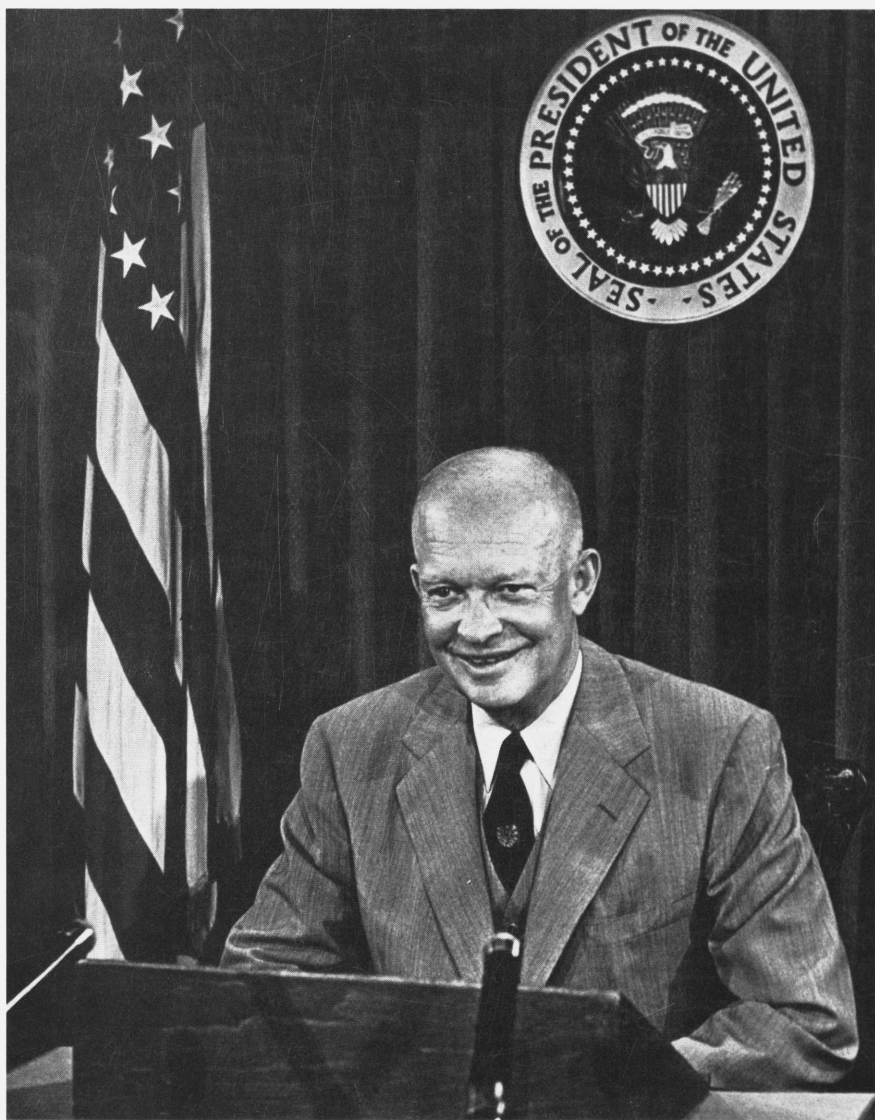


The Eisenhower Era



The University of Kansas
Division of Continuing Education

The Eisenhower Era

Division of Continuing Education
The University of Kansas

This series of articles was funded in part by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, by the Kansas Eisenhower Centennial Commission, and by the Eisenhower Foundation.

Copyright 1990
The University of Kansas

Cover photograph:
Courtesy of the Dwight D.
Eisenhower Library and the
National Park Service

PK09075

Contents

Preface	v
The President from Abilene <i>Francis H. Heller</i>	1
Ike's America in 1953 <i>Francis H. Heller</i>	5
The World Scene in 1953 <i>Burton I. Kaufman</i>	9
Korea and Vietnam <i>Burton I. Kaufman</i>	13
Eisenhower, NATO, and the European Defense Community <i>Burton I. Kaufman</i>	17
The Suez Canal and Relations with England <i>Judith R. Johnson</i>	21
The Khrushchev Challenge <i>M. Albert Dimmitt</i>	25
The Space Age Begins <i>Bruce R. Kahler</i>	29

Eisenhower and the School Segregation Cases	
<i>James C. Duram</i>	33
The Nation's Economy in the Eisenhower Years	
<i>Loren E. Pennington</i>	37
National Security: Internal and External	
<i>M. Albert Dimmitt</i>	41
The Eisenhower Image	
<i>Francis H. Heller</i>	45
Suggested Readings	49

Preface

The Eisenhower Era is a twelve-part radio/newspaper series designed to provide fresh perspectives on the Eisenhower presidency and on the midcentury period. This series uses primary-source material, including oral histories and documentary footage from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library—as well as interviews with historians and biographers—to help Americans better understand the influence of the midcentury period on our own era.

Many issues that President Eisenhower confronted—for example, national defense, nuclear power, the cost of fighting limited wars, environmental destruction, civil rights, national health insurance, the cold war, the stress of change, the heightening divisions between social classes, and the importance of presidential image—are still with us.

The Eisenhower Era has been aired on 30 radio stations and published in 75 newspapers across the state of Kansas. Because of its wide appeal, we have prepared this collection of the series articles as a permanent resource for classroom use and for the pleasure of those individuals who want to know more about our foremost Kansas hero and his role as a national and international leader.

Much of the credit for the success of this series goes to two individuals: Francis H. Heller, Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Law and Political Science emeritus at the University of Kansas, and John Katich, University of Kansas assistant professor of radio and television. Professor Heller served as series adviser and helped organize the series contents; he also wrote several articles for *The Eisenhower Era*. Professor Katich produced the radio version of the series.

Scholars who wrote articles for *The Eisenhower Era* include Burton I. Kaufman, professor of history, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Judith R. Johnson, assistant professor of history, Wichita State University; M. Albert Dimmitt, adjunct professor of history, Penn Valley Community College; Bruce R. Kahler, professor of history, Bethany College; James C. Duram, professor of history, Wichita State University; and Loren E. Pennington, professor of history, Emporia State University.

Donna Butler helped edit the articles for the series. Rachel Hunter narrated the radio version of *The Eisenhower Era*, and Adrienne Rivers-Waribagha assisted with the production of the radio programs.

Donna Flory supervised project funds. Malcolm Neelley and Joan Davies provided word-processing and layout services.

All of these individuals have contributed significantly to the quality of this series.

Barbara Watkins
Project Director

Photo Credits:

Maps and photographs on the pages noted below are used with permission of the following sources:

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, pp. 3, 14, 18, 19, 27, 35, 43

Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries, pp. 6, 7, 34, 39, 47

Dickinson County (Kansas) Historical Society, p. 2

Roger L. Kaesler, p. 4

Maps on File, pp. 10, 12, 16, 24

U. S. Army, p. 14

National Park Service, p. 19

Associated Press, p. 22

U. S. Navy, pp. 27, 35

NASA, pp. 30, 31

The President from Abilene

Francis H. Heller

He was born in Texas. He spent his entire life in the service of his country, never owned a home of his own until he retired, and then it was to a farm in Pennsylvania. Yet all his life Dwight Eisenhower thought of Abilene, Kansas, as his home, and he designated it as the place where he should be buried.

Abilene during Eisenhower's growing-up years was a young community. It had just passed through a brief period when, as the point where the cattle trails met the railroad, it attracted gamblers, prostitutes, and others drawn by the easy-going environment of the trailhand culture. As the rails pushed further west, much of this vanished but some of the aura remained.

The Eisenhowers and their co-religionists were of a very different cast. They lived modestly; some might say that they were poor. But they were a solid family for whom religion was all-important. Every evening the family gathered in Mennonite fashion, while the father read from the Bible. They were a hard-working family. Young "Ike," as he was known from early days, learned the meaning of work from his grandfather. They were a family that valued learning.



Abilene, Kansas c. 1900. Traces of Abilene's cowtown past were still visible.

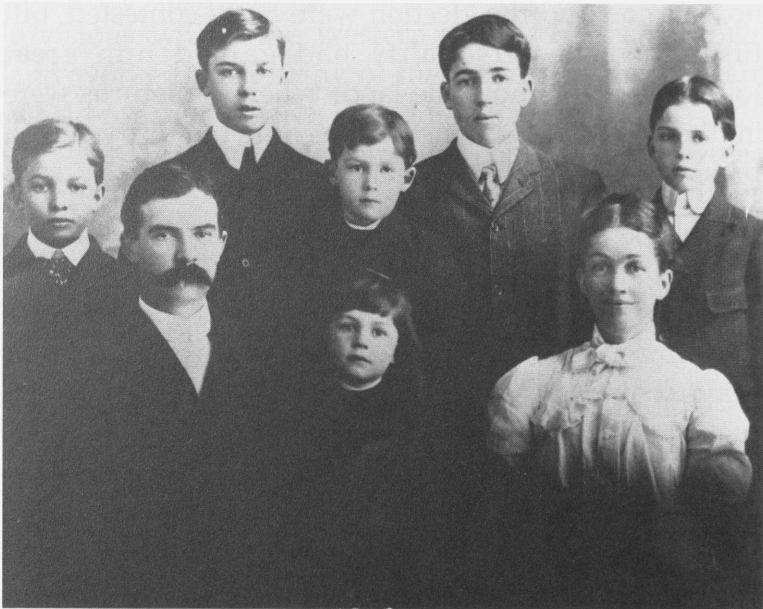
Ike's mother, Ida, was described as "intelligent and religious." They were aloof from politics but their values were deeply conservative.

This is where Dwight Eisenhower grew up, where he went to grade school and high school, where he made his first friends. At the urging of a friend, he sought an appointment to the Naval Academy. When he came in second on the entrance examination, he opted for West Point.

At the Military Academy he was a mediocre student but, as he had done in Abilene, made friendships that would last a lifetime. His career as a regular army officer began inconspicuously. To his disappointment, he spent World War I training troops and failed to see action. But he had the good fortune a few years later to be befriended by a senior officer who introduced him to the serious study of military

subjects. By the time he attended such advanced schools as the Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, his achievements as a student of military science and as a staff officer had become widely known in the army.

With one brief exception of troop command, his career now moved him inexorably toward the climax: the high command of the Allied troops in Western Europe. The task required the highest degree of diplomatic skill and Eisenhower excelled as he dealt with such diverse and complex personalities as Winston Churchill, Charles De Gaulle, and Field Marshal Montgomery. The assault on "Fortress Europe" called for planning of the highest order; its successful accomplishment proved how well the supreme commander of the Allied Forces had done the job. Most significantly, Ike became a household



The Eisenhower family, 1902. Front row: David, Milton, Ida; back row: Dwight, Edgar, Earl, Arthur, Roy.

name on two continents. When he returned to the United States after victory had been attained in Europe, there was no one more widely acclaimed throughout the country than Dwight Eisenhower. Although he denied any ambitions of the kind, it seemed inevitable that his name should frequently be mentioned in connection with the presidency.

His post-war service as chief of staff of the army and later as president of Columbia University continued the high visibility he had gained. His appointment as the first supreme commander of NATO forces was a logical choice and added further to his stature.

As the election year 1952 grew closer, the pressures on Eisenhower to make himself available as the presidential candidate of the Republican party increased until they became irresistible. But it was not the kind of draft he might have expected. Both the nomination and the election were hotly contested, but Eisenhower's personality had gained him great following throughout the land. When the returns were in, the boy from Abilene had become the thirty-fourth president of the United States.



Eisenhower campaign button, 1952

Ike's America in 1953

Francis H. Heller

Dwight David Eisenhower came to the presidency from the top military position in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As the commander of American forces in Europe, he was keenly aware of the meaning of the iron curtain that separated the Western countries from the Communist East. He also knew the divisions within the Western world. He had known and worked with many of the leaders of the Western world for more than a decade.

In 1953 the world seemed to consist of two armed camps based on irreconcilable ideologies. Russia and China were the core of the Communist world, the United States the leader of the free world. The two blocks were in open, military conflict in Korea. The American decision in 1950 to resist Communist aggression in Korea had at first enjoyed wide support. But as time passed and casualties mounted, support had waned. Ike had promised to bring an end to the conflict.

But he and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, were committed to Harry Truman's policy that communism had to be contained. This meant

continuing support for the North Atlantic Treaty but also forging new alignments of free-world forces to resist the Kremlin's advances. The colonial empires of the British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Spaniards were disintegrating in the face of nationalist movements that often had the support of Russia and/or China. There were danger points all around the globe.

The situation called for broadly conceived strategies. Dulles had long advocated a "policy of deterrence" based on America's supremacy in nuclear weapons. The Korean war showed that victory was difficult in a battle with conventional weapons, especially in distant theaters of combat. Korea had



Hillcrest Shopping Center, Lawrence, Kansas, 1950s. Following World War II mom-and-pop stores began to give way to supermarkets. The end of war and newfound prosperity meant a dramatic increase in consumer goods.



Sandy's Hamburger Stand, Lawrence, Kansas, 1950s. Low prices, standardized menus, fast service, and easy access by car exemplify America's drive-in culture. In the 1950s, fast-food franchises began to threaten family-style restaurants and grocery store sales.

also demonstrated the effects of military involvement abroad on the domestic economy. There seemed to be a need for strategy that would give “more bang for the buck.”

America had not experienced a normal economy since the Wall Street crash of 1929. The New Deal had been followed by World War II and the dislocations it made necessary. Hardly had the large wartime military forces been dismantled when the Cold War began. The Truman administration had managed to balance the budget in 1948 and 1951, but the demands of the containment policy (including the Korean war) had led to more deficit spending. Campaigning for the presidency, Ike had promised to restore a normal climate for the development of the economy.

One of the by-products of the Cold War was widespread public fear of infiltration of the United States by agents working for the Kremlin. A number of trials and legislative investigations had revealed the presence of such agents within the government. Unscrupulous politicians, most notably Senator

Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin, implied that they were only the tip of the iceberg. Government employees, teachers, actors, writers, and producers were, often wrongfully, the subject of suspicion, intimidation, and persecution. The country was in danger of serious disruption and disunity.

The racial issue caused another internal cleavage of increasing concern. The nation's black population had long suffered under the rule of "separate but equal." Blacks were subjected to inferior treatment in general and to outright discrimination and deprivation of basic rights in the Southern states. A commission appointed by President Truman had documented the disadvantaged position of black citizens and recommended a nationwide effort to remedy the situation. Truman had ordered integration of the armed forces to begin immediately. Several decisions of the Supreme Court pointed to an eventual overturn of the "separate but equal" doctrine. Southern leaders insisted that any such changes would be intolerable to their states. Here was another potential source of disunity and domestic conflict.

These were the challenges on the American scene as Ike entered the White House. The task he faced was formidable, but he approached it with the same calm confidence that had always been his hallmark.

The World Scene in 1953

Burton I. Kaufman

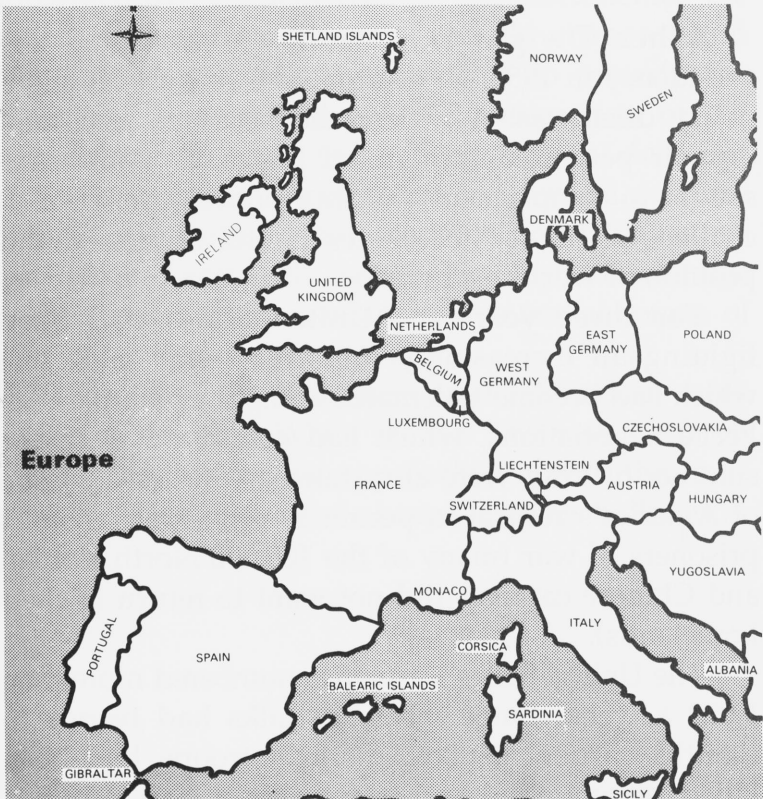
When Dwight D. Eisenhower assumed the presidency in 1953, he confronted a series of foreign-policy dilemmas. A widespread sense of crisis and despair pervaded the United States, as Americans sought to comprehend a chain of developments that challenged the United States' moral authority and position of world leadership.

For three years the United States had been fighting an increasingly unpopular war in Korea, which had become stalemated along the 38th parallel. Peace negotiations, which had continued since the summer of 1951, were also stalemated over the issue of America's refusal to permit forced repatriation of prisoners of war (many of the 100,000 North Korean and Chinese captives did not want to return to their homelands).

The United States' casualties numbered more than 1,000 a week. Since the truce talks had begun 16 months earlier, 45,000 American troops had been killed or wounded. American planes had dropped more bombs on Korea than in the first two years of World War II. The Eighth Army had used as many

mortar and artillery shells as in the whole European operation from D Day to V-E Day. Yet the enemy had grown stronger, not weaker. On the eve of Eisenhower's inauguration, Communist forces in North Korea totaled 1.2 million, and their defensive lines had become virtually impenetrable. Ending the war in Korea would be Eisenhower's highest priority after he took office.

Yet the Korean War was not the only foreign-policy problem facing the new president. In Vietnam the French were fighting a losing war against



Western Europe. Many Europeans feared rearming Germany following World War II and did not want to incorporate German forces in the European Defense Community.

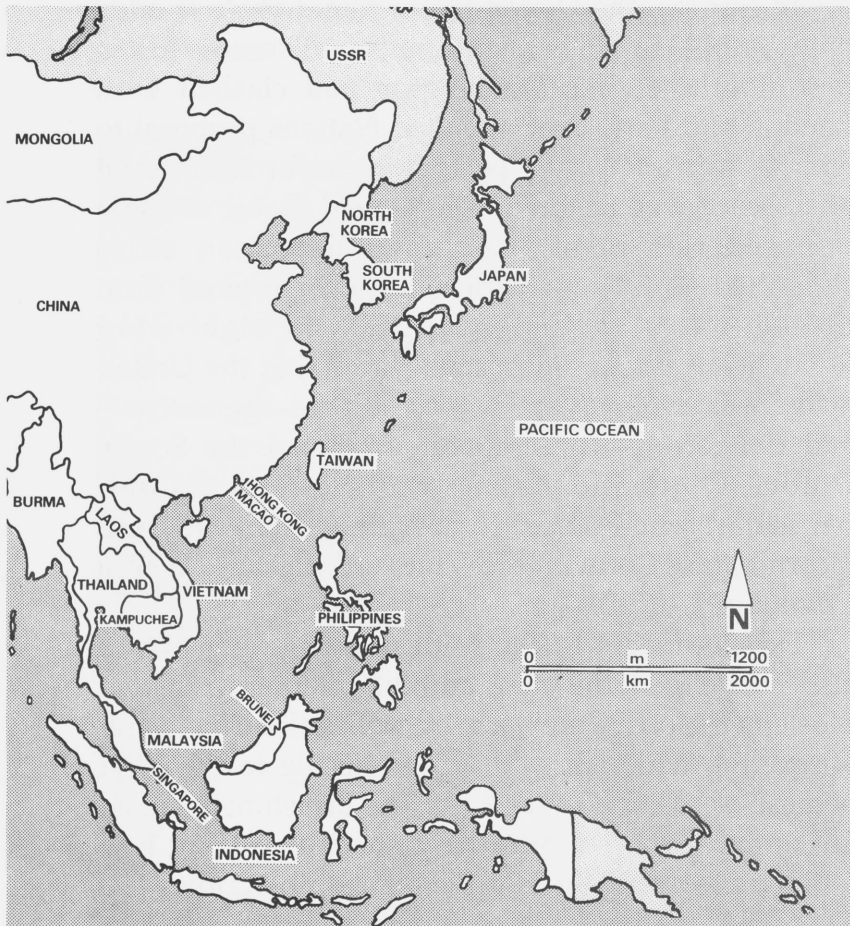
Communist guerrillas known as the Vietminh. Although the Truman administration had already approved \$60 million to support the French effort, the Vietminh controlled much of the country. Many Americans, including Eisenhower, were worried that, if the French forfeited Vietnam and the rest of Indochina, there would be nothing to prevent communism from spreading to neighboring states and from reaching Burma eventually.

In Europe, the United States found itself at odds with its NATO allies on a number of issues. Just a few months earlier, Washington had clashed with London and Paris over a United Nations proposal to end the Korean War by postponing repatriation until after peace was restored. The United States strongly opposed this position, but its European allies supported it. Friction with allies also resulted from Eisenhower's campaign appeals to right-wing Republicans. Many Europeans feared that the United States was about to embark on a more aggressive—and dangerous—foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Opposition also continued to mount, particularly in France, to rearming Germany and incorporating German forces into a European Defense Community (EDC).

Developments in the Mideast and North Africa also challenged the new administration. Arab and Moslem regions were torn by political turmoil and rampaging nationalism that was hostile to the West because of its colonial heritage. The British maintained an embargo on Iranian oil because Iran had nationalized the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In Egypt, resentment against the British remained strong because London refused to withdraw

its garrison guarding the Suez Canal or to turn over the Sudan to Egypt.

As Eisenhower prepared to assume office, it was hard to imagine that the 1950s would later be characterized as a serene and complacent decade lacking in major military engagements and international crises. In 1953, such crises seemed omnipresent.



Southeast Asia. The Korean War and the Vietminh insurrection against the French in Vietnam were major foreign policy problems facing Eisenhower as he assumed the presidency in 1953.

Korea and Vietnam

Burton I. Kaufman

For most Americans in the late 1940s Korea and Indochina were simply places on a map. Indochina had been under French control since the 1860s but was occupied by the Japanese during World War II. In the late 1940s it was torn by civil strife between French-supported nationalists and Communists aided from China. Few were aware of the artificial division of Korea, along the 38th parallel, into a Communist North and a nationalist South, where America had maintained occupation forces until mid-1949. The experts in our State Department were more concerned about Indochina, especially the eastern part now called Vietnam, than about Korea.

But Korea erupted first. North Korea invaded its southern neighbor in June 1950. Backed by the United Nations, the United States rushed to the rescue. War seesawed across the peninsula. When the Chinese Communists entered the fray after a year of fighting, a stalemate resulted. The adversaries began negotiations to end the war. Americans, who at first strongly supported their government's military response to the Communist invasion, became

frustrated as the talks dragged on. In the election campaign of 1952 Eisenhower and Stevenson both promised to bring about peace in Korea. Eisenhower announced that, if he were elected, he would at once travel to Korea to assess the situation.



President-elect Eisenhower inspects training facilities of the Republic of Korea Capitol Division.

He did so and returned home persuaded that the United States "could not stand forever on a static front and continue to accept casualties without any visible result." To pressure the Chinese into signing a peace agreement, he announced that the American Seventh Fleet would "no longer be employed to shield Communist China" from Chinese nationalist forces on Formosa (Taiwan). He also considered employing atomic weapons if the Beijing government continued to block an agreement to end the fighting. The

Communist forces signed an armistice agreement on July 23, 1953. Ike had delivered on his promise to bring the war in Korea to an end, although American troops still remain in South Korea.

In Vietnam, meanwhile, the French were fighting a losing war against the Communist guerillas. Their call for American help had strong support among Eisenhower advisers, with the notable exception of the Army chief of staff, General Matthew Ridgway. It was Ike, however, who decided against intervention. "If the United States," he said, "were, unilaterally, to permit its forces to be drawn into conflict in Indochina and in a succession of Asian wars, the end result would be to drain off our resources and to weaken our over-all defense."

Without American aid, the French suffered a major defeat and agreed to withdraw from Indochina. In an accord reached at a conference in Geneva in 1954, Vietnam was divided along the seventeenth parallel, pending national elections in 1956. The Eisenhower administration was represented in Geneva but declined to sign the agreements. Instead, it formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which included Vietnam.

The United States sided with the non-Communist government in South Vietnam, although this government had little popular support. America provided increasing economic and military aid, including military advisers. Eisenhower was determined to avoid a repetition in Vietnam of the 1950 Communist aggression in Korea.

Although there was no large-scale American involvement in Vietnam during Eisenhower's presidency, the United States had set a course that would be difficult to reverse by pursuing the policy

of containing Communist advances wherever they occurred. Eisenhower had ended the fighting in Korea and he had refrained from direct involvement in Vietnam. Yet, as he left the White House, Vietnam and neighboring Laos had emerged as flash points of possible future conflicts, with serious consequences for the United States both at home and abroad.



North and South Korea. The armistice line established in 1953 divides the peninsula to this day.

Eisenhower, NATO, and the European Defense Community

Burton I. Kaufman

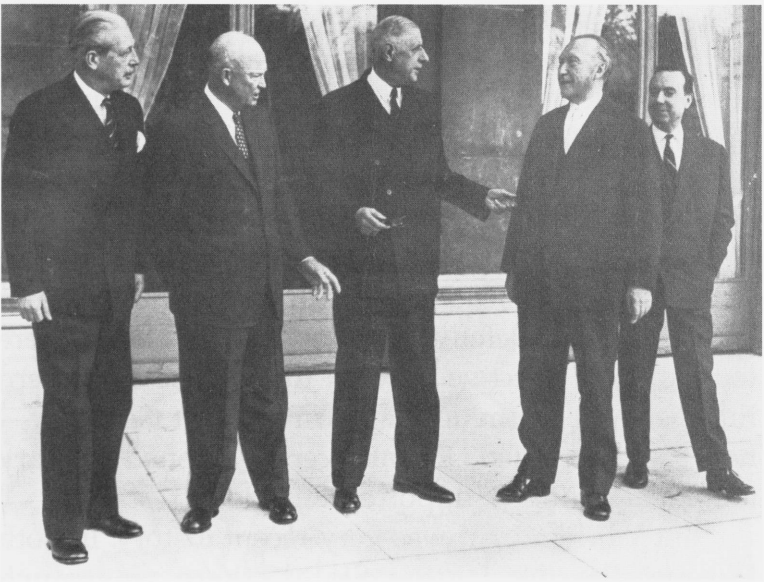
When Dwight Eisenhower decided to run for president in 1952, the Cold War was at its peak. One reason he chose to run was that Senator Robert A. Taft, the front runner for the Republican nomination, appeared to favor scuttling America's commitment to Atlantic defense. As president of Columbia University and later as supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Eisenhower had been deeply involved in the Cold War.

Although NATO had been formed in 1949, it had not become organizationally strong. The United States Department of Defense believed that, if NATO were to become an effective force for the defense of Western Europe, West Germany—a rearmed West Germany—had to be included. Eisenhower's seasoned military judgment strongly supported this view.

But World War II was very recent history. In both Europe and the United States, there was much opposition to rearming Germany, admitting Germany into NATO, and including German military units in the NATO forces. The French, who had suffered

German military occupation three times in the last century, objected strongly to including Germany in the alliance. But after long discussions, in which Eisenhower played a central role as NATO commander, they were finally willing to accept the idea, provided Germans were excluded from major commands in the European force.

The foreign ministers of Western Europe affirmed this so-called European Defense Community in May 1952, shortly before Eisenhower left NATO to enter the presidential campaign. But the agreement still required ratification by the member nations of NATO. In 1954 the French rejected it, much to the shock and chagrin of the new president and John Foster Dulles, his secretary of state. The opposition in France had



Eisenhower meets with leaders of the Western World; left to right, Harold Macmillan of Great Britain, Charles De Gaulle of France, Konrad Adenauer of Germany, and French Prime Minister Michel Debré.



Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, October 25, 1954. Dulles attracted much criticism during the Eisenhower presidencies and helped maintain Eisenhower's popularity. In reality, however, Eisenhower made foreign policy decisions, not Dulles.

been too much. Eisenhower called the French refusal "one of the major setbacks."

He immediately set to work, assisted by Dulles, to repair the damage. To allay French fears, the United States advanced a proposal that would rearm West Germany and bring it into NATO, but under strict controls. Britain furthered the plan by agreeing to station four divisions of its forces on the European mainland. France reluctantly accepted these terms.

Eisenhower was delighted with the arrangement he had helped work out. The country he had fought against less than a decade earlier was now "a rehabilitated and equal member of the Western Alliance." It was, he said, "a near miracle—a shining chapter in history."

NATO thus became a reality—as it continues today. It was the product of what has been called “a Europe of fear” and American apprehension of the Soviet Union, but it has become more than its founders expected—more than Dwight D. Eisenhower expected. NATO provided the umbrella that allowed Western Europe to draw together, leading eventually to the forming of the European Economic Community, the Pact of Rome, and still closer ties scheduled to go into effect in 1992. A simple look at any map of Europe shows that none of these developments would have been possible without the participation, as an equal partner, of the Federal Republic of Germany. It was Eisenhower, victor over Germany in war, who paved the way for German rehabilitation in peace.

The Suez Canal and Relations with England

Judith R. Johnson

The year 1956 was a banner occasion for Dwight David Eisenhower. Not only did Ike win reelection to the presidency, but his decisive actions during the Suez Crisis prevented a global war. Employing skillful diplomacy rather than armed force to resolve the conflict, Eisenhower secured an end to hostilities there and maintained Western dominance in the troubled Middle East.

In July 1956, President Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt stunned the world when he seized control of the Suez Canal. Nasser's move confirmed the rise of Arab nationalism in an area already rebelling against the creation of the Israeli State. Britain and France not only feared a disruption in the transportation of oil, which was vital to their economy, but also realized that the loss of the canal signaled an end to their influence and control in the Middle East. Although Eisenhower recognized Western Europe's dependence on the canal, he also understood the legality of Nasser's action and believed Egypt had the technical capability to continue its operation. Eisenhower was

concerned that aggressive action against Nasser might invite Soviet support for the Egyptians. He sought a diplomatic course of action to keep the canal open.

British leaders did not share Eisenhower's confidence in a peaceful settlement. To protect the economic lifeline that the canal represented, England secretly joined forces with France and Israel to plan an attack against Egypt in October 1956. News of the assault shocked Eisenhower, but he immediately ruled out military participation by the United States. Instead the president chose a moral stand against armed aggression. As a result, relations between the United States and England suffered.

Eisenhower was well aware of the long friendship his country enjoyed with England. The two nations shared one of the most trusted alliances in recent history. According to Donald Neff in *Warriors at Suez*:



President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Anthony Eden meet at the White House, January 30, 1956, to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

British feelings were no light matter to Eisenhower. He had a deep admiration for Britain growing out of his arduous wartime service. He valued his many British friendships, respected British culture and delighted in the fighting capabilities of Britons. America's special relationship with Britain was founded on a common language and common ideals, and for Eisenhower it formed the bulwark of the West's defense against Communism.

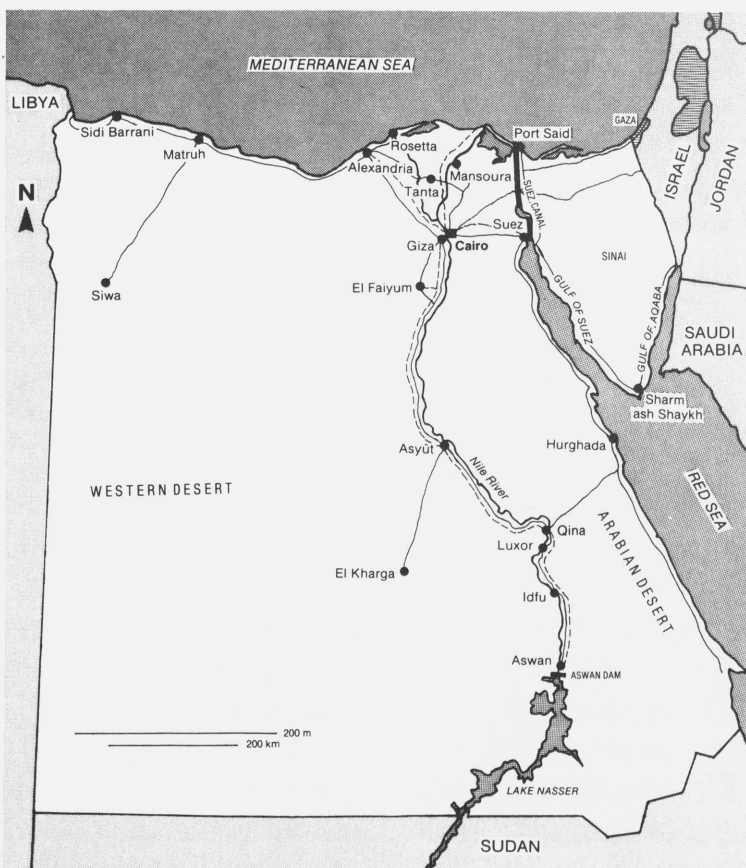
Despite this friendship and admiration, Eisenhower could not support England in an aggressive move against Egypt.

Eisenhower first attempted to resolve the issue by arranging a conference in London for all nations that used the canal. Nasser rejected, however, a proposal to internationalize the canal. Still unsure that the Egyptian leader would keep the waterway open, Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles next proposed a Suez Canal users' association to regulate traffic through the canal. This plan collapsed when operations carried out by the Egyptians during September proved more efficient and orderly than under British management. After England, France, and Israel attacked Egypt, the President turned to the United Nations and placed a resolution before the Security Council for a cease-fire. Great Britain and France at first vetoed the resolution, although they finally agreed after Eisenhower withheld the transfer of oil from the Western Hemisphere to Europe.

Following the cease-fire on November 7, 1956, Eisenhower continued to act on principle by supporting the United Nations and by rejecting armed aggression. Responding to the potential power vacuum in the Middle East, the President proposed to Congress a plan, known as the Eisenhower Doctrine, for American economic aid and support to

any nation in the Middle East threatened by Communist aggression.

More significant than the Doctrine itself was Eisenhower's leadership during the Suez crisis. He prevented a major—possibly global—war, reaffirmed the alliance between the United States and Great Britain, and increased the influence of the United States in the Middle East.



The Suez Canal. Controversy over control of the Suez Canal severely strained relations between the United States and Great Britain in 1956.

The Khrushchev Challenge

M. Albert Dimmitt

After World War II the international scene was dominated by the enigmatic figure of Joseph Stalin. He had been the undisputed master of Russia for more than two decades, and in the West he was seen as the adversary who had embroiled the world in the Cold War. No doubt this is how Eisenhower perceived him.

But within weeks after Eisenhower became president, Joseph Stalin died. For a brief period power in the Kremlin appeared to be shared by a group of three, but ultimately a man quite different from Stalin emerged as the new leader of Russia, Nikita Khrushchev. A product of the generation after Stalin, the new party boss and premier had worked his way up through the Soviet bureaucracy. Almost at once, however, he began to distance himself from the tradition of Stalin, publicly denouncing the terrors of the Stalin regime and proclaiming as his primary goal the betterment of economic conditions in the Soviet Union. He also declared his willingness to work with the United States to reduce the world's tensions.

This change in the Kremlin's attitude may have persuaded the two Communist countries at war in Korea—China and North Korea—to accept the armistice that brought an end to that struggle. But Korea was only one of many tension points in the world. Communist-led nationalists in Vietnam battled French troops for control of Indochina, long a French possession. Khrushchev agreed—as Stalin probably would not have done—to meet in Geneva to seek a settlement of the conflict. And, in spring 1955, the Soviet Union radically reversed its policy and restored Austria as a free, unoccupied, and neutral country—the first instance of a public withdrawal of Soviet forces in Europe.

Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin, titular president of the Soviet Union, met with the leaders of Britain, France, and the United States in Geneva in July 1955. At this meeting the Russian leader declared his commitment to the vague concept of “peaceful co-existence” and Eisenhower presented his equally vague proposal for disarmament, the concept of “open skies.” But little was accomplished at Geneva and, perhaps most importantly, no personal relationship developed between Eisenhower and his Russian counterpart.

In 1956, however, both countries cooperated to contain the hostilities over the control of the Suez canal. This, however, was to be the high point of cooperation between the super powers. Within weeks, Western public opinion was aroused by the uprising in Hungary, climaxed by the Soviet military's forceful suppression of dissent. In Lebanon, the monarchy was overthrown by elements friendly to, and probably supported by, the Soviet Union, leading Eisenhower to dispatch Marines and army troops to that country.

At the same time, Communist China was shelling the off-shore islands of Matsu and Quemoi and seemed poised to move on Taiwan. The European Economic Community—perceived by the Kremlin as an aggressive Western move—became a reality and in response Khrushchev threatened to cut off Western access to Berlin.



President Eisenhower and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev meet at Camp David, Maryland, on September 25, 1959, during Khrushchev's visit to the United States.

But Khrushchev was still willing to work toward improved relations with the United States. During a ten-day visit to the United States—in itself an unprecedented event—he exuded good feelings and conciliatory words. He invited Eisenhower to a second summit meeting in Paris in 1960 and later to visit Moscow. But shortly before the Paris summit an American U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down over the Soviet Union and its pilot captured. After some preliminary denials, Eisenhower admitted that such reconnaissance flights had taken place with his knowledge. With that, the Paris summit collapsed and Eisenhower's planned visit to the Soviet Union was called off. Khrushchev was now as suspicious of the West as Stalin had ever been. The brief thaw in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union had come to an end.

The Space Age Begins

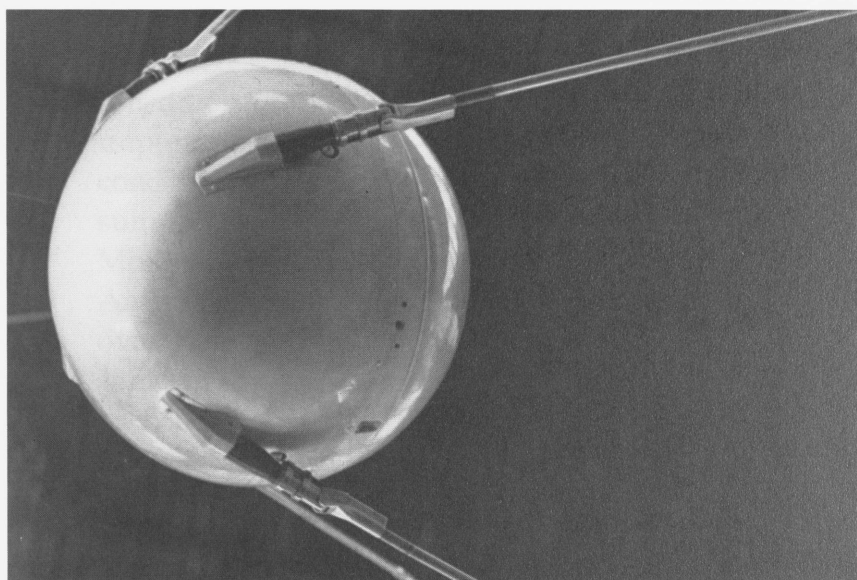
Bruce R. Kahler

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union fired into orbit Sputnik, the world's first man-made satellite. One month later the Russians launched Sputnik II, which carried a much heavier payload, including a live dog named Laika. The Space Age had begun.

Americans were astounded, awed, and scared. Suddenly the nation seemed vulnerable to its Communist arch rival and unsure of its own purposes and values. Russia, long believed to be well behind the United States in scientific competence and industrial development, had made the first significant achievement in space. Where did this leave the nation's vaunted superiority?

President Dwight D. Eisenhower was as surprised as any of his fellow-citizens. But he was even more startled by the American public's reaction. The press, the political opposition, and the public demanded to know how the Russians had, without our knowing it, forged ahead of America in science and technology.

Eisenhower sought to stem the panic. At a press conference he denied that America was losing the space race, hinted that we were ready to launch



Sputnik, the first Soviet satellite, was launched in 1959.

satellites of our own within a matter of months, and denied that Sputnik constituted a threat to the nation's military security. To underscore his commitment to American primacy in science, he persuaded the distinguished scientist Dr. James Killian, the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to come to Washington as his science adviser and head of the newly created President's Science Advisory Committee.

Shortly thereafter he consolidated authority over all nonmilitary missile and space exploration programs in a new agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA). He also addressed the widespread fear that our educational system had failed to produce the scientists needed for a major effort in space and citizens who could understand the complexity of the post-war world. He proposed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), promptly

passed by Congress, to upgrade education in the sciences and mathematics as well as in the languages of the non-Western world.

Eisenhower presided over a massive expansion of federal involvement in education as well as in scientific and technological research and development. Given his commitment to the values of individualism, limited government, and local initiative, he viewed this involvement with some misgivings. He resisted the tendency of many public leaders to solve the problem by increased governmental spending. He was willing to maintain parity with the Russians but saw no need to press for American superiority.



In 1959 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration designated the first seven astronauts, left to right, Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, John Glenn, Virgil Grissom, Walter Schirra, Alan Shepard, and Donald Slayton.

Stephen Ambrose, an Eisenhower biographer, has written that "Eisenhower's calm, commonsense, deliberate response to Sputnik may have been his finest gift to the nation." But the opposition claimed that his administration had allowed a "missile gap" and a "space gap" to develop, and that the nation's future had been jeopardized. John Kennedy used this theme effectively in his presidential campaign in 1960.

Eisenhower too thought the nation's future was in jeopardy—but for a different reason. The new surge in science and technology had created a close, and possibly irreversible, affinity between the federal government—especially the military—and industry. In his farewell address in January 1961 he warned the nation that this "military-industrial complex" held dangerous portents. The space age was indeed upon us. The nation needed to recognize that it was a mixed blessing.

Eisenhower and the School Segregation Cases

James C. Duram

Dwight Eisenhower attended Abilene High School with black students, actively pushed for integration of the Armed Forces, and was the first president to name a black to the White House central staff. Yet he was bitterly criticized for his reactions to a school segregation controversy that originated in his home state of Kansas.

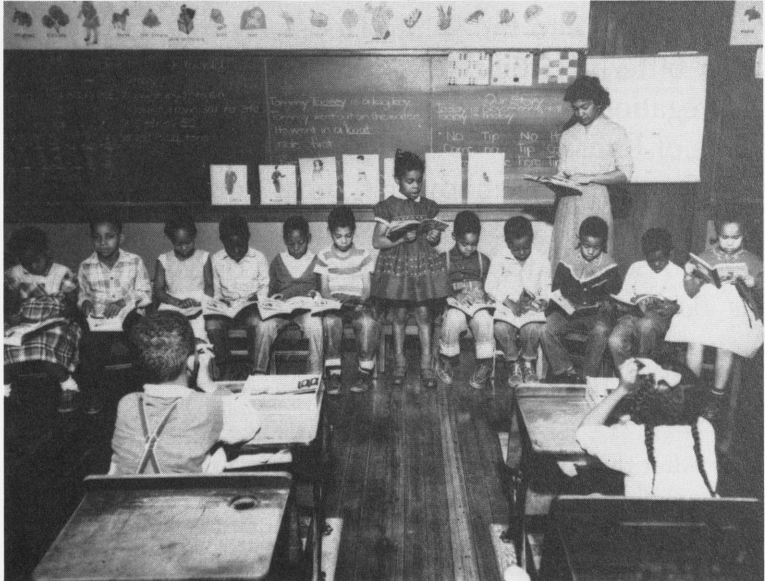
President Eisenhower's most controversial civil rights decision was his refusal to publicly approve the United States Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* and its companion school desegregation cases. In his memoirs he explained his stance:

After the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling, I refused to say whether I approved or disapproved of it. The Court's judgment was law, I said, and I would abide by it. This determination was one of principle. I believed that if I should express, publicly, either approval or disapproval of a Supreme Court decision in one case, I would be obliged to do so in many, if not all, cases. Inevitably I eventually would be drawn into a public statement or

disagreement with some decision, creating a suspicion that my vigor of enforcement would, in such cases, be in doubt.

Many supporters of school integration rejected his rationale. They argued that he owed the nation a more positive stand on the critical segregation issue. They charged that his “neutral” position encouraged segregationists to defy the law. The president and his advisors insisted, however, that a more activist stance would aggravate the situation.

One of the the president’s fears—later vindicated in Virginia—was that some Southern states would close their public school systems rather than integrate them. As Eisenhower stated in a 1956 meeting with congressional leaders:

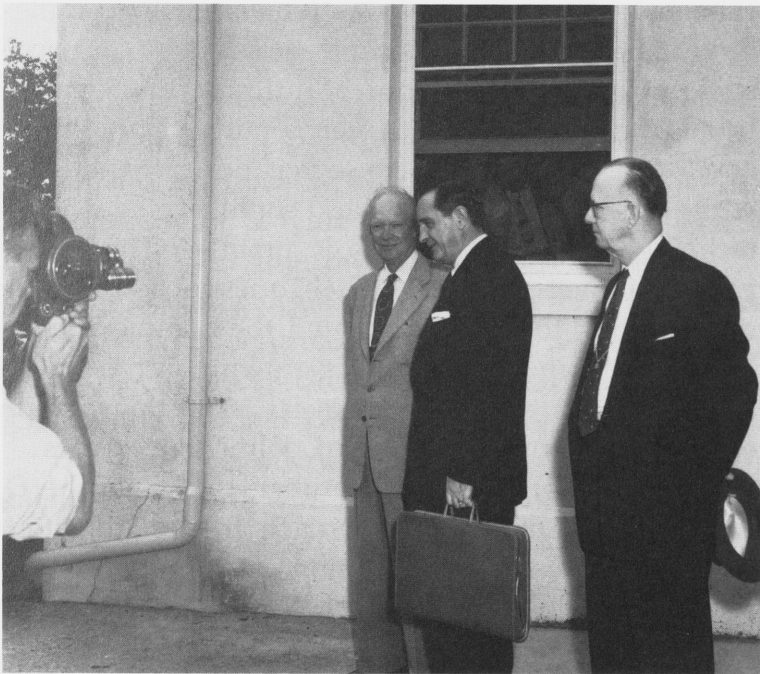


First grade, Washington School, Topeka, Kansas, 1950s. Even in abolitionist Kansas, prior to the Supreme Court’s decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the law allowed school boards in large cities to maintain segregated schools.

the Civil Rights extremists never stop to consider that although you can send in troops, they can't make anyone operate schools. Private schools could be set up and Negroes would get no education at all.

Such concerns help explain the president's preference for a gradual one-grade-per-year approach to school desegregation.

Similar fears explain why he didn't act more forcefully when the court-ordered integration of Little Rock Central High School in September 1957 met mob defiance. Eisenhower publicly stated that his role in



President Eisenhower meets with Arkansas Governor Orville Faubus and Georgia Governor Lester Maddox, Newport, Rhode Island, September 14, 1957. Faubus had defied a United States district judge's order to end segregation in Arkansas public schools by calling out the state's National Guard to prevent Negro students from entering Central High School in Little Rock.

the Little Rock crisis was to fulfill his constitutional duty to enforce the desegregation decision. His private remarks indicate that he feared the federal courts might precipitate a crisis so severe that his administration would be unable to cope with widespread defiance of federal authority in the South. The mixture of hesitation and firmness that marked his behavior during the Little Rock confrontation reflected the tension between the moderate approach to desegregation he preferred and the one created by his duty to uphold the Constitution.

With the gift of hindsight, we have increased respect for the wisdom of Eisenhower's view that school desegregation was a tremendously complex issue, one that raised basic questions about American society and defied rapid solution. The years of tribulation since 1954, with their continuing arguments over such issues as de facto segregation, cross-busing, white flight to the suburbs, and sophisticated evasive techniques, vindicate his basic premise. The use of judicial power to resolve such questions seems, in recent years, to have confronted the complexities of black-white bipolarity. There is growing intransigence about what is essentially a racial issue tinged with explosive economic, social, and political overtones.

It is important to remember that Dwight D. Eisenhower's moderate approach to desegregation was not an excuse for inaction. It was his way of seeking solutions to tough problems—of letting the American peoples' hearts catch up with their minds.

The Nation's Economy in the Eisenhower Years

Loren E. Pennington

When Dwight Eisenhower was inaugurated president in January 1953, he inherited an economy that had grown rapidly since the end of World War II. Demand for housing and durable goods and the development of a wide variety of new consumer products had led to growth in the private sector. In the public sector, increased spending by state and local government had spurred the economy, as had federal spending to meet the military and foreign-aid demands of the Cold War and the Korean conflict.

The ability of American industry to produce goods and services, along with the low costs of raw materials and energy, promoted the best possible economic world: stable prices in the midst of prosperity, low unemployment, and rising real income. There was little inflation and no depression.

The Eisenhower administration's management of the economy was closely tied to the president's moderate philosophy. Government controls should be reduced and the free market promoted, but the social reforms of the New Deal should be maintained and,

in a few instances, even expanded. Eisenhower's conduct of the economy was determined primarily by his view of the world situation. He believed that America must use its economy as a weapon in opposing communism throughout the world. To win the Cold War the United States had to avoid the twin threats of inflation and depression by maintaining a stable economy. For this reason the Eisenhower administration's primary goal was to balance the federal budget.

Balancing the budget was not an easy task. Conservative Republicans in the Congress continually fought for tax cuts and reductions in foreign aid; liberal Democrats insisted on increased social spending. But the real threat to a balanced budget came from the increasing demands of the Pentagon, supported by Congressional conservatives and liberals alike.

In Eisenhower's view, providing the military with the manpower and weapons to fight conventional wars would be hugely expensive. Nuclear weapons would be cheaper in the short run but would probably lead to an arms race with the Soviets that could bankrupt the country. Eisenhower therefore attempted to fight the Cold War by using clandestine operations and by providing military and economic aid to American allies, including a reduction of American tariffs on free-world exports.

Eisenhower generally succeeded in his goals, particularly in balancing the federal budget. He also succeeded in giving America eight years of prosperity, marred only by three short recessions.

Some critics have argued that Eisenhower's success in managing the economy was more apparent than real. Aside from the construction of the St.



Tollbooth, Kansas turnpike, 1950s. President Eisenhower initiated the federal interstate highway system, which was designed to improve the transportation network that had become woefully inadequate after World War II.

Lawrence Seaway and the interstate highway system, the infrastructure of the economy was neglected. Limited federal spending for education burdened already overtaxed state and local governments. Attempts to free the farm economy from government subsidy not only failed but contributed to the decline of the family farm. The promotion of free trade and

overseas investments to bolster foreign economies led to increased competition for American firms both at home and abroad. By 1955 less than half of America's workers were employed in the manufacture of goods as the nation began the shift to a service economy. Finally, balancing the budget at all costs was important in limiting the growth of the American economy and setting the stage for the stagflation—rising inflation and stagnant economic growth—in the years that followed.

Yet, on the balance, Eisenhower “gave the nation eight years of peace and prosperity.” Historian Stephen Ambrose assesses the nation's economy in the Eisenhower presidency:

By almost any standard—GNP, personal income and savings, home buying, auto purchases, capital investment, highway construction, and so forth—it was the best decade of the century. Surely Eisenhower's fiscal policies, his refusal to cut taxes or increase defense spending, his insistence on a balanced budget, played some role in creating this happy situation.

National Security: Internal and External

M. Albert Dimmitt

In 1952 Republicans looked forward to electing Dwight Eisenhower president. The issues would be Korea, communism, and corruption. National security, internal and external, had troubled the nation since 1945.

When World War II ended, there were tensions between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Cold war tensions mounted in the late 1940s and early 1950s and prompted White House and congressional leaders to uncover pro-Communist security risks in government and remove them from office. Demands for tighter security legislation produced the Internal Security Act of 1950 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. In the midterm elections of 1950 senators tagged as soft on communism were defeated, and those who climbed on the anti-Communist bandwagon were elected. In the center of the anti-Communist rage was Senator Joseph McCarthy, Republican from Wisconsin.

In the presidential elections of 1952, Republicans viewed Dwight Eisenhower as a national leader who

would establish a strong foreign policy, negotiate a settlement in Korea and take vigorous action against security risks. They hoped these actions would help ensure security and satisfy Senator McCarthy.

Although Eisenhower found McCarthy and his tactics distasteful, his running mate, Richard Nixon, carried on the McCarthy rhetoric. Nixon criticized Adlai Stevenson and other Democrats for their lack of energy in attacking the threat of Communists, both internal and external.

Eisenhower and Nixon were elected and proceeded to develop foreign policies and internal security programs that would meet the perceived dangers and control McCarthyism.

The Eisenhower team developed a new way to uncover subversive public employees. In two years, more than 3,000 persons were removed from office as security risks. In addition, there were 5,000 resignations. Among those caught in this web was Harry Dexter White, whom Attorney General Herbert Brownell brought to trial in 1953. White was accused of enemy-agent activities in 1945 while appointed to the International Monetary Fund. Also spotlighted was J. Robert Oppenheimer, leader in the development of the atomic bomb. To the dismay of many close to nuclear research, the new leaders in the Atomic Energy Commission removed Oppenheimer's security clearance.

McCarthy's pressure for action continued. Two of his staff charged the Voice of America with pro-Communist leanings and under the direction of the State Department went to Europe to inspect embassy libraries. They found objectionable books and had some of them removed. Although Eisenhower was distressed at this "book burning" and State



Senator Joseph McCarthy greets presidential candidate Eisenhower on his campaign visit to Wisconsin, October 1952. Stephen Ambrose, an Eisenhower biographer, comments that "some of Ike's worst problems as president flowed from this handshake."

Department personnel were annoyed at this legislative interference, the Department did remove some of the selected books.

Public interest and support of the McCarthy probe rose dramatically in 1953 and reached a high in January 1954, when about half of those polled supported McCarthy. This changed after the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954. These televised hearings brought General Ralph Zwicker and the Secretary of the Army, Robert Stevens, to answer questions about possible subversives in the Army. The spectacle, which was viewed nationwide, troubled many viewers. McCarthy's popularity ratings fell sharply, and both congressional and administrative personnel began to formulate a motion to censure McCarthy. The motion

censured McCarthy for "conduct . . . unbecoming a member of the United States Senate." The vote was 67 to 22 with six abstentions. McCarthy continued to press his cause but had few followers. He died in 1957.

The issues of internal and external security did not end with McCarthy. Foreign-policy problems persisted during Eisenhower's term. Revolts in East Germany and Hungary challenged Dulles' foreign policy. Crises in Suez, Lebanon, and Indochina tested the administration's mettle in defining and defending national interests. The U-2 incident at the close of the decade signalled continuing United States-Soviet tension. National security continued to be an important issue.

The Eisenhower Image

Francis H. Heller

What manner of president was Dwight D. Eisenhower? While he was in office, cartoonists and pundits often derided him. They depicted him as a do-nothing president; they joked about his tendency to garble his replies in press conferences; they cast suspicion on his associations with business leaders; and they deplored his reading habits and bridge playing.

But the people still liked Ike. For many, he would always be a hero and for many more he was a father figure.

How do we see him thirty years later? The jibes and jokes have been put aside. We know now, from the materials on file in the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, that he garbled answers deliberately whenever he did not wish to give a direct response. We know that, contrary to the conventional wisdom in the fifties, it was he, and not John Foster Dulles, who made the important foreign policy decisions. We understand, much better than we did then, that he was deeply committed to the kind of moderation that, for most of America's history, has marked the

mainstream of the nation's political thought and behavior.

This kind of reevaluation has been the fate of every president. Harry Truman observed, less than four years after he had left the White House, that a president could be fairly assessed only decades after his term of service. Then it would be possible to determine whether his major decisions had, in the long run, benefited the nation. Stephen Ambrose, who has written the definitive biography of Eisenhower, points out that a judgment of Ike (or any other president) is a relative matter, that such judgments are unfair because no two presidents have the same opportunities or face the same dangers.

Eisenhower, Ambrose observes,

ruled at a time that required him, at least in his own view, to adopt a moderate course, to stay in the middle of the road, to avoid calling on his fellow citizens for some great national effort. He did not face the challenges that Washington did, or Lincoln, or Franklin Roosevelt. How he would have responded to setting precedents, rather than following them, or to a Civil War, or to a Depression, or to a world war, we cannot know. What we do know, is that he guided the country safely and securely through a dangerous decade.

Shortly after Eisenhower left office, a national poll of American historians placed him nearly at the bottom of the list of presidents. By the early 1980s, a new poll placed him ninth. Ambrose believes his reputation will continue to rise, perhaps even to a point just below Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt.

In attempting to assess the Eisenhower presidency, Ambrose writes,

certain comparisons must be made. Since Jackson's time, only four men have served eight consecutive years or more in the White House—Grant, Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Eisenhower. Of the four, only two—Eisenhower and Roosevelt—were more popular when they left office than when they entered. In contrast to his Democratic predecessors and successors, Eisenhower kept the peace; in contrast to his Republican successors, Eisenhower both balanced the budget and stopped inflation.

Eisenhower looms much larger today than he did thirty years ago. He does so as the World War II military leader and as the president but, preeminently, he does so as a human being. The values he acquired in his youth in Abilene stayed with him throughout his life and served him well. He towers as a man of integrity and decency. His home state justly honors him.



In 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed townspeople in his hometown of Abilene, Kansas. His wife, Mamie, is to his right.

Suggested Readings

Dwight D. Eisenhower has been the subject of numerous biographies, both popular and scholarly. The best so far is the two-volume work by Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983–84, also available in paperback). It is comprehensive and readable and it projects a rounded yet consistent image of its subject.

Two shorter studies are Piers Brendon, *Ike: His Life and Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) and the volume in Twayne's Twentieth Century Biography series by Robert F. Burk, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Hero and Politician* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986, also in paperback).

Steve Neal's *The Eisenhowers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985, paperback) is an appealing family biography.

Among books that focus on the period of Eisenhower's presidency, the most recent one is the well-received volume by John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America and War and Peace, 1941–1960* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988). Richard S. Kirkendall's *A Global Empire: America since the Age of Roosevelt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2nd ed., 1980), and William L. O'Neill's *American High: The Years of*

Confidence, 1945–1960 (New York: Free Press, 1987) are widely used college texts.

For younger readers (grades 7–12), volume 16 of the American Heritage Illustrated History of the United States, *Decades of Cold War, 1946–1963*, originally published by American Heritage in 1963, is available in a reprint by Choice Publishing (Great Neck, NY: 1988).

Also for younger readers, there are, among several books on Eisenhower, two entitled *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, one by Jim Hargrove, in the Encyclopedia of Presidents series (Chicago: Children's Press, 1987, for grades 3 and up); the other by Peter S. Sandberg, in the series World Leaders Past and Present (New York: Chelsea House, 1986, for grades 8 and up). Both are well illustrated and capably presented.