were pushing forward, even as the old right opposed internationalist organizations. The Party platform was enhanced with the selection of General

⁶⁵ Issues related to McCarthy will be addressing Chapter 4.

⁶⁶ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3215.

⁶⁷ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3233.

Eisenhower as the Republican nominee, and his reputation of a strong and successful military leader preceded his own campaign. His record of positive interactions with foreign leaders, as well as his NATO involvement provided to experience required by the Republican Party to support their platform positions regarding preparedness and security.

The Republican platform was vague in its pledge to provide aid to Western Europe. They simply addressed that eastern European nations who the United States failed to help fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. The Republicans never specified exactly what that aid would look like, but the promise of some form of aid fueled the anti-communist ideals held by the majority of the electorate to prevent even more nations from falling under communist influence. If a foreign nation was left in tatters after the conclusion of WWII, that nation would be more likely to succumb to communism or accept Soviet aid, which would inevitably permit Soviet intervention. Many American voters looked upon any indication of American assistance overseas as a strong anti-communist position. The Republican Party took a middle of the road stance with in policy involving Asian nations, openly criticizing the Truman administration's involvement in the Korean War without a clear plan to pursue victory, but also refusing to endorse General MacArthur's strategy of bombing China, a nation that had already fallen to communism.⁶⁸ In bombing a communist nation, Americans risked angering the Soviet Union, potentially leading to the feared nuclear war.

The Democrats faced a different set of issues from the Republicans, as only candidates who had distanced themselves from the Truman administration stood a chance in establishing themselves as independent from the existing Democratic leadership.

⁶⁸ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3234.

Stevenson distanced himself from the administration quickly after the Democratic National Convention, knowing that Truman's unpopularity would have a negative impact on his own campaign. The Illinois governor had established his own identity within the Illinois State Democratic Party and sought to do the same on the national stage. He had served under FDR in a variety of administrative roles and sought to draw on his ties to the beloved recent president rather than fall in line with the Truman administration, while drawing on similar ties to FDR that Eisenhower had used. Both candidates wartime service allowed them to claim connection to FDR.

The Democratic Party platform adhered to New Deal liberalism, including the extension of social security and unemployment compensation, as well as implementing a public housing program.⁶⁹ In the realm of foreign relations and anti-communism, the Democrats took a slightly different stance from the Republicans. They did not seek an immediate end to the Korean War, instead pursuing a "fair and effective peace," appearing softer on communist aggression in Korea than the stance of the Republican Party. Any appearance of being soft on communism pushed away a large segment of the American electorate, many of whom believed that Eisenhower would quickly end the war in Korea. The Democrats countered their own, less aggressive stance on the war in Korea with a greater emphasis on collective security than even Eisenhower and the Republicans had taken. The Democrats sought a balanced military force, rather than a stronger emphasis on the Air Force. They also strongly endorsed collective security through programs like NATO, the Marshall Plan, and the Japanese-U.S. military alliance of 1951.⁷⁰ Their focus on collective security harkened back to President Woodrow Wilson's

⁶⁹ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3240.

⁷⁰ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3240.

14 Points and the creation of the United Nations following WWI, but this time with clear American involvement in these institutions. Adlai Stevenson had served on the Woodrow Wilson campaign in his younger years, and he had demonstrated his belief in a higher level of collective security for the majority of his adult life.

While Eisenhower attempted to lean into his ties to a popular former president, the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, the Democratic Party sought to draw on the reputation of former President Herbert Hoover, the last Republican to occupy the White House and the man often blamed for the Great Depression. Democrats communicated to voters that they would be the party to fight inflation, while Republican Hoover had simply allowed the economy to crumble and inflation to continue, creating a depression.⁷¹ Bernstein's discussion of Hoover feels almost too soft. Following the depression, Hoover was toxic to nearly any Republican campaign. Hoover occupied a behind the scenes role with the Republican Party for the rest of his life.

The two political parties shared the goals of ending the conflict in Korea and preventing the spread of communism, but clearly supported different tactics in order to achieve those goals. Any plan that had been devised under the Truman administration was subject to intense criticism, which gave the Republicans the clear advantage when addressing strategies to reach these goals, countering the Democratic attacks revolving around Hoover and the economy.

In considering an aggressive campaign strategy, Eisenhower's life experience as an athlete and a fighter pushed him into a more successful position than Stevenson. According to Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose, Eisenhower though nine years

⁷¹ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3240.

older than Stevenson, appeared during the campaign to be more energetic. He travelled more, spoke more, held more press conferences, and always appeared fresh. Stevenson sometimes appeared exhausted along the campaign trail.⁷² In comparing the campaign papers of both Eisenhower and Stevenson, it is clear that Eisenhower did travel and speak more, although it is impossible to determine public perception of exhaustion or energy from written documents and schedules. However, Eisenhower's military training likely provided him with greater stamina throughout the campaign cycle than Stevenson's various administrative positions. Eisenhower ran on the image of being the great moral authority and avoided open clashes with the Democrats, which ensured that the election would come down to a decision based on personality rather than ideological differences, in which Eisenhower prevailed.⁷³

Eisenhower's clean reputation nearly took a hit when it was discovered that Vice-Presidential candidate Richard Nixon had been receiving secret payments from wealthy California donors. This challenge initially caused Eisenhower to distance himself from his running mate, as the General never wanted the appearance of any immorality tied to himself or his campaign. After Nixon delivered his famous "Checkers Speech," in which he pled his case for the forgiveness from the American people, the voters rallied behind Nixon, viewing him as the relatable family man who was just trying to get by.⁷⁴ This view is reinforced by news stories and phone calls following the televised address. Eisenhower quickly returned his support to Nixon, believing that the American people

⁷² Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 277.

⁷³ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 126.

⁷⁴ Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 126.

had a figure that they could relate to in their Vice-Presidential candidate, which would help his campaign.⁷⁵

Eisenhower also enhanced his image through interactions with the press. The General was more successful in relating to the press than Stevenson throughout the 1952 campaign, and in addition to his positive image in press conferences, he hired experts to make the best possible use of television. Eisenhower taped 40 twenty-second long television spots in which he addressed key campaign issues to ordinary voters.⁷⁶ These spots, archived on the website “The Living Room Candidate,” continued to make Eisenhower more relatable to the American electorate, while Stevenson did not appear in television commercials and continued to be viewed as less relatable by the American population. Stevenson felt that television spots were a cheap way for a candidate to sell themselves to the public, much like a pack of gum or a tube of toothpaste. A variety of individuals spoke in television spots on his behalf, but Stevenson did not take advantage of what could have been a very valuable opportunity to present himself as more relatable to the American electorate.⁷⁷

Stevenson’s best chance to win votes was in the South, where the Dixiecrat revolt had begun, but a large portion of the electorate continued to vote Democrat. The Republican Party essentially wrote off the African American vote before the campaign cycle of 1952 ever began. They wanted to bring African American voters into the Party, the logical desire of either political party, but Republicans were more concerned with winning the white southern vote, which had recently begun to slowly shift in their favor

⁷⁵ Nixon’s “Checker’s Speech” will be further examined in Chapter 5.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Eisenhower*, 87.

⁷⁷ Television spots will be further examined in Chapter 5.

with the Dixiecrat revolt, than they were with recruiting black voters. Therefore, the Republican Party made it clear that they would not impose any extensive federal power with regard to civil rights issues. They made public suggestions that the states should control their own domestic institutions, including racial divisions, but with the caveat that the federal government should have the right to take supplemental action to further just employment practices.⁷⁸ However, as the campaign kicked off, Eisenhower refused to simply ignore the white southern voters, even though the region traditionally voted Democrat. He began his formal campaign in September of 1952 with a trip through the South.⁷⁹ This departure from the traditional Republican thinking regarding the South is one of the many factors that made Eisenhower stand out to the electorate and shifted some southern white voters away from the Democratic Party.

Before the campaign could get underway, both candidates would have to endure a grueling nomination process. While neither candidate initially sought to pursue the nomination, both men eventually received their party nominations and fought to win the general election. General Eisenhower was reluctant to leave NATO in the beginning of the nomination process, but as he realized that Senator Taft would not support the level of international cooperation the General felt was necessary for global security, he decided to pursue the Republican nomination. In order to understand the two men's varying opinions, it is important to understand the different factions within the Republican Party, all of which will be examined in Chapter Two.

⁷⁸ Bernstein, "The Election of 1952," 3234.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 276.

Chapter 2

The Old Right Faces Off Against The Moderate Conservative

In the early months of 1952 the Republican Party was severely divided, leading to one of the most heated Republican National Conventions in American history. The party faced a split between Eastern Republicans, who were moderate conservatives, and their more extreme right leaning Midwestern Republican counterparts. The Eastern Republicans respected many of the existing New Deal programs that had been providing aid to a large segment of the population, although they would have preferred to see stricter restrictions imposed on those programs and their funding. While they did not approve of a large federal budget, they believed there was value in some spending in order to strengthen the economy. These Eastern Republicans also supported ongoing defense of Europe, and many members of the party felt western European security to be vital to American security interests.⁸⁰ These two factions of the Party were most clearly illustrated in the opposition between Ohio Senator Robert Taft, a representative of the old right of the Midwestern Republicans, and Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower, representing the transition from the old right to a more moderate conservative stance, even if just in 1952. In the culture of Cold War America, Dwight Eisenhower was to emerge the logical Presidential candidate in 1952, initially overtaking the representative of the Old Right, Senator Taft, and eventually Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson II in the general election.

In contrast to the Eastern Republicans, the Midwestern segment of the Republican Party, represented by Taft, was composed of more far right leaning conservatives. They

⁸⁰ David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World Of Joe McCarthy* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1983), 228.

felt that the New Deal was anti-capitalistic and they were opposed to big government spending for a variety of reasons. These Republicans also believed that labor unions were anti-capitalistic, and that made them a natural enemy to the Midwestern Republicans. This segment of the party held onto a laissez-faire belief system regarding the economy. Conservatives representing the old right believed in a free market that did not include imposing strict government regulations on business. With regard to Europe, this faction of the Republican Party opposed using America's limited resources on commitments that did not directly impact American interests.⁸¹ This opposition indicated that the old right felt the U.S. should be concerned about protecting its own interests with the looming threat of nuclear conflict, not spending its funds on nations halfway around the world. In many cases, this opposition extended to the North Atlantic Treaty Association (NATO). Eisenhower held the position of Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, and many of the representatives of the old right opposed his nomination because they did not support strong international cooperation.⁸²

With campaign season looming, the Republican presidential nomination for the upcoming election of 1952 naturally became a polarizing issue for the party. The Republican National Convention was to take place July seventh to the eleventh, 1952, in Chicago, Illinois.⁸³ A candidate needed to secure a majority of votes from convention delegates in order to receive the nomination, not simply have more votes than any other member of the Republican Party seeking to be placed at the top of the ticket.

⁸¹ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 228.

⁸² Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier And President*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991), 249.

⁸³ John R. Greene, *I Like Ike: The Presidential Election of 1952* (Lawrence: University Press Of Kansas, 2017), 92.

In 1952, Presidential nominees were not selected using a modern national primary system that awards delegates based on votes in state primaries. Only thirteen states held primary elections, meaning that only thirty-nine percent of delegates at the national convention had their votes determined by the Republican Party electorate in their state.⁸⁴ The votes of delegates representing states that did not participate in primary elections were determined in one of two ways. The state party caucus, essentially party leadership without consent of the everyday voters, could determine how their delegates would vote. This meant sending them to the convention with a decision already made for at least the initial vote. If the initial vote did not result in a majority for any candidate, they would either have a second choice determined by their state party leadership or have the freedom to select another candidate.

The final group of delegates consisted of a system that Taft, already a successful politician, could use to bury Eisenhower. Delegates were sent to the convention to be persuaded and wooed behind closed doors prior to the convention vote.⁸⁵ They were selected by the state party based on their views and which candidate they publicly supported but were not given a specific voting strategy. In addressing those delegates, Eisenhower and his supporters had their work cut out for them in order to offset the political network that Taft had developed throughout his time in Washington. While General Eisenhower had been overseas rather than engaging in domestic political involvement, Senator Taft had learned firsthand the how party politics functioned in Washington. Even if he did not know the individual delegates personally, he knew how to negotiate and persuade individuals to vote in his favor after serving in the Senate.

⁸⁴ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 45.

⁸⁵ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 45.

Beyond the battle between Eisenhower and Taft there were other Republicans who sought the nomination, and their convention delegates went on to play a decisive role in the nomination process. Their views and the sides they took along the ever-growing rift in the Republican Party allowed them to play a vital role in the campaign and election process. They could throw their support behind either the General or the Senator, and with that support their delegates representing states without a primary voting system could also be persuaded to vote for their preferred candidate if they decided to remove themselves from the nomination process.

One of the other moderate Republicans seeking the nomination was California governor Earl Warren. He was the frontrunner for the nomination early in the campaign season. The governor had been Thomas Dewey's running mate in 1948. Warren, from a Western state, shared many of the moderate views of the Eastern Republicans. In the early discussions, when Eisenhower's candidacy was an uncertainty, those backing Warren realized that his only chance to win the nomination was if Eisenhower did decide to run, as the party would be split.⁸⁶ Senator Taft did not support Warren as a candidate, believing him to be too moderate to maintain what the old right believed to be conservative ideals. Taft biographer James Patterson described Taft as anything but timid when it came to expressing these opinions, stating "it is hard for me to see how any real Republicans could be for Warren today. He certainly represents all the New Deal principles, and does not even recognize that there is any difference in principle."⁸⁷ In driving this point home with a harsh quote expressing Taft's opinion on Warren,

⁸⁶ Anne Emanuel, *Elbert Parr Tuttle: Chief Jurist Of The Civil Rights Revolution* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 86.

⁸⁷ James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 504.

Patterson was able to clearly convey that Taft and his Midwestern counterparts felt that the New Deal supported liberal programs that Republicans should never approve of, making the Governor the enemy of what they believed the Republican Party represented. Taft's opposition to Warren for being too liberal was very similar to his opposition of Eisenhower. The fact that both parties attempted to court Eisenhower early in the campaign cycle and Taft's accusations levied against Warren for not being a "real Republican" demonstrated how similar the two potential nominees really were. The Warren supporters were likely very wrong in their prediction that Warren's only real chance at the nomination was if Eisenhower entered the race, as Taft supporters would have remained with Taft, while Warren and Eisenhower would have split the more moderate segment of the Republican Party. This type of split would have created a victory for Taft, not Warren.

The other two key men vying for the Republican nomination demonstrated early in the process that they were not viable contenders for the top of the ticket. The potential candidates were former Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen and former Republican nominee Thomas Dewey. Dewey had run at the top of the Republican ticket in 1944 and 1948, losing both elections. Stassen had been a friend of Senator Joseph McCarthy, but they split due to a dispute regarding trade with communist nations.⁸⁸ Anyone who openly opposed McCarthy risked losing the support of the Republican Party, and Stassen was no exception. The Party response to this dispute served as an early warning to Eisenhower that he could not openly oppose McCarthy. Stassen held more moderate views than many conservatives in the Midwest and threw his support behind General Eisenhower when his

⁸⁸ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 295.

own dreams of the nomination were dashed, in turn tying more of the Republican delegates to Eisenhower.

Thomas Dewey was initially considered for the nomination, likely because he had run previously, but it became clear that he was not the candidate who could win the White House for the Republicans. He was not a strong enough presence, as already demonstrated in his losses to both Roosevelt in 1944 and to Truman in 1948. Dewey was a moderate Eastern Republican and an established party rival of Taft. With his beliefs that a moderate position was the future of the Republican Party, Dewey turned his focus to Eisenhower, redirecting his efforts to support the Ike nomination. He also advocated for Californian Richard Nixon as Ike's running mate in order to balance the ticket with regard to age and geography, demonstrating the knowledge that he had gained during his two failed campaigns. Historian Michael Bowen argued that Stassen and Dewey overcame the fact that they had been rivals for the Republican nomination during the last two election cycles in order to rally their delegates behind Eisenhower because they, like the general, feared that Taft's isolationist policies and fiscal positions would be detrimental to American interests within the context of the Cold War.⁸⁹ In presenting this argument, Bowen is accurate. Had any of the more moderate forces within the Republican Party remained divided, Taft would have received the nomination from a unified old right. Fragile alliances of moderate republicans were an absolute necessity in order to ensure an Eisenhower nomination. As moderate members of the Republican Party embraced this realization, the most competitive early candidates began to support

⁸⁹ Michael Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 116.

Eisenhower as they exited the nomination process themselves, leaving Taft and his supporters in the minority of the Republican Party.

In removing these three men from the discussion for the Republican nomination, two very different potential options for the top of the Republican ticket remained, Senator Taft and General Eisenhower. The available scholarship discusses that Eisenhower had no partisan political experience to speak of prior to the 1952 primary, but the Dewey faction of the Republican Party propelled him forward.⁹⁰ Eisenhower had never voted in any election and his experience in Washington was limited to the scope of his military service. In contrast, Taft had been elected to the Senate in the 1938 mid-term elections, when Republicans were struggling in Washington under the New Deal.⁹¹ Taft's election during a challenging time for the Republican Party demonstrates the support he had within his home state of Ohio, a Midwestern Republican stronghold. Eisenhower made it clear that he did not think politics had any place within the military service, and he often kept his views to himself in order to ensure he never spoke views that conflicted with military policy or image. Taft was open and clear with his positions and made Eisenhower's silence and lack of political experience key points in his public statements.⁹² Since his arrival in the Senate, Taft made clear his opinions of what the Republican party stood for, articulating his convictions better than many within his party, according to conservative thinker Russell Kirk.⁹³ While Kirk phrased Taft's outspoken behavior kindly, Taft primarily spoke for those Midwestern Republicans who supported more right leaning policies and views, which alienated much of the more moderate

⁹⁰ Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism*, 109.

⁹¹ Russell Kirk, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (New York: Fleet Press Corp, 1967), 41.

⁹² Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism*, 120.

⁹³ Kirk, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft*, 47.

segment of republican voters. These clearly stated Eastern Republicans, who made peace with the New Deal and simply believed that Republicans would administer the programs better than the Democrats, did often not support Taft's views, especially considering foreign policy and the economy.

Eisenhower's Washington experience stood in stark contrast to Taft's. The general served in Washington at the request of President Truman in 1948-1949. The Department of Defense had recently been organized as part of the post World War II military and budget restructuring plans, with James Forrestal serving as the first Secretary of Defense. Truman requested that Eisenhower advise Forrestal in his new role for a period of two to three months, which was an indication of the respect that Truman held for Eisenhower and his leadership abilities. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington battled for a larger share of the new postwar budget, Eisenhower continued to serve in an advisory role. After two years in Washington the budget related battles became too frustrating for Ike, especially when considering his strong belief that politics had no place in the military organization. He was eventually pushed to his breaking point, excusing himself from his advisory position. As he departed, Eisenhower stated that he was "convinced that Washington would never see him again except as an occasional visitor."⁹⁴ General Eisenhower left Washington and exited the country yet again to return to his role as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, a role that he never anticipated leaving in order to seek the presidency.

Eisenhower attempted to avoid politics as a military man, but various representatives of both parties often courted him. As he did not vote, he did not have a

⁹⁴ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier And President*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991), 245.

history with either party, allowing leadership on either side of the aisle to believe they had a chance to sway him. President Truman approached Eisenhower and attempted to convince him to run on the Democratic ticket in 1952.⁹⁵ There was not an obvious choice for the Democratic Party nominee, and it was widely accepted, both in 1952 and in the current scholarship, that the general credited with coordinating the Normandy invasion on D-Day and winning the war in Europe would be nearly unbeatable. Eisenhower declined, as he felt more comfortable with the policies of the Republicans and did not feel that he would be suited to represent the Democratic Party. The Democrats spending and social policies were simply too liberal for his views.⁹⁶

The Republicans also recognized that the decorated general would be a difficult candidate to defeat in the general election. In the fall of 1951, Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. traveled to Paris to meet with Eisenhower. Lodge, along with other supporters of a moderate conservatism like Dewey, believed that those in charge of the Republican Party, including Senator Taft, were not the men who would be able to lead the nation in the direction he felt was appropriate, especially considering the global climate where nuclear conflict caused by communist aggression was on everyone's mind. The Dewey segment of the Republican Party believed that a leader with diplomatic experience who had also proven himself in times of war would be an ideal leader during this period of uncertainty. The old right conservative positions did not appeal to the moderate party members, nor would they persuade independent voters who did not necessarily feel loyalty to either the Democrats or Republicans. Lodge felt that the only person who had a chance of saving the Republican Party, which had not occupied the

⁹⁵ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 238.

⁹⁶ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 229.

White House since Herbert Hoover had left office in 1933, was Eisenhower. Lodge became a leader in the “Draft Eisenhower” movement and sought to convince Eisenhower to seek the Republican nomination in 1952.

Eisenhower showed no interest in running for political office, even from the earliest rumblings of a potential nomination. During his time in NATO, Eisenhower stated in his personal diary on October 4, 1951, “The temptation grows to issue a short, definite statement saying No (in almost arbitrary language) to all the arguments that seek to convince me that I should accept (if offered) the Republican nomination for the Presidency.”⁹⁷ This diary entry was firm, but it was also very early. Eisenhower eventually reconsidered his firm stance on the matter, but largely due to his level of protectiveness over NATO and his ideas of international cooperation. The General had very little interest in pursuing the nomination prior to his realization that Taft would not support NATO. Eisenhower demonstrated his gradually changing views in a letter to his son in May 15, 1952. He stated “I have a very tough time trying to keep my own personal feelings and hopes from dominating all my thinking with respect to this political business. On the personal side, I should like to see the Republicans nominate someone else on the first ballot. On the more objective side, I can not disregard the convictions, beliefs, and efforts of literally thousands and thousands of citizens that I admire.”⁹⁸ Ike was coming around to the idea of the Presidency but was still not enthusiastic about leaving his position with NATO in order to campaign, as evident in sharing this sentiment in a private letter instead of a public statement. This letter also illustrates

⁹⁷ Diary entry, Oct. 4, 1951, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 12:608.

⁹⁸ Letter to John Sheldon Doud Eisenhower, May 15, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1211.

Eisenhower's concerns, as the Dewey segment of the Republican Party shared the same internationalist beliefs that Eisenhower felt were so important. The potential of someone else being nominated by the Republicans, and while Eisenhower would have been supportive of the idea of a moderate republican from the Dewey faction, he was also concerned that Taft could become the nominee, a possibility that never felt acceptable to Eisenhower.

Eisenhower eventually stopped shrinking from political demands as he realized that the Republican Party would not give up on this prospect of his nomination. The General was driven by his desire to serve, but he was even more driven by his strong focus on internationalism in order to maintain global security. Eisenhower grew to embrace the political process as the campaign progressed. He also recognized the likelihood of a Taft nomination if he did not agree to campaign. Holding political office was a different form of service the country compared to Eisenhower's lifelong career with the Army, but his desire to maintain international cooperation was jeopardized by Senator Taft's views. This change in the military leader's position because of Taft's firm stance on international involvement pushed him toward the nomination.

In the early months of 1951, Senator Taft claimed that he would not actively pursue the nomination: "I don't say I wouldn't take the nomination if it were offered to me, but I shall make no campaign to get it."⁹⁹ Taft's political ambitions were immense, as evident by the way he spoke of his opponents within the party. He was already serving in the Senate and viewed the presidency as the next logical step in his political career. The Senator was an intelligent man who realized that if Eisenhower were to be considered for

⁹⁹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 504.

the nomination, he would be incredibly difficult to defeat and worked to secure his own support before a challenge by the General could complicate the nomination process.

Strong personal ambition was not an attractive quality in a leader during the era of potential nuclear conflict, especially after the nation witnessed the horrors of ambitious individuals like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin when they rose to power in Europe. The European leaders allowed personal feelings combined with power to corrupt their administrations, leading to the death of many people in their respective nations. The American electorate appeared to desire strong leaders who could stand their ground against leaders of communist nations, but feared potential corruption within their own government if the person they elected became too entrenched in their own ideas. Taft shared these beliefs with much of the American population, stating in his foreign policy works, “recent wars have not been started by poverty stricken peoples, but by prosperous peoples, as in a Germany led by dictators.”¹⁰⁰ He believed that poverty did not spread communism and violence, corrupt leadership did. This statement provides an example of the old right position that providing financial aid to struggling nations was not the best course of action to keep communism from spreading. Allowing communists to achieve leadership roles, much like Mao in China, fueled the spread of communism in the eyes of the old right. Maintaining a level head and demonstrating a sense of devotion to the American way of life were the keys to political success in the United States, ensuring that potential candidates did not demonstrate anything resembling the level of personal ambition held by the feared European dictators. Eisenhower’s resistance to campaigning for the Republican nomination were clear demonstrations of those qualities, and Taft

¹⁰⁰ Robert Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1951), 15.

attempted to use the very same strategy in order to make himself more appealing to the American electorate than if he had openly stated his political ambitions from the early months of the campaign.

On October 16, 1951, Taft held a press conference to announce his candidacy for President. He stated that the majority of the Republican Party “really desire me to be the candidate of their party.”¹⁰¹ Taft announced his candidacy relatively early, but it was hardly shocking, and his statement about the majority of the party depicts a sense of confidence that remained unshaken until the Republican national convention. Taft’s clear political ambitions overtook his statement that he would not actively seek the nomination, realizing that he would have to make himself and his views known, especially within the conservative wing of the party and deeply conservative states. Winning the nomination over Eisenhower would require strategic thinking and planning by Taft and his supporters, which meant starting to campaign early.

It took nearly three months for Senator Taft’s worst fears to be confirmed. On January 7, 1952, General Eisenhower finally announced that he would accept the nomination from the Republican Party if it were offered to him.¹⁰² While the General still had no intention of actively campaigning for the nomination personally, he had a team of people from the Dewey machine of previous election cycles behind him who would do just that. Eisenhower did not have the same strategy as Senator Taft, and did not demonstrate the attitude Americans had come to expect of a candidate. In a letter to Eugene Collins Pulliam, publisher of the *Indianapolis Star and News*, Ike stated, “I have no intention of dwelling upon a number of details that may be considered to have vote-

¹⁰¹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 501.

¹⁰² Anne Emanuel, *Elbert Parr Tuttle*, 88.

catching appeal.”¹⁰³ Eisenhower would not make public statements simply to attract votes, but he did demonstrate throughout the campaign that he had strong options regarding internationalism and the Korean War. As strong as his views were, and as firmly as he believed that they were right for the nation, the General often did not articulate his specific plans for reaching his goals. Knowing exactly where Eisenhower’s priorities fell provided a sense of comfort to a population that was already on edge. He knew that his best chance to win the nomination was to embrace his image as a straightforward leader with a strong understanding of military strategy, a strategy he could execute throughout the campaign.

While Taft was campaigning to convince voters that his old right views would lead the nation in what he believed to be the proper direction, Eisenhower remained focused on his military service rather than making public statements regarding his political positions. Eisenhower was not a member of the very traditional segment of the Republican Party and he was not interested in changing his positions in order to appeal to their more traditionalist views. Ike was more concerned about his position with the Army than politics, as well as any harm that his campaign may bring to the image of the military. He requested to be placed on retired status with the Army on May 28, 1952, before he attended the Republican National Convention.¹⁰⁴ Retired status relieved Eisenhower of his fear that campaigning would alter the image or perception of the Army. However, in requesting retirement just before the Convention, he was unable to

¹⁰³ Letter to Eugene Collins Pulliam, May 21, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1234.

¹⁰⁴ Letter to Robert Abercrombie Lovett, May 28, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1238.

personally campaign, based on his own values regarding politics and the military. He knew that even without pushing for the nomination himself, he had a good chance of receiving the Republican nomination and put his military obligations in order accordingly; the Dewey machine took care of the campaigning for Eisenhower while he was still in an active military status. Eisenhower was willing to accept the nomination if he were selected, but he maintained his efforts to keep his military career and budding political career separate.

Image and public perception became an important factor during the race for the Republican nomination. In his push toward the nomination, Senator Taft began to make his positions in line with the old right very well known to the rest of the Republican Party, appealing to the Americans who did not support international cooperation. The public continued to view Eisenhower as the victorious general of World War II, the man who was able to maintain strong international ties using his position as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces, all while presenting a comforting grandfather image to the American electorate. Eisenhower had an image and reputation that he strategically cultivated in a manner that propelled his campaign forward without as much active campaigning as traditional politicians. This perception reached as far back as April of 1950, when a Gallup poll demonstrated that thirty seven percent of Republican voters would favor Eisenhower if he were to seek the candidacy, compared to Taft at seventeen percent. Additionally, thirty three percent of independent voters said they would vote for Eisenhower if he received the Republican nomination, demonstrating a clear appeal to voters outside the Republican Party.¹⁰⁵ Taft knew that he had an uphill battle before him

¹⁰⁵ Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism*, 112.

if he was going to engage in competition with Eisenhower for the nomination, and he had to fight for the support of his divided party.

Historian David Oshinsky argued that in the early months of 1952, Taft made clear his support of theatrical Senator Joseph McCarthy, believing that he would appeal to both the right wing of the Republican Party and to working-class Democrats.¹⁰⁶ McCarthy was a polarizing figure in American politics, often making accusations of communism or communist infiltration within various government agencies and departments. While some of the population in both parties appreciated McCarthy's attempted to ensure the security of the American government by chasing down potential communists, others opposed his tactics, believing he went too far and was simply destroying the reputations of those he did not agree with. It would not be long before he would be levying the very same accusations against Democratic political opponents throughout the 1952 campaign cycle. Oshinsky's argument minimized Taft's realization that even though he sometimes felt McCarthy went too far, alienating him or his supporters would bring an end to any of Taft's hopes for the Republican nomination, while fully embracing him would drive those who opposed McCarthy away from his nomination. Taft was forced to manipulate his discussions of such a polarizing figure in an effort to tie McCarthy's followers and those who opposed him to his campaign, while Taft himself was sometimes, but not always, in agreement with McCarthy. McCarthy became a political pawn throughout the primaries and even more challenging during the general election.

¹⁰⁶ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 229.

As Taft fought to rally the Republican Party behind himself, Eisenhower continued with his military tasks, including his leadership of NATO, demonstrating the two potential nominees' differing views on internationalism. Senator Taft, in opposition to General Eisenhower, made his views as a non-interventionist known. The debate between American involvement in foreign nations or remaining focused on domestic security created a situation in which the two Republican nominees had distinctively different positions. Taft did not want to see the war in Korea continue, or any conflict involving foreign nations, but also did not want to simply withdraw American troops and admit defeat. Eisenhower believed that a swift victory in Korea was vital, and that international cooperation was the key to preventing similar conflicts in the future. These differing positions became a key focus of the campaign as Americans sought to maintain the safety and security of their nation, fighting against the threat of both communist ideology and nuclear conflict.

The differing positions considering domestic focus and internationalism played directly into the party divisions between Eastern and Midwestern Republicans. Taft, desiring to focus on American interests rather than European security, opposed NATO entirely. In 1940 he delivered a speech in the Senate opposing the extension of the draft.¹⁰⁷ Patterson argued that Taft's beliefs were based largely on his fiscal position, as the Senator denounced excessive military spending and felt that temporary deficit financing while the defense production program was operating at a high level was unacceptable.¹⁰⁸ While Patterson is correct in stating conservative fiscal beliefs, it would be misleading to believe that members of the old right would not permit deficit spending

¹⁰⁷ Anne Emanuel, *Elbert Parr Tuttle*, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 504.

in times of crisis, such as WWII. Some voters believed that if the war in Korea did not end soon, it would have the potential to escalate into a larger conflict in which greater government spending would be necessary. Spending for the sake of peace would have been beneficial to Taft's campaign.

In 1951, Senator Taft published his beliefs on foreign policy; making it clear that quality of life for the everyday American was far more important to him than the security of rest of the world. In this work he stated that "we cannot adopt a foreign policy which gives away all of our people's earnings or imposes such a tremendous burden on the individual American as, in effect, to destroy his incentive and his ability to increase production and productivity and his standard of living."¹⁰⁹ In discussing incentive within his own foreign policy documents, Taft alluded to issues of communism, and an increased standard of living in a truly capitalistic society, the opposite of communism. Taft did not want Americans to sacrifice their lifestyle in order to protect other nations. Popular scholarship conveys that Taft firmly believed that it was not the duty of the United States to spread democracy to foreign nations, primarily because he was unwilling to extend American commitments abroad.¹¹⁰ This belief is further demonstrated in his own foreign policy statements, painting the picture of views deeply rooted in the ideals of the old right.

The conservative Midwestern segment of the Republican Party rallied behind Taft's opposition to extending American commitments abroad. This non-interventionist view had deep roots among old right conservatives, and not always for fiscal purposes.

¹⁰⁹ Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans*, 14.

¹¹⁰ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," In *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3221.

Non-interventionist views prevented Americans from immediately becoming involved in both World War I and World War II. In 1952 these views were exacerbated by memories of the Great Depression as well as fears of communism and nuclear conflict, driving Republican voters to firmly support either Taft's non-interventionist views or Eisenhower's support of international cooperation. The two viewpoints were very opposite ends of the same spectrum, and compromise was difficult to reach when addressing international involvement.

As the disputes between the factions of the party grew more pronounced, Taft and his supporters began pushing away the Eastern Republicans and moderates who believed that military defense spending was an absolute necessity in a world where the Soviet threat could become nuclear war at any moment. However, as the 1952 Republican National Convention approached, Taft began to begrudgingly embrace some level of international involvement. He maintained that NATO would drag the United States into a conflict without the support of the Senate and that a large defense budget would be harmful to the American tax base. Bowen argues that Taft began recognizing that foreign policy and security were areas in which he struggled to draw support, and he embraced the idea of military air defense, which required a relatively smaller budget and less troops than more traditional national defense methods.¹¹¹ Bowen's argument that Taft was willing to adapt and embrace some form of military security was an indication that Taft recognized that his foreign policy views could cost him the nomination. As this was as far toward international cooperation as Taft was willing to move, his specific ideas surrounding NATO demonstrated his clear opposition to Eisenhower's internationalist

¹¹¹ Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism*, 132.

beliefs. Taft's firm non-interventionist views became the issue that eventually cost him the nomination.

While Taft believed that aid to Europe would do irreparable damage to the American economy, Eisenhower finally began to make his views regarding international support clear before the American electorate.¹¹² The General believed strongly in the importance to NATO. He demonstrated his support in a letter to former Secretary of the Army Kenneth Caliborne on April 7, 1951, "I am so convinced that the safety of the free world depends on development of sound, practical, and effective cooperation among us all... that I do not see how any man can fail to respond to anything that has even the appearance of a call to duty."¹¹³ While this letter was intended for a former bureaucrat who Eisenhower had a previous relationship with, it continued to reinforce the argument that Ike had international cooperation at the forefront of his mind. All of his statements discussing NATO illustrate his belief that in order to prevent conflict, various nations would be required to work together. With the tense global situation developing alongside the Cold War, a firm stance tied to any plan that could provide safety to the free world appealed to Eastern Republicans, moderates, and even moderate Democrats who were already supportive of internationalist policies. This stance could potentially swing some Democrats to vote for a Republican nominee, particularly if that nominee were Eisenhower. The goal of preventing nuclear conflict was shared throughout the nation, and a candidate with a clearly expressed method to prevent that conflict was appealing to the broader American population.

¹¹² Greene, *I Like Ike*, 20.

¹¹³ Letter to Kenneth Caliborne Royall, found in Greene, *I Like Ike*, 26.

Eisenhower so firmly believed in the importance of NATO to global security interests that he even agreed to take himself out of the running for the nomination if Taft would agree to support NATO and the idea of collective security. Taft refused his offer, remaining committed to the idea that isolation was best for the nation.¹¹⁴ At the time of this offer the General still felt that his work in the new international organization was not complete, and he did not want to leave NATO until he felt the alliance was stable. However, this offer to withdraw his name from consideration for the nomination illustrated how committed the General was to the idea of international cooperation. He would remain with NATO if Taft would support the organization, otherwise he would challenge Taft in order to ensure that the United States supported international cooperation. Eisenhower was a successful military leader with strong global ties, which made it clear to the American electorate that an alliance like NATO was how he believed nuclear conflict and the spread of communism could be prevented.

Eisenhower believed in global cooperation to secure the world from the nuclear threat, but he also realized that the Soviet Union also sought to avoid war as much as the United States. Eisenhower often communicated this belief in clear statements to those around him, once saying that “I do not believe that the Soviets would in their own best interests, deliberately provoke global war. I believe that war is possible; moreover I believe that we can expect a continuance of various kinds of satellite conflicts in certain of our sensitive areas. Consequently I feel that we should figure out our strength objectives and push toward them steadily, but always having in mind that we should

¹¹⁴ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 34.

retain a strong and solvent economy.”¹¹⁵ In making this statement, the General clearly demonstrated his view that the Soviets did not want to engage in a global conflict, but satellite conflicts regarding ideology, such as the ongoing war in Korea, were likely to continue. From Eisenhower’s point of view, Americans should focus internally on growing their economy and the strength and technology of the military, but international cooperation must be continued at the same time in order to minimize the development of proxy wars around the globe while simultaneously bringing an end to the Korean War.

As Eisenhower began finally speaking up, making certain that the American people knew he believed in both military strength and a strong domestic economy in order to maintain national security, Senator Taft was battling to remove the United States from the world stage. Taft made it clear that he did not support proxy wars like that in Korea, or the Korean War itself, but he was even more strongly against these conflicts if the United States was perceived to be losing. Taft supported General Douglass MacArthur, who had proven to be a large part of the reason for American World War II victory in the Pacific theater with his exceedingly aggressive tactics. After World War II, as conflict developed in Korea, General MacArthur was sent to lead the American Forces on the ground. In Korea, the strong willed General proved himself to be difficult to control; President Truman was eventually forced to bring MacArthur home.¹¹⁶ Senator Taft was a part of the group of congressmen who entertained the idea of impeaching President Truman after he fired General MacArthur.¹¹⁷ Taft’s support for impeachment

¹¹⁵ Letter to Bernard Mannes Baruch, June 30, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1263.

¹¹⁶ Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross Of Iron: Harry S. Truman And The Origins Of The National Security State 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 331.

¹¹⁷ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 194.

demonstrated his desire to ensure that if Americans were involved in military conflict, it would be a conflict they were sure to win, and he viewed MacArthur as a winner.

MacArthur's reputation overshadowed his rogue tactics in Korea and Taft was not going to stand by and watch him be removed from the battlefield.

In further demonstration of his non-interventionist tendencies, Green argued that Senator Taft believed that the President had no right to commit troops to any foreign nation without a formal declaration of war from Congress, a common old right view.¹¹⁸ In considering this strong stance regarding when the military could be used, Green clearly illustrated a division placed before the Republican electorate. Green presents the obvious choice, Republicans had to choose between a commander in chief who would not deploy forces without first working through the bureaucracy of Congress or a military general who understood the functions of the Army better than most of the American leadership, had strong NATO ties, but may act without first seeking Congressional approval. In a period of potential global conflict, this distinction was glaring. If nuclear war were to become a reality, a quick thinking military leader in the White House could appeal to the American electorate in a much more favorable manner than a leader who would likely find himself tied up in bureaucracy.

Moving beyond the distinct differences in global security, domestic policies were a key concern of the American population. In the arena of domestic policy, Taft had the opportunity to separate himself from Eisenhower, as Ike had the clear support of the population due to his military service. The Senator realized that he would have to win over the white southern voters if he wanted to win the 1952 Presidential election,

¹¹⁸ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 20.

something Republicans had not managed to accomplish in previous elections, and he began campaigning in the South before the primaries ever took place.

Patterson argues that Taft demonstrated strong views in support of limited federal interference in individual states, an argument that he was strongly able to support in examining Taft's Congressional actions. He denounced a strong Fair Employment Practices Commission and opposed federal action against racial segregation in primary schools.¹¹⁹ In an era that was not only driven by fear of the Cold War but also by white concerns about the growing Civil Rights Movement, Taft's stance appealed to the white southern voters who often associated civil rights with communism. His position supporting limited federal intervention bolstered his support among white southerners, where the white population wanted to be sure that African Americans were kept in a subordinate status.

The Ohio Senator's support in the white South came largely from his agreement with "separate but equal" policies. He stated that Republicans "have a very difficult problem with the Negro vote" and that the party should "fundamentally oppose excessive government regulation and excessive federal interference with states."¹²⁰ Demonstrating a very traditional old right Republican view, Taft made it clear that limited federal government should not only apply to American aid in Europe, but also at home. Eisenhower had not yet made his views regarding the developing Civil Rights Movement known, which provided Taft with the opportunity to win over support from the southern states where maintaining segregation was potentially as important to the white population than international cooperation and security. The Civil Rights Movement increased the

¹¹⁹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 510.

¹²⁰ Taft quoted in Greene, *I Like Ike*, 21.

fear of communist ideology, especially with considering the leaders within the movement. Civil Rights historian Mary Dudziak argued that if any African American spoke up against any form of American policy, they were branded a communist, a common challenge for any American who promoted ideas outside of the mainstream.¹²¹ While many civil rights leaders were members of the communist party, there was not a clear racial line that tied African American leaders to the communist party. Open opposition to those activists who were potentially communists could sway voters toward Taft both in the primaries and the general election.

Despite Senator Taft's best efforts, the first of the thirteen states to hold primary elections did not bode well for him. The New Hampshire Primary demonstrated that Taft was more popular with party leadership than he was amongst the Republican voters of the general population. General Eisenhower took fifty percent of the vote in New Hampshire, while Senator Taft only received thirty eight percent. The low vote totals that Taft received were not for his lack of effort. In addition to campaigning for himself, Taft enlisted many prominent conservatives, including Douglas MacArthur, Herbert Hoover, Joe McCarthy, and Joe Martin to advocate for him.¹²² While Oshinsky presents this coalition of strong old right leaders, he does not mention that these men clearly did not depict the desires of the majority of the American electorate, as evident by Eisenhower's victory.

The collection of individuals supporting Taft represented a strong sense of duty to country, anti communist beliefs, and a far right conservative ideology, but they were not

¹²¹ Mary, Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 62.

¹²² Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 230.

enough to capture the votes Taft needed. McArthur was polarizing, because despite his reputation during WWII, his removal from Korea had left people questioning his methods and tactics. Herbert Hoover was the Republican President under which the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began, and memories of the Depression had the potential to make him radioactive to any campaign; Americans were not quick to forget the dire situation that they faced before the onset of WWII. Joseph McCarthy and his anti-communist crusades, while appreciated by one segment of the American population, alienated others. Joe Martin led a conservative coalition in the House of Representatives, pushing away moderate Eastern Republicans. Beyond these four men, Taft did not excel at bringing in strong individuals to be part of his campaign staff. Additionally, Taft failed to recruit some of the more progressive eastern Republicans, which meant that he did not do much to prevent these individuals from backing Eisenhower.¹²³ Taft appealed to his extreme conservative end of the Republican Party, as well as conservative southern Democrats, but not to the electorate as a whole, and the primary numbers demonstrate that he did not appeal to the majority of the Republican voters. This lack of appeal to moderates proved to be his downfall.

By the time of the New Hampshire primary, General Eisenhower had not campaigned heavily for himself or made much effort to be a part of the race.¹²⁴ Available scholarship explains that the Dewey machine handled the campaigning on behalf of Eisenhower before his military retirement, and this explanation defines the only probable reason why Eisenhower found success in the nomination process. In the wake of the New Hampshire primary, Eisenhower realized that a large portion of the American electorate

¹²³ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 512.

¹²⁴ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 229.

had the desire to see him campaign for the White House. He began to transition from his role of military leadership to one of a presidential hopeful. The New Hampshire primary proved to be the spark that began the campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower for President in 1952. The Republicans did not want a nominee who struggled to appeal to moderates, which was the scholarship suggests was the very definition of Senator Taft. They sought a candidate with an established reputation of strong leadership, and that quality was only enhanced with a smile and perceived image of a happy grandfather like the one presented by Eisenhower. The divided party spoke at the very first primary, when Eisenhower emerged victorious in New Hampshire without even being in the country. The nomination was yet to come, but this primary proved to be the catalyst that pushed Eisenhower to begin campaigning for himself. The Republican voters in New Hampshire had selected the general, and Eisenhower believed that the rest of the nation shared their beliefs.

From the time of the New Hampshire primary until the Republican National Convention met in Chicago, Eisenhower officially settled into retired status with the Army. Retirement permitted Eisenhower to transfer his focus to receiving the nomination, although he still resisted the idea of campaigning. Eisenhower no longer objected to the idea of running for office following his New Hampshire victory, because he believed that he could win. Taft and his team had believed that they had an opportunity to win the New Hampshire primary, only to suffer a disappointing defeat at the hands of Eisenhower, a candidate who did not even campaign for himself.¹²⁵ While encouraging the General to join the campaign, the New Hampshire primary also planted

¹²⁵ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 46.

the seeds of concern in the Taft camp. Eisenhower earned the first fourteen delegates that were up for grabs in the nomination process.¹²⁶ This single victory illustrates both the early views of a segment of the American electorate as well as the encouragement needed Eisenhower to pursue the White House.

Even with the encouragement of the New Hampshire Primary, along with taking second place in the Minnesota Primary as a write in candidate, Eisenhower did not return to the United States immediately. As the primaries began to swing in Taft's favor, especially in Wisconsin and Illinois, Eisenhower's team began to push him to return home. The Dewey machine was concerned that without campaigning, the General would enter the Republican National Convention in a significant deficit in delegates. Upon requesting to be placed on inactive status with the Army until the Republican National Convention and an announcement of an estimated return to the United States, the Eisenhower wave began to crest again in the primaries. New Jersey was the first primary after the announcement, and the General captured thirty-one of the thirty-eight delegates from the Garden State.¹²⁷ This reaction to the promise of Eisenhower's return home demonstrated how quickly voters rallied to support him, ripping potential delegates away from Taft.

When all was said and done, all of the Republican primary votes had been counted, and the delegates at the Republican National Convention were seated, Eisenhower defeated Taft in the race for the Republican Presidential Nomination in 1952. While Eisenhower's supporters were naturally thrilled, and a large segment of the Republican Party held fast to the realization that Eisenhower was their best chance to win

¹²⁶ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 47.

¹²⁷ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 49.

the general election, Taft's supporters were livid. Many felt that the liberals were taking over the Republican Party, removing the far right Midwestern Republicans from control of the party.¹²⁸ In this era of a divided party, the more moderate Eastern Republicans, and their candidate, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, had won.

The moderate faction of the Republican Party began to redefine the image of the right, a vitally important task after the perceived failure of their last President, Herbert Hoover. Conservative ideals and the Republican Party had to be redefined if Republicans wanted to retake the White House after nearly two decades. General Eisenhower, with his strong military background and positive public image, was that leader. The Republican Party finally had the opportunity to redefine itself, to start anew, especially since there was no clear nominee for the Democratic Party to replace the unpopular Truman. Both the Democrats and the Republicans had attempted to court Eisenhower, and at the end of the day the Republicans gained the advantage of his strong leadership and support for international cooperation. Eisenhower would be the Republican nominee for President in 1952. The next challenge would not arise until the Democrats selected their candidate later in July of 1952, which will be examined in the next chapter.

¹²⁸ Donald T. Critchlow, William Chafe, Gary Gerstle, Linda Gordon, and Julian Zelizer, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 46.

Chapter 3

Who Will Replace President Truman?

After the Republican Nation Convention nominated General Eisenhower, the Democrats found themselves in a bind. Eisenhower was easily the strongest candidate that the Republicans could have nominated, and he had strong poll numbers throughout the nation to prove that. President Truman's preferred candidate, Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, had already indicated that he did not want the Democratic nomination. The South had been a reliably Democratic stronghold, but the early portion of the Dixiecrat revolt had begun, in which some Democrats changed the affiliation to the Republican Party, had weakened the Democratic hold over the South. A nominee from the north had to potential to continue alienating the Southern Democrats, costing the Party votes, while a Democratic nominee from the South would be a gamble for Northern voters. Many Southern Democrats opposed the Fair Employment Act and bringing an end to segregation, while Northern Democrats generally supported these ideas. The Democratic Party faced a difficult decision.

In late July 1952, the Democrats met in Chicago to determine their own nominee for the general election. As the governor of the host state, Adlai Stevenson II delivered the welcome address to his party, but he had already indicated that he would run for reelection as governor, and not for the presidency. Stevenson's public addresses repeated his statement that he had not completed his work as governor in a single term, and he was very outspoken in stating that he was not interested in being considered for the Democratic nomination, something that he and Eisenhower had in common. The leadership of Stevenson's party would not accept this response, much like the Dewey

segment of the Republican Party would not accept the reluctance of Eisenhower. They pushed for Stevenson to submit his name for consideration. Much like General Eisenhower and the Republican Party, Stevenson was pushed toward running without the initial genuine ambition to run himself, eventually finding himself at the top of the Democratic Party ticket. Stevenson accepted the nomination upon realizing that his party lacked a logical alternative candidate who had national appeal, and that was a similar situation to the one Republicans encountered as they decided between Eisenhower and Taft.

Stevenson did have to endure the process of multiple votes in order to receive the nomination, but he did not experience nearly the same level of competition or hostility that took place between Eisenhower and Taft throughout the Republican National Convention. His biggest competition, as illustrated by very early poll numbers, came from Democratic Senator Estes Kefauver, who had served in both the House and the Senate prior to seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination. Kefauver was best known for his very public investigation of organized crime, one that linked prominent gangsters to the Democratic city machines.¹²⁹ Initially, Kefauver received more votes at the Democratic National Convention than other nominees, but as other candidates removed themselves from the running their delegates often moved to support Stevenson due to Kefauver's polarizing reputation.

Estes Kefauver was a forty-eight year old junior senator from Tennessee who became a household name because of his campaign against crime and the broadcasting of his criminal hearings on television. Prior to serving in the Senate, he had served in the

¹²⁹ David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World Of Joe McCarthy* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1983), 226.

House of Representatives for ten years; the people of Tennessee elected him to the Senate in 1948. Because Kefauver linked gangsters to Democratic Party machines, many powerful men in the party opposed his nomination. The opposition among leadership eventually led to his defeat at the Democratic National Convention, largely because without Party support Kefauver struggled to gain delegate votes.¹³⁰ The lack of support from Party leadership indicated a view that if Kefauver was not going to protect prominent party leadership from prosecution, that same leadership did not believe that he would have the best interest of the party in mind. Painting members of his own party as criminals could easily be interpreted as a driving factor in alienating Kefauver from a large portion of the Democratic Party, making him a polarizing figure that stood very little chance of receiving national support. Personal morality was never to be held above Party interests, especially if Party members were brought down in the process.

Kefauver biographer Charles Fontenay describes the television coverage of Kefauver's hearings as unprecedented, propelling him to greater public recognition than many other candidates among the American population.¹³¹ Fontenay does not downplay the early importance of television, and this coverage was the first of a campaign that would rely heavily on television as the election drew closer. Kefauver's supporters felt that he was the best chance the Democrats had to defeat Eisenhower's glamorous reputation if he were to receive the Republican nomination because of his criminal investigation and television coverage.¹³² Kefauver's national recognition, presenting

¹³⁰ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," In *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3235.

¹³¹ Charles L. Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 180.

¹³² Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 187.

himself as a politician who battled corruption domestically, was not as extensive as Eisenhower's, but his television coverage made him the most widely recognized Democrat pursuing the nomination. Both of Eisenhower and Kefauver had found national prominence that led to electoral support on their own terms, and that recognition placed Kefauver as the early frontrunner for the Democratic nomination.

Kefauver faced multiple other opponents from within the Democratic Party. Vice President Alben W. Barkley briefly pursued the nomination, as well as liberal Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, Oklahoma oil tycoon Robert S. Kerr, Alabama Senator and future Vice Presidential nominee John J. Sparkman, and Georgia Senator Richard Russell Jr. Russell and Stevenson would prove to be the downfall of Kefauver, while the other men were merely distractions until the time President Truman announced that he would not be seeking re-election.

Vice-President Alben W. Barkley served during Truman's second term and was oldest man to ever occupy the office of Vice President. Truman threw his support behind Barkley when he gave up on recruiting Stevenson, believing that Barkley could unify the fractured Party following the Dixiecrat revolt.¹³³ Northern and Southern Democrats varied in priorities, a division largely defined by segregation and the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Prior to holding the office of Vice President, Barkley served as the House Majority Leader during the New Deal. In 1950, Barkley campaigned on behalf of Democrats in the midterm elections, stepping up to help the Party while Truman was preoccupied with the Korean War and demonstrated his ability to speak up on behalf of his party. Popular scholarship presents the concern that by 1952, the Vice President was

¹³³ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3237.

viewed as too old to seek the nomination at 74 years old.¹³⁴ No party had ever put forward a man of his age, and he was suffering from failing eyesight but attempted to hide it. In addition to his advanced age, Barkley was the distant cousin of Adlai Stevenson, who was seen as his biggest competition for the Democratic nomination, even though Stevenson expressed no interest in becoming the Democratic nominee.¹³⁵ While Barkley's age was a factor in his eventual withdraw from the campaign, he also faced an insurmountable challenge in his clear ties to President Truman. Truman's unpopularity would have followed Barkley into the general election, likely leading to his defeat.

President Truman told Barkley at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner on March 28, 1952, that he would not seek reelection, in front of a crowd of people at a volume that no one could hear. After this announcement, Barkley was forced to make a quick decision and stated that he was available to run for office in 1952, while not actively pursuing a nomination. "While I am not a candidate in the sense that I am actively seeking the nomination, I have never dodged a responsibility, shirked a duty, or ignored an opportunity to serve the American people. Therefore, if the forthcoming Chicago convention should choose me to lead the fight in the approaching campaign, I would accept."¹³⁶ Barkley is historically presented as subscribing to the same school of thought of Eisenhower and Stevenson; political office was not something to pursue, but any of these men would serve if the public called them to. While this perception of Barkley can be accepted with some level of truth, Barkley was a career politician. He did not campaign for himself because, at his age, it was not the ideal time to actively pursue

¹³⁴ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 226.

¹³⁵ James K. Libbey, *Dear Alben: Mr. Barkley Of Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 106.

¹³⁶ Libbey, *Dear Alben*, 105.

higher office. He was reaching the end of his career. Vice President Barkley would not go on to seek any political office after 1952, although he was not opposed to being nominated for any elected office. While very experienced, his age and failing eyesight were key factors in his gradual withdraw from public service.

The Democratic Party leadership believed that Barkley could appeal to both the North and the South, but labor bosses blocked his nomination, fearing that Barkley was too old and that the big business forces would back him, securing too much influence within the party.¹³⁷ Labor bosses maintained a secure hold over the Democratic Party in 1952, allowing them to influence which nominee would ultimately occupy the top of the ticket. The party was already fractured, with Southern Democrats concerned about the Civil Rights movement while organized labor bosses were more concerned about big business owners finding support amongst the Democrats and hindering their bargaining power. In addition to general divisions between North and South, business owners and labor bosses, struggling individuals in both rural and urban areas were concerned about the continuation of the New Deal programs that were keeping their families financially afloat.

Barkley biographer Libbey argues that early in the nomination process Barkley and his supporters strategized that by allowing Kefauver, a New Deal program supporter, and Russell, a big business supporter, to knock each other out of the nomination process, and the door would be open for Barkley to step into the nomination.¹³⁸ This plan did eventually knock both Kefauver and Russell out of the nomination process, but Barkley had already withdrawn his name from consideration by that point. On July 21, 1952 after

¹³⁷ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3237.

¹³⁸ Libbey, *Dear Alben*, 106.

organized labor spoke out against him, the Vice-President withdrew from the nomination process. Barkley told the voters, "If by taking myself out of this race, I have contributed to the progress of the Democratic Party and the future welfare of the United States, and, thereby, have rendered a service to my country, then I am most happy."¹³⁹ In his withdraw address, Barkley expressed his desire for a nominee who would be able to defeat Eisenhower and unify the Democratic Party as a whole. If he was not the person to do that, he was happy to step aside.

Organized labor did not only fear the nomination of Vice-President Barkley, they also viewed Oklahoma Senator Robert S. Kerr as a potential threat to their interests. Kerr was the first native born governor of Oklahoma and went on to be elected to the United States Senate. In 1952, Kerr was a junior senator from Oklahoma and a millionaire partner of an oil firm, Kerr-McGee. He wore a button for his company in the Senate, and often voted to further the interests of his company.¹⁴⁰ This open demonstration of his company ties can be interpreted as a presentation of where his loyalty was focused. The organized labor faction of the Democratic Party was certainly uncomfortable with the idea of his nomination. Kerr, however, promised to withdraw if Truman decided to run, and announced his candidacy in March of 1952 after Truman withdrew and not long after Vice-President Barkley announced that he would accept the nomination if the Party selected him. Newspaper articles leading up to the Democratic National Convention indicated that Truman had not given any public support to Kerr,¹⁴¹ although Kerr

¹³⁹ Libbey, *Dear Alben*, 108.

¹⁴⁰ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3235.

¹⁴¹ Marvin L. Arrowsmith, "Wide Open Convention Predicted By Democrats" *Tampa Bay Times*, (Tampa, FL, March 31, 1952), 1.

supported most of Truman's foreign and domestic policies.¹⁴² Kerr found his downfall in putting the interests of Oklahoma first, neglecting high visibility issues like anti-communism and Civil Rights. His strong focus on his home state and his own business hindered Kerr's appeal among Democrats outside of his home region.

While organized labor feared the nomination of both Barkley and Kerr, there were two even less competitive Democrats considered in the early months of the nomination process. These men were Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey and Alabama Democrat John J. Sparkman. Humphrey ran in the Minnesota Democratic primary in 1952. He was Minnesota's favorite son and he was seeking to take delegates away from Kefauver, the only initial challenger of President Truman. Humphrey biographer Sheldon Engelmayer explains that Humphrey supported Truman's ideas and policies; he was not seeking the nomination for himself.¹⁴³ After emerging victorious in the Minnesota Primary, Humphrey still did not view himself as a legitimate contender for the nomination, he simply ran as a stand-in for President Truman in Minnesota because he did not support the idea of Kefauver challenging him. Humphrey's sole goal in running was to keep Kefauver from winning Minnesota's delegates. After Truman removed himself from the nomination process, Humphrey was not sure which candidate he would support, but he even made it clear to newspaper reporters that he did not believe that he was in a position to win the nomination for himself.¹⁴⁴ Humphrey clearly recognized that he was too liberal to appeal to a national audience, in addition to his general support of President Truman hindering his public support.

¹⁴² Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3235.

¹⁴³ Sheldon D. Engelmayer and Robert J. Wagman, *Hubert Humphrey: The Man and His Dream* (New York: Methuen, 1978), 124.

¹⁴⁴ "Democratic Contest Blows Wide Open," *The Morning News*, (Wilmington, DE, 31 Mar 1952), 9.

Humphrey biographer Sheldon Engelmayer argues that Humphrey was loyal to his party. For his brief period as a candidate for the nomination, Humphrey stated that he would “remain faithful to a Democratic Party political platform committed to the foreign policy of the administration and a domestic program of parity and progress for agriculture, full and equal civil rights for all, public power... , development and conservation of our natural resources, free and collective bargaining and defense mobilization.”¹⁴⁵ Humphrey’s statements demonstrated that he never believed that he was a legitimate contender for the Democratic nomination, but this particular statement conveyed his feelings of uncertainty as to which candidate would align with his views and positions. Direct association with the Truman administration would not benefit any candidate due to Truman’s level of unpopularity, and Humphrey supported their policies, associating him with a failing administration. Humphrey’s press coverage demonstrated that he was the most liberal of the potential democratic nominees as he fought for Civil Rights and equal opportunity for all Americans.¹⁴⁶

In contrast to Humphrey’s liberal views stood Alabama Senator John J. Sparkman. A Southern Democrat, Sparkman served in both the House and the Senate before becoming Adlai Stevenson’s running mate in 1952.¹⁴⁷ Sparkman aligned himself with Republican Senators in opposition to Truman’s defense plans, believing that his plan would increase inflation. This single position made it impossible for him to receive the Democratic nomination, as those who were more liberal would never support Sparkman’s alignment with Republicans on any issue. He also alienated those who were still loyal to

¹⁴⁵ Engelmayer, *Hubert Humphrey*, 124.

¹⁴⁶ “Selections From Speeches Placing Democratic Presidential Aspirants In Nomination,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, (Philadelphia, DE, 25 Jul 1952), 5.

¹⁴⁷ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3238.

President Truman, like Hubert Humphrey, after Sparkman demonstrated that he would vote with Republicans if their views were more suited to his own. His ventures across the aisle painted an image of a Democrat who could potentially join the Dixiecrats that revolted against the Party. Sparkman's moderate stance worked to his benefit when it came time to balance the ticket, as he was chosen as Stevenson's running-mate the day after the convention.¹⁴⁸

With the men who were not supported by large segments of the Party eliminated from contention, the Democrats were left to decide between Senator Kefauver and his biggest rival, Richard Russell Jr., as Governor Stevenson continued to resist the nomination. Stevenson remained committed to his re-election as Governor of Illinois. Truman promised his support to Stevenson, although Stevenson continued to show no interest in the White House.¹⁴⁹ Stevenson repeatedly stated, "I want to run for governor of Illinois – and that is all. And I want to be re-elected Governor – and that is all. And I want to finish some work we have under way here in Illinois – and that is all."¹⁵⁰ This particular statement was made the very same day that President Truman announced that he would not seek reelection, further reinforcing Stevenson's position of remaining in Illinois and not making the move to Washington. Remaining governor was a desire that Stevenson expressed in many public addresses prior to the Democratic National Convention, making it clear that he felt loyal to his state government and was not ready to move onto a national stage.

¹⁴⁸ Engelmayer, *Hubert Humphrey*, 126.

¹⁴⁹ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3236.

¹⁵⁰ Speech at Jackson Day Dinner, March 20, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 491.

Stevenson's political experience was not strictly reserved to Illinois. He had a variety of experience working with Washington officials during the FDR administration, but he never held elected office prior to 1948. The variety of offices that Stevenson worked for allowed him to claim a portion of credit for New Deal programs, developing credibility within the national Democratic Party. He had also served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy and Assistant Secretary of State, adding experience in foreign and military affairs to his resume. These positions provided Stevenson with experience in international cooperation that he was able to emphasize throughout his campaign in the general election. Like Kefauver, Stevenson had a reputation for cleaning up political corruption in Illinois, of being a reformer, and was known for his ability to work effectively with Party leadership.¹⁵¹ Unlike Kefauver, Stevenson did not televise his cleanup within state government, preventing the level of resistance that faced Kefauver from impacting the Stevenson nomination.

Stevenson was well aware of the "Draft Stevenson" movement to nominate him. He acknowledged that he would accept a nomination if he were drafted, but also begged the Party not to recruit him.¹⁵² His resistance to being drafted was made clear in all of Stevenson's public addresses stating that he wanted to remain in his position as Governor.

Prior to the kick off of the Republican nomination process, Stevenson hoped that General Eisenhower would run as the Democratic nominee. In a private letter to Alicia Patterson, Stevenson indicated that he would like to see Eisenhower as the Democratic nominee and that he believed Ike could defeat Taft in a general election, if Taft were at

¹⁵¹ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3236.

¹⁵² Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3238.

the top of the Republican ticket.¹⁵³ This letter demonstrated that Stevenson did not support Taft, but he could see himself backing Eisenhower in a general election. This letter also provides evidence that Stevenson believed Eisenhower would emerge victorious in the general election, and supports the fact that Stevenson did not desire to seek the presidency for himself.

As clear as Stevenson made himself in stating that he wanted to remain in his position as Governor, national political pressure still found him as early as 1951. On September 26, 1951, University of Hawaii President Gregg M. Sinclair wrote to Stevenson stating that he would like to see Stevenson follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and become Vice President. Truman had not yet removed himself from the 1952 election; there were already rumbles that Stevenson would be considered for Truman's running mate if he did decide to run again. Stevenson wrote a letter in response stating that Sinclair's "proposals did not coincide with either the realities here of my own ambitions. I have found Illinois about as much as I can handle, and then some!"¹⁵⁴ Stevenson's repeated statements that he was best suited to be Governor of Illinois paint a clear argument that he did not have any desire to enter the national political arena.

National pressure continued to be placed on Stevenson into 1952. On Jan 28, 1952, *Time Magazine* published an editorial story about a secretive conference between Stevenson and Truman, seeking to draw Stevenson into the spotlight as either Truman's vice presidential candidate or even to become to presidential nominee himself. The magazine speculated if Truman was actively attempting to recruit Stevenson to run as his

¹⁵³ Letter to Alicia Patterson, Oct 16, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 461.

¹⁵⁴ Letter to Gregg M. Sinclair, Oct 4, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 456.

vice presidential candidate or if Truman was asking Stevenson to run on the Democratic ticket as he stepped aside. The article concluded with a clear statement supporting Stevenson, writing that, “in a cold season for the Democrats, Adlai Stevenson is politically hot, and Harry Truman feels the need for a little warmth.”¹⁵⁵ *Time* magazine, along with other forms of media, were pushing Stevenson toward the national political arena, regardless of if he wanted to enter national politics or not, especially to aid Truman as his popularity fell. The Illinois Governor was becoming the only hope for the Democratic Party, although Kefauver and Russell attempted to derail the Stevenson movement.

When Truman announced that he would not seek re-election, reporters mobbed Stevenson to see if he would be the candidate Truman supported. Stevenson repeatedly emphasized in public statements that he wanted to remain Governor of Illinois. When asked if he would consider becoming a candidate, Stevenson responded “I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it.”¹⁵⁶ This statement further fueled the “draft Stevenson” movement, and hindered Stevenson’s own stance against running in the presidential election because he did not explicitly say that he would not accept the nomination.

Stevenson fought against his potential nomination by the Democrats, but Kefauver and Russell continued to push their way forward. Their relationships with President Truman varied. Kefauver did not openly oppose Truman, and he generally supported most of Truman’s programs. Any indication that Kefauver may seek the Presidency could have been viewed as a personal challenge, so the Kefauver primary

¹⁵⁵ *Time Magazine*, Oct, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 491.

¹⁵⁶ Arrowsmith, "Wide Open Convention Predicted By Democrats," 1.

campaign had to be handled very carefully. Truman was irritated with Kefauver because he could not keep the Democratic Party out of the organized crime investigations.¹⁵⁷ Despite Truman's irritation with him, Kefauver had a personal meeting with Truman on January 15, 1952. At this meeting, Kefauver informed the sitting president that he would like to run, but only if Truman was not seeking reelection. This discussion illustrated Kefauver's party loyalty, even though party leadership did not support his investigations. Truman admitted that he was undecided on seeking re-election, and Kefauver informed him that he intended to run as a "good Democrat," and hoped that Truman would not take his campaign personally.¹⁵⁸ This conversation demonstrated that Kefauver had national political ambitions but he did not want to undermine his own party in order to achieve his personal goals.

Kefauver never campaigned against Truman personally, but he did offer his alternative views on how to handle the conflict in Korea and how he believed that corruption in government needed to be addressed.¹⁵⁹ Kefauver wanted the UN to set terms for a truce in Korea, giving the communists a deadline to come to an agreement, and invade Manchuria if they did not comply.¹⁶⁰ This stance demonstrates Kefauver's dedication to international cooperation, much like both Eisenhower and Stevenson, but he was more aggressive in defeating communists in his threats to invade Manchuria. This aggressive position helped to build Kefauver's popularity among the American electorate because, even if they did not believe that this idea was the correct course of action, at least Kefauver had a plan to do something to resolve the stalemate. The Truman

¹⁵⁷ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 189.

¹⁵⁸ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 189.

¹⁵⁹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 197.

¹⁶⁰ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3235.

administration had yet to offer a solution to the problems facing American troops in Korea.

In contrast to Kefauver's attempts to run without personally offending President Truman, newspaper reports from 1952 presented Georgia Senator Richard Russell Jr. as a candidate who was primarily encouraged to run by anti-Truman southerners who sought to keep Truman from being re-elected.¹⁶¹ White Southern Democrats generally opposed Truman because of his efforts to end segregation, beginning with the military, while Dixiecrats sought to preserve their segregated way of life, leading the Southern press to promote a Democratic nominee from their region. Russell had served as Georgia Governor before being elected to the Senate. Russell biographer Gilbert Fite presented the Georgia Senator as not interested in running for President, much like Eisenhower, Stevenson, and even Vice-President Barkley. Russell believed that he could better serve the South from the Senate and that even if he received the Democratic nomination it was not the right time for a southern Democrat to win the White House, largely due to the varying opinions related to Civil Rights in the North and South. The Georgia Senator predicted that Eisenhower would win regardless of which party placed him at the top of the ticket, which was proving to be a common view amongst all potential candidates. Despite Russell's reluctance, on January 30, 1952, the Georgia House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution urging him to seek the Democratic nomination.¹⁶² Russell pursued the nomination primarily because Southern Democrats pushed him forward, but knew that the national party viewed him as uncompetitive because of his ties

¹⁶¹ Arrowsmith, "Wide Open Convention Predicted By Democrats," 1.

¹⁶² Gilbert C. Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr., Senator From Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 272.

to the Deep South.¹⁶³ Because Russell supported segregation he became a candidate who alienated Democratic voters in the North, but carried strong appeal to voters in the South.

Historians acknowledge that Russell opposed many liberal positions. He was an archenemy of the Fair-Deal, one of the most powerful men in the Senate as head of the Southern Caucus, and chairman of the Armed Services Committee. He maintained a connection to the Republican Party as he blocked Truman's domestic programs and reform policies, putting him into the same moderate category as Senator Sparkman.¹⁶⁴ His willingness to work across the aisle with Republicans created a situation in which both potential nominees were not always viewed as loyal to the Democratic Party. The fact that they were Southern Democrats made these compromises even more problematic; Democrats had witnessed the Dixiecrat revolt in recent years and did not want to nominate potential candidates who may convert to the Republican Party like many of their southern cohorts.

While Russell worked to block many of Truman's policies, he did generally agree with the Truman administration's foreign policy, but would have modified their tactics. He believed that the U.S. should be providing less military and economic aid to free nations resisting communism, but he did support strategies of resistance and containment. He sought "new methods" to end the Korean War, but never specified what those methods might be. It was not until February 28, 1952, that Russell formally announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination. He called himself a "Jeffersonian Democrat," emphasizing local and states rights over federal authority. This focus on states rights allowed him to avoid openly mentioning Civil Rights in the nomination

¹⁶³ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 226.

¹⁶⁴ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3235.

process. However, his voting record against the Fair Employment Practices Commission and similar legislation found itself quickly picked up by reporters, who made his views on Civil Rights openly known to the entire Party, as well as the electorate.¹⁶⁵ Northern Democrats who supported Civil Rights legislation hesitated to support a candidate who permitted states to make their own decisions, believing that Russell would likely hinder progress toward Civil Rights.

With the exception of his views on Civil Rights, Russell was more in line with mainstream Democrats than many other Democrats from the South.¹⁶⁶ Russell worked hard to keep his positions on Civil Rights to himself, but his voting record illustrated his views for him, ultimately costing him the 1952 nomination. He remained loyal to the Democrats after the Dixiecrat revolt in 1948, but his candidacy was little more than a ploy to gain leverage with the party for southern interests.¹⁶⁷ Russell fought the image of being entirely focused on southern interests throughout his campaign, telling various reporters that he had the best interests of all Americans at heart, and although he believed that the south had some issues that were misunderstood by the rest of the country. Much like Kerr's focus on Oklahoma's interests, Russell was perceived nationally as being focused solely on Southern interests, upsetting Northern Democrats. Civil Rights continued to play a key role in a region still wounded by the Dixiecrat revolt, undermining Russell at practically every turn. Fite described Russell's potential nomination as an issue for labor and minority groups to overcome, not a viable candidate for the Party nomination, and he was unable to overcome that image to win the

¹⁶⁵ Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr.*, 274.

¹⁶⁶ Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr.*, 272.

¹⁶⁷ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3235.

Democratic Primary.¹⁶⁸ In that sense, Fite was correct; Russell's southern appeal worked against him all the way through the Democratic National Convention, but because he had such strong support in his home region, he did not withdraw.

As Russell worked to eliminate the impact of Civil Rights and the labor leadership's efforts to derail his campaign, Estes Kefauver was busy entering various primary races across the nation. He managed to defeat President Truman in the New Hampshire Primary, winning 19,800 votes to Truman's 15,927. This primary loss was the initial push that ultimately led to Truman withdraw from the race, and it confirmed his unpopularity in an election rather than a pre-election poll.¹⁶⁹ 1952 newspapers believed that Kefauver would emerge victorious in the Wisconsin primary. Truman withdrew himself from consideration shortly before the primary took place, leaving the door wide open for Kefauver to maintain a stronghold over those delegates, as reported in 1952 newspaper coverage.¹⁷⁰ This early coverage was accurate and Kefauver emerged victorious in many of the primaries, even winning in Adlai Stevenson's home state of Illinois. Stevenson still would not commit to run but many simply wrote him in for the nomination, resulting in a Kefauver victory with 526,301 votes while Stevenson won 54,336 write in votes.¹⁷¹ Stevenson's numbers were substantial for a write in candidate who indicated that he did not want to run, but Kefauver was emerging as the next presidential nominee for the Democratic Party, while Russell struggled to remain competitive throughout the nomination process.

¹⁶⁸ Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr.*, 292.

¹⁶⁹ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3236.

¹⁷⁰ "Kefauver Seems Sure Winner In Wisconsin," *The Tampa Bay Times*, (Tampa, FL, 31 Mar 1952), 2.

¹⁷¹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 200.

While Kefauver gained steam within the electorate, Stevenson's resolve began to crumble. In a letter to Charles S. Murphy, Special Council to President Truman, Stevenson wrote that if, under extraordinary circumstances, he were to run for President, he believed that "I think the inconsistency and insincerity of my candidacy for Governor would be quickly apparent," demonstrating both a shift in Stevenson's dedication from the position of Governor and into a that of a potential presidential nominee.¹⁷² Stevenson recognized that he would need to withdraw from the race for Governor if he were to pursue the Presidency, or risk appearing insincere in running for both offices. Stevenson's repeated statements of his devotion to Illinois demonstrated that he clearly did not want to withdraw from the race for Governor. In the same letter, Stevenson stated that if Truman did not run and could not come up with a suitable alternative, he would accept the nomination, but likened himself to Ike in saying "I will reach a prompt decision if he wants me, but a la Eisenhower, I can't sincerely and consistently go out and campaign for the nomination."¹⁷³ This statement made Stevenson's view, as well as the public perception of the Eisenhower campaign, abundantly clear; neither man showed any interest in seeking their Party's nomination, but if it were given to them they would pursue the Presidency with every ounce of effort they could muster. Just as Eisenhower was happy and satisfied in his NATO post, Stevenson was content to remain Governor of Illinois and did not want to compromise his dedication to his state with a run for the presidential nomination.

¹⁷² Letter to Charles S. Murphy, March 17, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 533.

¹⁷³ Letter to Charles S. Murphy, March 17, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 535.

The Illinois Governor did not support the “draft Stevenson” movement. At a press conference in Houston, during the annual Conference of State Governors on June 30, 1952, he made his opposition to this movement clear. “I have not participated, nor will I participate, overtly or covertly, in any movement to draft me. Without such participation on my part, I do not believe that any such draft can or will develop. In the unlikely event that it does, I will decide what to do at that time in light of the conditions then existing.”¹⁷⁴ Stevenson was not openly stating that he would not accept the nomination at his press conference, but he did tell voters that he had no desire to be considered. What the rest of the Democratic Party felt about the situation would be left to their discretion, Stevenson did not see himself as the future President of the United States. His public statements were intended to tell not only the Democratic Party leadership, but also the American voters, that he wanted to remain in state government.

Stevenson’s indifference to his own nomination continued through the opening of the Democratic national convention on July 21, 1952. As the Governor of home state of the Democratic National Convention, Stevenson delivered the welcome address. To his surprise, this address drew even more Democrats to him and added fuel to the fire for drafting him. Stevenson entered the convention without having declared himself a nominee, but he had the support of sitting President Truman, the Democratic Party leaders, and organized labor.¹⁷⁵ Stevenson continued to resist into the convention, and it was not until July 24th, the third day of the convention, when he finally decided to

¹⁷⁴ Letter to Edison Dick, June 29, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 577.

¹⁷⁵ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 227.

become a candidate. Truman returned his public support to Stevenson immediately, indicating that he was clearly Truman's first choice for the nomination.¹⁷⁶

Stevenson's official declaration threw the Democratic National Convention into a whirlwind of a nomination process, all in the Governor's favor. Estes Kefauver won more votes than anyone else on the initial ballot, but without the majority he did not secure the nomination. This left the door open for delegates to begin to shift their support, much as they had during the Republican Primary earlier in the same month. Kefauver's antagonism of party leadership, tied to the very issue that put his face all over American televisions, built him public recognition, and helped him to victory in many state primary elections was exactly the issue that undermined him when the convention arrived.¹⁷⁷

Senator Russell met a similar fate to that of Kefauver. He was competitive on the first ballot, receiving only five fewer votes than Stevenson and 72 fewer than Kefauver, but by the second ballot many of the delegates began shifting toward Stevenson. Russell knew that he had lost the nomination as delegates pulled away, but the scholarship addressing Russell makes it clear that he never expected to win.¹⁷⁸ Russell's supporters had encouraged him to remain in the nomination process for the first ballot in order to deadlock the nomination process between Kefauver, Stevenson, and Russell, the same strategy that Barkley's supporters had encouraged immediately following President Truman's announcement to not seek reelection. The majority of party members who supported Russell vehemently opposed the nomination of Kefauver and his lack of party loyalty. If Russell were to remain in contention in the early ballots, he could take

¹⁷⁶ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3238.

¹⁷⁷ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3238.

¹⁷⁸ Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr.*, 295.

potential votes from the Kefauver camp and keep Kefauver from receiving the nomination of the first ballot. Eventually, as the delegates began to shift, they supported Stevenson, allowing the Illinois governor to emerge as the nominee over Kefauver.¹⁷⁹

The supporters of Russell, along with those who were a part of the “draft Stevenson” movement, saw their plan come to fruition. After three ballots, candidates gradually withdrew from the nomination process, leading to the unanimous nomination of Stevenson.¹⁸⁰ Stevenson delivered his acceptance address on July 26, 1952. The Governor remained humble as his party pursued and selected him to occupy the top of the ticket for the Democrats. After stating that he did not seek the Presidency, Stevenson made his position clear: “I revere the office of the Presidency of the United States. And now, my friends, that you have made your decision, I will fight to win that office with all my heart and soul.”¹⁸¹ While he claimed to not want the nomination, he had been loyal to the Democratic Party all of his life and was not about to let them down. He would push to defeat General Eisenhower on behalf of his Democratic Party and those who fought to nominate him.

Stevenson took a moment during his acceptance address to “pay my humble respects to a very great and good American, whom I am proud to call my kinsman, Alben Barkley of Kentucky.”¹⁸² This simple statement further presented Stevenson’s party loyalty. He was the nominee, but Barkley had proven himself a loyal Vice-President and supporter of President Truman. Even as Barkley removed himself from the nomination

¹⁷⁹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver*, 208.

¹⁸⁰ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3239.

¹⁸¹ Nomination Acceptance Address, July 26, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV:16.

¹⁸² Nomination Acceptance Address, July 26, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV:17.

process he made it known that he was stepping aside because he believed that it was in the best interest of the Party and the nation. Stevenson sought to model himself after Barkley, who he felt illustrated everything he believed a loyal Democrat should be, and throughout the campaign he appeared to attempt to follow in the footsteps of respected Democrats like Woodrow Wilson.

After Stevenson was selected as the Presidential nominee, Frank McKinney, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, along with several other prominent Democrats, approached Russell to see if he had interest in being Stevenson's running-mate. Russell firmly declined, but he did recommend John J. Sparkman, who would end up on the ticket; Sparkman was also Truman's choice for Vice-President.¹⁸³ This combination of a two moderate Democrats, one from the North and one from the South, created a balanced ticket in which Stevenson, a northern Democrat who came from a well known and well connected political family was paired with a Southern Senator who supported the ideas of segregation, earning the support of white southern voters. The team of Stevenson and Sparkman was the best chance that the Democrats had at holding together two very different segments of their Party.

Stevenson and Sparkman were about to enter a heated political campaign. Television began taking a prominent role in American life, leading to television coverage of a campaign that the nation had never seen. Candidates debated the onset of the Cold War, the fear of Communism fueled by Joseph McCarthy, and the Korean War in public speeches, press conferences, and television advertisements. The variety of challenges facing the nation created a nervous electorate, particularly considering the fear of

¹⁸³ Fite, *Richard B. Russell Jr.*, 296.

communism. Communist ideology was linked to the threat of nuclear war, a terrifying thought for the American people, and became an issue that both Stevenson and Eisenhower would have to navigate before the American electorate.

Chapter 4

The McCarthy Problem

With the rising global concerns tied to the Cold War at the forefront of the election, both candidates were forced to quickly address issues related to communism. Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy was a leading figure in the United States anti-communist movement, but he exercised extreme tactics in his efforts to find and prosecute communists throughout the nation. His biggest targets were often political opponents, and this made him a complicated figure in the eyes of the electorate. Both Eisenhower and Stevenson were required to address the McCarthy problem quickly, but Stevenson had an easier time than Eisenhower in confronting the controversial Senator. Eisenhower and McCarthy were members of the same Party, creating a situation in which Eisenhower had to use caution in handling the Senator's attacks.

Both candidates began to face an onslaught of attacks from opponents, and Senator Joseph McCarthy naturally became one of the leading figures. McCarthy was initially elected to the United States Senate in 1946, as a traditional Midwestern conservative from Wisconsin. Ellen Schreckler's work about McCarthyism suggests that red baiting was a common tactic used by the Republican Party in 1946, so his campaign did not stand out. Attempts to find and eliminate communists from government, or any position of influence, rose to prominence quickly in the American public eye. McCarthy served as the face of anti-communism in America, and he knew how to get his message on the front page of the newspapers better than most of the other anti-communist government officials.¹⁸⁴ Historians widely and correctly acknowledge that he was a loud

¹⁸⁴ Ellen Schreckler, *Many Are The Crimes: McCarthyism In America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 241.

and controversial figure who made accusations of communists in the State Department, President Truman's administration, and the U.S. Armed Forces.

In the months leading up to the election of 1952, McCarthy and his supporters grew more vocal. McCarthy advocated the firing of many high-level government officials prior to the election of 1952, including Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, a friend and mentor of General Eisenhower, and he called for the impeachment of President Truman. Even though McCarthy was a Republican senator, his anti-communist ideas appealed to voters of both parties, creating a situation in which General Eisenhower and Governor Stevenson had to both exercise caution in managing their efforts to challenge his ideas and tactics. Making their own views known while not offending the electorate proved more challenging to Eisenhower than Stevenson, and the Illinois Governor navigated the troubling waters of McCarthyism in a more clear and decisive manner than Eisenhower could ever hope for himself, primarily due to the General's political affiliation.

Eisenhower learned very quickly to proceed with caution when addressing the Senator and his supporters. The General avoided challenging McCarthy in public, although historians acknowledge that it was common knowledge that he despised McCarthy. Eisenhower believed that McCarthy's attacks on government personnel were simply name-calling, not accusations based on facts.¹⁸⁵ These beliefs are supported both in Eisenhower's personal papers and the secondary literature on McCarthyism. The Republican Party, particularly the more traditional members of the old right, followed up the Republican National Convention in questioning Eisenhower's Party loyalty almost

¹⁸⁵ David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World Of Joe McCarthy* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1983), 235.

immediately because of his views on McCarthy. Eisenhower was asked if he would support red-hunters like Senator McCarthy, and the Republican nominee stated that he would endorse all GOP candidates, but would not support the unjust damaging of anyone's reputation.¹⁸⁶ This position of not speaking in open opposition to red bating while also not denouncing the Wisconsin Senator's tactics created a situation in which Eisenhower often appeared to waver on the issue, his largest weakness during the campaign.

Eisenhower's strategy in addressing McCarthyism began to fail from practically the second he began to address the issue. He spoke up against communist infiltration in the government, but also against character assassination. Newspapers addressed the fact that Eisenhower never called McCarthy out by name but also did not encourage his tactics.¹⁸⁷ The Republican nominee did not plan to visit Wisconsin at the onset of the campaign cycle, but he quickly recognized that avoidance was not an option. Eisenhower needed to campaign in McCarthy's home state, which meant that he had no choice but to take a firm position regarding the Wisconsin Senator and his tactics. Eisenhower's rival from the Republican National Convention, Senator Taft, further illustrated the differences between himself and Eisenhower through his encouragement of McCarthy and his tactics, believing that if one case against a political opponent did not work out, he could simply bring up another case.¹⁸⁸ While Eisenhower disagreed with Taft's position and McCarthy's tactics, he was also well aware that the Republican nomination process was

¹⁸⁶ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," In *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3245.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph and Stewart Alsop, "Silent Treatment For McCarthy," *The Decatur Daily Review*, (Decatur, IL, 5 Aug 1952), 6.

¹⁸⁸ Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes*, 244.

much more contested than the Democrats, and party unity was a requirement in order to win the general election. Eisenhower had to be cautious and not alienate the “Old Right” segment of the Republican Party, and they were the voters who supported Taft and McCarthy. Eisenhower did not speak against McCarthy by name because his election strategy was “to do everything possible, from personal appeal to public endorsement, to appease the extreme right wing of the party,” as documented in a 1952 Midwestern newspaper.¹⁸⁹ Without the support of the old right, Eisenhower’s chances of winning the White House were doomed, and he clearly understood that as he tried to balance the McCarthy problem with his own personal views.

Eisenhower cautiously attempted to make it clear in private, to his personal friends, that he did not support what he believed to be smear tactics; while continuing to not openly criticize McCarthy or other Republicans. Eisenhower wrote in a private letter, “I am never going to condone smear practices that are not only un-American, but are unjust and repugnant to our sense of fair play. Even though we may condemn the practices of some individuals who have been nominated by the Republicans in certain of our states, the fact remains that every candidate who is on the Republican slate had been placed there by some legal process with presumably reflects the will of the Republican citizens of his state or district.”¹⁹⁰ This letter demonstrated Eisenhower’s respect for the American electoral system, and even the voters themselves. Eisenhower did not even mention McCarthy by name in private correspondence, although he often expressed that the name-calling accusations made without evidence were nothing more than attempts to

¹⁸⁹ Alsop, “Silent Treatment For McCarthy,” 6.

¹⁹⁰ Letter to Eugene and Helen Henley, August 19, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1328.

destroy a public figure's image. This concern clearly alluded to redbaiting politicians like McCarthy, but also demonstrated the General's desire to avoid open disagreement with members of his own Party.

Eisenhower kept this opinion largely to himself in the public eye, but he discussed it privately with those he trusted. Eisenhower also made it clear in correspondence that he was aware of the desires of the electorate. In another personal letter, Eisenhower said that "if a Wisconsin primary names an individual as its Republican candidate and I should oppose him on the ground that he is morally unfit for office, I would be indirectly accusing the Republican electorate of stupidity, at the least, and of immorality at the most."¹⁹¹ This letter provided further evidence of Eisenhower's awareness that he needed to appeal to the entirety of the Republican Party, and he was walking a fine line, having to work exceptionally hard not to alienate voters. In an already heated election cycle, losing votes from members of his party was simply unacceptable. Eisenhower needed to maintain all of the Republican votes possible, as well as sway some independents and some Democrats to his side if he wanted to find himself in the White House.

Eisenhower's position on communism was tied to the "McCarthy Problem." Opposition to McCarthy's tactics bridged party lines, just as his supporters spanned both parties. Many influential Eastern Republicans opposed McCarthy's tactics; if Eisenhower endorsed McCarthyism he would alienate the people who put him at the top of the Republican ticket. Taft endorsed McCarthy, which meant that if Eisenhower spoke against him he would risk alienating Taft supporters, a necessary voting bloc. In taking a firm stance on either side of the McCarthy issue, Eisenhower could potentially deter

¹⁹¹ Letter to Edward Meade Earle, September 2, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1345.

independent voters who he needed in order to win the general election.¹⁹² While some independents, and even Democrats, supported McCarthy and feared communist infiltration within the United States, others thought that the tactics of red baiting went too far and could ruin the reputation of any individual accused of communism. Those voters who opposed redbaiting were aligned with Eisenhower's personal views, but he could not afford to alienate those on the other side by speaking up in clear agreement with the opposition. Eisenhower found himself in a delicate balancing act that could potentially cost him the White House if he did not manage the situation correctly.

The biggest challenge that Eisenhower faced when dealing with Senator McCarthy was McCarthy's attacks on General George C. Marshall. General Marshall had been a friend and mentor to General Eisenhower throughout his time in the Army, but Marshall had also served as Secretary of Defense under President Truman, making him a target for Senator McCarthy. McCarthy leveled accusations against Marshall largely because of his position within the Truman administration as China fell to communism and the war in Korea began, although Marshall was never an advocate for communism and fought for the tactics and methods he believed would best protect American interests. Eisenhower was left with a dilemma. Historians acknowledge that Eisenhower wanted to defend his friend and mentor, but he had to find a way to do so without publically criticizing McCarthy, knowing that he would alienate a large portion of the Republican Party if he spoke out against the Senator.¹⁹³ The scholarship related to Eisenhower and Marshall supports the fact that Eisenhower distanced himself from his Army mentor.

¹⁹² "Halfway: The Campaign Gets Rough," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 1.

¹⁹³ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 235.

This challenge became most evident when Eisenhower campaigned in McCarthy's home state of Wisconsin. Eisenhower initially drafted a speech to deliver in Green Bay in 1952, a speech that included a paragraph in defense of Marshall, but omitted it from the final version to avoid challenging McCarthy. He had delivered the same speech with the endorsement of Marshall in other cities, but in Milwaukee he omitted that segment. When omitting his defense of Marshall, Eisenhower presented a speech that discussed communist subversion in government and created a public perception that the General endorsed McCarthy and his tactics. Endorsing McCarthy was not Eisenhower's intent, as evident by many of his private letters, but the crowd loved the speech and the handshake between Eisenhower and McCarthy that followed, a gesture that was interpreted as unity and understanding between the two men.¹⁹⁴ McCarthy later spoke to New York Times about Eisenhower's Milwaukee address, informing the press that he "told the Republican nominee that he had no particular objection to General Eisenhower's saying anything that he wished to say, but that he believed a defense of General Marshall probably could be made better before another audience."¹⁹⁵ McCarthy's statement demonstrated that he was not one to be swayed by anyone's opinion of his tactics, but he also recognized the benefit to his own political position if a Republican occupied the White House. It would also strengthen his position if he did not see a candidate with the level of public recognition that Eisenhower maintained rejecting his tactics in his home state, which had the potential to cause voters to question his methods and ideas.

¹⁹⁴ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 236.

¹⁹⁵ "McCarthy Denies Swaying General: Senator Denies Report He Urged Eisenhower To Drop Reference to Marshall," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 60.

After giving the speech and omitting the segment in defense of Marshall, Eisenhower found himself in a vulnerable position regarding McCarthy. The press discovered the changes to the speech, as well as the meetings between Eisenhower and McCarthy regarding campaign strategy and how Eisenhower would approach endorsing Senator McCarthy in his reelection campaign. The press did not know that the decision to omit the Marshall segment of the speech came from Eisenhower's advisors who felt that the elimination of that segment of the speech would be what is best for the party as a whole, not simply for the Presidential campaign. They assumed that the communist hunting senator had swayed Eisenhower's views. According to Oshinsky, Eisenhower later regretted his decision because it felt degrading to both himself and his supporters.¹⁹⁶ Eisenhower did not appear to have many regrets in his campaign, but his lack of clarity with McCarthy was clearly a challenge. In a letter to Harold Stassen, Eisenhower discussed three factors that persuaded him to eliminate his paragraph about Marshall. His staff was united in pushing him to omit that segment of the speech for party benefit as well as personal, the discussion of anti-communism and methods used to find communists were well balanced without defense of Marshall included in that paragraph, and "a considerable amount of argument was presented to show that Senator McCarthy has never made the flat allegation that General Marshall was traitorous in design"¹⁹⁷ Eisenhower, a self proclaimed inexperienced politician, used this letter to claim ignorance, expressing that he was simply following the advice of his campaign advisors and staff in maintaining his appeal to the party as a whole. In having little political

¹⁹⁶ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 238.

¹⁹⁷ Letter to Harold Stassen, October 5, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1372.

experience, the General was open to accepting advice when he was uncertain of how to manage campaign issues.

Eisenhower felt that omitting his defense of his mentor was the right decision based on the previously mentioned factors, but the press presented the speech as a concession to McCarthy and his supporters. Eisenhower wrote to his running mate Richard Nixon, "I have always defended General Marshall's patriotism and sense of duty. In doing so I have not endorsed any errors of judgment he may have made while occupying posts in China or elsewhere subsequent to VJ Day in 1945."¹⁹⁸ Eisenhower made his belief clear with this letter; he felt that Marshall always had the best interest of the nation as a whole at heart, although Eisenhower did not always believe that Marshall's tactical decisions were correct, particularly when considering China and Korea. The Republican nominee was clear that he did not support the McCarthy discussion of Marshall as a communist or communist sympathizer, but remained aware that defending his friend was a political gamble that he was not prepared to take during the campaign.

Eisenhower's running mate spoke for him when addressing the endorsement of Senator McCarthy for re-election, as Nixon stated that both he and Eisenhower would support any Republican candidate for the House and Senate, regardless of if their views or methods conflicted with Eisenhower or Nixon's personal beliefs. 1952 newspapers reported on Nixon's pledge to campaign for McCarthy if he were nominated in Wisconsin's primary.¹⁹⁹ With Nixon supporting McCarthy for reelection, Eisenhower

¹⁹⁸ Letter to Richard Nixon, October 1, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1367.

¹⁹⁹ "Nixon Pledges Backing for McCarthy," *The Missoulian*, (Missoula, MT, 23 August, 1952), 1.

was able to step back from the polarizing Senator and attempt to balance what views he made public in order to preserve support from voters who both agreed and disagreed with McCarthy's tactics.

On the opposite side of the campaign, Governor Stevenson was more clear and vocal in stating his views of Senator McCarthy. Stevenson described McCarthy's behavior as irresponsible and believed that McCarthy's tactics would create a police state, not a democracy. As Eisenhower waffled in his position on McCarthy, Stevenson made clear objections. On this issue where Eisenhower appeared at his weakest before the American electorate, Stevenson was strong. He delivered a public statement that the Republicans have "adopted a policy of 'smear the innocent, prejudge the accused, twist the truth and make cynicism the first rule of politics.'" Stevenson's statement was a clear expression of his disapproval of McCarthy's tactics. Eisenhower's position regarding domestic communism was tied to the "McCarthy Problem." Opposition to McCarthy's tactics bridged party lines, and Stevenson took a clear and decisive position.²⁰⁰

Stevenson's outspoken opposition to McCarthy quickly made him a target for McCarthy. The Wisconsin Senator announced that Stevenson was associated with various far left organizations, claiming in a public statement that he had "the complete endorsement of the Communist Party."²⁰¹ McCarthy's statement demonstrated his standard tactics in order to undermine the Democratic nominee's campaign, and the Stevenson camp rushed to his defense. Stevenson's Vice-Presidential candidate John Sparkman publicly rebuffed McCarthy's accusations as a "pathetic smear" and a "last ditch defense of the Republican

²⁰⁰ "Halfway: The Campaign Gets Rough," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 1.

²⁰¹ "McCarthy Charges Adlai, His Aids Follow Left Wing Lines Through Association," *Press and Sun Bulletin*, (Binghamton, NY, 28 October 1952), 1.

old guard.”²⁰² Sparkman was the closest Democrat to Stevenson to defend him, but the party as a whole believed that Stevenson’s opposition to McCarthy would work to their advantage. The Democrats understood that McCarthy’s opposition to Stevenson would help rally voters who opposed redbaiting tactics across both parties. The Party as a whole presented a united front against McCarthyism, even as the electorate remained divided on his tactics.

McCarthy quickly responded to the Democrats attempt to win votes with their opposition of his tactics. He attacked Stevenson and his entire team, quoting a New York Times article from December 11, 1949, in which Arthur Schlesinger, Stevenson’s speech writer stated, “I happen to believe that the Communist party should be granted the freedom of political action and that communists should be allowed to teach in universities.”²⁰³ When McCarthy delivered this speech, he was careful to omit the end of the statement by Schlesinger, which said “so long as they do not disqualify themselves by intellectual distortions in the classroom.” McCarthy manipulated the article in order to portray the Democrats as sympathetic to communists, not as supporters of the freedom of political expression. This distinction was required for McCarthy’s tactics in order to allow the Senator to paint the Democrats as potential communists and prevent their electoral success.

Stevenson’s rebuke of McCarthy did not simply end with the Senator and his supporters. Stevenson brought his opposition of McCarthy into the campaign when *The New York Times* reported on Stevenson’s accusation that Eisenhower did not have a

²⁰² “McCarthy Charges Adlai, His Aids Follow Left Wing Lines Through Association,” 1.

²⁰³ Richard J.H. Johnston, “McCarthy Terms Stevenson Unfit: Senator Accuses Governor of Sympathy With and Aid to Communist Cause,” *New York Times*, (New York, NY, 28 October 1952), 1.

backbone, which was demonstrated as he failed to put his personal beliefs before party loyalty. Stevenson also proclaimed that the General essentially endorsed McCarthy without using McCarthy's name, and allowed people like Taft to run the campaign and dictate Eisenhower's policies and positions.²⁰⁴ The General, who had enjoyed a public image of strength following his military success, was weak when addressing the McCarthy problem, and the Democratic campaign was quick to exploit the lone demonstration of weakness they could find in Eisenhower. Stevenson was not alone in this view of Eisenhower, which complicated the situation for the Republicans; many voters in both parties shared Stevenson's view. In a *New York Times* article speaking to voters across the country, Miss Ruth McEvoy, a librarian from Milwaukee and an independent voter, told the paper, "It looks like General Eisenhower sold out to Senator McCarthy."²⁰⁵ Another voter, Clifford Grigsby, a printer and independent voter from Albuquerque, New Mexico, was even more extreme when he responded to *The New York Times*. Grigsby told the paper, "I hadn't announced how I was planning to vote, but after Eisenhower put his arm around that witch hunter McCarthy I got sick of the whole outfit."²⁰⁶ These voters demonstrated that many everyday Americans were either making decisions or shifting their support based on how the candidates handled the McCarthy issue, and many believed that Stevenson was correct in taking a firm stance. Voters saw Eisenhower as weak in his attempt to walk a fine line down the middle ground of his

²⁰⁴ James Reston, "Stevenson Scores Rival on McCarthy In Wisconsin Talks: Calls for Defeat of Senator, Sees Eisenhower's Support Showing Lack of Backbone," *New York Times*, (New York, NY, 9 October 1952), 1.

²⁰⁵ "Man in Street Feels Korea Helps Eisenhower, But That McCarthy and Taft Issues Assist Stevenson," *New York Times*, (New York, NY, 9 October 1952), 17.

²⁰⁶ "Man in Street Feels Korea Helps Eisenhower, But That McCarthy and Taft Issues Assist Stevenson," *New York Times*, (New York, NY, 9 October 1952), 17.

Party. The Eisenhower balancing act created a situation in which he appeared weak, embracing a stance that could easily backfire on Election Day.

Stevenson continued to attack not only Eisenhower, but the Republican Party as a whole for its support of Senator McCarthy and his tactics. Stevenson denounced McCarthy, and in turn the entirety of the Republican Party leadership in stating that their claims to pursue morality were actually “smear the innocent, prejudge the accused, twist the truth, and make cynicism the first rule of politics,” as reported by *The Detroit Free Press*.²⁰⁷ This was an illustration of how Stevenson felt about the McCarthy tactics. Stevenson continued his attacks on McCarthy and his supporters as he stated that the old guard of the Republican Party controlled Eisenhower, which became the only reason why the General continued to endorse McCarthy. The Democratic nominee was driving home his position that McCarthy’s tactics were nothing more than an attempt to destroy the reputations of his political enemies, not a legitimate effort to eliminate communist influence in the United States government, and the electorate supported him. Eisenhower was perceived as undecided about McCarthy at best, leading to a weak position that pushed away both supporters of McCarthy and those who opposed him. Stevenson presented himself as the clear candidate for those who opposed the tactics of McCarthy.

Stevenson pushed Eisenhower on the subject of McCarthyism, as he believed that Eisenhower proved himself stronger in war than he was to fight members of his own party who he disagreed with. Stevenson was quick to focus in on Eisenhower’s failure as a friend. Although Eisenhower stopped short of denouncing his friend and mentor General Marshall, their contact throughout the campaign became limited. Eisenhower

²⁰⁷ “Stevenson Rips Plug for McCarthy,” *Detroit Free Press*, (Detroit, MI, 5 October 1952), 1.

pandered to party leadership, sacrificing friendships that he made during his military service, his relationship with General Marshall never recovered. This split was ironic because Eisenhower's military service is what catapulted him to a nationally recognized position in which both parties attempted to recruit him for the nomination. Stevenson went so far in his attacks of the Republican Party as to say that the Republicans were "focused on finding communists in small agencies, like the Bureau of Wildlife and Fisheries rather than support those who were resisting the real threat of communism in Europe, and that they were too busy mourning the fall of China to work to save India." India was experiencing a rift that Stevenson feared would result in another nation falling to communist rule, although Stevenson never expressed a plan to protect the populous nation. He boldly stated in New York City, "they would rather fight democrats than communists any day. And, like the communists, their favorite sport is prophesying our imminent doom."²⁰⁸ Stevenson was vocal in his stance during this speech, emphasizing his belief that the tactics of McCarthy and his supporters were not an effective strategy to contain or eradicate communism, they were simply an effective political strategy to defeat the opposing party.

Eisenhower did not fight back as hard as he could have against the Stevenson accusations, likely because he realized that Stevenson was right and the General was attempting to walk the fine line of not offending either side of his own party. While Eisenhower did not fight back, McCarthy did push back against Stevenson, potentially harder than many of his other political foes. McCarthy's favorite action to attack was

²⁰⁸ Stevenson Address to the State Committee of the Liberal Party in New York City, August 28, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 60.

Stevenson's veto of a state loyalty oath bill twice during his time as governor of Illinois. Stevenson made clear in his veto that he believed the purpose of the FBI was to provide counter balance to the more radical anti-communists like McCarthy. The Illinois Governor stated that a true communist would have no problem lying and swearing an oath.²⁰⁹ This veto was a clear emphasis of Stevenson's opinions, and was often cited when McCarthy spoke out against the Governor, claiming that Stevenson would allow communists to rise to positions of authority. However, many voters agreed with Stevenson; it was not be shocking to believe that a communist would lie about his or her affiliation with the communist party in order to gain access to a position of influence. McCarthy's efforts to discredit Stevenson by discussing his veto failed, as voters believed communists to be untrustworthy and easily capable of lying. The electorate saw what Stevenson saw, that an oath would not dissuade a communist because the oath would not mean anything to the person who swore it.

McCarthy gave a speech directed at Democrats, the very members of Stevenson's own party whose support was required to win the election, saying that loyal Democrats who love America just as much as they hate communism will not have a party in Washington with Stevenson at the top of the Democratic ticket.²¹⁰ McCarthy's address, among other accusations, sought to convince the opposing party that they had selected the wrong candidate by nominating Stevenson rather than other, more suitable candidates, and that they should instead vote Republican in the general election. If they voted for

²⁰⁹ Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes*, 220.

²¹⁰ "Text of Address by McCarthy Accusing Governor Stevenson of Aid to Communist Cause," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 28 October 1952), 26.

Stevenson, they were either voting for a communist or a communist sympathizer, and they would end up without anyone to accurately represent their beliefs on the capital.

Stevenson opposed McCarthy in a politically effective manner, and this opposition was an aspect of the campaign in which he outshined Eisenhower. The Illinois governor was much quicker to state his own positions than to simply engage in a back and forth with McCarthy, and often when he spoke in opposition to McCarthy he did not even mention the Wisconsin senator's name because the electorate knew who he was speaking about. In his speech to the American Legion Convention, Stevenson, stated that patriotism was based on tolerance. This particular address was said to be a "talk on fundamentals to be followed to achieve peace and freedom in contrast to the foreign affairs address of his Republican opponent, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower" by the *New York Times*.²¹¹ Stevenson told the American Legion that, "communism is abhorrent. It is strangulation of the individual; it is death to the soul."²¹² Rather than engage in petty public fighting with McCarthy, Stevenson used this address to make his own views regarding communism very clear. He went so far as to describe communism as "worse than cancer, tuberculosis, and heart disease combined."²¹³ Stevenson used such strong language to convey to voters that communism was toxic to the American system of democracy and communists must be eliminated from positions of authority, along with communicating the fact that he was not a communist. He again emphasized his

²¹¹ William M. Blair, "Legion Will Hear Stevenson Today: Nominee Expected to Discuss Basic Beliefs in Speech – Accepts Minnesota Bid," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 26 October 1952), 1.

²¹² Stevenson Address to the American Legion, August 28, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 52.

²¹³ Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes*, 144.

disagreement with McCarthy by using strong language to oppose communism, but not by making baseless accusations for an individual's own political gain.

Like Eisenhower, Stevenson was advised not to attack McCarthy, as he was popular with people of both parties.²¹⁴ While Eisenhower had a greater challenge with this issue because he and McCarthy were both members of the same party, leaving him to walk a line that would not offend the old right or his more moderate supporters, Stevenson could simply attack McCarthy without ever using his name explicitly. In the same address to the American Legion, Stevenson demonstrated his ability to speak out against McCarthy without using his name as he said, "What can we say for a man who proclaims himself a patriot – and then for political or personal reasons attacks the patriotism of faithful public servants? I give you, as a shocking example, the attacks of which have been made on the loyalty and the motives of our great wartime Chief of Staff, General Marshall." Stevenson defended the man whom Eisenhower didn't, even though they did not have the same level of personal connection. Later in the same address, Stevenson referred to these accusations as the "last refuge of scoundrels."²¹⁵ Stevenson used his address to support Secretary of Defense Marshall when Eisenhower backed away from defending his friend and mentor. The electorate was not blind to this distinction between candidates. Stevenson continued in this address to explain that, "It is never necessary to call a man a communist to make political capital. Those of us who have undertaken to practice the ancient but imperfect art of government will always make enough mistakes to keep our critics well supplied with standard ammunition. There is no

²¹⁴ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 240.

²¹⁵ Stevenson Address to the American Legion, 52.

need for poison gas.”²¹⁶ Stevenson used this address to make his position explicitly clear to the voters, politicians had enough opposing views to attack each other without stooping to the level of McCarthy, even likening the McCarthy’s tactics to attacks used on soldiers during both world wars with a reference to poison gas. In short, the accusations were petty and unnecessary.

While McCarthy and his tactics were only one element of a heated campaign cycle, the issue was far more important to many voters than other issues impacting the nation. Eisenhower attempted to create a sense of balance to appease all members of his own party, but it backfired, ultimately making him appear weak before the electorate. Lucky for Eisenhower, he knew how to play his strengths in addressing the Korean War and international cooperation. In contrast, Stevenson was clear in his views that red baiting and baseless accusations were morally inexcusable. The Illinois governor presented himself as a candidate who would make his strong opinions known for the electorate, and from that point they could make their own decisions about him. These opinions worked in his favor when he spoke against McCarthy, but on nearly any other issue the respected reputation of General Eisenhower overshadowed him. McCarthy did more damage to the Eisenhower campaign than he did to the Stevenson campaign because he made his own Republican Party appear weak and indecisive, if not secretive and manipulative.

If anti-communism and Senator McCarthy had been the only polarizing issue in the general election of 1952, Eisenhower would have likely been defeated because of his inability to take a firm public stance the way that Stevenson had. Stevenson did have a

²¹⁶ Stevenson Address to the American Legion, 53.

sizable amount of support as Election Day approached in November of 1952. As luck, or fortunate circumstance would have it, the General was able to run on his military success during a period where the Korean War overshadowed his tiptoeing around McCarthy. Eisenhower's running mate, Richard Nixon, also helped to alleviate some of the concerns held by the old right with his open support of the Wisconsin Senator and his harsh tactics. If Stevenson won the battle against McCarthy, Eisenhower would have to win the war with his views on Korea and his military reputation, as well as his generally likeable public image. Beyond the singular issue of the McCarthy problem, image and reputation defined this campaign, and Eisenhower had the clear advantage. His television promotions made him relatable and likable to the American voters. His war experience made him the clear choice in the eyes of many voters who believed that ending the War in Korea was a primary goal. Even his running mate, Senator Nixon, enhanced the image of the Eisenhower ticket as he clawed his way out of financial scandal and became likeable to the American electorate. While Stevenson had won over voters who believed that the McCarthy issue was the most critical of the election, those voters were clearly outnumbered by those who were concerned with the Korean War, or those who simply believed that Eisenhower and Nixon composed a more relatable ticket than Stevenson and Sparkman. Television spots, campaign speeches, and discussions of the Korean War from the Eisenhower campaign ultimately overpowered the McCarthy problem

Chapter 5

How Television, Korea, and Public Perception Changed The Campaign

Beyond the issues raised by Senator McCarthy, the campaign of 1952 largely came down to public image and perception. In the broad scope of positions and issues, Eisenhower and Stevenson were largely similar, creating a situation in which one party must exploit the smallest differences in order to gain some type of edge over the other. The main issues throughout the campaign remained ending or containing communism, finding a peaceful resolution to the war in Korea, and the elimination of alleged corruption in the federal government. These were not single party issues, and made public image and the presentation of the candidates the final decisive factor in the election. With the exception of his weak position regarding Senator McCarthy, Eisenhower maintained the edge in appealing to the American electorate. He was a successful general, and had national recognition. Stevenson struggled because he was a relatively unknown single term Governor from Illinois with previous experience behind the scenes in Washington. These two candidates sought to increase their recognition and likability among the American population with everything from television ads to their Vice-Presidential nominees, but the Korean War is what finally put Eisenhower over the top and led to his victory in 1952.

Eisenhower's campaign advisors convinced him that television spots would make him increasingly well known and recognizable to the American electorate. Television had not been used to promote candidates in prior election cycles, creating a situation in which both candidates were wary of its

effectiveness. The development of television throughout the 1952 campaign fueled a change in the American system of campaigning long after the conclusion of the election. Eisenhower was willing to try new methods of campaigning in order to win the 1952 election, and was the first to allow televised campaign advertisements. Many of his television spots spoke to the fact that Eisenhower came from humble beginnings and grew up to become a strong military leader. His military leadership allowed him to promote himself as strong and trustworthy, while portraying the Democrats as unsuccessful in containing communism or emerging victorious in Korea.

In some television spots, the Eisenhower campaign spoke about the General with minimal direct involvement from the Republican nominee himself. This was best demonstrated in television advertisement titled, "The Man From Abilene." This particular television promotion depicts Eisenhower as coming from a small, rural home life, growing up to lead American troops to victory at D-Day and then to peace at VE Day. The only time Eisenhower was shown in that particular spot was in a brief interview, where he stated that America is not ready for another war if one should arrive, and that it is "time for a change." This discussion fueled the image that Eisenhower was the great military leader who could defeat any other nation if a war should arise. The advertisement also stated that "Eisenhower knows how to deal with the Russians," showing an image of him standing with Stalin. This simple phrase drove forward the idea that the Republican nominee had preexisting relationships with European leaders, especially those that he had collaborated with during WWII, and went on to show

a clip of Eisenhower with Churchill to further drive home that point. The television spot closed with the saying, “vote for peace, vote for Eisenhower,”²¹⁷ encouraging voters to support the victorious military general who went on to lead the NATO in their efforts to maintain international peace.

Beyond the rather comprehensive “Man from Abilene” television spot, the Eisenhower campaign developed a series of “Eisenhower Answers America” commercials. This series presented Eisenhower responding to citizens’ concerns in quick, twenty-second television spots. The brief promotions were intended more to sell Eisenhower’s personality than to explain positions, as the time was so limited. These advertisements further fueled Eisenhower’s friendly grandfather image, an image strongly presented by Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose, while not giving the public any great detail as to what Eisenhower would actually do to fix the issues that the citizens expressed to him.

Historian Stephen C. Wood addressed the “Eisenhower Answers America” in his research. This work argues that 1952 was the first campaign in which television advertisements were a viable option, and that each party paid between 2 million – 6 million dollars in cost solely for television airtime, a large expenditure for the campaigns. The two parties engaged in different strategies, not only in the context of their advertisements but also in the airtime purchased. The Stevenson campaign bought up 30 minute slots well in advance, at a lower cost, intending to earn greater public recognition for the Democratic nominee. The Eisenhower campaign strategy was more costly, as they bought up airtime during

²¹⁷ Eisenhower Campaign, *The Man From Abilene*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/the-man-from-abilene#3943>

prime programming hours in hopes of maximum exposure. Wood argues that research performed in the early months of the 1952 campaign indicated that the American electorate retained more information from short television spots than from long speeches. Wood's discussion of retention makes it clear that Eisenhower's short spots were more effective than Stevenson's televised speeches. The frequency at which these spots were aired increased in the final weeks of the campaign, increasing Eisenhower's exposure before the American public. If a voter already have a firm understanding of who Eisenhower was, they did by the end of the campaign because of the "Eisenhower Answers America" television spots.²¹⁸

Eisenhower's running mate, Richard Nixon, was also included in the campaign's television sports. Nixon had his own advertisement in which he informed the American people that he and Eisenhower would eliminate corruption in Washington to create a trustworthy federal government.²¹⁹ The corruption accusations were often focused around business interests in the federal government, which were tied to men like Oklahoma Senator Kerr, a previously considered Democratic presidential hopeful who wore a button for his own business around the capital. While Nixon did not carry the same level of likability with the American public that Eisenhower presented, he was able to reach the American people because he was tied to the General's campaign and appealed to some members of the Republican Party who did not think that Eisenhower was far

²¹⁸ Stephen C. Wood, "Television's First Political Spot Ad Campaign: Eisenhower Answers America," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1990), 272.

²¹⁹ Eisenhower Campaign, *Nixon on Corruption*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/nixon-on-corruption#3953>

enough right. With the variety of television spots promoted by the Republican campaign, the Eisenhower image of being both a strong military leader and a comforting grandfather figure was further stamped into the minds of the American voters.

In contrast to Eisenhower, Governor Stevenson did not agree with the concept of promotional television spots. The Democratic Party had to create their own television advertisements, even though Stevenson was often not directly involved in their creation. Without television promotions, the democrats would have been completely overshadowed by Eisenhower's television presence. The Democrats refused to give up, even without Stevenson's participation, and began with the release of an advertisement entitled "Love the Gov." This television spot consisted of an attractive woman singing about how Stevenson had rid Illinois of crooks and corruption and that he will do the same for the rest of the nation.²²⁰ The Democrats used this ad as an attempt to emphasize how much Stevenson had cleaned up Illinois in his single term as governor, as well as how he was not going to fall into the same accusations of corruption that were made against the Truman administration simply because he was a member of the same political party. Unfortunately for Stevenson, any television spot that expressed how he would eliminate corruption without him appearing in the advertisement itself limited its impact on the American voters because it did not contribute to a more likeable public image.

²²⁰ Stevenson Campaign, *Love The Gov*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/i-love-the-gov#3942>

The Democrats were undeterred by Stevenson's refusal to participate and continued to create promotional spots without using the Governor himself. In the ad entitled "Endorsement, Women," a woman spoke to her belief that Stevenson was a "new kind of man in American politics," someone whom she was excited to vote for. She stated her belief that he stood for all people and had made a strong statement for civil liberties in the south; to her, Stevenson would represent the farmer, the veteran, the businessman, and the workingman.²²¹ This advertisement was an attempt to make Stevenson as relatable to the public as Eisenhower was in his twenty-second "Eisenhower Answers America" spots, appealing to a broad swatch of the electorate.

Wood successfully argues that election predictions, even up to the night before Election Day, presented an uncertain outcome. He also addresses the fact that historians who call the 1952 election a landslide victory for Eisenhower are incorrect, as the polls demonstrated a variety of potential outcomes. Some polls did have Eisenhower winning in a landslide, while others had Stevenson winning by a narrow margin. The Republican Party was not blind to the fact that Democrats had occupied the White House for twenty years and they were well aware that taking the presidency for their party would not be an easy task. Wood argues that the time and monetary cost of Eisenhower's television spots was a necessity in the eyes of the Party.²²² The Republican Party viewed the frequent television spots as a necessity to further Eisenhower's image and public

²²¹ Stevenson Campaign, *Endorsement Women*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/endorsement-woman#3948>

²²² Wood, "Television's First Political Spot Ad Campaign," 274.

recognition, but they failed to recognize the lasting impact that the cost and exposure would have on the American campaign system.

The Stevenson campaign continued to battle the short Eisenhower spots with voter centric advertisements, further demonstrated in the spot titled, “The Same God Made Us All.” In this advertisement, a Stevenson voter discussed how Stevenson’s statement that “The Same God Made Us All” demonstrated that he supported equality for everyone,²²³ which was a valiant attempt to appeal not only to white male voters, but instead create an effort to sway entirety of the south in his direction, however misguided that goal may have been. If the white Southern voters supported a candidate, it was unlikely that the black voters would support the same candidate. The 1952 campaign was the first in which the South seemed less predictable than elections preceding the Civil War. When the south held slaves, white southerners believed that Republicans did not have their interests at heart, and would free those slaves. The Stevenson campaign felt it necessary to make some kind of stand in order to keep whites voting for the Democratic Party while also trying to sway the black vote away from the Republicans, who many blacks still viewed as “the Party of Lincoln.”

Unlike the Eisenhower campaign, the Stevenson campaign took direct shots at their opponent in television spots. Stevenson himself did not initiate these attacks, but the advertisements were clearly designed to dissuade voters who may have supported Eisenhower. A Democratic advertisement titled, “Ike...Bob” insinuated that Eisenhower and Taft had become one in the same and that Taft

²²³ Stevenson Campaign, *The Same God Made Us All*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/the-same-god-made-us-all#4393>

and members of the Old Guard of the Republican Party would control Eisenhower if he were elected.²²⁴ The commercial itself was simple, and it was catchy enough to stick in a voter's mind and remind them that Eisenhower and Taft were far more similar than the heated Republican primary would have them believe. Stevenson had argued throughout his campaign addresses that Stevenson had lost his backbone and fallen under the influence of Taft, and this ad further drove that point into the minds of the electorate.

The Democrats continued to pick at the image of the Republican Party with their "Platform Double Talk" advertisement, which depicted a member of the Republican Party with two heads giving completely opposite positions on vital issues like Korea and the UN, alluding to the disparity between Eisenhower and the old right.²²⁵ That disparity is exactly what created such a contentious Republican National Convention, but Eisenhower and Taft reconciled shortly after the convention came to a close. Even with these television spots attempting to paint Eisenhower as a puppet of the old right within the Republican Party, Stevenson's campaign could not overcome to support that Eisenhower had developed by promoting his image rather than cutting down the other party. Eisenhower continued to be viewed as the relatable candidate, while Stevenson, failing to be filmed for television spots, fell further behind in public recognition.

²²⁴ Stevenson Campaign, *Ike...Bob*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/ikebob#3944>

²²⁵ Stevenson Campaign, *Platform Double Talk*, Television Commercial, 1952, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952/platform-double-talk#3954>

Wood argued in his discussion of the “Eisenhower Answers America” television spots that the Democratic spots were elusive.²²⁶ Nineteen years after Wood’s work was published, the “Living Room Candidate” website has provided researchers with access to a selection of Democratic Spots, but none of these spots include Adlai Stevenson himself, or are nearly as memorable as the Republican television spots. The time and money invested by the Republican Party to promote their candidate on television is clearly demonstrated in their advertisements and had a clear impact on the campaign of 1952, although voters were likely not swayed by the substance of the ads themselves. Television Spots allowed the candidates, and even Vice-Presidential nominees, an opportunity to become more recognizable and relatable to the American electorate, and in that sense, the Eisenhower team emerged superior in their use of television media.

Choice of Vice Presidential candidate also became a key issue for the nominees, especially when promoting public image. Eisenhower’s military success and grandfather image was great for the Republican Party, but he was also much older and grew up in rural Kansas. The Republican Party decided to bring in junior senator Richard Nixon in order to balance the ticket to please the old right supporters of the Party and offset Eisenhower’s shortcomings. At only thirty-nine years old, Nixon brought youth to the ticket in order to offset the grandfather image of Eisenhower. His California roots provided geographic balance to Eisenhower’s rural upbringing in the center of the nation. Additionally, Nixon had a record of opposition to corruption and was a crusading anti-

²²⁶ Stephen C. Wood, "Television's First Political Spot Ad Campaign," 280.

communist, and created a sense of security for those members of the old right who supported Senator McCarthy while Eisenhower kept his distance. Nixon appealed to the Taft wing of the party for his anticommunist views, while also being accepted by the Eisenhower wing for his support of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and troops in Europe.²²⁷ Historians Ambrose and Green both agree that Nixon was the perfect balance to Eisenhower because the pair brought something for everyone within the electorate. Nixon appealed to the old right within the Republican Party, while Eisenhower could appeal not only to his own party (especially moderates), but to independent moderate voters as well. When discussing Nixon, Eisenhower wrote to his friend Paul Hoy Helms, "I wanted him as my running mate because he is dynamic, direct, and square."²²⁸ Eisenhower attempted to be honest and straightforward with the American people whenever possible, and he wanted a running mate who would be the same, even if they did not share identical views, which was proven throughout the campaign.

Selecting Stevenson's running mate presented a more complicated choice than the selection of Senator Nixon by the Republican Party. After some debate, John Sparkman became Stevenson's Vice Presidential candidate, as he was the only option viewed as inoffensive to various aspects of the Democratic Party, which would help to preserve the Dixiecrat voters who may not have supported Stevenson, the Northern Democratic candidate. Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver came with the risk of antagonizing the South, while Georgia Senator Richard

²²⁷ Barton J. Bernstein, "Election of 1952," in *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, Vol. 4. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 3232.

²²⁸ Letter to Paul Hoy Helms, August, 2, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1307.

Russell risked alienating the North, and, as previously mentioned, Russell did not want to accept the Vice-Presidential nomination. The debate selecting a running mate resulted in an appeal to the South with a relatively moderate southern Democrat, Alabama Senator John Sparkman, as Stevenson was a moderate Northern Democrat.²²⁹ The selection of Sparkman further illustrated the Democrats efforts to maintain their strong southern voting bloc that seemed to be less certain in the early years of the Dixiecrat revolt.

Sparkman was liberal in his views on economics, fighting for price controls and increased public housing. He backed the Truman administration of foreign policy, supporting the Marshall Plan, NATO, and arms and troops to Europe, issues that both the Democrats and Republicans supported throughout the campaign cycle. However, he did not satisfy liberal Democrats when addressing Civil Rights. Sparkman was not openly racist, but he did struggle within the Party to defend segregation. Like Stevenson, Sparkman adhered to New Deal liberalism, as he supported the extension of social security and unemployment assistance, as well as the implementation of a public housing program.²³⁰

Stevenson was enthusiastic about his running mate, but when the discussion of Civil Rights arose he had to exercise the same level of caution as Eisenhower addressing the McCarthy problem. Stevenson explaining to voters at the New York State Democratic Convention that he felt Sparkman was a great Vice Presidential candidate, proclaiming that, “to me he is somehow the physical embodiment of the social and economic progress of the past two great decades of

²²⁹ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3239.

²³⁰ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3240.

Democratic leadership.”²³¹ Stevenson used his address to promote his support for Sparkman’s social and economic positions, but simply stayed quiet on Sparkman’s views on Civil Rights, glossing over them as he told the voters that, “he is a leading representative of the new liberalism which is changing the face and the folkways of the South.”²³² Stevenson advocated for support of his running mate, but avoided the issues that would polarize the electorate in order to limit any challenges by either Northern or Southern Democrats.

Creating balanced tickets pushed each candidate toward a public image that appealed to the electorate, and they also began to attempt to tear their opposition down. Eisenhower wrote to U.S. Army Commander Albert Wedemeyer, “The Democrats have chosen a leader who is the creature of the entrenched machine. But all signs prove that we are facing a very tough fight and to win will require the teamwork and cooperation of all elements within the party.”²³³ Eisenhower used this letter in an attempt to explain to a fellow general that the divided Republican Party, from Taft supporters to Eisenhower supporters, would have to work together to defeat Stevenson and the Democrats, who had experienced two decades of control in the White House and were attempting to remain united and firmly in place. Eisenhower also wrote to Republican supporters Walter Williams and Mary Pillsbury Lord that, in contrast to Stevenson and the entrenched Democratic Party, “ours is the cause of honest

²³¹ Address at the New York State Democratic National Convention, August 28, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV:55.

²³² Address at the New York State Democratic National Convention, August 28, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 55.

²³³ Letter to Albert Coady Wedemeyer, August 1, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1306.

government against backroom rule of cynical machines. It is the cause of a government responsible to the people against the practice of catering to political self-interest. It is the cause of peace against policies which are misleading us toward a third world war. It is the cause of a government based on confidence and faith against a political regime too long in power, seeking to perpetuate itself by the creation of doubt and fear.”²³⁴ Eisenhower attempted to make his views very clear, and he used extreme language in his letters in order to convey those beliefs. He believed Stevenson to be closely linked to Truman, and included in every mistake that the Democrats had made since WWII. Eisenhower never conveyed that the Democrats had malicious intent, and he presented a stance in proposing his belief that Truman’s Party acted on what they believed was best for themselves as individuals and as a Party, not what was best for the American people as a whole. Eisenhower’s letters and speeches convey his feelings that the Democrats had been in power for too long and were leading Americans down the wrong path, one that would lead to another major war, potentially stemming from the conflict in Korea. Eisenhower wanted to create change to the policies that the Democrats had put in place.

Eisenhower’s Vice-Presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, supported him in his criticism of the Democratic Party. Historians are clear in their assertion that Nixon quickly became one of the toughest critics of Stevenson, making bold statements in a speech in Indiana such as, “somebody had to testify for Alger

²³⁴ Letter to Walter Williams and Mary Pillsbury Ward, August, 13, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1319.

Hiss, but you don't have to elect him President of the United States."²³⁵ This statement was in reference to Adlai Stevenson testifying as a character witness for Alger Hiss, an American government official who was convicted of espionage for the Soviet Union and the communist party. Nixon used his public platforms to assert that the country was in danger and the only person who could save it was Eisenhower. In Nixon's view, the Truman administration had led to corruption and casualties both in nations falling to communism and the literal loss of American lives in Korea. In his "Checker's Speech," Nixon emphasized his opinion that Eisenhower would be able to clean up the State Department and help to eliminate communist expansion, while Stevenson would defend Truman policy and allow the corruption in Washington to continue.²³⁶

In response to the attacks by the Eisenhower campaign, Stevenson began to shift slightly right. While he had previously opposed anti-communist decisions like insisting that teachers and government employees swear a loyalty oath in order to maintain employment, he began supporting ideas like Truman's loyalty program as well as the firing of Communist teachers.²³⁷

Stevenson also developed a tactic of baiting the Republicans into creating issues to argue about amongst themselves, such as ensuring that the Democrats would appeal to bipartisan ideas on foreign policy, allowing the Republicans to make non-partisan issues into partisan ones. Stevenson wrote a letter to Truman to

²³⁵ David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World Of Joe McCarthy* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1983), 242.

²³⁶ Richard Nixon, "Checkers Speech" (Los Angeles, September 23, 1952, The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-senator-nixon-the-american-people-the-checkers-speech>).

²³⁷ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 242.

discuss this campaign strategy, telling the sitting president that, “If there is sabotage, let it come from them.”²³⁸ In enacting this plan, Stevenson would not have to succumb to dirty campaigning, simply allow the Republicans to make themselves look bad and create the image that he would rise above the fray.

President Truman campaigned on behalf of Governor Stevenson, and in the latter months of the campaign, gave Eisenhower credit as an outstanding general. The *New York Times* addressed how Truman gave this credit to Eisenhower along with a statement that he believed the General should remain in that position. Truman stated that Eisenhower had been out of the country for a long time and didn’t know much about government.²³⁹ In this speech, Truman attempted to convey to the public that the experience Stevenson had as Governor of Illinois, and even serving in a variety of New Deal programs under FDR could make Stevenson the more logical candidate. Truman’s address seemed to ignore the fact that Eisenhower had been working with NATO and had developed strong international ties that were inherently political. Unfortunately for Stevenson, Truman’s popularity was very low in the latter months of the campaign cycle, which inhibited his campaigning abilities; his efforts on behalf of the Governor were minimally effective, if not harmful. John Sparkman also campaigned on behalf of his own ticket, and stated that Columbia University, where Eisenhower served as University President, was responsible for producing more communists than any other school in the U.S.²⁴⁰ These accusations should logically have

²³⁸ Letter to Truman, August 23, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 46.

²³⁹ “Halfway: The Campaign Gets Rough,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 1.

²⁴⁰ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 242.

turned voters away from Eisenhower, but they did not seem to have much impact on the general election or the public perception of Eisenhower.

Eisenhower began to seem untouchable, until a major scandal broke involving his running mate, Senator Nixon. On September 18, 1952, *The New York Post* broke a story of allegations that Nixon received a private “slush fund” from California businessmen. Nixon and Eisenhower had been charging Democrats with corruption and scandal, and they had both had promised eliminate corruption in Washington when Nixon became embroiled in scandal.²⁴¹ This scandal was a gift to the Democrats and a potential end to the political career of Richard Nixon, but he managed to spin it in favor of their campaign.

On the very same day that the story broke, Nixon confirmed that he had accepted about \$16,000 dollars for mailing and other political expenses. While some Congressmen used official allowances for these purposes, Nixon believed they “should not be charged to the federal government.” In his affirmation of having the fund and claims to use it for political expenses, Nixon discussed the alternatives to such a fund “as an alternative I might have resorted to the use of tax paid facilities, free government transportation, or I might have put my wife on the Federal payroll as did the Democratic nominee for Vice President.”²⁴² Not only did Senator Nixon use this address to spin the slush fund story in his favor almost immediately by claiming that the fund was to keep him from spending

²⁴¹ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3243.

²⁴² Gladwin Hill, “Nixon Affirms Getting Fund of \$16,000 From Backers: Fund For Expenses Affirmed by Nixon,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, September 19, 1952), 1.

taxpayer money, but he managed to turn the tables on Senator Sparkman's spending habits, bringing him into the discussion of the scandal.

Nixon made a nationally televised speech in order to discuss the fund on September 23, 1952. In this national address he made it known before the voters that he was not keeping the fund a secret and that an administrator named Dana Smith managed it, so he did not have any access to those funds to use them for expenses beyond the scope that they were designated for. In explaining that the fund had an administration, Nixon hoped that the American people would trust that the funds were used appropriately, although they could not have known if the administrator was honest or embroiled in scandal. Nixon was proving himself to be an excellent manipulator before the American electorate. Nixon told the voters that the fund was used for political business that did not directly benefit the taxpayers, stating, "the taxpayers shouldn't be required to finance items which are not official business but which are primarily political business." In furthering the pledge made by both Eisenhower and Nixon, the Senator spoke to the American public with what they could only believe to be full transparency. He told the nation that "this is unprecedented in the history of American politics, I am going to at this time give to this television and radio audience, a complete financial history, everything I've earned, everything I've spent, everything I own. And I want you to know the facts."²⁴³ In allowing the American electorate into his personal finances, Nixon presented himself as a relatable member of the Eisenhower team before the eyes of the American public, who seemed to

²⁴³ Nixon, "Checkers Speech."

generally accept his explanation at the time of the speech without hard evidence, which was presented later in the campaign.

Nixon gave the American voters what he called the facts, all the way back to his childhood. He began his summary by describing his family upbringing, then described his military service and that he and his wife had just under \$10,000 between the two of them at the end of WWII, all in government bonds. Nixon then painted a picture before the voters of how he had earned his Congressman's salary and around \$1500 a year in nonpolitical speaking engagements and lectures. He and his wife had a small inheritance from her grandfather that they used to purchase a house. He confessed that he owned no stock in any company, so no businesses could have influence his decisions, and presented his personal debts in both his mortgage and what he owes his parents. He claimed that every dime they had and every bit of debt they owed was honestly theirs.²⁴⁴ In laying out the details of his financial situation before the American electorate, the voters began to see Nixon as a more relatable figure that shared in many of the struggles that they undertook on a daily basis.

After explaining his personal financial situation to the general public, Nixon went on to appeal to the hearts of the American people in admitting that he accepted one gift from a donor, a donor who was not even from his home state of California. A man in Texas heard Nixon's wife mention on the radio that the kids would like a dog, and he sent them a little cocker spaniel. "The kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they

²⁴⁴ Nixon, "Checkers Speech."

say about it, we're going to keep it."²⁴⁵ In this moment, after full financial transparency, Nixon pulled himself away from the negative images associated with scandal and created a situation in which the American voters saw him as a caring man and a compassionate father who would do anything to make his children happy. With the presentation of this speech Nixon narrowly avoided destroying his entire political career, simply by telling the public about his children and their dog.

Nixon did not stop at simply winning the empathy of the American voters. Instead, he used the Checkers speech to take a personal dig at Stevenson about his financial situation. Nixon claimed that he didn't believe that you should have to be a wealthy man to run for political office, as he believed himself to be a man of modest means, but "that it's fine that a man like Governor Stevenson, who inherited a fortune from his father, can run for President, but also that it's essential in this country of ours that a man of modest means can also run for President, because, you know, remember Abraham Lincoln, you remember what he said: 'God must have loved the common people, he made so many of them.'"²⁴⁶ By invoking the most beloved Republican President of all time, a man who came from very little and received credit for ending the Civil War, Nixon used this address to place himself and General Eisenhower in a position that seemed far superior to that of Governor Stevenson. He claimed that since Stevenson came from a political family with large amounts of money, it was natural for him to run, while the everyday man was the logical leader for the

²⁴⁵ Nixon, "Checkers Speech."

²⁴⁶ Nixon, "Checkers Speech."

nation. Nixon wanted people to see him as the everyday man after the nearly destructive financial scandal that he manipulated in his favor.

Eisenhower handled the Nixon scandal in much the same way that he handled issues with Senator McCarthy throughout the campaign cycle, very cautiously. The General was not quick to take a firm stance either in support or defense of his running mate, instead he decided to allow Nixon to manage the situation as he saw fit and make his decision following whatever Nixon chose to do in response to the allegations. Eisenhower stated publically to an audience in Kansas City that he believed Nixon would not compromise his morality and that the fund was in fact for political expenses. Eisenhower presented a weak defense of his running mate, and both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Herald-Tribune*, two outlets that supported the Republican ticket, called for Nixon's resignation.²⁴⁷ The editorial press was divided over if Nixon should have removed himself from the campaign or not, but the majority of the press did absolve Eisenhower of any blame. The press was quick to fall into the belief that Eisenhower was as moral as anyone could hope for in a candidate for political office, and they believed that he had no knowledge of Nixon's fund. The *New York Times* referred to the entire scandal became a source of embarrassment for Eisenhower, illustrating the support that Eisenhower had among the press.²⁴⁸

Nixon received support from all sides of the campaign. Eisenhower wrote a private letter to Nixon, which was never sent, probably because they spoke on the situation. In this letter, Eisenhower asked Nixon to quickly make the facts

²⁴⁷ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3243.

²⁴⁸ "Press of Nation Divides on Nixon," *The New York Times* (New York, NY, September 21, 1952), 1.

known to the public by publishing “all documentary evidence including amounts received in funds, all payments from it and exact nature of speeches, letters, addresses and documents for which expenses were met out of the fund.”²⁴⁹

Eisenhower’s request that Nixon present all of his personal documents indicated his confusion, much like the American people felt, but he would not make a decision on dropping or keeping Nixon on the ticket until he had all the facts. In a personal letter to William Robinson, Eisenhower told his friend that, “without full knowledge of the facts, I am not willing to prejudge any man.” Eisenhower was going to maintain faith in Nixon until he was given proof of a reason not to.²⁵⁰

This letter demonstrated Eisenhower’s hesitance to drop a politically experienced running mate who he understood balanced his ticket, but he could not simply support Nixon unconditionally if he was not a moral figure. Nixon also received support from Senator Taft, leading to a situation in which much of the Republican leadership backed him remaining in the ticket, although many voters wondered if he was the best choice for the Vice-Presidency.

In addition to support from his own party, Democratic Nominee Adlai Stevenson also supported Nixon. Stevenson believed that there was no issue with accepting financial assistance as long as no favors were given in return, a further demonstration that Stevenson’s views would often cross party lines.²⁵¹ Stevenson urged the public not to judge Nixon’s campaign fund until all the facts were

²⁴⁹ Draft of Letter to Richard Nixon, September, 19, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1358.

²⁵⁰ Letter to William Edward Robinson, September, 20, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1360.

²⁵¹ Bernstein, “Election of 1952,” 3243.

brought to light. He expressed his belief that the Republican Party would find and make public all the necessary information on the issue and that “condemnation without all the evidence, a practice all too familiar to us, would be wrong.”²⁵² This discussion of condemning candidates or opponents without evidence indicated a subtle dig at McCarthy by Stevenson, as McCarthy, supported by Nixon, had made accusations against Stevenson without evidence. Stevenson clearly desired to avoid being depicted as a hypocrite for making baseless accusations against his opponents. The *New York Times* also reported that Stevenson’s running mate, Senator Sparkman, also refused to pass judgment on the Nixon fund, although he did make it known that if it had been him receiving the fund he would not have used it.²⁵³ Sparkman and Stevenson were more on the same page than Eisenhower and Nixon, they often found themselves unified, or at least similar, in many campaign issues and positions, even when discussing the opposing party.

After the accusations were levied against Senator Nixon, Stevenson released his financial records for the previous ten years in order to avoid having any similar issues levied against his own campaign. Nixon had called for both Stevenson and Sparkman to release their own financial records in his Checkers Speech, attempting to find scandal among the Democratic candidates. Stevenson had allowed businesses to pay supplementary salaries to state employees and Sparkman had his wife on the payroll, both things that Nixon knew going into his

²⁵² “Stevenson Urges Fairness to Nixon,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, September 20, 1952), 1.

²⁵³ “Sparkman Scores Nixon’s Fund Story,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, September 29, 1952), 1.

national address.²⁵⁴ Nixon urged the American people not to judge these men until they released their statements and to give them the opportunity to prove that these funds were not used carry government favor for the businesses that donated, much like Stevenson and Sparkman had done when the initial allegations against Nixon came to light. Nixon's goal was to achieve transparency in both campaigns, but he selfishly hoped that either Stevenson or Sparkman would have handled their federal finances immorally, in which case the Republican campaign could easily exploit their opponents. Even the slightest hint of impropriety would have worked to the advantage of the Republican campaign.

Eisenhower was not as quick to release his own financial records as Nixon, Stevenson, and Sparkman, but Ambrose presented a very believable argument that Eisenhower felt that his running mate had put him into a situation in which he had no choice. The Republican nominee waited a long time to release his records, feeling that that his family finances were not of any business to the general public, but he eventually did release them in order to ensure transparency with the American voters. The *New York Times* explained that it potentially would have been more destructive to the Republican campaign if the Democrats and his own running mate had released their personal records.²⁵⁵ Eisenhower knew that he had managed his funds properly; he simply did not feel that what a general chose to do with his personal finances was any business of the American public.

²⁵⁴ Nixon, "Checkers Speech."

²⁵⁵ New York Times, "Eisenhower Decides to Bare Finances Over Last 10 Years," *The New York Times* (New York, NY, October 11, 1952), 1.

Beyond describing his personal finances in his national address, the paper trail of the Nixon fund was also made public. When the records of the funds became public, it was made clear that California businessmen had donated amounts varying from an average of \$250, to as high as \$1,000. *Time Magazine* stated that businessmen had established the fund because Nixon was viewed as the best statesman against socialism or government control over business.²⁵⁶ That position did not necessarily present a conflict of interest as long as the donations were based on Nixon's existing beliefs, rather than an attempt to sway votes in the favor of the donors. There was no further discussion of how Nixon was spending the funds, indicating that many voters accepted Nixon's description of the fund's purpose presented to them in his speech.

Following Nixon's address and the official release of funds, Eisenhower, rather than dismissing Nixon, allowed the American people to decide for themselves what they felt was true. This decision indicated Eisenhower's desire to appeal to the electorate rather than submit to his personal opinions. After Nixon addressed the largest television audience to date with his speech, the voters began to notify the Republican National Committee that they supported Nixon.²⁵⁷ Women responded favorably to Nixon's speech, many crying while watching he and his wife on television and believing that he maintained the image of a younger man simply trying to support his family. The reaction of women within the electorate was a clear indication that the address strengthened the Republican ticket in states where they had previously been polling poorly. This speech made

²⁵⁶ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3244.

²⁵⁷ Bernstein, "Election of 1952," 3244.

him appear more human to the American public, creating Republican ticket that the electorate found relatable. James Hagerty reported in the *New York Times* that, “generally, persons who heard or saw Nixon deliver his speech expressed sympathy and admiration for his courage.”²⁵⁸ This report indicated that the speech rallied American voters in support of Nixon, and with that advocacy, Eisenhower made his support for his running mate clear. The public empathized him, so Eisenhower would not remove him from the ticket. Removing Nixon would be a risk the General was unwilling to take, because removing him would risk alienating the voters who found Nixon relatable.

The Republican ticket began to seem unstoppable as Nixon became more popular with the American electorate. Eisenhower was the victorious WWII general who appeared to be a sweet grandfather figure before the American people, while Nixon was the young WWII veteran who was trying to provide the best possible life for his young family, making him relatable to the American people. Governor Stevenson was slowly losing the battle of image in the eyes of the American voters, and the Korean War became the final nail in the coffin of the Democrats efforts to maintain control of the White House.

Eisenhower believed that the War in Korea had been dragging on without improving. As a general, Eisenhower expressed his belief that the only way to end the war would be to apply across the board controls, meaning that Congress would have to provide an official declaration of war and allow the United States to engage in full scale involvement rather than the uncertain attempt to prevent

²⁵⁸ James A. Hagerty, “Nixon’s Speech ‘Shot in Arm’ to the GOP,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, September 29, 1952), 1.

the spread of communism with ground troops that was currently taking place. In asking for Congressional authorization, Eisenhower expressed, “I do not believe that the Soviets would in their own best interests, deliberately provoke global war. I believe that war is possible; moreover I believe that we can expect a continuance of various kinds of satellite conflicts in certain of our sensitive areas.”²⁵⁹ In short, this statement indicated Eisenhower’s opinion that if an administration were able to end the conflict in Korea, the Soviets would not create another global conflict. They may fan the flames of other smaller conflicts, but it was unlikely that the Soviets would initiate any new conflict directly. This view appealed to much of the American electorate who sought to end satellite conflicts, especially involving American troops.

Eisenhower was openly critical of the Truman administration’s foreign policy, blaming them for the loss of China, the fall of many Eastern European nations to Soviet control, and the “bungling” War in Korea, which the administration had no plan for ending. The *New York Times* presented Eisenhower’s views of the Truman administration as a simply content with a containment policy that was not working.²⁶⁰ This depiction by the press was accurate, as Eisenhower was known for his aggressive military victories. Eisenhower was critical of simply containing communism, and he sought to show the people behind the Iron Curtain that the free world was thriving. Eisenhower’s ultimate goal for the nations under communist control was to someday have the

²⁵⁹ Address to Congress, July 16, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1263.

²⁶⁰ “Halfway: The Campaign Gets Rough,” *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 1.

ability to choose their own government without Soviet influence.²⁶¹ Eisenhower presented noble goals, but he failed to articulate his plans to reaching them throughout the campaign. His reputation led the electorate to simply overlook the lack of specific plans set forth by Eisenhower.

The *New York Times* reported on Eisenhower's views of Truman and Korea. The General did not believe that Korea was "Truman's War." He recognized that once the communists began to show aggression the U.S. had no option but to intervene with troops. The intervention is where things went wrong, and Truman made "really terrible blunders" once they were involved.²⁶² While Eisenhower viewed Korea as unavoidable, he also believed that the Truman administration operated in an atmosphere of fear when developing foreign policy, where Eisenhower believed the free world should not be frightened of anyone. While Eisenhower accused the Truman administration of fearing communists, he projected an image that he, along with an international coalition, would push back at the communists and eventually defeat them. In addition to essentially running scared, Eisenhower also believed that Truman's administration had not made their goals clear to American allies, or even his own people.²⁶³

Eisenhower argued that the most effective way to set a clear goal for American allies was to limit American involvement on the ground in Korea, along with the rest of the United Nations. Instead, the American and UN forces should train the South Korean military to fight for themselves. In a letter to Richard

²⁶¹ W. H. Lawrence, "Eisenhower and Stevenson Agree On Principles But Differ on Details," *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 24 August 1952), 7.

²⁶² W. H. Lawrence, "Eisenhower and Stevenson Agree On Principles But Differ on Details," 7.

²⁶³ W. H. Lawrence, "Eisenhower and Stevenson Agree On Principles But Differ on Details," 7.

Nixon, Eisenhower told his running mate, “I have several times pointed out that there is no simple way of getting out of the “Soviet mouse trap.” The early and important thing to do is organize, train, and equip South Koreans and other Asiatic non-Communist nations to defend their own front lines and thus minimize, if not eliminate, the drain on Western manpower.”²⁶⁴ Eisenhower’s letter emphasized his desire to instill a sense of self-determination in the South Korean troops, providing them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own fate, so long as they did not fall to communism. In a letter to Basil Brewer, Eisenhower explained that, “my information is that ROK soldiers have proved excellent fighting men and are fired with patriotic resolve. Our political leadership has failed very badly to work out a better solution for America in Korea.”²⁶⁵ This letter is a clear expression of Eisenhower’s view, which was that American and the United Nations troops should be working in support or reserve roles in Korea, not providing active ground forces. Eisenhower used both personal letters and public addresses to argue that training the Koreans to protect their own troops would not only benefit the UN forces and the US troops, but also the South Koreans who want to defend their own homes.²⁶⁶

On October 24, 1952, Eisenhower delivered a campaign address in Detroit that rallied the support of the American population in favor of the great general who helped defeat the Germans. In this speech, he pledged to go to Korea

²⁶⁴ Letter to Richard Nixon, October, 1, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1368.

²⁶⁵ Letter to Basil Brewer, October, 24, 1952, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 13:1396.

²⁶⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea" (Speech, Detroit, October 24, 1952), The Eisenhower Archives.

himself. Eisenhower used his Detroit address to critique the Truman administration, stating, "It has been a sign, a warning sign, of the way the administration has conducted our world affairs."²⁶⁷ Eisenhower expressed his intentions to correct the mistakes made by the Truman administration in explaining that he would handle foreign affairs differently from the way in which Truman and the Democrats had handled them. According to Eisenhower, the Korean War was taking place because "free leadership failed to check and turn back communist ambition before it savagely attacked us. The Korean War, perhaps more than any other war in history, simply and swiftly followed the collapse of our political defenses."²⁶⁸ Eisenhower's words indicated that he believed the Truman administration had been weak on communism, especially as they allowed it to spread. As China fell to communism and the iron curtain dropped over Eastern Europe, Eisenhower determined that the Truman administration had failed to manage the threat of communist expansion in an effective manner. Eisenhower emphasized his opinion that the Democrats had simply allowed the issue to grow and develop until the U.S. was so defenseless that the military ended up in a stalemate in Korea trying to simply hold back communist forces, and there was no progress being made to defeat them. These statements were left open to the public to interpret, but Eisenhower's intentions were clearly to make the American voters believe that his unexplained plans would help to end the war in Korea in a more effective manner than the Democrat's plans.

²⁶⁷ Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

²⁶⁸ Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

In his Detroit address, Eisenhower echoed one of his campaign television spots, informing voters that he learned how to manage dictators from different nations while serving in WWII. In contrast to Eisenhower's diplomatic skills, the speech alluded to the fact that the Truman administration had failed to relate to world leaders and provided fuel to the communist leaders by hesitating to act, which allowed them to gain a more firm footing in regions like Korea.

Eisenhower openly accused the Truman administration of ignoring warnings from General Albert Wedemayer as early as 1947, when General Wedemayer warned the administration that if the American troops left South Korea, either Soviet Forces or the Soviet trained forces in North Korean forces would move in to fill the power vacuum left by the United States. Eisenhower explained the differences of opinions in 1947 to his Detroit audience, including differences amongst Republicans. Republican Congressman John Lodge believed that the Korean Government could fill the vacuum left behind if the US removed their troops in 1947, while Republican Congressman Walter Judd argued that even leaving behind a small battalion of American troops would deter any Soviet aggression in Korea. Eisenhower was clearly inclined to agree with Congressman Judd, exclaiming, "What a tragedy that the administration shrugged off such an accurate warning!"²⁶⁹ Eisenhower was driving home his own views, and the American electorate was inclined to trust him because of his strong military record.

²⁶⁹ Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

Three years after these warnings were ignored, communist North Korean forces made their move. Eisenhower told the voters, “When the enemy struck, on that June day of 1950, what did America do? It did what it has always done in all its time of peril. It appealed to the heroism of its youth.”²⁷⁰ As the Truman administration ignored the warnings regarding Korea in the three years leading up to the war, it reacted by counting on the younger generation to step up and defend Korea and the Democratic principles. Eisenhower was presenting this younger generation with the option to elect a leader who would end the war in Korea, bringing them home rather than forcing them to fight. Eisenhower pledged that, “The first task of a new administration will be to review and reexamine every course of action open to us with one goal in view: to bring the Korean War to an early and honorable end. That is my pledge to the American people.”²⁷¹ This pledge was a clear indication of Eisenhower’s intention to end the stalemate in Korea that the American voters largely did not support.

Eisenhower pushed his military image further by expressing that the conclusion of the war would begin when he, as president, would be “forgoing the diversions of politics and concentrating on the job of ending the Korean War until that job is honorably done. That job requires a personal trip to Korea. I shall make that trip. Only in that way could I learn how to best serve the American people in the cause of peace.” Who would be able to argue with the general who was credited with bringing the end to WWII in Europe by coordinating the Normandy invasion on D-Day? Even without laying out specific details of how he would end

²⁷⁰ Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

²⁷¹ Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

the war, Eisenhower promising to go to Korea and develop a plan resonated with the American people because of his popular image as a victorious general.

Eisenhower concluded this address, following his pledge to go to Korea himself, by stating that, “For a democracy, a great election such as this signifies a solemn trial. It is the time when, to the bewilderment of all tyrants, the people sit judgment upon their leaders.”²⁷² The General was attempting to convince the American voters that the communist leadership did not know how to handle a nation who selected their own leaders, but that the voters should take advantage of their opportunity to contribute to a change in leadership, electing Eisenhower to be tough on the communists.

Historian Martin Medhurst refers to Eisenhower’s “I Will Go To Korea Speech” as one of the “most effective campaign speeches of all time,” and cites four other historians who support his analysis. However, Medhurst goes beyond the fellow historians that he mentions in arguing that Eisenhower’s Korea speech would not have been nearly as effective if the early Cold War had not been taking place, if there had not been a growing international discussion regarding foreign policy fueling political arguments in the United States, or if the Korean War was not viewed by much of the electorate as such a challenge for American politicians.²⁷³ Medhurst is accurate in his statement that Eisenhower’s speech was particularly successful because of the context in which it was delivered. Much of the American electorate feared the spread of communism, and they also feared the

²⁷² Eisenhower, "I Shall Go To Korea."

²⁷³ Martin Medhurst, "Text and Context in the 1952 Presidential Campaign: Eisenhower's "I Shall Go to Korea" Speech," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (September 2000), 465.

growing threat of war. Eisenhower used this particular address as an attempt to convince the American electorate that he was the best candidate to bring security to the nation and an end to the war in Korea.

Medhurst also asserts that the Cold War created a general feeling among the American population that democracy and communism were black and white, and the context of the Cold War eliminated the option of a gray area.²⁷⁴ This view seems a bit extreme, as the concept of containment is inherently a gray area. Allowing communism to exist in whatever location it held and simply not to spread is in itself a compromise, and the elimination of communism is black and white. Eisenhower's promise to go to Korea himself, even though containment was a shade of gray, was a black and white promise to the American electorate, and one that the majority of the voters supported.

Governor Stevenson countered Eisenhower's beliefs on the Truman administration's management of the conflict in Korea. Stevenson believed that the administration had made some mistakes but had overall helped to end communist aggression in Korea and limited the spread of communism in Europe. He argued, "perseverance, discipline, and sacrifice are the only answers to the communist threat."²⁷⁵ Stevenson indicated his belief that Americans should continue to make the necessary sacrifices to push forward in Korea until the communists were defeated. He explained to voters in Grand Rapids, Michigan, "If we had not chosen to fight in Korea, sooner or later we would have had to fight a bigger war somewhere else. The memory of Munich is still fresh. The quicker aggression is

²⁷⁴ Medhurst, "Text and Context in the 1952 Presidential Campaign, 466.

²⁷⁵ "Halfway: The Campaign Gets Rough," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY, 5 October 1952), 1.

stopped the better. And, as it is, even with all the heartbreak and suffering and cost of Korea – even with the frustration of the long stalemate over the armistice – it is quite possible that our action in Korea may have headed off World War Three.”²⁷⁶ Stevenson’s address indicated that the war in Korea was a requirement in order to prevent a larger global conflict, and Stevenson supported the decision to bring American troops into the conflict.

Stevenson opposed Eisenhower’s position that Americans should simply train Koreans and leave them, asserting that the General had said Asians should be fighting Asians, and that was not the solution in Stevenson’s eyes. Stevenson believed that the communist attack in Korea was directed at America as a threat, meaning American troops should be involved.²⁷⁷ This speech indicated that Stevenson’s view of the war was one in which the Soviets could demonstrate their threat of communist expansion without directly attacking the United States, and that the U.S. must work to contain communism. Stevenson told voters in San Francisco that, “I believe in time we may look back at Korea as a major turning point in history – a turning point which led not to another terrible war, but to the first historic demonstration that an effective system of collective security is possible.”²⁷⁸ In witnessing the United Nations forces working with American forces and South Korean forces, collective global security was thriving in practice. Stevenson was making it clear that leaving the South Koreans alone to

²⁷⁶ Address In Grand Rapids, MI, September 1, 1951, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), III: 67.

²⁷⁷ James Reston, “Stevenson Says Korea Policy Helps Avert a World Conflict,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 17 October 1952), 1.

²⁷⁸ Address in San Francisco, September 9, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 84.

fight the communist forces would not be an effective solution. They would not or could not defend themselves from communist aggression, and as international cooperation developed, these organizations should work to help the Korean people defend themselves.

Stevenson justified the war in Korea, and the Truman administration's involvement in the conflict, with his personal beliefs regarding the war. He believed that if the U.S. troops were not fighting in Korea, a war would have appeared somewhere else, and he made that opinion loud and clear for the American electorate to hear. Stevenson told young Marines that, "fighting which must inevitably be faced, somewhere in the world, so long as the Soviet Union pressed its purpose to subjugate the free peoples of the earth, and so long as the United States and the free peoples of the earth retained their purpose to resist."²⁷⁹ Stevenson's address demonstrated his position on Korea, which was not to quickly end the war, in contrast to Eisenhower, but to eliminate the communist threat, even if that meant fighting a ground war in Korea.

The discussion of the Korean War, especially with the Detroit address so close to Election Day, became the final nail in the coffin of the Stevenson campaign. The victorious WWII general was supported from all angles, from members of congress to everyday voters. One of Eisenhower's most vocal supporters was Senator Irving M. Ives, a Republican seeking reelection. He spoke to the American people on television over the Columbia Broadcasting System, stating that if Eisenhower were elected "We can end the war and end it

²⁷⁹ Address to the Young Marines at Quantico, September 20, 1952, in *The Papers Of Adlai E. Stevenson*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), IV: 105.

victoriously.”²⁸⁰ While he was involved in his own re-election campaign, he also shared the views of the Eisenhower administration with many voters across the nation.

As previously mentioned, *The New York Times* interviewed voters in the streets in the days leading up to the election. In addressing the War in Korea, the voter interviews clearly favored Eisenhower. Clyde Pemberton, a restaurant owner from Cleveland, was quoted in the *New York Times* saying, “The big issue is the Korean War. I don’t think that the Democratic administration knows what to do. I think Eisenhower does.”²⁸¹ This comment demonstrated that one voter had confidence in the general, and while Eisenhower seemed weak on McCarthy and his tactics, he was viewed as forceful and strong regarding the war in Korea; a more concerning issue to many voters. Another individual from Cleveland, insurance salesman Edward Spencer told *The New York Times* that, “Eisenhower is the best bet to avoid another world war. With this new flare-up in Korea, it is imperative that we put a military man in the White house.”²⁸² Defeating communist forces in Korea and preventing another war were clearly on the forefront of American minds, and having a proven military leader in the position of commander in chief held greater appeal for much of the electorate.

As Election Day approached in November of 1952, the images of Eisenhower and Stevenson were heavily scrutinized, along with their running

²⁸⁰ “Ives Sees Korea Victory,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 29 October 1952), 25.

²⁸¹ “Man In Street Feels Korean War Helps Eisenhower,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 13 October 1952), 17.

²⁸² “Man In Street Feels Korean War Helps Eisenhower,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY, 13 October 1952), 17.

mates. With the exception of a stumble by Richard Nixon, Eisenhower emerged as the superior candidate in public image. His television spots, public addresses, and, most importantly, his promises regarding the Korean War, were enough to push him to a victory over Stevenson and win him the White House. Eisenhower became the first Republican President in two decades.

Conclusion:

From the very early stages of 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower was a strong candidate. Both parties attempted to court him, but he eventually chose to run on the Republican ticket. Both parties recognized that Eisenhower's strong reputation and public image would propel him forward in 1952. The members of both parties who chose to court the General during his military service were proven correct. In a nation that feared communist expansion and sought an end to the Korean War, voters were drawn to Eisenhower throughout the campaign cycle, eventually selecting him as their next President.

Eisenhower's victory is considered a landslide by many historians, and in examining the Electoral College, they are correct. The general election resulted in Ike receiving 442 electoral votes, while Stevenson took 89. However, the popular vote paints a different picture. Eisenhower claimed 55% of the popular vote, while 44.5% voted for Stevenson, a much closer margin than the Electoral College numbers would lead historians to believe.²⁸³ These popular vote numbers depict a campaign that was incredibly heated and competitive, and the largest divisions were founded in the importance of different issues. Stevenson emerged victorious when challenging McCarthyism, while Eisenhower presented the superior position in discussions of the Korean War. The level of competitiveness and the time of the campaign began to make Americans question how the campaign process was shifting and what it was becoming.

Eisenhower's victory can be attributed to the fact that he won over populations who had voted Democrat in recent elections. Eisenhower won the majority of German,

²⁸³ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 168.

Polish and Irish voters, as well as women, people over 50 years old, and farmers outside the south, all of whom were reliable democratic voters in FDR's elections. The unpopularity of Truman combined with the prestigious reputation of Eisenhower caused these voters to reexamine their selections, and the heated campaign cycle provided that opportunity. Eisenhower also captured the urban vote in large Midwestern cities and the American middle class. Wealthy voters had been reliably republican strongholds, while poor voters reliably selected democratic candidates. The middle class was its own battleground, one in which Eisenhower prevailed. Stevenson's strengths came from the Jewish, Italian, and black vote, but it was not enough to push him to victory over Eisenhower.²⁸⁴

In the days following the election, the *New York Times* published an article examining the negative impacts related to the new style of campaign that emerged in 1952. Journalist James Reston told his readers, "The method of electing a president is getting out of hand... candidates are saying things which they do not always mean, which divides the nation, misleads its allies and its enemies, and thus makes the winner's task of governing more difficult when he finally reaches the White House."²⁸⁵ He was examining the fact that both Eisenhower and Stevenson, while making big statements and claims, were not being as open and honest with the American voters as previous presidential candidates. This is most evident in the Eisenhower "I Will Go To Korea" speech, in which no specifics were provided to the voters. Eisenhower was a great general, but he did not articulate a plan that the American voters could hold him to; there was not any

²⁸⁴ Greene, *I Like Ike*, 171.

²⁸⁵ James Reston, "Our Campaign Techniques Re-examined," *New York Times*, (New York, NY, 9 November 1952), 8.

clear plan to end the war. In an increasingly international culture following WWII, American allies were paying more attention to potential American leaders. Eisenhower's statements could be perceived as either confusing or terrifying by allies who had a stake in the outcome of the Korean War.

Both candidates, as well as the American voters, recognized that the new methods of running presidential campaigns were not in the best interest of American politics, but they did not know how to stop or change the transition. Reston told his readers, "The one thing on which both the winner and the loser were agreed during and after last Tuesday's vote was that this was the most exhausting election on record and that there must be a better way to do the job." The three complaints that most election observers had were that campaign lasted too long, it cost too much money, and it did not use television to expand the candidate's ability to reach people, television was simply added on top of the already grueling campaign schedule."²⁸⁶ All of these complaints increased as future campaign cycles unfolded, and the 1952 election was simply the first time that the new challenges were recognized.

Reston also accused candidates of making claims or promises that did not even come from them. As candidates were so busy campaigning over such a long period of time, they did not write their own speeches and instead began parroting the words of other men who wrote those speeches for them.²⁸⁷ Eisenhower was known not to write any of his own speeches, while Stevenson attempted to write for himself early in the

²⁸⁶ Reston, "Our Campaign Techniques Re-examined," 8.

²⁸⁷ Reston, "Our Campaign Techniques Re-examined," 8.

campaign but lost that ability by the end of the election cycle. This transition further fueled confusion in both the American electorate and in the eyes of American allies.

These varying claims, coming from the candidates or their advocates, were unable to be challenged by voters in the changing election cycle. Reston demonstrated this challenge in dramatic fashion by using Senator McCarthy as an example. In past elections candidates could not make outlandish claims without risking a challenge from the electorate. By 1952, the system of American presidential elections had reached a point where Joseph McCarty can “get on a nation wide television hook up and blast the candidate of the other party, while one voter in the audience who had courage enough to stand up in protest is arrested and hauled from the room by police.”²⁸⁸ This became an indication of the American political system that was to come in future elections. Any dispute of what a candidate said was quickly shut down, and that continued all the way into modern election cycles.

In addition to changing the way in which American elections functioned, Eisenhower also brought together a fragile coalition across races, ethnic groups, social classes, and religions to support the Republican Party. He tripled the voter turnout in the state of New Hampshire. He formed a delicate alliance with Taft during the 1952 campaign that created support for him within the old right, but that support quickly began to dissolve after Taft’s death in 1953.²⁸⁹ Eisenhower held office for 8 years and became a rallying point for Republicans, but his moderate Republican position was not to last.

²⁸⁸ Reston, “Our Campaign Techniques Re-examined,” 61.

²⁸⁹ Michael Bowen, *The Roots Of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 153.

Eisenhower went on to be one of the most commonly remembered figures of American history. Stevenson lost the election of 1952, but he opened the door of the Democratic Party to young voters who had never shown an interest in politics before. His campaign demonstrated that politics did not have to be corrupt.²⁹⁰ The Stevenson campaign helped pave the way for JFK's New Frontier and LBJ's Great Society. He brought new life to the Democratic Party.²⁹¹ Eisenhower and Stevenson may have been two men who did not want to be part of the national political system, but they engaged in one of the most fascinating and influential elections of American political history.

Eisenhower found victory in his strong military image during the onset of the Cold War, but as Americans settled into a new world order of internationalism and proxy wars, they began to find a polarizing political system again. Following Eisenhower's two terms, Democrats retook the White House with John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. When voters finally selected another Republican President, strong conservatism had reemerged within the Party. Richard Nixon, the man selected as Eisenhower's Vice Presidential candidate in order to balance the ticket and bring the support of the old right to Eisenhower's 1952 campaign, emerged victorious in 1968. Nixon's election brought an end to the reign of the moderate Republican, but was an early step in the internationalist version of the Republican Party.

²⁹⁰ Bill Severn, *Adlai Stevenson: Citizen of the World* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1966), 116.

²⁹¹ Severn, *Adlai Stevenson*, 116.

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