CHANGING COURSE: THE SOURCES OF STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENT

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By

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Under what conditions will presidents change their grand strategy? Change isn’t easy, particularly for presidents and particularly at the level of grand strategy. Most presidents take office with well-formed foreign policy views, or at least a general set of foreign policy promises (often to reverse the “failures” of their predecessor). Most grand strategies are formed at the beginning of an administration and rarely change thereafter. Presidents attempting to change course must overcome cognitive biases that prefer consistency and a national security bureaucracy that “does its thing.” While we have models for major change between administrations, we lack theory for smaller adjustments within administrations.

This dissertation builds a typological theory of strategic adjustment. Initially, I model adjustment as a function of: (1) strategic shock; (2) domestic political slack; (3) a president’s conceptual complexity; and (4) a president’s foreign policy experience. After conducting original archival research and three cases studies from the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, I argue strategic shocks set processes in motion that force presidents to consider a course change and give presidents freedom to maneuver around domestic political pressures. Positive shocks put presidents in the domain of gains, making them more risk averse. Negative shocks put presidents in the domain of losses, making them more risk acceptant. The president’s foreign policy experience also influences the degree of adjustment. Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to take risks in response to positive shocks and can afford to
resist pressure in response to negative shocks. Experienced presidents are thus more likely to make moderate adjustments when confronted with gains or losses. Presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience, on the other hand, are less willing to take risks in response to positive shocks and are more vulnerable to charges of “weakness” and pressures to “do something” from the public and strong-willed subordinates in response to negative shocks. Inexperienced presidents are thus more likely to make no adjustment in response to positive shocks and major adjustments in response to negative shocks.
To Caden and Cora.

Love,

Uncle Mike
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INTRODUCTION

“But the pledges of each new Administration are like leaves on a turbulent sea. No President-elect or his advisers can possibly know upon what shore they may finally be washed by that storm of deadlines, ambiguous information, complex choices, and manifold pressures which descends upon all leaders of a great nation.”

-Henry Kissinger, 1979

While campaigning for reelection in September 1948, President Harry S. Truman argued that the U.S. economy could not sustain annual defense spending greater than $15 billion. The grand strategy he approved two months later, NSC 20/4, reflected this position—it selectively applied limited means to advance U.S. interests. By September 1950, after the outbreak of the Korean War, Truman abandoned this budget ceiling—initiating appropriations in excess of $30 billion as part of largest defense buildup in the history of postwar U.S. foreign policy. The majority of these funds, however, were not for Korea. Instead, they were spent in service of a new and ambitious grand strategy, NSC 68, which Truman had commissioned prior to the war but had initially rejected.

The change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 is the starkest example of so-called “Containment Puzzle”—a persistent disjuncture between the consistent ends of Containment and the inconsistent means applied to achieve those ends. Where the disjuncture varies within an administration, the puzzle is more puzzling. Most presidents take office with stable views on the nature of international politics. Most grand strategies are formed at the beginning of an administration and rarely change thereafter. Presidents who come to the office promising a new

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1 Henry Kissinger, White Years (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1979), 16.
4 Alexander George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 45. Broader than a military strategy (i.e. a plan for advancing a military
direction for U.S. foreign policy must overcome intransigent advisers and a national security bureaucracy that “does its thing.” And as the epigraph to this chapter suggests, presidents—even those with extensive foreign policy experience—are often blown off course by unforeseen events and international crises. 

This raises the questions: Under what conditions will presidents change U.S. grand strategy? As a first step toward answering this question, this dissertation builds a typological theory of strategic adjustment, a model for when (and how) presidents change course.

**Stakes of the Study: Theory and Policy**

The literature on grand strategy has two main gaps. First, scholars have focused on major reorientations of U.S. grand strategy (i.e. isolationism to containment) and have yet to specify theories that can account for smaller adjustments within a dominant strategic framework. Even if these are adjustments are smaller, they still have significant impact over time: “like a 1-degree objective in a given conflict situation) yet narrower than a foreign policy (i.e. all of a state’s actions abroad), “[g]rand strategy may be defined as a nation’s conscious effort to employ all elements of national power to advance and fulfill its security-related objectives in the foreign sphere.” Elbridge Colby, “Grand Strategy: Contending Contemporary Analyst Views and Implications for the U.S. Navy,” Center for Naval Analysis (November 2011): 6, [https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0025423.A2.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0025423.A2.pdf) (accessed June 6, 2013). “Grand strategy refers to a state’s overall plan for providing national security by keeping military resources and external commitments in balance.” Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 3.


6 Most presidents face unexpected crises in the first year of their presidency. See Jeff Chidester, “The Questions We Should Ask the Candidates,” *Politico*, October 26, 2015.

shift in the vector of an air-craft carrier over a 1000 [nautical] mile voyage.” The nautical image of changing course highlights the second gap: the literature suggests the president is carried along by systemic and domestic currents, casting doubt on his individual ability to steer the ship of state in a new direction. The theory developed in this dissertation aims to fill these gaps, with a particular focus on reinserting presidential agency and personality into the literature.

This theory should also contribute to our understanding of important present-day policy debates. For example, George W. Bush campaigned in 2000 criticizing the Clinton Administration for its interventionism abroad and promising to be “very careful about using our troops as nation-builders.” Yet in the aftermath of 9/11, Bush would change course, embarking on an ambitious grand strategy and launching the two longest and most costly wars in American history. President Obama’s early opposition to Iraq war helped him win the presidency. He has since attempted rebalance U.S. grand strategy by “ending wars” in the Middle East, paying greater attention to Asia, and focusing on “nation-building at home.” Debates about these course changes since 2000 are shaping the 2016 presidential campaign, as candidates from both parties struggle to talk about the foreign policy legacies of Bush and Obama.

Some suggest the rhetorical differences between Bush and Obama mask a surprising amount of foreign policy continuity between the two administrations. Others question whether the United States has even had an overarching grand strategy in recent years to guide its foreign

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9 Quoted in Welch, 1.
11 See, for example, Timothy Lynch, “‘A Change of Leaders in the Joy of Fools’: Bush, Obama and Continuity in American Foreign Policy.” (paper presented at the Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia, March 25, 2011).
The common wisdom holds that present times are hard times for grand strategy. Many believe that today, in contrast to the Cold War, the U.S. faces a “grand strategic deficit” and strategic planning “is either dead or dying.” Policy elites continue to propose “fixes” to strategic planning process because they believe the dearth of grand strategy is dangerous: while good grand strategy does not guarantee foreign policy success, bad or nonexistent grand strategy increases the risk of failure. But these outside efforts to change course, however, do not address the prior question of when presidents themselves can steer the ship of state in a new direction.

The Plan of the Dissertation

The stakes of strategic adjustment are high, but the scope of this dissertation is limited. My primary goal is to create a theory, specifically the first typological theory of strategic adjustment. My secondary goal is to explain the cases that follow, and thereby contribute to the

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understanding of strategic adjustment during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{16}

Towards these ends, in the next chapter I build an exploratory framework derived from the existing literature. In this framework, the dependent variable is strategic adjustment, a type of foreign policy change that involves changes to grand strategy. I propose that adjustment occurs in a two-stage process of formulation and implementation. My continuum for strategic adjustment ranges from continuity (no adjustment), to refinement (minor adjustment), to reform (moderate adjustment), to restructuring (major adjustment).

I then identify four candidate causal variables that influence strategic adjustment and offer exploratory hypotheses related to each of these variables. My first independent variable is strategic shock. I hypothesize that strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment.

The second independent variable is domestic political slack, based on the assumption that presidents are motivated in large part by political survival. I hypothesize that in order to implement a strategic adjustment, the president must perceive he has the domestic political slack to convince the public and overcome Congressional opposition. A president, in other words, will not commit political suicide for the sake of strategic adjustment.

My third independent variable is a president’s conceptual complexity, a measure of how open a leader is to negative feedback from the surrounding environment and his or her propensity to change course. I hypothesize that presidents with higher levels of conceptual complexity are more likely to respond to strategic shocks by formulating options for strategic adjustment.

My fourth independent variable is the president's foreign policy experience. I hypothesize that prior foreign policy experience gives the president confidence in dealing with his or her advisors, with Congress, and with the public, who are in turn more likely to defer to experienced presidents. Experience also increases the chance the president will be personally involved in both the formulation and implementation of strategy. Thus, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to successfully implement a strategic adjustment.

Figure 1 below provides an initial model of probabilistic outcomes on the dependent variable based upon these four independent variables. Generally speaking, if neither shock nor slack obtain, I expect continuity (Outcomes 1 and 2). If both shock and slack are present but the president has low conceptual complexity, the president is likely to make minor adjustments or refinements (Outcome 3). If under the same conditions of shock and slack the president is conceptually complex, then the process of strategy formulation will likely begin. If the president has little experience, then adjustment is likely to falter in the strategy implementation phase, leading to moderate adjustments or reforms (Outcome 4). If, on the other hand, the president is experienced, then I expect major change or restructuring (Outcome 5).
Figure 1: An Initial Model of Strategic Adjustment

Chapters II-IV refine this model and inductively derive theory from the empirical record using three Cold War case studies. Chapter II examines the formulation of NSC 68 following the Soviet nuclear test in September 1949 and the eventual implementation of NSC 68 following the invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950. Chapter III examines how Eisenhower deviated from the course laid out by Truman and abandoned campaign promises to “roll back” the Soviet Union, generating NSC 162/2, his “New Look” grand strategy. Chapter IV examines Eisenhower’s response to the launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite on October 4, 1957 and Sputnik II on November 3, 1957.

Based on this empirical work, Chapter V presents a refined typological theory of strategic adjustment. My overall conclusion is that the initial model was too complex—the case studies cast doubt on the utility of domestic political slack and conceptual complexity as independent variables. Though I add a distinction for different types of shock (positive vs. negative shock), I simplify the theory in three ways. First, I eliminate the phases of formulation and
implementation. Second, I specify only three possible outcomes on the dependent variable: no adjustment, moderate adjustment, and major adjustment (and propose a more detailed framework for measuring adjustment in Appendix 1). Third, I eliminate the domestic political slack variable and the conceptual complexity variable.

Figure 2 models this refined theory of strategic adjustment.

**Figure 2: A Refined Model of Strategic Adjustment**

In brief, drawing on prospect theory and political psychology, the new model hypothesizes that shocks can be either positive or negative. Positive shocks, those that reveal new opportunities to advance U.S. interests or suggest a more benign international environment, put presidents in the domain of gains, making them more risk averse and more likely to make no adjustment or a moderate adjustment. Negative shocks, those that reveal threats to U.S. interests or suggest a more hostile international environment, put presidents in the domain of losses, making them more risk acceptant and likely to make moderate adjustments or major adjustments.
In the face of such shocks, the president retains agency and the ability channel the pressure created by shocks in a particular direction. The foreign policy experience of the president adjudicates the degree of adjustment. Not only are presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience more likely to avoid shock, but when operating in the domain of gain, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can also afford to take risks. Additionally, they can overcome inertia and bureaucratic intransigence through their personal involvement in the foreign policy decision-making process, and are therefore are more likely to make moderate adjustments. When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to stay the course, resist pressure, maintain control of the adjustments process, and diffuse charges of “weakness,” and are therefore more likely to make moderate adjustments.

Presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience, on the other hand, are more likely to encounter shock, particularly negative shock. When operating in the domain of gain, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are less likely to take risks or get involved in the adjustment process and are therefore more likely to make no adjustment. When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more vulnerable to charges of “weakness,” more likely to take risks or lose control of the adjustment process and are therefore more likely to make major adjustments.

In Chapter VI, I apply this theory to the Cold War and post-Cold War empirical record, conducting two “mini” case studies of the Nixon and Carter administrations. I conclude by identifying the most promising cases and comparative cases to advance the research agenda and by assessing the contributions and limits of my theory.
CHAPTER II: TOWARDS A THEORY OF STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENT

“It is an illusion to believe that leaders gain in profundity while they gain experience….the convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office.”17

- Henry Kissinger

Foreign policy is in a constant state of change. At any given moment diplomats are changing posts and negotiating international agreements, military servicemen are redeploying and repositioning assets, bureaucrats are allocating resources and approving policy changes, and presidents are giving speeches that induce changes throughout the executive branch. Even when the commander-in-chief appears calm and committed to the foreign policy course he has laid out, there is non-stop churn below the surface.

Yet of all the aspects of a president’s foreign policy, grand strategy should be the most stable, the least affected by this continual process of foreign policy adjustment. Grand strategy is the administration’s overall roadmap for securing national interests, “the process by which officials identified vital national security interests and charted the political, economic, military, and diplomatic moves necessary for their realization.”18 A grand strategy reflects a president’s general approach to geopolitics, a comprehensive framework for thinking about the world built over the course of his or her career. Lesser foreign policy initiatives can be changed without altering the grand strategic framework of which it is part. Yet the reverse is not true. If a president changes his or her grand strategy, then the adjustment reverberates through the rest of American foreign policy.

Thus, to build a theory of grand strategy change or strategic adjustment, the challenge is twofold: (1) to separate that type of change from the constant tweaking of U.S. foreign policy,

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17 Kissinger, White House Years, 54.
much of which happens without the president being aware, and (2) to identify the candidate causal variables that actually influence the president’s decision to change course. This chapter reviews the literature on grand strategy change with these two goals in mind. Drawing from extant theory, it aims to build an initial typological theory of strategic adjustment, one that can subsequently be tested and refined through empirical case studies.

**Literature on Grand Strategy Change**

Scholars appear to agree on one thing: presidents will not change course without a change in their environment. Structural realist approaches, for example, argue that state behavior is not determined by state-level decisionmakers but rather by system-level variables such as the distribution of material power. Indeed, most structural models assume that great powers are rational and respond to systemic changes in similar ways, unencumbered by internal constraints.

Domestic political approaches, on the other hand, reject as empirically false this notion of states as “black boxes,” pointing out that states do not always respond to systemic pressures in the same way. They use a variety of state and individual level variables to explain deviations from the behavior that structural realists predict. Foremost among these are the pressures and policy preferences of domestic political constituencies whose support is necessary to sustain a party or president’s power. Leaders will respond to these changes in constituencies. Thus,

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foreign policy change can be seen as a product of a struggle for political power—a tool to distinguish oneself from one’s opponent or to retain control of the presidency or Congress. In the domestic political approach, the degree of change depends upon (1) the degree of institutionalization or commitment to the current course, (2) the degree of support from the constituency, and (3) the degree of significance of the issue involved.

A strand of constructivism argues that states’ possess unique strategic cultures—a set of values and beliefs about how to pursue national interests—that shape how systemic pressures are perceived by decision-makers and shapes how leaders define and pursue national interests. Ideas can capture foreign policy elites, influence how leaders choose among policy options, and thereby affect strategic adjustments. Norms can shape the national security interests or the policies of states, acting like rules or standards for how a grand strategy should be formulated and implemented. Often such norms are bound up in a sense of national identity, such that choosing a strategic path outside the normal bounds of a state’s strategic culture (i.e. preemptive war) can produce domestic political backlash.

Most recent approaches to grand strategy combine international, domestic, material, and ideational variables. For example, Colin Dueck develops a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy adjustment in which international pressures are filtered through America’s distinct

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national culture. Dueck argues that America’s culture comprises both classical liberal assumptions and a tradition of “limited liability.” U.S. grand strategy thus reflects the influence of “reluctant crusaders”—crusading to promote a liberal international order while loath to bear the necessary costs. Dueck, however, is concerned only with “first-order” or massive shifts in grand strategy and does not apply the reluctant crusader model to Containment beyond 1951.

In more recent work, Dueck argues that Republican foreign policy since the 1950s has been a coherent form of “hawkish and intense American nationalism.” Republicans are hard-liners: they are more willing than their Democratic counterparts to use force abroad, unwilling to accommodate threatening states, and skeptical of international institutions that might constrain U.S. activity. Dueck identifies four possible variables that might explain particular foreign policy outcomes drawn from existing theories: (1) economic interests at the foundation of existing party coalitions; (2) partisan politics; (3) international pressure; and (4) power of policy ideas. This is a complex mix of moving parts. Add to this the uncertainty surrounding how voter preferences are perceived, the protean nature of these preferences, and the fact that many voters vote based on “valence” issues such as a candidate’s personality or “position” issues such as abortion.

Dueck recognizes this complexity and concludes that under these conditions, formal or game-theoretic models cannot predict foreign policy outcomes from a given distribution of foreign

26 On neoclassical realism, see Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” World Politics 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 144-172.
29 Dueck, Hard Line, 36. Party leaders and foreign policy decision-makers bring preconceived are not just responding to electoral incentives, they also bring genuinely-held ideas to their positions of power. These ideas shape how they define the national interest and how they will pursue it. Dueck here concedes his approach cannot disentangle ideas from bureaucratic interests and does not explain why one particular set of ideas wins out at a given time.
policy preferences among the electorate. This is the reason that partisan or economic interest-based explanations for foreign policy change are insufficient. Rather, Dueck expects to see highly contingent foreign policy outcomes—outcomes that may be unconnected to constituent interests—based upon a process of “continuous log-rolling and agenda-setting on the part of the presidents, their supporters, and their opponents as they strive to create and sustain winning coalitions in the midst of uncertainty and across multiple issue areas.”

A key part of Dueck’s argument is that party leaders, particularly presidents, provide focal points in this multidimensional issue space; they rally diverse interests around particular ideas such that “[c]oalition building is consequently an exercise in political leadership.” Presidents choose which constituents to represent. They have room to position themselves, to persuade, to negotiate and compromise among various party factions, and “[t]hey are also uniquely positioned at the point where the international system intersects with American government, at the highest level. They possess unusual status and resources with regard to the making of foreign policy, and they are given a certain amount of latitude by their own party, the American public, and Congress to make foreign policy decisions.” As such, the president’s beliefs, personality, and choices, far from being intervening variables through which systemic and domestic pressures are filtered, “make a real difference when it comes to precise foreign policy outcomes.” A president is not all-powerful when it comes to foreign policy, but he or she is the most powerful actor: “to a surprising extent, when one party controls the White House, that party’s foreign policy is what the President says it is.”

Dueck demonstrates slight variation within Republican grand strategic choices, but his

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story is largely one of continuity since World War II. This is common in recent theory-focused works on grand strategic change. For example, Jeffrey Legro explains radical changes in foreign policy ideas using a two-stage model displayed in Figure 3. First, external shock, particularly the shock of war, causes the old orthodoxy to collapse. Second, policymakers consolidate around a new grand strategy with social support. Legro does not address adjustments within a broad foreign policy framework such as containment; he labels all of Cold War U.S. grand strategy broadly as “integrationist” or a general move towards embracing international relationships and institutions.35

![Figure 3: Legro’s Two-Stage Model of Foreign Policy Change](image)

Similarly, Charles Kupchan argues that America’s Cold War strategic culture—a “mindset associated with NSC 68” comprising images of a hostile struggle with the Soviets, high perceptions of vulnerability, industrial sector demand for high defense spending, and military demand for nuclear and conventional missions—was largely set in place from 1949-1950 and simply gained momentum thereafter. To explain why states frequently fail to adjust or adjust inappropriately to changes in the strategic landscape—pursuing self-defeating grand

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strategies of overexposure and overextension—he focuses on elite beliefs and strategic culture. Kupchan contends that rapid, adverse shifts in the international balance of power (what Legro might call “shocks”) create perceptions of high vulnerability and strategic insufficiency, where decision-makers believe that their resources are insufficient to cope with threats to their homeland. This causes them to adopt extremist policies. In order to generate domestic support for these policies, elites deliberately propagated a new strategic culture throughout the state in order to generate support for a more ambitious, costly, and ultimately overextended grand strategy. As extremist policies begin to produce negative consequences, elites recognize this disconfirming evidence but they cannot adjust. They are trapped by the shift in strategic culture they have been selling; their strategic culture takes on a life of its own, making the domestic political costs of rationally adjusting grand strategy too high.36

In later work with Peter Trubowitz, Kupchan labels all of Cold War grand strategy as a bipartisan, consistent and coherent form of “liberal internationalism.”37 Timothy Lynch similarly argues that any adjustments to Cold War grand strategy were at most cosmetic. This strategic continuity was a function of two variables: (1) a coherent external threat and (2) a strong domestic consensus on how to defeat that threat.38 In contrast, Benjamin Miller subordinates domestic-ideational variables such as the appeal of foreign policy ideas to the international environment. Whereas in Dueck’s model the president is uniquely positioned to act as the final

37 Liberal internationalism coupled U.S. power with international partnership to confront an unambiguous external threat. Despite frequent clashes over foreign aid and trade, when it came to “the basic elements of grand strategy—when military force should be used, the importance of international support, and the role of multilateral institutions—consensus was the norm.” Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 10, 7-44.
38 For example, Timothy Lynch contends that while Eisenhower’s “New Look” may have downsized the budget and changed foreign policy rhetoric, it largely embraced the underlying logic and substance of Truman’s containment strategy (he seems to skip over the intervening case of NSC 68 entirely). Lynch similarly argues that neither Kennedy nor Reagan nor Obama shifted substantially from the grand strategies of their predecessors. “A Change of Leaders in the Joy of Fools”.
selector of foreign policy outcomes, Miller argues that the distribution of capabilities and the balance of threat work as the “selector of ideas” and determine which grand strategic idea will emerge from the foreign policy process. He codes his dependent variable as one of four ideal-type grand strategies: offensive realism, defensive realism, offensive liberalism and defensive liberalism. Miller argues that Cold War grand strategy shifted between offensive realism when the Soviet threat was highest (1947-1962, 1979-1985) and defensive realism during détente (1963-1978, 1985-1990). Miller’s model also suggests that absent changes in systemic factors, presidential transitions and party changes will not produce grand strategy shifts. But Miller’s two categories of realism make for strange strategic bedfellows. For example, beyond the fact that he does not account for adjustment within the Truman administration, many would quibble with classifying Kennedy-Johnson’s “Flexible Response” as a form of détente.39

Stephen Sestanovich goes farther than Miller in rejecting the prevailing view of Cold War strategy as invariant. Sestanovich argues that the history of modern U.S. foreign policy is one of discontinuity, and he disaggregates the concept of containment into a record of cyclical foreign policy change and discord. Changes stem primarily from a president’s desire to distance the new administration from the foreign policy failures of his or her predecessor:

Every president leaving the Washington at the end of an administration was widely condemned for his foreign policy record. Some were virtually run out of town. Almost every new occupant of the Oval Office thought the world had changed in some fundamental way that his predecessor either totally misunderstood or failed to manage effectively. This was how Truman viewed Roosevelt, how Eisenhower viewed Truman, how Kennedy viewed Eisenhower, and so on. Twenty years later, when Ronald Reagan took over from Jimmy Carter, his verdict was harsher still. Reagan believed that America had been losing the Cold War for at least the previous three presidencies. Some of these claims were unfair and partisan, but they were not mere campaign rhetoric. They shaped

the outlook and actions of most new administrations. The story of American foreign policy, we will see, is not one of dogged continuity but of regular, repeated, and successful efforts to change course.\footnote{Sestanovich, 7. This accords with Gaddis’s earlier argument that most presidents take office seeking to distance themselves from their predecessors, which influences the initial grand strategic course they set.}

Adjustment for Sestanovitch depends on two different types of failure that produce two different types of presidents. The first is crisis, “some alarming new challenge that raised the prospect of a major American setback and required an urgent response.”\footnote{“These moments of crisis included Western Europe’s seeming economic collapse in the winter of 1947, North Korea’s attack on the South in 1950, the launch of Sputnik in 1957, Nikita Khrushchev’s threat to strangle West Berlin in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis a year later, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, martial law in Poland in 1981, Iraq’s seizure of Kuwait in 1990, Balkan mass murder later in the decade and of course the attacks of September 11, 2001.” Sestanovich, 7-8.} Faced with such crises, presidents determine that a “maximalist” approach is needed to turn back the threat. A maximalist approach requires new resources and new commitments: “our leaders typically had just one answer to such problems: Do more. Think big. Pedal to the metal.”\footnote{Sestanovich, 8.} Sestanovich characterizes Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan as maximalist presidents. These presidents also rejected the caution urged by some of their advisers who argued that going big would do more harm than good.

The second type of failure is over-commitment. Presidents faced with the consequences of over-commitment become “retrenchment” presidents, those seeking to unwind disasters, calm the public, narrow commitments, reduce costs, and put U.S. foreign policy on a more sustainable path. Sestanovich identifies Eisenhower and Nixon as “classic examples” of retrenchers, both Cold War president “charged with closing down stalemated wars at bearable cost.”\footnote{Sestanovich, 8.} Retrenchment presidents sought to do less and “think harder, not bigger. Hit the brakes, not the gas.”\footnote{Sestanovich, 9.} Thus maximalist presidents produce retrenchment presidents and vice versa, in a cycle of failure and (over)correction. Maximalists overreach and retrenchers pull back, which produces
new geopolitical challenges that resurrect the maximalists.45

Most presidents, however, would not think of themselves as either maximalists or retrenchers, and it is hard to accept Sestanovitch’s broad classifications. Eisenhower was supposedly a retrencher who nonetheless consistently maintained a sizeable U.S. force presence in Europe and, after the experience of the Suez crisis, proved willing to deploy troops to the Middle East for the sake of regional stability. Kennedy, for example, was a maximalist who was nonetheless sensitive to the risks of his maximalist instincts and was always looking for a safe exit. Nixon, on the other hand, was a retrencher who knew he had to get the war in Vietnam off his plate—and escalated dramatically in order to sue for peace and advocated a “madman” theory of international politics46—but worried about retreat and tried to sell himself on a maximalist approach. All presidents try to fine-tune strategies as they are implemented and as they encounter challenges. But they usually find it difficult to deal with inertia and to control all the different instruments of national power.

Sestanovitch’s model also does not explain strategic adjustment within an administration. President’s change course in response to the failure of their predecessors and the type of change depends on the type of failure. Sestanovich does explore how 9/11 put a stop to George W. Bush’s initial efforts to do less abroad and forced him to embrace maximalism. He gives short

45 This cycle, in Sestanovich’s view, has played out at least three times. First, the “golden age” of the early Cold War activism ended with drift in the late Eisenhower administration. Second, the New Frontier corrected this drift and then was ended by the abandonment of detente in the late 1970s. Third, Ronald Reagan’s attempt to “begin the world over again,” a cycle which may not yet have ended. Yet maximalism and retrenchment do not track neatly along political, ideological lines. Kennedy launched an incredibly ambitious foreign policy that shocked Eisenhower. Clinton was pressed hardest by liberals to intervene in the Balkans while conservatives such as Colin Powell pushed in the opposite direction. Conservatives, on the other hand, have often played on the public’s interest in peace to justify their foreign policy retrenchment. Both parties have struggled with domestic political pressures and how to pursue a particular foreign policy in the face of unreliable public support: “Expecting their policies to be unpopular, they looked for ways to adjust. Some sought success on the cheap, or misrepresented the costs of the actions they proposed. Others favored a spasm of all-out, expensive effort—to get a big job done quickly, before the public changed its mind. Still others sought to avoid controversy by operating in secret.” Sestanovitch, 12.

shift, however, to Bush 43’s decision to “surge” in Iraq, which can be seen as a willingness to change course within an administration in response to failure. Rather, for Sestanovitch the surge “was Bush’s last burst of maximalism and—this probably explained his utter determination—the only one that could be said to have succeeded.”47 Sestanovitch argues the surge decision was made with total disregard for public opinion and Barack Obama subsequently made reversing Bush 43’s overreach (i.e. rentrenching) his overriding foreign policy imperative.

Recent work by Henry R. Nau traces the development of a foreign policy tradition he calls “conservative internationalism”48 and lends support for Dueck’s view of presidential agency. Nau argues that how presidents see the world as the key variable determining the direction of foreign policy, a variable he traces using prior presidential speeches and writings and examining how presidents interacted with contemporary rivals. Presidential ideas compete with other variables such as domestic pressures, culture, and foreign events, but ultimately counter or override these other influences that might produce different foreign policy outcomes. If presidents only reacted to exogenous variables and never shaped particular strategies, Nau explains, then the concept of presidential leadership would be meaningless.

Though presidential ideas dominate, exogenous events play a key role in validating some ideas while rejecting others (i.e. Gorbachev facilitating Reagan's agenda and Polk succeeding in January 1848 to get an agreement with Mexico due to a more moderate government coming to

47 Sestanovitch, 299.
48 Nau’s “conservative internationalism” draws upon certain elements of realism, nationalism, and liberal internationalism. Conservative internationalism has three hallmarks: (1) actively spreading freedom, albeit opportunistically and selectively on the borders of existing freedom with an awareness of threats; (2) integrating the use of force and diplomacy into "armed diplomacy", countering adversaries with military force (or the threat of military force) and diplomacy simultaneously; and (3) respecting national sovereignty and limiting efforts to build global governance and supranational structures. Nau suggests Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan were pioneers of this conservative internationalist tradition. Henry R. Nau, Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy Under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 6-7.
power in Mexico). Nau also describes the influence of domestic political pressures in a way that would seem to override a president’s foreign policy orientation. Conservative internationalist presidents act within the constraints of public pressure and patience, and their authority ultimately depends on their ability to respect and shape public opinion. In other words, presidential ideas cannot override domestic political pressures. For example, Nau argues that today the American public will not tolerate another invasion in the Middle East, even to counter a nuclear Iran. In his view, America is now passing through another historical cycle of retrenchment and inward-focus after having over-extended under George W. Bush. This is part of a historical cycle of retreat similar to that laid out by Sestanovitch, in which America indulges in self-restraint, leaving the world “at its own peril” and thereby triggering international threats.

Like most scholars, Nau sees little strategic adjustment within Cold War presidencies. He argues that there was a Truman-inspired post-war consensus on foreign policy that combined liberal internationalism with realism, or freedom with deterrence. Nau contends this was the underlying logic of containment that allowed both parties to support a forward-based policy to defeat fascism and contain the Soviet Union. The Vietnam War shattered this consensus until Reagan built a new consensus in the early 1980s centered on a more explicitly conservative

49 “Circumstances clearly adjudicate between ideas and outcomes, but ideas (traditions) identify which events can be changed or created and which cannot. Successful leaders must read the tea leaves (facts) accurate, but they must also brew the water—create the new events—that eventually dissolves the tea leaves and bring to fruition the goals the seek.” Nau, 33.

50 “If public opinion does not follow, no leadership can be considered legitimate even if it succeeds. In short, no American leader can justify a foreign policy undertaken purely on the basis of geopolitics (realist) or ideology (liberal internationalist), arguing that history will vindicate that undertaking even if the people don’t support it. Authority in foreign affairs, as in domestic affairs, comes from the consent of the people, and the people render the ultimate verdict of history.” Nau, 35.

51 “When it left Europe in 1919, World War II followed. When it left Europe again in 1945, the Cold War followed. And when it retreated from Vietnam, the Soviet Union established naval bases in Cam Ranh Bay, invaded Afghanistan, and projected Soviet military power for the first time into Africa. As America leaves Iraq and Afghanistan, different but equally dangerous events are likely to follow.” Nau, 6-7
version of internationalism. The idea of consensus contradicts a different argument Nau makes, that the most consistent aspect of foreign policy is that each party tends to define itself in reference to the president’s foreign policy approach. Nau highlights that in every election year since the Eisenhower Administration’s second midterm (1958, right after Sputnik), the opposition party believed the U.S. position in the world grew weaker in the past year. For partisan reasons, each party rejects the foreign policy of the incumbent party and makes changing the course of the policy a key part of their platform for coming into office. For Nau, this is the closest thing to an inviolable axiom in U.S. politics.

Peter Trubowitz also explores the mix of international pressures and domestic politics in determining grand strategy. His “executive choice model” describes grand strategy as the product of an institutional tension between: (1) the executive’s need to confront geopolitical realities as a statesman (realpolitik) and (2) the executive’s need to navigate domestic political currents as a party head (innenpolitik). Trubowitz models the pressures of realpolitik as “geopolitical slack,” measured along a continuum from high to low risks of foreign aggression.

52 To support the idea of consensus, Nau highlights the fact that from 1933 to 1981, Democrats controlled both houses of Congress except for two years in each branch, 1946-1948 in the House and 1952-54 in the Senate. This had the practical effect of spreading and cementing liberal internationalism and realism as the dominant strands of thought embedded in the infrastructure of American foreign policy. From 1981-1986, the Republicans recaptured the Senate and subsequently took the House in 1994 after 60 years of Democratic control. Since 1994, Nau argues that a normal amount of foreign policy competition has returned and the result is a better balance of foreign policy choices, a contest for the center in American politics, which leads to greater variation in foreign policy outcomes.

53 Nau, 62.

54 But this is not just reactive or pure partisanship, there is an ideological component to this cycle and evidence that each party holds different substantive preferences about the goals and means of foreign policy. Democrats expect Republicans to rely too much on the unilateral use of force, neglecting diplomacy and thereby damaging the U.S. standing in the world. Republicans in turn expect democrats to depend too much on diplomacy and international institutions, neglecting force and thereby allowing threats to increase and damaging U.S. security. Here Nau draws on the work of Ole Holsti, who finds a correlation between support for the use of force and political ideologies, developing a militant internationalism (MI) and cooperative internationalism (CI) index. Three-Quarters of respondents who support MI (or both MI and CI) identify as conservatives while less than one-fourth identify as liberals. MI represents preferences for the use of force while CI represents preference for diplomacy. In other words conservatives are three times more likely than liberals to support the use of force in foreign affairs, while liberals are twice as likely as conservatives to support diplomacy. Conservative favor sticks, while liberals like carrots. Thus when a Republican is in the White House, Democrats disapprove of their foreign policy because it relies too much on the use of force and too little on the diplomacy and vice versa. Ole R. Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 124-125
(and the attendant risks of domestic blowback). He models *innenpolitik* as the preferences of a domestic political coalition, measured in terms of party support for “guns” vs. “butter.”

Trubowitz’s model, however, cannot account for strategic adjustment during the Cold War. As he admits, his theory “does not make good predictions about variation within broad grand-strategy types.” Table 1 clarifies this point, organizing Trubowitz’s variables and outcomes for Cold War presidents. He places all Cold War grand strategy under the broad ideal-type of “balancing.” Balancing occurs when international security is scarce and domestic constituents prefer guns over butter, but since Cold War cases form only a brief part of Trubowitz’s work, it is unclear when domestic constituents favored guns, butter, or both. These domestic pressures seem to vary, but the outcome on the dependent variable does not. Further, Trubowitz acknowledges grand strategy changes within the Truman and Carter administrations but does not then account for these adjustments.

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55 Specifically, party preference is measured as the extent to which investing in military power (i.e. guns over butter) (1) placates constituents and interest groups, (2) allows the president to drive a wedge between his opponents or deflect public attention from domestic problems, and (3) is consistent with the availability of state resources. Peter Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 23, 31.


57 He suggests that in contrast to Truman, whose constituents only favored guns, the constituencies of Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan, favored both. Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 42, 130-132.

58 Similarly, though Kupchan devotes significant time to discussing the domestic political components of foreign policy outcomes, ultimately his model suggests that ruling elites, not domestic political influences, drive foreign policy outcomes. And these ruling elites, in turn, are themselves driven by international structure, or the degree of “strategic vulnerability.” In other words, his actual model is invariant on the outcome with respect to domestic politics. *The Vulnerability of Empire*, 14, 61, 63. I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.

Trubowitz’s major analytic move is to incorporate the individual level (i.e. executive choice) into a theory of grand strategy. But as Table 1 shows, the executive in this model does not choose—he is a cipher for systemic and domestic pressures. Indeed, Trubowitz deliberately controls for individual, cognitive variables that might shape how presidents interpret geopolitical slack and party preferences.\(^6^0\) He chooses cases where the international environment was “unambiguous.”\(^6^1\) While Trubowitz concedes that threat assessment a “frequently incremental, fragmented, and contentious” activity, this process is not an important part of his causal story.\(^6^2\) It is not surprising then that Trubowitz theory performs well in such cases—the values of the independent variables are extremely high or low such that the president does not really have a choice among options and the appropriate adjustment is obvious.\(^6^3\) In other words, Trubowitz

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\(^6^0\) Trubowitz argues that presidents’ ideological visions or idiosyncrasies are unlikely to influence grand strategy. Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 38, 136.


\(^6^3\) Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 43.
does not address cases where “presidents faced ambiguous signals and cross-pressures.” Contra Dueck and Nau, he argues that grand strategy choices are unlikely to flow from presidents’ personal ideological visions or other personal idiosyncrasies. For Trubowitz, these first image variables such as presidents’ personality traits, governing styles, and experience are poor predictors of the type of grand strategy they prefer.

Trubowitz’s theory also gives short shrift to bureaucratic processes and decision-making structures. Much of the literature on presidential decision-making “rests on the premise that the processes through which a policy is made can have significant consequences for the policy’s substance.” Most works evaluating presidential decision-making, however, focus on times of crisis or war or focus on narrower changes than grand strategy. A small number of works focus on the difficulties that experts and government leaders face in their attempts to “measure relative national power and how they become aware of and react to shifts in the position of their own country.” For example, Risa A. Brooks examines this process of strategic assessment and

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64 Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 42-43.
65 Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 38.
69 See, for example, Welch; Carlsnaes; Hermann; and Rosenau, “Restlessness, Change, and Foreign Policy Analysis.”
argues that domestic civil-military relationships explain variations in a states’ ability to conduct strategic assessment. Poor civil-military relations can corrupt a leader’s attempt to organize an advisory system that “provides them with comprehensive information and affords them definitive decision-making power.” The result is an environment in which the state is “devastatingly unprepared to manage their international relations.” Yet since Brooks confines her scope to military assessments and makes strategic assessment her dependent variable, her work has little to say about how strategic assessment shapes grand strategy.

Assessments and forecasts, however, form a large part of the growing literature on intelligence and decision-making. Two debates dominate extant intelligence scholarship. The first addresses intelligence failure and dates back to Roberta Wohlstetter’s concept of signals and noise. The second (and related) debate focuses on the proper model for intelligence professional and policymaker interactions. But these works do not address the role of

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72 Risa Brooks, 13.
73 Risa Brooks, 5.
75 At the simplest level, there are two schools of thought. The “arm’s length,” or distance camp, argues that a separation between intelligence analysts and policymakers enhances the quality of analysis by reducing the risk that intelligence will be “politicized.” By contrast, the “at elbow,” or proximate school, highlights the value of intelligence that is carefully attuned to the unique demands of policymakers. These terms and their implications emerge from the work of Stephen Marrin, who refers to this implicit tradeoff between objectivity and relevance as “the Proximity hypothesis.” Proximity, for Marrin, is measured according the level of formal and symbolic autonomy from the policy process, the geographic separation between the policy center and intelligence agencies, and the frequency of interaction between senior intelligence professionals and policymakers. Stephen Marrin, “Intelligence Analysis and Decisionmaking: Proximity Matters,” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2009) and Stephen Marrin, “At Arm’s Length or At the Elbow?: Explaining the Distance between Analysts and Decisionmakers,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 20, no. 3 (April 2007): 131-150. For
intelligence assessments in grand strategy. Most simply presuppose that as presidents design strategy, they depend upon intelligence to assess current and future threats to U.S. national interests. In a murky international system, strategic assessments presumably provide clarity and foresight. There are, however, legitimate reasons to question whether intelligence has ever driven a significant decision related to national strategy. Indeed, intelligence expert Paul Pillar argues that when it comes to the major departures in U.S. foreign policy, the overall influence of intelligence has been negligible. More recent work, Keren Yarhi-Milo argues that while the intelligence community weights military capabilities when analyzing adversaries, presidents base threat perceptions largely on their personal impressions of foreign leaders gained through direct interaction.


77 Indeed, the U.S. spends over $80 billion a year on its intelligence community (IC). The primary goal of the IC is to enable wise national security policies by reducing uncertainty and arming decision-makers with foresight. See U.S. Director of National Intelligence, “The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America,” (August 2009), www.dni.gov/reports/2009_NIS.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010).


78 The intelligence officer who believes it is their job to tell the emperor he has no clothes “leaves unaddressed the question of whether the emperor, certain that he is sartorially resplendent, can be convinced otherwise.” Richard H. Immerman, “Intelligence and Strategy: Historicizing Psychology, Policy, and Politics,” Diplomatic History 32, no. 1 (January 2008): 3.


80 Keren Yarhi-Milo, Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
A Typological Theory of Strategic Adjustment

This brief review of the literature on grand strategy reveals two gaps. First, scholars have yet to specify theories that can account for strategic adjustment during the Cold War, and within the dominant framework of containment. 81 Even if we accept Dueck’s distinction that these adjustments are “second-order” shifts, they are still significant, “like a 1-degree shift in the vector of an air-craft carrier over a 1000 [nautical] mile voyage.” 82 This image highlights the second gap: with few exceptions, the literature suggests that the president is carried along by systemic and domestic currents, casting doubt on his or her individual ability to steer the ship of state in a new direction.

To fill this gap, we need a new model.83 The goal of this dissertation is to build a theory of strategic adjustment. Rather than attempting to specify a general explanatory theory of strategic adjustment, a typological theory may allow for a richer understanding of this complex phenomenon. A typological theory specifies all of the configurations of the independent variables, provides hypotheses for how these variables operate individually, and offers contingent generalizations on how they interact and affect the dependent variable.84 A typological theory also offers a path between pure theorizing and pure historical explanation. 85

81 Historians such as Gaddis have focused on strategic adjustment, but their findings have not been used to build a theory of adjustment. There have also been attempts to model foreign policy change during this period, but they largely address sudden and radical change, discrete crises, or policies below the level of grand strategy. For example, Welch’s theory focuses on “short dramatic foreign policy changes” (i.e. war) that “command headlines and attention, make other states sit up and take notice, generally call for some kind of response or adjustment, and dramatically change a threat environment or an opportunity structure.” Welch, 61. In this sense the program on foreign policy changes reflects that on presidential decisionmaking writ large, which focuses on decisions in crisis or war. See, for example, Herek, Janus, and Huth; Haney; and Fornham.
82 Peter Feaver, “8 Myths About American Grand Strategy.” The correct term is “course” not vector (Commander Thane Clare insisted this be noted).
83 As Trubowitz concedes, in order “[t]o explain why one particular variant of a broad grand strategy is selected over another, we need a finer-grained model.” Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 138.
85 Typological theories are “abstract and theoretical even though they are closer to concrete historical explanations than are claims about causal mechanisms.” George and Bennett, 236.
**Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is the U.S. presidential administration, not just the president as an individual. The president is likely to be the most influential actor in changing grand strategy— in most cases the president makes final foreign policy decisions, and his or her influence exceeds other actors. But a range of individuals, organizations, and processes within the administration influences the president. To understand how presidents change course, and how attempts to change can stall and fail, we need to trace processes and arguments throughout the administration. In other words, the data needed to assess adjustment comes both from the president as an individual and the presidency as an institution.86

**Universe of Cases**

The universe of cases is every presidential administration during the Cold War, from Truman to Reagan.87 Important grand strategy changes occurred outside this period, but limiting the empirical world from 1947 to 1989 keeps the focus on the unexplained variance— adjustments within the dominant approach of containment. Bounding the empirical world in this way also controls for the polarity of the international system and many of the foreign policy processes created by the 1947 National Security Act. This also allows me to control for the polarity of the international system.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is *strategic adjustment*, a type of foreign policy change that specifically involves changes to grand strategy. Adjustment implies neither improvement nor

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87 By the time George H. W. Bush (41) took office, containment had largely achieved its goals such that there was nothing left to contain. See Gaddis, *Strategies*, 377-379.
learning nor any judgment on the merits of change; it measures changes in policies and programs, not belief systems.\textsuperscript{88} Presidents can adjust foreign policy without updating their views on foreign policy. For example, Stephen Walker and Mark Shafer have argued that Johnson’s operational code shifted between two phases of planning for the Vietnam War in 1964-1965, as he became more risk averse and less confident in his ability to control events. His grand strategy, however, did not change.\textsuperscript{89} Alternatively, grand strategy could change without a corresponding change in the president’s worldview. Reagan assumed office emphasizing the extreme differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in moral terms, a contest between good and evil. His aggressive grand strategy reflected this worldview. By the end of his second term, however, Reagan had seemingly adjusted his grand strategy in response to changes within the Soviet Union, emphasizing a new era in U.S.-Soviet relations. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that Reagan’s operational code underwent any major modifications.\textsuperscript{90} In other words, the context had changed—the Soviet Union was much more cooperative—but Reagan’s views on how to deal with uncooperative adversaries had not changed.\textsuperscript{91}

It is also important to note here that this study is agnostic about the type or utility of the grand strategy that the president chooses. I am not examining what combination of independent variables produces certain types of strategies. I am interested only in the degree of change—to


\textsuperscript{89} Stephen G. Walker and Mark Schafer, “The Political Universe of Lyndon B. Johnson and His Advisors: Diagnostic and Strategic Propensities in their Operational Codes,” \textit{Political Psychology} 21, no. 3 (September 2000): 529-543.


\textsuperscript{91} I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
what extent does the new course deviate from the prior course. Changes, in other words, do not necessarily imply improvement. In this way adjustment treats the initial course or grand strategy as an exogenous input—it does not seek to explain the president chose this course in the first place, only why he or she deviated from it.

Thus we must start with the administration’s initial definition and implementation of its grand strategy. Lawrence Freedman describes strategy as “the art of creating power” by specifying the relationship among ends, ways, and means. With this in mind, I intend to measure strategic adjustment by focusing on changes in ends or goals of grand strategy, ways or the qualitative programs and methods for achieving those goals, and means or the quantitative resources invested programs and departments. Since the development of goals and methods for realizing those goals requires the administration to develop a conception of the national interest and the perceived level of threat, I will also focus on changes in national interests and changes in threat perception to determine the degree of adjustment.

I propose that adjustment occurs in a two-stage process of formulation and implementation. This implies both that adjustment can stall within and between these two stages, and that different types of adjustment are possible depending upon how this process plays out. My continuum for strategic adjustment ranges from continuity (no adjustment), to refinement (minor adjustment), to reform (moderate adjustment), to restructuring (major adjustment).

92 This avoids a “substantive theory” debate over the merits of any strategies and assessments under consideration. Instead, I situate my variables within a “process theory” debate over the organizational conditions that bear on presidential decision-making. See Alexander L. George, Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1993), xxi-xxii.


94 Note that this scale does not include the extreme pole of reorientation, or fundamental changes in the total pattern of a state’s foreign relations. For more on this type of change seek K. J. Holsti, ed., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (Boston, MA: George Allen & Unwin, 1982). For a different but related continuum see Jerel A. Rosati, “Cycles in Foreign Policy Restructuring: the Politics of Continuity and Change in U.S. Foreign Policy,” in Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Change, eds. Jerel A. Rosati,
These poles are ideal-types, with most adjustments likely falling somewhere in between. As such coding will depend on careful case analysis. Yet the general coding method is to take a “photograph” of U.S. grand strategy at \( t_1 \), describe the debate within the presidency over adjusting grand strategy and the subsequent actions taken to adjust grand strategy, and then take a second photograph of grand strategy at \( t_2 \).\(^{95}\)

Yet since any adjustment must be made relative to a current course, the challenge for coding the dependent variable is to separate the administration’s ultimate strategy from the president’s prior preferred strategy.\(^ {96}\) The puzzle is not when a change in administration (i.e. regime change) accounts for adjustment but rather when an existing administration realizes that its current course is misguided or insufficient and adjusts.\(^ {97}\) For example, both Eisenhower’s New Look and Kennedy’s Flexible Response were major strategic adjustments relative to their predecessor’s strategy. But at first glance it seems that only the former may qualify as an adjustment. The New Look explicitly rejected the “rollback” strategy that the isolationist Old Guard of the Republican party (led by Senator Robert Taft) had officially endorsed at their 1952 presidential convention as well as Truman’s foreign policy approach, which Ike had largely agreed with prior to assuming the presidency.\(^ {98}\) The basic thrust of Flexible Response, on the

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Joe D. Hogan, and Martin W. Sampson (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 221–264. Charles Hermann offers a four pole scale of change: (1) adjustment or changes in the level of effort or scope of recipients; (2) program changes or qualitative changes in the means through which to achieve a goal; (3) problem/goal changes or changes in the ends; (4) international orientation changes or the redirection of an entire orientation toward world affairs. He contends that adjustment is not a major change, but that program change would likely involve “changes in the configuration of instruments, in the level of commitment, and probably in the degree of expressed affect.” In his scheme all of Cold War grand strategy would fall into the first three types of change. Charles F. Hermann, 5-6.

90 See K. J. Holsti, 2.

91 If nothing changes, this strategy is likely to reflect political motives: “Presidents are rarely made by endorsing their predecessors.” See Gaddis, Strategies, 125.


93 Ike’s decision to run for president was primarily a product of his concern that the isolationist Old Guard Republicans would win the White House. He largely agreed with Truman on foreign policy and was one of the most important shapers of Truman’s strategy. This was particularly true of NATO. As the first supreme Allied commander, Europe (SACEUR), Eisenhower was at the forefront of Truman’s foreign policy. He agreed with the
other hand, was articulated by Kennedy well before the Democratic presidential convention in 1960. Other presidential campaigns, such as Nixon’s in 1968, provided no clear indication of what foreign policy direction they would pursue once in office. Using changes in the “National Security Strategy” as a proxy for grand strategy change may get us closer to adjustments within an administration, but these documents are often meaningless, with little connection to foreign policy reality. In the words of one experienced diplomat, these mandatory exercises do not “tell us terribly much about national security or strategy.”99 Thus grand strategy may be formulated and implemented without a National Security Strategy and a National Security Strategy may be written without any correspondence with a real world grand strategy.

A more useful proxy may be found in Gaddis’ concept of “strategic” or “geopolitical codes.”100 This term signifies a coherent set of “assumptions about American interests in the world, potential threats to them, and feasible responses, that tend to be formed either before or just after an administration takes office, and barring very unusual circumstances tend not to change much thereafter.”101 A change in geopolitical code suggests a major adjustment or restructuring. Because it requires a significant degree of effort and bureaucratic buy-in, and may carry major consequences at home and abroad, it is likely to be the rarest type of adjustment.

According to Gaddis, there have been five new geopolitical codes since Truman’s set the original

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100 Gaddis draws the geopolitical code concept from the “operational code” concept first coined by Nathan Lietes in 1951 and systematized by Alexander George beginning in 1969. The operational code is “a set of assumptions about the world, formed early in one’s career, that tend to govern without much subsequent variation the way one responds to crises afterward.” Gaddis, Strategies, ix. See also Alexander L. George, “The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,” International Studies Quarterly 13, no. 2 (June 1969): 190-222.

101 Gaddis, Strategies, ix.
course (NSC 20/4): (1) Truman’s NSC 68, (2) Eisenhower’s New Look, (3) Kennedy’s Flexible Response, (4) Nixon’s Détente, and (5) the Reagan Doctrine. Gaddis argues that Johnson and Ford continued the course set by their predecessors. Gaddis also excludes Carter because his internally-divided administration, despite its rhetoric, failed to articulate a coherent grand strategy. (However, Carter did make important strategic adjustments in response to Soviet adventurism and these changes will be explored in the final chapter.)

One problem with this framework is that of Gaddis’s five geopolitical codes, three emerged as part of presidential campaigns and the tendency Nau describes for aspiring presidents to define themselves in opposition to the sitting president (Kennedy, Nixon, and Reagan). In these cases, the course was set early (largely before presidential inauguration), and while policy adjustments were made in response to systemic and domestic events, the grand strategy did not change. Thus, this type of political restructuring does not reflect a restructuring within an administration; it does not tell us when the president will change from a course he previously set. This suggests Truman and Eisenhower may be the most fruitful cases of adjustment to examine, and may shed light on the continuity or lesser forms of adjustment in the Kennedy, Nixon, and Reagan administrations.

Using Gaddis’s proxy as an initial baseline, I can define lesser forms of adjustment in reference to restructuring. For example, since all of Gaddis’s geopolitical codes fall within the broad concept of containment, which had the consistent goal of seeking to contain the Soviet Union, we would expect the ends of grand strategy to remain consistent for all lesser degrees of adjustment. Thus, reforms or moderate strategic adjustments do not change the goals of grand strategy, they changes ways and means. Like restructurings, reforms go beyond rhetoric; they involve real changes that can be measured in budgets, bases, troops, and treaties. But these
changes are not large or significant enough to produce a new geopolitical code (or changes stall in the implementation phase). We would expect the president to begin formulating alternative strategic approaches in cases of reform, but for these alternatives not to be implemented in full. The overall logic of the existing strategy remains intact in a reform, but presidents cancel or initiate programs, shift priorities, and change spending levels to take advantage of new opportunities or respond to new challenges.

In cases of refinement or minor adjustment, we would expect consistency in ends and ways, meaning the goals and method for realizing those goals do not change. But we would expect means to change. Money for existing programs would likely be increased or decreased in order to advance U.S. interests and goals more efficiently. Throughout, the president does not question the current strategy, threat perception, or priorities to the extent that he or she begins formulating alternative options.

These categories, while loosely defined, provide an initial framework to structure my research and case studies. Through the subsequent case studies I hope to refine the definition of the dependent variable, making the type and degree of adjustment more precise and fully specifying the dependent variable.  

Independent Variable #1: Strategic Shock

When a new president takes office, he can build on the foreign policy ideas he campaigned on, likely designed to contrast with and criticize the party he was trying to defeat. Or he may be more discriminating, discarding campaign promises and calling for new thinking. In either case, once the president decides on an initial strategic course, subsequent changes are

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102 “The dependent variable as an object of inquiry in and of itself has been one of the great understudied phenomena in international relations, and yet it is that phenomenon that should drive the entire research endeavor. Like the chameleon, the dependent variable does mutate and, again, like the chameleon, it confuses the predator, in this case the scholar.” Michael P. Sullivan, Theories of International Relations: Transition vs. Persistence (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 5.
difficult. Institutional inertia or “the realities of government take over” such that “fresh ideas are unlikely to flourish in the absence of dramatic external shock.”

Thus, the first candidate causal variable is *strategic shock*, drawn from Legro’s concept of “external shock.” Legro, however, offers no clear definition for shock that would allow for consistent coding. Moreover, nearly every administration experiences foreign policy surprises. The extent to which these are shocking is difficult to determine without a sense of whether the surprise reinforced or reversed prior beliefs. This is also why I do not use Trubowitz’s concept of “geopolitical slack”: the presence or absence of slack could be equally conducive to change depending upon the president’s prior perceptions. Either the emergence or disappearance of a geopolitical threat could jumpstart the process of strategic adjustment. Moreover, geopolitical slack implies a static threat condition and adjustments are unlikely to occur if the international system is static and simply reinforces the current course. Something in the external environment must change. Even if a president does not agree with the dominant foreign policy positions of the party, it is difficult to change course upon assuming office without assuming political risks. A catalyzing event helps the president convince his or her party and subordinates to make a change. This does not imply that all shocks lead to adjustments, as we would expect shocks to vary in degree and therefore in terms of their impact on the administration.

In my initial framework, strategic shock is defined according to two criteria. First, a

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104 It is simply a “big event” such as war, revolution, or economic crisis. Legro, 11.
105 “Shocks are only a potential occasion for change depending on preexisting expectations. When a shock is anticipated by the existing orthodoxy, that mentality is not challenged but is sustained by the setback.” Legro, 15.
106 According to Trubowitz leaders have geopolitical slack when “their country faces no immediate threat to its physical security and when the possibility of a rapid and adverse shift in the distribution of power is relatively low.” Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 19.
107 For example, the death of Stalin in March 1953 reduced the threat but was still shocking in the sense that it forced officials to question the current course and it opened up new geostrategic opportunities. In this sense I disagree with Kupchan that systemic changes need to be “rapid and adverse shifts in the international balance of power” to induce change. Kupchan, *Vulnerability of Empire*, 14.
108 Legro, 11.
strategic shock is a high-profile foreign policy surprise. Surprise in a military sense can be defined “as a victim's lack of preparedness based on erroneous judgments of whether, when, where, and how it would be attacked.” But surprise need not be adversarial (i.e. involve getting attacked), the key is the administration’s lack of preparedness and inability to hide the surprise. In this way, the surprise both catches the administration off-guard and cannot be ignored, creating pressure to respond. Second, to be shocking the surprise must contain discrepant information about the current grand strategic course. Shock must challenge assumptions of the strategy or the president’s worldview. In this sense a shock is strategic: it changes the nature of the game by disconfirming the status quo or casting doubt on the president’s grand strategic “schemata.” Even cultural approaches to grand strategy and those emphasizing the power of presidential ideas take changes in the strategic environment as a starting point, a necessary condition for grand strategy adjustment. Something in the external environment (or the president’s perception of the external environment) must change. Otherwise presidents would merely implement foreign policy campaign promises and it would be difficult to disaggregate grand strategy design from domestic political posturing. For example,


110 “In short, unless they are repeatedly reinforced by other events, most foreign stimuli are easy to miss, misinterpret, ignore, or treat routinely. By contrast, external shocks are large events in terms of visibility and immediate impact on the recipient. They cannot be ignored, and they can trigger major foreign policy change.” Charles F. Hermann, 12. For more on shock see Nathan Freier, “Known Unknowns: Unconventional ‘Strategic Shocks’ in Defense Strategy Development,” U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute (November 2008), http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB890.pdf (accessed June 20, 2014), 5.

111 See Welch, 37.

112 See, for example, Kupchan, The Vulnerability of Empire, 14.

113 “The inadequacy of an existing schemata to account for some critical experience forces the individual into a learning mode that may lead to a restructuring of his or her mental model. Information that existing policy is not performing properly motivates advocates of change in a government and serves as ammunition in their struggle with the bureaucracy.” Charles F. Hermann, 13.
both the Cuban Missile Crisis and the discrediting of the “missile-gap” were surprises. But only the latter (while far less dramatic) could potentially qualify as a strategic shock (though it was not a high-profile event). The shipment of Soviet missiles to Cuba reinforced Kennedy’s sense of clear and present danger. Discrediting the missile-gap, on the other hand, not only undermined one of the central pillars of Kennedy’s presidential campaign platform, but also vitiated the need for a strategic buildup, a key element of Flexible Response.\textsuperscript{114}

Strategic shocks do not necessarily suggest a particular adjustment; they merely jumpstart the process of debate within an administration on how best to respond. Even the most extreme shocks may suggest an urgent need to “do something” without revealing an obvious course change. For example, the 9/11 attack was a dramatic shock, but it did not necessarily suggest that invading Afghanistan and (especially) Iraq was the appropriate response. The shock was insufficient to explain the subsequent course change because it was filtered through the presidency and its idiosyncrasies. This concept of shock suggests the following exploratory hypothesis:

**H1:** Strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment.

One can think of a strategic shock as a necessary but insufficient condition for strategic adjustment, but as George and Bennett caution, making a general claim that a single variable is necessary or sufficient for an outcome on the dependent variable across the entire universe of cases has rarely been borne out by the empirical record. Even the more modest claim that a variable is necessary or sufficient in a particular case has drawbacks because it can only be tested through counterfactual analysis. Thus, it is more useful to think of strategic shock as necessary but insufficient in conjunction with the other variables that I identify below, or that the presence

\textsuperscript{114} But it is important to note that the build up nevertheless proceeded. Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 216-217, 232-233.
of strategic shock “favors” or is a “contributing cause” to an outcome of adjustment on the dependent variable.115

*Independent Variable #2: Domestic Political Slack*

Strategic adjustments are usually described as responses to external factors or systemic variables. For example, when confronted with a rising power a dominant power may adjust by balancing against the rising power or preemptively attacking the rising power. But systemic changes such as strategic shocks rarely send clear signals, as the previous example of 9/11 illustrates. Additionally, these signals must be filtered through domestic political variables such as public opinion and bureaucratic inertia. My initial typology must account for this influence of “second-image” variables, as almost all of the scholars examined in the preceding literature review suggest domestic politics affects grand strategy change.

Thus, my second candidate causal variable is *domestic political slack*, based on the assumption that presidents are motivated in part by political survival.116 Even those presidents less concerned with survival and driven by sincere beliefs about geopolitics must confront the fact that strategy ultimately “wears a dollar sign.”117 A president can decide that “the public be damned,” but he still needs money from the legislative branch and support from the people to force change in a bureaucratic environment that favors continuity, even if the international environment demands change. In other words, a strategic shock might suggest that an adjustment is needed, but the president must consider his or her freedom to maneuver, or the domestic political costs and benefits of a potential adjustment. Even the most skillful and powerful president hits a limit in terms of the degree of change he can implement, as extant foreign policy

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115 George and Bennett, 26-27.
116 See, for example, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, “Political Survival and Endogenous Institutional Change,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (January 2009): 167-197.
initiatives and agencies that implement foreign policy develop powerful domestic political
constituencies that contribute to the general inertia of an administration’s grand strategy. With
this in mind, slack is a measure of the administration’s expected political support for a potential
adjustment. If the administration perceives the public and the foreign policy elites remain
committed to the current course and wary of the costs of the adjustment, then the president has
little domestic political slack. This suggests a second hypothesis:

H2: In order to implement a strategic adjustment, the president must perceive he has the
domestic political slack to convince the public and overcome Congressional opposition.
A president will not commit political suicide for the sake of strategic adjustment.

There are, however, no obvious or consistent proxies for slack. While public approval
ratings may capture some of this sentiment, they are poor predictors of presidential actions
“beyond the waters’ edge,” where the executive typically enjoys relative freedom to act. For
example, Truman’s average approval ratings were below 40 percent from 1949-1953 and dipped
below 30 percent as he decided to implement NSC 68’s major initiatives. Even during the rare
cases of elections where foreign affairs are more important to voters than economic concerns, the
public’s foreign policy preferences are volatile and may not align with the views of the elites
who actually formulate and implement strategy. Decision-makers do not merely read the latest

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118 Even Teddy Roosevelt, the ultimate advocate for an active and aggressive foreign policy—an approach that benefited the Republican Party—felt domestic political pressures that constrained his international ambitions. Dueck, Hard Line, 16.
120 Foreign and security concerns formed the most important national problem from 1948-1972 (peaking in 1968) and again in the 2004 election. The partisan gap on foreign policy issues also widened significantly after 9/11. “Eroding Respect for America Seen as Major Problem: Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 and Iraq,” Pew Research Center, August 18, 2004), http://www.people-press.org/2004/08/18/foreign-policy-attitudes-now-driven-by-911-and-iraq/ (accessed April 21, 2012). “There is evidence that public attitudes are more volatile than those of leaders because they are less likely to be embedded within coherent and internally-consistent belief systems. Thus what is true of the public may not provide an appropriate benchmark for assessing leadership beliefs.” Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, “Consensus Lost. Consensus Regained?: Foreign Policy Beliefs of American
Pew poll to determine their foreign policy choices.

Additionally, the public is often divided on foreign policy issues. Especially in the absence of a clear external threat there is no consistent public preference for a particular grand strategic course. Leaders are often forced to mobilize support (i.e. create slack) for ambitious adjustments such as using military force or increasing national security expenditures. As Nincic, Rose, and Gorski argue, various domestic forces are frequently struggling to identify their foreign policy objectives; they have different priorities, goals, and mechanisms for influencing decision-makers. This makes strategic adjustment a complicated and rough process: “Under post-Cold War international circumstances, it is natural that the aggregation of policy preferences should reflect the rough and tumble of democratic politics, and that it should be guided largely by domestic needs.”

Thus, when confronted with a strategic shock, presidents and policymakers consider a wide range of domestic political views from the national security community, Congress, lobbyists, elite thinkers and writers, party leaders, and public opinion.

As previously mentioned, Trubowitz argues that domestic political rewards incentivize leaders to pursue particular grand strategies. He describes these rewards as the extent to which investing in military power (i.e. guns over butter) (1) placates constituents and interest groups, (2) allows the president to drive a wedge between his or her opponents or deflect public attention from domestic problems, and (3) is consistent with the availability of state resources.

Trubowitz approach has at least four limitations. First, as Trubowitz concedes, his measures of party support and cohesion on key elements of a president’s grand strategy are limited. He uses

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122 He also concedes that *Innenpolitik*—the school of thought that argues leaders are preoccupied with domestic interests and politics—is not a single theory but rather a collection of different theories that stress different domestic variables in the explanation of grand strategy. Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 23, 31.
patterns of congressional roll call voting as a proxy for domestic pressures. These votes are most often cast in response to presidential initiatives. Thus, they tell us broadly whether the party’s foreign policy preferences aligns with the president’s grand strategy, but they do not tell us specifically whether the president chooses a grand strategy in direct response to party preferences.\textsuperscript{123} This approach tells us nothing about how a president might anticipate the response of Congress and interest groups and tailor his or her reaction to shocks accordingly.

Second, in Trubowitz model domestic pressure can suggest a grand strategy ideal type such as “balancing”, but it cannot account for important variation within this broad approach. Even if one agrees with his argument that high levels of anxiety among the public about taxes and conscription constrains the president’s ability mobilize military power in support of an aggressive grand strategy, there are presumably a variety of less-aggressive options that the president can still choose from. Trubowitz does not address such a choice. He conducts shadow case studies of the Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan administrations—when constituents preferred guns over butter and domestic politics rewarded aggressive grand strategy—but does not systematically compare them to cases where constituents were less willing to spend money on the military (i.e. Eisenhower, Nixon, and Carter).\textsuperscript{124}

Third, this approach it does not capture the interaction effects of shock and slack. A shock can galvanize the public and thereby overrule other domestic political pressures. For example, prior to Pearl Harbor President Roosevelt was swimming upstream against public opinion to prepare the U.S. for entry into World War II. After the attack, however, he went from a lack of slack to an abundance of it. Similarly, Truman was unable to procure funding for military capabilities necessary to fulfill peacetime security commitments abroad until after the

\textsuperscript{123} Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 40.
\textsuperscript{124} Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 42, 130-132.
invasion of South Korea. In both cases, it would seem, “domestic politics underlay an incoherence in U.S. grand strategy that was resolved only by war.” Most recently, George W. Bush’s job approval ratings jumped from 51 percent on September 10, 2011 to 86 percent five days later.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, the variation in domestic pressures and their influence on foreign policy during the Cold War is highly contested. On the one hand, Kupchan and Trubowitz and Lynch tell us that there was broad domestic political consensus on grand strategy during the Cold War. This implies that slack did not vary to a degree that it would shift grand strategy in meaningful ways. Moreover, if one subscribes to Wildavsky’s prominent “two-presidencies” thesis, then it follows president has a great degree of freedom beyond the water’s edge. And since a grand strategy is usually formed at the beginning of an administration—a honeymoon period of high presidential popularity—we would expect this freedom to be exaggerated. Consider Figure 4, which shows presidential approval to be consistently high during the first 100 days of an administration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Interview Dates</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Approval</th>
<th>% Disapproval</th>
<th>% No Opinion</th>
<th>Initial Approval</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Apr. 19-24</td>
<td>Dwight D. Eisenhower</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Apr. 28-May 3</td>
<td>John Kennedy</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>May 1-6</td>
<td>Richard Nixon</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Apr. 29-May 2</td>
<td>Jimmy Carter</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>May 8-11</td>
<td>Ronald Reagan</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>May 4-7</td>
<td>George Bush</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Apr. 22-24</td>
<td>William J. Clinton</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Apr. 28-30</td>
<td>Barack Obama</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*data includes only presidents inaugurated following election
data compiled from the Gallup Poll

**Figure 4: Presidential Job Approval Ratings Following First 100 Days**

126 See Howell and Pevehouse, 57.
Contrast that with Figure 5, which shows presidential approval to be consistently lower at the end of an administration:

![Figure 5: Final Presidential Job Approval](image)

On the other hand, Holsti and Rosenau contend that Vietnam dissolved the postwar foreign policy consensus. The period 1976-1980 was a time in which “one might well have expected substantial changes in the content and structure of foreign policy beliefs.”

Nevertheless, drawing upon two nationwide surveys of American leaders in 1976 and 1980, they find little evidence of such a change and even less evidence of a new consensus in 1980. Their work also raises the unresolved question of whether domestic consensus constrains the president by emphasizing a single, widely-accepted approach or frees the president and ruling out other, equally-plausible options.

The debate surrounding the diversionary war or “scapegoat” theory of foreign policy brings this fourth limitation into sharp relief. The diversionary war theory argues “leaders use

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130 Holsti and Rosenau, 376.

131 “Common sense suggests that when domestic coalitions are more united over grand strategy, their leaders will find it easier to forge a coherent, internally consistent grand strategy. When coalitions are rent with conflict over foreign policy choices, leaders have a hard time designing coherent grand strategy.” Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 26.
foreign crises, international threats, and nationalist appeals to deflect popular attention from their domestic failures to sustain their government’s legitimacy.”

For example, some scholars contend that George W. Bush deliberately used the specter of war during the midterm elections of 2002 to distract from economic issues and divide Democrats on questions of national security. Not only does this presume that the president can conceal his or her true intentions, but theories such as Trubowitz’s also predict the opposite behavior—presidents facing domestic constraints (i.e. economic crises) will look for ways to scale back their foreign commitments rather than recklessly gambling for political resurrection. There is also little evidence suggesting that presidents facing a tough re-election or second-term presidents attempting to “secure their place in history” will change grand strategies or ignore partisan pressures.

A more sophisticated measure of domestic political slack comes from William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse, who model how Congressional support or opposition affects the president’s decision to use military force abroad. This variable, president party power, modifies the “legislative potential for policy change” (LPPC) scores developed by David Brady, Joseph Cooper, and Patricia Hurley. LPPC is generated using the equation: $LPPC = [(\text{president party size in percent}) \times (\text{cohesion president’s party})] - [(\text{opposition party size in percent}) \times (\text{cohesion of minority party})]$. The adjusted LPPC scores are divided by 100 to make them more interpretable.

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132 Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 28-29. “In times of plenty, conflicts over national priorities and budget outlays ease, and domestic politics becomes less zero-sum. Leaders who hold power at a time of economic crisis, by contrast, have fewer resources at their disposal and are thus more constrained.”


134 See “How the Presidents Stack Up.” For the inconclusiveness of the theory that second-term presidents will buck party preferences see Trubowitz, Politics and Strategy, 38-39. Consider also William Quandt’s argument that election cycles shape foreign policy. In the first year in office the president has bold foreign policy goals. In the second year, concerns over midterm elections temper these overly zealous goals and leads to policy pragmatism. In the third year, looming re-election campaign concerns overwhelm foreign policy issues. In the fourth year, presidents are locked into to domestic politics and foreign policy issues take back seat. Thus, we have further reason to doubt that a president would change grand strategy as a way to get re-elected. “The Electoral Cycle and the Conduct of American Foreign Policy,” Political Science Quarterly 101, no. 5 (1986): 825-837.
Figure 6 plots their measure of the power of the president’s party in Congress over time.\footnote{Howell and Pevehouse use two other measures of Congressional support (the first of which is not statistically significant in their model): (1) unified government or a simple indicator of whether the congressional majority party is the same as the president’s in both the House and Senate and (2) the average percentage of seats held by the president’s party in the House and Senate. But since president party power accounts for internal partisan divisions (i.e. Southern Democrats), it is the most nuanced of the three measures. Howell and Pevehouse, 59-61, 276.}

![Figure 6: Presidential Power Scores Across Time](image)

Though LPPC scores vary within and among administrations, coding slack “no” for an administration if LPPC scores are below zero during the first two years of an administration (i.e. the honeymoon period), shows that only Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush 41 lacked slack. Ford and Bush 41 were both vice presidents who subsequently assumed the presidency. Perhaps one would not expect the president to have slack when he is committed, politically and practically, to the course mapped out by his or her predecessor.\footnote{The empirical record seems to support this coding scheme. Ford was unable or unwilling to shift from détente despite the change in the global military balance in favor of the Soviet Union. Johnson took great effort to conceal the costs of U.S. involvement in Vietnam so as to protect the Great Society and avoid being labeled a communist appeaser. Gaddis, Strategies, 268-271, 318-319. On Johnson constrained political environment, see also, H.R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam (NY: HarperCollins, 1997).} Nixon and Reagan are more controversial, since both administrations distinctly departed from the grand strategy of their predecessors. But these were adjustments consistent with their campaign agendas. Truman is perhaps the closest call with respect to slack. The scores show, for example, that President Truman’s domestic political situation was less dire than his low public approval ratings would suggest. Truman
faced moderate Congressional opposition from 1947-1949, at which point the Democrats regained control of both houses of Congress, but their majorities were not particularly strong.

As this brief look at LPPC scores shows that for the purposes of strategic adjustment, these scores are difficult to interpret. Not only do they vary within administrations, but a president buoyed by strong party support in Congress does not necessarily have slack; party preferences may push the president along a particular course and discourage deviation. For example, on the issue of authorizing the use of military force against the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), the Obama Administration faced far more constraints in the 114th Congress (where the Senate was controlled by Democrats) than in the 115th (with a Republican majority in both houses). Low power scores might instead induce a president to change course, gambling for resurrection or adjusting so as to divert attention from the administration’s domestic political failures. Alternatively, the middle values may be most conducive to adjustment, as they may indicate that a transition of political power is underway. Figure 6 shows that the period in which NSC 68 was drafted was indeed a time of transition in terms of the power of political coalitions in Congress.

Alternatively, there may be unique personality issues at play that cloud any attempt to interpret these scores. For example, though the Republicans lost both houses of Congress in 1954, throughout his administration Eisenhower enjoyed closer and more cordial relations with Congressional Democrats (particularly Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn) than many of his Old Guard Republican colleagues whom

138 See Holsti and Rosenau, 375, 407-408.
he viewed as reactionary and out of touch (particularly Senator Taft and Senator McCarthy).

Further, Eisenhower’s personal popularity was so high throughout his administration that the absence of Republican power in Congress seemingly did not seem to impede his foreign policy agenda.

Without clear proxies for slack, I will defer coding until conducting within-case analysis. One promising technique might be to measure the preference divergence of with respect to the adjustment being considered. This in turn depends on the potential coalitions in Congress a president perceives as well as the individual views of those he or she expects to be involved in the debate. While my case studies will not add up “weighted vector sums”, to code slack my case studies will highlight preference divergence by tracing arguments over strategic adjustment within the presidency, identifying the president’s operative reference points, his or her subjective assessment of the status quo, and the favored alternative options and their perceived riskiness by other key administration officials. This is a difficult coding task but not impossible. As Welch shows, “policy changes are typically preceded by statements from officials, diplomats, other representatives, and government organs that can provide a sense of the overall preferences and risk-taking propensities of the decision-making group as a whole.”

Independent Variable #3: President’s Conceptual Complexity

The question of this dissertation, which seeks to clarify when and how presidents can adjust grand strategy, is a question of presidential leadership. The topic implies the president has agency, that he or she can actually steer the ship of state in a new direction. But as we have seen even those theories like Trubowitz’s that attempt to insert the president into the process of

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139 The most sophisticated version of this is to weight vector sum of the preferences of the relevant players. See Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, David Newman, and Alvin Rabbushka, *Forecasting Political Events: The Future of Hong Kong* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See also Risa Brooks, 4-6, 11, 23-27.

140 Welch, 49.
adjustment favor system and domestic variables and do not include individual-level variables. This is a key omission because shock and slack rarely suggest a clear response, and the actual degree of change still depends upon the president—how he or she interprets systemic and domestic pressures and how he or she chooses to respond. In a complex bureaucratic environment, the president sets the agenda and has the final say. As Clinton Rossiter memorably put it, the president is “a kind of magnificent lion, who can roam freely and do great deeds so long as he does not try to break loose from his broad reservation.”

It follows that the president’s individual characteristics matter and that variation in these qualities may affect strategic adjustment. But the question is which presidential characteristics matter when it comes to strategic adjustment? Scholars of presidential decision-making have identified conceptual complexity as a measure of how open a leader is to negative feedback from his or her surrounding environment. Conceptual complexity is a personality trait associated

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141 As in a game of chess, even if we know the complete list of possible moves, to predict the next move “requires detailed information about the player, not merely about the game.” Welch, 13. On the importance of leader belief systems see Ole R. Holsti, “The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 3 (September 1962): 244-252.


143 Rossiter, 21.

144 For example, a study of eight cases of major foreign policy change in different regimes found that personality and perception variables were the only variables with causal power across all cases. K. J. Holsti. See also, Yi Edward Yang, “Leaders’ Conceptual Complexity and Foreign Policy Change: Comparing the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Foreign Policies toward China,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (October 2010): 417; Sullivan, 19-20. The link between presidential personality and subsequent international behavior has received increasing scholarly attention since Alexander and Margaret George’s study of Woodrow Wilson’s personality argued that “the basic hypothesis concerning [his] political behavior is that power was for him a compensatory value, a means of restoring the self-esteem damaged in childhood.” Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 320 and Janice Gross Stein, “Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner,” *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 156, 155-183.

145 Brian Dille and Michael D. Young, “The Conceptual Complexity of Presidents Carter and Clinton: An Automated Content Analysis of Temporal Stability and Source Bias,” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 3 (September 2000): 588. Tetlock offers a related (but not identical) distinction using Isaiah Berlin’s famous hedgehog vs. fox metaphor. Tetlock tracks the estimative accuracy of hundreds of experts across a diverse range of countries and topics. He finds that who experts are (i.e. professional prestige) and what they think (i.e. their philosophical or political orientation) matter less than how they think. Specifically, an expert style of reasoning that favors eclecticism, self-criticism, and skepticism outperforms a style that favors highly specific knowledge, parsimony, and
with the processing of information and testing of reality. Conceptual complexity is the degree to which an individual differentiates when describing or discussing people, places, policies, ideas, or things.\textsuperscript{146} High complexity leaders view issues in shades of grey and are more open to discrepant information. Low complexity leaders, on the other hand, tend to view the world in black-and-white terms and are more closed off to negative feedback. Low-complexity leader are not impervious to change, they merely require more dramatic catalyzing mechanisms (i.e. more intense shocks).\textsuperscript{147} Complexity is linked to one’s willingness to receive negative feedback and to incorporate it into one’s decision-making: “the more sensitive leaders are to information from the decision environment, the more receptive they are to the views of colleagues or constituents, the views of outside actors, and the value of alternative viewpoints and information discrepant with their existing ideas.”\textsuperscript{148} A president’s conceptual complexity is thus a measure of the administration’s propensity to change course, a personality trait likely to affect the formulation phase of adjustment more than the implementation phase. This suggests a third hypothesis:

**H3:** Presidents with higher levels of conceptual complexity are more likely to respond to strategic shocks by formulating options for strategic adjustment.

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\textsuperscript{146} “By conceptual complexity, Hermann referred to the ability to recognize and hold multiple, even contradictory, dimensions of an idea or situation simultaneously People with low conceptual complexity tend to view situations in dichotomous, universal, and generally rigid terms. Those exhibiting high complexity tend to see varying reasons for a particular position, have a higher tolerance for ambiguity, and are flexible in reacting to objects or ideas.” Dille and Young, 588.

\textsuperscript{147} Yang compared adjustments to policies vis-à-vis China in the Bill Clinton (high complexity) and George W. Bush (low complexity) and found that “conceptual complexity interacts with external stimuli (system-and/or domestic-level factors) to affect: (i) the leader’s willingness to change course in response to policy failure and (ii) the type of changes that the leader is likely to carry out.” Yang, 415, 426; Janice Gross Stein, “Psychological Explanations of International Conflict,” in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 292–308; David G. Winter, “Personality and Foreign Policy: Historical Overview of Research,” in *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy*, eds. Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 79–101.

\textsuperscript{148} Dyson and Preston, 267.
It is important to note that complexity is not synonymous with intelligence or effectiveness. In certain situations, a lower level of complexity can provide a useful decision-making heuristic. For example, leaders high in conceptual complexity may see things in shades of gray and distrust their first response to an event; they want to understand the situation better and to gather more information and other opinions before making a decision. One consequence is that high complexity leaders will be slower to act when faced with a decision. Low complexity serves a president well “when decisions must be made immediately;…when one faces an implacable opponent who will not negotiate; when single minded devotion to a cause is necessary for morale or to overcome unfavorable odds; or when well-structures methods are more effective than innovation.”\(^{149}\) As Tetlock has argued, “[n]ot only is it possible to be complex and wrong, it may also be possible to be simple and right. Cognitive structural learning is probably not even necessary for effective matching of means to ends. The simple-minded and determined pursuit of a single, well-defined objective my sometimes yield better results than complex attempts to achieve many, poorly defined objectives.”\(^{150}\)

Though it is easy to find evidence that a president’s behavior is rooted in character-based needs or motives; the risk in using such character attribute variables as part of the causal story is that these factors are hard to “touch.”\(^{151}\) Yet scholars operationalize complexity using the “at-a-distance” framework. Conceptual complexity is one of seven personality characteristics measured by Margaret G. Hermann’s leadership traits assessment (LTA) profiling technique.\(^{152}\) Herman uses content analysis of spontaneous interview responses from political leaders, coding

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\(^{151}\) Sullivan, 23.

\(^{152}\) The other six are the need for power, ethnocentrism, locus of controls, self-confidence, distrust of others, and task/interpersonal emphasis. See Yang, 420.
words within a sample of text to determine personality trait scores. By coding particular words such as “approximately” or “possibly” or “trend” as indicative of high complexity and words such as “definitely” or “irreversible” as indicating low complexity Hermann’s method allows one to reconstruct a presidential personality “at a distance” and thereby overcome the lack of access to leaders. The LTA framework provides a score for conceptual complexity ranging from 0 to 1 indicating the salience and strength of the characteristic. The spontaneity of the responses is the key innovation of Hermann’s work, because unlike prepared text it attempts to reduce the influence of speechwriters and advisers, getting us closer to the president’s personality. It is seen as a way to account for the fact that prepared materials such as speeches “are frequently the product of speechwriters and not the leaders themselves…analyses of the linguistic patterns that are contained in prepared comments may not accurately reflect the attributes of the leader.”

Some scholars have used a related measure of “integrative complexity” rather than “conceptual complexity.” But integrative complexity differs from conceptual complexity in that the former refers to aspects of information processes that can change as the situation changes while the latter is a personality variable from which integrative complexity is derived. Integrative


complexity measures whether an individual can differentiate numerous perspectives on an issue and integrate them into a single coherent viewpoint. Integrative complexity analyzes information processing at a given point in time, which is a product of personality (i.e., conceptual complexity), internal factors such as fatigue and anger, and external factors such as time pressure.\textsuperscript{156} Integrative complexity is situation-dependent and measured in specific episodes. Conceptual complexity, on the other hand, is a stable personality trait across time and situations. In this way conceptual complexity provides a robust way to distinguish between individual leaders without reference to specific decision-making episodes and particular issues.\textsuperscript{157}

Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Carter profile as high complexity leaders while Truman, Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan profile as low complexity leaders.\textsuperscript{158} We do not have measures of


\textsuperscript{157}See Dyson and Preston, 269-270. They selected four U.S. presidents—Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson—to control for nationality and to control for the time period as a source of analogies. They examine the following foreign policy crises: (1) Truman’s decision to intervene in Korea; (2) Truman’s decision to cross the 38\textdegree parallel in September 1950; (3) Eisenhower’s decision not to intervene in Dien Bien Phu in April 1954; (4) the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962; (5) Johnson’s decision to intervene in Vietnam in July 1965; and (6) Johnson’s decision to institute a partial-bombing halt and winding down of the war in March 1968. Dyson and Preston used Hermann’s method, collecting spontaneous responses for each of their four presidents drawn from press conferences, interviews, and television talk shows. Dyson and Preston find support for their hypothesis that high complexity leaders will use sophisticated analogical reasoning. The high complexity leaders in their sample demonstrate “sophistication” in 91 percent (10/11) instances of analogy usage (i.e. analogies used in contingent terms or stressing deep structural similarities) while low complexity leaders use “nonsophisticated” analogies in 88 percent (14/16) of the instances of analogy usage (i.e. analogies used to suggest perfect similarity to past events and based on surface similarities. See also, Dille and Young’s analysis of Carter and Clinton’s conceptual complexity, they divided spontaneous response material into administration years and conducted an analysis of variance test of the complexity scores for each year. They found Carter’s complexity score did not vary significantly and Clinton’s score dropped slightly from his first to second term, but was stable in his second, third and fourth years as president. Further, the difference between the two presidents was consistent throughout, with Carter profiling as much more complex. They concluded: “Hermann’s at a distance measurement technique is a robust one. It captures substantive differences between individuals, which researchers can use to understand foreign policy behavior,” 594.

\textsuperscript{158}One problem with this variable is that there is no established threshold separating high from low complexity leaders. A 122 leader-reference set developed by Taysi and Preston labels scores high or low if they fall outside of one standard deviation from the mean (.45 on a 0 to 1 scale; low<.32; high>.58). Thus Truman (.42) and Johnson (.45) profile as medium while Eisenhower (.63) and Kennedy (.64) profile as high. Yet subsequent research has suggested that in the key areas of information processing and situational framing, Truman and Johnson are low complexity leaders. Dyson and Preston, 274-275. Other approaches put the average score of world leaders at .57 (with low<.53 and high>.53). See Yang 430-431 and Brian Dille, “The Prepared and Spontaneous Remarks of Presidents Reagan and Bush: A Validity Comparison for At-a-Distance Measurements,” \textit{Political Psychology} 21, no. 3. (September 2000): 573-585.
conceptual complexity using Herman’s approach Ford, but we can use related “openness scores” to fill in this blank as well as double-check the classification of the other presidents. Openness scores, which are calculated by surveying presidential biographers, have a hypothetical range from 0 to 100 and attempts to measure “a cognitive proclivity that encompasses unusual receptiveness to fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values.”

Independent Variable #4: President’s Foreign Policy Experience

Even complex presidents predisposed to formulate strategic alternatives in response to shock and slack face challenges in implementing a strategic adjustment. In the first instance, new grand strategies do not emerge, fully-formed from the president’s mind—shock and slack must be filtered through a president’s particular process for strategy design, one that affects both the strategy’s substance and the chance it will be implemented. This strategy formulation process can take on a life of its own, generating a product different than what the president expects or viewed with skepticism by the rank-and-file foreign policy bureaucracy. Additionally, the president’s personal characteristics influence the structure of foreign policy-making process, and the same characteristics that make a president open to formulating options for strategic adjustment may make it harder to implement an adjustment in a timely fashion.

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159 Dean Keith Simonton, “Presidential IQ, Openness, Intellectual Brilliance, and Leadership: Estimates and Correlations for 42 U.S. Chief Executives,” *Political Psychology* 27, no. 4 (August 2006): 513. The scores are as follows: Truman 1.7, Eisenhower 29.0, Kennedy 82.0, Johnson 7.0, Nixon 14.0, Ford 8.0, Carter 77.0, Reagan 10.0, H.W. Bush 18.0, Clinton 82.0, W. Bush 0.0. Of the six measures of Openness, Openness to Ideas (intellectual curiosity and willingness to consider new ideas) and Openness to Values (readiness to reexamine or reject social, political and religious values”) are the most relevant for conceptual complexity.

160 “In other words, to effect a change in governmental foreign policy, agents must act on the governmental decision process. The decision process itself can obstruct or facilitate change.” Charles F. Hermann, 13.

conceptual complexity affects the process—more complex leaders tend to establish open, deliberative decision making structures that institutionalize the consideration of alternative viewpoints, placing a premium on dissent and discussion. Less complex leaders, on the other hand, establish decision-making structures that are more closed, decisive and less deliberative.  

The challenge is to determine which presidential characteristics besides complexity are likely to influence the process of strategy formulation and implementation, with a particular emphasis on implementation. One variable that has been shown to impact decision-making processes—and unlike complexity is not based on personality—is the president’s foreign policy experience. Presidents may have more foreign policy experience because foreign policy interested them and they sought to get involved in it, or because events—such as compulsory military service—drew them in and developed their interest. In either case, prior foreign policy experience gives leaders a sense of what actions to take in specific situations and helps them interpret relevant cues from the environment. Experience also gives the president confidence in dealing with advisors, with Congress, and with the public, who are in turn more likely to defer to experienced presidents. It is in this sense that only Eisenhower, the hero of WWII, could deliver a “Chance for Peace” speech and only Nixon, the dedicated anti-communist, could go to China. Highly experienced leaders also tend to insist on being personally involved in the foreign policy decision-making process; they are interested in the arguments at play and in the real-world consequences. Finally, experience increases the chance the president will be

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162 Preston, \textit{The President}, 9-10.  
163 For an illustration of Eisenhower’s active interest and participation in foreign policy issues and direct role in shaping the “Chance for Peace” speech, as well as preventing an intervention in Dien Bien Phu to aid the French or in Formosa to aid Chang Kai-shek’s Nationalist forces, counter to the currents of his Republican colleagues and closest advisers, even Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, see Smith, \textit{Eisenhower in War and Peace}, 566-578, 613-616, 640-647, 649, 655-662, 664-672.  
164 Preston, \textit{The President}, 11-12. Preston identifies one other presidential trait that affects decisionmaking: the need
personally involved in both the formulation and implementation of strategy. It stands to reason that if this process is presidentially driven, it will generate more support.\footnote{Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy, 1-3, 193-195. See also, Charles F. Hermann, 19.}

Presidents with less foreign policy experience, on the other hand, are less likely to insist on controlling the foreign policy process; they rely heavily upon their expert advisers to interpret foreign policy developments.\footnote{As Alexander George argues, any president faced with a decision is not only grappling with the quality of the decision and the resources and time available, but also the need for acceptability, consensus, and support around the decision once it has been made. Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy, 1-3, 193-195. See also, Charles F. Hermann, 19.} If the president does not drive the foreign policy process, this increases the chances that initiatives will fail in the implementation phase, for they will lack critical consensus and support. The lack of directive presidential leadership increases the risk of decision-making inefficiency and “bureau political” waste.”\footnote{Preston, The President, 25. Perhaps this suggests that presidents with less foreign policy experience are more likely to commission strategic reviews (i.e. there will be a greater amount of strategy formulation in the administrations of less experienced presidents). Indeed, statistical analysis of presidents’ use of national security commissions shows that as presidents gain greater experience in foreign affairs, they are less likely to rely on foreign policy commissions. Amy Zegart, “Blue Ribbons, Black Boxes: Toward a Better Understanding of Presidential Commissions,” Presidential Studies Quarterly 34, no. 2 (June 2004): 366-393. But presidential commissions, at least in the realm of national security, are most often used for damage control rather than to generate serious policy change. See Kenneth Kitts, Presidential Commissions and National Security: The Politics of Damage Control (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006). For an alternative view see Jordan Tama, Terrorism and National Security: How Commissions Can Drive Change During Crises (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).} In other words, a president that is faced with shock, enjoys slack, is open to new thinking, but does not drive the grand strategy review process is more susceptible to being “overcome by events.” For example, President Obama has demonstrated a clear willingness to consider alternative analyses. Yet the exigencies of war compelled him to commission a “comprehensive strategic review” of Af-Pak policy (i.e. for power or dominance. Leaders who have higher psychological needs for power are associated with suppressing open decision-making. Their decision processes tend to be centralized within a tight inner circle. This advisory structure is usually hierarchical to enhance the president’s personal control. Thus, the president’s own policy preferences will dominate the policy process and the decisions reflect these preferences. Power is excluded from this theory for two reasons. First, for the sake of parsimony: prior policy experience also tells us how forcefully a president will foist his own preferences on the decisionmaking process. Second, recent scholarship supports the use of foreign policy experience in conjunction with conceptual complexity to explain presidential decision-making. Indeed, the interaction of complexity and experience—and their combined effect on the decision-making process—allowed Preston and other scholars to develop a comprehensive typology of presidential leadership style. See Dyson and Preston, 274-275.\footnote{Thomas Preston and Paul ’t Hart, “Understanding and Evaluating Bureaucratic Politics: The Nexus Between Political Leaders and Advisory Systems,” Political Psychology 20, no. 1 (March 1999): 67, 49-98.}
regional strategy in Southeast Asia) prior to articulating an overarching grand strategy. Further, when the Arab Spring occurred, not only had Obama’s major foreign policy commitments already been made, but the Libyan crisis also constrained his ability to launch a reassessment of U.S. grand strategy. This suggests a fourth exploratory hypothesis:

**H4:** *Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to successfully implement a strategic adjustment.*

Foreign policy experience can be coded using Preston and Dyson’s “Foreign Policy Expertise Scoring Sheet.” This system has five indicators of expertise. The first is the senior-level political/military job(s) previously held *primarily* in foreign affairs or policy-making. A president earns 5 points for each job held for a minimum of 1 year and 2 points for each job held less than 1 year. The second is previous junior-level job(s). A president earns 1 point for each job held for a minimum of 1 year. The third is previous job(s) not primarily focused on foreign-affairs but substantively involving the individual in foreign policy during specific episodes. A president earns 1 point for each “significant or major individual job experience.” The fourth indicator is significant foreign affairs-related education. A president earns 5 points for a Ph.D. in foreign/international affairs and 1 point for a M.A. in foreign/international affairs. The fifth indicator is significant foreign travel experience. A president earns 1 point for each experience lasting a minimum of 1 year and .5 point for those lasting at least 6 months. Preston’s dataset only extends to Clinton, so I update it to include Bush 43 and Obama. Presidents who score high in foreign policy experience include: Eisenhower (45 points), Kennedy (15 points), Nixon (16 points), and Bush 41 (36 points). Low scoring presidents include: Truman (1 point), Johnson (6 points), Ford (1 point), Carter (1 point), Reagan (1 point), Clinton (1 point), Bush 43 (0 points),
Political psychologists have used this scoring system to broadly classify presidents as low or high experience, but we can problematize the scores. For example, Truman gets a single point despite serving in the Missouri National Guard from 1905 to 1911, seeing combat as a Captain in WWI, reaching the rank of Colonel after rejoining the reserves after the War, and chairing the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program in 1940. Gerald Ford flew fighters in the Navy from 1942-1946, participating in nine engagements and resigning with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Carter graduated from the Naval Academy in 1946 and served—in noncombat assignments on battleships and submarines—until 1953.

Additionally, the scores are static—they do not account for the fact that a president’s foreign policy experience increases over the course of an administration. Though Reagan and Clinton were elected with little foreign policy experience, according to this scale they could each be given an additional 5 points after serving as president for more than one year, not to mention their higher levels of experience at the start of their second terms. This might suggest that presidents are more likely to make strategic adjustments later in their administrations as they gain experience. Yet this would contradict the idea that inertia influences foreign policy, and the costs of changing course increase over time once major decisions and foreign policy pronouncements have already been made.

With respect to H4 this suggests not only that the scores must be updated to reflect years

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168 See Thomas Preston, “The President and His Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Policy Making,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1996), 622. See also, Dyson and Preston, 288. Dyson and Preston do not score Bush 43 or Obama, but using their system I give Bush 43 no points despite his National Guard service, which was controversial (also Truman gets no points for 37 years of reserve duty). I give Obama 3 points, 1 point for his three years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (i.e. a job that “while not primarily focused upon foreign affairs, involved the individual substantively in the formulation, implementation or conduct of foreign policy during specific episodes”= 1 point/experience) and two years living in Jakarta from 1967-1969 (i.e. “significant foreign travel experience”= 1 point/year).
of military serve and the time spent in office, but also that the type of foreign policy experience matters. \textsuperscript{169} For example, presidents who served during wartime are likely to bring more clout and confidence to national security debates. Among war veterans, those who have experienced actual combat are even more distinguished. This suggests that it is not just a president’s foreign policy experience that matters for adjustment, but also how elites and voters perceive that experience. A president like Eisenhower had much more reputational slack and corresponding political cover than a similarly high-experience president like George H. W. Bush. Bill Clinton’s lack of military experience made him timid when dealing with issues of civil-military relations. \textsuperscript{170} More recently, though Barack Obama was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time he ran for president in 2008, his primary challenger Hillary Clinton attacked him for his lack of foreign policy experience, running an infamous add: “It’s 3 a.m., and your children are safe and asleep…But there’s a phone in the White House, and it’s ringing…Who do you want answering the phone?” Some six years later, in response to perceived foreign policy failures in Syria and Iraq, conservative columnist Jennifer Rubin criticized President Obama by saying: “The lessons for politicians and voters alike are clear. Don’t elect a president whose only foreign policy experience comes from Ivy League classes and travel abroad as a child.”\textsuperscript{171}

Another caveat with respect to H4 is in order. It is reasonable to assume that highly experienced presidents will have both a higher chance of setting the “right” course at the beginning of their administration. After all, what is the point of foreign policy experience if it

\textsuperscript{169} As Christopher Hemmer points out: “Other things being equal, more recent events, events that occurred during the formative years of a policymaker’s political career, and events that are emotionally involving because they were personally experienced or because they had important consequences for a policymaker or his state are more likely to be used as the basis for lessons of history,” \textit{Which Lessons Matter? American Foreign Policy Decision-Making in the Middle East, 1979-1987} (New York: SUNY Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{170} I thank Andy Bennet for raising this point.

does not give the president a leg up in designing sound strategy and thereby avoiding shock in the first place. Additionally, experience may give presidents a more sober view of surprises that their less experienced counterparts consider shocking or game changing. In this sense foreign policy experience would seem to suggest continuity not adjustment.\textsuperscript{172} Yet my concept of shock is reference-dependent: it is defined as such only if actually disconfirms the president’s initial grand strategy, regardless of how sound that strategy seemed at the outset. No president, no matter how experienced, is likely to avoid shock entirely.\textsuperscript{173} Foreign policy experience gives him the credibility and confidence necessary to accept shock consider its implications for grand strategy and change course.

\textbf{A Tentative Typological Theory of Strategic Adjustment}

Figure 1 provides an initial model of probabilistic (i.e. not deterministic) outcomes on the dependent variable based upon these four independent variables. Generally speaking, if neither shock nor slack obtain, I expect continuity (Outcomes 1 and 2). If both shock and slack are present but the president has low conceptual complexity, only minor adjustments or refinements should occur (Outcome 3). If under the same conditions of shock and slack the president is conceptually complex, then the process of strategy formulation will likely begin. If the president has little experience, then adjustment is likely to falter in the strategy implementation phase, leading to moderate adjustments or reforms (Outcome 4). If, on the other hand, the president is experienced, then I expect major change or restructuring (Outcome 5). Table 2 defines the

\hspace{1cm}\textsuperscript{172} As Jervis argues, leaders with extensive knowledge of issues and well-grounded beliefs “might be more likely to maintain their beliefs in the face of extensive knowledge that indicates they are incorrect.” “Political Decision-Making: Recent Contributions.” \textit{Political Psychology} 2, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 88, 86-101. Conversely, “an uniformed decision-maker may support policies that contradict his or her belief without even realizing it (e.g., Regan’s support for a START proposal that would probably have increased the vulnerability of U.S. Forces.” Keith L. Shimko, \textit{Images and Arms Control: Perceptions of the Soviet Union in the Reagan Administration} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 245.

theoretical property space in light of this model. It shows 16 possible types after all the types that are not socially possible are eliminated.

![Figure 1: An Initial Model of Strategic Adjustment](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shock</th>
<th>Slack</th>
<th>President Complex</th>
<th>President Experienced</th>
<th>Expected Outcome</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Restructuring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: An Initial Typology of Strategic Adjustment
Yet there are three problems with simply testing this typology against the universe of cases. First, the model is too mechanistic; it only predicts ideal-type outcomes, thereby ignoring a range of possible outcomes depending on the degree of shock and slack. In other words the model does not address the possibility that outcomes 3 through 5 (refinement, reform, and restructuring) could be decremented or overridden as a result of varying levels of shock and slack. For example, an extreme shock (e.g. 9/11) could change the values of the other variables, forcing a politically constrained, conceptually simple, and inexperienced president to change course.\footnote{Cognitive psychology suggests that when the stakes of a decision are high, individuals tend to abandon simple decisionmaking heuristics and search for more information to understand the situation. See, for example, Shelly Chaiken, “Heuristic versus Systematic Information Processing and the Use of Source versus Message Cues in Persuasion,” \textit{Journal of Personality and Social Psychology} 39, no. 5 (1980): 752-766.} Second, as previously mentioned there are no clear proxies for coding shock, slack, and the degree of adjustment. Even where a strategy satisfies Gaddis’ concept of a “geopolitical code” the challenge is to separate that code from a president’s pre-presidential course and commitments. Third, the typology does not yet account for the possibility of multiple shocks or changing slack over the course of an administration. Fourth, the typology does not yet account for false positives or false negatives of my four hypotheses.

\textbf{Research Strategy}

These challenges limit my initial theoretical foundation and my ability to select most similar, least similar, most likely, or least likely cases for comparison.\footnote{On the drawbacks of choosing test cases without a throughout understanding of the assumptions and scope conditions under which a given theory is most or least likely to be valid, see Daryl Press, \textit{Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 36.} In light of this and in order to avoid a “premature, \textit{a priori} characterization of variance of the dependent and independent variables” I am adopting a “building-block” research strategy, one that remains open to feedback as I inductively derive theory from the empirical record.\footnote{George and Bennett, 240.}
Stage One: Inductive Theory Building

In the next three chapters I will examine three cases: one from the Truman Administration and two from different periods in the Eisenhower administration. The cases are as follows:

- **NSC 68 (1949-1950):** The first case will examine the formulation of NSC 68 following the Soviet nuclear test in September 1949—the most prominent in a series of international events that “struck the United States like a series of hammer blows”\(^{177}\)—and the eventual implementation of NSC 68 following the invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950. Since Truman was initially intransigent—tabling the document pending a cost assessment, this case allows me to ask the counterfactual: would Truman have accepted NSC 68 if the invasion of Korea (i.e. another shock) had not occurred?\(^{178}\)

- **The New Look (1953):** The second case will examine how Eisenhower, after the death of Stalin in March 1953, deviated from the course laid out by Truman and abandoned campaign promises to “roll back” the Soviet Union, generating NSC 162/2, his “New Look” grand strategy. This adjustment also involved a competitive grand strategy design exercise unique in the history of U.S. foreign policy known as Project Solarium, “the best example of long-term strategic planning in the history of the American Presidency.”\(^{179}\)

- **The Sputnik Moment (1957):** The third case will examine Eisenhower’s response to the launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite on October 4, 1957 and Sputnik II on November 3, 1957.

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\(^{178}\) Such counterfactuals are especially useful when examining puzzles that lack substantial or developed theory. Timothy J. McKeown, “Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative Worldview,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 163, 139-168.

\(^{179}\) Flourney and Brimley, 83.
1957. The public reaction to these shocks “varied between measured anxiety and total hysteria.” The crisis forced the Eisenhower Administration to question whether “the linchpin assumption at the foundation of U.S. national security policy—U.S. nuclear superiority—was on the verge of disappearing.” The launches also coincided with the final report of the Gaither Committee, a presidential commission on defense spending.

I have selected these cases for five reasons. First, the change from NSC 20/4, to NSC 68, to NSC 162/2 places three distinct “geopolitical codes” alongside each other in a relatively short period of time. The cases turn on similar strategic issues, have well-defined turning points, and involve many of the same players whose preferences are well known. The cases also provide us with a rich, accessible body of documentation and testimony from which to draw conclusions, model variables, and minimize any intercoder reliability problems.

Second, the differences in complexity and experience between Eisenhower and Truman have been well established in the political psychology literature and produce a useful typology displayed in Table 3 below. As a low complexity, low experience president, Truman is, according to Thomas Preston, a “Maverick.” Mavericks rely heavily on expert advisers to whom they delegate policy formulation and tend make decisions based on “personal, idiosyncratic policy views and principles, which are often heavily influenced by simple decision heuristics (such as analogies).” As a complex president with high foreign policy experience, Eisenhower

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is a “Navigator.” Navigators are actively involved in the decision-making process, sensitive to political context, hungry for new information, and confident in their own adjustment skills. Since my theory expects Mavericks and Navigators to be the least and most skilled in changing course, respectively, it makes sense to start with these types. Further, when shock and slack are absent in a Truman case, this becomes a “least likely” case for my typological theory. Similarly, if shock and slack are present in an Eisenhower case, this becomes a “most likely” case for my theory. In either case, the outcome on the dependent variable should shed considerable light on my initial typological theory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Complexity</th>
<th>Truman: “Maverick”</th>
<th>Eisenhower: “Navigator”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy Experience</td>
<td>1(^{184})</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Complexity and Experience Scores for Truman and Eisenhower

Third, any adjustment during the Eisenhower administration is a deviant case for the leading theories of grand strategy change, particularly Trubowitz’s. Despite a consistent nuclear arms build-up and crises in Quemoy, Matsu, and Dien Bien Phu, according to Trubowitz’s concept of “geopolitical slack,” from 1953 to 1961 the geopolitical threat and balance of power remained relatively constant as the U.S. avoided major conflicts. Neither can domestic politics account for Eisenhower’s “New Look” (NSC 162/2), an initially unpopular combination of internationalism and fiscal conservatism that Eisenhower had to build a coalition around. Eisenhower chose a course contrary to both the preferences of major political coalitions

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\(^{184}\) Although, as previously discussed, this score may be too low, adjusting for Truman’s military experience does not change his classification as a low-experience president.

\(^{185}\) On deviant cases see George and Bennett, 240.
within his own party and the policies of the Truman administration, many of which Ike had a
hand in shaping.\textsuperscript{186}

Fourth, Truman and Eisenhower qualify as cases of intrinsic importance.\textsuperscript{187} The
formation of NSC 68 and the extent to which it deviated from NSC 20/4 is generally considered
a signal event in the history of U.S. grand strategy.\textsuperscript{188} Eisenhower’s deliberate approach to
decision-making—particularly the process through which he formulated and implemented the
New Look—is now the standard against which others are judged.\textsuperscript{189} Sputnik has become the
quintessential analogy used to describe a national wake-up call and need to change course.\textsuperscript{190}

Fifth, beyond the “demand side” of developing theory, on the “supply side” of case
explaining the historical record is far from complete. Debate continues over the extent to which
the implementation of NSC 68 constituted a major change in Truman’s approach to geopolitics
or simply reiterated NSC 20/4’s objectives with a different tone.\textsuperscript{191} Noted historian Richard
Immerman argues that Eisenhower never changed his strategic course in response to new
analysis or interpretation of the international environment.\textsuperscript{192} There are thus reasons to question

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{186} Smith, \textit{Eisenhower in War and Peace}, 494-496, 499, 505-506, 509, 528-529, 531, 547, 559-561.
\bibitem{187} For what constitutes a case of intrinsic importance see Van Evera, 67-68, 75.
\bibitem{188} As Bowie and Immerman put it: “Interpreting NSC 68 and appraising its significance has become a cottage
industry for historians and others.” Bowie and Immerman, 17. See also, Ernest R. May, ed., \textit{American Cold War
\bibitem{189} President Obama and his advisers frequently reference the Ike standard. See, for example, Barack H. Obama,
“Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” Presidential
Remarks, West Point Academy, December 1, 2009 and Robert M. Gates, “Eisenhower Library (Defense
Spending),” Secretary of Defense Remarks, Abilene, KS, May 1, 2010. Critics of Obama cite Ike’s experience and
decisiveness in contrast to Obama’s hesitation. See, for example, Fouad Ajami, “Obama and the Eisenhower
Standard,” \textit{The Wall Street Journal}, April 2, 2012, 15. For the purposes of my project, I am not particularly
interested in whether Eisenhower’s “formalistic” decisionmaking process outperforms the alternatives. But I am
interested clearly identifying and measuring the relevant variables and I expect this highly structured and thoroughly
documented strategy design process will bring these and any variables I may have overlooked into sharp relief. On
the formalistic, competitive, and collegial presidential decisionmaking styles, see Tanner Johnson.
\bibitem{190} See President Barack H. Obama, “State of the Union 2011: Winning the Future,” Presidential State of the Union
address, U.S. Congress, January 25, 2011.
\bibitem{191} See Stein, 118, 123; Wells 138; Kupchan, 423; and Dueck, 89
\bibitem{192} Immerman, “Intelligence and Strategy,” 11. See Peter J. Roman, \textit{Eisenhower and the Missile Gap} (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 1995). “Contrary to the claims of ‘revisionist’ historians, then, Eisenhower was something
less than a ‘genius’.” Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 196.
\end{thebibliography}
the sources and degree of strategic adjustment in both administrations.

In the chapters that follow, I use feedback from these cases to refine my exploratory framework. In each case I have used process tracing to identify the “the causal chain and causal mechanism” between the independent variables and the outcome of the dependent variable.\(^\text{193}\) I provide a detailed narrative of the case and then apply it to the initial hypotheses and generalizations that I have developed in this chapter, asking key counterfactuals about whether an adjustment would have occurred if my variables were not present. Additionally, I use cross-case comparisons in order to identify omitted or mis-measured variables.\(^\text{194}\) I am not suggesting that these cases are independent of one another. Indeed, one of the goals of my research is to uncover relationships between cases and to determine “whether the lessons of an earlier case played a causal role in a later one.”\(^\text{195}\)

As I examine each case, I ask the following questions:

- What is the administration’s initial grand strategic course/reference point (i.e. what is the initial relationship between ends, ways, and means)?
- What is the nature of the strategic shock and how does it disconfirm or challenge the administration’s grand strategic course? Does it suggest an obvious adjustment?
- Does the administration have the domestic political slack to consider a strategic adjustment? What domestic political concerns and risks might influence the president’s foreign policy thinking?
- Is the president open to alternative grand strategic options and negative feedback? How does he signal such openness and begin to formulate alternatives?

\(^\text{193}\) George and Bennett, 206. For more on process tracing see Van Evera, 64-67.
\(^\text{194}\) See Van Evera, 68-69 and George and Bennett, 51, 81, 153-160, 165, 290.
\(^\text{195}\) George and Bennett, 34.
• How does the president’s foreign policy experience affect his or her relationships with his
advisers, with the State Department, with the Defense Department, with Congress, and
with the public? How does experience affect the president’s level of involvement in the
adjustment process?
• What is the nature and extent of the strategic adjustment with respect to the initial grand
strategic course/reference point?

To ensure my answers to these questions are sound, and to against investigator bias in
terms of which sources I selected to explain cases, in general, my reconstruction of cases was
based on three source layers in order of priority: (1) primary sources in the form archival
documents as close as possible to the case in time and place; (2) interviews (oral histories and
biographies where interviews are not possible); and (3) secondary historical accounts, starting
with the most recent contributions and working backwards.

Stage Two: Inductive Theory Refinement and Test-Driving

After presenting a revised typological theory based on feedback from these three cases, I
gauge how well my theory performs against the broader Cold War empirical record. My goal in
this second stage is to “test drive” my theory, a middle-ground approach that puts the theory
“through its paces, assessing its design, comfort, and handling.” The idea is to probe my
hypotheses and mechanisms and assess the utility of my theory. Towards that end, in Chapter VI
I apply my refined theory to the broader empirical record, relying far more on secondary sources

196 See Cameron G. Thies, “A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International
Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” The
American Political Science Review 90, no. 3 (September 1996): 605-618.
197 The primary documents for the Eisenhower administration are largely declassified come from five archival
repositories: Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) is digitized by the University of Wisconsin, the
Eisenhower and Truman Presidential Libraries, the National Archives at College Park (Record Group 59, 218, and
263), the Dulles Papers of the Mudd Library at Princeton University, the Lyman Lemnitzer papers at National
Defense University, and various personal paper collections at the Library of Congress.
198 Welch, 8-9, 68-69.
to reconstruct the cases, triangulate my analysis, and classify each case broadly as confirming, disconfirming, or ambiguous for each hypothesis.\textsuperscript{199}

**Limits**

There are at least four limits to this research design. First, my model currently does not shed light on the type, quality, or effectiveness of strategic adjustments a president may choose and its effectiveness, just the degree of adjustment relative to a prior course. This is largely because the various strategy options, the president’s preferences and conception of U.S. national interests, the relevant players’ subjective reference points, and various norms or logics of appropriateness are all exogenous to my model. A comprehensive theory of strategic adjustment would ideally try to account for these variables, but it would also risk unnecessary complexity and problems with operationalizing the variables. More to the point, my theory may serve as a starting point for discussing (without explaining) whether the adjustment amounted to “good” foreign policy judgment.\textsuperscript{200}

Second, since Truman’s complexity and foreign policy experience are (at least according to current approaches in political psychology) unusually low and Eisenhower’s are unusually high, the variables and hypotheses I derive from these deviant cases may not be theoretically informative for the rest of the empirical record. A research program that is new and undeveloped, however, may be “more likely to be advanced by plausibility probes and inductive studies of deviant cases.”\textsuperscript{201} At the very least I aim to establish a baseline with Truman and Eisenhower, one that lays the groundwork for future tests of my theory with other presidents (and thereby

\textsuperscript{199} This classification method draws from Welch, 216-217.
\textsuperscript{200} On what constitutes good foreign policy judgment see Stanley A. Renshon and Deborah Welch Larson eds., *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
\textsuperscript{201} George and Bennett, 251.
avoids the problem of testing theory with the same empirical data used to derive theory).\textsuperscript{202}

Third, since I draw much of my theoretical motivation from gaps in Trubowitz’s theory, one might ask why I do not instead concentrate on the cases that Trubowitz has acknowledged as outliers: Truman, Carter, and Nixon.\textsuperscript{203} I do explore all of these cases (Truman in-depth and Carter and Nixon as mini-cases), but my goal is not to test Trubowitz’s theory, but rather to build a theory of strategic adjustment. I cannot choose most-similar and least-similar cases for comparison until I fully model and measure shock and slack and validate the usefulness of complexity and foreign policy experience.

Fourth, I do not focus on more contemporary cases or policies. Indeed I may find that a model derived from the Cold War is not portable to the present-day. During the Cold War the U.S. had a clear existential threat to stimulate grand strategy design and adjustment. In present conditions of unipolarity, the U.S. may simply be able to afford an astrategic or reactive posture.\textsuperscript{204} This question merits its own dissertation, but in Chapter VI I assess the utility of my framework for the present day.

In sum, this dissertation aims to build the first typological theory of strategic adjustment—identifying the candidate causal variables, refining their measures, specifying their attendant hypotheses, and clarifying their underlying assumptions and conditions. My scope is limited but the stakes are high. When the president attempts to steer the ship of state in a new direction, many hazards lurk on the horizon. In the pages that follow, I hope to improve the view and to specify the appropriate heading to guide future scholarship.\textsuperscript{205}


\textsuperscript{203} Peter Trubowitz, “The Containment Puzzle.”


\textsuperscript{205} “This specification of new concepts or variables, as Max Weber noted, is often one of the most important contributions of research.” George and Bennett, 114.
“Like everyone else, the President is bound to make mistakes. There have been times when I have lain awake at night, full of self-reproach, deeply unhappy because I realized that I could have done some things better than I had. I tell you, that feeling hurts. But that’s how you learn the job of being President. And that goes for every President who is a man of heart, and who feels his responsibilities. When you read the personal notes of former Presidents, as I have, you know that almost every man who held the office felt the same way. But after you get to know the real nature of the tasks of the Presidency, and after you have begun to know your way, then you have another worry. You realize that the issues are nothing less than peace, or war on a terrible scale; nothing less than the standard of living of the American people; nothing less than the preservation of democracy and freedom in the United States.”

-President Harry S. Truman

This chapter will examine the President Harry S. Truman’s strategic adjustment from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68. This case is recognized as one of the most significant course changes in Cold War history. By tracing the process of strategic adjustment in the Truman Administration, I aim to refine the initial typology of strategic adjustment presented in the previous chapter, gauging how my candidate causal variables and initial hypotheses perform.

Truman the “Maverick” President

Theoretical Expectations

As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to the typology developed by Thomas Preston, Truman profiles as a “Maverick”—a low complexity, low foreign policy experience president. His complexity score (.42) is a standard deviation lower than Eisenhower’s (.63). Preston’s typology predicts Truman will exhibit a low need for information or alternative viewpoints and a tendency to make decisions based on “personal, idiosyncratic policy views and principles, which are often heavily influenced by simple decision heuristics (such as

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206 Truman, “Notes on the Nature of the President’s Task,” n.d., Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO (TPL), Truman Papers, White House Central Files (WHCF): Confidential File, Box 30, “The President…,” 1-5. Though undated the note was likely written in 1947-1948 since it reflects on whether he should run for reelection.
analogies). “Truman gets only one point for foreign policy experience compared to Eisenhower’s 45 points. This lack of foreign policy predicts a heavy reliance on expert advisers to whom he delegates policy formulation. Nevertheless, Preston predicts a high level of decisiveness from Truman, even in the face of political pressure, “since seeing the world in absolute terms makes decisions much clearer and easier to formulate.”

My initial theory builds upon Preston’s hypotheses and predicts minor strategic adjustment or refinement. This is because as a conceptually simple president we expect Truman will be the least willing to change course—he will resist discrepant information from the surrounding environment, incorporate new information into his preexisting worldview, and reject the formulation of alternative strategies that could lead to a strategic adjustment, instead seeking reinforcement for the initial course he set at the beginning of the administration. As a president with low foreign policy experience, Truman will be the least skilled in changing course—he will not drive the process of adjustment, instead delegating the formulation and implementation of new strategy to subordinates, and thereby increasing the risks of “bureau-political waste” and the likelihood that the inertia of the prior course will prevail over any attempted adjustment.

The Accidental President

Truman’s typological classification as a Maverick seem to confirm the portrait of him as both the simple haberdasher from Independence, MO and the man with a clear view of right and wrong best known for the sign on his desk proclaiming “The Buck Stops Here!” For many at the time, including many of Roosevelt’s (and subsequently Truman’s) advisors, he was the

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207 Preston The President, 26-27, 33.
208 Preston, The President, 27, 33. Richard Neustadt, who worked on Truman’s white house staff, claims similarly that Truman saw things not as an analyst but as a judge, who would look directly at the issue presented to him—not “to the right or to the left”—and was comfortable making a decision, but less comfortable the more there was to be decided. Quoted in Preston, The President , 38.
209 See, for example, Dean Rusk, As I Saw It, ed. Daniel S. Papp (New York: Norton, 1990), 155-156.
“Accidental President,” an ordinary man unsuited to the challenges of the office to which he inadvertently ascended. Yet when Roosevelt tapped Truman for Vice President, while he did not know Truman well on a personal level, he knew that Truman had served well as head of the War Investigating Committee or “Truman Committee” from 1941-1943. Truman chaired the Committee after conducting a 10,000-mile tour of military bases to investigate contractor mismanagement. This domestic political experience had an important connection to foreign policy. It also did much to improve Truman’s image, giving him a reputation for determination and hard work and “eras[ing] his earlier public image as an errand-runner for Kansas City politicos.”\(^{210}\) In this position Truman not only performed well, but also exhibited his loyalty to Roosevelt and demonstrated that he “had been well trained in politics.”\(^{211}\)

Truman had also served in the Missouri National Guard from 1905 to 1911, experienced combat as a Captain in WWI, and reached the rank of Colonel after rejoining the reserves after the war.

Even if one maintains that Truman assumed the presidency with little foreign policy experience, he nonetheless accumulated significant foreign policy experience in a short time on the job. In his memoirs Truman would refer to 1945 as “a year of decisions” and by 1947 Truman had already managed the end of World War II, ordered the use of atomic weapons in Japan, negotiated face-to-face with Joseph Stalin, and convinced Congress to ratify the UN Charter. Truman had also shown enough confidence in his own foreign policy experience to defy his military advisers. For example, in 1948 the Soviets began to block the delivery of food and other forms of assistance to West Berlin, leading to a two-week standoff. General Omar Bradley, the Army chief of staff, and General Hoyt Vandenberg, the Air Force chief of staff, thought


prolonged airlifts were unsustainable and recommended a unilateral withdrawal from Berlin. Truman rejected this recommendation as an unacceptable form of surrender. When he ordered an increased airlift, the chiefs tried to trap Truman (weeks before the presidential election), telling the president he had to authorize general preparations for war if he wanted to continue the defense of Berlin. Truman rejected this proposal and refused to retreat from Berlin. By the following year he had seemingly won this confrontation with the Soviets.²¹²

Some began to appreciate Truman’s growth in office. As a Cleveland Press article from April 21, 1947, entitled “The Remarkable Transformation of Mr. Truman,” put it: “most of us said not long ago, He’s all washed up, anybody nominated against him in 1948 is a sure winner. He was the ‘little man in a big job,’ ‘the Missouri haberdasher who had failed,’ the ‘political accident,’ the ‘interim president’…He is now making his record.”²¹³ Many of Truman’s private reflections support this evolving public image, showing a man with an appreciation for the responsibilities of his office and a recognition of the important foreign policy challenges he faced (as well as their historical context). And as the epigraph to this chapter indicates, history indeed shaped his thinking. While Truman lacked a college degree, he was highly studious, and his primary hobby was reading history. For example, when asked by a reporter whom he considered the greatest figures in history, Truman responded at length:

There are dozens of them, both moral leaders and military ones. No one can say who is greatest even in one line. Moral: Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed. Military: Hannibal, Alexander, Genghis Khan, Tamerlaine, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles Martel, the Black Prince, Huniades, Caesar, Washington, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Sheridan, Sherman, maybe Frederick the Great. Napoleon next to Hannibal, in my opinion the greatest military leader. There are three or four great maneuvers: 1. Canea; 2...

²¹² Sestanovich, 31-38.
²¹³ “[A]nd as to his personality—well, its the kind of personality that the people in getting to know are getting to like...From a sitting-down position to a standing-up position in the period form one editor’s meeting a year ago to the one this year is somewhat symbolical both of President Truman’s growth within himself, and the growth of the public’s estimate of him as a public servant and as a man.” “The Remarkable Transformation of Mr. Truman,” Cleveland Press, April 21, 1947, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Speech File, Miscellaneous Speeches File, Box 44, “General.”
Arbella; 3. Austerlitz; 4. Chancellorsville. Great rulers: David (not Solomon), Hamurabe, Rameses II, Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus, Justinian, Charlemange, King Henry IV of France, Elizabeth of England, Peter the Great (Russia), Saladin and a dozen more.214

Similarly, in a letter to his wife Bess Wallace on September 22, 1947 after a lunch meeting with General Marshall, Truman said:

The world seems to be topsy turvy, but when you read the history after the Napoleonic Wars and the first World War they are no worse, only cover more territory. I can’t see why it was necessary for me to inherit all difficulties and tribulations of the world—but I have them on hand and must work them out some way—I hope for the welfare of all concerned. Russia has at last shown her hand and it contains the cards Marshall + I thought it would. All we can do is go ahead working for peace—and keep our powder dry.215

In private notes such as these, often to his wife or to himself, Truman exhibits a complex understanding of his surrounding environment and the grey areas of presidential decision-making. For example, reflecting on the presidency and why he felt obligated to run for a second term, Truman wrote a detailed “Note on the Nature of the President’s Task.” The note provides an in-depth look at how Truman perceived the challenges of being president. Truman described the presidency as not only the biggest job in the world, but also a sacred trust for the “hopes and aspirations of the American people,” and what makes this “task great and difficult is the power which he must exercise in making big decisions—decision which affect the lives and destinies of every one of us.” Truman wanted to continue as the trustee in order to make sure the that the policies he had initiated “in the broad interest of America and the world,” would be carried out and he could prevent a reaction that would undo the work he had begun “before it had time to yield results….when times are deeply critical, as they are at present, it is disturbing to think of

214 Untitled Document, Truman’s handwritten responses to a questionnaire, TPL, Truman Papers, WHCF: Confidential File, Box 30, “The President’s Handwritten Notes.”
the trouble that could follow if policies aimed at achieving world peace and domestic stability were abruptly thrown overboard.”

For Truman, the prestige of the job quickly faded, and he found, as all presidents find, that “the continuous strain and responsibility is a killing burden.” To withstand the burden and protect against the many dangers surrounding the office, the president must develop certain skills. For example, the president is sees the weaknesses of human nature “displayed all over the world, and sometimes in high places,” and in response must develop “infinite patience, and tolerance,” exercising U.S. power “with great care and caution.” The president must control his temper and guard against personal feelings which may distort his judgment, not allowing himself “to be eaten up by cold rage inside when things go wrong.” The president must also not be swayed by public attacks at home or bad manners abroad.

In terms of how the president processes information, Truman notes “the President is constantly getting information from thousands of people. You have to learn to distinguish between reliable information and information which might mislead you just a little bit. That little bit can be fatal, when you are dealing with the destinies of a generation of men.” In order to grapple with world problems:

The President must work himself day and night trying to hear and read everything that may help him make wise and good decisions. He wants to get at the absolute truth. He’s got to get as close as he can to the absolute truth about what is going on, not only at home, but in every critical part of the world.

For Truman, the daily judgments of the president and the secretary of state resonated around the world. In light of this and in light of the general anxiety of the world scene, Truman did not feel he could risk resigning. He foresaw and feared the “understandable eagerness of a new President to assert himself in the world situation.” That eager new President might induce disaster through just one serious mistake, because he had not yet mastered the issues, sorted his
facts, understood the personalities involved in major decisions, or “or has not yet got himself or his temper under control.” 216 (Yet it is worth noting that Truman, as a new president “totally unbriefed as to what Roosevelt had been trying to do” and “[e]ager to appear decisive and in command,” abruptly ended Lend-Lease with the Soviets in August 1945. 217)

Though Truman is likely presenting an idealized picture of himself in office, it is striking that his conception of the presidency—particularly in his search for “absolute truth”—differs from the theoretical expectations of how a low complexity president might approach the job. Truman’s message is one of caution and respect for discrepant information from the surrounding environment: because the president’s decisions are so important and affect thousands of lives around the world, the president must work to tirelessly to get the complete picture, to separate good information from bad. Truman suggests that he worked hard to avoid simple, heuristic decision-making, that his view of the world was not black-and-white, and that he was at least conscious of the emotions of the moment when making decisions.

Truman also admits to being highly affected by the pressures of the office. In a private letter to his wife on March 24, 1950, Truman further revealed his personal anxiety and sensitivity to criticism: “You see everybody shoots at me, if not directly then at some of the staff closest to me…The general trend of the press is that I’m a very small man in a very large place and when someone I trust joins the critical side—well it hurts. I’m much older and very tired and I need support as no man ever did.” Truman went on to express his worry about the lack of loyal

216 Truman, “Notes on the Nature of the President’s Task,” n.d., TPL, Truman Papers, WHCF: Confidential File, Box 30, “The President…” 1-5.
217 Gaddis, Strategies, 15.
lieutenants, complaining about unwarranted attacks from Senator McCarthy, which had put his whole foreign policy at stake “just as we are on the road to a possible solution.”

Truman’s low conceptual complexity predicts less receptiveness to the views of his advisers, particularly views contradicting his own. At the same time, Truman’s low foreign policy experience score predicts less participation in foreign policy debates and a corresponding willingness to rely on his advisers to shape the debate. This seems contradictory. Truman’s type is at once deferential and decisive, delegating foreign policy decisions to his advisers but also resisting their alternative analysis. Truman undoubtedly chose strong advisers, and the presidency as a whole did not suffer from a lack of experience. For example, career CIA officer, administrator of the Marshall Plan, and head of the Economic Cooperation Administration in the Truman Administration Richard Bissell wrote that he admired Truman’s “practice of selecting senior subordinates, delegating to them, and backing them up to the hilt. His most important selections turned out to have been superb. I would find it difficult to name four men as able, distinguished, and well-suited to the tasks he gave them as George Marshall, Dean Acheson, Averill Harriman, and Robert Lovett.” Preston recognizes that both Acheson and Marshall in particular were more cognitively complex, more pragmatic in their approach, and less driven by the emotions of the moment than Truman. In Preston’s view this created a good balance of pragmatism and decisiveness within the Truman Administration.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson, perhaps the most influential among Truman’s advisers, may have viewed the world in more complex terms, yet he seemed cut from similar cloth as Truman. Historian John Lewis Gaddis describes Acheson’s “general proclivity for action almost

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218 Truman to Bess Truman, March 24, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, Family, Business and Personal Affairs (FBPA), Family Correspondence File, Box 16, “March 24, 1950.”
220 Preston, The President, 63.
as an end in itself, and his corresponding tendency to avoid reconsiderations, second thoughts,
and above all self-doubt.” In Gaddis’ view, these shared characteristics not only allowed for
Acheson’s excellent relationship with Truman, but also manifested themselves in Truman’s
generally aggressive approach to foreign policy after June 1950, when there “was in the
administration very much a sense of direction without destination—of marching forthrightly
forward into unknown areas, without any clear sense of what the ultimate objective was, how
long it would take to achieve it, or what it would cost.”

Acheson himself recognized that the
president and his advisers rarely come to the job with a great deal of foreign policy experience.
His solution was not to tread carefully, but rather to press forward with confidence, to “get on
and do what had to be done as quickly and effectively as you could, and if you stopped to
analyze what you were doing…[a]ll you did was to weaken and confuse your will and not get
anywhere.” Acheson here lends support to the idea of presidential agency in strategic
adjustment, suggesting that the statesman can formulate and implement whatever grand strategy
he chooses.

Truman’s Initial Course: Kennan’s Containment and NSC 20/4

From 1947 to 1949, the Truman Administration formulated and implemented a grand
strategy largely consistent with George Kennan’s original version of containment. Officially
codified in NSC 20/4—which was approved by Truman in November 1948—this strategy sought
to compel the Soviet Union to modify its aggressive, expansionist behavior so that it would act

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221 These characteristics also put Acheson frequently at odds with George Kennan, “for whom such traits were a
chronic affliction.” Gaddis, Strategies, 123.

222 Acheson quoted in David S. McLellan, Dean Acheson: The State Department Years (New York: Dodd, Mead,
1976), 282. In a speech to the Army War College in 1952 Acheson painted a more nuanced picture of the decision-
making process: “We are always forced to choose between a great many goals…all of which are good, and those
which we can accomplish with the limited means at our command…Then you come to this very, very difficult
question of…choice: What to do first, what to defer until later, what to give up altogether.” “Acheson Speech to
Army War College Group,” October 2, 1952, TPL, Acheson Papers, Box 69, “Classified Off the Record Speeches,
1947-52.”
according the principles of the UN Charter. In more practical terms NSC 20/4 held that Soviet domination of Eurasia, whether through armed aggression or through more subtle means, could not be tolerated. The strategy had three pillars. First, the strategy viewed economic assistance—particularly aiding the economic recovery of critical industrial centers in Europe—as the most important instrument of national power. Second, presuming the danger of war to be remote and time to be on the side of the U.S., the strategy sought to avoid actions that would provoke the Soviets or make them feel vulnerable.  

Third, the strategy made clear distinctions between vital and peripheral areas in the international system based on strategic and economic rationale as opposed to reputational considerations. As such, the U.S. devoted most of its foreign policy efforts to helping Western Europe and Japan with their economic recovery while avoiding a major military buildup, notwithstanding the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which initially sought to build up European security rather than stationing American forces in Europe. This was a selective expansion of U.S. foreign commitments, what Gaddis calls an asymmetrical form of containment. It involved “confronting the adversary at times and in places of one’s own choosing” and retaining the initiative by choosing “the terrain upon which the contest was to take place, the means by which it was to be conducted, and the balance between the costs encountered and the benefits derived.”

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223 Kennan would begin to fall out with the Truman administration when Truman began to take steps Kennan felt were needlessly provocative. “Kennan regarded several of its major actions between 1948-1950—the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the creation of an independent West German state, the insistence on retaining American forces in post-occupation Japan, and the decisions to build the hydrogen bomb—as certain to reinforce Soviet feelings of suspicion and insecurity, and hence, to narrow opportunities for negotiations.” Gaddis, Strategies, 70.

224 Kupchan, Vulnerability of Empire, 419, 457

In adopting and implementing NSC 20/4, Truman had money on his mind. The archives show a tension between growing national security expenditures and Truman’s desire to cut costs. In a letter to his wife in September 1947, Truman wrote:

Marshall + Lovett were in yesterday morning and went over the European situation from soup to nuts with me. It’s pretty bad but not quite as bad as I thought it would be. If it works out as planned it will cost us about sixteen billions over a four year period. I canceled 42 billions in appropriations for the last half of 1945 so if we can buy peace and quiet for about 2/5 of half year’s war cost it will be cheap at the price.\(^{226}\)

Writing to his wife again a week later Truman continued:

To feed France and Italy this winter will cost 580 million, the Marshall Plan 16/12 billions. But you know in October + November 1945 I canceled 63 billions in appropriations 55 billions at one crack. Our war cost that year was set at 105 billions. The 16 1/2 is for a four year period and is for peace. A Russian war would cost us 400 billion and untold lives, mostly civilian. So I must do what I can. I shouldn’t write you this stuff but you should know what I’ve been facing since Potsdam.\(^{227}\)

Truman had to work hard to secure the necessary funding and support for implementing NSC 20/4. There were two reasons for this. First, the actual threat of Soviet aggression still seemed remote. Intelligence reports between 1947 and 1949 uniformly concluded that the Soviets could not counter the atomic bomb. Moreover, the Soviets were unlikely to risk general war because they could achieve their objectives in Europe without using military force.\(^{228}\) The eventual Soviet backdown in Berlin, lifting the blockade in May 1949, seemed to confirm this view. Though there was genuine concern over the Soviet Union’s growing military capabilities—and both NSC-7 and NSC 20/3 claimed that the Soviets’ had the capability to seize Western Europe and the Middle East—the newly-created NATO (which the US joined in 1949) would act as a de facto “third force” to deter Soviet aggression.

\(^{226}\) Truman to Bess Truman, September 23, 1947, TPL, Truman Papers, Family, Business and Personal Affairs (FBPA), Family Correspondence File, Box 16, “September 23, 1947.”

\(^{227}\) Truman to Bess Truman, September 30, 1947, TPL, Truman Papers, Family, Business and Personal Affairs (FBPA), Family Correspondence File, Box 16, “September 30, 1947.”

\(^{228}\) Gaddis, Strategies, 60-61.
The second and related reason Truman faced budget constraints was that in the post-WWII environment, the country accepted its new role as a great power, if not the great power, but was unwilling to pay for it. In this way domestic sentiment seemed to preclude the proper alignment of ends and means. Truman and his advisers gradually expanded foreign policy expenditures but not enough to sustain expanding international commitments. For a country struggling to emerge from postwar recession, military expenditures were widely seen as a drain on the economy; the general mood supported “rapid demobilization, retrenchment, and constrained rearmament.” Dean Acheson, speaking to the Maryland Historical Society in 1945, summarized the public sentiment on foreign policy as: “1. Bring the boys home. 2. Don’t be a Santa Claus. 3. Don’t be pushed around.” Two years later, while briefing Truman on the need to support Greece and Turkey, Acheson thought it would be hard to convince the public to accept the mantle of global responsibility, particularly since America’s European allies were so dysfunctional. Moreover, a Republican majority controlled Congress for the first time in fourteen years, and Acheson doubted that they (and even many Democrats) would embrace increased foreign assistance. Military manpower had already dropped from 12 million in 1945 to under 3 million in 1946, and below authorized levels after the expiration of the Selective Service Act in March 1947. The Defense budget shrank from $42 billion for Fiscal Year (FY) 1946 to $14 billion for FY 1947. Congress had cut Truman’s proposed FY 1948 budget by an additional 10 percent.

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231 Sestanovitch, 21-22.
232 Military expenditures went from 37.4% of GNP in FY 1944 to 4.4% of GNP in FY 1948. Stein, “Domestic Constraints, Extended Deterrence, and the Incoherence of Grand Strategy,” 114.
In December 1946, James Rowe, a presidential assistant to Truman, prepared a study on the president’s relationship with an opposition Congress (a study which was also given to Eisenhower at the beginning of his administration). Rowe painted a grim picture of potential bipartisan cooperation:

In the first place the opposition definitely do not wish to carry out a legislative program of the President. They believe their party has been given ‘the mandate’; that it is up to them, and not to the executive, to set the policy. The opposition believe also that they can elect their own President two years from now. But the best way to do it is by showing the people every day and every way the presumed incompetence of the present administration. In such an atmosphere—the ‘two-party’ atmosphere, as well as the independence of the legislature atmosphere—formal cooperation is impossible.  

In Rowe’s view, the opposition party would wield the power of the purse to control the government, infringe upon executive power, reject all of the president’s legislative proposals, demand Congressional review of executive agency regulations, investigate “countless” departments and agencies and war programs, and even “demand Congressional representation on executive boards dealing with foreign policy.”

Cognizant of the public mood and expecting opposition from a Republican Congress, Truman knew that implementing NSC 20/4 would require the “greatest selling job ever.” He began his sales pitch, a deliberate attempt to galvanize the public into action, in March 1947, asking Congress for emergency funds to support Greece and Turkey, declaring the U.S. must be ready to help free peoples everywhere defend themselves—what became known as the Truman Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine, despite its expansive rhetoric, sought to exploit divisions within the Communist bloc and selectively counter communist movements in the Soviet’s sphere of influence. Truman also committed to rebuilding Western Europe. He seized upon Secretary of

233 James Rowe, “Cooperation or Conflict?: The President’s Relationships with an Opposition Congress,” Eisenhower Presidential Library (EPL), The Presidential Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower (Ann Whitman File), Name Series, Box 14, “Executive Authority,” 7.
234 James Rowe, “Cooperation or Conflict?”, 7.
State George Marshall’s commencement address to Harvard in June 1947 declaring the U.S. willingness to support and rebuild Europe with foreign aid, and used the term “Marshall Plan” in an effort to exploit Marshall’s popularity and win congressional support for the effort.\textsuperscript{236}

In the summer of 1949, Truman was also considering whether to approve a $300 million increase in funding for the Atomic Energy Commission, expenses that had not been accounted for in the original budget. Truman requested this proposal be evaluated in light of the NSC ongoing review of national defense and international programs, and to consider whether the proposed acceleration was sound from the standpoint of “the stringency of the over-all budgetary situation” and “the effect upon the international situation of so great an acceleration of visible effort in this area of our national defense program.”\textsuperscript{237} Despite his cost concerns, Truman subsequently approved the expansion and asked Congress for an emergency supplemental. As he told the Secretary of Defense on October 19, 1949, he approved the plan because it would “result in significant gains form the military standpoint in terms of lower unit cost of weapons, probable shortening of a war, increased military effectiveness, erased logistical and manpower requirements for the prosecution of certain tasks in war, and increased flexibility in the conduct of the war.”\textsuperscript{238}

Yet even while selling select new programs, Truman continued to try and cut the overall budget. Campaigning for reelection in 1948, Truman proposed an additional 13 percent cut for FY 1949 and stated that the economy could not afford defense spending in excess of $15 billion a year. Congress had reduced Truman’s initial 1950 request, to which the president responded that he would not even spend the sum that Congress eventually authorized. Truman directed

\textsuperscript{236} Sestanovich, 19.
\textsuperscript{238} Truman to Secretary of Defense, October 19, 1949, TPL, Truman Papers, WHCF: Confidential File, Box 4, “Atomic bomb and energy, 1948-1949.”
Secretary of Defense James Forrestal to keep FY1950 defense programs under $14.5 billion. Forrestal had earlier argued that he saw no prospect for reducing the military budget in the foreseeable future and, should world conditions deteriorate even further, he anticipated having to ask for more funds. In light of the security situation, any savings they could make through better management or elimination of duplicative programs would have to be reinvested into strengthening the National Military Establishment. This was due in large part to looming pay raises, the necessity of replacing reserves with new personnel, coming increases in operational responsibilities, and the need for modernizing weapons systems. Yet while Forrestal and the Joint Chiefs argued that they could not meet Truman’s standard (claiming that $29 billion was necessary), the Defense Department eventually submitted. Truman also appointed avowed budget-cutter Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense in March 1949 as a way to enforce his $14.5 billion budget.

The Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Frank Pace Jr., outlined the bleak fiscal situation on June 30, 1949 in a memorandum for Truman. Pace estimated that the domestic economic forecast would include continued and sustained unemployment, with the possibility of a serious recession. The national security forecast, however, would include improvement in the stability and strength of free nations, except in Southeast Asia. Federal receipts would continue to decline unless changes were made to costly government programs, resulting in a FY1950 deficit of $3.5 billion and a FY1951 deficit of $6-8 billion. In particular, Pace thought it hard to reduce the “extraordinary budget requirements for national defense and international aid programs” which were necessary to carry out policies such as “economic recovery program and

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240 Johnson saw reduced spending as his key to securing the Democratic presidential nomination in 1952. Truman thus wielded Johnson as a way “to enforce economy on the defense establishment.” Wells, 124.
government and relief in occupied areas.” However, sizable reductions could be made in military expenditures without compromising national readiness for an emergency. Pace recommended placing a ceiling of $15 billion on new obligational authority for the 1951 budget of the National Military Establishment. Even so, Pace did not think it possible to terminate the deficit. “On the other hand, with the possibilities of further declines in employment and production, it does not now appear that the Congress will increase budget revenues. For these reasons, the budget policy at the present time for fiscal year 1951 is to reduce expenditures below present forecasts by $2 to $4 billion.”

Pace included a statement for Truman to send to the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Security Resources Board, explaining that the president was basing his budget ceiling determinations for 1951 on two principles: (1) holding governmental expenditures as closely as possible to present levels and more importantly (2) preventing a large increase in military expenses. The expense trends were substantially above the levels they could hope to maintain consistent with a sound fiscal and economic program. It was thus necessary to re-evaluate certain national defense and international aid programs, and Truman requested a review of national military programs in order to determine their relative priority and which should be emphasized to meet the fiscal limits established.

On August 30, 1949, the CIA delivered an estimate of the effect of the proposed substantial reduction of appropriations for national security and international affairs programs for FY 1951 upon the relative security position of the U.S. vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R.. The estimate assumed objectives and aims of U.S. policy as stated in NSC 20/4, and argued that unfavorable

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trends were now overtaking favorable ones. Such unfavorable trends included: (1) the deterioration of the international financial position of the UK, (2) dollar shortages, and (3) expanding communism in the Far East. The estimate concluded that the proposed reduction would give support to these adverse trends in FY 1950 and induce an “unfavorable psychological reaction in the non-Soviet world and a concurrent boost to the Soviet world,” and the depreciation in US military capabilities would tip the balance of power in the Soviets favor. By 1951 it would diminish the U.S. government’s capacity to pursue the objectives and aims stated in NSC 20/4, and in subsequent years it might invalidate those objectives and aims altogether.243

“A New Type of Pearl Harbor”: The Shock of the Soviet Nuclear Test

On September 23, 1949, Truman publicly announced that American military aircraft had recently detected the Soviets had successfully detonated a nuclear bomb. The test was quickly followed by a series of subsidiary shocks. The Soviets established the German Democratic Republic on October 7, 1949. Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist closely involved with the Manhattan Project, was revealed to be a Soviet spy on February 3, 1949. The People’s Republic of China was established and signed a “Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance” with the Soviet Union by February 14, 1949. These events “struck the United States like a series of hammer blows.”244 Though the Soviets still lacked bombers capable of reaching the U.S. with a nuclear payload, the nuclear test punctured the sense of geopolitical isolation and security that the U.S. had enjoyed for over a century.245 As a report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented to the NSC on February 1, 1950 described:

244 Wells, 117. See also Acheson, Present At The Creation, 321, 355, 362 and Bohlen, Witness to History, 237.
245 Wells, 117.
Friday, 23 September 1949, when the President announced that we had evidence of an atomic explosion in the U.S.S.R., is to us as historic a date as Pearl Harbor or Hiroshima, for it has posed us with the possibility that the atomic bomb, which ended World War II, and which we now believe is produced by the Soviet, might in the future be used against us in a new type of a Pearl Harbor attack of infinitely greater magnitude than that of 1941.\(^{246}\)

The intelligence community had been caught unaware. An estimate of the Russian Atomic Energy project on July 6, 1948 assessed that while it was impossible to determine the exact status or date schedule for completing the first atomic bomb, “it is estimated that the earliest date by which it is remotely possible that the U.S.S.R. may have completed its first atomic bomb is mid-1950, but the most probably date is believed to be mid-1953.”\(^{247}\) At a broader level, CIA intelligence estimates in 1947 and 1948 reflected the prevailing consensus that the Soviets remained wary of provoking America. Their policy would be to build up their war potential while undermining U.S. strength and influence.\(^{248}\) A CIA estimate from September 1948 assessed that over the next decade the Soviets intended to: (1) avoid war with the U.S. (but exploit their preponderance of military power in Eurasia); (2) build up as rapidly as possible Soviet war potential in order to equal and eventually surpass the U.S.; (3) wage psychological, political and economic warfare against the U.S. and Western Allies to undermine their relative strength (particularly to hinder the recovery of Western Europe); and (4) exploit the weakness of its neighboring states. The Soviets were unlikely to restart deliberately to war during this decade.

\(^{246}\) Lt. Gen. Alfred M. Bruenther to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, January 31, 1950, National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, MD (NARA), Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Record Group (RG) 330, “Department of Defense.”


\(^{248}\) Western Europe was the most important area of the globe in this struggle, followed by the Near and Middle East, and then followed by the Far East. CIA, “Review of the World Situation as it Relates to the Security of the United States,” September 12, 1947, TPL, Truman Papers, Staff Member and Office Files (SMOF): CIA Files, Box 4, “Review of the World Situation Report September 12, 1947.”
but would do so if it became convinced such a move was expedient.\textsuperscript{249} As intelligence historian Christopher Andrew has pointed out: “if all presidents had possessed as little intelligence on the Soviet Union as Truman, there would have been many more missile-gap controversies and much greater tension between the superpowers.”\textsuperscript{250}

**Course Change?: The Formulation of NSC 68**

The shock of the Soviet nuclear test created a sense that Soviet behavior had fundamentally changed in some way, but true Soviet intentions remained unclear.\textsuperscript{251} The test initiated a debate within the administration over whether the U.S. should accelerate the development of a thermonuclear weapon or “super.” Earlier, on November 9, 1949, the Atomic Energy Commission had voted three-to-two against the idea. Most of the members of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy disagreed with the decision and had since been lobbying the administration to proceed with the super. After the Soviet nuclear test, Truman commissioned a special committee of the NSC, which reviewed the issue and, on January 31, 1950, recommended Truman accelerate the super.\textsuperscript{252} Truman accepted the recommendation the same day.\textsuperscript{253} But as W. Sterling Cole, the Chairman of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, put it in a letter to President Eisenhower on August 21, 1953, Truman’s “super” decision was a difficult one. Truman “issued his directive only after the evidences of Soviet

\textsuperscript{250} Christopher Andrew, “Intelligence and International Relations in the Early Cold War,” Review of International Studies 24, no. 3 (July 1998), 328.
\textsuperscript{252} Wells, 122-123
\textsuperscript{253} President to Secretary of State, January 31, 1950, (FRUS 1950 Vol. I), 141-142.
intransigence (sic) and hostility had become so overwhelming as to leave us no alternative but to proceed with the development of these dreadful armaments.”

Truman not only approved the acceleration of the super, but also directed a broader full-scale review of U.S. national security policy “in light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union.” George Kennan, then Counselor of the State Department, had proposed a similar exercise eleven days prior. But Truman tapped Paul H. Nitze, the State Department Director of Policy Planning who had been a key proponent of the super, to chair this “State-Defense Policy Review Group.” Nitze also served as principal author and primary recruiter for the Group. He quickly assembled ten regular members, four occasional participants, and six outside consultants.

Nitze dominated the process. His Group consisted mostly of his staff subordinates or other departmental representatives that shared his views. Freed from the routine bureaucracy and executive oversight, the Group worked quickly, holding its first meeting on February 8 and producing a working draft—one with a striking degree of consensus that closely resembled the final report—by February 27. Gaddis argues the process took on a life of its own as the Group

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254 Sterling Cole to Eisenhower, August 21, 1953, EPL, White House Office, OSANSA, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 1, “President’s Papers 1953 (3).”
255 President to Secretary of State, January 31, 1950 (FRUS 1950 Vol. I), 141-142.
256 Wells, 122-123.
257 The ten regular members consisted of four members of Nitze’s Policy Planning Staff, the special assistant to the Under Secretary of State for atomic energy policy, the assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Foreign Military Affairs, the Air Force member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee of the JCS, the director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, the chairman of the Military Liaison Committee to the AEC, the executive secretary of the NSC. The four occasional participants included two more State Department officials, one defense official, and one NSC official.
258 Wells, 130.
259 The only two dissents were relatively minor and came from two of the six outside consultants. The first, J. Robert Oppenheimer, accepted the urgent need for increased defense spending but argued that the government needed to get away from its complete dependence on atomic weapons and to reduce the secrecy surrounding technical information. James B. Conant, then President of Harvard University, argued that the goals/ends that the report identified, particularly those of restoring freedom to victims of the Kremlin and bringing about change in the Soviet system were too ambitious. The only change that was made in reaction to these criticisms, however, was to remove from the final version of NSC 68 the object of “restoring freedom to victims of the Kremlin.” Both of these
quickly consolidated around a new approach more extreme than Truman had in mind at the 
outset. As Gaddis describes, the process “resembled the drafting of the Constitution in that both 
were done independently of the agencies nominally responsible for such matters—in the case of 
the latter, the Confederation Congress; in the former, the National Security Council.”260

The Group’s strategy, NSC 68, started from a dire assessment of the threat. The Soviets 
were presently capable of taking over Western Europe, advancing on the near and Middle East, 
consolidating gains in the Far East, launching air attacks against the UK, and, in the event of 
major war, launching atomic attacks against select targets in North America.261 U.S. atomic 
superiority would disappear by mid-1954 (the “year of maximum danger”), at which point the 
Soviets would be capable of conducting a surprise attack on U.S targets. Here NSC-68 cited 
intelligence estimates that predicted that the Soviets would be capable of delivering 100 atomic 
weapons on US targets by mid-1954.262 Soviet intentions had also become clearer in the strategy. 
According to NSC 68, the Soviet Union was animated by a blend of hatred and fear, a fanatic 
faith antithetical to U.S values. The Soviets not only aspired to international hegemony, but also 
actively sought the destruction of the U.S.

Despite this change in threat, the goals specified in NSC 68 were consistent with those in 
NSC 20/4. As Gaddis argues, the goal was not to reject or repudiate the ends of containment—as 
evidenced by the fact that Kennan was consulted during the drafting of NSC 68—but rather “to 
systematize containment, and to find the means to make it work.”263 The only significant change

prominent scientists, moreover, would soon join the Committee on the Present Danger in support of NSC 68. Wells, 125, 130.
261 Wells, 132.
263 Gaddis, Strategies, 88.
in ends was rhetorical—a vague call for “genuine and drastic” change in the nature of the Soviet system.\textsuperscript{264} NSC 20/4 had demanded no such change.

The means necessary for containment, however, had changed. After considering and rejecting three alternative courses of action, NSC 68 called for a rapid, broad buildup of “the political, economic, and military strength of the free world” in order to prevent U.S. relative decline.\textsuperscript{265} Since recent Soviet moves were but one part of a global assault on the free world itself, “a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere.”\textsuperscript{266} Geographic prioritization, so essential to Kennan and NSC 20/4, disappeared in a blurring of strategic priorities.\textsuperscript{267} Now no corner of the world was part of the periphery. Means, once limited and inelastic, were expandable and inexhaustible. In this way NSC 68 shifted from asymmetric to symmetrical containment. The U.S. now had both the imperative and the ability to respond anywhere, anytime, and in any way to Soviet aggression.\textsuperscript{268} NSC-68 called for taking whatever action necessary to frustrate Soviet designs, even if doing so did not affirm U.S. values. It recommended taking “dynamic steps to reduce the power and influence of the Kremlin inside the Soviet Union and other areas under its control.”\textsuperscript{269} This required elevating military instruments of national power above economic tools. A broad military buildup was a necessary part of a larger effort to show U.S. resolve and change its credibility and reputation.\textsuperscript{270} Further, armed with estimates that U.S. atomic superiority would disappear by 1954, the report rejected the views of Kennan that the U.S. should pledge never to first use nuclear weapons or submit to comprehensive international control of nuclear weapons. As the document declared: “Without

\textsuperscript{264} NSC 68, 267-271.
\textsuperscript{265} The three (straw men) alternatives were: (1) a continuation of current course, (2) isolation, and (3) preventive war. NSC 68, 276-281.
\textsuperscript{266} NSC 68, 239-240.
\textsuperscript{267} Kupchan, \textit{Vulnerability of Empire}, 469.
\textsuperscript{268} Gaddis, “Strategies of Containment, Past and Future.”
\textsuperscript{269} NSC 68, 282-285.
\textsuperscript{270} Kupchan, \textit{Vulnerability of Empire}, 469.
superior aggregate military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of ‘containment’—which is in effect a policy of calculated and gradual coercion—is no more than a policy of bluff.”

These were expansive and expensive claims. Heeding NSC 68 path would require increasing military expenditures, improving intelligence, enhancing internal security and civilian defense programs, increasing taxes, reducing federal expenditures for non-defense and non-foreign assistance program, and intensifying economic, covert, and psychological warfare. NSC 68 acknowledged that a massive buildup would be expensive and would require lobbying Congress and the public. But this was simply the cost of survival—budgetary concerns would have to take a backseat to security concerns since “the survival of the free world is at stake.” Expanding the means of containment would not only allow the U.S. to back its international bets, but also have the added benefit of stimulating the economy.

Despite these calls for buildup, NSC 68 contained no budget estimates or programmatic details. Privately, Group members agreed that the new strategy would cost $40 billion per year. Publicly, they eschewed specifics in order to avoid cost disputes with Truman and Secretary Johnson. While NSC 68’s stated goal was to change the Soviet system by applying political pressure supported by economic, psychological, propaganda, and covert activities, the report did not include any specific recommendations for what programs would have to be expanded and the associated costs. Additionally, it did not present Truman with a range of reasonable alternatives. Among the courses of action it considered, two were straw men (isolation and war) and one was

\[271\quad \text{NSC 68, 402.}\]
\[272\quad \text{NSC 68, 285-292.}\]
\[273\quad \text{Gaddis, “Strategies of Containment, Past and Future” and Kupchan, Vulnerability of Empire, 469. Robert A. Lovett, an outside consultant for the State-Defense Policy Review Group and respected investment banker, argued that the U.S. economy would benefit from increases in defense expenditures and that every method of economic warfare should be used to throw the Soviets off schedule and off balance. Wells, 129-130.}\]
\[274\quad \text{Wells. 130.}\]
presented as an untenable choice (continuation of the current course). These were included only to enhance the desirability of the authors’ favored choice: a rapid, political, economic, and military buildup. It further made broad assumptions about Soviet intentions and capabilities without backing them up with facts and oversimplified the nature of the Communist bloc.

This marked NSC 68 as “an amazingly incomplete and amateurish study.” As Gaddis describes, NSC 68 failed in terms of its own internal logic (and subsequent practical implementation) in part because “[b]eginning with a perceptions of implacable threat and expandable means, it derived a set of interests so vast as to be beyond the nation’s political will, if not theoretical capacity, to sustain.” The primary difference between NSC-68 and Kennan’s earlier version of containment, in Gaddis’ view, was that the former drew its conception of U.S. interests from its perception of the Soviet threat while the latter first defined the interests and then analyzed the threat. NSC-68 did not even contain a general statement of fundamental U.S. interests. As a result, NSC-68 essentially transferred control over U.S. interests to the Soviets, making interests a function of threats.

Truman’s Initial Intransigence

NSC 68 initially stalled in the face of skepticism. While some senior officials rejected the basic premise of the report—that the Soviets sought to dominate the world—many of those who accepted its general call for action rejected the idea that a costly military buildup was either necessary or politically possible. In this sense, elite opinion paralleled the public’s: the general mood in Washington and around the country was that (1) the threat was increasing, (2) some sort

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275 Wells, 139.
276 Gaddis, Strategies, 124.
277 “By neglecting to define those interests apart from the threat to them, the document in effect expanded interests along with means, thereby vitiating its own intended accomplishment.” Gaddis, Strategies, 96.
278 Wells, 135-136.
of bold action was required, but (3) that action must be cheap.\(^{279}\) A study conducted at the beginning of March showed that most Americans “endorsed a more vigorous policy toward the Soviet Union without being willing to increase government spending significantly”\(^{280}\)

In light of this general call for action and in spite of the document’s subpar analysis, Secretary Johnson was unable to edit NSC 68’s content or block its presentation. The document was forwarded to President Truman (with Johnson’s endorsement) on April 11, 1950. Truman read it the same day, but then delayed his decision. The problem with NSC 68, from the president’s perspective, was not that it portrayed communism and the international system in black-and-white terms. As early as 1947, with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the administration had begun to espouse an expansive and simplistic view of the world, one that caused Kennan much concern. If anything, NSC 68 merely applied the logic and rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine—Truman’s call on March 12, 1947 “to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures”—more broadly.\(^{281}\)

The real problem with NSC 68 was that it would entail another massive selling job in order to generate domestic political support. Truman and Acheson did not think a major buildup was politically possible. Nor was it practical. Both men were already busy trying to build support for current, expensive initiatives. Pausing to assess and adjust would be counterproductive, like (to use Acheson’s simile) a farmer who pulls up his crops to see how much they have grown.\(^{282}\)

\(^{279}\) Wells, 125.
\(^{280}\) Wells, 128.
\(^{281}\) On the Truman Doctrine, and why it contained the seeds of NSC 68 but was not originally intended as a generalizable commitment to resist Soviet aggression everywhere around the world, see Gaddis, Strategies, 22-23, 51, 57-58, 63-64, 106.
\(^{282}\) Gaddis, Strategies, 85.
Using a similarly rustic image, upon reading NSC 68 Truman declared that he would not “buy a pig in a poke.”

Thus, the President initially decided to punt his decision to a later date. On April 12, 1950, Truman referred NSC 68 to a special NSC committee for further consideration. Truman was “particularly anxious that the Council give me a clearer indication of the programs which are envisaged in the Report, including estimates of the probably cost of such programs.” In light of NSC 68’s enormous effect on “the budgetary and economic situation,” Truman specified that the Economic Cooperation Administrator, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Secretary of the Treasury should evaluate the report. In the meantime, Truman directed the implementation of “existing programs” without delay and indicated “my desire that no publicity be given to their Report or its contents without my approval.”

This “Ad Hoc Committee on NSC 68” met eight times in the spring and summer of 1950 to address Truman’s concerns. The group established tentative agreement on proposal for a modest increase in national security expenditures, but Truman would not budge on his budgetary ceiling. Truman’s official budget message to Congress on January 5, 1950, had predicted reductions in total expenditures by 1951. While recognizing “the costs of past wars and to achieve a peaceful world,” which would require $30 billion or 71 percent of the total budget (a reduction of $1.8 billion from 1950), Truman emphasized national defense expenditures would

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283 Quoted in Stein, “Domestic Constraints, Extended Deterrence, and the Incoherence of Grand Strategy,” 118. Even after the Soviet nuclear test, Truman had signed an appropriations bill sharply limiting defense spending. “Truman’s commitment to budgetary imperatives prevailed over the Soviet threat...With most of this group [NSC 68’s drafters] convinced that their job was to make the case for an expanded defense effort, everyone realized that their target audience consisted of a single individual—Harry Truman.” Wells, 124

level off. This would coincide with reductions in programs such as international affairs and finance.285

The FY1951 budget for national security expenditures was $13 billion, after which Defense Secretary Johnson instructed the military to prepare a FY1952 budget based on this lowered ceiling. As late as June 1950, as a result of these politically-determined budget ceilings, U.S. military strength was in its postwar nadir with no signs of climbing out.286 Indeed, one can read NSC 68 as an extended effort to lobby Truman for increased defense expenditures.287 During an NSC meeting on June 7, 1950, the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board highlighted concerns that NSC 68 had been crafted without any sense of a budget limitation and he urged serious consideration to be given to the costs of expanded programs, particularly before any funds were defended before Congress.288

Secondary Shock: The Invasion of Korea

On Sunday June 25, 1950 at 0400 Korean time, the North Korean People’s Army and border constabulary crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. As the Joint Chiefs later reported to the Senate:

The scale of the attack, the fact that the offensive was a coordinated one and was launch against important strategic areas, the amount and character of the material involved, and the simultaneous execution of amphibious operations, all indicate clearly that the invasion had been carefully planned well in advance. It was subsequently determined that trained Korean forces were moved from Manchuria in April 1950 for the purpose of

287 “With most of this group convinced that their job was to make the case for an expanded defense effort, everyone realized that their target audience consisted of a single individual—Harry Truman.” Wells, 124. See also Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its Fifty-Fifth Meeting, April 20, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Subject File, National Security Council File, Box 168, “Actions, Record of: 1950” and Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its Fifty-Seventh Meeting, May 18, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Subject File, National Security Council File, Box 168, “Actions, Record of: 1950.”
launching this attack. Further, the attack was designed to coincide with the annual period of heaviest rainfall. This served to screen the enemy action.\textsuperscript{289}

Though the level of Soviet involvement in authorizing the invasion would not become clear for some time, the event proved for Truman and for most Americans that the Soviets were deliberately challenging the U.S. global position and resolve, albeit while stopping short of provoking general war with the West.\textsuperscript{290} The cable from Embassy Moscow to the Secretary of State on June 25 put the gravity of the situation in context. Embassy Moscow argued that the invasion of South Korea represented a clear-cut challenge to U.S. leadership of the free world.

The Soviets were probably calculating:

that we will be inclined to allow ‘neutralization’ of Korean civil war in which numerically stronger and more heavily armed NK troops and Commie fifth columnists in ROK territory will form victorious combination and thus advanced boundaries Soviet empire without actual use Soviet military forces...Embassy does not think Soviets prepared now risk possibility full scale war with west. Kremlin’s Korean adventure thus offers us opportunity to show that we mean what we say by talking of firmness, and at same time, to unmask present important Soviet weaknesses before eyes world and particularly Asia where popular concepts Soviet power grossly exaggerated as result recent Soviet political and propaganda successes that area.\textsuperscript{291}

A CIA intelligence memorandum on June 28, 1950 assessed the invasion:

was undoubtedly undertaken at Soviet direction and Soviet material support is unquestionably being provided. The Soviet objective was the elimination of the last remaining anti-Communist bridgehead on the mainland of northern Asia, thereby undermining the position of the US and the Western Powers throughout the Far East. By

\textsuperscript{289} Joint Chiefs of Staff Report for Senate Committees on Korean Operations, April 30, 1951, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Korean War File, Box 207, “Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Senate Committees, April 30, 1951,” 5.
\textsuperscript{290} Wells, 140. As Undersecretary of State James Webb remembered, “there was very real concern that the Korean invasion might be the first of several thrusts and might be followed by one or other actions, perhaps in other parts of the world, which would present us with multiple requirements for action that would be very difficult for us to meet.” Quoted in Preston, The President, 47.
\textsuperscript{291} Moscow Embassy to Secretary of State, June 25, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Korean War File, Box 207, “General Data.” A State Department foreign affairs pamphlet claimed that the unprovoked attack on the Republic of Korea marked a shift in communist tactics from subversion to open aggression. Such aggression, if left unchallenged, would threaten the security of the free world and undermined the United Nations. The crisis put the free world to “the supreme test, to determine whether they will stand firm against aggression, even under adverse circumstances and in distant part of the word, in the realization that, though the fire be distant at the moment, if it is not extinguished it will surely spread and will ultimately threaten our own house.” Department of State, “Building the Peace,” Foreign Affairs Outlines no. 24 (Autumn 1950), TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Speech File, Miscellaneous Speeches File, Box 44, “Anderson, Clinton P.,” 1.
choosing Korea as the area of attack, the USS was able to challenge the US specifically and test the firmness of US resistance to Communist expansion.  

After a week’s long intelligence conference involving the Joint Chiefs, State Department, and CIA, a new estimate of Soviet capabilities and intentions emerged with specific reference to the date at which the U.S.S.R. might be prepared to initiate general war with the U.S. The final conclusions of the Conference were submitted for NSC review on September 25, 1950. The Conference concluded that the Soviet’s long-term objective was to establish World Communism under Kremlin domination. In light of the long-term objective, the Conference concluded that there was grave danger of war between the Soviets and the West. The Soviets did not intend, however, to deliberately provoke such a war until the “moment when, in their opinion, the strength of the Soviet Union vis-a-vis the Western Powers is at its maximum. We estimate that such a period exists now and will extend from the present through 1954…with its peak at about half way, i.e., 1952.”

National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)-15, “Probable Soviet Moves to Exploit the Present Situation,” completed in December 1950, estimated that Soviet behavior in Korea indicated they viewed their own military and political position “as one of great strength in comparison with that of the West, and that they propose to exploit the apparent conviction of the West of its own present weakness.” The Soviets would increase pressure rather than negotiate, would refuse to...

293 The Soviets’ short-term goals, to be pursued simultaneously were as follows: (1) maintain internal control over all peoples within the Soviet Union; (2) strengthen their economic and military positions and defend their territory; (3) consolidate control over European and Asian Satellites including China; (4) prevent the establishment of forces capable of threatening its position in Europe and Asia (i.e. protecting strategic approaches to the Soviet Union); (5) eliminate Anglo-American influence in Europe and Asia; (6) dominate Europe and Asia; and (7) weaken and disintegrate the general non-Soviet world. R. H. Hillenkoetter, “Memorandum for the Executive Secretary, National Security Council,” September 25, 1950 TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Subject File, National Security Council File, Box 170, “Memoranda for the National Security Council,” 4.
compromise on issues such as West German rearmament, and intended to destroy the unity of the Western powers while isolate the U.S.. NIE-15 also highlighted the possibility that the Soviets not only might exploit the present crisis to initiate general war with the U.S., but “the over-all situation is such that the possibility cannot be disregarded that the U.S.S.R. has already made a decision for general war and is in process of taking steps preliminary to its inception.”

**Changing Course: NSC 68’s Implementation**

When the telegram reporting the attack in Korea arrived, Truman was back home in Independence, MO. Speaking with Acheson over the phone, the president deferred to Acheson’s judgment, authorizing the Secretary of State to decide whether to call for a UN Security Council Resolution. By the time Truman returned the next day, Acheson and other high-level advisors had already coalesced around the idea of seeking a UN resolution followed by a military response. Traveling from the DC airport to the Blair House to meet with his advisers on the evening of June 25, Truman announced: “By God, I’m going to let them have it.”

But it was not clear what “letting them have it” would mean. At the initial Blair House meeting, General Bradley stated that the U.S. must draw the line somewhere and Truman responded that he agreed. Bradley continued that Russia is not yet ready for war, and the Korean situation offered as good an occasion for action in drawing the line as anywhere else. Bradley, however, questioned the utility of employing ground units, saying they could not carry out other U.S. commitments without a broader mobilization of the population. The President asked about calling up the National Guard, commenting that if this option were pursued he would have to ask

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Congress for funds and “he wished the Joint Chiefs to think about this and to let him know in a few days time…’I don’t want to go to war’.”

Thus while scholars like Preston see Truman’s quick decision to “draw the line” and “let them have it” as evidence of his conceptual simplicity and unwillingness to consider alternatives, Truman was wrestling with the specifics of the response. There were options short of introducing ground troops, such as targeting North Korean tanks with air assets, that could greatly increase South Korean morale. Naval action could also help on the East Coast, and Bradley proposed moving fleet units now in Suic Bay so they might frighten off the North Korean amphibious forces.

Weighing this advice, Truman seemed to echo Bradley’s sentiment: “The President said he had done everything he could for five years to prevent this kind of situation. Now the situation is here and we must do what we can to meet it…He repeated we must do everything we can for the Korean situation—‘for the United Nations.’” The President decided five things at the meeting: (1) General MacArthur would send arms supplies to Korea, (2) MacArthur would send a survey group to Korea, (3) fleet units would be moved to Japan; (4) the Air Force would prepare plans to destroy all Soviet air bases in the Far East, and (5) “Careful calculation should be made of the next probable place in which Soviet action might take place. A complete survey should be made by State and Defense Departments.”

Truman was here making significant decisions without consulting Congressional leaders or deliberating on whether Congress would support these moves, which necessarily

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300 Department of State, “Memorandum of Conversation,” June 25, 1950, 4-5.
entailed greater defense spending. Perhaps Truman and his advisers assumed Congress would go along. Or perhaps they were willing to proceed even if they would have to fight tooth-and-nail for Congressional support. Regardless, this seems to suggest the value of domestic political slack had changed.\footnote{I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.}

The next day Truman approved an order removing restrictions on Navy and Air Force of operations in Korea (but only authorizing actions south of the 38th parallel). In a statement on June 27, 1950, Truman argued that the attack on Korea made “it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.”\footnote{Truman, “Statement by the President,” June 27, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Korean War File, Box 207, “Releases: Mimeographed.”} He said that in response he had ordered the 7th Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa, strengthened U.S. Forces in the Philippines, accelerated military assistance to the Philippine Government, and accelerated military assistance to the French and U.S. in IndoChina.

In a meeting of the NSC on June 28, 1950, the President, after reading the latest information concerning Korea, said he was “doing his best to avoid any feeling of panic and to keep the people from being scared…[but] he didn’t’’ intend to back out unless there should develop a military situation which we had to meet elsewhere.”\footnote{Department of State, “Memorandum of Conversation,” June 28, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, “May-June, 1950,” 2.} Truman also indicated that the policy papers on the Soviet intentions in Korea and elsewhere needed to be updated from both State and Defense perspectives.

At the NSC meeting on July 14, 1950, Acheson said that the State Department and the Pentagon had agreed on three general points. First, the Soviets had the military capability at present to take military action ranging from local aggression along their periphery to all out
general war. Second, estimates of probabilities of such actions varied, and there was not sufficient evidence to suggest the Soviets would not take one or all of the actions within its capabilities. Third, and as a result, the world situation was fraught with extreme danger and tension, which could present the U.S. with new aggressions and general hostilities. The situation was one of gravest danger:

It is becoming apparent to the world that we do not have the capabilities to face the threat, and the feeling in Europe is changing from one of elation that the United States has come into the Korean crisis to petrified fright. People are questioning whether NATO really means anything, since it means only what we are able to do. Our intentions are not doubted, but are capabilities are doubted.\(^{304}\)

In Acheson’s view, the game had changed. The essential question was now whether the free world could arm itself with sufficient strength in sufficient time to defeat Soviet communism without going broke. Regardless of the answer, in this present situation, the U.S. must do more, and do more immediately: “Prompt action is worth more than perfect action. In the very early days of next week such action must be announced. Whether that action is the best possible action is less important than that some effective action be taken and announced.” Acheson also recommended the President ask Congress for money, “and if it is a question of asking for too little or too much, he should ask for too much.”\(^{305}\) In a meeting with Congressional leaders at the White House on June 30, 1950, the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and the JCS reviewed the situation in Korea. The President announced that he had authorized the Air Force to conduct missions on specific military targets in North Korea wherever necessary, ordered a naval blockade of the entire Korean coast, and authorized General MacArthur to use

\(^{304}\) "Notes taken by BE on Secretary’s report of the meeting,” July 14, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, “July, 1950,” 1.

\(^{305}\) "Notes taken by BE on Secretary’s report of the meeting,” July 14, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, “July, 1950,” 2.
certain supporting ground units.\textsuperscript{306} In my research, I could not find evidence of Truman’
engagement with Congress prior to this meeting. Here we are a full five days into the crisis, after
Truman had already made significant decisions that would lead to a major strategic
adjustment.\textsuperscript{307} Secretary Acheson, however, had spoken by phone with leaders of the Senate
Foreign Relations Committee and House Committee on Foreign Affairs from 10:10 to 10:50 a.m.
on June 26, 1950. Acheson reportedly “gave the an account of the Department’s action in the
危机 and said that the situation seemed to be in hand.”\textsuperscript{308}

The public now seemed to support bold, decisive action. An August 1950 Gallup poll
showed that over half of U.S. citizens now believed that the U.S. was engaged in World War
III.\textsuperscript{309} Elite opinion makers began to speak out in support of the Korean War and the need to
further bolster U.S. forces in Europe. This included General Eisenhower as part of a group of
seven university presidents who hosted a “Citizens Conference” in New York on September 28,
1950. In December 1950, the newly-formed Committee on the Present Danger publicly
announced that twenty-five prominent members had joined together in order to question whether
this increased commitment was even sufficient, particularly as it concerned the stated of defenses
in Europe. The committee sought to prevent a Korea in Western Europe. It developed a
sophisticated array of public relations projects, taking to the radio on an almost weekly basis to
speak in support of topics such as universal military service and increased military presence in
Europe. It issued press releases and films to stoke public support, and even commissioned a

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\textsuperscript{307} As Louis Fisher has argued, Truman’s commitment of U.S. troops to Korea “still stands as the single most
important precedent for the executive use of military force without congressional authority.” “The Korean War: On
What Legal Basis Did Truman Act?” The American Journal of International Law 89, no. 1 (January 1995): 21, 21-
39.
\textsuperscript{309} Wells, 141.
popular children’s author to make comic books explaining the dangers posed by the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{310}

The State Department told Truman in late June that international opinion overwhelmingly approved of his actions in Korea.\textsuperscript{311} Foreign governments “throughout virtually the entire non-Communist world” expressed enthusiastic support.\textsuperscript{312} Even George Kennan, a man not prone to histrionics, joined the chorus. Kennan hand wrote a note to Secretary Acheson reflecting on Korea, “what is unquestionably a major failure and disaster to our national fortunes.” In Kennan’s view, if the U.S. accepted the failure and responded with resolve, “starting all over again, if necessary, along the pattern of Pearl Harbor,” it could keep its position and strengthen its alliances. If instead, the U.S. sought to conceal the full scale of the crisis, or lapsed into hysteria, “we can easily find this crisis resolving itself into an irreparable deterioration of our world position—and of our confidence in ourselves.”\textsuperscript{313}

This new environment gave NSC 68 new life. During an NSC meeting on July 27, 1950, Truman directed the Ad Hoc Committee to finish its work on NSC 68 by September 1 (three weeks later he extended this deadline to September 15). Not only would this timing coincide with the drafting of the 1952 budget plans, but Truman also felt the events in Korea had made the recommendations in NSC 68 “more rather than less urgent.” He was further concerned that his Administration’s preoccupation with Korea would obscure a broader strategic buildup, one that would “have far-reaching effect upon the foreign, military, and domestic situation.” He urged the NSC to project plans and programs four or five years ahead, for “only by such future

\textsuperscript{310} Wells, 146.
\textsuperscript{313} Kennan to Acheson, December 4, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 68, “December 1950.”
planning will the steps which we are taking follow an orderly sequence and leave to the eventual achievement of our objectives.”

Cost concerns (and the lack of detailed cost estimates), which had previously blocked Truman from following NSC 68’s path, now fell by the wayside. On September 29, 1950 Truman approved NSC 68 “as a statement of policy to be followed over the next four or five years,” with the implementing programs to be “put into effect as rapidly as feasible, with the understanding that the specific nature and estimated costs of these programs will be decided as they are more firmly developed.”

Truman had already requested supplemental defense appropriations in excess of $30 billion. Defense spending would subsequently increase from $14.26 billion in FY1950 to $53.21 billion in FY1951 to $65.99 billion in FY1952.

The majority of this money was not associated with Korean War costs. Rather, it would pay for a variety of programs directed against the Soviet Union that NSC 68 had implied if not called for explicitly. These included: developing tactical nuclear weapons, sending four additional Army divisions to Europe, rearming West Germany, enhancing economic aid to the French in Indochina, patrolling the seas between Taiwan and China, and funding covert operations. Indeed, at the same time Truman announced the response to the attack on Korea, he also announced that the U.S. would make new security commitments in Asia, including patrolling the seas between Taiwan and China. Truman also committed ground forces to defend Western Europe and helped to incorporate Turkey into NATO.

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Stein argues that the Korean invasion produced a swell of anticommunist sentiment and the domestic political pressures blocking NSC 68’s implementation disappeared. Kupchan similarly argues that Congressmen and decisionmakers began to “recognize that their popularity at home was linked to the policies they adopted in the Far East.” Consider the fact that in the summer of 1949, Truman was struggling to get the House Foreign Affairs Committee to authorize $150 million for economic assistance to Korea—the House rejected the Korea Aid Bill of 1949 by a vote of 193 to 191. This included 61 democrats. After the invasion, sixteen Democrats and sixteen Republicans changed their votes and a revised Korean-China Aid Bill passed.

Yet the archival record suggests Truman continued to encounter countervailing domestic political pressure, particularly from Congress. Consider Kennan’s notes from a meeting with General Marshall and Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett on December 4, 1950, 11 days before Truman would declare a state of national emergency. Lovett joined the group having just come from testifying before the House Armed Services Committee. To Lovett, the prevailing sentiment in Congress was to sue for peace as rapidly as possible, that “our entire entry into Korea had been a mistake and that we ought to pull out as rapidly as possible.” Kennan was disturbed, he feared this would greatly complicate the Administration’s political problem. But Marshall dismissed Kennan’s concerns, indicating that “this sort of fluctuation in Congressional opinion was not a new thing and that the present mood might not last for very long.”

320 Kupchan, Vulnerability of Empire, 481.
Others in Congress urged even more aggressive action. On August 14, 1950 a group of five Senators and five Congressmen (including Senators Kefauver and Fulbright) called on Acheson to say that while they supported Truman’s general foreign policy efforts, there was concern that it amounted to a series of temporary expedient measures with no long-term, forward looking design. There was “a growing sentiment in Congress”—over half the Senate and approximately 100 members of the House—to more quickly establish stronger political ties to “the free nations of the world.” The U.S. needed a “bold new program involving Herculean effort” one that would “capture the imagination of the American people to a degree that they will realize that their Government is ingeniously pursuing every possible path to insure a peaceful world of the future.” Without such a bold plan, Congress would continue to oppose funding key foreign policy programs such as Voice of America, and the American people would increasingly support the disastrous concept of preventive war. Acheson dismissed the idea that the American people supported preventive war, a prospect “too terrifying to contemplate,” but seemed to agree with the Congressional delegation that the present foreign policy program was insufficient and on the need for bold action. In Acheson’s view, the U.S. was presently “in the greatest danger in its history, more so even then the crucial days marked by the battle of Gettysburg and the debacle at Pearl Harbor.”

Despite Congressional crosswinds, Truman, buoyed by his advisers, continued along the course of implementing NSC 68. On November 22, 1950 the NSC advised the President that the proposed military program for FY 1951 was consistent with the policies and objectives state in NSC 68/2. A week later the NSC advised the President that declaring a national emergency

was necessary to ensure national security.\footnote{Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its Seventy-Third Meeting,” November 28, 1950, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Subject File, National Security Council File, Box 168, “Actions, Record of: 1950,” 2.} In order to generate support for the new strategy, Acheson spoke to Truman on November 27, 1950 proposing a series of three speeches previewing NSC 68, the first “laying down the broad aspects of what should be an American policy without partisanship and in the second two speeches applying these principles first to Europe and then to Asia.” Truman approved the idea “heartily.”\footnote{Acheson, “Memorandum of Conversation with the President,” November 27, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, “November, 1950.”} Later that same day Acheson mentioned to Truman that he had prepared a memo laying out certain ideas in keeping with the president’s desire to take a “vigorous fighting attitude in support of our foreign policy.” The memo largely “foreshadowed” NSC 68 and Truman suggested having two leading Senators—John Sparkman of Alabama and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. of Massachusetts—as well as members of the “Citizens Committee” (i.e. Committee on Present Danger) and the Advisory Committee, to make statements in support of NSC 68.\footnote{Acheson, “Memorandum of Conversation with the President,” November 27, 1950.}

In an NSC meeting on November 28, 1950 Secretary Marshall, reflecting on the Chinese participation in Korea, summarized the view of the three secretaries of the military services. All called for a more rapid build-up in the West, including increasing the number of non-U.S. United Nations troops to be placed in Korea (even if the U.S. had to pay for them), pressing Congress immediately for a second supplemental to the 1951 appropriation (along with a notice that the administration would soon need more), revising the 1952 budget to account for more spending, and accelerating overall production. Marshall’s own view was that they should not try to revise budgetary figures right now, but there should be no cuts in personnel and material needed in Korea. Acheson praised both the memorandum of the military secretaries and Marshall’s comments, but emphasized how close the U.S. was to the danger of general war. Korea could not
be considered in isolation, but rather as part of a “world-wide problem of confronting the Soviet Union as an antagonist.”

In a meeting with Truman, Marshall, and Bradley on December 3, 1950, Acheson argued for declaring a national emergency so as to make the public aware of the seriousness of the situation. Acheson urged the president to use his emergency powers to freeze prices and wages, as well as establish “high and far-reaching production controls.” Acheson’s notes claim that Truman agreed with these suggestions during the meeting. In terms of building up U.S. armed forces, Acheson and Marshall both felt that additional appropriations were not presently needed; they had the requisite funds to accelerate the program for the time being, but additional funding would have to be considered once the program got further under way.

In an agenda for a meeting with Congressional leaders on December 12, 1950, the President made clear that he was “considering a sharp step-up in mobilization because of the gravity of the international situation—and, in that connection, is considering declaring a national emergency.” The effect of declaring an emergency would primarily be psychological, but would allow the president to speed up military procurement and speed-up military mobilization. He closed the meeting by inviting Congressional leaders to meet with him from time to time and directing his Departments to consult with Congress, particularly concerning economic and military aid to other countries.

On December 14 the President sped up the timeline for implementing NSC 68 by directing the secretaries of State and Defense to:

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328 Department of State, “Memorandum of Conversation, Notes on NSC Meeting, November 28, 3:00pm,” November 28, 1950, TPL, Acheson Papers, Secretary of State File, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 67, “November, 1950,” 2.
undertake immediately a joint review of the politico-military strategy of this Government with a view to increasing and speeding up the programs outlined in NSC 68/3…This review is not to delay action upon the basis of NSC 68/3 as amended, the implementation of which by all appropriate departments and agencies of the United States Government is hereby directed.331

In an address to the National Press Club on December 13, 1951, then Director of Defense Mobilization Charles E. Wilson described Truman’s new strategy as a calculated risk against the possibility of immediate world war because it would take time to mobilize—“You can even call it a gamble if you like, perhaps the greatest gamble in our history.” In Wilson’s view, no less than the future of civilization was at stake. NSC 68 sought to build power until such a point as the U.S. was no longer in danger of losing its “sacred freedom and liberty.” He explained that NSC 68 was built on three principles. First, it chose a 3-year mobilization window. Second, it went beyond mobilizing in terms of planes, tanks and guns to include increasing production capacity so the U.S. could go into “all-out production” in the event of an “all-out war.” For example, NSC 68 expanded basic metal (i.e. steel and aluminum), electric power, petroleum, transportation, and agriculture production so the U.S. could meet the demands of fuller mobilization. Third, NSC 68 sought to maintain a strong civilian economy as much as the other objects would permit. Wilson admitted that NSC 68 was under attack from both sides—one side saying mobilization was proceeding too slowly and the other saying too fast. But as the U.S. mobilized it grew stronger, thereby decreasing the possibility of world war. And in the meantime, the U.S. was not a sitting duck: the Army had tripled in size, the Navy had doubled with more than 1,000 commissioned fighting ships, and the Air Force was growing from 48 to 95 wings. Wilson also pushed back on the idea that NSC 68 simply spent extravagantly on both “guns and butter.” Wilson highlighted the cutbacks that Truman had ordered for the first quarter

of 1952 in certain industries such as cutting back on the amount of metals allotted for civilian good by 50 percent to offset corresponding increases in military production. For 1952, Wilson predicted “many more guns and much less better.”

**Refining the Typology**

*Dependent Variable: Strategic Adjustment*

My initial typology drew upon Gaddis’ concept of “geopolitical codes” as a proxy for a major strategic adjustment, or *restructuring*. I classified the change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 as such a restructuring, since Gaddis classifies each as a distinct geopolitical code. Yet it seems reasonable to question the extent to which of NSC 68 constituted a major adjustment in Truman’s approach to geopolitics. Stein argues that the Korean War merely tested the global role the U.S. had already staked out for itself, testing the US willingness to adequately support its position of forward defense and security commitments that it had made earlier but failed to fund adequately. Similarly, Dueck sees the period from 1945-1951 as a gradual process of implementing containment, which involved a dramatic expansion of U.S. defense expenditures and commitments in order to draw “lines of resistance around the Soviet bloc, and denying the U.S.S.R. further gains, through the provision by the United States of economic, political, and military aid to non-Communist countries.” This process unfolded in a series of steady increases in diplomatic, economic, and military commitments abroad in response to Stalin’s probes of non-Communist governments in Europe and Asia. Dueck sees various adjustments during this period, but these were due more to the “unfolding of international events than with

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332 This was due not to any change in basic policy, but rather by the fact that 1951 was devoted to finalizing contracts, designing systems, and assembling manpower. Charles E. Wilson, “Address Before the National Press Club,” December 31, 1951, TPL, Truman Papers, PSF: Speech File, Miscellaneous Speeches File, Box 44, “Wilson, Charles E.,” 2-3.
changes in the basic strategy or mentality of U.S. policymakers. Most of the central and defining assumptions of containment were established in the minds of American officials by the end of 1946.\footnote{Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 89.}

Aside from NSC 68’s “exceptionally fervent tone” and a more grim assessment of the Soviet threat, the document largely reiterated NSC 20/4’s objectives and “reproduced earlier evaluations of Soviet objectives and potential U.S. responses.”\footnote{Stein, “Domestic Constraints, Extended Deterrence, and the Incoherence of Grand Strategy,”118. Wells concurs with Stein’s assessment. He argues that while NSC-68 adopted a hostile and more urgent tone than its predecessor NSC 20/4 and took a tougher stand against the Soviet, it was not a dramatic departure because the document “restates at length the established objectives of American policy as set forth in NSC 20/4 of November 1948.” Wells, 138} Consider the fact that James Lay sent Truman a memorandum on November 5, 1952 with a “key data” book attached intended to serve as the president’s “ready guide to national security programs.” One of the first enclosures was taken directly from NSC 20/4, stating the general objectives of U.S. foreign policy as follows:

A. To reduce the power and influence of the U.S.S.R. to limits which no longer constitute a threat to the peace, national independence and stability of the world family of nations.

B. To bring about a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia, to conform with the purposes and principles set forth in the UN Charter.

IN pursuing these objectives due care must be taken to avoid permanently impairing our economy and the fundamental values and institutions inherent in our way of life.


NSC 20/4 called for pursuing methods short of war to reduce the power and influence of the Soviet Union so that it no longer constituted a threat to the peace, independence, and the stability of the world system. It also sought to bring about a change in the Soviet’s conduct of international relations and convince them to conform with the purposes and principles set forth in the UN charter. As an NSC Operation’s Coordination Board Study from 1954 concluded, NSC
68/2 did not veer from these basic objectives. The study claims NSC 68/2 also portrayed the Soviet threat in much the same way as NSC 20/4, the exceptions being an increase in the Soviet’s fission bomb capability and possible thermo-nuclear bomb capability.338

Thus we see that a major strategic adjustment did not involve a change in goals or ends, it involved changes in ways and means. The Soviet nuclear test and the Korean invasion did not invalidate containment as the primary goal of U.S. grand strategy, it merely allowed Truman to pay for an enhanced version of NSC 20/4. In other words, Truman’s response in Korea amounted to “a full application of the Truman Doctrine in Asia.”339 Since the threat was more immediate than had been previously estimated, the necessity of mobilization and buildup was also more immediate. Starting in 1947, the Truman Administration had already begun to stake out its global position, gradually expanding U.S. international commitments.340 The only unresolved question was how to finance these commitments.341 This suggests that while NSC 68 may have changed the course of U.S. foreign policy, it did not change the assumptions underlying the Truman Administration’s general foreign policy approach. Consider the fact that Truman was already undertaking the ambitious “selling job” of generating support for NSC 20/4 and the need for a more expansive and competitive foreign policy. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift had already demonstrated Truman’s willingness to confront Soviet aggression and desire to implement an internationalist foreign policy. Truman and Acheson were simply struggling with how to pay for it while avoiding inflation, particularly in the face of a Republican Congress with isolationist tendencies and a desire for balanced budgets.

340 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 89.
After the Soviet nuclear test and the Korean invasion, the threat was now more immediate than NSC 20/4 previously estimated, and thus the programs and plans to counter this threat were dangerously inadequate. Military instruments of national power would have to supplant economic instruments as the leading edge of U.S. grand strategy. NSC 68 argued in the main that the U.S. had failed to adequately implement fundamental aspects of containment, which required maintaining a strong military posture as a backdrop to the policy of containment. The implementation of NSC 68 thus involved a major buildup of conventional and nuclear forces and taking a hard-line stance on all Communist states rather than trying to woo some states away from the Soviets. The expansion of means was tied to a redefinition of geographic priorities and the necessity of countering the Soviets everywhere, not just in priority areas.

Yet changing the ways and means of grand strategy while maintaining consistent ends is still a form of adjustment, and this case study does not invalidate the framework in the initial typology. Since this dissertation examines adjustment within a consistent and dominant framework, it is reasonable to conclude that more extreme change outside the framework, a reorientation rather than a restructuring, would involve changing the ends of U.S. grand strategy. Both NSC 20/4 and NSC 68 both sought to contain Soviet influence, they just differed in how to do it, how quickly, and with what level of resources. A restructuring or major adjustment thus entails changes in both the ways and means of grand strategy. The president pursues his goals through some new initiative (i.e. the Korean war), which typically involves a change in the funding necessary to support that initiative. The budgetary changes must be significant—NSC 68 not only increased national security expenditures, it increased national security expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product from 4.8 percent to 13.2 percent. This was a massive change in means. Another way of thinking about a restructuring is that it involves a change in
speed (i.e. buildup along a 3-year timeline) rather than direction (i.e. changing the goal of containment). It is also reasonable to look for military activity short of general war (i.e. a “police action” such as the Korean War) as an indicator of a major adjustment. Prolonged military campaigns, no matter how limited, entail significant costs, provide a unique test of a president’s grand strategic assumptions, and risk domestic political blowback.

**Independent Variable #1: Strategic Shock**

The Soviet atomic test in 1949 seems to meet the criteria for a strategic shock developed in the previous chapter: it was both unexpected and it contained discrepant information about Truman’s current course. In particular, the test shattered the post-war aura of safety most Americans enjoined, and “not only raised the possibility of devastating attacks against the U.S. mainland, but also cast doubt on the assessment that the United States would be able to defeat the Soviets in a protracted war.”

High-ranking Administration officials viewed the event through the lens of Pearl Harbor, feeling that it was actually more dangerous than Pearl Harbor.

Despite this newfound perception of high vulnerability, the question of whether the Soviet’s would actually risk general war remained unresolved. Moreover, while shocking, the event did not point to an obvious policy adjustment other than to “do more.” Truman did “do more.” He not only commissioned the formulation of NSC 68, but also approved an expedited development of the “super” to keep up with the Soviets. Yet Truman was still concerned about costs; he needed to be convinced, not of the utility of NSC 68, but rather of his ability to secure Congressional support. In this sense, the Soviet atomic test jump-started the process of strategy formulation, which made Truman’s subsequent restructuring of his grand strategy easier. As

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342 Kupchan, *Vulnerability of Empire*, 422.
Wells argues, the “real significance of NSC 68 was its timing—the tocsin sounded just before the fire.”

When a second shock occurred in the Korean invasion, this further undermined the prevailing view that the Soviets would not risk general war. The atomic test had convinced them that the Soviets possessed a newfound capability to challenge the U.S., but the Korean invasion convinced them that the Soviets had the intent to push back against U.S. power through overt aggression. In this sense the shock was strategic: it changed the nature of the game by disconfirming the status quo, causing Truman and his closest advisers to perceive coordinated Soviet aggression around the world. NSC 68’s dire analysis of the threat now seemed spot on. Additionally, by showing that peripheral areas could unexpectedly become vital, the Korean invasion seemed to confirm another one of NSC 68’s underlying assumptions and vitiate Kennan’s reliance on geographic prioritization. So too did the event highlight NATO’s military weakness and reveal, contrary to those preaching a reliance on nuclear weapons, that conventional military forces were still highly important.

Thus, while the Soviet test initiated the strategy formulation process, the Korean War was more influential in NSC 68’s implementation, particularly in translating its militarization and globalization of containment into policy. Both events influenced the adjustment. The Soviet test triggered the need to “do something,” to initiate a comprehensive review of grand strategy led by Nitze, which amounted to a major restructuring of foreign policy. But concerns over the feasibility of this new approach and the overall cost remained (and the document did not have a sophisticated discussion of budgetary realities), and prevented the implementation of this new strategy. The Korean War subsequently convinced Truman not only that bolder action was required, but also that Congress and the public would support the major increases in defense

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343 Wells, 139.
spending that NSC 68 implied. Truman, just days before the Korean invasion unwilling to authorize a military buildup, was “stunned into action…Fair Deal programs and balanced budgets now took a back seat to national security concerns.” And yet he still spent weeks grappling with budgetary realities and the necessity of selling this shift to the American people.

*Independent Variable #2: Domestic Political Slack*

It is reasonable to conclude that Truman would not have approved NSC 68 if the Korean invasion had not occurred. Absent Korea, the most likely outcome was the implementation of an “NSC 68-lite,” a less aggressive adjustment that could be sold in Congress. The Soviet nuclear test had initiated the process through which NSC 68 was formulated, but it is hard to see how the document’s proponents could have implemented their vision. By itself, the strategy was too divisive and too short on specifics. More importantly, the domestic political pressures militating against increased defense spending were simply too strong. Truman, who had just been reelected by the narrowest of margins, had little political slack with which to work; it is unlikely that he would have approved anything but a modest budget increase. The fact that Congress had been cutting Truman’s defense requests supports this and may prove a useful proxy for slack that can be used across cases. While Republicans in Congress had supported containment during Truman’s first term, they attacked the Administration’s foreign policy from 1949 onward. The public became frustrated with the Korea War and as casualties mounted, Truman’s handling of foreign policy was heavily criticized. Nevertheless, as Dueck notes, “when it came time to vote on the president’s central foreign policy proposals—such as whether to send four more divisions

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344 Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 111.
345 “The number and position of people who either opposed increased spending or assumed it was not very necessary is very impressive….Truman certainly would not have accepted a large increase in spending without an overwhelming case being made.” Wells, 139. Truman was “politically incapable of securing the requisites for extended deterrence until international crises tipped the political scales at home…the Truman administration could extend peacetime security commitments to a host of countries, but found itself unable to procure the requisite military capability to fulfill those obligations until the invasion of South Korea.” Stein, “Domestic Constraints, Extended Deterrence, and the Incoherence of Grand Strategy,” 97.
to Europe—even critics like Senator Taft voted in favor. The arguments, and the international pressures in favor of such actions, were simply too strong.”

Foreign policy elites such as the members of the Committee on Present Danger also influenced the domestic political environment, emphasizing the threat posed by the Soviets and the need for a more aggressive foreign policy. As Kupchan argues, Truman had earlier set out to generate support for his more ambitious and competitive policies, weaning the public from the conciliatory attitudes that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of the war, garnering “congressional support for the Marshall Plan and a general stiffening of policy toward the Soviets. Elite manipulations of the public succeeded in empowering the administration.” Stein argues that Truman, Like Roosevelt before him was “politically incapable” of securing support for his international ambitions until crises tipped the political scales at home in his favor: “the Truman administration could extend peacetime security commitments to a host of countries, but found itself unable to procure the requisite military capability to fulfill those obligations until the invasion of South Korea.”

This case study highlights the interaction effects of shock and slack, with the evidence suggesting the former is more important than the latter because it changes the latter. The Soviet test and the Korean War swept away the domestic political opposition to increased national security expenditures, which had previously been strong and shared by Truman himself. Even if NSC 68 had been a more complete and coherent document, its strategic logic would not have been persuasive enough to change domestic political slack. This is a departure from Kupchan’s explanation for how ambitious grand strategies emerge. He casts NSC 68 as a way of silencing domestic opposition; for Kupchan the “causal mechanism at work is clear: elites see external

346 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 112.
347 Kupchan, Vulnerability of Empire, 457.
ambition as a way of disarming domestic opposition, whether arising from political chaos at home or strategic threats from abroad.”349 This case study shows new strategic threats or shocks, rather than the new ambitious policy itself, disarmed domestic opposition, giving new life to external ambition. Truman’s prolonged commitment to cutting national security costs is powerful evidence that he did not wish to exploit NSC 68 simply to disarm domestic opposition. Faced with the Soviet nuclear test and the Korean invasion he was convinced NSC 68 was necessary and could feasibly be implemented in a new domestic political environment. Alternatively, Truman chose to defy domestic political pressures and felt he could go forward without Congressional support. After all, American “police action” in Korea, done without Congressional approval, was an enormous expansion of executive authority over the legislature, one that continues to resonate today.350

The case also throws further caution on using presidential approval ratings or Congressional composition as proxies for slack. As Figure 7 below shows, Truman’s approval ratings remained low throughout the Korean War. From October 18, 1950 until the end of his presidency Truman’s approval rating remained below 40 percent, staying below 30 percent from February 1951 until July 1952. Truman also faced contradictory pressures from the Republican opposition in Congress and from members of his own party. Some felt he was going overboard with NSC 68, others felt he was not going far enough, few thought he had struck the goldilocks balance. Regardless, Truman was able to win Congressional support for his defense supplementals and implement the most dramatic buildup in post-WWII U.S. history.

349 Kupchan, Vulnerability of Empire, 488.
Independent Variable #3: Truman’s Conceptual Complexity

At first glance, the case of adjustment from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 seems to suggest that Truman’s simplistic, black-and-white view of the world shaped his initial intransigence, explaining his initial decision to table NSC 68. One could also argue that his low complexity shaped his subsequent rapid decision to “let them have it” in Korea and implement NSC 68. At this point the strategic shock simply became too big to ignore, thereby overcoming Truman’s initial aversion to discrepant information. As argued in Chapter I, low complexity does not make a president impervious to change, it merely requires a stronger shock to overcome. After crossing that threshold, the same dogmatism that made Truman resistant to change could have made him zealous in implementing change.

Yet this case study has revealed a more complicated picture. In the first instance, Truman’s personal thoughts betray a deep appreciation for the complexities of the international

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environment, a tendency to use the lessons of history when evaluating events, and a profound sense of the burdens of the presidency. These reflections do not necessarily invalidate Truman’s low complexity score. They could confirm he hypothesis that Truman used simple historical examples—albeit examples he studied diligently and deeply—to filter and categorize complex events. One could also read his notes on the nature of the presidency as grandiose navel-gazing, something that indicates narcissism rather than complexity. A more complex president might not consider himself the center of all international events, or someone capable of turning the tide of history.

Perhaps more importantly, Truman did not reject NSC 68’s assessment of the threat—or the significance of the Soviet test—nor did he exhibit a conceptual aversion to NSC 68’s recommendations. Truman was instead concerned with how to pay for NSC 68 and generate support for it in Congress. This showed political pragmatism and a sensitivity to political context rather than a closed conceptual framework.

On the other hand, NSC 68’s recommendations did not necessarily contradict the course that Truman had laid out with NSC 20/4, nor did the drafters of NSC 68 tell Truman to abandon the Marshall Plan or adjust the Truman Doctrine. For the most part, NSC 68 urged Truman to go faster and farther in the direction he was already headed—expanding U.S. global commitments and defending previously peripheral areas. The Soviet nuclear test and the invasion of Korea were not cross-currents for Truman’s conceptual framework, but rather winds in Truman’s sails. As the NSC discussions in response to these shocks confirm, the events confirmed Truman’s Manichean view of the international situation as a struggle between good and evil, between communism and the free world.
Consider Truman’s address to the nation on September 1, 1950, explaining why he intervened in Korea. Here Truman described the conflict as a struggle for world peace against Communist aggressors, with nothing less than the free way of life at stake. Truman invoked the work of the last five years to achieve “just and lasting peace,” citing the creation of the UN in 1945, aid to Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift, and the creation of NATO. To pursue only diplomacy without force in the face of aggression would be to abandon this work and instead choose “the course of appeasement. If the history of the 1930's teaches us anything, it is that appeasement of dictators is the sure road to world war.” At the same time, Truman emphasized that the Korean conflict marked the beginning of a much broader conflict, one that would require sustained sacrifice from the American people. Truman praised Congressional legislation completed that same day allowing him to increase defense spending, increase productive capacity, and hold inflation down. He also emphasized the need to divert a large share of U.S. productive power to defense purposes, work harder and longer, “give up many things we enjoy,” and “impose certain restrictions upon ourselves.”

In sum, this case does not provide clear support for the hypothesis related to conceptual complexity, and it can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The archives certainly reveal a more nuanced picture of Truman than his low complexity score would suggest. Given Truman’s willingness to delegate to key advisers like Acheson, this case also raises the question of whether the complexity scores of the president’s closest advisers need to be incorporated into the typological theory for changing course. Instead of using the president’s complexity score, one could develop a complexity score for the presidency—averaging the complexity score of the

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353 Truman, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Situation in Korea.”
president and the members of the NSC, or the scores of the president and the few advisers to whom he actually listened. But unless this and the subsequent case studies prove otherwise, it seems reasonable to continue using the president’s complexity scores as a proxy for the complexity of the entire presidency.

*Independent Variable #4: Foreign Policy Experience*

The fact that Truman successfully implemented a strategic adjustment despite a lack of foreign policy experience does not invalidate the fourth hypothesis, which only suggested foreign policy experience would help in the implementation of grand strategic change. But it does cast doubt on the scoring system adopted from Preston and Dyson. In my initial typology, using the Preston-Dyson experience calculator, Truman received an extremely low score (1 point). But this case study demonstrates that Truman had accumulated more experience than the scoring system accounts for. For example, Truman had served in the Missouri National Guard from 1905 to 1911 and saw combat as a Captain in WWI, reaching the rank of Colonel after rejoining the reserves after the War. Based on that experience alone he was unlikely to be pushed around by the military brass while in the presidency. Additionally, Truman was chosen as Vice President largely because he had chaired the Special Committee on National Defense, a domestic basing review with obvious foreign policy implications. As the official Senate history of the “Truman Committee” describes:

> During the three years of Truman's chairmanship, the committee held hundreds of hearings, traveled thousands of miles to conduct field inspections, and saved millions of dollars in cost overruns. Earning nearly universal respect for his thoroughness and determination as chairman, Truman erased his earlier public image as an errand-runner for Kansas City politicos. Along the way, he developed working experience with business, labor, agriculture, and executive branch agencies that would serve him well in later years.\(^{354}\)

Moreover, by the time Truman changed course from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68, he had experienced a series of foreign policy tests and crises (i.e. generating support for the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, staring down the Soviets in the Berlin airlift). By 1950 Truman had gained confidence in his mastery of international affairs, his key foreign policy advisers, and his administration’s general foreign policy approach. As Edwin W. Pauley, the former Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, explained, Truman’s decision to “draw the line against Communism” and commit U.S. troops to defend South Korea, thereby suddenly turning the Cold War into a hot one, were the actions of “a man who was sure of himself and his country. It was an act without fear or doubt. And yet some few are still surprised at his decisiveness: they have never forgotten that Harry S. Truman was an ‘accidental’ President.”

The perception of the accidental president or the simple haberdasher from Missouri did not match the reality. This suggested we may need to develop a more nuanced experience calculator and one that potentially accounts for experience gained while in office. An inexperienced president confronting crises at the beginning of this presidency is likely to behave differently than when confronting crises and shocks mid-way through his presidency, if for no other reason that by that point the president is working off a baseline of previous foreign policy commitments. By that point the president has also gained a clearer understanding of Congressional and bureaucratic foreign policy prerogatives, both of which contribute to the inertia that makes adjustment difficult.

There is a key piece of contradictory evidence that must be mentioned. Though Truman had more foreign policy experience than his score suggests, he himself thought otherwise. In a

355 Edwin W. Pauley, as told to Richard English, “Why Truman is President,” 14.
1959 interview in preparation for a book exploring his post-presidency (Mr. Citizen), Truman says he did not consider himself to be experienced in foreign policy upon entering the office:

Truman: It’s unnecessary for a man to be an expert in foreign affairs to be president of the United States. The way to be elected president of the United States is to be an expert in domestic affairs. And then he can take the foreign situation and work it out because he is the man who makes the foreign policy and when he has all the information he can do it without any trouble.

Interviewers: Do you mean that any person, even lacking in understanding of foreign policy, could become an able administrator of our foreign affairs once he became president.

Truman: I think I’m a shining example of it.

Interviewers: Well we challenge that. You were a student of history and what was going on and you certainly had a…

Truman: Well I kept up with it of course. And everybody, anyone who is interested in being a candidate for president outta know exactly what is going on around the world from start to finish, and most of them do.”

Here Truman treats foreign policy experience as unimportant both for winning the presidency and for being a successful president. He suggests that any candidate, no matter how inexperienced, can get up to speed on foreign policy issues and “work it out…without any trouble.” Yet the interviewers also hint at a key finding that the foreign policy experience scores cannot account for—Truman’s diligent study and deep knowledge of history. Truman does not get points for having an advanced degree in international relations or history—as the current scoring system prioritizes—but his writings and frequent references to historical analogues reveal him to be thoughtful and scholarly.

Looking Ahead

In the same interview, Truman was also asked if Eisenhower’s status as a military hero gave him an advantage when he ran in 1952. Truman responded: “Well of course. A war veteran

who runs for president—Taylor and Grant and Eisenhower are shining examples—always has
the inside track. They wear a golden halo until they turn it into brass.” Later in the interview,
when questioned on why he made statements in 1956 that were critical of Democratic nominee
Adlai Stevenson’s ability to win the presidency, Truman commented that it was because he
“knew the halo was still working, so far as the military was concerned, just like it did for Grant.
In fact, Grant almost was nominated in 1880 for a third term, after they’d found out what a
terrible administration he had.” Pressed on why it was easier in 1956 for Eisenhower to win,
Truman confessed that he did not know. Unlike 1952, when Eisenhower’s pledge to go to Korea
sealed his victory, there was no way for the Republicans to use the Korean issue to their
advantage in 1956. Truman said he did not understand, “except that people are inclined to be
very friendly to military heroes. But President Roosevelt and I had built up this hero, and made
him, but he doesn’t remember that.”

In the next chapter I will examine Eisenhower’s strategic adjustment. This will allow for
a deeper understanding of how Eisenhower’s “golden halo” of foreign policy experience
influenced his ability to change course (and whether the golden halo ever turned to brass). The
comparison of Eisenhower and Truman—opposite types in terms of complexity and
experience—will allow for a greater understanding of how these variables affect a president’s
response to shock and slack.

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357 Truman, interview by David Noyes and William Hillman.
CHAPTER III: EISENHOWER AND THE NEW LOOK

“He noted how some people ‘rant and raved’ because the new Administration had not revolutionized our foreign policy. He was certain it could not ever be ‘revolutionized’ because the facts of the world situation don’t ever change that much that quickly."

-Eisenhower to a Congressional delegation, July 7, 1953.

This chapter examines President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s formulation and implementation of NSC 162/2, the “New Look.” It pays particular attention to his 1953 competitive review of Truman’s grand strategy, known as Project Solarium, through which Eisenhower rejected both NSC 68 and campaign promises to “rollback” the Soviet Union.

The conventional wisdom holds that no president before or since has “received such a systematic and focused briefing on the threats facing the nation’s security and the possible strategies for coping with them.” Some sixty years later, Eisenhower’s decision-making process is viewed as an ideal model for grand strategy design, “the best example of long-term strategic planning in the history of the American Presidency.” Thus, beyond the “demand side” of developing theory, this case may satisfy the “supply side” of explaining the historical record. Despite Eisenhower’s exceptional status in the history of grand strategy, noted historian Richard Immerman argues that Eisenhower never changed his strategic course in response to new analysis of the international environment. In other words, there are reasons to question the newness of Eisenhower’s “New Look” and whether Eisenhower skillfully adjusted the New Look in response to strategic shocks.

360 Bowie and Immerman, 127.
361 Flournoy and Brimley, 83.
362 Immerman, “Intelligence and Strategy,” 11.
363 See Roman. “Contrary to the claims of ‘revisionist’ historians, then, Eisenhower was something less than a
Further, any adjustment during the Eisenhower administration is a deviant case for the leading theories of grand strategy change, particularly Trubowitz’s. From 1953 to 1961, contrary to public perceptions of an emerging “missile gap,” the U.S. maintained superiority in strategic weapons and delivery systems such as long-range bombers. The U.S. experienced crises such as Quemoy and Matsu, but avoided major conflict and rapid shifts in the balance of power. Neither can domestic politics account for Eisenhower’s “New Look” (NSC 162/2), an initially unpopular combination of internationalism and fiscal conservatism for which Eisenhower had to build support. Eisenhower chose a course contrary to both the preferences of major political coalitions within his own party and the policies of the Truman administration, many of which Eisenhower had a hand in shaping.

Eisenhower the “Navigator” President

As mentioned in Chapter II, Eisenhower profiles as a high complexity leader, with a score .63 compared with Truman’s low score of .42 (only Kennedy has a higher score than Eisenhower with .64). Eisenhower also had vastly more foreign policy experience than any other presidents during the Cold War with a score of 45, which is 44 points higher than Truman (Bush 41 comes closest with 36). Indeed, when President Eisenhower took office in January of 1953, he did so with more foreign policy experience than perhaps any president in history.

‘genius’.” Gaddis, Strategies, 196.
364 On deviant cases see George and Bennett, 240.
365 As we will see the New Look rejected the “rollback” strategy that the isolationist Old Guard of the Republican Party had officially endorsed at their 1952 presidential convention. Even Eisenhower’s pledge to go to Korea in search of peace during the campaign did not imply a wholesale rejection of Truman’s foreign policy. Smith, Eisenhower in War and Peace, 494-496, 499, 505-506, 509, 528-529, 531, 547, 559-561.
366 Preston, “The President and His Inner Circle,” 622. See also, Dyson and Preston, 288.
367 Only Ulysses S. Grant can potentially match Eisenhower’s military experience and experience in consuming intelligence. See Edwin C. Fishel, Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War (New York: Mariner Books, 1998) and William B. Feis, Grants Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). See also, Rothkopf, Running the World, 65, where the difference between Eisenhower and his immediate predecessor is described as follows: “Unlike Truman, who came to the job ill-prepared for its managerial demands…Eisenhower came to the office with an extraordinary amount of organizational leadership experience and was thoroughly steeped in foreign policy and
As a complex president with high foreign policy experience, Eisenhower profiles as the opposite type of Truman’s “Maverick,” what Preston calls a “Navigator.” Navigators are actively involved in the decisionmaking process, sensitive to political context, hungry for new information, and confident in their own adjustment skills.\textsuperscript{368} It is because of this that my initial typology predicts that Eisenhower will be the most effective in changing course—both willing to recognize the need for change and capable of implementing a strategic alternative. Indeed, when shock and slack are present, Eisenhower becomes a “most likely” case for my typological theory. Thus, if there is no corresponding adjustment, then this case strongly disconfirms my theory.

The rehabilitation of Eisenhower’s image from the disengaged, golf-obsessed, figurehead president to the strategic, statesmanlike, “hidden hand” president has produced a historiography bordering on hagiography. Eisenhower’s process for consuming information and making decisions fares particularly well. During his military and presidential career, Eisenhower demonstrated a keen interest “in having good information, in being informed, in ensuring that the people that advised him had a full understanding of the issue and making that understanding known.”\textsuperscript{369} Eisenhower sought to “convert uncertainty into risk, so that a reasoned decision could be made on the basis of the available information.”\textsuperscript{370} In this way he did not blindly accept the recommendations and analysis of his advisers at face value; he assessed the quality of facts and assumptions they contained. As a seasoned staff officer whose decision-making abilities were refined in the crucible of WWII, he understood that strategic and operational decisions were based largely on “presumptions as to what might be facts…, the higher the proportion of

\textsuperscript{368} Preston, \textit{The President}, 20-24.


\textsuperscript{370} Galambos, 206.
fact and the stronger the evidentiary base for presumptions, the better the plan or the
operation.”
Eisenhower championed cutting-edge technology—high quality cameras, U-2
aerial collection platforms, and organizations for imagery analysis—as a way of increasing the
amount of information flowing into his decision making process. Yet he also displayed an
ability to distinguish between “bad” and “good” information from the surrounding environment
and rejected the notion that the decision-making process, however useful, could offer pure truth
to power.

Perhaps this is because Eisenhower grasped his own limitations: he was comfortable with
what he did not know and thus “unlikely to act from insecurity.” Nor was Eisenhower likely to
be dominated in his thinking by current crises. He continually emphasized the need for a long-
rangle perspective, particularly at the strategic level of thought and policy. This proclivity for
long-range analysis begat a preference for predictive intelligence assessments—those that went
beyond the news of the day. He coupled this with an emphasis on identifying how particular
policies would affect the individuals and societies at which they were aimed. For example,
General Andrew Goodpaster—Eisenhower’s closest aide—recalls that in considering the effects
of U.S. hydrogen bomb test detonations, Eisenhower focused not on technical assessments of
how the bombs performed, but rather on how the tests were perceived by Soviet leadership. In
so doing he demonstrated “a great sense of how these things would be viewed by the other side,

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History Collection, 38-39. Eisenhower was also willing to employ these collection assets in a proactive manner,
believing that the U.S. “should be willing to take risks while avoiding unnecessary provocation of the Soviet
Union.” Here Goodpaster also stated that once information was collected and analyzed it would be highly
compartmentalized and controlled within the administration. Eisenhower also deliberately shielded himself from
certain things such as the operation of agents.
373 See, for example, Rothkopf, Running the World, 75.
374 Dennis E. Showalter, ed., Forging the Shield, 3.
375 Andrew J. Goodpaster, interview by Malcolm S. McDonald, 2. For example, Goodpaster here argued that
Eisenhower rejected NSC-68’s postulation of a date of maximum danger because he felt that the U.S. “should
organize and program for what he called ‘the long pull’ rather than working toward some arbitrarily set date of
maximum danger.”
in other words, of the deterrent as a strategy…. [H]e thought in those terms--how does this affect the other man.” Goodpaster likened Eisenhower’s capabilities as a poker play to his capabilities as a strategist, particularly his ability to penetrate the “psychology operating on the other man…getting inside the other man’s head…was an expression that he tended to use and it was a real process with him.”

Eisenhower felt capable of getting inside the Soviets’ heads because of his extensive interaction with Soviet leadership after WWII. Eisenhower thus conceived of the Soviet threat in broad terms, as a combination of military power, communist political influence, psychological appeal, and economic strength. Eisenhower correspondingly viewed the Cold War as a lengthy struggle for the hearts and minds of the world’s citizens—one in which World War III could be set off by a variety of unpredictable factors.

Eisenhower was also sensitive to shifting contexts for analyzing information. Consider his distinction between the role of intelligence in war vs. peace:

In war nothing is more important to a commander than the facts concerning the strength, dispositions, and intentions of his opponents, and the proper interpretation of those facts. In peacetime the necessary facts are of a different nature. They deal with conditions, resources, requirements, and attitudes prevailing in the world. They and their correct interpretation are essential to the development of policy to further our long-term national security and best interests.

Organizing as a Navigator: No “Non-Concurrence Through Silence”

Eisenhower’s deliberate NSC process supports his profile as a Navigator, particularly his concern with high-quality information and rigorous debate. During Eisenhower’s regular four

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376 Goodpaster, interview by Malcolm S. McDonald, 5, 8.
377 Saki R. Dockrill, “Eisenhower’s Methodology for Intervention and Its Legacy in Contemporary World Politics,” in Forging the Shield, 23. Dockrill argues that Eisenhower built his grand strategy on three principles: gaining the initiative through flexible response, balancing all national programs to attain security, and applying a case-by-case approach to international crises. For Dockrill this reflects Eisenhower’s attempts to broaden the conception of national security, expanding it from national interest to “the British idea of ‘grand strategy’…the art of managing and controlling national resources to ensure that national interests of all kinds—economic, military, political, and cultural (values and beliefs) are maintained at a minimum cost,” 25.
weekly high-level policy-focused meetings, which were supplemented by “clusters of individual meetings, extending from my [Goodpaster’s] daily intelligence update and operations report,” Eisenhower’s primary emphasis was that he would not allow “non-concurrence through silence. This president was entitled to, and expected to hear, the full range of his responsible associates’ views before making his decisions.” As his subordinates debated an issue, Eisenhower demonstrated a “tremendous ability to analyze the argumentation and to draw people out, to see the basis of their argument, and do so without showing his own hand.”

In John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower also selected a Secretary of State with a high level of foreign policy experience and confidence. Dulles was not only a leading Republican foreign policy voice, having served as Dewey’s top foreign policy adviser in the 1944 and 1948 presidential elections, but also having served as Truman’s lead negotiator for the Japanese Peace Treaty and participated in a variety of other diplomatic initiatives. Dulles was a proponent of the bipartisan, internationalist coalition that championed collective security and robust diplomatic engagement. As Bowie and Immerman highlight: “In short, between 1945 and 1952 Dulles became the Republican most intimately involved in the formulation and implementation of Truman foreign policy—toward Asia as well as Europe—even as he was developing his own critique of it.”

Eisenhower welcomed Dulles’ expertise and came to rely on him more than any other foreign policy adviser. Perhaps this is because Eisenhower and Dulles shared similar beliefs on

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379 Andrew Goodpaster quoted in “Appendix A,” in Forging the Shield, 208-209. The four weekly meetings were as follows: congressional leaders on Tuesdays, Wednesday morning press conferences followed by an in-depth discussion with senior staff, NSC meetings on Thursday, and Friday cabinet meetings focusing on domestic issues. In discussing the NSC meetings, Goodpaster recalled that all of the papers considered had been meticulously developed and were complete with financial annexes to ensure that the ends were realistically joined to the means.

380 Goodpaster, interview by Malcolm S. McDonald, 43. Goodpaster further claimed that Eisenhower set up the Staff Secretary’s post to be the primary channel for the flow of information. Yet so too did Eisenhower maintain contemporaneous, private channels with personal friends. These non-official information channels gave Eisenhower a forum for soliciting opinions on embryonic views that had not yet been translated into policy.

381 Bowie and Immerman, 58.
the nature of the Soviet threat, the inefficiencies and dangers of Truman’s foreign policy, and the need for a more sustainable alternative. Yet despite continual press reports throughout the Eisenhower Administration that Dulles’ was the actual navigator, steering the ship of state in the direction he preferred, subsequent scholarly research has fully debunked this claim. Eisenhower was captain of the ship—he found Dulles’ strong influence essential but did not allow it to dominate his own decision-making. As Eisenhower later told Kissinger, “[he] had been fortunate to have a strong Secretary of State, but Dulles’s influence had derived from the President’s confidence in him and not from the State Department machinery. And for all his admiration for Dulles, he had always insisted on keeping control of the NSC machinery in the White House.”

Eisenhower also placed considerable trust in his Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the other Dulles’ brother, Allen Dulles. Throughout his long tenure (February 26, 1953 to November 29, 1961), Dulles maintained both the respect of the president and excellent relations across the executive and legislative branches. As his official CIA biography describes, he was aided in this regard not only by his immense energy, but his extensive intelligence experience on the ground during and after World War II, giving him a “glamorous reputation in intelligence.”

As DCI, Dulles continually “eschew[ed] any hint of wanting to advise on or

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383 Kissinger, White House Years, 43.
384 DCI Dulles, however, was criticized for a career-long fascination with covert action that resulted in him spending “a disproportionate amount of time in being a super case officer on individual projects” at the expense of exercising administrative control of the intelligence community. Wayne Jackson, Allen Welsh Dulles as Director of Central Intelligence 26 February 1953-29 November 1961: Volume I (Langley, VA: Central Intelligence Agency Historical Staff, 1994), iii. See also, Jackson, Volume I, 56, wherein the author describes how independent panels such as the Hoover Commission and Doolittle Commission also reached this conclusion. As evidence of his fascination with the “cloak-and-dagger” side of intelligence, Dulles, after being briefed on new technical collection methods, replied: “You’re taking all the fun out of intelligence.” Though Eisenhower understood and lamented Dulles’ administrative shortcomings, he felt that on the whole Dulles was the best man for the job and therefore balked at replacing him. Indeed, throughout the administration “the DCI had direct access to the president, not only as a trusted and respected intelligence advisor and co-policymaker, but as a personal friend.” Laurie, 104.
385 Jackson, Volume I, 52.
make policy.” Dulles felt that analytic objectivity hinged on divorcing intelligence producers from those making or carrying out policy. Yet Dulles nonetheless played an intimate role in the NSC’s policy decisions. While he avoided specific policy recommendations, he felt it his duty to assess the effects of the policies being recommended. Correspondingly, while the CIA in 1953 was less than six years old and still struggling to establish its role in the government, during the Eisenhower administration the organization would steadily increase in influence, evolving into what one historian termed “the important third leg of national security.”

Eisenhower relied heavily upon the CIA in three particular areas: covert action, analysis, and collection through espionage and technical means. Intelligence successes early in the Eisenhower administration demonstrated the CIA’s value. Incisive economic assessments demonstrated how CIA analytic efforts could inform decision-makers. Effective covert action in Iran and Guatemala showed how CIA operations could advance U.S objectives. The speed and low cost of these operations inflated the administration’s expectations about the potential benefits of covert action while deflating its awareness of the potential costs. This supports the

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386 Jackson, Volume I, 53. A public profile of Dulles at this time confirms this conception of the strategic producer-consumer dynamic. “The C.I.A. produces regular and special intelligence estimates for the President and the chiefs of agencies directly concerned with foreign affairs and internal security. But its principle ‘consumer’ is its parent organization, the National Security Council, where its reports become the principal ingredient in the formulation of high-level national policy. The C.I.A. Director participates regularly in all N.S.C. deliberations. Although he is not a statutory member of that body, his influence upon its decisions scarcely is exceeded by any of those who are.” See Cabell Phillips, “Allen Dulles of the ‘Silent Service’: Central Intelligence Agency’s First Civilian Director is Steeped in the Ticklish Skills of the Spy and Counter-Spy,” New York Times Magazine, March 29, 1953, Allen W. Dulles Papers, Princeton, NJ (Allen W. Dulles Papers), Subject Files, Series 5, Box 98, “Central Intelligence Agency 1953-1954.”

387 Jackson, Volume I, 64. See also Jackson, Allen Welsh Dulles as Director of Central Intelligence 26 February 1953-29 November 1961: Volume IV (Langley, VA: Central Intelligence Agency Historical Staff, 1994), 144. In this subsequent Volume, Dulles’ firm commitment to producer-consumer separation and objectivity is reflected in his angry response to Congressional allegations that intelligence estimates had been distorted to create the impression of a missile gap and thereby drum up support for Eisenhower’s foreign policy.

388 Laurie, 95.

389 Laurie, 94.

390 William M. Leary, ed., The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1984), 54. The author did not here intend to address the question of whether the long-term consequences of intervention in Iran were inimical to U.S. objectives, a subject on which reasonable men can still disagree and which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
claim that Eisenhower drew the wrong lessons about human intelligence from WWII—the experience caused him to view the CIA “less in terms of intelligence collection than as a means of continuing in peacetime the wartime covert operations carried out behind enemy lines.” In this case Eisenhower failed to recognize the existence of political ramifications for conducting covert action during peacetime that were largely absent during war.

Eisenhower also relied heavily on his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Robert Cutler, to establish a decision-making process where there could be no “non-concurrence through silence.” Both Cutler and Eisenhower realized that it was necessary to bring order to the advisory process and to integrate the views and recommendations of all qualified advisers into a manageable form. This reflected their shared belief that “in a world shrunk in size by supersonic speeds, loomed over by ominous atomic clouds, fragmenting into new political entities, living in uneasy peace or scourged – as in Korea – by war, it was no longer possible for a President himself to integrate the intelligence and opinions flooding in from all sides.” During NSC proceedings, the substance of the debate would not get bogged down in details, reflecting instead Eisenhower’s belief “that policy decision at the apex of Government should afford general direction, principle, and guidance…. The Council dealt with strategy, not tactics.” To that end, the NSC would integrate the views of high-level advisors as well as highlight dissenting opinions. Uniform procedures would set a pattern for the NSC’s meetings, with the appropriate papers prepared, distributed, and studied in advance. Once the President entered the process, he

391 Andrew, For the President’s Eyes Only, 201.
392 Andrew, For the President’s Eyes Only, 255. Andrew’s work posits that in “[clinging] to the illusion that American sponsorship of a paramilitary operation to overthrow the Castro regime could be kept secret,” Eisenhower ignored the lessons of Guatemala and Indonesia and thereby “bequeathed to his successor an intelligence disaster.”
393 Robert Cutler, No Time for Rest (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965), 296. Cutler continues by saying that “the essential utility of the Council, as I saw it, was that it brought together at one table before the President the views of hard-pressed realists upon whom he would later rely to carry out his policy decision,” 298.
394 Cutler, No Time for Rest, 300.
would act “as presiding umpire and judge.”  

Cutler also elevated the function of the NSC Planning Board, giving this deputies committee the primary role in drafting policy. For Cutler, the Planning Board could be used to wash out the “dangerous impurities” of “ex parte decisions,” special pleading, vague guidance, and suppression of contradicting views. The Planning Board, in Cutler’s estimation, “brought every side of every question out into the clear light of day.” According to Cutler, because Eisenhower wanted to take a “new look” at existing policies and programs, he did not want the Planning Board to have any individuals closely associated with the Truman Administration. This Planning Board was critical in Eisenhower’s view because the NSC principals “simply do not have enough time to do what needs to be done in thinking out the best decisions regarding the national security. Someone must therefore do much of this thinking for you.”

Indeed, less than a month after Eisenhower was sworn into office, Cutler had established a new process for knowledge management, one based chiefly on the President’s wish that he not “be deluged with material or to be briefed daily,” relying instead “upon his assistants to discharge the responsibilities of their positions and bring to him only what in their opinion he must see.” Cutler also specifically mandated that every NSC meeting open with a current intelligence briefing by the DCI. This brief, which would last between fifteen and twenty minutes, marked a significant change from the prior administration. Truman preferred to be briefed in his office prior to NSC meeting; Cutler’s change afforded “the members opportunity to

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395 Cutler, No Time for Rest, 297.
396 Cutler, No Time for Rest, 300.
397 Cutler, No Time for Rest, 300. Cutler later claimed that “this hard, intellectual, driving work taught the [Planning] Board members always to seek for a better word, a more explicit phrase, a sharper set of alternatives, a more distinct expression of divergent views, and to bring out every inflection and side of an issue,” 313.
399 Robert Cutler, “Flow of Secret Information for President, 4 February 4, 1953,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 17, “Special Assistant (Cutler) Memoranda, 1953 (1).”
hear both the latest intelligence on the matters before it and also any questions the President might ask of the Director.\textsuperscript{400}

Cutler also sought to leverage nontraditional sources of information to enhance NSC debate. On March 17, 1953, after two months spent observing and evaluating the NSC and holding roundtable discussions of its activities, Cutler submitted his recommendations for improving NSC functioning. Among his recommendations, Cutler advocated appointing ad hoc civilian consultants or small civilian committees in order to inject NSC deliberations with “a fresh, frequently-changing civilian point of view and to gain public understanding of national security problems through the use of civilians of stature.”\textsuperscript{401} For example, on February 25, 1953, Eisenhower commissioned an ad hoc committee of civilian consultants to study and advise the NSC on basic national security policies in relation to their costs.\textsuperscript{402} Eisenhower later commissioned the “Technical Capabilities Panel,” headed by James Killian of MIT (and as such often referred to as the Killian Surprise Attack Committee) to study the increasing capabilities and corresponding threat of Soviet long-range bombers.\textsuperscript{403} Eisenhower also commissioned Nelson Rockefeller to assemble a group of outside experts in June 1955 to evaluate Soviet weaknesses and potential opportunities for the U.S. to exploit these vulnerabilities. This “Quantico Vulnerabilities Panel” was chaired by MIT professor Walt Rostow and included ten academic and scholars drawn from prominent think tanks such as RAND and the Brookings

\textsuperscript{400} Robert Cutler, \textit{No Time for Rest}, 299. Cutler also claimed the following: “Allen Dulles was obviously well informed; his presentation was careful, apt to be pedestrian. Certainly the proper place to give current intelligence is before those who are about to recommend policy to the Chief Executive for his action. When I told Allen Dulles’s \textit{sic} English counterpart of our practice, he was a little floored that a similar procedure had not been used by the British War Cabinet,” 304.

\textsuperscript{401} Robert Cutler, “Recommendations Regarding the National Security Council,” March 17, 1953, NARA, RG 59, Executive Secretariat Lot 66D148 and 66D95, Subject Files 1947-1965, Box 5, “NSC Admin 1950-54.”

\textsuperscript{402} This would include Dillon Anderson, James B. Black, John Cowles, Eugene Holman, Dean H. Malott, David B. Robertson, and Charles A. Thomas. See EPL, NSC Papers, Disaster File Series, Box 39, “Project Solarium (1).”

\textsuperscript{403} The Panel played a major role in developing a series of reconnaissance systems to significantly improve intelligence collection throughout the Cold War. Bissell, Jr., Lewis and Pudlo, 92.
Institution, Henry Kissinger among them.404

Campaigning on “Rollback”

As seen in Chapter II, NSC 68, while aggressive, was still aimed at containment of the Soviet Union and thus not synonymous with “rollback.” The conventional view holds that while Eisenhower campaigned on rollback, upon winning the presidency he changed course and used Project Solarium to reject rollback in favor of the New Look. The proponents of rollback argued that containment invited retreat; it was too defensive. They called instead for the liberation of Eastern Europe from Soviet influence by supporting anti-Communist uprisings. One version of rollback advocated preventive air strikes against the Soviets to destroy their nuclear weapons capabilities.405

The Republican Party’s Official 1952 platform, adopted on July 10, 1952 in Chicago, IL, endorsed rollback and called for the liberation of Eastern Europe from Soviet influence by supporting anti-Communist uprisings. It committed the Republican Party to the “supreme goal” of “an honorable and just peace,” which would require ending the “futile and immoral policy of ‘containment’ which abandons countless human beings to a despotism and Godless terrorism.” In the party’s view, over the past seven years Truman had squandered the unprecedented power and prestige that the U.S. possessed at the end of WWII. The result was that 500 million non-Russians from 15 different countries had been absorbed into the power sphere of Communist Russia and the U.S. had been forced—at inviting aggression by withdrawing troops—to fight in Korea under unfavorable conditions. Truman had ignored “many vital areas…They profess to be following a defensive policy of ‘containment’ of Russian Communism which has not

404 One of the ideas that emerged from the group was the “open skies” proposal. See Kissinger, White House Years, 4; “Report of the Quantico Vulnerabilities Panel,” June 10, 1955, EPL, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 63, “Russia (6)” and NARA, RG 59, Executive Secretariat, Subject Files, 1947-1965.
405 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 85-86.
contained it. Those in control of the Party in Power have, in reality, no foreign policy. They swing erratically from timid appeasement to reckless bluster.” Truman, according to the Republican platform, was both inconsistent and profligate, endangering the economic health of the U.S. by committing the country to a variety of foreign policy programs that could not be sustained.406

Though Eisenhower tacitly accepted rollback by accepting the Republican nomination, it is difficult if not impossible to determine the extent to which Eisenhower ever accepted rollback as a strategic concept. Certainly he supported a robust, internationalist foreign policy, having run for the presidency primarily out of concern that the isolationist wing of the Republican Party, led by Senator Robert Taft, would abandon collective security, NATO, and investments in foreign aid that had been made under Truman. At the same time, Eisenhower developed a sharp critique of Truman, not only out of political necessity, but also out of a genuine concern that NSC 68 had perverted the initial foundations of containment and risked turning America into a garrison state. Thus, while Eisenhower likely accepted the Republican platform’s criticism of Truman as increasingly astrategic and erratic, he likely harbored concerns that aggressive rollback could bankrupt and imperil the country in ways similar to NSC 68.

Eisenhower’s arguments on the campaign trail support this view. Despite having been actively involved in implementing Truman’s foreign policy, particularly as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, Eisenhower described Truman’s foreign policy as “a succession of disasters. In the awful mathematics of human souls, the free world has been losing at the rate of 100 million people each heart taken captive and put to work for their masters.”407 He likened the

Truman Administration to a bus driver who runs into a ditch, arguing that:

Seven years after victory in WWII this Administration has bungled us periously (sic) close to WWIII… In this atomic age, in this day of terrible new weapons, it is impossible to win a global war. The beginning of such a war will be a loss from which the world will never recover in a millennium. Either the winning or losing of a modern war is almost equally disastrous. The one and only way to win WWIII is to prevent it.”

This idea, that the only way to win the next war was to prevent it, would become a key foundation for the “New Look.” Eisenhower also previewed his remarkably consistent view of the Soviet threat on the campaign trail. Eisenhower believed the Soviets presented a “deadly danger” that Americans must face because:

Communism, both ruthless in purpose and insidious as to method, is using the traditional imperialistic designs of Russia and the present physical straight of Asia and Eastern Europe to prompt the Communistic objective of world revolutions and subsequent domination of all earth by the communist party, centering in Moscow.

To confront this threat and advance peace, Eisenhower would champion NATO as the foundation of collective security and a mandatory ingredient for US national security. From this flowed Eisenhower’s short-term plan to leverage U.S. and British industrial power to make Western Europe a more cohesive political, economic and military unit. In the long-term, Eisenhower would pursue international disarmament (including atomic controls), enhance the policing power of the United Nations, and use multilateral cooperation “to promote justice, freedom and economic opportunity ‘for all men of good will.”

Three key principles lay behind this broad plan for peace. First, Eisenhower believed the

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408 “Notes on Campaign Speeches 1952,” Ann Whitman File, Campaign Series, Box 1, “Campaign Speeches, 1952—Notes.”
409 This comes from “Eisenhower’s Creed,” a series of twelve articles by Kevin McCann from the New York Herald Tribune that ran from February 28 to March 12, 1952, which provides insight into Eisenhower’s pre-presidential beliefs (or stated beliefs during the campaign). McCann was Eisenhower’s chief civilian assistant in the post-war years in Washington DC, at Columbia University, and at Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe (SHAPE). Originally these were off the record statements by Eisenhower intended to answer where the General stood on basic political questions. Kevin McCann, “Eisenhower’s Creed,” Reprinted from the New York Herald Tribune, EPL, Robinson, William E. Papers, Johns Hopkins Project Series, Box 9, “Political—D.D. Eisenhower (1952 Campaign).”
410 Kevin McCann, “Eisenhower’s Creed.”
U.S. must remain solvent through individual and national sacrifice, as bankruptcy would prove the communist lie that the capitalist system was weak. Second and related, foreign policy should be based primarily on securing access to the raw materials and foreign markets necessary to sustain the U.S. economy. By extension, this meant ensuring foreign governments that possessed such materials were willing to trade with the U.S. on a friendly basis. Third, foreign policy should aim to prevent the Eurasian landmass from being overrun by communists. Eisenhower tempered this goal, however, with a cautionary note: “We cannot be modern Rome guarding the far frontiers with our legions if for no other reason than because these are not, politically, our frontiers. What we must do is to assist these people to regain their confidence and get on their own military feet.”

One could interpret the warning against guarding far frontiers as an argument against rollback, but Eisenhower also campaigned on the idea of seizing the initiative from the Soviets. Eisenhower believed that after the hope at the end of WWII, communism had made dramatic gains. In seven years, the Soviets had gained control of Poland, the Baltic States, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Manchuria, Czechoslovakia, all of mainland China, and Tibet (and had encouraged revolt in Malay). This, in Ike’s view, was a new kind of war, one not necessarily fought by armies but rather by propaganda, sabotage, revolution, and the struggle for men’s mind covertly and overtly. The Soviet’s goal was to bring the assets of Western Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, and possibly even the U.S. homeland under their control. Their method was to exhaust the U.S. and the West, and through stealth and subversion, to absorb the West into their order. In other words, the Soviets were not content with limited objectives, they were bent on world conquest. The U.S. could not afford to merely slow down the expansion of communism or turn its back on that advance. Instead the U.S. must instead “erect a

411 Kevin McCann, “Eisenhower’s Creed.”
military shield and from the shelter of its protection take the offensive psychologically, morally, politically and economically.”

In sum, Eisenhower essential foreign policy message was simple: promote peace by getting the most defense at the least cost. This would require a careful balancing act. On the one hand, America needed a strong defense establishment. As Eisenhower said at an American Legion Convention on August 25, 1952, “…America must be militarily and productively strong. We must have security forces of mobility, security forces whose destructive and retaliatory power is so great that it causes nightmares in the Kremlin whenever they think of attacking us.” Yet on the other, America needed to cut costs, even military costs. Campaigning in Minnesota on September 6, Eisenhower proclaimed that “We must achieve a prosperity that is not based on expenditures for war.” In Illinois on September 15, he talked about the “staggering” budget sum of $85 billion, evidence that the U.S. was living well beyond its means. In New Jersey on October 16, Eisenhower argued the U.S. “cannot afford what we’re spending and stay strong enough to lead the world toward peace.” Eisenhower’s challenge was thus to reduce the $60 billion spent on national security programs without reducing military power, thereby eliminating the deficit and allowing for substantial tax reductions, a goal he promised to accomplish within four years. This would require leaders who knew how to do their job and could consistently plan for the future rather than reacting to the headlines, avoiding “stop-and-start planning” and wild swings “from optimism to panic.”

This was not just campaign fodder. While in uniform Eisenhower had championed

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413 Excerpts From Campaign Speeches 1952,” Ann Whitman File, Campaign Series, Box 1, “Campaign Speeches, 1952 Excerpts.”
414 “My goal, assuming that the cold war gets no worse, is to cut Federal spending to something like 60 billion within 4 years. Such a cut would eliminate the deficit in the budget, and would make way for a substantial tax reduction.” Rowland Hughes, “Memorandum for the President,” May 12, 1955, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Administration Series, Box 9, “Budget 1957.”
415 Excerpts From Campaign Speeches 1952.”
internationalism while voicing his concerns about massive mobilization. He consistently emphasized efficiency and economy in setting conventional force levels and developing a military that drew on America’s unique strengths in production capacity and ability to move destructive power quickly over large distances. For example, when considering whether or not to accept the position of Supreme Allied Commander, Eisenhower spoke with Secretary Marshall and Robert Lovett. Eisenhower expressed his view that combat readiness and the quality of troops mattered far more than their size, that “we ought to have a good, solid combat force with immediate expansion possibilities, rather than the vague idea that a lot of bodies give you an army. The state of readiness is what counts.” The Europeans also had to have skin in the game and demonstrate a commitment to security. Eisenhower “thought we ought to be prepared to throw in ten divisions to give impetus, but only after the Europeans show whole-hearted efforts in self-defense.”

Speaking at the Carnegie Institute in October 19, 1950, Eisenhower explained that the cost of maintaining large-scale troops in fixed defensive positions abroad was prohibitive and strategically unsound. A better principle was to maintain:

reasonable strength in the outposts supported by highly mobile forces of adequate strength in the central reserves. This principle applies to global strategy as clearly as to a tactical battle on a narrow front. The cost of a defensive force multiplies and its combat efficiency shrinks with each mile that separates it from its source of supply and replacement.

At the same address Eisenhower seemed to dismiss the utility of preventive war, emphasizing his personal hatred of war and musing how no one had yet been able to explain how initiating war

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prevents a war.\textsuperscript{418}

Eisenhower’s military record allowed him to emphasize reducing military waste without damaging political consequences. Eisenhower was also not afraid to wield his military experience on the campaign trail to enhance his message. For example, in Cleveland, OH on September 23, 1952, Eisenhower made the case for budget cuts, saying, “I tell you from my own experience: informed, intelligent scrutiny of military spending can effect substantial saving in our huge defense program.”\textsuperscript{419} Based on his experience, Eisenhower believed (1) the current defense program under Truman had no far-sighted objective or long-range plan; (2) the armed services had not yet been unified in a real way, thereby creating inefficiency and waste; and (3) the expansion of military spending produced disorder, duplication, and a feast or famine model that was unsustainable.\textsuperscript{420}

The clearest use of his foreign policy experience during the campaign came when Eisenhower pledged in Detroit on October 24, 1952 to forego “diversions of politics” and go to Korea at the beginning of his administration. Eisenhower thus sealed the election—and firmly co-opted the Taft wing of the Republican Party\textsuperscript{421}—with the inspiring idea that America’s greatest general could personally bring peace in the Far East. Prior to this dramatic announcement, Eisenhower had use Korea as a key line of attack on Truman’s foreign policy. For example, on October 8 in San Francisco, Eisenhower recalled that during his time as Army Chief of Staff there was a secret JCS military appraisal suggesting that a different line than the 38\textdegree parallel should be used as a defense perimeter to secure Korea. He then accused the Truman

\textsuperscript{420} “Notes on Campaign Speeches 1952.”
Administration of leaking this military assessment as an excuse for its political decision to withdraw, a withdrawal that led to the subsequent conflict, which had cost 120,000 lives and tripled Congressional appropriations.\textsuperscript{422}

Eisenhower had earlier supported Truman’s deployment of troops to Korea, had declared Korea as essential to U.S. national security, and had firmly disagreed with the old guard of his own party which supported General MacArthur’s desire to provoke China. Nevertheless, on the campaign trail he used Korea as a symbol of all that was wrong with Truman’s foreign policy. He argued the war was brought on by Truman’s misguided belief that it could withdraw from Korea (thereby contradicting the recommendation of the Wedemeyer Mission of 1947), exclude Korea from the U.S.-declared defensive perimeter, and allow the Koreans themselves to fill the security vacuum. This amounted to appeasement: “To vacillate, to hesitate, to appease is to feed a dictator’s appetite. That lesson should have guided every greet decision of our leadership through these latter years but was ignored.”\textsuperscript{423} Eisenhower’s official platform included the following summation of Korea:

In South Korea, they withdrew our occupation troops in the face of aggressive, poised-for-action, Communist military strength on its northern border. They publicly announced the Korea was of no concern to us. Then when the Communist forces acted to take what seemed to have been invited, they committed this nation to fight back under the most unfavorable conditions. Already the tragic cost is over 110,000 American casualties. With foresight, the Korean War would never have happened. In going back to Korea, they evoked the patriotic and sacrificial support of the American people. But by their hampering orders they produced stalemates and ignominious bartering with our enemies, and they offer no hope of victory.\textsuperscript{424}

Despite these attacks, Eisenhower also called for greater bipartisanship on foreign policy issues. In Michigan on October 1, 1952, Eisenhower pledged to cooperate with Democratic

\textsuperscript{422} “Notes on Campaign Speeches 1952,” Ann Whitman File, Campaign Series, Box 1, “Campaign Speeches, 1952—Notes”
\textsuperscript{423} “Notes on Campaign Speeches 1952.”
\textsuperscript{424} “Excerpts From Campaign Speeches 1952,” Ann Whitman File, Campaign Series, Box 1, “Campaign Speeches, 1952 Excerpts.”
Congressional leaders and make them real partners in formulating basic foreign policies. He argued that the foreign policy successes of the Truman Administration—the Marshall Plan, NATO, saving Turkey and Greece—had all occurred as the result of an “honest American bipartisan approach.” Truman’s failures—China and all of Asia—stemmed from Republicans being excluded from foreign policy discussions. Eisenhower further cast the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine as neither Marshall’s nor Truman’s work. Rather, these were “enactments of the Republican Eightieth Congress, the Congress so long vilified by the Administration.”

A Soldier’s Slack?: Forging Bipartisan Foreign Policy Consensus

Eisenhower won the 1952 election in a landslide, beating Adlai Stevenson by over six million votes with an electoral count of 442 to 80 (including all but nine states) and carrying 2,102 of the 3,099 counties in the U.S. The Republicans also won narrow majorities in the House (221-214) and the Senate (49-47). Edward Mead Earle, then a professor at the School of Economics and Politics at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, captured the unique political opportunity in a letter to Eisenhower on November 10, 1952. Earle argued that no other candidate of either party could have won in such a fashion: “You will enter the White House without obligations to any particular group and with as nearly unified national sentiment as one could possibly hope for.”

Eisenhower thus had enormous political capital to spend, but he did not have a blank check. Eisenhower recognized from the start of his administration that not only were Republican congressional majorities tenuous, but also that he would be facing significant pressure from...
members of his own party to cut the deficit quickly and thereby remove inflationary tendencies. This also meant his administration would need Democratic support on almost every major foreign policy issue and would have to work to “quickly show our readiness to cooperate in every decent way, and particularly in those areas where bipartisan action is vital to the national interest.” Part of Truman’s problem, in Eisenhower’s view, was that he “always thought in terms of politics,” failing to recognize that the “President is President of everybody in the United States.”

While he recognized the reality of political disagreement, Eisenhower’s military experience had also given him a genuine belief in forging bipartisan consensus around national security issues such as such as collective security and European unity. As such, he encouraged Congressional leaders to reach out to his administration “whenever there was the slightest thought that the spirit of American foreign policy was being violated, and that this applied as well in regard to national security and foreign assistance programs.” He explained that while serving overseas he had become “completely sold on the idea that U.S. interests do not allow the Government to be indecisive and indefinite in dealing with foreign powers…In our conduct of foreign affairs, he said, there must always be the basic threat of agreement by both parties.”

With this in mind, and owing in part to his concern that intra-Republican feuding would get his party voted out of office in 1954, Eisenhower established a routine process for actively engaging the Congressional leadership and consulting them on most major foreign policy issues.

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For example, in a message to all his cabinet officers, administrators, and directors of executive agencies on March 6, 1953, Eisenhower set the tone, urging them to “exercise particular care” to consult Congressional leaders, particularly before submitting papers to the President for action. He also showed respect for the chain of command: “On those occasions when bipartisan action would seem desirable, I think that the best practice is to arrange for Democratic participation through the Congressional leaders of our own party.”\textsuperscript{433} Writing to Taft on March 18, 1953, Eisenhower expressed delight “that you feel that true cooperation is developing between the Executive Department and the Legislative Branch, particularly between the Executive and the Leaders of our Party in Congress. I have had the same reaction.”\textsuperscript{434}

Despite this outreach, Congress consistently pushed for cuts to foreign aid or mutual security. Eisenhower chafed at this pressure, particularly when Congress continued to resist corresponding cuts in the defense budget and failed to identify any non-defense cuts to make up the shortfall.\textsuperscript{435} Eisenhower felt that the Marshall Plan had given the U.S. an incredible return on its investment, and that the alternative would have been to spend a great deal more on the defense establishment.\textsuperscript{436} As Eisenhower told the NSC on July 30, 1953, calling a bill a foreign aid bill had a “fatal effect on Congress…Even a member of the Administration, i.e., the Secretary of the Treasury, calls aid bills ‘give-away bills’. The President felt that if military assistance were put in the context of the Defense budget it would sell itself.”\textsuperscript{437} In a private letter to SACEUR Alfred Gruenther in May 1953, Eisenhower explained that by cutting foreign aid,

\textsuperscript{433} Eisenhower, “Memorandum for Cabinet Officers and for the Administrators and Directors of the Executive Agencies,” March 6, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, “DDE Diary Dec. 52-July 53 (3).”
\textsuperscript{434} Eisenhower to Robert A. Taft, March 18, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, “DDE Diary Dec. 52-July 53 (3).”
\textsuperscript{435} L. Arthur Minnich, “Memorandum,” May 25, 1953, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, L. Arthur Minnich Series, Box. 1, “Miscellaneous - C (1) [January - February 1953].”
Congress could “shout and scream about their concern for the individual voter and taxpayer and, of course, show how they are helping to protect the value of the dollar.” Eisenhower saw this as penny-wise and pound foolish, and recognized he would face “a hard fight to avoid excessive cuts in a field where it is entirely possible—even probable—that the United States is getting more for its money than in any other.” He told Gruenther that while he wanted to lower taxes, he did not wish to do so until making absolutely sure that the U.S. was secure against possible Soviet moves. In Eisenhower’s view, “Reasonable security demands good outposts, and these have to be furnished by the foreign nations close to the U.S.S.R.”

Vice President Nixon also warned of Congressional opposition during an early NSC meeting on March 31, 1953. Nixon predicted that Congress would be careful to cut the Defense budget, but keen to cut the mutual security budget. Nixon believed a small cut of only $1 billion in the Mutual Security Administration from the Truman budget levels would prove extremely difficult to sell to Congress. To solve this problem, Nixon urged the administration to emphasize the defense implications of foreign aid, “so that it might be presented as a means of obtaining our national security objectives at less cost than the United States would have to pay if it produced the men and materiel to secure its defenses.”

Eisenhower felt they could make such a sale to Congress so long as prior to any decision about the size of national security programs, the administration took real steps to save money in terms of administration, overhead, and

439 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the Special Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, March 31, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “Special Meeting of NSC March 1, 1953,” 15. Nixon later told Eisenhower in May 1953 that even with the President’s proactive congressional outreach and his process for conducting meetings with Congressional leadership, no one could “deliver” the Senate. Senator Taft could command the support of half of the Republicans (and certain other Senators could command the support of smaller groups) but not consistently. Secretary Dulles added that his only consistent influence over the Senate was in swaying Senator Vandenberg on foreign affairs matters. L. Arthur Minnich, “Memorandum,” May 11, 1953, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, L. Arthur Minnich Series, Box 1, “Miscellaneous - C (2) [March - December1953].”
procurement. Such a careful investigation coupled with assurances that “all possible economies [had been] effected would go a long way to help sell Congress on the necessity for supporting the figure recommended by the Administration.”

Eisenhower consistently made the sale. For example, on July 7, 1953, during a meeting with Congressmen, Eisenhower argued that Mutual Security Administration programs were some of the most important features of his foreign policy, and that cutting them by $1 or 2 billion would require increases in other parts of the national security program by $7 or 8 billion dollars. Simply put, he could not reduce the Defense budget while also substantially cutting foreign aid: “to cut it would be like ripping off one wheel of a wagon, and that to confine our program to purely military activities would be to choose the most expensive way of insuring security.”

Eisenhower also promised that he would continue to rethink foreign policy, but what could be done was being done. Meeting with Congressional leaders on December 17, 1953, Eisenhower again confronted their willingness to defend the Defense budget while cutting the Mutual Security budget. Eisenhower responded by using his military experience. He recounted “the strange situation he got into at the time of the North African invasion in 1942,” when he confronted extreme shortfalls in military equipment due to shipping problems. Eisenhower had nonetheless decided to prioritize transporting various civilian supplies such as coal over his military needs such as ammunition, “on the grounds that these civilian supplies were essential for handling the very serious situation that would otherwise had developed in the rear of the forces. Here was a firsthand example of dollars spent not for armaments but for security.”

A public opinion report circulated at Eisenhower’s direction within the executive branch on November 5, 1953, concluded that Eisenhower could be firmer with Congress because the people were behind him. The “higher echelons” of the Republican party were beginning to recognize the power of Eisenhower’s direct appeal to the people, and the administration should use this to their benefit: “With the loss of Taft [who died on July 31, 1953], the President will need to take a firmer hand and really by action be the Party leader. He should continue to be a PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE; more ‘ruling’, less ‘reigning’.\textsuperscript{443}

In a private letter to an old friend William Philips on June 5, 1953, Eisenhower summed up his relationship with Congress and his broader method for implementing his foreign policy in the face of domestic political pressures. He described that there were different styles of leadership and different methods of forging common ground among men of diverging viewpoints. Eisenhower deplored the “table-pounding, name-calling methods,” not because he feared a fight, but because he found these methods counter-productive. And since a democracy needed diverse viewpoints brought together under a common purpose in order to survive, he was careful not to alienate his political rivals. Eisenhower expanded:

\begin{quote}

the present situation is, I think, without recent precedent in that the particular legislators who are most often opposing Administration views are of the majority party. People like to think of Mr. Roosevelt as a leader; in the situation where his own party was delighted to hear a daily excoriation of the opposite political party, his methods were adequate to his time and to the situation. As of today, every measure that we deem essential to the progress and welfare of America normally requires Democratic support in varying degrees. I think it is fair to say that, in this situation, only a leadership that is based on honesty of purpose, calmness and inexhaustible patience in conference and persuasion, and refusal to be diverted from basic principles can, in the long run, win out. I further believe that we must never lose sight of the ultimate objectives we are trying to attain. Immediate reaction is relatively unimportant—it is particularly unimportant if it affects only my own current standing the popular polls. These are the principles by which I try to live. I regret that I so often fail.\textsuperscript{444}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{443} “Resume,” October, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, “DDE Diary November 1953 (3).”
\textsuperscript{444} Eisenhower to William Phillips, June 5, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, “DDE Diary
Rethinking Rollback and NSC 68

Eisenhower thus entered the White House with an extraordinary amount of popularity and public trust, but with no clear mandate to adjust U.S. grand strategy away from NSC 68 and toward rollback, in part because Eisenhower harbored suspicions about the latter approach and faced significant pressure from within his party to cut spending. As Bowie and Immerman highlight, the voters in 1952 new what they were against—Korea, communism, and corruption—but not what they were for: “If Eisenhower did receive a mandate, therefore, it must be defined as largely a demand for better execution and management of policy rather than a radical shift in its direction.”

Eisenhower’s intense criticism of Truman during the campaign had frayed their once amicable and productive relationship. Truman invited Eisenhower in August 1952 to a Cabinet luncheon to receive a CIA brief on foreign affairs, followed by a discussion with the Cabinet. Two days later Eisenhower replied (after writing at least two drafts) thanking Truman for the invitation but declining. Eisenhower explained that in his “current position as stander bearer of the Republican Party and of other Americans who want to bring about a change in the national government, it is my duty to remain free to analyze publicly the policies and acts of the present administration whenever it appears to me to be proper and in the country’s interests.” Thus, he felt the only communication they should have should be that known to the public. He would welcome the weekly CIA reports in written form, but this could not limit his freedom to discuss foreign policy programs according to his judgment.

Truman responded shortly thereafter with a handwritten letter that reveals his frustration

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Dec 52 - July 53 (2).”

445 Bowie and Immerman, 80.

446 Eisenhower to Truman, August 14, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (1).”
and sense that Eisenhower was shifting his views:

Dear Ike: I’m sorry if I caused you embarrassment. What I’ve always had in mind was and is a continuing foreign policy. You know that is a fact, because you had a part in outlining it. Partisan politics should stop at the boundaries the (sic) the United States. I am extremely sorry that you have allowed a bunch of screwballs to come between us. You have made a bad mistake and I hope it won’t injure this great Republic. There has never been one like it and I want to see it continued regardless of the man who occupies the most important position in the history of the world. May God guide you and give you light. From a man who has always been your friend and who always wanted to be! 447

After Eisenhower won the election, Truman not only offered him use of the presidential airplane to go to Korea, but also invited Eisenhower to designate someone to attend various NSC meetings and to prepare for the 1954 budget. 448 As Truman explained, “All these are vital policy matters which can only be decided by the President of the United States but I would prefer not to make firm decisions on these matters without your concurrence, although the decisions will have to be made. These things affect the whole American policy with regard to the free world.” 449 The next day, Eisenhower replied from Augusta, saying “because I believe firmly in true bi-partisan approach to our foreign problems, I am especially appreciative of your letter of November sixth, suggesting that I have a representative sit in on discussions involving a number of impending decision in this field.” 450 Eisenhower subsequently designated Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. of Massachusetts to serve as his personal liaison with State, Treasury, and Defense and Joseph M. Dodges of Detroit as liaison with the Director of the Bureau of the Budget.

447 Truman to Eisenhower, August 16, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (1).” Eisenhower replied three days later claiming the invitation did not cause him embarrassment. Rather, his feeling was that in the midst of a political campaign, the meeting would force him to make “laborious explanations to the public” and since Truman had not hinted at an emergency, he thought it wiser to decline. Eisenhower to Truman, August 19, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (1).”

448 Truman to Eisenhower, November 5, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (2).”

449 Truman to Eisenhower, November 6, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (2).”

450 Eisenhower to Truman, November 7, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (2).”
Truman and Eisenhower met shortly thereafter at the White House on November 18, 1953. First they met alone, and Truman explained to Eisenhower he wanted to reassure other countries that there would be some stability and continuity in U.S. foreign policy, thereby allaying any concerns about drastic changes during the transition period.\footnote{\textit{Memorandum of Meeting with General Eisenhower,} November 18, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (2).”} Subsequently they met along with their advisers, and Truman reiterated his desire to “avoid needless differences between this Administration and its successor…It will show the world national unity in foreign policy as far as politically possible” and thereby check the Kremlin’s attempts to divide the free world.\footnote{\textit{Memorandum of Meeting at the White House Between President Truman and General Eisenhower,} November 18, 1952, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 33, “Truman, Harry S. 8/12/52-1/15/53 (2).”}

Drawing on the insight of Acheson, Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett, Mutual Security Administrator Averell Harriman, and a working committee of senior civil servants (including Nitze), Truman also left Eisenhower with a statement of national security policy that he would have continued if he had remained in office. This document, NSC 141, was meant to “convey to the succeeding administration the insights of senior officers who had spent a good many years in international security affairs. It was, in other words, their advice.” NSC 141 took a hard line, assuming the Communist bloc was growing in power and calling for a major continuation in effort from the West to check that power. This would be expensive and “would represent a
continuation of the status quo.\textsuperscript{453} Eisenhower, while doubtless thankful for this gesture, was skeptical of the status quo for all the reasons he had articulated during the campaign. The Bureau of the Budget projected a cost of $250 billion for FY 1954-1958, which would contribute to a $44 billion aggregate deficit, adding to the current national debt of $270 billion. Further, these figures did not include the $81 billion in appropriations carried over and the costs of the Korean War. Faced with this fiscal situation, Eisenhower wanted fresh thinking on national security policy, recognizing that a long-term policy of heavy taxation and federal spending in excess of federal income would weaken and eventually destroy the U.S. economy. During an NSC meeting on February 18, 1953, Eisenhower summarized his initial strategic goals as: “Get outposts established and get our own people home,” or build indigenous forces abroad so as to minimize U.S. security presence overseas.\textsuperscript{454}

Eisenhower’s highest profile repudiation of Truman’s foreign policy came when he fulfilled his campaign promise to go to Korea on November 29, 1952. There he spent three days visiting field units (including the 1\textsuperscript{st} battalion, 15\textsuperscript{th} infantry that he had commanded in 1939-1940), commanders, and South Korean President Syngman Rhee. Eisenhower had served with the commander of UN forces Mark Clark, in North Africa in WWII and had almost relieved him of command. Clark recommended an aggressive offensive campaign, including air and naval operations in China and possible use of atomic weapons. Clark argued with Eisenhower until 3 a.m. and the president-elect told Clark he understood his position militarily, but politically, he had a mandate to sue for

\textsuperscript{453} Bissell, Jr., Lewis, and Pudlo, 75.
peace. As he later wrote in his memoirs, “it had been tacitly accepted by both sides that we were fighting defensively and would take no risks of turning the conflict into a global war...My conclusion as I left Korea was that we could not stand forever on a static front and continue to accept casualties without any visible results. Small attacks on small hills would not end this war.”

In February, Clark was instructed to offer to exchange sick and wounded prisoners with the North Koreans and Chinese (what would become Operation LITTLE SWITCH), which led to a counteroffer to resume comprehensive peace negotiations. Secretary Dulles counseled Eisenhower to reject peace negotiations and resume hostilities so as to secure a territorial advantage more favorable than the thirty-eighth parallel. Eisenhower felt resuming hostilities was impractical militarily and politically. When Rhee tried to sabotage the prisoner exchange by opening the gates of the South Korean stockades to allow enemy prisoners escape and threatening to withdraw his troops from the UN command, Eisenhower quickly cut off fuel and ammunition supplies to the South Korean Army and threatened to withdraw U.S. forces. Rhee capitulated three weeks later and an armistice ending the war was signed on July 27, 1953. Eisenhower thus overruled the advice of his military commander in Korea and his Secretary of State in order to bring the Korean War to a close.

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455 Smith, Eisenhower in War and Peace, 557-559.
457 As Smith writes: “Eisenhower was unfazed, having twice brought de Gaulle to heel under similar circumstances during the war in Europe, Ike understood the exercise.” Regarding rejecting Dulles’s recommendation, Smith writes: “Ike believed the country wanted peace, and he was determined to provide it. War was neither a board game nor a seminar exercise for armchair intellectuals. America’s two great military presidents—Grant and Eisenhower—both abhorred war. In 1869, Grant overruled Sherman and Sheridan and brought peace to the Great Plains; in 1953,
Strategic Shock: The Death of Stalin

The National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) and Special Estimates (SE) produced by the CIA in the early months of the Eisenhower administration painted an ominous picture of an aggressive Soviet Union seeking world domination. This threat assessment was bound up in the national security community’s conception of Joseph Stalin as the all-powerful, ruthless, yet rational and somewhat predictable ruler of the Kremlin.\(^{458}\) Stalin steered the Soviet ship of state, and while U.S. policymakers might have objected to the course he charted, they at least had a sense of where it was headed. Yet during a special meeting of the NSC on March 31, 1953, Allen Dulles admitted that CIA estimates exhibited “shortcomings of a serious nature…[and] difficulties of securing adequate information.”\(^{459}\) CIA source networks had suffered in the years after World War II and early intelligence assessments of Soviet capabilities and intentions “were based on conjecture, not on hard intelligence data collected by CIA or anyone else.”\(^{460}\) A “Post Mortem of NIE Production for 1953” criticized poor cooperation within the CIA and argued “the analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of vast quantities of available factual data” remained highly problematic.\(^{461}\)

The unexpected death of Stalin on March 5, 1953 (he had suffered a heart attack 3 days prior but the intelligence community had not found out until the Kremlin made a public

\(^{458}\) Bowie and Immerman, 7.


announcement) not only further exposed the CIA’s intelligence gaps concerning the political climate in Moscow, but also cast doubt on the CIA’s assessment of the Soviet threat, thereby forcing Eisenhower to reconsider basic national security policy. The key question was whether the death of Stalin would affect Soviet external behavior, whether new Soviet leaders would adopt a more cautious or more reckless approach.

The NSC met on March 4, 1953, after the Soviets had announced Stalin was critically ill. There Eisenhower doubted that Stalin’s death would have any significant impact among satellite states in Eastern Europe, but that it might have a significant psychological impact and potentially affect Communist China. Vice President Nixon astutely observed that the event was likely to increase pressures from Congress to drastically reduce national security and defense expenditures, since the perception would be that with Stalin gone, the overall threat had diminished. He recommended warning Congress that Stalin’s successor might very well prove more difficult to deal with than Stalin himself. Secretary Dulles and Eisenhower agreed with Nixon that the post-Stalin situation might be worse. Eisenhower added that in his view, Stalin had wanted to ease tensions at the end of World War II, but “the Politburo had insisted on heightening the tempo of the cold war and Stalin had been ablated to make concessions.”

Since the CIA had no intelligence assessments on the potential implications of Stalin’s death, the NSC immediately requested one, coupled with a statement of policy implications compiled by the State Department. On March 11, 1953, Allen Dulles orally presented the results contained in SE-39, “Probable Consequences of the Death of Stalin and of the Elevation of Malenkov to Leadership in the U.S.S.R..” SE-39 hedged its bets, saying the intelligence

\[463\] “Record of NSC Actions 135th Meeting, March 4, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 1, “Record of Actions by NSC 1953 (1).”
community could not estimate whether Georgiy Maksimilianovich Malenkov, Stalin’s apparent successor, could attain unchallenged power, nor could they estimate what his opponents were capable of. The overall conclusion was that the U.S.S.R. was now more politically vulnerable than before Stalin’s death. In the near-term, the new Soviet leadership was almost certain to pursue the foreign and domestic policies established by Stalin, continuing to emphasize “unremitting hostility to the West (including the tactic of splitting the West)” and consolidating power within its bloc. The new regime, however, may not prove as skillful in avoiding general war as Stalin because, lacking his immense prestige and authority, they might feel pressured to prove their anti-American bona fides. At the same time, SE-39 noted, the converse may be true, and the new regime may exercise caution.

Secretary Dulles predicted Soviet behavior would remain hostile going forward, and summarized the reactions of the foreign offices of the free world to Stalin’s death, noting that they advocated a cautious response. Eisenhower responded by reiterating his belief that, contrary to the judgment of the intelligence community, Stalin had never been “undisputed ruler” of the Soviet Union, which was more of a government by committee. Citing his:

personal experience the President believed that had Stalin, at the end of the war, been able to do what he wanted with his colleagues in the Kremlin, Russian would have sought more peaceful and normal relations with the rest of the world. The fact the Soviet Union instead chose cold war seemed to the President an indication that, in some degree at least, Stalin had had to come to terms why other members if the Kremlin ruling circle.

Here is evidence of Eisenhower wielding his foreign policy experience to argue against the considered view of the intelligence community. Eisenhower then suggested the basic idea for responding to Stalin’s death with a speech calling for peace. The speech—the basics of which

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were already being drafted that weekend by C.D. Jackson and his Psychology Strategy Board—would not focus on specific issues like Korea, but rather concentrate on the U.S.’s determination to raise the general standard of living throughout the world, “to suggest, for instance, that no more than 10 percent of the resources of the different countries of the world should be devoted to armaments, and all the rest to the provision of food, shelter, and consumers goods.” CIA Director Allen Dulles advocated caution: “he felt there was a very great risk in whatever the President said…it will be interpreted as an appeal to the Soviet people to rise up against their rulers in a period of mourning, at a time when they were bound to regard Stalin more reverentially than ordinarily.

Eisenhower, however, was initially outflanked by Malenkov, who gave a speech on March 15 indicating the Soviets were prepared to negotiate with the U.S. in order to peacefully settle international disputes. Though the intelligence community had predicted Malenkov would play a cautious waiting game, the new regime had instead moved “quickly and erratically” with a “peace offensive,” which would later include accepting the UN proposal for exchanging sick and wounded and releasing French and British prisoners in Korea, toning down anti-Western propaganda, relaxing Berlin air traffic controls, and proposing a discussion of disarmament and atomic controls. In the intelligence community’s revised assessment, this marked a clear break from Stalin’s policies, and signaled a broader, more abrupt shift in Soviet foreign policy, comparable to major Soviet moves in 1939. The Soviets were adapting to Stalin’s death, with the

466 For how this speech fit into Jackson’s plans for a broader psychological warfare offensive see, “Proposed Plan for a Psychological Warfare Offensive,” EPL, White House Office, NNSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, Box 51, “Eastern Europe (2)” and James S. Lay, Jr, “Memorandum for the Psychological Strategy Board,” March 12, 1953, EPL, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, Box 51, “Eastern Europe (2).”
468 S. Everett Gleason, “Discussion at the 135th Meeting of the NSC, March 4, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “135th Meeting of NSC.”
likely goals of (1) avoiding general war, (2) weakening this European Defense Community, and (3) convincing the West that there was no need to pursue greater armament.\footnote{S. Everett Gleason, “NSC Meeting Memorandum, April 8, 1953,” EPL, White House Office Special Assistant for National Affairs (WHOSANSA), NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 5, “Miscellaneous (1) [March-August 1953],” 1-4.}

Key allies such as Britain urged Eisenhower to respond in kind to the Soviet peace offensive and consider the prospect of broader negotiations.\footnote{Bowie and Immerman, 117.} Eisenhower himself wanted to test Malenkov’s sincerity. On March 31, 1953, the NSC held a special, all-day meeting with a group of civilian consultants. Treasury Secretary Humphrey highlighted the fact that in June the Treasury would owe $3 billion and have no way to pay for it; they were at a fork in the road and a decision would have to be made. Secretary Dulles responded that the U.S. could not abandon its efforts to strengthen the free world and must clearly communicate its intentions to the Soviets in order to avoid a “repetition of fuzzy situation in Korea in the spring of 1950, which constituted an invitation to the Soviets to move against South Korea.” He explained that Stalin’s death marked the end of an era: “There is no real replacement for Stalin the demigod. The current peace offensive is designed by the Soviets to relieve the ever-increasing pressure upon their regime. Accordingly we must not relax this pressure until the Soviets give promise of ending the struggle.” Eisenhower “emphatically endorsed Secretary Dulles’ warning against any relaxation of pressure on the U.S.S.R.” Eisenhower also joined Dulles in insisted on the need to maintain the five U.S. divisions currently in Europe, which served not merely as a psychological deterrent against the Soviets, but as a real physical deterrent. Even more surprisingly, both men expressed agreement on the need to consider the tactical use of atomic weapons in Korea and perhaps more broadly by reducing the public taboo against their use.\footnote{S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the Special Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, March 31, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “Special Meeting of NSC March 31, 1953,” 2-13. The Consultants’ meeting took place from 9:30 am and lasted all day. Civilians included Dillon}
Robert Cutler summed up the consensus at the meeting by suggesting Eisenhower wanted to change the means and ways of U.S. grand strategy from Truman’s approach, but not the ends. Cutler claimed that the over-all policies for national security were appropriate and reasonable, but to balance the budget they would have to change the programs involved in pursuing those policies. Humphrey disagreed firmly, stating his belief that they were contemplating a very different set of objectives and programs from those developed by Truman.472

The NSC produced a list of “new policies and programs” that should be adopted in light of the Consultants’ meetings. First, the administration would balance the budget as quickly as possible while continuing leadership of the free world. Second, this balance would occur gradually but they would tell the American people that they were committed to this new objective while being clear about the gravity of the Soviet threat. Third, they would not reduce taxes while still militarily engaged in Korea. Fourth, they would maintain sufficient military forces to defend the U.S. and assist other areas of the free world in their own defense. Fifth (and seemingly related), they would build up the free word, exploit Soviet vulnerabilities, and deter Soviet expansion with an eye toward the ultimate retraction and disintegration of Soviet power. In carrying out this fifth objective, the U.S. would bring the Korean War to a final settlement, aid settling the war in Indo-China, protect the homeland from attack, reduce waste, deemphasize the expansion of NATO, and move away from a fixed D-Day readiness timeline.473

But there was still the immediate issue of responding to Malenkov. While Eisenhower did

Anderson, James B. Black, John Cowles, Eugen Holman, Deane W. Malott, David B. Robertson, and Charles A. Thomas. “[T]he President and Secretary Dulles were in complete agreement that somehow or other the tabu which surrounds the use of atomic weapons would have to be destroyed. While Secretary Dulles admitted that in the present state of world opinion we could not use an A-bomb, we should make every effort now to dissipate this feeling, especially since we are spending such vast sums on the production of weapons we cannot use.” 472 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the Special Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, March 31, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “Special Meeting of NSC March 1, 1953,” 17.
not expect a basic change in Soviet policy, he also was not ruling out such a change: “It seemed to the President quite possible that the Soviet leaders may have decided that the time had come when a larger share of the wealth and resources of the Soviet Union must be diverted to civilian use and enjoyment, with the object of raising standards of living for the Soviet people.”

Stalin’s death offered a chance for improved relations. As such, Eisenhower’s “Chance for Peace” speech—delivered before the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16—aimed to test this proposition, identifying steps that could be taken to improve U.S.-Soviet relations, reduce the cost of armament, and reduce the likelihood of global war. The speech argued that Stalin’s death offered the Soviets a “precious opportunity” to open a new chapter in their foreign relations, choosing butter over guns.

Eisenhower’s rhetoric was both sincere and strategic. Eisenhower wanted to reduce tensions with the Soviets. Yet Eisenhower also put the onus for positive action on the enemy while deliberately provoking uncertainty within the Kremlin. Given that Eisenhower had no conclusive evidence as to what Stalin’s death would mean, this was a logical course of action. Neither the optimistic hypothesis (that regime change would produce moderation) nor the pessimistic hypothesis (that regime change would induce recklessness) could be adequately supported. As a CIA analyst would later put it: “The only reaction of U.S. experts to the significance of Stalin’s death is “I don’t know.” As Eisenhower told the Cabinet on April 30, he maintained his “rooted conviction” that the Soviets intended to control the entire free world. Thus, the “peace feelers” put forth by the new Soviet leadership, since Stalin’s death, have not

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475 Quoted in Bowie and Immerman, 119.
476 Attachment to C.D. Jackson to C. Tracy Barnes, May 13, 1953, EPL, White House Central Files, Confidential Files, Subject Series, Box 65, “Russia-Stalin’s Death and Reaction and Results of President’s Speech of 4/16/53 (S),” 1.
altered a full appreciation of the counting, terrible threat posed to the free world by the U.S.S.R.
My speech of April 16, 1953, was certainly not based on any belief that Kremlin policy had undergone a change.**477**

**Formulating the New Look: Project Solarium**

While Stalin’s death did not induce a détente with the Soviet Union, Eisenhower nonetheless pushed ahead with his plans to bolster U.S. national security while placing it on firmer financial footing. On April 30, 1953, Eisenhower explained to the NSC that after studying the basic national security policies, “which were adopted in 1948 and confirmed and amplified in 1950 and 1952,” and the costs of carrying out these policies, he intended to reduce these costs by at least $8.4 billion in the short-term, with greater reductions to follow. The goal was to signal a determination to move to a balanced budget without making a sudden cut to achieve that objective now. In order to achieve this reduction, Eisenhower would seek a lasting settlement in Korea, bring the war in Indo-china to a favorable conclusion without direct intervention (unless China intervened), protect the U.S. continent from an attack, procure military material off-shore, locate essential wartime production plant capacity in the U.S., reduce waste and duplication, lower trade barriers on a selective basis, and halt the expansion of NATO and U.S. armed forces.**478**

Getting more security “with fewer dollars” would demand his administration face the external threat of Communism (and the attendant Soviet desire to dominate the world) while simultaneously guarding against the internal threat of weakening the U.S. economy and thereby

**477** Eisenhower, “April 30/53 revision - final,” EPL, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 45, “National Security (1),” 2-3 and Cutler to Gabriel Hauge, May 1, 1953, EPL, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 45, “National Security (1),” 4-5.
**478** See also, S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the Special Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, March 31, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “Special Meeting of NSC March 1, 1953,” 5-6.
destroying the values, institution, and liberty America’s foreign policy programs were trying to protect. In Eisenhower’s view, Truman’s efforts to build military security at any cost were flawed because they sought to build military strength as soon as possible, thereby overlooking the total costs of maintaining this military strength over time. Eisenhower sought a middle course between the unbearable costs of full mobilization and potentially devastating implications of unpreparedness, one that would emphasize the U.S.’s ability to mobilize rapidly rather than maintaining standing forces and stockpiles in excess of what was necessary. Perhaps most importantly, Eisenhower seemed to reject the idea of a year of maximum danger or getting rid of preparing for global aggression on “some specified D-date.” Instead, his new policy would adopt a “‘floating D-date’—a maintenance of forces and material that can be paid for without breaking our backs and that can be lived with over the years ahead.”

That same day, Eisenhower told Congressional Republican leaders of his plans to reduce requested obligation authority by $8.4 billion in FY1954. This was not enough for Senator Taft, who exclaimed “he could not possibly express the deepness of his disappointment at the program the Administration presented today,” one which would have the practical effect of spending as much as Truman—over 30 percent of the national income with no promise of future reductions. Taft had already made the case to his caucus not to press for tax cuts this year, but he would not be able to do it again. He projected that some two-thirds of Congressional Republicans would vote for further spending reductions and thereby oppose the Administration. Taft said he had no confidence in the NSC experts proposing this program, particularly since the same military experts who were now arguing that $50 billion was not enough had told him in 1950 that $13.5 billion was sufficient. In his view they had not “moved an inch” from the Truman program, a fact the Democrats would soon exploit. He concluded that this was a “program on which the

Administration may fall, and certainly the Republican Congress will fall in 1954.”

Eisenhower responded to Taft with a review of the strategic situation, the basics of which he said were “not difficult to understand.” First, everyone agreed that the U.S. could not let Europe fall to Russia, but neither could the U.S. take control of Europe itself. Therefore they must build up Europe’s indigenous strength. Second, it was necessary to prevent the Russians from controlling the Middle East and by extension half of the world’s oil resources. Third, in Southeast Asia, the invasions of Laos by the Communists had endangered the entire region. These serious challenges required sustained resources—a rapid cancellation of defense programs would not only endanger U.S. security, but cost the U.S. more from cancelled contracts. The essential task was not to drastically reduce in the first year, but rather to “take hold of the upward trend of expenditures and bend it down.” In light of this, Eisenhower claimed the proposed plans were logical, he defended the competence of the NSC and his military advisers, and he disagreed with Taft that the proposed budget would destroy Republican prospects in 1954. Above all, he highlighted the fact that national security was his overriding, fundamental concern, and he would not let any budget cuts imperil national security. The President said he also truly believed that if the best brains of his administration went before the American public and explained their approach, they “could sell a program of real achievement to the American people.”

By selling these programmatic shifts, Eisenhower was moving in a new direction, but still lacked an overarching grand strategy. In June the NSC adopted a restatement of basic national security policy, NSC 153/1, which superseded NSC 20/4, NSC 68/2, and NSC 135/3. While NSC 153/1 spoke about exploiting the post Stalin transition in the Soviet Union, it did not revise

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481 L. A. Minnich Jr., “Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting,” April 30, 1953, 6-8. “Certainly, he said, he did not want to fight with the Congress for there were better things to be done, it was unpleasant, and besides he hoped that Republicans in Congress were his friends, not enemies waiting to cut his throat!”
the pessimistic assessment in U.S. capabilities found in earlier documents nor did it meaningfully change the objectives of U.S. policy. NSC 153/1 did bring a new emphasis on the internal economic threat posed to the U.S. through confronting Soviet aggression over the long term, which threatened the fundamental values and institutions of the U.S. The document spoke of striking Eisenhower’s balanced between confronting this internal fiscal threat and confronting the external Soviet threat. Yet overall, NSC 153/1, lacked specificity and was seen primarily as a summary of basic national security policy. These deficiencies lead Eisenhower to commission another, more competitive review of U.S. grand strategy—Project Solarium.482

Eisenhower conceived Project Solarium on May 8, 1953 during an informal meeting with key advisors in the White House Solarium, a small penthouse on the top floor of the White House where President Eisenhower often entertained and cooked for friends. From 5:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles discussed the strategic options available in light of the international situation. Both men agreed that following NSC 68 and its threefold increase in annual defense spending in order to cope with a seemingly implacable Soviet threat would inevitably lead the U.S. toward foreign or domestic disaster. Eisenhower, however, disagreed with Dulles’ grim assessment of the East-West alliance and the idea that time was working against the U.S. such that it might be necessary to pursue a policy of “boldness” (i.e. the “rollback” strategy of the campaign) and thereby risk general war with the Soviets.483

To continue their debate, Eisenhower commissioned a competitive exercise among

483 Bowie and Immerman, 19, 124-125, 246. Also present were Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles, Special Assistant to the President C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Robert Cutler, Undersecretary of State W. B. Smith, and Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey.
“teams of bright young fellows”, each tasked with developing a distinct strategic alternative. A Working Committee including Cutler, Allen Dulles, and Under-Secretary of State and former DCI Walter Bedell “Beetle” Smith, and then DCI Allen Dulles drafted the terms for the exercise. After Eisenhower approved the Working Committees guidelines on May 9, 1953, he directed them to assemble a panel of five “qualified persons to draft precise and detailed terms of reference for each alternative.”

The Working Committee chose General James H. Doolittle USAF, a WWII hero who had recently led a presidential commission on urban airport security for the Truman Administration, to chair the panel. The Doolittle assembled three Task Forces, each with seven members: “five specially chosen and two members of the current graduating class of the National War College.”

Task Force A would advocate a version of Truman’s original strategy of containment (NSC 20/4), one that deemphasized military action and economic mobilization, carefully building U.S. economic and military strength over the long-term while exploiting Soviet internal vulnerabilities. Its members needed an “intimate understanding of the past policies and actions of the United States, the rest of the free world, and of the U.S.S.R., and broad gauge political,

484 Bowie and Immerman, 125.
486 The Doolittle Panel also included: (1) distinguished WWII combat veteran and then the CIA’s Deputy Director of Intelligence (DDI) Robert Amory Jr.; (2) former Eisenhower staff member in WWII, division commander in Korea, Deputy Commandant of NWC, and then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army Lieutenant General (LTG) Lyman L. Lemnitzer USA; (3) Former Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (and future Secretary of State in the Kennedy Administration) and then President of the Rockefeller Foundation Dean Rusk; (4) Former naval attaché in Moscow and then President of the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism—the CIA-funded “private” company that controlled Radio Free Europe—Admiral Leslie C. Stevens USN. Cutler, “Memorandum for the Record by the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs,” May 15, 1953, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. II, 328.
military, economic and psychological planning for the future.” Paul Nitze, the primary author of NSC 68, was briefly considered to head Task Force A. The Panel instead selected the original architect of containment (turned foremost critic of its aggressive NSC 68 variant), George F. Kennan. Some three months prior, Secretary Dulles had dismissed Kennan from the Foreign Service. In light of this, Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman hypothesize that Eisenhower, who respected Kennan’s Soviet expertise and strategic views, personally insisted Kennan chair Task Force A.

Task Force B would advocate drawing a line around the Soviet Bloc and making it clear to the Russians that crossing this line would trigger massive retaliation and general war.

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488 “Annex A,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel).”


490 Bowie and Immerman, 127. See also, Pickett, 6. The final members of Task Force A included: (1) Former Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and then associate Deputy Director of the MSA C. Tyler Wood; (2) Director of the Defense Department’s Office of Foreign Military Affairs Rear Admiral Harold P. Smith USN; (3) Rhodes Scholar, the youngest general in the Army at the end of WWII (who had taken a demotion to build West Point’s Department of Social Sciences), and then Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense COL George A. Lincoln USA; (4) Rhodes Scholar, former Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary of State, and then NWC student COL Charles H. Bonesteel III USA; (5) Navy Cross Recipient and then NWC student Captain (CAPT) Harry E. Sears USN; (6) Soviet specialist and then CIA officer John M. Maury. “Task Force A of Project Solarium Report to the National Security Council,” July 16, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Disaster File Series, Box 39, “Project Solarium – Task Force ‘A’ Full Report (1),” ii; H. A. Craig to Allen Dulles, May 27, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; Robert Amory to H. A. Craig, June 1, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; H. A. Craig to Walter Bedell Smith, May 27, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; Robert Cutler, “Memorandum for the Director for Mutual Security,” May 22, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; Robert Cutler, “Memorandum for the Secretary of State,” May 22, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; and J.K Penfield to W.B. Smith, “Memorandum,” August 8, 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 66D148, Subject Files, 1947-1965; Box 15, “Project Solarium.” Though Maury was not explicitly identified as a CIA employee at the time, he was a career CIA officer. See Joseph J. Trento, The Secret History of the CIA (New York: Caroll and Graff, 2001), 497; Walter Laqueur, The Uses and Limits of Intelligence, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1995), 354; John Ranelagh, The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 222; and “John M. Maury,” New York Times, July 3, 1983, http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/03/obituaries/john-m-maury.html (accessed June 3, 2011).

491 Its members needed: intimate knowledge of communist reactions and methods; sound political and military judgment both regarding the Communist orbit and the free world; knowledge of the United States’ military capabilities to wage general war, including the use of unconventional weapons; ability to evaluate the economic capability of the United States and the rest of the free world to support the alternative. “Annex B,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel).”
Major General (MG) James McCormack USAF chaired Task Force B. A Rhodes Scholar, former Director of Military Applications at the Atomic Energy Commission, and then Director of Nuclear Applications at the Air Research and Development Center, McCormack had been an early advocate for developing thermonuclear weapons and integrating their use into national strategy.\(^{492}\) Since Task Force B’s “line in the sand” alternative was a deterrent strategy, one that relied on the credible willingness to resort to general (and possibly nuclear) war, McCormack was a logical choice to head the team.\(^{493}\)

Task Force C would argue for rollback—using bold options short of general war (e.g. covert action, psychological warfare, and economic warfare) to weaken the Soviet Bloc and to create a “climate of victory encouraging to the free world.”\(^{494}\) Its members needed “imaginative military, political, psychological and subversive planning experience; profound experience on Soviet-Communist actions and reactions.”\(^{495}\) Task Force C would be led by Navy Cross Recipient, former Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe, and then President of the Naval War College Vice Admiral (VADM) Richard L. “Close-In” Conolly USN, who had earned his nickname by insisting ships maneuver close to shore to provide fire support to amphibious


\(^{493}\) Task Force B’s final membership included: (1) Former intelligence officer operating in Europe, Soviet expert, and recent Command and Staff School graduate MG John R. Deane USA (Ret.); (2) Soviet economy expert and former head of Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Northern European operations Calvin B. Hoover; (3) Professor of international relations at Cornell and then Director of the Russian Institute at Columbia (where Eisenhower had been President) Philip E. Mosely Ph.D.; (4) State Department Foreign Service Political Planner and then Counselor of the American Embassy in London James K. Penfield; (5) Former staff member of the Air War College, National Security Agency (NSA) detailee and then NWC student Colonel (Col.) Elvin S. Ligon USAF; and (6) Eastern European specialist, State Department Policy Planning Staff member, and then NWC student John C. Campbell.

\(^{494}\) Bowie and Immerman, 125-126.

\(^{495}\) “Annex C,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel).”
assaults (despite the risk of running aground).496

Eisenhower, the Working Committee, and the Doolittle Panel had selected the best minds and most experienced professionals suited to defending the three alternatives. When George Kennan wrote to Robert Cutler accepting the request to chair Task Force A, he said he was “glad to learn of the relations of each of the Task Force members to his subject, and can assure you that with this understanding I will be happy to give the project all I have got.”497 Andrew Goodpaster, then one of the Army’s leading experts on nuclear weapons and later Eisenhower’s Staff Secretary, defense liaison, and most trusted assistant, claimed Eisenhower personally assigned him to Task Force C, the “most radical” study group, “largely because he knew that I’m not inclined to be too radical.”498 Eisenhower wanted a genuine debate among the three alternatives,

496 For more on Conolly’s experience see Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume VIII: New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944-August 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1953). Task Force C’s final membership included: (1) Doolittle Panel member LTG Lemnitzer, who had participated in a study group on Soviet-American relations for the Council on Foreign Relations just five months prior; (2) Former State Department Consul in Moscow, Director of State’s Division of Eastern European Affairs, and then Deputy for Civil Affairs at NATO Defense College in Paris George F. Reinhardt; (3) Former chief budget and manpower management expert for the Army and then Assistant Director of the CIA for Policy Coordination Kilbourne Johnston (in August 1952 the Office of Policy Coordination would be combined with the Office of Special Operations into a directorate that would become the CIA Clandestine Service); (4) Princeton Ph.D., former head of the Pentagon’s Advanced Study Group (charged with examining the role of nuclear weapons in war), and then special assistant to the Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe COL Andrew J. Goodpaster USA; (5) Former State Department Information and Education Exchange Program (USIE) officer and then NWC student Dr. Leslie S. Brady (USIE was precursor to the United States Information Agency, which Brady would subsequently serve in as Assistant Director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe); and (6) Former battalion commander in WWII, regimental commander in Korea, and then NWC student COL Harold K. Johnson USA. See “Task Force C of Project Solarium Report to the National Security Council,” July 16, 1953, EPL, WHOSANSA, NSC Series, Box 9, i.; Henry L. Roberts to Lyman Lemnitzer, December 3, 1953, Lemnitzer Papers National War College, Washington, DC (NWC), Box 1, “Personal Correspondence January – December 1954”; and Central Intelligence Agency, “Office of Policy Coordination 1948-1952,” n.d., The National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 276, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB276/ (accessed March 3, 2013). Goodpaster was thus likely referring to Johnston in February 1988 when he recalled that he still did not know if he was allowed to identify the CIA representative on Task Force C. See Pickett, 27. Additionally, Task Force C almost included Johnston’s predecessor at Policy Coordination and then head of the CIA’s Plans Directorate, Frank G. Wisner.

497 Kennan to Cutler, May 25, 1953, John Foster Dulles Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton, NJ (John Foster Dulles Papers), Dwight D. Eisenhower (DDE) Files Related to John Foster Dulles, Subject Series, Box 5, Folder 15, “Kennan George.”

498 Goodpaster, interview by Malcolm S. McDonald, 13; Bowie and Immerman, 127, 164; and “Memorandum of Conversation, Solarium Project,” May 8, 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 66D148, U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State-NSC Files, “1953.”
and his stated his preference was for each Task Force to “tackle its alternative with a real belief in it just the way a good advocate tackles a law case.” He knew that Alternative C might suffer from seemingly risky proposals to confront Soviet advances. He selected Goodpaster, someone whose judgment and experience he trusted, to challenge Task Force C and make it more effective.

The Doolittle Panel also provided the Task Forces with an extensive list of questions, forcing them to evaluate their proposed course of action in the context of specific regional issues, U.S. domestic politics, and the international system as a whole. Among these, the most imperative question was whether time was on America’s side. In other words, were Soviet atomic capabilities growing at such a rate that the U.S. would soon be vulnerable to an attack? The Panel had directed the Task Forces to assume Soviet capabilities to be those set forth in NIE-65, “Soviet Bloc Capabilities Through 1957,” and “supplemented by such other agreed intelligence and pertinent studies as exist within the Government.” But while NIE-65 considered the balance of power between the Soviets and the U.S. through 1957, it did not

499 Quoted in “Memorandum of Conversation, Solarium Project,” May 8, 1953. The Working Committee’s May 9 instructions called for each Task Force to “work up its Alternative in the same spirit that an advocate works up a case for a court presentation.” “Memorandum for the Record by the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs,” May 9, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. II, 324. The Doolittle Panel instructed the Task Forces to “employ a “Devil’s Advocate” technique to test the feasibility of Stet its plans and in the plenary sessions each Task Force will be free to criticize the others [sic] work.” “Memorandum on Project Solarium Organization and Arrangements for Preparing Plans and Presentations on Alternative Courses of Action, 26 May 1953,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel),” 2-3.

500 Pickett, 7.

501 The Panel further appended a “Memorandum on Basic Issues” outlining over seventy cross-cutting issues that each Task Force had to consider. The Panel instructed the Task Forces to clearly state any assumptions made in crafting their strategy and to coordinate these assumptions with the other Task Forces. In developing their oral presentations, the Task Forces were directed to marshal their arguments as effectively as possible and to disclose “the weaknesses inherent in that policy and the countervailing arguments.” “Paper Prepared by the Directing Panel of Project Solarium,” June 1, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. II, 362-363.

502 “Paper Prepared by the Directing Panel of Project Solarium,” 361. See also, Robert Cutler to W. B. Smith, May 15, 1953, “Project Solarium,” NARA, RG 59, Lot6D146, Executive Secretariat, Subject Files 1947-1965, and “Project Solarium Special Documents Initially Available,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel).” See also, “Administrative Instructions Task Force Operations, Project Solarium,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel),” 3.
specifically answer perhaps the question of whether time was on America’s side. Three years earlier, NSC 68 had predicted that by 1954, the “year of maximum danger,” the Soviets would have approximately 200 nuclear weapons, 100 of which might be deliverable on the continental U.S. This assessment was contentious, and disagreements persisted over when the Soviets would achieve nuclear plenty, but no one was sanguine about the costs of a possible nuclear exchange. For example, a May 1953 report by the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESC) of the NSC concluded a Soviet surprise attack would produce 12.5 million casualties (half of which would be fatal), cripple 2/3 of U.S. industrial production, and generate psychological damage “of a magnitude which it is impossible to estimate, or even comprehend, on the basis of any presently available valid data.”

But the NESC report, like NIE-65, did not address the broader issue of whether time was working for or against the U.S. If the tide was turning against the U.S., then preventive war—a more aggressive option than even “rollback”—might be necessary. In a Memorandum for Eisenhower on June 2, 1953, Cutler described a tentative plan for continued examination of this possible Alternative D, which “proposed a comparable examination of preventive war” in light of growing controversy over the Soviet’s expanding atomic capabilities and U.S. vulnerability to surprise attack. The Working Committee recommended that once Alternatives A, B, and C had been presented, a new Task Force should be formed from the “best men on these Task Forces, and perhaps additional qualified persons, and have the new Task Force study Alternative D.”

Plans for Alternative D were postponed until an intelligence estimate examining its major

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503 Bowie and Immerman, 19, 31, 106, 153, 162, 198, 245, 249.
505 Bowie and Immerman, 126.
506 Robert Cutler, “Memorandum For the President,” June 2, 1953, EPL, NSC Papers, Disaster File Series, Box 39, “Project Solarium (1).”
premise was completed. This estimate was SE-46, “Probable Long Term Development of the Soviet Bloc and Western Power Positions,” completed on July 8 (eight days before the final Solarium presentations). SE-46 provided a fifteen-year analysis of the Soviet threat “with a view to estimating whether or not time is on our side in the East-West conflict.”SE-46 was cautious in its analysis, claiming that the CIA could not “estimate the time at which the U.S.S.R. will attain the capability to cripple US war-making capacity, but it is probably well within the period of this estimate.” Perhaps owing to this ambiguity, SE-46 did not generate major disagreements when it was discussed by the Intelligence Advisory Committee (IAC)—which allowed intelligence chiefs from the military services, the State Department, and the Atomic Energy Agency to offer their concurrence or dissent with estimates—on 30 June 1953. Some administration officials, however, felt that a more extensive analysis was needed to build upon SE-46’s initial work. At the State Department, Robert Bowie recommended establishing an ad hoc inter-departmental working group within the NSC to further explore vital questions alluded to in SE-46. Nevertheless, all elements of the IAC accepted SE-46 on July 3, 1953 and Alternative D was never formally explored.

Bowie and Immerman contend that prior to the completion of SE-46, Eisenhower had already dismissed preventive war as a strategy for “suicidal atomic exchange” and had ruled out the possibility that the Soviets would risk general war based on his many years personally

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508 Robert Amory, “Memorandum,” July 8, 1953. The opening sentence of SE-46 sets this inconclusive tone: “there is no unequivocal answer to the question ‘is time on our side.’” See also, William C. Trueheart, “Notes on IAC Meeting,” June 30, 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 59D27, Intelligence Bureau, Office of the Director 1949-1955, Box 70, “IAC Meeting Notes VI. 1953.” Here Trueheart suggests Allen Dulles had personally formulated this opening verbiage in SE-46.

509 Trueheart.

510 See W. Park Armstrong to Allen Dulles, July 2, 1953, NARA, RG 59, Lot 58K528, Intelligence Bureau, Office of the Director 1950-1959, Box 66, “Chron 1951-1953.”
studying the problem. Perhaps, but nothing in SE-46 directly contradicted Eisenhower’s strategic thinking on the utility of preventive war. The estimate, by confirming his views, likely helped him to discard this dangerous strategic option. Moreover, Eisenhower did continue to consider the efficacy of a preventive strike and the moral burden of initiating general war. On September 24, 1953 he asked the NSC to “really face the question of whether or not we would have to throw everything at once against the enemy. The question could no longer be excluded, and it was the duty of the President and his advisers to find the best answer to it.” Such comments may have been, as Bowie and Immerman argue, “only abstract musings.” Alternatively, Eisenhower may have found it useful to force his advisors to consider such counterfactual scenarios and remain open to new intelligence that might indicate time was working against America.

Starting on June 8, 1953, the Task Forces spent six weeks working in secret over the summer, time Kennan described as “slav[ing] away in the basement floor of the National War College.” The Task Forces then delivered their oral presentations in the Conference Room of

511 Bowie and Immerman, 126, 149.
513 Bowie and Immerman, 164.
514 George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1950-1963 (New York: Atlantic-Little, Brown Books, 1972), 182. Goodpaster recalled the Task Forces” daily work schedule throughout as: start at 8:00am, break briefly for lunch and dinner (and possibly an hour for afternoon exercise), and work until midnight. Pickett, 24. The Task Forces began work the week of 8 June 1953 as the participants assembled at NWC for initial briefings from the NSC, CIA, JCS, and various Department of Defense entities. Most members set about reviewing the initial set of products, while a select few participated in a concurrent NWC-related round-table from 9-11 June. During the second week, 14-20 June, the Task Forces received additional briefings, reconsidered each course of action, and discussed the general problems facing all three alternatives. From 21 June to 5 July, the Task Forces set about crafting their initial presentations. In a plenary session on 26 June each Task Force chair delivered a general summary of where their reports were headed. Kennan claimed Task Force A was still considering whether time was on America’s side and Admiral Conolly claimed Task Force C would assess the Soviet threat and conclude “the U.S. cannot live with the Soviet Union if the latter’s present increasing strength continues.” In the final two weeks, from 6-16 July, the Task Forces refined and finalized their plans and presentations based on the feedback from this and other plenary sessions. “Notes Taken at the First Plenary Session of Project Solarium,” June 26, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. II, 388-393. “Memorandum on Project Solarium Organization and Arrangements for Preparing Plans and Presentations on Alternative Courses of Action,” May 26, 1953, 2-3; Handwritten Note, EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box
The White House beginning at 9:00 a.m. on July 16, in front of an audience of 39 according to the official record. Eisenhower wanted all those who would be responsible for executing strategy to hear the debate: NSC and NSC Planning Board members, military officials, assistant secretaries from various national security departments, as well as NWC head LTG Craig and two of his Colonels.  

Task Force A, whose presentation was delivered in approximately 30 minutes by George Kennan, argued that despite certain setbacks—the communist revolution in China foremost among them—time was not working against the U.S. such that it would require aggressive foreign policy proposals. Task Force A also claimed that while “certain of the available governmental documents were of great value to us, we have had to rely extensively on peculiar knowledge and judgment of individual members of the group in individual fields of experience.” This was evident in Task Force A’s analysis of what it considered the ten primary Soviet Bloc vulnerabilities that the U.S. could exploit. Such an analysis was absent from NIE-65 and no doubt reflected George Kennan’s personal experience. Bowie and Immerman argue that Kennan wrote the sections of Task Force A’s report which established its “philosophical” thrust. Kennan later recalled that while he had to compromise within his Task Force on large parts involving budgets and military preparations, he had succeeded in inserting his own thoughts about establishing a more plausible negotiating position with the Soviets over the future.

11, “General Papers (Col. Bonesteel)”; and “Security Check Month of July,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 15.
515 “Minutes of the 155th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 16, 1953,” FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. II, 394-395. See also, Pickett, 11-12, 29. Eisenhower also gave detailed instructions for the final presentations, personally insisting each Task Force rehearse the day prior and that the briefing room have a raised podium and air-conditioning. Pickett, 11.
516 Pickett, 21.
519 Bowie and Immerman, 128-130. See also Pickett, 6.
of Germany.\footnote{Pickett, 20}

Task Force B, in its oral argument delivered by MG McCormack, claimed that though the “NSC’s experts have found that a knock-out attack on the United States will not be within the Soviet capabilities during the next two years. We suppose that improvements in U.S. defenses can postpone the date another few years.”\footnote{Task Force B of Project Solarium Report to the National Security Council,” 4-5.} Task Force B’s report, as well as A’s and C’s, also frequently referenced SE-46 and the question of whether time was on America’s side. Task Force B claimed that it had given much thought to studying this question and “reached conclusions identical with those contained in the most recent CIA study on the subject—chiefly, that it is impossible to say.”\footnote{Task Force B of Project Solarium Report to the National Security Council,” I-2, I-3.}

Task Force C’s presentation began with an introduction by VADM Connolly followed by a more detailed analysis by LTG Lemnitzer, supplemented by Kilbourn Johnston’s presentation of specific courses of action.\footnote{This sequence of presenters, drawn from the actual Task Force C Report, contradicts Goodpaster’s 1988 recollection that he (Goodpaster) followed Lemnitzer and discussed how the strategy would be implemented. See Pickett, 23.} Considering the question of Soviet nuclear weapons, Task Force C decisively concluded that “[t]ime has been working against us.”\footnote{Pickett, 10.} This assessment seems to ignore or misinterpret the conclusions of SE-46, which was inconclusive on this question. Task Force C claimed, however, that it had

accepted the National Intelligence Estimate No. 65, which sets forth Soviet capabilities. We believe that the U.S.S.R. will have by 1955 a considerable stockpile of atomic weapons and a capability of delivering it against vital targets in the Continental United States. This threat, within a few years, if not effectively countered, would dangerously imperil our ability to wage a general war against the U.S.S.R.\footnote{Pickett, 12-13.}

Task Force C drew upon NIE-65 and SE-46, but used the analytical freedom granted them by the Panel to arrive at their own assessment of what the Soviet threat meant for U.S. national security.
Eisenhower concluded the proceedings with an extemporaneous 45-minute speech. The President praised their work; his handwritten notes from that day say all three plans were “beautifully presented (all seemed to believe).” He also emphasized that the similarities of the Task Force reports outweighed the differences and wanted the three teams to combine their work into an overarching policy plan. Though Kennan would later claim Eisenhower’s speech and mastery of the strategic issues demonstrated his “intellectual ascendancy over every man in the room,” few Task Force members were convinced by Eisenhower’s arguments. Significant disagreements persisted. It was not merely that the Task Force members “were tired and had over delayed commitments…there were fundamental differences which could be compromised into a watered-down position but not really agreed to.”

As Secretary Humphrey had said to the NSC two days before the Solarium presentation on July 14, this administration had been elected on four issues: Korea, communism, corruption, and balanced security. The last required cutting taxes, balancing the budget, and likely making $12 billion in cuts to national security programs, but:

this Administration hasn’t done a damn thing but go along with the programs and policies of the past Administration. There had been no real cuts in expenditures. The cuts that had been accomplished were only sufficient to take us back to the levels where Truman left off. We are just “niggardly Harrimans” [1952 Democratic presidential aspirant, leader of the liberal wing of the Democratic party, and former Mutual Security Administrator in the Truman Administration]. If we could not do better than this, the Administration could abandon all hope of being retained in office.”

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527 Quoted in Bowie and Immerman, 137.

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Eisenhower responded that the U.S. was indeed “in a hell of a fix.”

(Selling and) Implementing the New Look: From Solarium to NSC 162/2

Eisenhower had laid the predicate for a strategic adjustment. He had used Project Solarium not only to generate new thinking, but also to generate some consensus around what direction to take U.S. foreign policy. But implementing this emerging vision would prove difficult. Eisenhower was seeking some way to reduce global tensions in order to strike a middle path between the hardliners and the budget cutters. In a personal letter to Secretary Dulles on September 8, 1953, Eisenhower argued for relaxing world tensions rather than pursuing a harder line approach. Domestic political pressures were such that the American people wanted tax relief, but they did not understand what a drastic tax reduction would mean for U.S. national security. They held a vague hope that the Korean armistice would lead to better U.S.-Soviet relations, but felt helpless in dealing with the foreign threat hanging over their heads and therefore were turning their attention to immediate concerns such as taxes, drought relief, and partisan politics. To vastly increase expenditures, even if that change had the full support of all branches of government, the administration would have to fully educate the people on the dangers of atomic weapons and the hostile designs of the Kremlin so as to get their support and rally the support of America’s allies abroad. Such support would also depend on the perception that the U.S. had been driven to increased military preparation after the Communists had rejected all peaceful gestures. But the costs of such full mobilization would drive America to war or to dictatorship.

532 In a private memorandum to himself on October 24, 1953, Eisenhower commented on the lack of competent leaders in the Republican Party, leaving Eisenhower to conclude: “I must personally do more to urge Republican support of the middle of the road philosophy.” Eisenhower, “Memorandum,” October 24, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, “DDE October 1953 (2).”
533 Eisenhower, “Memorandum for the Secretary of State,” September 8, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary
An NSC Staff review completed a year later described the difficulty in combining the Task Force reports: “In the final analysis, most of these differences sprang from divergent interpretations regarding the nature of the Soviet threat and, secondarily, from divergent assumptions regarding the courses of action which were necessary and feasible to counter and reduce this threat.”\textsuperscript{534} For example, Task Force A recognized the seriousness of the Soviet desire to extend their hegemony, but it did not see anything new in this threat. Task Force A was thus most concerned about the risks inherent in aggressive U.S. policies. Task Force C, on the other hand, “was categorical in its conviction that time has been working against the United States and would continue to work against the United States unless the threat were arrested and reversed by positive action.”\textsuperscript{535}

Knowing Eisenhower was frustrated by a lack of agreement among the Task Forces, Cutler directed the NSC Special Staff make a summary of the principal points in each presentation and for designated representatives from each Task Force to review it to ensure correctness.\textsuperscript{536} Cutler also asked a member from each Task Force to work with a newly created ad hoc Special Committee of the NSC Planning Board—with representatives from State, Defense, CIA, and the JCS—to draft an overarching strategy based on the Solarium reports.\textsuperscript{537}

After three months of contentious work, Cutler presented the initial draft of NSC 162—the Planning Board’s “Solarium Paper”—to the NSC on October 7, 1953. There were still two competing interpretations of the Soviet threat that the intelligence community—despite another


\textsuperscript{536} Cutler, “Project Solarium,” July 16, 1953, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{537} Cutler, “Project Solarium,” July 16, 1953 and Bowie and Immerman, 141.
coordinated CIA estimate as to whether time was on America’s side\(^{538}\)—could not resolve. Secretary Humphrey called this unresolved question the number one problem facing the administration. “Side A” saw the threat as the Soviets’ extensive military power combined with basic Soviet hostility toward the West. According to this side, the U.S. must meet the threat before ensuring a sound U.S. economy, essentially subordinating budget and tax concerns to national security concerns. “Side B” saw the threat as Janus-faced: (1) the external threat of Soviet power and (2) the internal threat of degrading the U.S. economy and, by extension, the American way of life.

In the course of the discussion, it became clear that Eisenhower (still) sided with the second camp—he feared fighting and winning another global war would require the destruction of individual freedom. The President questioned whether Side A was prepared to hold onto its position even if it meant moving towards an American garrison state. They could “lick the whole world, said the President, if we were willing to adopt the system of Adolph Hitler.” He rejected the idea of establishing a fixed D-day and desperately mobilizing with that date in mind, stating that while you could “get the American people steamed up to do whatever you told them was necessary for a certain length of time,” if the process went on indefinitely it would mean full mobilization and tight control of the economy.\(^{539}\)

With this in mind and at Eisenhower’s urging, the first page of the strategy was revised to state the U.S. would meet the Soviet threat while avoiding seriously weakening the U.S. economy or undermining fundamental American values and institutions. Unconvinced that time was working against the U.S., Eisenhower also insisted on removing a phrase suggesting the


Soviets “shortly will have” the capability to launch an atomic attack against America.⁵⁴⁰ Eisenhower also resolved differences between Side A and Side B by removing paragraphs pertaining to tax rates and their effect on economic assistance and massaging language on funding foreign assistance programs and foreign military assistance programs to suggest future programs would be conditioned on the “best interests” of the U.S. and cut down as U.S. security interests permitted.⁵⁴¹ Concerning the redeployment of U.S. forces overseas, Eisenhower mended the language to emphasize such redeployment must be carefully managed so that U.S. allies would retain their morale and confidence in U.S. support.⁵⁴²

Finally, Eisenhower sided with Side B on the issue of imposing pressure on the Soviets. Side B felt the best way to induce negotiated settlements (unlikely though they may be) with the Soviets on key issues was to maintain pressures short of risking general war, so as not to relax the defense. The President thought that if they accepted Side A’s strategy of avoiding direct pressure, a foreign policy accomplishment like saving the Shah in Iran would not have been possible. Eisenhower, over the objections of Secretary Dulles (who worried about subordinating the need for mutually acceptable agreements with the Soviets to improving the U.S. power position in every area), directed them to remove a paragraph stating the U.S. should not initiate aggressive actions involving force against the Soviet bloc territory.⁵⁴³ Secretary of Defense Wilson pressed the president on one particular point: he needed to know whether they intended to use the nuclear weapons they were spending so much money on. Eisenhower replied that the military should count on using these weapons in general war, but not in “minor affairs.”

⁵⁴³ S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 17.
President, he would have to make this ultimate decision, “and if the use of them was dictated by the interests of U.S. Security, he would certainly decide to use them.”

Yet a week later Secretary Wilson argued that while the NSC had talked at length about formulating a “new strategic concept,” there had been no significant changes thus far in basic national security policy, in the seriousness of the Soviet threat, or on the decision to use atomic weapons, which would allow them to shift emphasis from using conventional forces. As such the Defense Department could not come up with a plan for cutting force levels and reducing expenditures. Eisenhower disagreed and summed up his position as follows: there should be a readjustment of U.S. military strength, on that placed a premium on striking and retaliatory power. In making this adjustment, however, they must be cautious in redeploying military forces too fast, particularly because State was concerned about the psychological effect on U.S. allies. He directed Wilson and the JCS to take another look at their military plan with longer time horizons, with a greater emphasis on the necessary size of support forces, and in the general light of their earlier discussion about using atomic weapons. Eisenhower urged them to bear in mind that the U.S. could not achieve perfect defense. Instead, they needed what George Washington had called “a respectable posture of defense.”

During an NSC meeting on October 29, 1953, when Cutler presented a revised version of NSC 162, the President amended the conclusion of the report to state that the strategy was only valid if the U.S. maintained a retaliatory capability that could not be neutralized with a surprise attack. Therefore, the U.S. needed to continually examine and report the likelihood of such a capability and revise its national security strategy accordingly. Eisenhower also felt that

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544 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 20.
emphasizing massive retaliatory damage “provided some sense of priority for our military planning.” For Eisenhower, deterring war was far more important than winning a war, and no deterrent was more important or powerful than massive retaliatory striking power. In light of this he intended NSC 162 to signal the U.S. would “keep a minimum respectable posture of defense while emphasizing this particular offensive capability [nuclear weapons]. Nobody could possibly deduce from such a statement that we propose to abandon the defense of New York City.”

546 As Eisenhower told Congressional leaders on December 13, 1954, he did not believe the Russians were seeking general war, but the recent advances of Soviet long-range bombers had made the threat of an attack on U.S. territory real. To counteract that threat he would focus national security efforts on retaliatory forces and on continental defense combined with economic and political subversions.

With such revisions the council adopted NSC 162/2, the New Look, on October 29, 1953 and the president approved it the next day. NSC 162/2 reflected certain aspects of all three Solarium Task Force reports, but “in effect clearly rejected the policy proposed by Alternative ‘C’.”

Thus, the primary result of Project Solarium was to reject the “year of maximum danger” that figured so prominently in NSC 68 and Task Force C’s “rollback” strategy, along with the related idea that time was working against the U.S. such that the Soviets would launch a


548 “Annex B to Report on U.S. Policy for the Exploitation of Soviet Vulnerabilities,” June 8, 1954, 29. See also Pickett, 30-32 and Gaddis, Strategies, 144. Here Gaddis also claims that at the end of Project Solarium, Eisenhower officially approved only Task Force A’s option but modified it slightly to incorporate that of Task Force B. This seems to contradict the reminiscences of Kennan, Goodpaster, and Bowie found in the Oral History, where they claimed the foremost result of Solarium was to discard Task Force B’s position, leaving Task Force C’s work to be incorporated into A’s.
surprise atomic attack or risk general war.\textsuperscript{549} The U.S., working closely with its allies, would maintain pressure on the Soviets over the long-term—emphasizing massive retaliatory offensive capabilities, psychological warfare, and building up German and Japanese defenses—while remaining open to the possibility of negotiated settlements with the Soviets and attempt to avoid spending levels that might turn America into a garrison state.

With his new strategic concept now in place, Eisenhower nonetheless continued to face pressure from allies and Congress on how to respond to Stalin’s death. At the Bermuda Conference—a meeting of the Heads of Government of the U.S. Britain, and France and their Foreign Ministers in December 1953—Churchill raised “the supreme question before us which should underlie all of our decisions…is there a new Soviet Look” or a deep change in the “mighty entity” called the Soviet Union since the death of Stalin. His answer was yes, owing largely to the fact that new Russian leaders were suffering economically and could not deliver on the “Russian Utopia which they had dangled before millions of people.” This had the promise of producing a tremendous change in the Russian outlook toward the world. Yet Churchill urged those present to take advantage of this new look, not by changing course, but by remaining unified and strong and not reducing any armed forces of the free world.\textsuperscript{550}

Eisenhower responded that while he was particularly intrigued by the phrase “new look”, they “must be sure that the new look was not the same old lady in the street—‘the same old gal’:

He said that despite the fact that this lady might have changed her dress, washed and used perfume, in his opinion she was the same old gal with the same old policy. That policy was the traditional Soviet policy of destruction of the Western capitalistic system by force, by threat of force, by infiltration, by deception and by conceit. The free world must recognize the danger and must stand together against a relentless, implacable enemy whose policies he doubted had changed at all.\textsuperscript{551}

\textsuperscript{549} Bowie and Immerman, 145-157.
\textsuperscript{551} “Heads of Government Meeting Mid-Ocean Club.”
At the meeting of the foreign ministers the next day Secretary Dulles argued that “It is possible that there is what Mr. Churchill referred to yesterday as a ‘change of heart’ but it is not yet manifest in this particular instance.” Dulles conceded that it was never possible to be 100 percent sure of adversaries’ intentions, but in this case he was 90 percent certain that the only purpose the Soviets had was to delay confrontation to a point where they would be more powerful. Thus, time was running out and Dulles pointed out that the U.S. Congress was in no mood to take positive action within the framework of NATO unless they had definite assurances that the Allies, and particularly the French, were serious about the European Defense Community. Otherwise, in Dulles’ opinion, Congress would significantly reduce appropriations to a level damaging to NATO (he also pointed out that at the start of the new year, 50 percent of Congressional appropriations would be made available for NATO only through EDC countries).\textsuperscript{552}

In order to avoid such a dramatic reduction in appropriations from Congress, Eisenhower would have to force greater economy on the Defense Department and sell it to Congress as progress. In a letter to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget on December 1, 1953, Eisenhower indicated his strong desire for further defense cuts and his intent to place everything but a few units (i.e. combat units in Korea, strategic air force units) on an austerity basis. He believed they had no excuse for keeping force levels for 1955 at 3,500,000 or above, particularly since they were no longer fighting in Korea. Correspondingly, the defense establishment should identify further economies “without wailing about the missions they have to accomplish. If they put their hearts into it, they can make substantial savings in personnel with little damage to the

\textsuperscript{552} “Foreign Ministers Meeting Mid-Ocean Club,” December 5, 1953, EPL, Hagerty, James C. Ppaers, All Trip Schedules Series, Box 11, “Bermuda Conference, 1953 (2)”
long term efficiency of the establishment.”

During an NSC meeting on December 16, 1953, the JCS presented a new military program to begin carrying out the “most defense at least cost” as envisioned in NSC 162/2. By June 30, 1957, the level of armed forces personnel would be reduced to 2,815,000 for an Army with 14 divisions, 650,000 for a Navy with 1,030 active combat vessels, 975,000 for an Air Force with 137 wings, and 190,000 for the Marine Corps. Redeployment of foreign-stationed personnel would take place depending on the success of diplomatic efforts to convince allies that their security would still be guaranteed. This would cost approximately $37.6 billion compared with $44 billion before (plus $4.2-4.5 billion for continental defense). Eisenhower approved of the plan but cautioned that he was not going to speak publicly about force levels for the armed services over the next three years for fear of public backlash. He also directed his advisers to approach Congress carefully, emphasizing that these figures were best estimates subject to change. Eisenhower then commended the Defense Department for its efforts to cut the budget:

As a former military man, the President said he knew with what emotion military men defend their right and responsibility to defend their country. He knew of the anguish with which some of these concessions to economy had been made. He said that he and the other members of the Council appreciated all of this, and especially the part played by the Army in the process.

Thus, in implementing and generating support for NSC 162/2, Eisenhower was willing to invoke his military experience. For example, on January 5, 1954, at a bipartisan conference discussing the alleged reduction in Air Force strength, Eisenhower explained that his administration was not reducing the Air Force’s strength but rather reducing the lead-time for approving and developing projects. This would have the practical effect of providing the military

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and Congress greater flexibility. To illustrate his point he drew on his experience in England during the War when, due to long lead-time, the Armed Forces had to buy a factory to carry out 216 modifications of the B-47 before sending the plane into combat. At that time he had been the “main instigator in getting rid of the ‘crazy’ lead time which in some cases extended as far forward as 1957.”

A personal letter from Eisenhower to Emmet J. Hughes—who served on Eisenhower’s personal staff during the campaign and subsequently as Administrative Assistant to the President—on December 10, 1953, showed the persistent influence of his military experience on his approach to being president and particularly in dealing with domestic political pressures. Eisenhower recalled that when the war first began in 1941, many people were urging immediate action; it was seen as un-American to be passive in the face of attack. But military leaders took the necessary time to build the leadership teams and combat units necessary to win the war. When stationed in London in June of 1942 and when directing Operation Overlord in 1944, Eisenhower was surrounded by people in the press urging him to personalize his campaign and rename his command centers “Eisenhower’s Headquarters.” He learned then not to read the newspapers, not to worry about seizing the limelight, and, most importantly, to cultivate loyal subordinates by taking “full responsibility, promptly, for everything that remotely resembles failure—giv[ing] extravagant and public praise to all subordinates for every success. The method is slow—but its results endure!!”

Eisenhower elaborated that “so called public opinion” is protean and often inaccurate. Further, it can be changed by success. Success could be achieved by one man such as himself.

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556 Eisenhower began the letter by saying: “I cannot remember when any letter has intrigued me as much as yours of December first.” Eisenhower to Emmet Hughes, December 10, 1953, EPL, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, “DDE Diary December 1953 (2),” 1-3.
with a high rank in the public esteem, “[b]ut in our complicated political system, even with such an individual standing, success is going to be measured, over the long term, by the skill with which the leader builds a strong team around him.” Such a strong team of leaders comprises people “who believe in certain things—often simple things—very deeply. This consolidation of intellectual approach to the Administration’s problems has been going on in the Cabinet and on the Hill for almost a year,” and in Eisenhower’s view it was slowly beginning to work. He was slowly beginning to build a “legislative-executive team that will not be too dependent upon the mere presence, words, or even the counsel of the chief, but which will, because of its complete solidarity of faith in ideas and ideals, be cable of functioning both collectively and in all of its parts.”

**Refining the Typology**

Dependent Variable: Strategic Adjustment

Thus, by the end of his first year in office, Eisenhower felt he had assembled a national security team capable of implementing his new grand strategy—a strategic adjustment away from NSC 68 and “rollback” to a more fiscally responsible (yet still strong and internationalist) form of containment. As Eisenhower described his goal to Senator Styles Bridges: “I want to wage the cold war in a militant, but reasonable style.” As Gaddis describes, this grand strategy had five novel pillars. First, an enhanced number of and reliance on nuclear weapons as a means of deterrence through “maximum retaliatory power.” Second, relying on alliances and on indigenous forces, bolstered by U.S. technical assistance and high-end air and naval assets, to deter the Soviets (what was often referred to as Secretary Dulles’s “pactomania”). Third, “psychological warfare” or the consistent use of public pronouncements and propaganda

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557 Eisenhower to Emmet Hughes, December 10, 1953, 5-6.
intended to demonstrate the strength of the free world relative to the isolation and overextension of the Soviet orbit, including a rhetorical commitment to the “liberation” of Europe and East Asia. Fourth, a broader use of covert action, including the overthrow Iran and Guatemala, the attempted overthrow of Indonesia and Cuba, U-2 aerial reconnaissance of the Soviet Union, domestic surveillance, and paramilitary operations against China and North Vietnam. Fifth, more frequent exchanges and attempts to negotiate with the Soviets and the Chinese.559

Nevertheless, the conventional view casts doubt on the idea that Eisenhower adjusted away from rollback toward the New Look, or that Project Solarium generated a new approach Eisenhower had not already begun to favor. For example, in their landmark analysis of NSC 162/2, Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman conclude “the fundamental elements of Eisenhower’s national strategy so closely paralleled his prepresidential views that one could argue that he would have adopted similar policies without the Solarium exercise, the numerous commissions, panels of consultants, staff studies, Planning Board papers, and even the vigorous NSC debates.”560 In a later work, Immerman argues basic national security strategy during the early Cold War was “driven more by the preexisting beliefs of decision makers and principal advisers than by intelligence collection and analysis.”561 Valerie Adams claims the Solarium exercise was rigged: “By stacking the deck through membership selection and narrow assignments, Eisenhower was able to re-examine containment, bury rollback, and build a team

559 Gaddis, Strategies, 143-159. Dueck describes this foreign policy as a series of balances: “He balanced domestic political goals and imperatives with international ones. He balanced an unquestioned belief in America’s form of government with a sense of realism as to its ease of export. He balanced hawkish anti-Communist convictions with a sincere desire for peace. He balanced cold war activism with a keen understanding that the violent military entanglements were easier to get into than out of. He balanced a deep American nationalism with a willingness to engage in diplomacy.” Dueck, Hard Line, 115.
560 Bowie and Immerman, 258.
561 Immerman, “Intelligence and Strategy,” 12.
consensus for his “New Look.””  

The text of NSC 162/2 itself seemed to repudiate rollback: “The detachment of any major European satellite from the Soviet bloc does not now appear feasible except by Soviet acquiescence or war.”

This Chapter has indeed demonstrated a great amount of congruence between Eisenhower’s campaign rhetoric (which did not dwell on rollback or talk about liberation with the same zeal as the Republican platform) and his ultimate adjustment with NSC 162/2. Eisenhower remained remarkably consistent in his emphasis on getting the most defense at the least cost and in protecting foreign aid relative to military spending. But as Chapter I made clear, this dissertation does not aim to measure changes in presidential beliefs. To say that Eisenhower did not change his mind from the start of his campaign to the implementation of NSC 162/2 is not to deny that an adjustment occurred. Consider Bowie and Immerman’s larger argument that Eisenhower, not Truman, was primarily responsible for shaping the basic strategy that guided the U.S. during three decades of the Cold War. In other words, they argue that NSC 162/2, was novel in its ideas and resonant in its influence. Because NSC 68 had perverted the initial concept of containment, Eisenhower did not inherit a fully formed or workable strategy from Truman. Eisenhower had to reject NSC 68 and adapt the concept of containment “to radically changed conditions and to implement it indefinitely.”

This case provides support for the classification of NSC 162/2 as a major strategic adjustment or restructuring from NSC 68. It not only significantly reduced the means that would be applied to containing the Soviet Union—Eisenhower cut the defense budget by 32 percent in

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564 Bowie and Immerman, 256.
FY1955 and 11 percent in FY1956, reducing Army manpower by 500,000—\textsuperscript{565}—but also emphasized the internal threat to the American way of life in addition to the external Soviet threat. One could argue this adjustment was a budget imperative in search of a strategic rational, but the adjustment was made nonetheless. Additionally, this case has shed light on an aspect of adjustment that my initial typology neglected. A strategic adjustment may involve a change in goals (i.e. ends) or resources applied to achieving certain goals (i.e means), and it may also involves a change in the internal logic that links ends and means. In military strategic planning this logic is often associated with “ways”, or the mechanisms through which means are expended in pursuit of ends. But since ways often become synonymous with specific programs or diplomatic initiatives, they become hard to separate from means and do not capture the internal logic of a strategy.

Eisenhower’s logic was simple but difficult to implement. He felt that with NSC 68, the U.S. had been trying to have its cake and eat it too, and risked reducing its spiritual and economic force to zero. His administration needed to “devise methods of meeting the Soviet threat and of adopting controls, if necessary, that would not result in our transformation into a garrison state. The whole thing, said the President, was a paradox.”\textsuperscript{566} NSC 162/2 solved that paradox, particularly by rejecting the idea of a “fixed D-date.” As Cutler summarized to the NSC on October 29, “despite the feeling in certain quarters that the policy was lacking in sharpness and in new content,” the grand strategy included a novel emphasis on the internal threat to the U.S. economy, the need to redeploy U.S. forces from abroad, the utility of massive retaliatory offensive capability, an attempt to normalize atomic weapons, building up German and Japanese

defensive strength, and continuing to put pressure on the Soviets while nonetheless remaining
open to mutually agreed settlements.\footnote{567}

Nevertheless, this case has cast doubt on the extent to which Eisenhower adjusted from
rollback. Rollback, even as articulated in the Republican platform of 1952, was a loosely-defined
objective, not a fully formulated strategy—it rejected the premise of containment on the grounds
that the U.S. may not be able to hold its anti-Soviet alliance together over the long term and in
light of the fact that the Soviets would soon achieve nuclear plenty. Rollback in fact had found
fuller expression in NSC 68, which aimed to reduce and retract Soviet influence by achieving
preponderant power and by pursuing a “positive campaign” (one that was never fleshed out). But
both NSC 135/3 and NSC 141, reappraisals of NSC 68 that Truman bequeathed to Eisenhower
near the end of his presidency, abandoned the elements of aggressive rollback found in NSC 68.
Though they were never implemented, these documents signaled a desire to move U.S. strategy
back toward Kennan’s version of containment found in NSC 20/4.\footnote{568} Eisenhower also
consistently qualified his endorsement of rollback by saying he was committed to liberation by
peaceful means and would not risk general war. This was, after all, a presidential campaign, and
Eisenhower needed soundbites more than a fully formed strategy. Since Eisenhower never fully
implemented rollback, it is hard to measure his adjustment from that starting point, or to take a
“photograph” of U.S. grand strategy at $t_1$, describe the actions taken to adjust grand strategy, and
then take a second photograph of grand strategy at $t_2$.

Yet this does not invalidate the utility of this case, particularly given the overall dearth of
cases of adjustments within administrations. In the first instance, as part of Project Solarium,

\footnote{567 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 168th Meeting of the National Security Council,
Thursday, October 29, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “168th Meeting of NSC October 29,
1953,” 2.}

\footnote{568 Bowie and Immerman, 29-31.}
Eisenhower specifically commissioned Task Force C to fully examine and advocate for rollback. Task Force C’s final report urged Eisenhower to accept the risk of general war in order to put the U.S. in a position to liberate Soviet satellites by 1965. Eisenhower even placed Andrew Goodpaster, his most trusted adviser, on Task Force C, the “most radical” study group, “largely because he knew that I’m [Goodpaster] not inclined to be too radical.”\(^569\) Eisenhower knew that Alternative C might suffer from seemingly risky proposals to confront Soviet advances around the globe. He selected Goodpaster, someone he knew to be thoughtful and reasonable, not to weaken the argument of Task Force C, but to challenge it and thereby make it more effective. Eisenhower thus gave rollback a fighting chance and devoted considerable bureaucratic resources to fleshing it out as a strategy.

Secondly, to acknowledge that Eisenhower may have initially accepted rollback in order to solidify the support of the right wing of the Republican Party—an issue to which they were “emotionally attached”\(^570\)—is not to deny that Eisenhower still faced a supremely difficult task in bringing the proponents of aggressive rollback on board his preferred “middle way” strategy. Notably, “Side B” in the NSC 162 debate, which consisted of the Defense Department, the JCS, and the isolationist proponents of tax cuts and balanced budgets, needed to be dragged along. Getting both John Foster Dulles and Robert Taft to support NSC 162/2 (or at least not openly oppose it) was a remarkable feat. Consider John Lewis Gaddis’ argument that the New Look was a product of the complex relationship between Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles. The strategy was thus “an amalgam” that emerged from “two personally friendly but temperamentally very different men, reflecting strainings and compromises as well as forbearance, cooperation, and


\(^{570}\) Bowie and Immerman, 76.
Dulles prodded Eisenhower in the direction of rollback, but Eisenhower tempered much of Dulles’ aggressive calls for liberating Soviet satellite states. At the very least, the formulation and implementation of NSC 162/2 shows the enormous investment of personal presidential leadership that was required to adjust grand strategy in a direction that many political supporters, key advisers, and entrenched bureaucrats had not originally intended to go.

Independent Variable #1: Strategic Shock

The death of Stalin was a substantial foreign policy surprise, it caught the Administration completely off guard and Eisenhower was frustrated by the CIA’s lack of insight and the Truman Administration’s complete failure to plan for such an event. The CIA was consistently wrong (or uselessly vague) in their predictions for how the power struggle within the Soviet Communist Party would affect foreign policy choices. Combined with the NSC’s failure to tease out the policy implications of Stalin’s death, this subpar Soviet intelligence collection and analysis frustrated Eisenhower. During a June 4, 1953 NSC meeting—two months after Eisenhower’s “Chance for Peace” speech attempted to restructure the U.S. relationship with the Soviet Union—Eisenhower “expressed his chagrin that the United States encounters such awful difficulty in trying to discover anything about Soviet capabilities in this and other fields, while, thanks to our habit of publicizing everything, it was so much easier for the Soviets to find out what they needed to know about our capabilities.” Thus, Stalin’s death satisfies the first of two criteria for a strategic shock.

Stalin’s death created confusion, but did not create “radically changed conditions” to use Bowie and Immerman’s phrase and it did not challenge Eisenhower’s grand strategic

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571 Gaddis, Strategies, 127.
572 Grose, 350-353.
“schemata.” In other words it did not contain discrepant information for Eisenhower’s grand strategic approach or cast doubt on the utility of rollback (or any of the other strategic options available to Eisenhower). While Malenkov quickly initiated a “peace offensive,” the prevailing view within the Administration was that this was a ruse, a delaying tactic that would allow the Soviets to continue to build up their military capabilities and shift the balance of power further in their favor. Eisenhower and his advisers generally felt the Soviets would not change course, or would not embark on a “new look” of their own as Churchill hoped. For example, at the NSC meeting on September 24, 1953, Allen Dulles began the proceedings with a brief on the recent series of Soviet atomic tests form August 12 through September 11, within the context of earlier tests going back to 1949, and concluded that the death of Stalin had not had any effect on the Soviets’ weapons program.\(^574\) On October 1, Dulles briefed the NSC that the U.S. Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. Chip Bohlen detected no basic changes in Soviet foreign policy.\(^575\) On November 5 Dulles briefed the NSC that Stalin’s death had produced no change in Sino-Soviet relations.\(^576\) A CIA Quarterly Estimate from April 1954 assessed that Soviet policies—thwarting European defense, advancing in Europe, consolidating the regime at home, and gaining breathing space by embroiling the U.S. in Asia—had not changed in terms of emphasis or direction.\(^577\) The text of NSC 162/2 even noted in paragraph 3a that “the authority of the Soviet regime does not appear to have been impaired by the events since Stalin’s death, or to be likely to be appreciably


\(^{575}\) S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 164th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 1, 1953,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, “164th Meeting of NSC October 1, 1953,” 2.


Weakened during the next few years.\footnote{578}

These assessments seem to contradict subsequent scholarly treatments that highlight the transformative effect of Stalin’s death. For example, Hopf argues that Stalin’s death “killed the institution of Stalinism, and so released the forces of change in Soviet society…This reversal occurred in virtually every domain of Soviet domestic life, from high politics to daily life on the kolkhoz.”\footnote{579} In terms of foreign policy, his death improved relations with the U.S., making “detente, unilateral arms reductions, and reversals of antagonistic policies in places like Austria and Korea” possible.\footnote{580}

It is understandable that the full effect of Stalin’s death would not be felt for years after NSC 162/2 was formulated and implemented. And for the purposes of this dissertation the key fact is that U.S. leaders at the time did not interpret Stalin’s death as a shock; they did not see it as changing Soviet foreign policy. Moreover, while Hopf draws a causal arrow from Stalin’s death to a reduction in global tensions, this Chapter shows that Eisenhower intended to pursue such a reduction in global tensions from the outset. The Chance for Peace speech was an expression of Eisenhower’s preexisting desire for avoiding unnecessary antagonism, as well as his intent to psychologically undermine Soviet leadership. The rejection of Task Force C and rollback was further evidence that Eisenhower decided against provoking the Soviet Union and risking general war through a “positive” campaign of “liberation.” At the same time, Eisenhower did not expect the Soviet’s to change their insidious behavior, and even as he argued for defense economies and reduced tensions, he made the case for safeguarding U.S. national security and

\footnote{578} NSC 162/2 quoted in “Annex B to Report on U.S. Policy for the Exploitation of Soviet Vulnerabilities,” June 8, 1954, EPL, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 1, “OCB 000.1 U.S.S.R. (File #1) (7),” 29. NSC 162/2 conceded that recent uprisings in East Germany and their satellites placed a strain on Soviet leadership, but had not actually reduced the Soviets ability to control and exploit the resources of these satellites.\footnote{579} Ted Hopf, Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945-1958 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143.\footnote{580} Hopf, 252-253.
maintaining consistent pressure on the Soviet Union.

This presents a problem for my second hypothesis, as this chapter argues that Eisenhower made a major foreign policy adjustment in the absence of a strategic shock. But at the same time this case study has revealed that Eisenhower was never fully committed to the rollback option and, since this option was never fully implemented, it is reasonable to conclude that Eisenhower did not require as dramatic of a catalyzing mechanism to jumpstart the adjustment process. It is also possible that unusually high values on other variables (i.e. foreign policy experience) allowed Eisenhower to adjust even in the absence of shock. In any case, the examination of how Eisenhower and his advisers responded to Stalin’s death allows for a clearer understanding of the difference between a surprise and a strategic shock.

Independent Variable #2: Domestic Political Slack

Eisenhower was elected on a wave of public support, and as Figure 8 below demonstrates, he rode this wave consistently throughout his presidency. But his “mandate for change” did not give him carte blanche to adjust U.S. grand strategy in whatever direction he wished. He had run for president out of a concern that the isolationist wing of the Republican Party would endanger U.S. national security, and he subsequently faced domestic political pressure from this same wing of his party to cut costs and balance budgets. Eisenhower understood these pressures as he designed his grand strategy and these pressures influenced his strategic thinking, but they did not overwhelm his strategic adjustment process.
An NSC meeting on October 7, 1952 debating NSC 162 illustrates the influence of domestic political pressures. Eisenhower told the members of the council that he wished they could see “the daily beating which he was taking from exponents of the balanced budget and greater economy.” The challenge for Eisenhower was to establish adequate defense and reasonable security while making it possible to balance the budget. This required the military, in the words of Secretary Humphrey, to be “so damned dollar conscious that it hurts.” NSC 141 [the reappraisal of NSC 68 completed on the last day of the Truman Administration that cast doubt on the sustainability of NSC 68] had “been left on our doorstep” by the Truman Administration and had called for additional of more than $20 billion on national security. Eisenhower felt the American people “ought to know when and how the law of diminishing returns sets in so heavy as to prove fatal.” In the subsequent NSC meeting a poll was

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581 Peters, “Presidential Job Approval: F. Roosevelt (1941)-Obama.”
582 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 6-7.
583 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 8.
584 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 8.
presenting showing that the issues of greatest concern to the American public, in order of importance, were: (1) Korea; (2) tax reduction; (3) economy in government; and (4) a balanced budget.585

Yet Eisenhower also consistently reminded Humphrey and other advisers that he had not promised to balance the budget in a specific year or at any cost. Rather, he had promised to steer the ship of state in the direction of a balanced budget.586 He would seek the most defense at the least cost, and in any case he was confident in his ability to sell his program to Congress and to the American people. Eisenhower thus struck a balance: he did not try to ram unpalatable programs through Congress, nor did he succumb to Congressional whims on matters of national security. He sought to engage Congress and induce cooperation whenever possible, but was willing to make the case for a politically problematic program (particularly mutual security programs) whenever he felt it necessary.

An NSC meeting on October 1, 1953 illustrated this careful balance between recognizing political realities and defending national security priorities. There Eisenhower explained that he had decided against supporting a retail sales tax because he was convinced that the administration could not get it through Congress. Yet when Secretary Humphrey claimed the administration could no longer use the hydrogen bomb as an excuse for raising taxes or failing to balance the budget (since they had been hearing such scare stories for 20 years), Eisenhower “commented that whatever the American people may think the hydrogen bomb scared him.” Secretary Humphrey responded that FY1955 was a critical year in which to preserve public confidence and demonstrate they were breaking from the bad business of the Truman Administration. Failing that, the “American economy will go to hell and the Republican Party

585 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 166th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 4.
586 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 165th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 8.
will lose the next election.” Eisenhower responded that if they needed money for foreign policy and national security, “he was prepared to fight for it everywhere and with all the energy he could summon up, although he said he did not want to scare the people to death and did want our military posture to be calculated on a long-term basis.”

This shows Eisenhower had the slack necessary both to change course from NSC 68 (indeed he was elected because of it) and to push back against his own party. In some ways the domestic pressure to cut budgets and taxes proved useful in adjusting away from rollback and defying Republicans who wanted to liberate Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union, for it illustrated that rollback was a bankrupt concept—its supporters were willing to risk general war in pursuit of rollback but unwilling to pay for it. Eisenhower’s consistent criticism of those who would cut foreign assistance while zealously defending defense budgets exposed the asymmetry between rollback’s ambitious goals divorced from the means necessary to achieve those goals.

This case also illustrates the challenges in consistently modeling domestic political slack on foreign policy matters within an administration. Eisenhower faced more domestic political pressure from members of his own party rather than from Democrats. Foreign policy politics in the Eisenhower Administration did not stop at the water’s edge, it just created strange bedfellows. Thus, while Eisenhower worried about the Republicans losing the Congress to Democrats in the midterm elections, he knew that a Democratic victory would not jeopardize the New Look. A greater challenge was pushing back against Republican calls for immediately balancing the budget in such a way that might, in Eisenhower’s view, imperil U.S. national security.

Independent Variable #3: Conceptual Complexity

Eisenhower’s conceptual complexity is evident in the way in which he structured his decision-making process in general and his process for formulating NSC 162/2 in particular. From the start of his administration, Eisenhower established an NSC process that was designed to capture new information, test working assumptions, and eliminate “nonconcurrence through silence. This president was entitled to, and expected to hear, the full range of his responsible associates’ views before making his decisions.” Project Solarium reflected this approach and Eisenhower’s appetite for alternative analysis, even if it challenged his preexisting grand strategic schemata. In Eisenhower’s view, the process itself created intelligence. The Solarium process allowed for a thorough consideration of a wide variety of information. It also created an intellectual setting in which three small teams of policymakers could freely voice their views without fear of angering the president, without having their views politicized, and with a genuine belief that they could influence foreign policy change. Kennan and the other participants were given clear instructions and equal access to national security resources such as NIEs and SE. As such, each Task Force had reason to believe that their reports would be taken seriously and that their six-week physical and intellectual investment would not simply supply a straw man.

In this way the Solarium process created productive dissent. The participants had the intellectual and professional clout to defend their assigned strategy well. Eisenhower, the Working Committee, and the Doolittle Panel had asked them act like legal advocates working up a case. But as authentic advocates for their assigned strategic alternative, the Task Forces were not playing the often-contrived role of a legal advocate nor were they merely trying to disprove a

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590 I thank Robert Bowie for suggesting this point.
case like a devil’s advocate. Project Solarium went further and approximated what Richard Betts has called ad hoc “real devils”: a selective form of multiple advocacy that employs outside experts to argue alternative viewpoints.

Using such procedural tools, Project Solarium encouraged a rigorous analysis of three strategic options. It made the key issues, analyses, assumptions, and positions more transparent to all those involved. It forced the administration to pause and take a hard look at the course it was charting before sailing forward. This was the way Eisenhower liked to make big decisions. As he was fond of telling his subordinates: “Let’s not make our mistakes in a hurry.”

But it is hard to draw a useful conclusion from this case other than this simple one: Eisenhower was conceptually complex and the way he structured his decision-making process illustrates his complexity. Preston’s work has already demonstrated this. Moreover, while Eisenhower appeared open to discrepant information from the international environment, he did not encounter much during the first year of his presidency as he formulated and implemented NSC 162/2. It also seems problematic to use records of NSC discussions as evidence of complexity, for these often resembled prepared debates rather than spontaneous discussions. And if Eisenhower intended to use the NSC process in part to generate consensus around positions he already held, then this is evidence against complexity. In sum, this case seems to support my third hypothesis—that conceptually complex presidents are more likely to respond to shocks by formulating strategic alternatives—but it raises questions about the marginal utility of this variable. As I refine the typological theory, I must question how much value the complexity variable is adding.

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591 On legal devil’s advocacy vs. intelligence community devil’s advocacy, see Robin v. Spivey, “The Devil is in the Details: The Legal Profession as a Model for Authentic Dissent,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 22, no.4 (December 2009), 633, 640.
593 Quoted by Goodpaster in *Forging the Shield*, 212.
**Independent Variable #4: Foreign Policy Experience**

In 1952, as Truman prepared to leave office, he reflected on what was in store for his successor: “He'll sit here...and he'll say, 'Do this! Do that!' And nothing will happen. Poor Ike--it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating.”

Truman was partially right—changing course from NSC 68 was frustrating work. But Eisenhower proved up to the task, in no small part because of his Army experience—which made him one of the nation’s most skillful strategists and bureaucrats—and his (related) popularity. Indeed, this case study has uncovered convincing evidence that while Eisenhower’s high amount of foreign policy experience did not make implementing a strategic adjustment easy, it made it easier. This supports my fourth hypothesis.

Eisenhower was also uniquely suited for the type of adjustment he pursued: cutting the defense budget at a time of high geopolitical anxiety without generating significant political blowback. This raises a key counterfactual: would Eisenhower the war hero been as successful in pursuing a different kind of adjustment such as rollback? Would Eisenhower have encountered more resistance had he gone in a more aggressive direction of continued deficit spending and massive military mobilization? Intuitively, it makes sense that extensive military experience would make it easier for a president to mobilize the country in the face of a threat. But more defense spending and bolder action in the face of a genuine threat will always be an easy sell relative to defense economy and defensive containment in the face of a threat. The latter opens a president up to accusations of weakness and surrender. The unique value of military experience

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595 In NSC Action No. 867 on September 23, 1953, the Operations Coordinating Board of the NSC approved a study on the decline in U.S. prestige abroad. Citing growing distrust of American leadership and concerns about anti-democratic trends in the U.S. (i.e. McCarthyism), the report recommending taking “maximum advantage of President Eisenhower’s personal popularity abroad, demonstrate his leadership of his party and the nation as a whole, and exploit appropriate opportunities for Presidential utterances on foreign policy.” C. D. Jackson, “Memorandum for the National Security Council,” September 23, 1953, EPL, WHOSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 5, “Miscellaneous (4) [September 1953- April 1954],” 10.
is to defuse this attack: it allows a president to cut national security spending and pursue détente without being labelled weak on national security. The presumption with Eisenhower was that he knew more about defense spending than most of the generals working for him; the country trusted him to make the right decision without endangering U.S. interests.

Eisenhower was also willing to wield his military experience in order to push back against the military brass and demand greater defense economy. NSC debates throughout the Eisenhower administration provide ample evidence of this. For example, in a November 23, 1953 meeting of the NSC, Eisenhower invoked his WWII experience to push back against the chairman of the joint chiefs regarding the utility of anti-aircraft artillery against aircraft flying at extremely high or low altitudes. In this way Eisenhower used his personal foreign policy experience to question an expansion of the military’s early warning system and interceptor forces as part of the Pentagon’s overall continental defense program. In a similar incident the JCS presented a proposal to make the rules for sharing atomic information with allies more strict. We would expect a leader without direct experience to err on the side of caution and agree to restricting such sensitive information, but Eisenhower questioned the necessity of this approach. He added “with some heat that he and others around the table had had a good deal of experience in dealing with allies, and that you had to start out to treat them as though they were allies.”

At an NSC meeting on December 16, 1953, the Secretary of the Army questioned the wisdom of reducing the size of the Army by 1/3 over the course of the next 2-3 years. He nonetheless deferred to Eisenhower’s judgment and he made this statement “with great deference to the

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President’s superior military knowledge, and with a sense of the President’s heavy responsibility. He professed his own lack of skill in military matters.”

Similarly, a memo for Eisenhower from Lieutenant General Henry Larsen, of the Association of Civil Defense Directors, assessing the Civil Defense program, conceded “your [Eisenhower’s] military background qualifies you far better than any of us to determine which course we should take form the present turning point.”

Eisenhower’s personal appeals to Congressional leaders, in which he invoked his foreign policy experience, also allowed him to protect foreign aid programs.

Eisenhower’s experience gave him the confidence both to overrule his advisers when necessary and to fully harness their talents without fear of being upstaged. His extensive time as a staff officer instilled in him a respect for the benefits of structured decision-making processes with a variety of participants. This allowed him to conceive of Project Solarium, a process that could harness the talents of top-level thinkers while compensating for the inherent weaknesses of human cognition. It also allowed him to choose the best strategic minds suited to defending the three different strategies—people that were true experts, regardless of popularity, or inner circle status. For example, Kennan, despite his vaunted status as the architect of containment, was not, at the time of Solarium, an administration insider or a safe choice. His strong views, which contradicted many of those held by John F. Dulles, may have intimidated a less assured president, but not Eisenhower, who was not afraid of the influence Kennan might exert on the process. A modern president may not have such political clout or personal confidence upon

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599 Lt. Gen Henry Larsen to Eisenhower, Unspecified Date, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Campgain Series, Box 6, “Defense.”
600 See, for example, L. Arthur Minnich, “Staff Meeting Minutes,” June 10, 1953, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, L. Arthur Minnich Series, Box. 1, “Staff Meetings (3) [June 1953 - February 1957].”
which to rely.\textsuperscript{601}

Yet this also reveals potential interaction effects between complexity and experience, which pose problems for my typology. For example, noted historian Christopher Andrew argues Eisenhower won his command of American military forces in WWII “partly because he impressed Marshall with his openness to new ideas.”\textsuperscript{602} It was Eisenhower’s complexity, in other words, that gave him opportunities to acquire foreign policy experience, which in turn increased Eisenhower’s propensity and ability to change course. It certainly seems reasonable to conclude that more conceptually complex individuals will seek out new opportunities to enhance their experience, for they are information-hungry and unafraid of encountering alternative views of the world. This raises the question: how much of a president’s experience is captured by complexity?

Alternatively: how much of a president’s complexity is captured by experience? As a 2004 conference examining Project Solarium concluded, Eisenhower’s time as a strategist, planner, and commander had impressed upon him “the importance—in matters concerning life or death and the destinies of nations—of getting the best possible information before deciding on a course of action and of selecting and organizing his planners in a way that increased the probability that they would help him discover the correct one.”\textsuperscript{603} In this formulation it was Eisenhower’s experience that made him more complex, more open to new and possibly discrepant information, increasing his likeliness to change course. But, however intuitive, if

\textsuperscript{601} Such confidence is critical to the multiple advocacy process. As George explains, “some executives find it extremely distasteful, disorienting, and enervating to be exposed directly in face-to-face settings to the clash of opinion among their advisers. In addition, they may be reluctant to listen to the persuasive effort of any determined advocate, even in a private setting in which no other advocates are present, for fear of being swayed in favor of or against his position by nonrational considerations.” George,\textit{ Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy}, 203.

\textsuperscript{602} Andrew, \textit{For the President’s Eyes Only}, 199.

complexity is a stable personality trait, this cannot be true—complexity, unlike experience, does not increase over time. The refined typology will have to account for these interaction effects, and determine the extent to which complexity can be disentangled from experience.

Finally, this case suggests—and most historians have argued—that Eisenhower’s extensive foreign policy experience made him more likely at the outset to formulate and implement a sound strategic adjustment that stood the test of time. This does not mean Eisenhower was immune to strategic shock (as we will see in the next chapter). Even the most experienced person cannot predict the future and even a “sound” or the “right” grand strategy can be overcome by international events and changes in the balance of power. Rather, Eisenhower’s foreign policy experience ensured that, at the very least, his grand strategy would be internally consistent and sustainable on its own merits. That is to say, his experience taught him how to actually formulate and implement grand strategy and the critical importance of doing so. As Gaddis argues, as a military commander Eisenhower learned the lessons of Clausewitz that “means had to be subordinated to ends; effort expended without purpose served no purpose, other than its own perpetuation.” And in Eisenhower’s view, this failure to align ends with means was the critical failing of NSC 68.

Looking Ahead

If this chapter has shown that Eisenhower did not adjust from rollback because rollback was never fully formed, the next chapter will address this deficiency. Eisenhower had implemented the New Look by 1957. Thus, any strategic shock at that later stage of his

604 Gaddis, Strategies, 133.
605 Elizabeth Saunders has also recently argued Eisenhower’s military experience formed his causal beliefs about the origin of threats, making him focused on external threats and the international dimension of state behavior rather than on the internal or domestic dimension of foreign threats. Saunders suggests this made Eisenhower more cautious in his foreign policy and less likely to intervene militarily to transform the domestic institutions of other countries. This argument, however, does not explain Eisenhower’s consistent use of covert action to meddle with the internal dynamics of foreign countries nor Eisenhower’s profound appreciation for the internal threat to U.S. security stemming from profligate spending. Saunders, Leaders at War, 53-91.
presidency poses a direct challenge to the course Eisenhower chartered in the first year of his presidency. It should shed light on whether Eisenhower continued to enjoy domestic political slack after steering the ship of state for four years. Finally, it should allow for a more thorough examination of Eisenhower’s classification as a “navigator”—whether complexity and experience truly affect strategic adjustment.
CHAPTER IV: EISENHOWER AND SPUTNIK

“Upon entering the Cabinet Room ten minutes late, the President commented with a smile that national security affairs occasionally had to give way when domestic politics raised its ugly head.”

-356th Meeting of the NSC, February 27, 1958

This chapter examines the key challenge to Eisenhower’s New Look after the October 1957 launch of the Soviet space satellite, Sputnik, which Colin Dueck calls the “single biggest perceived foreign policy setback of Eisenhower’s second term.” Since Eisenhower was conceptually complex and experienced, this chapter should test the value of strategic shock and domestic political slack. Additionally, as stated in Chapter I, my initial research shows a different outcome on the value of the dependent variable than the strategic adjustments examined in Chapters II and III. This is a case of grand strategic continuity, and my expectation is that comparing continuity in this case to adjustment in my prior cases will shed further light on the typology.

Implementing the New Look: Containing the Costs of Containing Communism

At the end of Eisenhower’s first year in office, though the New Look was codified as the official grand strategy of his administration, Eisenhower felt he had much work to do in implementing this grand strategy. As he put it to the Chairman of his Council of Economic advisors: “As the New Year begins, much of this exploratory work is behind us; the time has come for clear cut, determined action in setting this Nation on a moderate but definite course—avoiding the extremes of both Right and Left, but always steadily pushing ahead along the broad


607 Dueck, Hard Line, 110.
Center—where there is room for all men of good will.” Eisenhower himself enjoyed the good will of the people. A May 1955 Gallup poll of leaders from the “Who’s Who in America” list cited the Eisenhower’s intellectual honesty, his military record and war hero status, and his sincerity as the top three reasons for his popularity. A Minnesota Tribune poll conducted that same year indicated that 87 percent of men and 82 percent of women approved of the way Eisenhower was handling his duties. The previous high was in February 1953, when 77 percent approved, and in 1954, 75 percent approved.

The 65-year-old president suffered a heart attack in September 1955, creating serious concerns about his ability to withstand the rigors of the office. Nevertheless, Eisenhower coasted to reelection in 1956. He beat Adlai Stevenson—whose campaign simultaneously criticized Eisenhower for being insufficiently aggressive against Communism in Eastern Europe and Indochina and overly aggressive and militaristic in general—by 457 to 73 electoral votes, 35,590,472 to 26,022,752 total votes (57.4 to 42 percent of the popular vote), and 41 to 7 states. This was the largest presidential majority since Roosevelt’s victory over Alf Landon in 1936.

Despite Eisenhower’s landslide victory, the Republican Party lost two seats in the House and one seat in the Senate. In 1954 the Republicans had lost 18 seats in the House and one in the Senate (though independent Wayne Morse of Oregon caucused with the Democrats for a net loss of two seats). This marked a shift to Democratic control in the House and Senate that would last until 1994 and 1980 respectively. Along with these losses, the measure of “vote concurrence”, or the percentage of members who vote with the president’s position on roll call votes, declined

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609 “Reasons for Ike’s Popularity?” EPL, Ann Whitman File, Name Series, Box 26, “Political Advice.”
611 Smith, Eisenhower in War and Peace, 704.
slightly but consistently from 82.8 percent in 1954, to 75.3 percent in 1955, to 69.2 percent in 1956, to 68.4 percent in 1957 (and then up to 75.7 percent in 1958). \(^{612}\)

Further losses to the Democrats did not clearly translate into greater domestic political opposition to Eisenhower’s agenda. Eisenhower seemed mostly concerned with opposition from his own party. For example, at a meeting with Congressional leaders on March 1, 1954, Eisenhower described, “with some annoyance,” the complaints he had been getting from some extremely conservative members of the Republican Party. These members “were threatening to refuse to contribute any longer to the Party because the Eisenhower Administration was too New Deal-ish. He thought this criticism was particularly out of place in view of the economic situation of the country and the need for governmental concern to prevent the development of a serious economic decline.”\(^{613}\) For the Taft-wing of the Republican Party, Eisenhower would never be conservative enough. Yet the president felt the internal divide among Republicans was bridgeable. He believed the Republican Platform of 1956 captured the broad agreement within the party. In particular, Republicans were united on three things: (1) opposing centralization of Federal government responsibility, which created increasing dependence on government; (2) recognizing that isolation from the world stage was not possible for the U.S.; and (3) reducing national debt, particularly so as to avoid inflationary pressure.\(^{614}\)

Eisenhower expounded upon these views in a letter to the Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Meade Alcorn, on August 30, 1957. Eisenhower complained that Republicans had succumbed too easily to the efforts by the press to divide them into a

\(^{612}\) Vote concurrence is different from previous proxies for domestic political slack in that it recognizes that it is difficult if not impossible to judge whether the president influenced Congress or vice versa. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, “House and Senate Concurrence with the President,” The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/concurrence.php (accessed October 9, 2014).


\(^{614}\) Eisenhower to Bion R. East, September 12, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “September - 1957 - DDE Dictation (2).”
conservative wing and a liberal wing, with Senate Minority Leader Bill Knowland leading the former wing and Eisenhower leading the latter. Eisenhower disputed this division, and pointed out that Knowland stood in the top five among Republican Senators in terms of his record of voting for the president’s proposals. At times they differed on particular foreign policy issues, but Knowland had fought for Eisenhower when it counted. While Eisenhower recognized the need for the federal government to undertake unprecedented functions and responsibilities (particularly in foreign affairs), he had consistently fought against “the needless and useless expansion of these functions and responsibilities.” Members of the Senate’s so called “right wing”—which included Senators Bridges, Martin, Capehart, Dirksen, and Hickenlooper—had acted similarly. In Eisenhower’s view, the common doctrine that should unite the Republican Party above all else was the idea that isolation was not possible for the U.S. and the best way of binding other free nations to the U.S. Were as follows:

(1). By emphasizing our unity in spiritual values.

(2). By opposing Communism and other forms of dictatorship with our whole might, achieving here at home a unified bipartisan foreign policy, to be developed and exploited by the State Department, supported by Defense, Mutual Aid, and Intelligence organizations.

(3). Through investments, by private capital wherever possible, in those countries whose future development is dependent upon the acquisition of outside investment capital.

(4). Through mutually beneficial, multi-lateral aid.\(^6\)

Eisenhower made regular efforts to communicate this grand strategic vision to both parties in Congress, particularly during his routine meetings with Congressional leaders. For example, on December 14, 1954, Eisenhower defended his administration’s foreign policy approach, urging those present to abandon a fixation with manpower and instead recognize the

importance of strong retaliatory power and the long-term superiority of the American industrial base. The president conceded that Germany was weak, which eliminated a traditional check on Soviet power, but he emphasized “the most important thing was maintaining a long and steady course. This could be done through a well-chosen, adequate and constantly modernized defense organization, backed by the Reserve establishment and a strong domestic economy.” Towards this end, every military service ought to be examining every possible way to cut manpower and thereby ease the burden on the American people “in a way that would not expose the country.”

Eisenhower’s extensive military experience continued to prove an asset in selling his vision to Congress, particularly when it came to cutting force levels. For example, in a conference with Congressional leaders in June 1955, Eisenhower argued strongly against proposals to increase Army strength by 150,000 men. Those present asked him if he wanted to make a fight of the issue. Eisenhower replied: “Indeed I do. There are much better uses for that money if it has to be spent.” Adding 150,000 men would cost approximately $450 million, and, in Eisenhower’s view, accomplish very little. They needed more flexibility not more troops. Eisenhower concluded: “I get a little bit tired of having to defend myself against the charge of ‘being out to wreck the Army’!”

Since cutting force levels opened up his administration up to charge of being soft on communism, Eisenhower’s willingness to invoke his military experience was understandable. In early 1955, Congressional leaders asked Eisenhower about Army Chief of Staff General Ridgeway’s recent testimony before Congress in which he criticized reducing Army end strength. Eisenhower responded calmly that each service chief could make a compelling case for

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increasing their force strength and their budget, but the real question, and the real responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief was to determine on an administration-wide basis the essentials of national security, balancing military strength against the size of taxes and the state of the economy. Further, if you kept adding to the strength of a particular service, the law of diminishing returns would eventually set in. Eisenhower then “forcefully” asserted “it might be better to take much of the money now being spent on ground forces and use it to build highways leading away from large cities so to provide adequately for evacuation in case of attack…In the event of so great a disaster, there would be no possibility of sending whole divisions abroad.”

With this in mind, the most important task was not to increase the size of the Army or make more foot soldiers but rather to establish a powerful striking force capable of deterring a Soviet attack. 618

Similarly, at a meeting with Congressional leaders on March 6, 1956, there was a discussion about the efforts of a Congressional investigating committee to portray the administration as being soft on communism due to its East-West trade concessions. Eisenhower responded that had been opposing communism long before the members of this committee had ever started to get on the record. He recalled:

how when he was Chief of Staff he had virtually on bended knee beseeched President Truman for funds to keep up the strength of our occupying forces, for he had believed that the Communists would move in to any area we were not occupying. He said he had finally been willing to settle for a mere $110 million for maintenance of certain automotive equipment. Mr. Truman, however, had called him when he was down south to inform him that the money could not be had. The President went on to say that he had noticed in the recent reviews of Mr. Truman’s book the comments about Mr. Truman’s great statesmanship in coming to the defense of South Korea and upholding the United Nations. President Eisenhower commented that we would never have had to fight there at all if he had been given one regiment in Korea. In effect, he said, we partially invited the Communists in. 619

619 L. Arthur Minnich Jr., “Memorandum,” March 6, 1956, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary,
Thus, despite his stature and popular support, Eisenhower had to fight to implement his strategic adjustment. He had to fight the military to keep defense budgets in check, and he had to fight Congress to get certain programs approved. For example, during his final meeting with Congressional leaders in 1955, Eisenhower expressed disappointment that certain measures—such as the atomic powered merchant ship, the highway program, the housing bill—seemed doomed to fail in Congress. Eisenhower here seemed to preview the public reaction to Sputnik and stressed the potential negative impact on global public opinion if the Russians beat the U.S. in developing an atomic powered ship devoted to peaceful trade. Such an achievement would stir up wider concern that the Russians had surpassed the U.S. in other areas. Those present thought it would be unwise to take up these measures in an election year. The president responded: “I don’t mind having to take things up in an election year. I just don’t give a damn about elections. But some of these things are important to the people who have to run. I have no immediate personal concern in these things, but the Republican Party is important to me, for I want it to be the situation where it can command the support of the people.”

Though confident in the course he had set with the New Look, NSC 162/2 contained a key sentence in the final paragraph saying the strategy was only valid if the U.S. maintained a retaliatory capability that could not be neutralized via surprise attack. Therefore, the U.S. needed to continually reexamine the strategy, report the likelihood of such a capability, and be prepared to change course. Throughout the rest of Eisenhower’s administration, this reexamination would proceed both formally in an annual review of Basic National Security Policy and

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620 L. Arthur Minnich Series, Box. 1, “Miscellaneous - C (3) [January 1954 - August 1958].”
informally as NSC discussions often digressed into broad debates over the status and success of the New Look.

On August 5, 1954, Eisenhower convened the NSC to take stock of their grand strategy. Robert Cutler presented NSC 5422/1 to the Council, the Planning Board’s attempt to present a revised statement of policy guidelines to the departments and agencies. Cutler recommended this paper be approved as “Guidelines under NSC 162/2”—thereby allowing the various departments and agencies to prepare programs and budget requests for FY 1956—once various differences on the language were resolved. There was little disagreement on the overall “Estimate of the World Situation and Outlook Through Mid-1959,” which suggested an overall rise in the level of Soviet threat yet played down the risk of general war. The estimate made three main points about changes in the international environment: (1) Soviet nuclear capability (both delivery systems and weapons) had substantially increased, (2) the unity of the free world allies was threatened by conflicts of interest, and (3) Communist powers were more likely to attempt to extend their influence through “creeping expansion” and subversion rather than through overt attack.

There was disagreement, however, over the extent to which the Soviets would take increasingly bold action without running a substantial risk of general war. Eisenhower felt speculation on this subject was an “academic exercise” and NSC 5422/1 was instead meant to communicate the broadest lines of policy, not dwell on unknowable hypotheticals. Secretary Dulles felt it was important to engage in such speculation, but agreed with the President that it was extremely difficult to predict whether the Soviets would grow bolder on a global scale. The issue was resolved by Eisenhower, who inserted the following statement into the document: “Because Soviet action under this situation cannot be accurately predicted, the free world will have to be especially vigilant.”
Cutler then drew attention to a portion of the report assessing the Soviets would reach their high capability for a nuclear attack on the U.S. by July 1957. Interestingly, though Eisenhower rejected placing fixed dates in the paper for the U.S. to finish building early warning systems and continental defense readiness programs (and had spent much of 1953 pushing back against the “year of maximum danger”), he said he had no objection to including the date. The President, however, voiced concern with a phrase suggesting the U.S. should make clear to the world its determination to use “all available weapons” in the event of general war. Eisenhower and Dulles felt this policy statement should not require them to boast about U.S. nuclear capabilities. Additionally, Eisenhower felt it would be better to emphasize constructive peace rather than attempting to prepare global public opinion for war. One could talk to world leaders about war privately, but educating public opinion on matters of nuclear Armageddon was a different matter. Secretary Dulles added that talk of atomic attacks tended to create a “peace-at-any-price” syndrome, encouraging an appeasement sentiment in various countries.

Eisenhower was also frustrated that plans to use nuclear weapons had not yet been fully accepted by the Defense Department. Secretary Wilson responded: “the idea of using nuclear weapons involved a big change in military thinking and that it took time to get everyone to accept this change.” The disagreement was resolved by replacing the requirement for making the U.S. determination to use nuclear weapons known with the requirement that internal planning should be based on the assumption that, should general war occur, the U.S. would use all available weapons.

The NSC then discussed the steps the U.S. should be prepared to take to deter and defeat local Communist aggression, a subject of debate that would continue until the end of Eisenhower’s presidency and become bound up in the response to Sputnik. Eisenhower indicated
the trouble in such situations was often knowing who to retaliate against, since in many cases aggressions consisted of subversion in civil war rather than overt attack. This undermined the deterrent effect of the U.S. massive retaliatory power. Eisenhower also emphasized that, while they must rely primarily on local forces to fight Communist aggression, the U.S. must also maintain mobile forces capable of assisting local forces if they “fight hard and need help” and in order to “clean up certain situations.”

Deterring local Communist aggression with flexible, forward-deployed forces would still be costly. With characteristic causticness, Treasury Secretary Humphrey responded that he would then have to leave to go to Capitol Hill and get the debt limit raised so they could pay their bills for the next few months (the deficit was at $4.1 billion and would likely become $5 billion if they did not find a way to reduce expenditures). Humphrey suggested that while they should not give up any programs essential for national security, they should “pay as we go”, asking for a tax increase to fund programs they could not get by readjusting existing programs. Eisenhower responded that they should not be afraid to ask for taxes to fund essential programs, but in the meantime they should make every effort to eliminate unnecessary expenditures. He cautioned, however, that it would not always be possible to eliminate an old program to make room for a new one.

Finally, the NSC considered the question of rollback, as the draft paper contained a paragraph suggesting the U.S. should devote greater resources to pushing back Communist power in Asia. Governor Stassen indicated his concern that this implied rollback would take

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622 Yet there was still an overarching reliance on strategic forces to achieve economies on conventional forces; this was the administration’s essential tradeoff that would achieve the most defense at the least cost. It relied, of course, on a willingness to use nuclear weapons and/or convince adversaries of that willingness. “It is clear, in retrospect, that the Eisenhower administration was prepared to ‘go nuclear’ in any of several contingencies—a Soviet conventional force attack in Europe, a violation of the Korean armistice, an escalation of fighting in Indochina, or a Chinese Communist assault on Quemoy and Matsu.” Gaddis, Strategies, 169.
place only in Asia, and he wished to emphasize plans for broader rollback, albeit over an extremely long time horizon. Eisenhower resolved the issue by deciding the paper should indicate that while significant rollback was indeed a long-range objective, the U.S. should be prepared, in current actions and future planning, to seize earlier opportunities to contract Communist-controlled areas should they arise.623

Despite attempts to follow a consistent line in implementing the New Look, the administration faced significant difficulties in containing defense costs.624 This was due not only to Democratic pressures from Congress to avoid cuts but also to bureaucratic pressures internal to the administration. For example, in his last official communication as Director of the Bureau of the Budget on March 30, 1956, Rowland R. Hughes summarized the key challenges his successor was likely to face over the next five years if they continued followed the course Eisenhower had set. Hughes argued the biggest problem was that few on Eisenhower’s team could appreciate the overall budgetary problem. Most NSC and Cabinet members were captive to subordinates and outside pressures, which turned them ultimately into “special pleaders for particular expenditures, regardless of the impact on the budget as a whole.” Further, the overall climate in Washington was conducive to approving individual programs so as not to antagonize a particular interest group, without regard for the budget as a whole.625 The same advisers who had come into the administration inveighing against the excesses under the Truman administration

624 As Nixon told the NSC on July 13, 1956, it was essential to maintain the outward appearance of continuity in foreign policy. Nixon recognized they would all face “difficulties inherent in the democratic system” and “certainly have to take some heat in their efforts to make clear the continuity and the good sense of the Administration’s defense program and its foreign policy.” But it was essential, in his view, “at this stage in our history,” for the administration to “give every appearance of knowing precisely where it is going and that it follow a consistent line.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 290th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, July 13, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “290th Meeting of NSC July 13, 1956,” 18.
were now sincerely convinced their own budgets were sacrosanct. Only a thin minority in the
administration would counsel Eisenhower to cut government expenditures and thereby balance
the budget, and then only in the most abstract terms. In Hughes’ view, Defense was the biggest
offender, particularly owing to its tendency to add new programs rather than replacing programs
of lesser priority.  

This pushed the administration, against Eisenhower’s will, in the direction of increased
budgets. Hughes noted next year’s approved expenditure total would be the highest in U.S.
peacetime history, and future expenditures were likely to rise further. Despite the
Administration’s tax cuts in 1954 and continued emphasis on reducing tax burdens, “anticipated
tax collections for fiscal 1957 will be the highest in American history—exceeding those
collected in any of the Truman years and 50 percent above actual collections at the height of
World War II. Indeed, so far as I can find, our expenditure program requires that we collect more
in taxes next year than has ever been collected from any people in any country in all of recorded
history.” The current Democratic Congress exacerbated the problem by persistently resisting
the administration’s attempts to reduce costs. Hughes felt that “A Republican Congress, by
contrast, might well be the means for assisting us to save $2 or $3 billion annually.”

Eisenhower, however, questioned whether he should expend effort trying to elect
Republicans to Congress, because in most cases he was satisfied to have Democrats in control. He was not satisfied with the efforts of his own advisers to cut costs, cuts which were essential if
Eisenhower was to achieve his goal of balancing the budget by 1957 while maintaining a

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626 Rowland Hughes, “Memorandum,” March 30, 1956, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, L.
DIARY-acw,” 1.
credible military deterrent.\textsuperscript{630} Up to that point the administration had reduced annual expenditures by $15.5 billion. New obligational authority was also cut and kept below budget receipts and expenditures in each year. Taxes rates had been reduced by $7.4 billion in 1954 and the budget deficit was cut from $10 to $2.4 billion. But Eisenhower’s review of the Defense Department’s request for supplemental appropriation for FY 1957, completed in April 1956, demonstrated the difficulty of achieving a balanced budget by 1958 or subsequent years without further postponing tax reductions (if not imposing new taxes). Though Eisenhower had denied funding for a variety of new programs (except an increase in B-52s), currently approved programs came with automatic increases in expenditures.\textsuperscript{631}

Over the course of two meetings from August 16-17, 1956, the NSC again considered the budget situation. After the Director of the Bureau of the Budget—now Percival Brundage—presented the fiscal and budgetary outlook through FY 1959, Eisenhower noted it seemed that the cost of everything was increasing, and that “every time a paper came up containing a proposed expenditure figure, such as $54 billion, the figure would later be quoted, and any reduction of the figure could be interpreted as a cut in national defense…But the question is, where do we get the money?”\textsuperscript{632} Treasury Secretary Humphrey commented that this trend of taking on new programs with new costs was contrary to the purposes of the New Look as agreed upon three years ago, “when the basis of our security was thought to be the deterrent striking power of the Air Force.” In his view they were being led astray in matters of national security by “scientists and by vested interests—military, political and business vested interests.” The result

\textsuperscript{630} Rowland Hughes, “Memorandum for the President,” May 12, 1955, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Administration Series, Box 9, “Budget 1957.”
\textsuperscript{632} Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 293rd and 294th Meetings of the National Security Council, Thursday, August 16, and Friday, August 17, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “293rd & 294th Meetings of NSC, August 16 & 17, 1956,” 3.
was that they were paying between $44 or $54 billion annually for a one-year deterrent to war. At the end of each year they would buy another deterrent and “last year’s expenditure goes on the scrap heap.” If they continued, the Soviets would defeat them without firing a shot because they would induce depression.633

Eisenhower responded that the U.S. had a few basic policies that it had to carry out or it would simply cease to exist: (1) retain retaliatory power as a deterrent; (2) maintain “good” continental defense as part of this deterrent; (3) support the military strength of allies in Western Europe and Asia; and (4) ensure friendly nations “were able to make a living.” The NSC had established these basic policies as part of the New Look, now it was up to the Department of Defense to “find a Spartan way to carry out our policies…[and] tell us what gadgets we should have for that kind of defense.” Some gadgets seemed superfluous. For example, Eisenhower asked those present if anyone actually believed a nuclear-powered bomber would prove to be useful in their time. Admiral Radford said no, but Secretary Wilson claimed “recent scientific and technical advances had been so great that anything called research had become sacred. If he tried to cut down on research he was apt to ‘get the business.’”

Secretary Humphrey said they must reduce programs despite such criticism. He worried that the conclusions of the Killian report—the “Technological Capabilities Panel” that from 1954 to 1955 had studied the issue of Soviet surprise attack and recommended various ways to better leverage cutting-edge technology and bridge the gap between the scientific and military communities—would ruin the administration, presumably by convincing its members to spend

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633Humphrey provided some context: “Our expenditures for national security each year are about equal to the assets of 25 of the largest corporation in the United States. These corporations, with assets of $54.6 billion, produce 95% of the country’s autos, half its steel, 82% of its telecommunications, 75% of its heavy electrical equipment, half its freight car movements, and 35% of its agricultural machinery, and include also the New York, Chicago, and Pacific Coast utility companies.” Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 293rd and 294th Meetings of the National Security Council, Thursday, August 16, and Friday, August 17, 1956,” 4. See also, S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 301st Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, October 26, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “301st Meeting of NSC, October 26, 1956,” 15.
more on gadgets. Yet Eisenhower felt the Killian report had had a moderating influence, particularly since many Congressmen were much more extreme than the Killian report in their desire for new technology and more spending.634

Defense Secretary Wilson rejoined that the New Look had not yet been fully clarified for his Department of fully accepted by the Army. Eisenhower added that he thought the Navy had not yet fully accepted the New Look policy either. Nor had Congress. Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the JCS, emphasized that Congress was pushing them towards greater expenditures. Eisenhower felt this pressure would be short lived, and they would soon have to fight Congress to get enough money. Eisenhower added: “he remembered the time when Congress wouldn’t permit one division to stay in Korea, despite the pleas of the military, and look what happened.”635

The debate over the military budget continued. In December 1956, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Radford argued that by January 1956 it had become evident that while the basic military program agreed to under the auspices of the New Look in 1953 remained in effect, maintaining this program over future years would be more expensive because of missile development, continental defense developments, and new weapons. The JCS estimated that annual military expenditures up to 1960 could be held at $38-40 billion, with an extra $3 billion for military defense assistance. Radford, however, personally felt this level was too low. The JCS had recommended in March and early April of 1956 that the military posture of the free world was deteriorating and thus the U.S. needed a more vigorous political, economic and psychological course of action to avoid a very dangerous situation. In his view it was simply not

634 Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 293rd and 294th Meetings of the National Security Council, Thursday, August 16, and Friday, August 17, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “293rd & 294th Meetings of NSC, August 16 & 17, 1956,” 12.
635 Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 293rd and 294th Meetings of the National Security Council, Thursday, August 16, and Friday, August 17, 1956,” 6.
possible to maintain a fixed level of forces and a fixed budgetary level. Radford’s proposes solution was to lower force levels while enhancing their effectiveness.\(^{636}\)

In January of 1957, Eisenhower seemed to concede to the NSC that the implementation of NSC 162/2 had stalled. While the New Look had tried to reduce conventional armaments by relying more heavily on atomic weapons, “instead of succeeding in reducing the costs of our conventional armaments, the costs of both conventional and atomic armaments had steadily risen.”\(^{637}\) The President continued: “what in essence this Government was really trying to do, when you get down to it, was to prevent the Iron Curtain form advancing further or, indeed, to force a retraction of that Curtain if we could. The question was the best and cheapest means of achieving this objective.” Eisenhower felt they had yet to resolve this question and urged continual reexamination of the path they had chosen.\(^{638}\)

Treasury Secretary Humphrey felt even more strongly that they had yet to fully implement the New Look, and considered the status quo of military expenditures unsustainable and reflecting a lack of basic policy. Humphrey later told the NSC that when it came to knowing how much to spend and how to spend it, neither Treasury nor the Defense Department really knew what they were talking about. They needed to be more selective, and in his view they could not continue to take billions from taxpayers while simultaneously claiming the there was a low probability of war with the Soviets. They risked either a popular rebellion or overspending themselves into recession. Humphrey added that if the Democrats were smart, “and some of them were smart—they will soon be turning up in the public mind as the economy boys and the


balancers of the budget. The Republicans would be put down as true spendthrifts.\textsuperscript{639}

Secretary Dulles took a slightly different view. Four years ago they had agreed that massive retaliatory capability would be the foundation of their grand strategy. The problem was not, as Humphrey suggested, a lack of basic policy, “but perhaps stemmed from the fact that we have not applied our basic policy in the necessary way.”\textsuperscript{640} Eisenhower shared both sentiments. He felt his administration’s important long-term task was to stabilize the portion of GNP devoted to defense, at least on a percentage basis. The world problems they faced seemed insoluble in large part because ballistic missiles had changed the nature of warfare and the contest between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The contest had reached a tipping point—the world had all of the deterrent power that could possibly be used, enough so each side could destroy the other side completely. In light of this, Eisenhower felt that “Everyone who professes to be seriously concerned with the future of our country must do some fresh thinking. We cannot continue along our present line of thinking and acting without ‘busting’ ourselves.”\textsuperscript{641}

Meanwhile, the NSC Planning Board under Robert Cutler’s direction was hard at work on another annual review of Basic National Security Policy, then codified in NSC 5602/1. On February 28, 1957, Cutler presented a revised version of the administration’s grand strategy for NSC consideration as NSC 5707. Secretary Dulles objected that NSC 5707 took an unduly pessimistic view of the world situation, a view belied by strengthened ties between the U.S. and its Western European allies. The President agreed with Dulles’ view. Eisenhower also bristled at the document’s discussion of whether the Soviets would initiate actions short of general war if

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{639} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 309th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, January 11, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “309th Meeting of NSC, January 11, 1957,” 8. \\
\textsuperscript{640} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 311th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 31, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “311th Meeting of NSC, January 31, 1957,” 7 \\
\textsuperscript{641} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 309th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, January 11, 1957,” 10-11.}
they believed the U.S. did not have the capability or the will to respond to local Communist aggression. Eisenhower felt the discussion of local war was highly speculative. He asked the NSC to think back to the situation they confronted four years ago, when they had concluded that scattering U.S. forces across the globe would play to the Soviet advantage. At that time they had sent six divisions of American forces to Western Europe as an emergency measure, and it had now become a permanent arrangement. In Eisenhower’s view, the right policy should be to encourage friends and allies to “supply the means for local defense on the ground, and that the United States should come into the act with air and naval forces alone.”642 In other words, Eisenhower’s views on limited war and deterring local Communist aggression remained unchanged and he refused to alter the New Look’s original conclusions on this point.

A month later, when the NSC resumed its consideration of Basic National Security Policy, now revised as NSC 5701/1, there was still frustration over cost controls and disagreement as to whether the New Look had been implemented. Even assuming uninterrupted growth of the economy, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers concluded there was no way to substantially improve the balance of receipts and expenditures. Secretary Humphrey again raised the complaint that while they had officially adopted the New Look a few years ago—with the aim of substantially reducing conventional forces and redeploying forces abroad—nothing had been done to carry it out. Humphrey also felt that, given domestic political pressures and absent “another real war scare”, it would be almost impossible to avoid a tax cut, and reminded those present that such a measure had almost passed on the Senate floor the day prior.643

643 Humphrey reiterated the idea that a tax cut would be forced on them regardless of the Soviet threat, and unless
Humphrey’s analysis was extreme, but Eisenhower clearly shared his concern that they had not successfully implemented the New Look. At one point while Cutler was briefing a chart portraying the “Summary of Budget Expenditures by Function, FY 1950-FY 1958”, Eisenhower interrupted to say that if “any members of the Council were looking back with nostalgia to the low levels of defense expenditure use prior to the Korean war, these people should be aware that one of the reasons why the defense expenditures are so high now is because they were so low in the period 1949 and 1950.” (Earlier that month, Eisenhower had told Congressional leaders that while a firm budget figure had finally been set, he was beginning to think he would be unable to enforce it because of prior authorizations which resulted in an increasing level of spending.”644)

Eisenhower also conceded that despite their best efforts to keep expenditures down, “We now feel a certain sense of defeat.” Yet no one had ever suggested to him a program they would willingly abandon. Thus, the modest goals they were considering—essentially putting a brake on programs while defending foreign assistance from Congressional cuts645—were the best they could hope for.646

Eisenhower vetoed it on April 11. Eisenhower responded by turning “to Secretary Humphrey and asked him how much he would be willing to pay to save his life. Of course, added the President, in paying what was necessary for our national survival we should in turn reduce expenditures for other types of programs.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 317th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 28, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “317th Meeting of NSC, Thursday March 28, 1957,” 4-5. The document also portrayed the basic threat to U.S. security as threefold: (1) continuing hostility from the U.S.S.R. and Communist China and their growing power; (2) the unrestricted development of nuclear weapons; and (3) weakness or instability in critical areas. There was disagreement, however, concerning whether the second and third threats were on the same level as the first, but Eisenhower ended the debate by warning “there was danger that we would be picking nits with boxing gloves; let the text stand as written.”644 L. Arthur Minnich, “Memorandum,” March 5, 1957, EPL, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, L. Arthur Minnich Series, Box. 1, “Miscellaneous - D [February 1953 - January 1958].”

645 Regarding a proposal to relax legal restrictions on providing economy assistance to Eastern European Soviet Satellite nations. “The President observed that we certainly ought to ask Congress to relax these legal restrictions, but he doubts that we could induce Congress to agree to such relaxation.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 320th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, April 17, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “320th Meeting of NSC, April 17, 1957,” 11.

646 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 317th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 28, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “317th Meeting of NSC, Thursday March 28, 1957,” 8. For more on Eisenhower’s agreement with Humphrey’s fervent desire to get a handle on increasing costs see S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 324th Meeting of the National Security Council,
Forcing the national security bureaucracy, particularly the military, to accept the reliance on massive retaliatory power, was essential to achieving greater defense economies. Two weeks later on April 11, 1957, Eisenhower summarized his basic policy as follows: treating the nuclear weapon as a conventional weapon, and relying primarily (though not solely) on nuclear weapons. Thus, any military plans made without reference to the use of nuclear weapons would be strictly confined to police actions or the protection of American lives. In Eisenhower’s view, it was impossible in their planning to “earmark and set aside divisions designed to conquer and hold” small countries like Egypt. Admiral Radford claimed the JCS had been developing military strategy precisely along these lines since 1953. 647

On May 27, 1957, the NSC again considered revising Basic Policy (now NSC 5707/7) so as to specify an even more aggressive reliance on nuclear weapons along the lines Eisenhower had articulated. Secretary Dulles firmly resisted the change, arguing that while the general use of nuclear military power as conventional was inevitable, it was not yet realistic. The U.S. did not possess limited or tactical nuclear weapons, only weapons that could destroy on the scale of Hiroshima. Adopting such a policy would also run contrary to world opinion, which was not ready to accept the general use of nuclear weapons in local conflicts. Eisenhower proposed compromise language clarifying what was meant by “local aggression” and stating that the President would calculate what level force would be necessary to oppose local aggression, without broadening hostilities into general war. The Council ultimately adopted an amended version of this section that read: “It is the policy of the United States to place main, but not sole, reliance on nuclear weapons; to integrate nuclear weapons with other weapons in the arsenal of

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the United States; to consider them as conventional weapons from a military point of view and to use them when required to achieve national objectives. Advance authorization of their use is as determined by the President.”

This was a remarkable advance against the so-called nuclear taboo and a demonstration of the lengths to which Eisenhower was prepared to go to get the best defense at least cost. As Secretary Dulles had laid out, public opinion considered nuclear weapons to be indiscriminate in their character and capacity for destruction, and the prevailing view was that their use could not be limited and would inevitably lead to general nuclear war. Furthermore, the Soviets had an interest in encouraging a taboo against the limited use of nuclear weapons, because if such weapons were proscribed, the Soviets would benefit from their numerical superiority in conventional military forces. This created an unavoidable dilemma for the administration. As Admiral Strauss argued to the NSC on June 13, 1957, though the U.S. possessed some tactical nuclear weapons that could be detonated without much radioactive fallout, they still faced the problem “of convincing our allies that we do possess the necessary nuclear deterrent to aggression and that we are prepared to use this deterrent in case these allies are attacked. Most of our allies are still not convinced of this determination, and that is why they insist on seeing military power in being and situated in their own territories which are exposed to Communist aggression.”

Another problem was that while an enhanced reliance on nuclear weapons was more cost-effective, it still contained enormous costs. As of July 7, 1957, the U.S. had spent $11.8

648 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 325th Meeting of the National Security Council, Monday, May 27, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “325th Meeting of NSC, May 27, 1957,” 19. The Council also adopted new policy allowing for flexible and mobile forces to deter local aggression and continuing efforts to persuade allies to recognize nuclear weapons as an integral part of defending the Free World and the need for their prompt and selective use.

billion on missile programs. The cost of continuing these programs through FY 1963 would amount to $36.1 billion, totaling approximately $47 billion. Eisenhower felt that many of these missile systems resembled each other in their capabilities, and that the costs were being driven up because the government was refusing to choose the best “all-round program.” He cited the development of the TARTAR missile, which had an estimated performance somewhere in between that of the TERRIER missile and the advanced TERRIER missile. Is Eisenhower’s view they could not spend millions chasing the promise of slightly better missile capabilities—“We cannot hope for a perfect family of these weapons designed to achieve every purpose in warfare.”

Eisenhower also believed that, even with a more efficient selection of missile systems, it would be dangerous to assume that Congress would continue to support $38 billion for Defense at a time overall troop levels were being reduced. Despite his repeated warnings about severely reducing the national defense budget, Congress had already reduced new obligational authority to $36 billion. Eisenhower told the NSC on July 25, 1957 to review the history of Congressional appropriations and recalled his own experience advising Truman after World War II. Then he had told Truman that they could get along on $15 billion a year, but Congress had reduced that figure to $12.8 billion. Eisenhower said he was now “prepared to fight for a figure of $38 billion a year but realized he might not be able to get that much.” Treasury Secretary Humphrey added that the Treasury balance was so low that if they exceeded their allocations for the first half of FY 1958, they would bust the debt ceiling and require a special session of Congress.651

The Old General and New Politics

Yet the general political climate was favorable for Eisenhower’s measured approach. As Secretary of Defense Wilson put it, since this was the first time in history the U.S. was keeping high numbers of troops in foreign countries during peace, political pressures would eventually force them to bring these troops home: “The trend of the times was toward maximizing air power, including naval air power, and minimizing the foot soldier.” Moreover, Eisenhower had a number of influential defenders in Congress who were inclined to defer to his foreign policy expertise and experience. For example, on May 22, 1957 Senator Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin delivered a speech on the Senate floor defending Eisenhower and the budget, saying the president should not be deterred by “scare propaganda” seeking to reduce the budget. He argued that extreme conservatives would not bolt the Republican Party even if high budgets continued. A week later Senator Irving Ives of New York announced he would go along with whatever the President wanted in terms of defense spending, saying: “On questions of defense, I feel that our President is the authority.”

Perhaps most importantly, Eisenhower had developed solid working relationships with Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn (in whose district Eisenhower was born). As Eisenhower biographer Jean Edward Smith explains, the loss of Congress to the Democrats “was a blessing in disguise” for Eisenhower. The Democrats would “support Ike down the line in foreign affairs,” both out of genuine policy agreement and shrewd politics. Both Johnson and Rayburn stood to benefit from cooperating with the enormously

652 Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 332nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, July 25, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “332nd Meeting of NSC, July 25, 1957,” 3. As Wilson outlined U.S. Military programs for FY 1958 and FY 1959, he emphasized this was an extension of the New Look while also noting the difficulty of reducing force levels to live within the $39 billion ceiling (he commented that continued inflation had also cost the Defense Department $2 billion last year). They could achieve a reduction in the size and strength of units owing largely to increases in firepower.

popular president. As Johnson said, “Eisenhower was so popular, whoever supporting him would be on the popular side.” Rayburn often deferred to Eisenhower’s foreign policy experience. Rayburn said he told Eisenhower “that he should know more about what it took to defend this country than practically anyone and that if he would send up a budget for the amount he thought was necessary to put the country in a position to defend ourselves against attack, I would promise to deliver 95 percent of the Democratic votes in the House.”

Eisenhower’s relationship with the leaders of his own party, Senate Minority Leader William Knowland and House Speaker Joe Martin, was less productive. A frank conversation between long-serving Republican Senator Styles Bridges and Eisenhower in May 1957 provides perhaps the best insight into the state of Eisenhower’s thinking about the New Look, domestic political pressures, and his own foreign policy experience during this period prior to Sputnik. Bridges had publicly criticized the administration’s Mutual Security program as a “do-good” program with little impact. The next day Eisenhower called Bridges into his office for a conversation. Eisenhower felt that minor internal Party disagreements were healthy, but Republicans must unite on key issues such as foreign policy or they would be condemned to irrelevance. He explained that he had tried to get Humphrey, or Nixon, or someone else who shared his philosophy to run in 1956, but he had been persuaded to run again himself by those who said the popular vote he would garner would also produce a Republican Congress. This did not happen, and Eisenhower claimed he would not have run had he known he would not help his Party regain control of the legislature.

Nevertheless, the “foreign problem” still remained his passion, a passion to which had

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654 Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 647.
given his “entire hours.” Eisenhower told Bridges that he remained “convinced that the only way to avoid war—the only way to save America in the long run from destruction—is through the development of a true collective system of defense. This I have explained a dozen times.” He then scolded Bridges for his remarks, saying it was hard enough to bear the burdens of the Presidency as well as head of the Party, when one of the most important members of the Republican Party went out criticizing mutual security as a do-gooder act. Eisenhower thought nothing could be further from the truth. If he knew of a cheaper option he would take it and while it was popular to talk about saving a dollar, Eisenhower would rather see cuts to Defense rather than mutual security, because relying on their own arms would lead to war. If instead they could get “constructive work” from allies abroad, then “we have got a real fighting chance of bringing this world around to the point where the Communist menace, if not eliminated, will be so minimized it cannot work.”

Eisenhower then cited his past experience in defending military and defense expenditures. If Truman and the Republican Congresses of 1946 and 1948 had given the military what Eisenhower requested ($15 billion a year), then Eisenhower believed they would have avoided the Korean War and present defense budgets would be no more than $18 billion. Back then he had begged for the money, but had been unable to make Congress see the need for it. Bridges (along with Senator Taft) was among the group of legislators he had spoken with. “I am not blaming anybody, but I want to say this is just another incident in a long lifetime of work on this. Finally, I think my Party ought to trust me a little bit more when I put not only my life’s work, but my reputation and everything else, on the line in favor of this.” Eisenhower said he knew some in the Senate and the House were proposing a $4 billion cut to foreign aid. But he

659 Ann Whitman, “Conversation Between the President and Senator Styles Bridges,” May 21, 1957, 2.
told Bridges to imagine life after a global war, assuming they emerged from it as the victor. The devastation would be so severe, that there would be no possibility for exercising free government for over two decades. “Did you ever see one of the net evaluation studies given to me every year?…On a single attack—and it was not a complete surprise, we had enough warning for some preparation with our people and weapons, fighters and everything else—we figured something like 25 million killed, 60 million had to go to hospitals, and there were not enough hospitals.” In light of such staggering figures, the only real answer was to do everything possible to avoid war, to deter the Russians from attacking, and (once you had established a credible deterrent) keep the rest of the world from going Communist. Eisenhower concluded by saying his foreign policy vision was simple, he wanted:

   to wage the cold war in a militant, but reasonable, style whereby we appeal to the people of the world as a better group to hang with than the Communists. I am not concerned in buying friends or purchasing satellites or any other thing—that is all false. As a free country, the only ally you can have is a free ally, one that wants to be with us—that is what we are trying to develop. You do it with sort of your left hand, but to keep them at least from complete dependence on the other fellow.  

   In a long letter to his best friend and long-time confidante Swede Hazlett on July 22, 1957, Eisenhower said he was “repeatedly astonished, even astounded, by the apparent ignorance of members of Congress in the general subject of our foreign affairs and relationships…Congressional reaction that seemingly reflects either this abysmal ignorance or a far greater concern for local political sentiment than for the welfare of the United States.” He complained in particular of Congressional attempts to denounce U.S. status of forces treaties, “the very foundation of our defensive alliances. To denounce them would make us completely isolationists and force us to abandon practically every base we have abroad.” To Eisenhower no sensible person could believe in “a fanciful ‘Fortress America,’” even if the military tripled in size. He

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660 Ann Whitman, “Conversation Between the President and Senator Styles Bridges,” May 21, 1957, 6.
also saw the “same unreasoning attitude” reflected in Congressional attempts to cut mutual
security funding:

Again and again I have explained to individuals and to the public that, as of this moment, our mutual security operations represent America’s best investment. Through them we are able to keep down the direct costs of our own military establishment. More than this we are increasing the consuming power of many friendly nations and helping to build up future markets for our rapidly expanding productive capacity.  

The Strategic Situation: Pre-Sputnik Assessments of the Soviet Threat

Eisenhower’s reference to the work of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee was unsurprising; the president had approved its creation on February 14, 1955 in order to remedy what he saw as deficiencies in the quality of intelligence and analysis he was receiving regarding the Soviet Union. In early 1954, he complained to the NSC that intelligence reports failed to distinguish between Russian capability and intent, “a classic problem because the professional military, who are charged with the defense of the nation, always exaggerate the extent of the threat.” Eisenhower also harbored some belief that the intelligence analyses being presented to him reflected the special interests of various services and “special assessments and ideas from the other elements of the intelligence community – the CIA in particular.” At a broader level, Eisenhower’s establishment of a Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to examine the full scope

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662 Eisenhower, “Net Evaluations Subcommittee,” EPL, NSC Papers, Executive Secretary’s Subject File Series, Box 13, “Net [Capabilities] Evaluation Subcommittee [of the NSC] (4).” This Net Evaluations Subcommittee was directed to evaluate Soviet capability to inflict damage on the U.S. in the event of general war, to include direct injury upon the continental United States and key U.S. installations overseas, and to continually watch for changes, which might alter such net capabilities. Also see Stephen E. Ambrose, Ike’s Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 252, 255. This work describes how with Dulles focused intensely on covert operations, the task of responding to Eisenhower’s criticisms fell largely to the Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) Robert Amory and the Chief of the ONE Ray S. Cline. Cline took the lead in crafting the initial net assessments. The final products reduced the Soviet military threat, thereby allowing Eisenhower to adhere to his newly formulated national security strategy and restrict financial spending. Cline argued that “this quiet, little-remarked analytical feat,” accomplished more of value to the U.S. than any other CIA effort during the Eisenhower administration.
663 Ambrose, Ike’s Spies, 253.
664 Andrew J. Goodpaster, interview by Dr. Thomas Soapes, October 11, 1977, EPL, Oral History Collection, Interview OH-378: transcript, 97.
of intelligence operations reflected his “concern…as to whether we were getting the quality of intelligence that we required.” By demanding net assessments, Eisenhower tempered exaggerated estimates that the Soviets would inevitably launch dangerous assaults aimed at world domination. As intelligence products matured, “their language [became] more moderate, their descriptions of the Communist threat more accurate and less scary.”

Perhaps this was because Eisenhower’s first term was generally a time of reduced tensions between the Soviets and the West, resulting in the end of the Korean war, the 1954 Geneva Accords ending the French war in Vietnam, and the agreement on a neutral and united Austria. But significant foreign policy challenges and uncertainties remained. As late as 1956 the national security community was still wrestling with the implications of Stalin’s death, and there was little evidence that changes in Soviet leadership had moderated Soviet foreign policy. By then both Dulles brothers were claiming Khrushchev was far more dangerous than Stalin, because he reacted emotionally and unpredictably to events while Stalin played dispassionate geopolitical chess. But Khrushchev’s more erratic behavior did not necessarily make the Soviets more or less hostile. As Eisenhower commented in a public speech on April 21, 1956, “It is still too early to assess in any final way whether the Soviet regime wishes to provide a real basis for stable and enduring relations…Despite the changes so far, much of Stalin’s foreign policy remains unchanged.”

665 Goodpaster, interview by Dr. Thomas Soapes, 96-97.
666 Ambrose, Ike’s Spies, 255.
667 Hopf Reconstructing the Cold War, 4.
669 Bad as Stalin was, “you at least knew what you were up against in dealing with him. In fact, Stalin’s only serious blunder was the Korean war, and this could readily be forgiven him in view of the fact that the U.S. Administration at the time had given every possible indication that the United States was indifferent to what happened in Korea.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 289th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, June 28, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “289th Meeting of NSC June 28, 1956,” 3.
Eisenhower also faced a series of smaller crises, particularly in the Middle East, that suggested an overall rise in the level of Communist threat and disorder. On February 25, 1956 Khruschev delivered his “secret speech” to the Twentieth Party Congress denouncing Stalin’s abuse of power and “cult of personality.” The Eisenhower Administration, sensing an opportunity to weaken the Soviets psychologically, released a covertly obtained copy of the speech that summer.\textsuperscript{671} The speech sent shockwaves through the Soviet Union, with uprisings in Georgia, Poland, and Hungary. When Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy responded to demands for greater freedoms uprising by declaring his country neutral in the Cold War, Khruschev sent tanks into Hungary on November 4 (two days before Eisenhower resoundingly won reelection) to remove Nagy from power. The Hungarian freedom fighters had been encouraged by Secretary Dulles’ talk of liberation, as well as the propaganda of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, and appealed to the U.S. for assistance. The CIA requested approval to air-drop lethal assistance to the fighters, but Eisenhower refused, seeing Hungary as unfavorable ground on which to wage a proxy war with the Soviets and seeing the indigenous Hungarian forces as incapable of winning such a war.\textsuperscript{672} Over the course of six days the U.S. would watch as the Soviets killed over 2,500 Hungarians and displaced over 200,000.

Eisenhower simultaneously faced another crisis in the Middle East, while also campaigning for reelection. When Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in July of 1956, the Israelis responded by raiding the Sinai on October 29. The British and the French backed the operation because it would allow them to justify using force once the Egyptians resisted. By November 5, 200 British and French ships had arrived off the Egyptian cost as part of a massive amphibious landing supported by an aerial insertion of paratroopers.

\textsuperscript{671} Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 155.
\textsuperscript{672} See Dueck, \textit{Hard Line}, 104-105.
Eisenhower was furious with his traditional allies, viewing the invasion as a violation of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration pledging the U.S., British, and French would support any victims of outside aggression in the Middle East. In Eisenhower’s view, the Egyptians were the victims and the British, French, and Israelis the aggressors. He pursued cease-fire resolutions in the UN Security Council (which Britain and France vetoed for the first time in their history) and in the UN General Assembly. But more importantly, Eisenhower refused to supply the British with North American oil and threatened a run on the British pound, a stern rebuke of the British government that effectively ended British Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s career. Eisenhower also publicly rejected the offer of Soviet premier Nikolai Bulganin to cooperate militarily on the crisis.\(^673\)

Eisenhower, then running on a platform of “Peace and Prosperity,” appeared unconcerned about possible domestic political blowback from the crisis. The president told his advisers he did not care if the crisis cost him re-election, because staying true to their word (i.e. the Tripartite Declaration) and preventing a conflagration in the Middle East were more important. In his final campaign speech in Philadelphia on November 1, Eisenhower pledged that the U.S. would not condone armed aggression, no matter who was the victim. He did not mention Britain and France by name, but the allusion was clear.\(^674\) Just as Eisenhower had pledged to bring peace to Korea four years earlier, he was not pledging to maintain peace in the Middle East.

These efforts, while successful in Suez, proved counterproductive across the broader region. Eisenhower’s attempts to act as an honest broker between traditional allies and revisionist Arab states resulted in an expansion of Soviet power at the expense of U.S. influence. Though

\(^673\) See Smith, Eisenhower in War and Peace, 686-704. 
\(^674\) See Smith, Eisenhower in War and Peace, 686-704.
Eisenhower secured a Congressional authorization for the use of military force in the Middle East January 1957 “to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of nations requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism” (i.e. the Eisenhower Doctrine) and deployed Marines to Lebanon in 1958 to maintain Camille Chamoun’s non-Communist government, the anti-colonial, Arab nationalist sentiment was too powerful to control. A July 1958 military coup removed the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq and thereby eliminated an American ally. In Syria, Eisenhower’s CIA launched three failed attempts at regime change that served only to push the regime in Damascus further into the Soviet camp and towards state unity with Nasser’s United Arab Republic. Saudi Arabia, which did not support the Eisenhower Doctrine and instead embraced a policy of “positive neutrality,” rejected Eisenhower’s requests to intervene in Syria.675

In other words, while the public had generously granted Eisenhower a second term (in large part due to the perception that his foreign policy was working to bring peace and prosperity), the geopolitical threat was increasing in key parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In the Middle East, while the crises in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq took place after Sputnik and therefore cannot be factored into any accumulative strategic shock, they were linked to the positions Eisenhower had staked out during the Suez crisis and evidence of a trend of worsening U.S. position in the region and the improving Soviet position. Thus, it was no surprise that once he out of office Eisenhower came to regret his handling of the Suez crisis and its effect of enabling Nasser’s rise. In 1987 Nixon claimed that in 1967 he had a private conversation with Eisenhower in which the former president personally told him Suez was “his major foreign policy mistake,” one that undermined U.S. allies and emboldened its enemies.676

Assessments of growing Soviet capabilities and the risk of general war also added to the threat picture. On December 20, 1956, General Gerald C. Thomas, Director of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee Staff, outlined the findings of the 1956 net evaluation of the Soviet’s ability to achieve strategic surprise. Thomas concluded that in 1959, a nuclear war initiated by the U.S.S.R. would result in mutual devastation of both countries. By that time the Soviets would have the net capability to deliver a nuclear attack killing 40 percent of the US population, seriously injuring 13 percent more and disrupting the U.S. political, social and economic structure. The U.S. massive nuclear retaliatory capability, though valuable as a deterrent, could not prevent catastrophic destruction should the Soviets decide to attack. Long-range ballistic missile developments also suggested that the current concept of military and civil defense of the U.S. required extensive revision because the U.S. would have less warning time than previously thought.\textsuperscript{677}

Eisenhower recognized implications of these reports, but he did not panic. In fact, Eisenhower continued to disagree with his military advisers’ assessment that the likelihood of war was increasing, particularly since, as he told the NSC in December 1956, the Soviets had taken a “worse beating lately than at any time since 1945.” The Soviets were presently concerned about unrest in their satellites and as such “would not risk sticking their necks out.” Secretary Dulles agreed that the Soviet Union was undergoing a dramatic deterioration of its position over the past two years:

The men in the Kremlin do not now exert anything like the influence they exerted two years ago, either over the National Communist Parties outside the Soviet bloc or over the Soviet satellites themselves. Moreover, we can even discern in the Soviet Union itself a rising demand for greater freedom and a more liberal policy. All of this added up to a defeat and a setback for the Soviet rulers.\textsuperscript{678}


\textsuperscript{678} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 307th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday,
Eisenhower also continued the practice he had developed with Project Solarium, routinely commissioning expert assessments from outside the normal foreign policy establishment in order to get a more complete picture of the Soviet threat. Yet these teams of outside experts usually recommended greater investments in defense and scientific projects in order to confront an urgent Soviet threat. For example, as previously mentioned, the 1955 report of the Technological Capabilities Panel, or the Killian Committee, had examined the potential for a Soviet surprise attack in light of U.S. continental defense programs and concluded that within ten years the Soviets would match the U.S. in long-range bombing and nuclear payload capabilities. This would negate the element of surprise as each side developed the ability to retaliate and destroy the other. The Killian Committee recommended speeding the development of ICBMs and IRBMs, developing an anti-ballistic missile program, reducing Strategic Air Command (SAC) vulnerability, and developing a high-altitude reconnaissance plane (what would become the U-2). Additionally, from June 5-10, 1955, at the urging of the Special Assistant to the President Nelson A. Rockefeller, a panel of eleven distinguished experts—Chaired by Walt Rostow and including Henry Kissinger—met in Quantico to explore ways to exploit Communist bloc vulnerabilities. This “Quantico Vulnerabilities Panel” concluded that the U.S. “had a significant but transitory period of over-all strength vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc and the next 2-3 years presented an opportunity to force genuine concessions from the U.S.S.R. without

\textsuperscript{679} Valerie Adams, 109-145. Though the Killian Committee’s work proved influential, Eisenhower would later react to its recommendations in October 1956 by observing “with a smile that it seemed to him that every new survey of our problems by a scientific team seemed to result in recommendations that we undertake additional things. He rather wished we could find a team which would recommend programs which we could dispense with.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 299th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 4, 1956,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, “299th Meeting of NSC, October 4, 1956,” 2. Eisenhower also noted they could choose to spend $13 billion for nuclear fallout shelters or $113 depending on the quality, but the event precipitating their use would cause paralysis on both sides so as to make such projections futile.
Yet the most salient outside review of the Soviet threat and U.S. preparedness to meet this threat would come from the work of the Gaither Committee. The Gaither Committee grew out of a January 1957 report by the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), which had been established in 1950 by Congress to plan for protecting U.S. life and property from a nuclear attack. The FCDA report recommended allocating $32 billion to construct fallout and blast shelters. If adopted, this would mark the first time the federal government had assumed the costs of such civil defense measures. Eisenhower was strongly opposed to the idea of federal funding for civil defense, but he could not dismiss the report’s conclusions, which were not only politically problematic but also strategically important. Since a massive nuclear attack on the U.S. would result in 50,000,000 casualties and likely mean national disintegration, Eisenhower was interested in examining how to mitigate the effects of a nuclear strike. As he explained to the NSC in February 1957, he had first gotten interested in the problem after observing evacuations of large cities during the final years of WWII. He recalled from personal experience that the “people were really blind mobs, like a horde of locusts, and completely unmanageable.” In his view there were steps they could take to mitigate the effect of blind mobs and enable the American people to help themselves more effectively in the event of an attack.681

The NSC Planning Committee reviewed the FCDA report and in March said it could not make a recommendation to Eisenhower without conducting more specific studies related to the fallout shelters. One such study would be conducted by the Science Advisory Committee of the Office of Defense Mobilization in order to ascertain the value of various active and passive

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680 “Report of the Quantico Vulnerabilities Panel,” June 10, 1955, EPL, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 63, “Russia (6).”
measures for civil defense in the event of a nuclear attack on the U.S. Eisenhower met with the
Science Advisory Committee to the Office of the Director of Defense Mobilization, led by Nobel
Prize winning physicist Dr. Isidor Rabi of Columbia University, on March 29, 1957 to discuss
the shelter program. Rabi emphasized the necessity of commissioning a group of experts to study
the issue further and on April 4, 1957, Eisenhower granted the request. Rabi selected H. Rowan
Gaither, Jr., Chairman of the Board for RAND Corporation and the Ford Foundation, to lead the
group, which would officially be called the Security Resources Panel.

Yet the Gaither Committee subsequently exceeded its mandate, not only by expanding its
membership to over eighty people but by turning a study on the relative merits of passive and
active civil defense measures into a broad, overarching assessment of the New Look and its
suitability for confronting the Soviet threat. Paul Nitze, the author of NSC 68 and no fan of the
New Look (he had advised the Democratic Party during the 1956 presidential campaign), drafted
the Committee’s final report. As Adams argues, “what began as a rather modest study of civil
defense soon spread like a cancer.”682

Strategic Shock: Sputnik and the “Scientific Pearl Harbor”

Before the final report of the Gaither Committee was presented to the NSC, however, the
administration would grapple with a more powerful challenge to the New Look than outside
assessments or Congressional critics. In the months leading up to Sputnik launch, the space race
was a central part of the broader debate on fully implementing the New Look. The administration
tracked the Soviet space program closely, and the prevailing view held that the U.S. had a

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682 Valerie Adams, 175. Notably the Committee did not have access to U-2 imagery intelligence that would have
provided a more sober view of the threat. As such hawkish members of the Committee such as Albert Wohlstetter of
RAND influenced the group’s work such that the members coalesced around the idea that U.S. Strategic Air
Command was increasingly vulnerable to a Soviet attack—a view nurtured by the 1955 Soviet Aviation Day air
show, in which the Soviets used deception to suggest they had surpassed the U.S. in bomber squadrons—and U.S.
nuclear superiority was in jeopardy.
considerable lead in terms of satellite instrumentation, but the Soviets had superior launching units. For example, at the NSC meeting on January 24, 1957, DCI Dulles briefed the NSC that in April 1955 the Soviets had first announced their creation of a scientific commission to launch an earth satellite, but the program had actually begun in secret year earlier. Since then, the CIA had no firm information on the status of the Soviet program, but estimated the Soviets were making a major effort to be the first country to launch a satellite. Dulles claimed he was sure the Soviets had the ability to do so—the Soviets had detonated an atomic weapon in low-yield (between 1 and 5 KT) on January 19, 1957 and as of January 18, the U.S. had detected 208 Soviet missile firings with ranges of 150, 300, and 750 nautical miles.

Robert Cutler also briefed those present on NSC 5520, a summary of the U.S. scientific satellite program, the cost of which had risen considerably since it was first authorized. The key question before the committee was whether to launch 6 or 12 satellites. The initial estimate had risen from $20 million to $83 million for six satellites. Six additional satellites would cost $30 million more. Representatives from the National Science Foundation explained that the U.S. program would have its preliminary test in September 1957, after which all six satellites would be ready to launch, with the first launch scheduled for October 31, 1957. The remaining five satellites would launch thereafter at two-month intervals. Proponents of the enhanced program argued the launches were critical for at least three reasons. First, these satellites would give the U.S. data on communications and a record of information on outer space to be used in investigations about the outer atmosphere. Second, it would allow for a serious study of weather conditions. Third, exploring outer space would give data on particles or asteroids or other elements, which could affect the flight of ballistic missiles.

But skeptics such as Secretary Wilson argued against launching six additional satellites,
saying Defense was already running out of money. Eisenhower agreed, pointing out the enormous increase in the costs of the program from its inception. Eisenhower preferred to see what they got with six satellites before pouring another $30 million into the program. He decided to continue the program as laid out in NSC 5520, launching six scientific satellites. But he directed the Defense Department to submit a progress report after the third attempted launching so the NSC could reevaluate whether to launch more.683

The issue came up at the NSC again on May 10, 1957, when a new estimate put the cost of the scientific satellite program at $110 million. Congress had already criticized Defense for using emergency funds to nurture the earth satellite program, and therefore Defense could not underwrite a more expensive version of it (especially since it was publicized as a peaceful scientific project). Eisenhower was disturbed not only because of the increased cost but also because the program called for six satellites as a safety precaution to assure at least one could be orbit. In other words, there was no guarantee they would all be launched. Eisenhower announced that two thoughts that had come to his mind: (1) there was no particular reason to assume this cost estimate would prove any more final than the previous estimate (i.e. it was possible the program would cost upwards of $150 million) and (2) “everybody wanted to duck responsibility for finding the money to fund the program.” Eisenhower observed that it was too late for the U.S. to back out of the program but they should not expand it at the present time. Since they had run out of money, there was no other option “than for Defense and the National Science Foundation jointly to appear before the Congressional committees, tell them the story, and ask for supplemental funds.”684

684 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 322nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday,
DCI Dulles then updated the Council on the intelligence picture. While the Soviets had not publicly advertised their progress on an earth orbit satellite, the CIA had detected construction activity in the Soviet missile headquarters area. Dulles stood by the intelligence community’s earlier estimate that the Soviets would have the capability of orbiting a satellite in the course of 1957, with mid-June and mid-December as the optimum periods for the attempt. If the Soviets succeeded and the U.S. did not even try, the Soviets “would have achieved a propaganda weapon which they could use to boast about the superiority of Soviet scientists” and emphasize that the U.S. had abandoned its peaceful program in order to devote resources to war preparations.  

DCI Dulles was also delivering more dire assessments of the Soviet missile program. On September 12, 1957, DCI Dulles briefed the NSC that the Soviets had announced a successful launch of an ICBM, and that hard evidence suggested the missile’s range went up to 3,500 nautical miles. He conceded, however, that the intelligence community’s coverage of the Tyura-Tam site from which it was launched was inadequate, and they could not confirm whether the Soviets had successfully tested a missile at this range. The CIA was currently re-examining its previous estimate that the Soviets would not have an operational ICBM until 1960 or 1961. At the next meeting he briefed the NSC that the Soviets had flight-tested two ICBMs—one on August 21 and the second on September 7—but the CIA had no evidence regarding the range, accuracy, or type of missiles fired. On October 2, Dulles briefed the NSC that five nuclear

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tests had occurred in the Soviet Union since August 22, but there was no mention of soviet earth satellite program.\textsuperscript{688}

Two days later, on October 4, 1957, the Soviets successfully launched the world’s first earth orbit satellite, Sputnik-I. The 184-pound Sputnik, or “fellow traveler,” immediately captured the national attention. Eisenhower had been expecting the launch, but was taken aback by the weight of the satellite. Perhaps even more surprising to the president was the panic that soon swept the nation, the feeling that the U.S. “had suffered a scientific Pearl Harbor that left it exposed to Soviet missile attack.”\textsuperscript{689} As Eisenhower biographer Jean Edward Smith describes, though Sputnik had no direct military applications (i.e. no weapons or scientific equipment), “the technological breakthrough represented by the launch and the size of the thrust required to propel the satellites into orbit caught the world by surprise. American reaction varied between measured anxiety and total hysteria.”\textsuperscript{690}

On October 8, Eisenhower convened key advisors at 8:30 a.m.. Secretary Quarles reported that the Sputnik launch had been highly successful, but there was a silver lining in the sense that the Russians had unintentionally established the concept of freedom of international space by flying over every nation on earth without protest. Eisenhower said that a sudden shift in the U.S. program to catch up with the Soviets would belie the idea that they had had from the beginning, that the U.S. space program was scientific and intended to develop and transmit knowledge, not a “crash program” in competition with the Soviets. Quarles added that a shift in

\textsuperscript{689} Andrew, \textit{For the President’s Eyes Only}, 240.
\textsuperscript{690} Smith, \textit{Eisenhower in War and Peace}, 731.
policy would also fuel tensions among the services in the Pentagon.691

The National Science Board delivered a written assessment to Eisenhower arguing Sputnik should be recognized as a great technological and scientific achievement, one that revealed the U.S. needed to better utilize its engineers and scientists and better invest in education.692 The preliminary evaluation of the White House Staff Research Group emphasized that American prestige had suffered a severe blow and the Soviets had succeeded in creating serious doubts about U.S. military superiority. The Group offered five conclusions: (1) Sputnik would allow the Soviets to claim they had opened a new era and overtaken the U.S. in a domain it had traditionally dominated; (2) public opinion would focus on the relative military positions of the Soviets and the U.S.; (3) the Soviets would have a clear advantage it could exploit for peaceful overtures or to increase pressure on the U.S. (or both simultaneously); (4) Sputnik demonstrated the utility of the Soviet system, particularly in areas of the world that needed rapid technological achievement; and (5) general Soviet credibility had been “sharply enhanced.”693

On October 8, Director of the Bureau of the Budget Percival Brundage gave Eisenhower an assessment of the costs of the U.S. satellite program. The assessment showed how the estimated costs of the project had been revised upward several times since Eisenhower initially approved the U.S. program on May 27, 1955 (he publicly announced it on July 29, 1955). The administration had submitted two supplemental appropriation requests to Congress: (1) $18.3 million in a FY 1956 supplemental to the National Science Foundation to support the

691 Andrew Goodpaster, “Memorandum of Conference with the President on October 8, 1957, 8:30 a.m.,” (dated October 9), EPL, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “October ’57 Staff Notes (2); NAID #12043774,” http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/sputnik.html (accessed January 15, 2014).
International Geophysical Year and (2) $34.2 million in FY1957 funds for Defense to cover increasing costs of the program. When these requests were made, the total costs of the program were estimated at $110 million. Congress approved the supplemental and as of August 31, 1957, $67.9 million of the funds had been obligated for the project and $50.7 had been spent. 

In preparing his press conference statement on October 8, the President met with his advisers at 5:00 p.m. and said his “intent was not to belittle the Russian accomplishment. He would like, however, to allay hysteria and alarm, and to bring out that the Russian action is simply proof of a thrust mechanism of a certain power, accuracy and reliability. He wanted his statement to be accurate and directed to the right broad purpose.” After swearing in the new Defense Secretary Neil McElroy, the President met with him, Quarles, and the Joint Chiefs to talk about the group maintaining a “no comment” attitude on the satellite situation. Eisenhower wanted to keep the military and scientific lines of effort separate, with the satellites proceeding on the second, scientific track. His concern was that when military officials started talking about this subject and suggesting other missiles could have been used to launch a satellite sooner, “they tend to make the matter look like a ‘race,’ which is exactly the wrong impression.”

The Administration had separated the earth satellite program from military development to stress the peaceful character of the effort. Additionally, since foreign scientists would have access to the earth satellite program, the separation would protect material used in military rockets. Thus, in his press conference on October 9, Eisenhower set out to deliberately de-link

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695 Andrew Goodpaster, “Memorandum of Conference With the President,” October 8, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “October ’57 Staff Notes (2),” 2.

696 Goodpaster, “Memorandum of Conference With the President,” October 9, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “October ’57 Staff Notes (2).” McElroy, however, would give the opposite impression at his first press conference, suggesting in effect said that they would speed up the program. Ann Whitman Diary, October 9, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Ann Whitman Diary Series, “October ’57-ACW DIARY (2).”
military implication from what was primarily a scientific endeavor in space. He bluntly told the press that Sputnik would not compel the U.S. to speed up its missile program. NBC reporter Hazel Markel asked Eisenhower a question that cut to the core of his presidency: “Mr. President, in light of the great faith which the American people have in your military knowledge and leadership, are you saying at this time with the Russian satellite whirling about the world, you are not more concerned nor overly concerned about our nation’s security?” Eisenhower responded firmly:

Well, I think I have time and again emphasized my concern about the Nation's security. I believe I just a few months back went on the television to make a special plea about this. As a matter of fact, I plead very strongly for $38 billion in new appropriations this year, and was cut quite severely in the new appropriations for next year. Now, so far as the satellite itself is concerned, that does not raise my apprehensions, not one iota. I see nothing at this moment, at this stage of development, that is significant in that development as far as security is concerned, except, as I pointed out, it does definitely prove the possession by the Russian scientists of a very powerful thrust in their rocketry, and that is important. I can only say that I have had every group that I know anything about, to ask them is there anything more we can do in the development of our rocket program any better than it is being done? And, except for certain minor items or, you might say, almost involving administration, there has been little said.  

Eisenhower was almost as calm and resolute in private council with his closest advisers as he was in public, but he voiced real concerns about the propaganda implications of Sputnik.

The NSC met on Thursday October 10, 1957 to discuss the situation. Cutler called on DCI Dulles to begin with an intelligence briefing. DCI Dulles stated the facts:

at 1930 hours on October 4 the Soviets had fired their earth satellite from the Tyura Tam range. Its initial path followed the range, crossing approximately over the range’s other end at Klyuchi. Two hours after the successful orbiting of the earth satellite and after the second circuit of the earth by the satellite, the Soviets announced their achievement. This delay in the announcement was in line with the previous statements of the Soviet Union that they would not announce an attempt to orbit their satellite until they had been assured that the orbiting had been successful. Moreover, all the indications available to the intelligence community prior to the actual launching of the satellite pointed to the fact that the Soviets were preparing to launch either an earth satellite or an intercontinental

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Dulles claimed that the launch had not come as a surprise. As early as last November the intelligence community had estimated the Soviets would have the capability to launch an earth satellite “any time after November 1957.” The reason they were able to launch so fast was because they had combined their ICBM and earth satellite programs. The CIA did not yet know whether the satellite was sending encoded messages, but they expected additional launchings within the year (the Soviets publicly claimed they would launch between 6 and 13 satellites).

DCI Dulles then focused on the global reaction to the “Soviet achievement” pointing out first that “Khrushchev had moved all his propaganda guns into place. The launching of an earth satellite was one of a trilogy of propaganda moves, the other two being the announcement of the successful testing of an ICBM and the recent test of a large-scale hydrogen bomb at Novaya Zemlya.” Khrushchev’s initial statements claimed the satellite marked a new era, saying that military aircraft would soon be consigned to museums. (Dulles here noted that the CIA had not observed as many Soviet heavy bombers on airfields as had been expected, potentially indicating the Soviets were deliberately de-emphasizing the role of the heavy bomber.) Dulles assessed that the targets of all these Soviet propaganda assaults were underdeveloped nations, particularly those in the Middle East, and the goal was to convince them of the effectiveness of the Communist social system. Indeed, the Chinese had been quick to comment on the launch as proof that the Soviets were militarily and scientifically superior to the U.S.  

Under Secretary of State Christian Herter assessed that the reactions abroad were somber. While most U.S. allies had been “pretty firm and good” they nonetheless required assurances that

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699 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 2.
700 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 3.
the U.S. had not been surpassed scientifically. Neutral countries were patting themselves on the back for not taking sides. Overall, the U.S. would have to work to confirm the existence of its military and scientific strength. Governor Stassen added that while the members of the UN were surprised by Sputnik, they had already settled down and realized that the fundamentals of the world situation had not changed. Stassen doubted that Sputnik would cause any quick shifts among UN members.701

The discussion then turned to the state of the U.S. satellite program (one satellite had been completed, and three others were in various stages of completion). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Nathan Twining USAF, cautioned “that we should not permit ourselves to become hysterical about the Soviet achievement.” Deputy Secretary of Defense Quarles argued that the U.S. reaction must emphasize that the scientific aspects of U.S. earth satellite program were paramount; these included establishing the principle of freedom of outer space. Quarles continued that the U.S. had never tried to launch first, despite the Cold War propaganda advantages for doing so, and unlike the Soviets the U.S. program had separated the satellite rockets from those used in military ballistic missiles. Regarding the Soviet public offer to “permit” the U.S. to place its instrumentation on a Soviet satellite, Quarles felt they needed to find a good reason to refuse, since U.S. instrumentation was vastly superior. Yet the launch, in Quarles’ view, demonstrated that Soviet long-range rockets were far more advanced than previously thought and, further, the “outer space implications of the launching of this satellite were of very great significance, especially in relation to the development of reconnaissance satellites.”702

Dr. Waterman, the Director of the National Science Foundation, similarly stressed that

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the U.S. had two important assets in its rivalry with the Soviets: (1) transparency regarding the purposes of the satellite program and (2) skill in satellite and instrumentation design. Going forward, the focus of the program should be to produce a satellite that could either return to earth undamaged or transmit undamaged material back to earth. Dr. Detlev Bronk, the President of the National Academy of Sciences, further cautioned the NSC about getting the scientific community engaged in a race to accomplish everything before the Russians, as it was better to adhere strictly to objectives of the U.S. program and not deviate off course due to the fact the Russians had been first to launch.\(^{703}\)

Eisenhower’s advisers were thus sober, not apocalyptic, in their response to Sputnik. Having heard these assessments, Eisenhower delved into the specifics. The President noted they should inform the newspapers that Sputnik could not take pictures of the U.S. and asked whether, since the U.S. satellite would orbit at a lower height than the Soviet satellite, it would encounter more interference. Eisenhower was concerned this would diminish U.S. prestige once they had successfully launched a satellite. Quarles responded that the U.S. satellite would still have better equipment and thus collect better information.

Eisenhower also cautioned those present that they should expect being called soon to testify before Congress and talk to the press about the matter. Nixon later added that the NSC must be prepared for questions from Congress on how much the U.S. was spending on missiles relative to the U.S.S.R.. Eisenhower said that yesterday he had been asked how much of the earth satellite program delay was a result of inter-service rivalry. Nixon was also concerned that reports of inter-service rivalry and the lack of adequate support for U.S. satellite and missile programs would draw Congressional scrutiny and force them to shut down certain programs. Eisenhower said he always denied the assertions of inter-service rivalry, but these questions

\(^{703}\) S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 6.
showed that many in the U.S. believed they were competing among themselves rather than with the Russians. In facing public scrutiny, their most important task was to “stand firmly by the existing earth satellite program which was, after all, adopted by the Council after due deliberation as a reasonable program. In short, we should answer inquiries by stating that we have a plan—a good plan—and that we are going to stick to it.” Eisenhower was sensitive to the possibility that further Soviet breakthroughs could result in great, cumulative damage to the U.S. position, forcing them to question the adequacy of existing science and defense plans. Nevertheless, the U.S. could not attempt to out-do the Russians in each aspect of a vast scientific program. It was far more important to “seek a military posture that the Russians will respect.”

Eisenhower then turned to the status of the U.S. IRBM programs. The President was concerned that attempts to develop an IRBM with a 2,000-mile range were slowing efforts to develop a workable IRMB with a shorter ranger (1,500 miles). He reminded those present that the objective of the missile program was to produce the most efficient missile system, not the particular missile system each service desired. Parochial service concerns must take a backseat to the primary objective of firing a 1,500-mile missile and actually hitting something. Eisenhower stressed this achievement of an IRBM (and ICBM) would produce an enormous political and psychological advantages, advantages which the NSC had noted from the start of the ballistic missile program were more important than strictly military considerations.

The next day during a Cabinet meeting, Eisenhower began to suggest that Congressional pressures would now push in the direction of increased expenditures. He predicted “a gloomy situation” for the 1959 budget that would make it difficult to stay under the $38 billion budgetary ceiling, not only due to increase defense costs per unit, but also because he expected most

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704 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 6, 8.
705 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 11.
members of Congress to press for increased expenditures. The President emphasized that this administration “must continue to try to keep its fiscal house in order despite increased tensions with which we would have to learn to live for a long time.” Eisenhower recognized the administration would have to push forward with new missile programs despite the fact that manned airplanes were more important, but he reaffirmed his belief in “the worth of our 1952 objectives” and reminded those present of the progress they had made in cutbacks as a result of the New Look. 706

In a meeting with Treasury Secretary Humphrey and other economic officials on October 14, 1957, Eisenhower “observed that in the absence of some striking military development in coming months, Congress will very probably appropriate $41 billion for defense expenditures next year.” Eisenhower strongly doubted that Congress would reduce major expenditures, except possibly those related to the mutual security program. Thus, it was “virtually certain” they would face a budget deficit next year related to “demagogic temptations for more defense spending.” 707

Plans for conventional force reductions nevertheless proceeded apace. General Twining briefed the NSC on October 24 on the status of military programs. The Army had 18 divisions as of June 30, 1957, and Twining projected this would decrease to 15 Army divisions by June 30, 1958, and 14 by June 30, 1959. The comparable figures for reducing the number navy ships were 967, 901, 864 and those for reducing combat wings were 137, 117, and 103. 708

The next day, Eisenhower convened his Scientific Advisory Committee to the Director of Defense Mobilization, chaired by Dr. Rabi, who had played a key role in commissioning the

The group also included MIT President James Killian, inventor of the Polaroid Land camera Edwin A. Land, and President of the National Academy of Science Detlev Bronk, among others. Eisenhower told those present he could not understand the extreme public reaction to Sputnik—“Its certainly not going to drop on their heads”—but he wanted to know if the group really thought that American science was being surpassed by the Soviets. Rabi told the president that while the U.S. currently had the edge, the general trend favored the Soviets, who prioritized science in schools more than Americans. Land added that while Americans had become complacent in their approach to scientific life, Russian scientific culture taught the younger generation to enjoy science. Rabi and Killian both recommended creating a presidential science adviser to track government programs and decisions with a scientific dimension. Eisenhower first pushed back on factual grounds (reflecting his personal experience with the Soviets), saying that the Soviets did not inspire young people to love and pursue science, the instead “followed the practice of picking out the best minds and ruthlessly spurring the rest. At least he had been given that impression when he associated with them.” Nevertheless, Eisenhower here saw an opportunity to lead a coordinated effort to create a spirit—an attitude toward science similar to that held toward various kinds of athletics in his youth—an attitude which now seemed to him to have palled somewhat. He would think that one speech would not do the job. There would be a need for great carry through. He added that perhaps now is a good time to try such a thing. People are alarmed and thinking about science, and perhaps this alarm could be turned to a constructive result.  

The administration not only expected the Sputnik crisis to provoke a Congressional push for increasing military appropriations, but also, as Secretary Dulles wrote to the President on October 31, 1957, “offset this by cutting down on the economic aid.” Dulles said “his people” were concerned about this, and if Eisenhower agreed (as he knew Eisenhower did), he “would

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suggest that this point be brought to the attention of those who are helping with your prospective speeches.”

A month later Dulles would also warn Eisenhower and the Cabinet about the possible dangers of embarking on a program to enhance American scientific education, as the emphasis on science might cause a neglect of “other things fundamental to a free society…warping the educational pattern for materialistic purposes of a government.”

On October 25, 1957 Eisenhower wrote a personal letter to Frank Altschul, Vice Chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the National Planning Association, emphasizing that recent Soviet successes had been in the making for many years; the struggle was neither temporary nor recent. Correspondingly, the U.S. response must be designed for “indefinite use and endurance” rather than “hasty and extraordinary effort under the impetus of sudden fear.” Eisenhower indicated that in the next session of Congress, legislators may move to pass very large appropriations—“some possibly unjustifiably large”—but this was not guaranteed. In a recent session of Congress prior to Sputnik legislators considered similar arguments about the growing Soviet threat, but they had decided to drastically cut Defense, Mutual Aid, and Information programs, programs, which “have no pressure groups to support them.” Eisenhower closed by referencing his past experience in dealing with the Soviets and analysis of that experience. He recalled 1947, when he was writing “Crusade in Europe” and devoted the last chapter to reflecting on the Soviets and the nature of communism. At that time he had argued that the “most dangerous communist program could well be economic, making an appeal to the destitute and the desperate, while the free nations, each too much occupied with its

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own local and selfish affairs, might allow the world to fall victim to the most ruthless despotism of the ages.”

Dr. Rabi visited Eisenhower on October 29. Rabi told the president that the U.S. still enjoyed advantages in the nuclear world over the Russians, advantages that could only be overcome by near continuous testing on the part of the Russians. A particular favorable gap was the Russian H-bomb compared to the U.S H-bomb—the Russian bombs were vulnerable to certain types of radio activity that could affect them as they approach and thereby reduce their effectiveness by 99 percent.

This was preparation for the press conference Eisenhower would give the next day. Speaking to the press Eisenhower emphasized that his scientific advisers were not primarily concerned about Soviet superiority in scientific advancements at present, but rather concerned where the U.S. was going to be in ten years. Eisenhower told the press that his advisers had asked to enlist his support for “a means and method first of awakening the United States to the importance and indeed the absolute necessity of increasing our scientific output of our colleges and universities, and if necessary helping where it became the proper function of Federal Government to bring about this thing in a material way.”

The Gaither Committee: NSC 68 Redux?

On November 3, 1957, on the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, the

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712 Eisenhower to Frank Altschul, October 25, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “DDE Diary Oct. 1957,” 2-6. Eisenhower also returned to his longstanding belief that they were defending not just property, wealth, or the homeland, but the American way of life. Protecting that way of life required a long-term commitment to sound fiscal policies, and the wise use of resources so as to avoid the creation of a garrison state. “While I do not believe that in properly making sure that our security efforts match the seriousness of the threat, we shall need to turn our country into a garrison state, neither do I believe that given the existence of a major threat a country such as ours can permanently and by itself support abundance in both ‘guns and butter.’”


Soviets successfully launched Sputnik II, which weighed 1,121 lbs compared to its 184 lbs little brother and the 3.4 lbs, 6 inch U.S. Vanguard satellite in development. Sputnik II also had a passenger—a dog named Laika. The achievement added to the general sense of Soviet strength and American weakness. As Senator Symington proclaimed, the Sputnik II launch demonstrated the U.S. was “at least two years” behind the Soviets in ICBM capacity.\textsuperscript{715}

For proponents of the Gaither Committee’s work, the Sputnik II launch was further evidence supporting their case for more spending in the face of a dire threat. On November 7, the NSC considered the Gaither Committee’s final 28-page report, which contained 5 annexes and 26 recommendations. The Committee, which had worked without access to key U-2-collected intelligence, painted an alarming picture of growing Soviet capabilities. They claimed Soviet GNP was already more than 1/3 of U.S. GNP and increasing at a faster rate. Soviet expenditures for armed forces and heavy industry in 1957 were about equal to the U.S. at $57 billion. The Soviets had over 1,500 nuclear weapons, 4,500 long and short-range jet bombers, 250-300 long-range submarines (some with aerodynamic missiles), an air defense system with 4,600 ground radars, over 3,600 launching pads for surface-to-air missiles, 10,000 jet fighter planes, and a re-equipped army with 175 line divisions. The Soviets had also begun production of ballistic missiles with a 700 nm range and may have the capability to launch 100 ICBMs carrying megaton nuclear warheads by 1959 (they would have only four by 1961).

Based on this assessment of the relative balance of power, the Committee concluded U.S. air-nuclear retaliatory forces would be critically vulnerable to a Soviet surprise long-range missile attack in the 1959-1960 window, when the U.S. would likely still not possess significant ICBM retaliatory forces. The Committee’s recommendations thus focused on reducing SAC’s vulnerability to bomber and ICBM attacks, increasing U.S. strategic offensive power, and

augmenting forces for limited war in order to protect the U.S. civil population. This would involve putting roughly 515 SAC bombers (1/3 of the force) on alert status by mid-1959 so they could react to a bomber attack within 30-120 minutes depending on the base location, increasing the Polaris nuclear-powered submarine fleet from 6 to 18 submarines, increasing IRBMs from 120 to 240, and increasing ICBMs from 130 to 600. The Committee recommended a nation-wide fallout shelter program to protect civilians; this was a cheaper option than the $32 billion proposal recommended by the FCDA and would cost only $25 billion. The total cost for these programs would be $44 billion over five years—$25 billion for the fallout shelters plus $19 for active defense measures, which the Committee recognized would increase the debt, necessitate higher taxes, and potentially postpone investments in domestic infrastructure.\footnote{S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 350th Meeting of the National Security Council, Monday, January 6, 1958,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “350th Meeting of NSC, January 6, 1958,” 18. See also, Valerie Adams, 179-181.}

In sum, the Gaither Committee had concluded that the U.S. was in more danger than at any point in history, a point which Sputnik seemed to support. Unsurprisingly, a document that had been largely drafted by Paul Nitze—along with former Solarium Task Force A member and Eisenhower confidante, George “Abe” Lincoln—read much like NSC 68 in its hawkish and urgent tone. As Adams argues, “had the administration chosen to react to Sputnik in the same way Truman reacted to the Korean War, the Gaither report could easily have become the next NSC-68.”\footnote{Valerie Adams, 178.}

Yet the Gaither report would not become the next NSC 68, largely because Eisenhower correctly assessed from the start that U.S. strategic capabilities were in better shape than the Gaither Committee suggested. He responded to the Gaither recommendations by telling the NSC it was essential they neither panic nor become complacent. Rather, there was an urgent need to
“make an economic, psychological, and political survey of what could and should be done. In this context, perhaps the advent of SPUTNIK had been helpful. The President added that we certainly did not wish to appear frightened and he had received information today indicating that fear had pervaded the population of the United States. The President believed that we could correct this situation.” If they were sitting in the Kremlin, Eisenhower mused, they would likely adopt all the Gaither recommendations, without regard for how this would affect the American people. Yet the “big job” before them was to mold public opinion while avoiding extremes—leveling with the American public about the extent of the threat while also convincing them that “we can lick it.”

Secretary Dulles added his opinion that investing in a shelter program as the Gaither Committee recommended was unwise; it would give the impression of abandoning the European allies. In Dulles’s view, the most important thing the U.S could do was maintain a deterrent capability that could damage the U.S.S.R. so extensively that the Soviets would be unwilling to ever start a war: “With such a deterrent capability, together with the resources needed to wage the cold war, we should be in a position to conduct our foreign policy in such a manner as to assure victory in the cold war.”

In other words, massive retaliation would win the day, and Nitze’s attempts to convince Eisenhower to change course and invest more across the board were met with little enthusiasm. For example, while Eisenhower accepted the idea of accelerating missile programs, albeit at a much more measured pace, he almost immediately rejected the construction of fallout shelters.

On November 7, Eisenhower gave a television and radio address on “Science in National

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Security” in which he reaffirmed the strength of American defense forces, particularly its retaliatory capacity and the modernizations and efficiencies that had been brought about by the New Look, such as the B-52, which now carried more destructive capacity than all the bombers in World War II combined. The president told the public they were still ahead of the Soviets in nuclear capacity, both in terms of quality and quantity. Yet he conceded the Sputnik launch was a significant achievement, one which counseled for “eternal vigilance and increased free world military power.” Eisenhower’s proposed solution was to reprioritize scientific education, enhance sharing of scientific information with allies, and to concentrate efforts within government in the fields of science, technology, and missiles, including greater cooperation with Congress. Eisenhower announced five action items: (1) creating the office of Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology to oversee these efforts (Dr. Killian of MIT would fill this position); (2) directing the Secretary of Defense to fully empower the Guided Missiles Director so as to prevent inter-service rivalry in missile development; (3) determining any future missile or related program would be placed under a single manager; (4) sending new legislation to Congress to ease restrictions on sharing technological information with friendly countries; and (5) if such legislation was granted, supporting a Scientific Committee within NATO to carry out an enhanced research effort with allies. Yet he tempered this action items with a call for efficiency and economy, emphasizing the importance of seeing “nothing is wasted on non-essentials.”

On November 13, Eisenhower gave another television and radio address concerning “Our Future Security”, in which he again played down the idea that Sputnik was evidence of an increased Soviet threat. Yet he conceded that recent Soviet scientific achievements showed

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“competence in science and techniques important to modern warfare.” While the “sputniks have inspired a wide variety of suggestions” ranging from accelerating missile programs “to shooting a rocket around the moon, to an indiscriminate increase in every kind of military and scientific expenditure,” it would be a long time before the Soviets possessed even a fraction of the power of the U.S. present bombing force. Eisenhower announced that he would nonetheless spend more on enhancing SAC’s power, accelerating missile development (particularly long-range missiles), and reducing warning times. These increased costs would mean they would have to work with “redoubled determination to save every possible dime” in other areas. This would be one of the “hardest and most distasteful tasks that the coming session of Congress must face. And pressure groups will wail in anguish.” But it was nonetheless necessary, along with Eisenhower’s pledge to push federal, state, and local governments to prioritize scientific education.721

Eisenhower’s two post-Sputnik public addresses contained concessions to the Gaither Committee’s recommendations (i.e. increasing SAC readiness). Yet the Sputnik launch did not validate the conclusions of the Gaither report in the way the invasion of Korea had validated the conclusions of NSC 68. In the first instance, since U-2 flights had begun in 1956, Eisenhower had a better picture of Soviet capabilities than the public and even many of his advisers; the president knew the Soviets were not on the cusp of acquiring a massive operational ICMB program. In a letter to Swede Hazlett on November 18, 1957, Eisenhower hinted at his superior understanding of balance of power: “In the matters that currently seem to be disturbing the country so much, namely our relative position with Russia in arms development, you can understand there are many things that I don’t dare to allude to publicly, yet some of them would

do much to allay the fears of our own people.”  

There were those below Eisenhower agitating for moving farther in the Gaither direction. For example, on November 14, Deputy Secretary of Defense Quarles said if they implemented the Gaither “priority A” recommendations, it would cost an additional $2.8 billion in FY 1959. If they implemented the “priority B” recommendations, it would cost an additional $1.86 billion. Quarles also highlighted the fact that the $200 million currently budgeted for defense against ICBMs for FY 1959 fell short of the Gaither recommendations for accelerating these programs, and as such the Defense Department believed it was urgent to add some $100 million for missile defense. The total of those add-on programs would thus exceed Eisenhower’s $38 billion budget limit.  

The JCS added to Quarles comments and warned the president’s budget limits would reduce capabilities and prevent the modernization of critical equipment. Admiral Radford argued for more add-on spending, including pay increases for military and civilian personnel totaling $700 million, $525 million to modernize equipment, $1.36 billion for the Polaris ballistic missile program and to expedite anti-submarine research and development, and $1.972 billion for the Air Force to improve SAC alert and missile operational capability. Secretary of the Army Brucker piled on as well, warning of an impending decline in Army capability. He recommended supplemental FY 1959 appropriations of $738 million to increase Army personnel by 53,000. The total add-on programs mentioned in the course of the presentation was approximately $4.8 billion in new obligational authority.

After hearing from his top Defense advisers, Eisenhower said he was troubled that none

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724 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 345th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, November 14, 1957,” appendix.
of the presentations talked about implementing more efficient programs to cut costs. He asked why changes were being made to the atomic submarine (SEA WOLF), because he considered it a first class vessel that did not need significant modernization. He then turned back to the ICBM, saying he was concerned the Defense Department would continue both the TITAN and ATLAS ICBM programs while also arguing for the THOR and JUPITER IRBM programs. The purpose was to develop them only to the extent that they could choose the most effective ICBM and IRBM programs, not to develop all of them simultaneously. The President asked everyone present to recall that 2½ years ago the JCS had come up with the statement that $38 billion would be sufficient as a minimum level of spending, and now they were here arguing for a new minimum well beyond that level.725

On November 22, add-on programs exceeding Eisenhower’s $38 billion limit were whittled down, with the NSC selecting only those that were of the highest urgency and priority, thereby bringing the new total to $2.14 billion above the limit. This cost included pay increases for military and civilian personnel and investments in SAC alert, ballistic missile detection, ballistic missile acceleration, research and development, force levels, satellite and outer space programs, and antisubmarine warfare. FY1959 end strength for the Services would be 870,000 for the Army, 630,000 for the Navy, 175,000 for the Marine Corps, and 850,000 for the Air Force. This would allow the U.S. to retain 2 divisions in Korea and 5 divisions for NATO. Eisenhower was also satisfied with giving Defense an additional $100 million for the Outer Space Program, but he was not sure the Pentagon needed $200 million in FY1959.726 Secretary

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725 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 345th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, November 14, 1957,” 8. Eisenhower also felt the Gaither Panel’s recommendation for augmenting U.S. and allied forces for limited military operations was not well crafted, as it was more important in his view to increase the capabilities of existing forces rather than increasing the total number of forces. S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 352nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, January 22, 1958, EPL,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “352nd Meeting of NSC, January 22, 1958,” 4.
726 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 346th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday,
Dulles emphasized the importance of making one squadron of IRBM’s available to NATO by the end of 1959. Eisenhower, however, questioned whether they would be able to build the necessary guard installations by then, commenting that the elaborate nature of these installations would make them prime targets for an enemy attack. Later that same day, Eisenhower wrote a private letter to Secretary Humphrey in which he said it seemed over the past five years he had spent 2/3rds of his time fighting increasing expenditures, but “only this morning we had our mid-year review of the budget and we find that with the exception of one or two very unimportant agencies, the ’57 expenditures for every single Department of government exceed comparable ones in the year ’56.”

Eisenhower’s commitment to the New Look and reducing costs was balanced against genuine concerns about propaganda losses and the need for a public relations victory. This was magnified by unexpected delays in launching the U.S. satellite, despite having announced to the world in October they would accomplish a launch by December. On December 5, 1957, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Admiral Strauss, gave a report on the status of the Atomic Energy Program as of June 30, 1957. Eisenhower asked Strauss about the feasibility of having a nuclear-propelled aircraft operational in two years. Admiral Strauss said this was feasible, but it would not amount to much more than a flying platform, rather than an effective military airplane. Nevertheless, Eisenhower felt “the achievement of such an aircraft was just as important as the Sputnik.” Secretary Dulles took the opportunity to complain that the U.S had suffered a foreign relations disaster yesterday when it delayed launching the scientific satellite after telling the world the details the launch date down to the minute. The delay had made the

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U.S. “the laughing stock of the whole Free World, and was being most effectively exploited by the Soviets.” Yet a week later, George V. Allen, the Director of the U.S. Information Agency, tempered Dulles’s assessment. He gave Eisenhower a report on post-Sputnik opinion in Western Europe based on interviews with cross sections of the public in France, Great Britain, Italy and Western Germany. In general, the report found that while a preponderance of respondents considered the Soviets slightly ahead of the U.S. alone in terms of scientific development, they did not think the Soviets were ahead of the Western Powers as a whole.

The NSC again discussed the Gaither recommendations in January 1958. Eisenhower noted the growing demand for publicly releasing the Gaither report, commenting that “before we got done with this Gaither thing we would find ourselves obliged to do things which we normally would never think of doing (releasing a classified report to the President prepared confidentially by a board of consultants appointed by the President).” Cutler was deeply opposed to releasing the report, feeling even the release of a sanitized version would have catastrophic consequences (though it is unclear if he meant for domestic politics or national security or both). Cutler further noted that Congressmen were most interested in getting their hands on the timetables for Soviet missile production relative to the U.S. in the Gaither report, the source of what candidate Kennedy would exploit as the “missile gap.” Eisenhower “replied in exasperation that he was sick to death of timetables; he had had experience with them for years, and they never proved anything useful.” Eisenhower was, however, interested in the Gaither recommendations pertaining to the alert positions and U.S. retaliatory power. But he remained skeptical about

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730 George Allen to Eisenhower, December 13, 1957, EPL, White House Central Files, Subject Series, Box 65, “SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM (Missiles-Satellites, etc.) (As Proposed in President’s Speech, 11/7/57) (1).”
speeding ballistic missile production without first having tested these missiles, as his Defense advisers were recommending. In any case, Eisenhower wanted to flatten out the missile production curve after achieving a certain level of production and until further tests had allowed them to perfect the missile systems. Eisenhower was here articulating the concept of strategic sufficiency for missile production—the idea that past a certain point and absent a markedly different capability, the utility of adding to the missile stockpile was dubious.  

On January 16, 1958, the NSC reexamined the Gaither Committee’s proposal for a nation-wide fallout shelter program, as well as the costs and economic consequences of its overall proposals. The NSC agreed the U.S. should not initiate a nation-wide fallout shelter program of the type recommended by the Gaither Committee; they should instead continue to emphasize “measures to strengthen our effective nuclear retaliatory power as a deterrent and to improve our active defenses, as compared with—but not to exclusion of—passive defense measures such as shelter for the civil population.” Transcripts of the debate claim the cost of the fallout shelter program was not the prohibitive factor. Rather the decision was made based on an overall assessment of how best to protect the American people. Yet cost was a significant variable. Adopting the shelter proposal would have resulted in a $19 billion deficit, and when combined with other contingency items in the Gaither report would have added a total of $36 billion to the deficit over five years, assuming the continuance of existing tax rates.

Vice President Nixon contributed an obvious yet critical point to the debate that built on Eisenhower’s earlier concept of strategic sufficiency: building the shelters recommended by the

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Gaither Committee would save 20 million lives, but this was a change from 60 million dead to 40 million dead. Despite the value of 20 million extra lives, 40 million deaths was a lot, enough to mean the de facto destruction of the Republic. Thus, shelters could not protect the U.S. in a meaningful sense. The logical conclusion was to concentrate their limited resources on the measures that would deter an attack rather than shelters. Eisenhower agreed with Nixon’s analysis and indicated that damage on the scale spelled out in previous Net Evaluation Subcommittee reports meant complete U.S. paralysis, thereby negating the need for shelters. “It would be silly to talk of recuperation if everything was destroyed. We could also destroy Russia, and the result would be two wounded giants doing nothing. Casualties of the magnitude begin talked about would mean that civilization could not be rebuilt in a century or even two centuries.”

Changing Domestic Political Pressures: More Butter and More Guns

As early as November 23, large portions of the Gaither Committee report were leaked to the press, thus spreading a sense that the administration was intransigent (if not paralyzed) in the face of a dramatically increased Soviet threat. The New York Herald Tribune and the Washington Post published detailed accounts of the Gaither Committee’s conclusions. This gave the already concerned public access to expert assessments suggesting the U.S. was in grave danger. Correspondingly, members of Congress such as Senator Lyndon Johnson—then Chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee—began to agitate for the full release of the report. Beginning on November 25, 1957, Johnson chaired Senate hearings on Sputnik and the Eisenhower Administration’s response. Though Johnson struck a bipartisan tone during the hearings, and Eisenhower cooperated extensively with Johnson’s requests for information (which had the secondary effect of blocking a broader inquiry by Johnson’s rival for the Democratic nomination

733 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 351st Meeting of the National Security Council,” 12.
Stuart Symington), the hearings fanned the flames of public hysteria. Witnesses included notable scientists such as Edward Teller warning that the Soviets were opening up a considerable lead in scientific and military capabilities.

Eisenhower’s public approval rating fell to an all-time low of 49 percent in April 1958. And though it was back up to 54 percent by May, the Democrats now had a unique opportunity to reassert their authority on foreign policy matters against the popular, war hero president whose foreign policy credentials had heretofore been sacrosanct.\textsuperscript{734} Whereas Eisenhower had previously had to fight his own party to avoid cutting spending too quickly and to preserve foreign assistance, partisan politics now pushed him in the opposite direction. On December 5, 1957, Democratic Congressmen Carl T. Durham and Clinton P. Anderson—Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy respectively—sent a letter to Eisenhower concerning Sputnik that captured this sentiment. Durham and Anderson argued the recent Soviet earth satellite and ICBM successes presented significant challenges to U.S. leadership, and “there is an urgent need for the Bureau of the Budget to release funds, already authorized and appropriated by the Congress, to carry forward projects in both the military and civilian fields which are vital to the national security and to world confidence in America’s scientific capabilities.”\textsuperscript{735}

Congress wanted Eisenhower to “do something” and there was no shortage of “good ideas” emerging from Capitol Hill. For example, on October 16, 1957, Senator Charles E. Potter (a Republican from Michigan) wrote Eisenhower recommending the creation of a new Federal Agency called the “Scientific Progress Agency” headed by a Cabinet ranking official.

\textsuperscript{734} Divine, 135.
\textsuperscript{735} Durham and Anderson to Eisenhower, December 15, 1957, EPL, White House Central Files, Subject Series, Box 65, “SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM (Missiles-Satellites, etc.) (As Proposed in President’s Speech, 11/7/57) (2).”
Eisenhower politely replied that he had already been receiving advice from scientific groups serving in a similar advisory capacity for years. Just two weeks prior he had initiated discussions with his Science Advisory Committee on the prospect of improving coordination within the federal government. He also reminded the Senator of the wide scientific responsibilities of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the National Science Foundation. Eisenhower told Potter that the Science Advisory Committee had recently concluded that the most serious challenge in this field was not the proven competence of the Soviets, but rather the difficulties in attracting qualified and promising people to scientific fields in the U.S. “To this part of the problem, also mentioned in your letter, they feel we should devote efforts calculated to enlist nation-wide support.”

Thus, in the wake of Sputnik, Eisenhower quickly digested the shift in Congressional sentiment and took steps to partially accommodate it. For example, at the Cabinet Meeting on October 18, 1957, Eisenhower began the proceedings by asking those present to work to improve their connections with their related Congressional Committee as well as to improve their overall presentations to Congress. Eisenhower stressed that whenever they went to Congress to defend particular programs they should work to connect that program with the Administration’s overall goal to provide military strength and security, economic strength, and advance human welfare. UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge nonetheless warned that the next Congress would use the crisis and make a deliberate effort to “destroy popular confidence in the President and the Administration.” This was despite a continuing sentiment, even among Defense officials, that the sky was not falling. Deputy Secretary of Defense Quarles stated that the Sputnik launch was

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evidence that the Soviets had extremely competent scientists, but they were not ahead of the U.S. such that they should change the timelines laid out in the U.S. space program. Eisenhower emphasized his continued commitment to making tough choices between programs that were necessary and those that did not merit expenditure, but recognized the task would now be more difficult:

He [Eisenhower] stressed that it is no longer a possibility of butter and guns, rather it is one of butter or guns...despite all the talk of satellites and guided missiles, the United States with its planes still retained the power of destroying Russia. He saw the need, however, for convincing the world—presently scared by Russia—that the United States is doing what it should. He repeated that the country would just have to do a little less ‘buttering’ and more ‘gunning’, in a situation complicated by the prospect of reduced Treasury receipts. He noted the probably inevitability of certain things like increased pay, hence the necessity for avoiding any new program except as one saves money or can’t be delayed. The President felt this would be the most difficult budget ever in its development.  

Eisenhower was right—subsequent NSC discussions demonstrate the intense difficulty the administration faced in controlling costs. In mid-November, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Percival Brundage, told the NSC that while they were working hard to reduce FY 1959 civilian expenditures, doing so was practically impossible without new legislation from Congress. “This meant serious political problems were going to face us in the future.” Eisenhower responded by saying he was not particularly concerned about achieving a balanced budget in any one year but rather with putting them on the path towards a balanced budget while maintaining the nation’s security. His aim was to “achieve the right balance between a desirable defense program and our available resources. We could not take any risks to our national security but we would certainly have to make some very hard decisions.”

The following week on November 22, 1957, Vice President Nixon, drawing on

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738 L. A. Minnich Jr., “Minutes of Cabinet Meeting,” October 18, 1957, Files), 4-5.
“information and rumor available to him” warned the NSC that Congress would make “strenuous efforts” to find areas where certain defense programs could be expedited and production of operational missiles could be increased “even on a crash basis” and even if the missile quality declined. Nixon believed that the administration had to communicate in the course of Congressional hearings that they would have the capability to put a squadron of IRBM’s in Europe by the end of 1958. And even if this missile program was not fully complete, there would still “be strong Congressional pressure to take the risk and place the squadron in Europe for psychological reasons.” Eisenhower responded with a smile, asking Nixon “which of the two parties was likely to propose a big tax increase in order to mount a crash program.” 740

A crash program was indeed what many in Congress wanted. In a meeting with Congressional leaders on January 28, 1958, Senator Saltonstall told Eisenhower that there were still powerful pressures in Congress for authorizing more B-52s. Eisenhower responded by railing “against the proclivity people had for doing things in Defense that are terribly costly yet do not serve security significantly.” He then again articulated his concept of strategic sufficiency. Eisenhower could not conceive of enemy attack of such a scale they would not have enough bombers to do their job. “[I]f 600 bombers weren’t enough to serve the purpose, 700 would not be able to serve it either. He much preferred to put the vast sum of money involved in something more useful. He just couldn’t see overbuilding things that frequently get obsolete before the contract is complete.” 741

As he would later express in a private letter to (then former) Treasury Secretary Humphrey, Eisenhower confessed his inability to convince Congress of the dangers of

“unwarranted expenditures.” In his view there were four subversive factions in Congress. The first faction was “simply careless and obsessed by the idea that by voting for every expenditure, particularly those that affect their states and districts, they hope to be re-elected.” The second faction voted for more spending out of an ideological desire to centralize functions and resources in the federal government and to push American government in a socialist direction; they were unconcerned about placing a greater debt burden on the American people. The third faction was “engaged in pushing preposterous money bills in the certainty that these will be vetoed by me. According to this theory, these individuals believe that the country will be no worse financially but they, by their ‘liberal’ voting record, will fare much better at the polls this fall.” Fourth and finally, there was a group “that believes (or pretends to believe) that we are still moving so rapidly downward in a recession that only lowered taxes and vast increases in spending will do us any good.” Faced with these factions, Eisenhower doubted that Congress would have the wisdom or the political courage to fund critical programs like mutual security while reducing wasteful expenditures: “They would rather neglect a vital—but unpopular—program to spend billions elsewhere futilely.”

Eisenhower felt mutual security dollars were the most important in the federal budget, the best means of keeping the peace and preventing World War III. At the July 25, 1958 Cabinet meeting he said his three “prime interests” for that year would be (1) mutual security legislation, (2) reciprocal trade, and (3) defense reorganization. The appropriation for mutual security was about to be marked up in committee in the Senate, and Eisenhower urged every Cabinet member “to do what he could with his friends on the Hill board getting the highest possible amount approved by the Senate so that the low House figure could be counteracted for Conference

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purposes and a reasonably high final appropriation be obtained.” Indeed, Eisenhower felt that Congress was holding Mutual Security hostage in order to prevent him from vetoing any pet proposals that Congress wanted to get through, such as the $193 million Congress had appropriated for the Atomic Energy Commission. In a letter to Lyndon Johnson on August 4, 1958, Eisenhower strongly objected to proposed Congressional cuts to mutual security funds, saying the authorization fell short by $157.5 million. While it was Congress’s duty to determine the level of authorization, Eisenhower felt his duty was “equally clear”—to emphasize that the “restoration of these funds is of the utmost importance to ourselves and to friendly nations throughout the world. I hope you will use this letter, to the degree you deem advisable, throughout the Senate, for in this matter the stakes for America are no less than crucial.”

Eisenhower also predicted post-Sputnik domestic political pressures to increase military spending would dissipate over time. As he told the Cabinet in April 1958, while Congress was currently in a “spending mood”, Congress would revert to an “economy cycle” in eighteen months or three years and would then seek to “lop off” projects they had initiated now in an uneconomic and irresponsible fashion. At the Cabinet meeting on May 23, 1958 Eisenhower again predicted a new “economy push” by Congress sometime during the 1960 budgeting period and said that “he feared that when it came it could cause the Defense budget to be cut too far, to the detriment of the Nation.” Thus it was in their interest to make prudent cuts now. The figure projected for FY1960 was $53.7 billion for national security, which caused the president to

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exclaim: “How far do we have to go before we convince Russia!”

Harnessing the Hysteria: Post-Sputnik Foreign Policy Initiatives

Though skeptical of the Gaither Committee’s recommendations and resolute in the face of Congressional pressures, Eisenhower recognized the need to allay public hysteria after the Sputnik launch. This had been the overarching goal of his first two press conferences—to reassure the public that U.S. national security was strong and in capable hands. Eisenhower’s State of the Union address on January 9, 1957 went even farther, turning broad public reassurances into concrete policy proposals. Eisenhower did not mention Sputnik directly in the speech and emphasized that U.S. massive retaliatory capability could inflict “virtual annihilation” on any attacker. But he recognized the U.S. was “probably somewhat behind” in terms of ICBM capabilities. He outlined a response built on three pillars. First, he asked Congress for an additional $1.3 billion in order to accelerate the production of missile systems (the budget request he transmitted to Congress the following week stipulated half of the $1.3 billion would go towards missile production and the rest of the funds would go to Air Force B-52s and military reconnaissance satellites). Second, since such new weapons affected all the military services, Eisenhower intended to “end interservice disputes” by consolidating these programs in the Pentagon and giving the Secretary of Defense clear authority to drive their development. Third, Eisenhower stressed the need to improve education and scientific resources by investing more than $1 billion in this field over the next four years and increasing the National Science Foundation’s science education programs.

Increased Defense Spending

Thus, while Eisenhower remained committed to the New Look’s broad goal of getting the

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748 Quoted in Divine, 80-81.
most defense at the least cost, he made adjustments in response to Sputnik. As he had initially told his scientific advisers on October 15, 1957, he saw a great opportunity to lead a coordinated effort to revitalize the nation’s attitude toward science, particularly among the youth. “People are alarmed and thinking about science, and perhaps this alarm could be turned to a constructive result.” He was also willing to accept some of the Gaither recommendations along with a modest increase in military expenditures. For example, on January 22, 1958 he directed the NSC to place the following programs at the highest priority above all others for research and development and achieving operational capability: Atlas ICBM, Titan ICBM, Thor-Jupiter IRBM, Polaris FBM, anti-missile missile defense system, International Geospatial Year (IGY) scientific satellite programs, and other satellite programs determined by the Secretary of Defense to have key political, scientific, psychological, or military objectives.

Eisenhower’s January 1958 budget request included $39.1 billion in defense expenditures, $1.1 billion more than his initial ceiling of $38 billion, at a time when recession had increased the deficit to $10 billion. Eisenhower was willing to bear a budget deficit of $400 million for 1958 with larger deficits projected for 1959, largely because (as his post-Sputnik budget request specified) this “expresses the way the American people will want to respond to the promises and dangers of the dawning age of space conquest.” On April 24, 1958 Eisenhower told the NSC he was going against his desire for austerity and approved the recommendation of the Secretary of Defense to increase initial operational capability of IRBMs from 8 squadrons (120 missiles) to 12 squadrons (180 missiles) by early FY 1961, albeit with the understanding that this would not entail new

751 Quoted in Divine, 82.
obligational authority in FY 1958 or FY 1959.\footnote{S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 363rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, April 24, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “363rd Meeting of NSC, April 24, 1958,” 6. Secretary Dulles commented that these NSC discussions always assumed the U.S. needed the best and most of everything, rather than aiming for George Washington’s “respectable posture of defense” as the President frequently reminded them. Dulles proposed designating a study group to figure out what level of military capabilities constituted a respectable posture of defense.}

Yet these adjustments still fell far short of the Gaither’s proposed $8 billion increase in national security expenditures. Eisenhower’s commitment to the concept of strategic sufficiency and concern about the long-term threat of bankrupting the country minimized the scale of the adjustment. On February 28, 1958, Eisenhower listened to the Gaither Committee’s military recommendations: producing more first-generation ICBMs by the end of 1963 (beyond the 130 already in the pipeline) along with the launch sites they required, ordering more than three POLARIS submarines missile systems, developing more advanced NIE-ZEUS anti-missile missiles rather than the TALOS system in production, and hardening SAC bases by providing blast shelters for planes, weapons, and personnel. The President responded that he had but one comment to make about this entire discussion: “namely, that we were not going to carry out all these plans and still maintain a free economy in the United States.” He then invoked his personal experience in war to push back on the recommendations, asking “what additional protection could be afforded installations by layered reinforced concrete, noting that we had been unable to destroy the German submarine plans even with direct hits by the block-busters of World War II.”\footnote{S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 356th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, February 27, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “356th Meeting of NSC, February 27, 1958,” 11.}

By this time retired Army Chief of Research and Development General James W. Gavin and journalist Joseph Alsop had publicly begun warning of a developing missile gap favoring the Soviets, thereby fueling Congressional desire to increase defense spending. In subsequent
negotiations with Congress, the House added to Eisenhower’s FY 1959 request by voting for $638 million more for three Polaris submarines and $90 million for enhancing the Minuteman missile program. The Senate voted 71-9 for an even greater increase totaling $40 billion for FY 1959, which reflected increases to B-52 bombers and KC-135 refueling tankers. Eisenhower pushed back on arguments for “wild” procurement programs in a press conference on August 27, 1958. The president explained that his administration, unlike his predecessor’s, had made the missile program the “highest priority” since 1955, such that there was no possibility of gaps occurring, particularly since long-range bombers would fill any potential gaps. Eisenhower struck a compromise in August 1958, and Congress passed $39.6 billion in appropriations, which increased Polaris submarines from six to nine (four more than Eisenhower wanted) and included the $90 million for Minuteman. Eisenhower had acceded to a budget $1 billion more than he wanted, but was able to negotiate language making most of the increases “new obligational authority” on a “no year” basis, meaning Eisenhower did not have to spend the money in a given fiscal year, and thereby could potentially reduce spending in the future.\footnote{Divine, 169-171, 177.}

*Defense Reorganization and Minimizing Inter-Service Rivalry*

Eisenhower also harnessed the Sputnik crisis to advance changes in Defense organization he had long desired. A month after the Sputnik launch, Nelson Rockefeller—who chaired Eisenhower’s Advisory Committee on government reorganization—briefed the president on his recommendations. Eisenhower was supportive of Rockefeller’s ideas to transfer operational authority from the individual services to unified command structures under the JCS, with the Secretary of Defense given greater overall authority to control the JCS. He also indicated his support for centralizing research and development in the Pentagon (including missile programs) under a single official. Unsurprisingly, the service chiefs resisted the reforms, arguing each...
service had different needs and different areas of expertise, thereby necessitating greater service independence. Congress also resisted unifying command structures, largely because divided services had the practical effect of enhancing Congressional influence, as they could selectively choose from competing service requests. Giving the Secretary of Defense more control over the defense budget would give the president greater leeway to choose among various missile programs. To overcome Congressional opposition, Eisenhower embarked on a public campaign portraying Defense reorganization as a way to enhance efficiency and cut costs. His efforts paid off: on August 6, 1958, Eisenhower signed a major defense reorganization bill into law. The bill enhanced the role of the JCS and created a new post of Director of Defense Research and Engineering. This was a significant adjustment, but one that went farther in the direction of the New Look—seeking Defense efficiencies so as to control costs. As Eisenhower said while haggling with Congress over the details of the bill: “We need a clean-cut bill that makes it possible to have a security that is not only sound and strong but also leaves the country solvent.

Enhanced Science Education

Eisenhower also pursued education reform initiatives, building on work the National Science Foundation (NSF) had begun prior to Sputnik to improve science curriculum in high schools and increase teacher training in physics. In January 1958, Eisenhower requested a threefold increase in the NSF budget for 1959 and $1 billion increase in funding for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in order to grant 40,000 scholarships over the next four years to students demonstrating high proficiencies in math and sciences. Though federal aid

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755 Quoted in Divine, 138. Divine also highlights how Eisenhower uncharacteristically became personally involved and too passionate in the debate over defense reorganization, owing largely to the problem that “the president’s own reputation as the nation’s most distinguished military leader led him astray. Convinced that he knew far more than members of Congress about the requirements of national security, he became rigid and unbending when the situation called for moderation and conciliation.” Divine, 143.
to education went against his political principles, Eisenhower portrayed these programs explicitly as a response to Sputnik, an “emergency” measure to produce more highly-trained scientists, engineers, and teachers.\footnote{Quoted in Divine, 91.} That summer the House produced a bill increasing the number of scholarships to 23,000 per year for four years, which Eisenhower subsequently insisted on limiting to 10,000 per year for four years.\footnote{Quoted in Divine, 163.}

Ultimately, the National Defense Education Act that passed out of Congress in August and Eisenhower signed into law on September 2, 1958 had a price tag of just under $1 billion (only $200 million added to the 1959 budget). The bill did three big things: (1) replaced the scholarships with a $295 million loan fund from which students could borrow $1,000 a year for five years if they demonstrated financial need and with special measures for students intending to focus on science, math or foreign languages; (2) provided $280 million for equipment to facilitate teaching science, math, and foreign languages; (3) provided $59.4 million for 5,500 graduate fellowships in science, engineering, and foreign area studies. Yet while signing the legislation, Eisenhower emphasized it was an emergency measure that would be terminated within four years. He had increased spending but had also fought to avoid a large-scale scholarship program that would give the federal government a greater permanent presence in education.\footnote{Divine, 164-165.} On October 5, 1958, Eisenhower also designated October as the National Science Youth Month. Dr. Howard L. Bevis, whom Eisenhower had appointed Chairman of the Committee on Scientists and Engineers called this “a major answer to the intellectual challenge symbolized in Russia’s launching of Sputnik a year ago today.”\footnote{U.S. President’s Committee on Scientists and Engineers, “National Science Youth Month termed ‘Answer to Sputnik,’” October 5, 1958, NAID #12093112, http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/sputnik.html (accessed January 20, 2014).}

\footnote{Quoted in Divine, 91.} \footnote{Quoted in Divine, 163.} \footnote{Divine, 164-165.} \footnote{U.S. President’s Committee on Scientists and Engineers, “National Science Youth Month termed ‘Answer to Sputnik’,” October 5, 1958, NAID #12093112, http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/sputnik.html (accessed January 20, 2014).}


**Space Policy**

Responding to Sputnik in October, Eisenhower had publicly committed to putting a U.S. satellite into orbit by December. Yet the U.S. Vanguard satellite program—started in 1956 under the auspices of the Naval Research laboratory—was a second tier priority compared with military IRBM and ICMB programs and thus lacked funds and urgency. An attempted Vanguard launch on December 6, 1957 failed in full public view, a failure that stung the administration. A subsequent test on January 28, 1958 was delayed due to a fuel leak. Finally, on January 31, 1958, 119 days after Sputnik I, the U.S. successfully launched the Explorer satellite.

This successful launch only increased demands for a more comprehensive space exploration policy, such that the Senate created a new Committee on Outer Space on February 6, 1958. The administration in turn announced that it had already created the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) within the Department of Defense to better coordinate all military space programs. Yet a debate persisted about where to locate civilian space programs without duplicating costs, as well as how to deconflict ARPA with the newly-created position of Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Eisenhower was skeptical about approving a separate civilian program and about the utility of space exploration in general, telling Senator William Knowland, who emphasized the psychological importance of such programs, that he would rather “have a good Redstone [Army IRBM] than hit the moon. I don’t think we have an enemy on the moon!”\(^760\)

Despite this, Eisenhower ultimately agreed to change the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), which had been founded in 1915 to oversee U.S. aviation projects, into a new National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) run by a presidential appointee. The effort gained steam as the administration succeeded in putting another Explorer into orbit on

\(^{760}\) Quoted in Divine, 101.
March 26, 1958, which had far more advanced instrumentation than anything on the Soviet Sputniks. Finally on March 17, 1958, the first successful Vanguard satellite was launched at a higher orbit than any previous U.S. or Soviet satellite. On March 26, 1958 Eisenhower approved ARPA proposals for $5 million to launch four more Explorer satellites before January 1959, $2 million for three lunar probes, and $200,000 for a station to track the lunar probes on the ground. Yet Eisenhower did not tout these programs publicly as a way to show he was “doing something.” In fact, Eisenhower attempted to publicly downplay any suggestion of a space race, which he felt was not only expensive but also lacked a valid strategic or scientific rationale.761

Eisenhower also adopted a new statement of U.S. Policy on Outer Space contained in NSC 5814 on July 3, 1958. Notably this policy did not commit the U.S. to maintaining space superiority over the Soviets. In discussing this document, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget Maurice Stans captured the difficulties in trying to maintain parity or superiority with the Soviets in space. In the first instance it was incredibly difficult if not literally impossible to determine the full extent of Soviet programs. Additionally, emphasizing military aspects of the outer space program would come at the expense of the peaceful, civilian aspects.762 Eisenhower also approved a program for using IRBMs to put eight test reconnaissance satellites into orbit over the U.S.S.R., with the understanding that he would subsequently authorize the launch and operational capability of these satellites in early 1960.763

On July 15, 1958, after Eisenhower and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson worked

out a compromise on the composition of NASA’s advisory board and the division of labor between military space programs and NASA, Congress approved legislation bringing NASA into existence. The costs of these space programs totaled $536 million for FY1959. This included $240 million for NASA, $110 million for ARPA, and $186 million for the WS-117L, a top-priority reconnaissance satellite that Eisenhower felt could replace the U-2’s capability with less risk of being shot down.\textsuperscript{764} An executive order from October 1, 1958 officially established NASA and gave it authority over the majority of existing space programs such as the Vanguard and Explorer programs, and transferred $117 million from the Defense Department’s 1958 dollars to NASA. ARPA retained controlled of the WS-117L reconnaissance satellite program, but Eisenhower subsequently placed the program under CIA control, now code-named Project Corona. Eisenhower also approved budget increases for NASA for 1960 of $130 million.\textsuperscript{765}

It is clear that these changes to space programs and policy would not have occurred without the Sputnik crisis. Though Eisenhower did not succumb to Sputnik hysteria by pursuing total space supremacy, in large part because his administration did not know what the Russians full space capability was, Eisenhower later admitted “the furor produced by Sputniks was really the reason for the creation of NASA.”\textsuperscript{766}

In August 1965, Eisenhower reviewed a manuscript by Professor Loyd S. Swenson, Jr. that was an official program history of Project Mercury, the beginnings of U.S. manned space flight. Eisenhower recounted that after the Soviets announced in 1957 that they would be the first to orbit, “manifestly we did not want to be second in the field although up until this time there

\textsuperscript{764} Yet the WS-117L, the largest recipient of increased funding, was a secret program, and Eisenhower refused to publicize in order to defuse political pressure and public hysteria. But with the launch of Explorer II on July 6, 1958, weighing 38.43 lbs, the U.S. now had four satellites in orbit, which while much smaller than the three Soviet Sputniks (Sputnik II weighed 1.5 tons), had far more advanced instrumentation. Divine, 152.

was no thought of an international competition of any kind. In other words, we were merely making a contribution to the scientific world. Incidentally, the public paid no attention to this Soviet announcement.” After the Soviets successfully orbited Sputnik I and II, the impact upon America was startling. While in governmental councils the Russian accomplishment caused no apprehension respecting national security, the psychological effect upon the entire country was drastic. I personally made two televised broadcasts in an effort to put the whole affair in perspective.\textsuperscript{767}

Though it became clear that successfully orbiting a satellite would have military significance for communications, reconnaissance, and meteorological information, Eisenhower still wanted to keep the program outside of the realm of military competition and focused on peaceful exploration of space. A competition or “race always implies urgency and spectacular progress regardless of cost or need….Neither then nor since have I ever agreed that it was wise to base any of these projects on an openly and announced competition with any other country. This kind of thing is unnecessary, wasteful and violates the basic tenets of common sense.” Thus the administration decided to put these peaceful aspects of the program under NASA.\textsuperscript{768}

\textit{Revising Basic National Security Policy}

Changes in Defense organization, national education policy, and space policy and programs all formed part of a broader discussion about the status of the New Look and the nature of the Soviet threat. At the NSC meeting on March 20, 1958, Robert Cutler briefed those present on the NSC Planning Board’s interpretation of the CIA’s newly completed “Estimate of the World Situation” (NIE 100-58), which was meant to illuminate the annual discussion of Basic Programs.

\textsuperscript{767} Eisenhower to Loyd S. Swenson Jr., August 5, 1965, EPL, Eisenhower Post-Presidential Papers, Principal File, Box 49, “SW (2),” 2-3.

\textsuperscript{768} Eisenhower to Loyd S. Swenson Jr., August 5, 1965, 4. Eisenhower began with a brief, largely chronological account of the founding of the NASA and the Government’s initial entry into space. The program started in early 1955 when Dr. Alan Waterman got Eisenhower’s approval to put a small satellite ("about the size of a grapefruit") into orbit at a cost of $22 million. The project cost soon ballooned to $60 million, then $150 million as the grapefruit became a basketball carrying some instrumentation. The project subsequently encountered difficulties, which delayed the anticipated date of a successful orbit.
National Security Policy. The most current iteration of Basic National Security Policy was NSC 5707/8, officially adopted prior to Sputnik I on June 3, 1957. The Planning Board had already spent five meetings reviewing Basic Policy but considered the new NIE significant enough to warrant a further reexamination of grand strategy. Cutler had even asked outside experts to read the NIE and discuss its implications with the Planning Board.\textsuperscript{769}

Five points emerged from these discussions. First, the Soviet world position vis-a-vis the West had improved from 1956 to 1957, due in part to its demonstrated scientific capabilities with Sputnik and its reassertion of control in Soviet Bloc countries, making it more difficult to avoid large-scale war. Second, the U.S. would soon reach a state of mutual deterrence with the Soviets, thereby weakening Free World alliances because allies would be less confident in U.S. leadership and U.S. willingness to deter Soviet aggression. Third and related, the U.S. would encounter increasing problems retaining overseas bases. Fourth, underdeveloped and uncommitted countries (i.e. those not firmly in either the U.S. or Soviet camp) were not greatly concerned with anti-communism and were instead choosing between neutralism or pro-Communism. Fifth, in the short-run the economic strength of the U.S.S.R. would continue to grow at a faster rate than that of the U.S., but over the long run, prospects for economic growth favored the Free World.\textsuperscript{770}

This was a troubling picture of the world situation, and DCI Dulles indicated he concurred with all five points selected by the Planning Board. In light of the NIE’s conclusions on mutual deterrence and the deterioration of the Western position, Cutler asked the NSC whether they should continue down the current course and stick to their existing national

\textsuperscript{769} These included General Gruenther, Robert Bowie, Karl Bendetsen, John McCloy, and Arthur Burns.

strategy. Secretary Dulles pushed back on the idea of changing course. Going against his brother’s position, he argued that the NIE paid too much attention to U.S. problems and not enough attention to the problems confronting the Soviet Union. Cutler pushed back, asking the Secretary of State what the U.S. could then do to assuage fear among U.S. allies that the U.S. was not prepared to use its nuclear retaliatory capability to protect them from Soviet aggression. Secretary Dulles said he did not think the allies were losing faith in U.S. willingness to use these capabilities. Moreover, some of these allies were quickly developing their own nuclear weapons.

Cutler clarified “that he was simply suggesting that once the Russians fully realize the existence of the state of mutual deterrence, they would nibble their way into the fabric of the Free World by small aggressions. Secretary Dulles disagreed with General Cutler’s view, and thought the Soviets were no more likely to take such risks than was the United States.” According to the summary transcript of the debate, Eisenhower was “in strong support of Secretary Dulles’ view” and cited their strong defense of the island of Formosa and positive effects in the Middle East of the Eisenhower Doctrine (both of which had involved Eisenhower getting a Congressional authorization for the use of military force with wide vote margins).

Subsequent reports of Soviet superiority were treated with similar skepticism. For example, on May 8, 1958, Dr. James Killian, Eisenhower’s Special Assistant for Science and Technology, briefed the NSC on a study comparing the Soviet and U.S. ballistic missile programs since 1954. The study concluded that the Soviets had a greater variety of missile types and a greater number of short-range ballistic missiles. The Soviets were also a year ahead of the U.S. in IRBMs and their longer-range missiles had superior mobility (largely because the Soviets had started their ballistic missile programs sooner than the U.S.). Eisenhower observed that while the Soviets were clearly ahead of the U.S. in developing missile propulsion systems, they may

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771 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 359th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 8.
not have been as successful in other aspects of their missile program. Secretary of Defense McElroy seemed to agree with the president, wondering whether the report over-emphasized Soviet capabilities.\textsuperscript{772}

Intelligence collected by the U-2 reconnaissance plane, which Eisenhower had approved “at a cost of about $35 million” on November 24, 1954\textsuperscript{773}, gave him a clearer picture of Soviet progress. While Eisenhower had been surprised by the size of Sputnik and the corresponding thrust required to send it into orbit, U-2 planes had previously captured photographs of the SS-6 missile the Soviets used to launch Sputnik.\textsuperscript{774} Yet the intelligence picture was far from perfect. As the CIA’s official history of estimates on Soviet strategic forces concludes, the CIA was at pains to understand the massive project of modernization being carried out by Kruschev (the cornerstone of which was the development of long-range nuclear weapons). Its intelligence sources, particularly human intelligence sources, were scarce and the Soviets used public demonstrations such as their annual May Day parade to deliberately distort the U.S. intelligence picture. The “lack of programmatic evidence made it difficult to understand the new strategic systems in context with broader concepts of Soviet strategy or with the development of the Soviet military economy.”\textsuperscript{775}

Intelligence limits manifested themselves most acutely in the “bomber gap” myth that developed from 1955-1958\textsuperscript{776} and the “missile gap” myth that developed from 1957-1961.\textsuperscript{777} Yet

\textsuperscript{772} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 365th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 10.
\textsuperscript{773} Andrew Goodpaster, “Memorandum of Conference with the President--authorization by the President to produce thirty U-2 aircraft,” November 24, 1954, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 3, “November 1954(1).”
\textsuperscript{774} Callahan and Greenstein, 26.
\textsuperscript{776} In 1955, US Air Force intelligence estimates calculated that by the end of the decade the Soviet Long-Range Air Force would be more powerful than US Strategic Air Command, whose head, General Curtis LeMay, became dangerously attracted by the idea of a pre-emptive strike to prevent the Soviet Union from achieving nuclear superiority.” Andrew, “Intelligence and International Relations in the Early Cold War,” 321-330.
while NIEs brought dates forward for their predictions of when the Soviets would have a significant number of operational ICBMs, the overall intelligence picture had the U.S. on top of the balance of power. “The classified information available to the president on U.S. weapons programs, combined with intelligence on the Soviet Union provided by the U-2, left him [Eisenhower] rightly convinced of the general superiority of American military technology.”\footnote{Steury, Intentions and Capabilities, 5-7, 55-57.}

But Eisenhower could not reveal such intelligence in order to reassure the public post-Sputnik, particularly that intelligence collected covertly by the U-2 planes. As Christopher Andrew notes, Eisenhower’s determination that no word of the U-2 program should leak out meant that he “failed to win a convincing public victory against those who denounced the fictitious ‘missile gap’ because he felt unable to produce the secret evidence that would have demolished most of their arguments.”\footnote{Andrew, For the President’s Eyes Only, 241.} U-2 missions were also high-risk—almost every sortie flown West of the Ural Mountain range in Western Russia was tracked by the Russians and Eisenhower personally approved every mission. At times Eisenhower questioned whether the intelligence gained from the platform was worth the “exacerbation of international tensions that results” particularly since the U-2 still could not collect the information necessary to detect a surprise attack.\footnote{Andrew, For the President’s Eyes Only, 243.} Eisenhower was concerned Soviet detection of the flights would provoke Kruschev and set off an international crisis.\footnote{John S. D. Eisenhower, “Memorandum of Conference with the President regarding enemy ICBM development,” April 3, 1959, EPL, White House, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 15, “Intelligence Matters (10),” http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/u2_incident/4_3_59_Memo.pdf (accessed January 20, 2014).} Eisenhower’s concerns about the negative propaganda effects of a fallen U-2 plane proved prescient when on May 1, 1960 the Soviets shot-

down a U-2 plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers, heightening international tensions and scuttling any hope Eisenhower had of reaching a meaningful arms control agreement with the Soviets in his final years in office.782

Though U-2 reconnaissance tempered concerns over perceived bomber and missile gaps, Soviet progress still troubled the administration. On August 27, 1958 DCI Dulles briefed the NSC on NIE 11-5-58, an all-source assessment of Soviet guided missile capabilities. The NIE concluded the Soviets would have operational capability with ten ICBM prototypes by FY1959, including those with a maximum range of 5,500 nautical miles (nm). The Soviets had conducted twelve launching operations: six (likely) unsuccessful ICBMs, three earth satellites, one failed space vehicle, and the remaining two unknown. After obtaining ICBM operational capability in 1960, within a year the Soviets would likely produce and deploy 100 missiles, with 500 more to follow two or three years later. The Soviets were also developing subsonic missiles with a range of 200 miles that could be fired from a surfaced submarine. By 1961 (earlier than the previous assessment) the Soviets would likely have a prototype of a submarine capable of a submerged missile launch with 1/3 megaton warhead and a range of 1000 nm.783

The CIA subsequently revised its assessment in December 1958, reducing the number of ICBMs the Russians would have by 1961 from 1,000 down to 300, largely based on the small

783 Marion W. Boggs, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 378th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, August 27, 1958,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “378th Meeting of NSC, August 27, 1958,” 15. Net assessments provided a slightly more balanced picture (as did British and Canadian intelligence), and on October 13, 1958, DCI Dulles reminded the NSC that the Soviets had had made nine nuclear tests ranging from 2 megatons to 5 kilotons in yield since September 30, they remained far behind the U.S. James Lay Jr., “Memorandum of Discussion at the 382nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Monday, October 13, 1958,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “382nd Meeting of NSC, October 13, 1958,” 10.
number of missile tests they were observing. On March 5, 1959 DCI Dulles presented the most important NIEs for the year to the NSC: NIE 11-4-58 “Main Trends in Soviet Capabilities and Policies” and NIE 100-59 “Estimate of the World Situation” (these NIEs would be used by the Planning Board in their annual review of grand strategy). Compared with earlier estimates, these products painted a favorable picture for the West, focusing on the decline of Communist influence in Western Europe (as well as in the United Arab Republic, Burma, and Argentina), strengthened NATO cohesion, restored faith in U.S. leadership among Western opinion, and the lack of Communist successes in under-developed areas. Nevertheless, the estimates noted Soviet leaders were more confident and assertive, thus leading to an overall rise in the scale and intensity of the Soviet threat. The intelligence community also noted the Soviets maintained a growth rate twice that of the U.S., were on track to have an operational ICBM in the course of the current year, and would simultaneously be able to maintain and modernize massive conventional military forces.784

As threat assessments continued to be revised, the annual review of Basic National Security Policy in 1958 culminated in NSC 5810, which was presented to the NSC on May 1, 1958. Cutler claimed that eleven major factors had influenced the review (which had been the Planning Board’s focus for over two months), and that new guidance and new emphasis in NSC 5810 reflected these factors. First, since both the U.S. and the Soviets were capable of delivering massive nuclear devastation regardless of who struck first, this would deter each side from

784 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 398th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 5, 1959,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 11, “398th Meeting of NSC, March 5, 1959,” 3. Debates continued about the extent to which Sputnik should be perceived as a threat. For example, in discussing a newly approved preliminary outer space policy at the Cabinet meeting on August 15, 1958, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Gordon Gray noted that the Bureau of the Budget had objections about introductory language because it seemed to exaggerate the importance of outer space to the American public. Gray, however, felt the importance was appropriate, “particularly since the Russian Sputnik did capture the imagination of the world and completely transformed attitudes about the status of Soviet scientific achievement.” L. Arthur Minnich Jr., “Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting,” August 15, 1958, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Cabinet Series, Box 12, “Cabinet Meeting of August 15, 1958;” 3.
risking general nuclear war. Second, in such a time of nuclear parity and mutual deterrence, the Free World was trending toward neutralism because countries doubted the U.S. would use its retaliatory capability and assumed the Soviets would be more bold in probing outside their bloc. Third, unstable and underdeveloped nations were more vulnerable to expanding Sino-Soviet political and economic penetration. Fourth, despite changes in top Kremlin personnel, the Soviets’ determination to achieve world domination had not deteriorated. Fifth (and somewhat duplicative), massive nuclear retaliation was essential and sufficient to deter general nuclear war. Sixth, U.S. capabilities for deterring or suppressing limited military aggression were not promising. Seventh, the Soviets had made significant advances in military technology and scientific skill. Eighth, the U.S.S.R had used propaganda to portray itself as an advocate of peace and disarmament while portraying the U.S. as the opposite. Ninth, the U.S. economic recession had adversely affected U.S. security. Tenth, the Soviets and the Chinese could better direct their economic strength in support of internal and external policies for world domination. Eleventh, the American people did not appreciate the full extent of the crisis facing the United States.

Despite this pessimistic picture, Cutler told the NSC that the chief elements of NSC 5810 were substantially the same as existing basic policy, merely with different emphases in four areas. First, the document emphasized the U.S. was facing an enduring crisis greater than previously recognized, and as such the U.S. had to mobilize more people and more resources and enhance overall public understanding of the crisis. Second, if nuclear war could be deterred, the crisis would involve a long, drawn-out contest for world leadership with the Sino-Soviet bloc (though this seemed to echo the fundamental premise of containment stretching back to Kennan and NSC 20/4). Third, military aggression was more likely to be of a limited nature, limited conflicts that should be dealt with so as to prevent them from turning into general nuclear war.
Fourth, the U.S. needed to increase its positive efforts in peaceful political and economic competition with the Sino-Soviet bloc for allegiance of the uncommitted and underdeveloped areas of the world, as well as increase its contacts and exchanges with the Soviet bloc.

The third point proved particularly contentious. The JCS argued against language suggesting the U.S. would not respond to limited aggression, saying it would amount to a retreat that would psychologically demoralize the Free World. Secretary Dulles felt over the next 2-3 years U.S. allies would demand adequate capability for local defense or they would disassociate themselves from the U.S. In his view the U.S. also needed the tactical defensive capabilities inherent in small, clean nuclear weapons. Eisenhower responded with two points. First, anyone who thought mutual deterrence acted as an umbrella under which small wars, even in the NATO area, could be fought without fear of a global war was wrong—the umbrella acted more as a lightning rod, as small wars made global wars more likely. It seemed very unrealistic to the President that if the Soviets seized Austria the U.S. could fight them in “a nice, sweet, World War II type of war.” Second, Eisenhower felt that strengthening mobile and tactical forces would force them either to decrease the strength of the nuclear deterrent force, since resources were limited, or accept massive increases in military resources, which in turn would require reverting to a “controlled economy, but which in effect would amount to a garrison state.” Eisenhower thus maintained a skeptical view of committing the U.S. to limited conflicts, a consistent view that was codified in Basic National Security Policy as NSC 5810/1.785

785 "The President expressed his satisfaction that we were raising this most serious problem. This one paper, NSC 5810, said the President, was worth all the NSC policy papers which he had read in the last six months." S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 364th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, May 1, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “364th Meeting of NSC, May 1, 1958,” 10. For further attempts to eliminate weapons systems see, James Lay Jr., “Memorandum of Discussion at the 382nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Monday, October 13, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “382nd Meeting of NSC, October 13, 1958,” 2-3.
The Midterm Revolution and the New Look

For Eisenhower’s political opponents, these initiatives fell short. Stuart Symington, the Democratic Senator from Missouri and leading administration critic, wrote Eisenhower a lengthy letter on August 19, 1958, decrying DCI Dulles for underestimating Soviet missile development and arguing correspondingly that U.S. weapon system planning was woefully insufficient. Eisenhower later learned that Symington had obtained his information from a retired Colonel Tom Lanphier, Symington’s former aid who was then serving as vice-president of Convair, an aerospace company building Atlas missiles. There Lanphier obtained inflated air force intelligence estimates that he subsequently fed to Symington. “Every bit of evidence we have indicates that Lanphier is dealing with falsehoods.” 786

When Eisenhower met with members of his Science Advisory Committee—James Killian, Edward Purcell, and Edwin Land—on February 13, 1959 to discuss the status of reconnaissance programs and the corresponding ability to detect Soviet missile developments, he complained about the way “irresponsible officials and demagogues are leaking security information and presenting a misleading picture of our security situation to our people,” highlighting the efforts of Symington and Lanphier. Killian warned of wild swings in the U.S. military missile program, and Eisenhower responded that he had been trying to avoid such wild swings since 1930, “that there is nothing as expensive as shuttling between haste and complacency…he asked the questions as to whether we have a sufficiency, whether it is efficient, and whether it is properly deployed; if so he is ready to beat off the self-proclaimed experts calling for sudden changes.” 787

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787 “Memorandum of Conference with the President regarding recent progress in reconnaissance devices,” February 13, 1959, EPL, White House, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 15,
In November 1958, the Democratic Sputnik-related attacks paid off. Though Eisenhower’s personal popularity had risen back up from its all-time low of 40 percent in April to 56 percent by October, Republicans suffered major losses in the 1958 “Mid Term Revolution.” In total, the Republicans lost five governorships, forty-seven seats in the House, and thirteen seats in the Senate, still the largest Senate loss in history. In a private letter to British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan on November 11, 1958, Eisenhower claimed he was sorely disappointed by the overall Republican showing. “Fortunately I have never considered myself an expert politician (I am certain a great many people would emphatically agree that I am not), and I can view the matter at least with some detachment.” One thing that bothered him in particular was the “seeming desire of the people of our country to spend more and more upon the government—they do not seem to understand that more governmental assistance inevitably means more governmental control. I have not done well in my efforts to point out the dangers to all of us inherent in these trends—particularly for our children and grandchildren.” Eisenhower further conceded the Republican Party had exhibited obvious faults, among them the tendency to believe the charges that they are hopelessly divided among themselves while the Democrats could always unite for an election battle. Eisenhower said he would like to devote himself to reorganizing and revitalizing the party, but he felt it his duty to take a broader approach than that of a mere politician, “even though I profoundly believe in a two-party system, and believe that

Intelligence Matters (8) [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/u2_incident/2_13_59_Memo.pdf](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/u2_incident/2_13_59_Memo.pdf) (accessed January 20, 2014). During a meeting with Admiral Radford and other Defense officials on March 29, 1958, Eisenhower emphasized his desire to see the Defense Department cut down to a “spartan basis.” Eisenhower continued to say that all the people he had known his whole life were asking for more and more, but “I say the patriot today is the fellow who can do the job with less money.” Though he had firm assurances from the Services that they could live with reduced funding, he expected an agonizing fight in Congress “with the pressure for ballistic missiles, for B-52’s, and pressure form Symington and Russell committee.” Ann Whitman Diary, March 29, 1956, EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 8, “Mar. ’56 DIARY-acw,” 4-5.

788 Divine, 198.
my Party is much better of the two for the nation.”

The loss was disappointing for Eisenhower, but it did not translate into clear Congressional pressure for changing course on foreign policy. While the Sputnik crisis clearly enhanced the overall pressure for more military spending, foreign aid programs were still on the chopping block, but this time due to Democratic pressures. As Eisenhower told the NSC in March 1958, “there would be very few votes in Congress in support of” an outright competition with the Soviets. What progress they had made thus far in selling essential programs was due to the fact that “the Democrats had always been strong supporters of the foreign aid program; but they were now turning against it, and the Republicans were the majority supporters of the program. It was pointed out that the South, as it became more heavily industrialized, was turning against foreign aid programs.”

Lending support to the claim that the 1958 loss did not eliminate Eisenhower’s domestic political slack is the fact that Eisenhower still maintained good relationships with key Democratic Congressmen. For example, in a long meeting with Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey, the Senator said that the president still had a tremendous reservoir of good will on Capitol Hill, such that he did not need to worry about trouble in Congress, particularly with Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn in charge. Eisenhower responded that he had “no quarrel with Congress whatsoever” and if he could make them see that we should not be expanding programs irresponsibly and should instead have a “good stock-taking period” the executive-legislative foreign policy relationship would be fine. Eisenhower elaborated that he had “come to realize that our defensive posture is not one that should be responding from sputnik thinking, or

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any other kind of thing, we must be very wise to design our security and get it, knowing what is
accurate and respectable.”

An even more powerful argument that Eisenhower remained committed to the New Look
despite domestic political losses comes from the NSC debates before and after the election. For
example, during the October 30, 1958 meeting of the NSC, Eisenhower listened to a detailed
brief from JCS and DoD representatives suggesting the relative capabilities of the U.S. vis-à-vis
the Soviet Union were deteriorating due to recent Soviet technological advances and concurrent
qualitative reductions in U.S. forces. If such trends continued, the military analysts predicted that
U.S. superiority would be lost for the foreseeable future. Eisenhower responded that the pillar of
their military efforts must remain possessing a nuclear capability that would deter the Soviet
Union:

Beyond that, reason and discrimination should guide the choice and development of an
establish priorities for weapons systems for other military takes. The effort should not be
to balance exactly each Soviet capability, but to provide a military posture in which the
United States can have confidence and which it can finance indefinitely without seriously
weakening the essential strength of our economy.

Secretary Dulles backed the president’s analysis and emphasized the importance of
avoiding an arms race with the Soviets. Again he referenced George Washington’s statement
about maintaining a respectable posture of defense. In modern terms, Dulles took this to mean
maintaining the capability to inflect heavy enough damage on the enemy to deter an attack on the
U.S. Eisenhower then “stated with great force that he was strongly convinced of certain
things.” Despite continual implications he kept hearing that the U.S. was declining in capabilities

791 Transcript of conversation between Eisenhower and Humphrey, ND [likely post-1958], EPL, Ann Whitman File,
Administration Series, Box 21, “Humphrey, Sen. Hubert (2),” 5. Humphrey later recounted to Eisenhower a
conversation with Premier Krushchev in which he told Kruschchev that the Democrats support Eisenhower on the
basic substance of foreign policy, such that the election was not decided on that issue. “I made it quite clear to him
and I went back to this two times.”
792 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 384th Meeting of the National Security Council,
Thursday October 30, 1958,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “384th Meeting of NSC, October 30,
relative to the Soviet Union, in three years American scientists had “done wonders to close the
gap in the missile race, in which the Soviet Union had acquired a considerable head start.
Continuing his forceful speech,” Eisenhower directed the JCS to more closely and urgently study
each and every weapons system in order to find out where there were duplications and
overlapping capabilities. They could not continue to balance their capabilities against the Soviet
Union’s. If they could “take care” of the first order problem of maintaining U.S. deterrent
capability, then they could use “sanity” to guide them in tackling problems of lesser
importance.793

This deterrent was more than a bluff, as some historians have suggested.794 The records
suggest Eisenhower was willing to retaliate in the face of Soviet aggression. For example, in the
midst of the crisis over Kruschev’s attempts to cut off Western access routes to Berlin in 1958,
Secretary Dulles said he was getting ready to go to Berlin to repeat what he had said four years
ago—the U.S. would consider an attack on Berlin an attack on the U.S. and would respond in
kind. Dulles was not sure whether his audience would believe it, or whether he believed it
himself. Nevertheless, he was “going to perform this ritual act.” Eisenhower was surprised by
Dulles’s characterization, as it was clear they would have to respond to a Soviet attack on Berlin.
If they did not, Western Europe would soon fall and if Western Europe fell, thereby adding to
Soviet industrial strength, the U.S. would be reduced to a garrison state to survive. DCI Dulles
commented that he thought the Russians believed Eisenhower would order a nuclear attack if
they attacked Berlin and it was extremely important that they continue to believe this.795

Eisenhower’s thus retained his commitment to the course laid out by the New Look (with

794 See Evan Thomas, Ike’s Bluff: President Eisenhower’s Secret Battle to Save the World (New York: Little,
795 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 364th Meeting of the National Security Council,
the backing of John Foster Dulles), despite external pressures from Congress and internal pressures from key players within his administration.\textsuperscript{796} Certain analyses even painted a favorable picture of U.S. capabilities and reaffirmed the strategic soundness of the New Look. For example, the Net Evaluation Subcommittee presented a report to the NSC on November 20, 1958 examining U.S. ability to retaliate to a Soviet surprise attack with the objective of immediately paralyzing the Russian nation. The report concluded that by concentrating retaliatory strikes on combined military-urban industrial targets rather than strictly military targets, the U.S. could substantially reduce the capability of the U.S.S.R. to recover and destroy the Soviet nuclear offensive capability. As NSC Executive Secretary Gordon Gray summarized the discussion of the report: “A central aim of our policy is to deter the Communists from use of their military power, remaining prepared to fight general war should one be forced upon the U.S. There has been no suggestion from any quarter as to a change in this basic policy.”\textsuperscript{797} Eisenhower concurred with this statement and approved Gray’s suggestion of commissioning a study on evaluating retaliatory capability in light of strategic warning of a Soviet attack. Eisenhower emphasized that there was naturally a limit—“a human limit”—to the amount of devastation humans could endure. As such they did not need to aim for 100 percent “pulverization” of the Soviet Union, they merely had to focus on destroying the Soviet will to fight. The destruction the NESC report had outlined certainly would accomplish that objective in

\textsuperscript{796} For example, just two weeks later DCI Dulles informed the NSC that there was evidence Soviet policy was undergoing an overall “hardening.” He cited developments in Berlin, the Soviets challenging Iran on it military agreements with the U.S., Gomulka’s [the Communist leader in Poland] bitter statements against the West, and the Soviets’ backing of Chinese Communists. “Khrushchev appears to be behaving in less relaxed fashion than formerly and in a manner more reminiscent of Stalin. Mr. Dulles said he cited this evidence simply to strike a note of caution.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 386th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday November 13, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 10, “386th Meeting of NSC, November 13, 1958,” 1.

Eisenhower’s opinion.\textsuperscript{798}

Eisenhower also remained committed to defending mutual security funding and clear-eyed about how to deal with Congress on the issue. During a December 3, 1958 NSC meeting discussing military aid programs and desired force posture through 1962, the Council noted the necessity of downplaying the distinction between military assistance for political or military purposes when dealing this Congress. Eisenhower indicated he was well aware that many members of Congress regarded U.S. assistance programs for political or economic purposes as simple “give-aways.” It was difficult to make Congress understand that such assistance made a vital contribution to overall national security, and in many cases represented a better investment than new missile or aircraft programs. With this in mind Eisenhower felt they would do well to describe all assistance to Congress as national security assistance. Nixon agreed and added that all political assistance should be tied to military assistance when presenting it to Congress, for “Congress was as generous in providing funds for military assistance as it was niggardly in providing funds for assistance for political purposes.”\textsuperscript{799}

Three days later the NSC discussed a program Eisenhower did not have to defend from Congressional cuts: the FY1960 military budget. Eisenhower approved an increase from 13 to 20 ICBM squadrons, the construction of an additional POLARIS submarine as well as three additional submarines, and the construction of a new aircraft carrier beginning in FY1960. By then the total strength of military forces would be 2,525,000 and direct obligations would be $42.84 billion, with actual expenditures for FY 1960 estimated at $41.17 billion.\textsuperscript{800}

\textsuperscript{798} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 387th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 5.
\textsuperscript{800} Approximately 9\% of GDP, which is still a much larger proportion of the overall U.S. budget allocated to defense than in modern times. Not only were there fewer military retirees to take care of, but also Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” programs had not yet begun to consume large portions of the budget. For historical spending levels see Rob
officials, however, recommended further missile program increases, including a $144 million add-on for research and development. Eisenhower asked if there had ever been a successful test of a TITAN ICBM. When the Defense Director of Guided Missiles said no, Eisenhower asked how Defense could justify its recommendation for increasing the overall number of TITAN squadrons. He said he fully understood the “psychological importance of getting an early ICBM operational capability for the U.S.” but questioned whether they needed to procure 200 missiles by 1963. If anything, Eisenhower believed the “history of military equipment and weapons systems revealed the danger of trying to agree on standardization of a weapon for as short a time as a year and a half. He still believed we were putting too much money on ATLAS in terms of 200 missiles for a period of one and half years.”

Notably, Secretary of the Treasury Anderson and Director of the Bureau of the Budget Stans objected to the military budget, particularly since a budget of $41 billion ruled out the possibility of balancing the FY1960 budget and risked inflation. Both preferred new taxes to persistent deficits. Secretary of Defense McElroy pushed back, saying that they had held back increases in shorter-range missiles and the programs presented for augmentation were critical. Admiral Burke added that while POLARIS was risky and expensive, the program showed promise and they expected to obtain a POLARIS missile with a 1200 nm range fired form a submarine. Eisenhower worried that somewhere along the line they had gotten themselves “heavily over-insured. He would agree with the need for a good little fleet of POLARIS submarines but do we need such a hell of a lot of them?...the U.S. defense system has got to be


one that this country can carry for forty years. If they could keep that idea in their minds, then they could surely find ways to cut one of two of these military programs and possibly some divisions stationed in the U.S.” 

Vice President Nixon cautioned that when this Budget went to Congress, they were likely to get more than they were asking for—Congress would likely cut foreign aid appropriations but “would almost certainly add to the military program. Both the President and Secretary McElroy were inclined to agree but pointed out that opinion in this country could change and we might get less.”

Nixon was right—subsequent U.S. space successes did not make it easier to reduce defense costs. By the time the Soviets launched Sputnik III on May 15, 1958, a 1.5 ton satellite with a full kit of scientific instrumentation and a rocket boost more powerful than anything the U.S. was developing, the overall score was four U.S. satellites (three Exploreres and one Vanguard) to three Sputniks (and only Sputnik III was still in orbit by October 4, 1958). On December 18, 1958 Eisenhower scored a major propaganda victory when the U.S. placed a 4.5 ton Atlas rocket into orbit, the largest object yet sent into space. This included a 150 lbs communications satellite. Eisenhower had previously recorded a message that was transmitted to radio stations at approximately 3:00 p.m. saying: “This is the President of the United States speaking. Though the marvels of scientific advance my voice is coming to you from a satellite circling in outer space. My message is a simple one. Through this unique means I convey to you and to all mankind America’s wish for peace on earth and good will toward men everywhere.”

Eisenhower’s good will wishes did not induce general good will from Congress. A month later in February 1959, Eisenhower argued against providing intelligence information to

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802 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 389th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 11.
804 Divine, 144.
Congress to paint a more sober picture of U.S. capabilities relative to the Soviets, “since no reason or logic was going to stop the Democrats from criticizing the Administration’s missiles program.” Eisenhower then commented that he had been giving the domestic political pressure on this subject a great deal of thought and felt that the administration:

> got heavier pressure from our critics on the grounds of alleged neglect of our Outer Space programs than we did for neglecting our guided missile programs. Insofar as space exploration programs can really contribute to our national defense such programs, said the President, should have, of course, very high priority but if the space programs did not make such a contribution, it should be left to common sense to establish priorities among the projects for exploring Outer Space. We should not in the later instance demand the frantic expenditures for Outer Space exploration that some people are insisting upon.\(^{806}\)

The space programs were scientific and thus not directly linked to national defense. Eisenhower also felt that any alleged missile gap was belied by the fact that the Soviets would not have a genuine ICBM operational capability for quite some time while the U.S. had made rapid progress in its own programs. Thus, in terms of real military capabilities and corresponding national security benefits, the U.S. was still in the catbird seat. Dr. Killian pushed back, however, arguing that the Soviets had derived greater prestige from successful space exploration, which embarrassed the U.S.. If the Soviets next succeeded in putting a man in outer space, the U.S. would lose even more prestige. This was admittedly a propaganda project, but one with important, tangible benefits. Eisenhower responded that he could understand Dr. Killian’s views, but the U.S. had been leading the world in scientific prestige for many years and it had not scared the Russians to death.

> Why, therefore, should we now be scared to death of the Russians—scared to the point of doing unwise things from the broad point of view of the national interest? The President then repeated that if our space programs had no clear relation to our national defense, such projects should have a lower priority. If they promised a great contribution to

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defense on the other hand we should push such space projects as hard as we can.\textsuperscript{807}

\textit{Basic National Security Policy in the Final Years of the Eisenhower Administration}

The fight to control costs in the face of Congressional and bureaucratic pressure would continue until the very end of Eisenhower’s presidency. On June 5, 1959 Eisenhower told his Cabinet he thought the country had never recovered from “its intoxication with heavy spending during World War II and Korea; that there just had not been a return to an austerity basis such as that of the 1930’s. He recalled the extensive detailed efforts made in those years toward effecting savings, even with such minute things as the use of paper clips. The President thought that the matter of austere spending in government was an important issue for the 1960 election.”\textsuperscript{808}

While the NSC discussed the annual review of Basic National Security Policy on July 9, 1959, Eisenhower observed that he continued to receive recommendations from the Department of Defense that “we deploy nuclear weapons of every type and that we increasingly disperse such weapons and that we also provide for a wider delegation of authority to use nuclear weapons.” Eisenhower could understand why the State Department was worried about these recommendations. He had no intention of closing production on weapons systems necessary to deter war, but neither was he contemplating a massive expansion of programs. In the future technological advances might fundamentally change the character of U.S. retaliatory capability, but that time had not yet come. The President did not “intend to change our fundamental military policy and program which we had been pursuing for the last six years.”\textsuperscript{809}

At the Cabinet meeting on November 27, 1959, Eisenhower said he did not “intend to talk about figures or estimates this morning. I just want to make clear to my own conscience that

\textsuperscript{807} S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 397th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 10.
I have made clear to each of you the thing that worries me most about our survival as a free nation.” The true problem facing Western civilization—as he and John Foster Dulles had frequently discussed—was whether free government could continue to exist in light of the threats they faced. The Soviets were growing rapidly, and benefitting from a strong morale and the material benefits they provided to their citizens. Though Soviet leaders were talking more politely, there was “no question about the efforts they are making in this field of world domination.” The picture was not entirely pessimistic. The Cabinet merely had to recognize the threat and the importance of maintaining a sound economy and of getting out of all unnecessary activities and they would strengthen their position. To make free economy work, the fight for “Spartan simplicity” and reducing the debt—which was “hanging like a dark cloud over the future”—must “be waged endlessly” and intelligently. In Eisenhower’s view, they kept trying foolishly to justify their positions with reference to Congress’ position, feeling they had accomplished something when they took a $600 million Congressional proposal and reduced it to $200 million, forgetting the fact that they did not agree with the proposal to start with.

Eisenhower said he had only fourteen months left in office, and if “I have to show an unbalanced budget, if I have to show a trend of upward spending—then I am defeated. And I don’t like defeats—haven’t had to take too many in my life…We must remember: frugality economy, simplicity with efficiency. I cannot tell you how deeply I believe this.”

Eisenhower’s views on how Sputnik had affected his administration came into sharp relief during the NSC discussion of the FY1961 military budget on November 25, 1959. During the proceedings, Eisenhower interjected that he:

wished to make some observations from instinct, not from logic. In 1957 SPUTNIK went

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810 Eisenhower as Recorded by Don Paarlberg (Special Assistant to the President for Economic Affairs), “Paraphrase of Remarks of the President on Future Budget and Program at the Cabinet Meeting of November 27, 1959,” EPL, Ann Whitman Files, Cabinet Series, Box 14, “Cabinet Meeting of November 27, 1959,” 1-3.
up and induced a SPUTNIK psychology in this country. One had only to say “moon” or “missile” and everyone went berserk. SPUTNIK was followed by a recession resulting in tremendous pressure to spend additional money. The peak of our anxiety is now passed and the people are taking things in their stride. He did not wish to inculcate complacency, but he did hope that Defense would be able to find a way to save $200 million more. He realized that certain factors mentioned by Secretary McElroy had pushed the Defense Budget up and possibly he was too optimistic in hoping for savings. However, if the Defense Budget could be $200 million below the present figure, he would have a big lever in compelling a reduction in the budgets of other departments and agencies. Indeed he wished to use a reduction in the Defense Budget as a club, not only against other departments and agencies, but against Congress.811

Again on December 20, 1960, Eisenhower told the NSC he was “anxious to do whatever was necessary for security, but wished to avoid the development of a SPUTNIK complex.” The Sputnik complex was not only pushing them to breach the $1 billion ceiling on funding for the space program, but it also “impelled us to do everything yesterday. He noted that the first time a man was lost in an attempted space flight we would be compelled to start over again and spend twice as much.”812

Eisenhower met with President-elect Kennedy on December 6, 1960. According to Eisenhower’s notes from the meeting, Kennedy was highly interested in the national security operations and asked Eisenhower for ideas on improving Pentagon operations. Eisenhower emphasized the paramount importance of the NSC, which “had become the most important weekly meeting of the government.” He urged Kennedy to avoid reorganizing the Pentagon, the NSC, or the White House staff until he had become well acquainted with their operations. Improvements could definitely be made in the Pentagon, but the present functioning had been brought about by eight years of “patient study and long and drawn out negotiations with the


Congress and the Armed Services.” Eisenhower also highlighted the value of scientific research and expert counsel, illustrated by the fact that approximately $6.5 billion went into designing and developing weapons that were never placed in the inventory. “This emphasized, I told him, the need for earnest study and thinking before making radical changes.”

There was no annual review of Basic National Security Policy for 1960 because certain portions of the Planning Board’s paper were not completed until after Kennedy had been elected. Yet in discussing overall national security policy on December 8, 1960, Eisenhower exhibited further commitment to certain aspects of the New Look. First, he said was becoming increasingly convinced that it was dangerous to assume limited wars could stay limited—“His conviction in this matter was growing stronger all the time as he heard more and more discussion of nuclear capabilities.” The president was also becoming increasingly focused on the idea that their principal goal should be to convince the Soviet Union that no matter what happens, it “will receive a rain of destruction if it attacks the U.S. The President believed that all other military matters must remain secondary to the overriding importance of deterrence.” Eisenhower remained sensitive to “his dedicated old associates in the military services” but asked them to consider broader national security variables such as the soundness of the dollar and balanced budgets. He believed it was the duty of military officers not only to ensure the safety of the U.S. but also “to get along with less if at all possible.” As for the FY1961 budget, the president wanted to “make sure that this government could continue to operate until next June without going further into debt.” Eisenhower had also rejected a proposal under Project Mercury to put a man on the moon at a cost of $26-38 billion. His January 1961 budget message (the final he

would submit) cancelled funds NASA had requested for post-Mercury projects. As Callahan and Greenstein argue: “Project Mercury represented everything Eisenhower claimed he wanted to avoid in space policy. It was hugely expensive, driven almost entirely by competition with the Soviets, and lacking a compelling scientific rationale.”

The very last NSC meeting was held on January 12, 1961. Eisenhower had personally presided over 329 of the 366 NSC meetings, or 89.8 percent. Eisenhower thanked the Council for their frankness and discretion, as he could only recall one occasion where a remark in the NSC had been quoted publicly outside the room, a “really remarkable achievement.” DCI Dulles said that looking back on the last eight years, he was left to conclude that the administration had largely held the line against communism—except in Cuba and Laos—despite his “often gloomy predictions.” Eisenhower then noted that some years back the NSC had started to discuss the idea that the real threat to U.S. national security was not military in nature, but rather economic and political, and they had made progress on this front. “Nevertheless, we have made little advance in convincing Congress of the need for support for economic and political measures.”

Refining the Typology

*Dependent Variable: Strategic Adjustment*

In a letter to Arthur Burns in March 1958, Eisenhower counseled moderation and avoidance of “wild-eyed schemes” in response to Sputnik, saying he was “convinced his course is right even if he is accused of being a ‘reactionary old fossil.’” In response to Sputnik, Eisenhower was neither carried along by the hysteria of the “new Pearl Harbor” nor did he act

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like a reactionary old fossil. Eisenhower did not embark on a radically different foreign policy approach. But as the preceding analysis demonstrates, Eisenhower harnessed the Sputnik hysteria to make significant changes in the realms of military spending, defense reorganization, national education and space policy. These are summarized as follows:

- Expanding beyond the defense budget ceiling of $38 billion in 1958 to $39.6 billion for 1959—this was $815 million more than Eisenhower’s January 1958 budget request of $39.1 billion, reflecting a compromise between the president’s preferred position and Congress’s attempts to increase the defense budget by up to $40 billion for FY 1959, which passed the Senate by a vote of 71-9—and to just under $41 billion in 1960. Yet while overall national security expenses increased from 1958-1960, the percentage of GDP allocated to Defense decreased from 10.2 percent to 10.0 percent to 9.3 percent.

- Correspondingly increasing ICBM projected production from 130 to 200 by 1962, and adding 112 IRBMs as well.818

- Defense reorganization creating more unified combatant command structures under JCS authority and creation of a Director of Defense Research and Engineering.

- Passage of the National Defense Education Act, strengthening the National Science Foundation and investing $1 billion into education for science, engineering, math, and foreign area studies.

- Creating ARPA and NASA, including an increase in immediate funding by more than $7 million and bringing the total FY1959 space budget to $536 million (NASA was spending approximately $1 billion a year by the time Eisenhower left office).

These adjustments rule out classifying this case as pure continuity or no change. At the

818 Divine, 202.
same time, training junior high school students and modestly increasing the budget do not seem to qualify as a restructuring or major adjustment. We are left with reform (moderate adjustment) and refinement (minor adjustment). Given the lengths to which Eisenhower went to temper the hysteria created by Sputnik and keep his administration committed to controlling costs, relying on their nuclear deterrent, and reducing conventional force levels, refinement or minor adjustment is the logical classification. Yet this highlights a gap in the initial typology—there is no clear standard separating reform and refinement. What level of change in spending constitutes a change from minor to moderate reform? Additionally, how does one measure program changes such as the creation of ARPA and NASA while simultaneously measuring the corresponding costs of these programs without duplicating degrees of change? These problems suggest that my initial description of the dependent variable needs to be simplified and that clear categories and standards for changes in resources and programs must be defined in order to arrive at the overall level of adjustment.

*Independent Variable #1: Strategic Shock*

Gaddis says the “shock of Sputnik rivaled only Pearl Harbor and Korea.” Sputnik spooked the nation and lit a fire under the Eisenhower Administration’s critics. Yet while Air Force intelligence estimates and the Gaither Committee provided Eisenhower with an inflated threat picture, the CIA estimates and the net assessments from December 10, 1957 to December 23, 1959 were much more sober in their assessment of Soviet capabilities in general and guided missile activity in particular. Additionally, Sputnik was not entirely a surprise, which is the first criterion for qualifying as a strategic shock. In 1960, DCI Dulles reminded the NSC that in 1957, the intelligence community had predicted Sputnik and overall had done a good job of prediction in the “general field of Soviet space accomplishment. The President agreed with Mr. Dulles’

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comments.” For example, on May 10, 1957, DCI Dulles updated the NSC on the intelligence picture. While the Soviets had not publicly advertised their progress on an earth orbit satellite, the CIA had detected construction activity in the Soviet missile headquarters area. Dulles stood by the intelligence community’s earlier estimate that the Soviets would have the capability of orbiting a satellite in the course of 1957, with mid-June and mid-December as the optimum periods for the attempt. If the Soviets succeeded and the U.S. did not even try, the Soviets “would have achieved a propaganda weapon which they could use to boast about the superiority of Soviet scientists” and emphasize that the U.S. had abandoned its peaceful program in order to devote resources to war preparations.

In other words, the Sputnik launch was unexpected in terms of the precise timing, the sheer weight of the satellite itself, and the subsequent public reaction, but it did not catch the Eisenhower Administration completely off-guard. A U-2 pilot had spotted the Soviet Tyura Tam missile test center in early 1957. An NIE from March 12, 1957 had predicted the first Soviet ICBM would become operational in 1960 or 1961, but after the firing of an ICBM on August 27, 1957 DCI Dulles told the NSC the intelligence community would have to review this NIE. Furthermore, U-2 imagery helped dispel the notion (within the Eisenhower Administration if not among the public), one linked to Sputnik hysteria, that there was a “bomber gap” or a “missile gap.” This intelligence was quickly fed into the administration’s decision-making process, and this chapter demonstrates that while Defense officials and others lobbied for greater resources, Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles maintained a balanced view of the Soviet threat. For example,

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on January 16, 1958, DCI Dulles showed the NSC a chart displaying a substantial drop off in Soviet missile testing. There had been no ICBM tests since early September and no IRBM tests in the 950 mile range since August. He could not account for this decline since logic suggested testing would increase once the first tests were successful. Eisenhower said, “shooting from the hip, he would be inclined to think the Soviets were having some missile trouble. In his experience, the higher the stage of development of a weapon, the more frequent was the testing.”

In his memoirs Eisenhower wrote that the U-2 “provided proof that the horrors of the alleged ‘bomber gap’ and ‘missile gap’ were nothing more than the imaginative creations of irresponsibility.”

Even if Soviet missile capabilities had been more than imaginative creations of irresponsibility, it is still unclear the extent to which this would have “shocked” the president. Eisenhower fundamentally believed ballistic missiles were more psychological than tactical, and a manned bomber was a superior tactical option in his opinion. They were reaching a point where ballistic missiles had increasing tactical utility, but Eisenhower still questioned whether they were justified in devoting significant resources to these programs. In his mind there was an upper limit to deterrence—the deterrent effect leveled off once each side had enough missiles to destroy the other.

Furthermore, Eisenhower was quick to recognize that Sputnik had no military implications, and his general post-Sputnik strategy was to emphasize the scientific and

822 S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 351st Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 16, 1958,” EPL, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “351st Meeting of NSC, January 16, 1958,” 18-19. Admiral Strauss suggested perhaps the Soviets instead were content with previous tests, reminding them that there were no tests in August 1951 and August 1953 because the Soviets were content with their 1951 device. Eisenhower pushed back on his JCS Chairman, saying it “was incredible that a military organization should be content with an existing weapon.”

823 Quoted in Andrew, “Presidents and Their Intelligence Communities,” 437, 431-446.

peaceful aspects of space. Though U.S. satellite launches were frustratingly delayed, the eventual successful Explorer and Vanguard launches proved the U.S. was ahead in key aspects of space. Sputnik was subsequently conflated with Soviet ICBM and IRBM programs, but this was a product of domestic political convenience rather than strategic sense.

Thus, Sputnik was not shocking in the sense that the administration did not consider it to contradict the assumptions upon which the New Look was built; the preceding case study casts doubt on the scope of discrepant information Sputnik contained. Eisenhower retained his view of the centrality of massive retaliation, he felt the Soviets would not risk general war, and he questioned the ability of the U.S. to engage in limited wars and keep them limited. Eisenhower and his advisers, however, recognized the powerful psychological effect of Sputnik and the need to address public hysteria. What may have been slightly shocking to Eisenhower was that Sputnik revealed the need for the U.S. to revitalize its focus on scientific and technological education. Thus, Eisenhower’s response to Sputnik was not to admit that the course they had been following on foreign policy was wrong and needed to change, but rather to harness the public hysteria towards productive ends, and to use his own foreign policy clout to calm the nation and ensure defense spending did not get out of control. We are left wondering whether a less experienced president, operating without Eisenhower’s credibility on military issues (or without Eisenhower’s concern over the size of government and level of government spending), could have withstood Sputnik pressures and kept military spending under control.\(^\text{825}\)

In sum, Sputnik was neither fully surprising nor fully shocking. It would have been shocking if the Soviets had satellites with military applications, or if a crash ICBM program was truly in the works, or if the Soviets used the Sputnik success to make serious territorial advances (thus contradicting Eisenhower’s assumption that they would not risk general war). But this case

\(^{825}\) I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
raises an interesting point: even if a president does not view a strategic shock as such, if the public (and by extension Congress) does, then the shock can create its own reality. In other words, if the perception of shock creates enough political pressure to “do something,” even a sober, experienced president may prove powerless to avoid adjusting in response. Indeed, a president will suffer worse criticism if he attempts to downplay the threat or seems passive in the face of mounting dangers abroad. This again highlights the difficulty of disentangling strategic shock from domestic political slack.

Independent Variable #2: Domestic Political Slack

Congressional pressure affected Eisenhower’s analysis and in terms of domestic politics, Sputnik came at a terrible time. Many in the U.S. feared growing Soviet power, particularly unfounded reports of a growing Soviet superiority in the number and types of missiles. The launching of the Sputniks signaled for the average voter who did not understand the scientific details that there was a greater threat of war. It also undermined confidence in the ability of the government, under Eisenhower’s direction, to maintain peace through deterrence. As a Life story in March 1958 described, before Sputnik Americans were primarily concerned with avoiding war, inflation, and segregation. After Sputnik Americans top concerns were catching up to the Russians and educating better scientists. A general sense of unease about the country’s position contributed to the Republicans historic loss in the 1958 Midterm Revolution.

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826 For example, in October 1957, while discussing the type and extent of foreign military assistance to be provided to France in FY 1958, Eisenhower worried that the proposals were not detailed enough and that Congress would object. Secretary Dulles commented: “Congress always wanted precision in these matters. Congress always wanted to pin you down. But you cannot run foreign policy on that kind of basis, although it was possible to plan on that basis. A situation might even arise in which the President would want to provide France with assistance from his emergency funds.” S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 340th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 17, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “340th Meeting of NSC, October 17, 1957,” 4-6. See also, S. Everett Gleason, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 342nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, October 31, 1957,” EPL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 9, “342nd Meeting of NSC, October 31, 1957.” Item 4, 1.

Eisenhower recognized this. During an NSC meeting in January 1960, Eisenhower noted that despite his efforts to downplay the Soviet achievements in space in order to “keep people on an even keel,” Congress was still insisting on more dollars for space.\textsuperscript{828}

Yet there is reason to question the level of hysteria Sputnik induced. For example, a survey by “Claude Robinson’s Public Opinion Index” (which was transmitted to the Secretary Defense in April of 1958) conducted right after Sputnik canvassed 1,000 adults in the general public and 117 newspaper editors. The study found that while 95 percent of the public knew of the Sputnik launch, 40 percent dismissed it without serious thought about what it might mean. Further, the launch had not affected the prestige of the administration: 80 percent thought the U.S. was “at least even” with the Soviets or would “catch up before long”, and only 39 percent thought the sources of the “missile lag” was due to a lack of leadership from Eisenhower. In terms of a desired response, while most favored additional defense spending, 53 percent preferred balancing the budget over going further into debt. The majority did not want to cut the size of the Armed Forces or increase taxes, but they were willing to cut the highway program “and most of all, they are willing (54 to 30 percent) to cut foreign aid.”\textsuperscript{829}

Regardless, Sputnik created pressure to respond. Yet Eisenhower refused to release the Gaither report or U-2 intelligence in order to deflect domestic criticism. Eisenhower not only wanted to safeguard intelligence sources and methods, but was also concerned the Gaither report’s release would induce greater hysteria and thus demands for massive spending, which would in turn wreck the economy. Eisenhower also still hoped to negotiate a limited test ban

treaty with the Soviets. He understood that releasing intelligence showing deficiencies in Soviet capabilities relative to the U.S. would humiliate the Kremlin and extinguish the hope of lasting diplomatic agreements.  

Even in the lead up to the 1958 election, Eisenhower continued to campaign on controlling costs. For example, in September 1958, when discussing the outline of a speech he was to give in California, Eisenhower “stressed that he felt it important this year as a campaign issue to point up Congressional disease of spending. He realizes that such a disease is not confined totally to Democrats.”

After Sputnik, the Democrats grew more comfortable with their disease. For the first time on foreign policy issues the opposition party saw blood in the water. Lyndon Johnson and Stuart Symington cited Sputnik as evidence Eisenhower had allowed the U.S. to decline relative to the Soviets and to call for more Defense spending along the lines the Gaither Committee had laid out. Prior to Sputnik, Eisenhower was warning his advisers that Congress would continue to cut appropriations, and Democrats were largely supportive of aspects of foreign policy such as mutual security that Eisenhower wanted to protect. After Sputnik, Congress wanted to increase appropriations while still cutting the relative share for foreign assistance. Sputnik thus reduced Eisenhower’s domestic political slack, empowering the Democrats to push back on Eisenhower’s attempts to control Defense costs, control inflation, and ultimately balance the budget. Whereas Eisenhower previously had to fight his own party to protect essential programs, he now had to fight Democrats who wanted to inject massive resources into nonessential, duplicative programs. This highlights the difficulty in using party control of Congress as a proxy for domestic political

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830 See Dueck, _Hard Line_, 111-112. See also, Valerie Adams, 192.
832 In light of this, Jean Edward Smith’s portrayal of Eisenhower as having chummy relationships with Democratic leaders and poor relationships with Republicans is too simplistic. See Smith, _Eisenhower in War and Peace_, 647-649.
slack. The president may be aligned with the opposite political party on some foreign policy issues and opposed on others. Moreover, these preference divergences manifest themselves in internal administration debates such as the weekly NSC meetings, suggesting preference divergence among the president’s key advisers could be used as a measure for domestic political slack.

Yet while Sputnik may have reduced Eisenhower’s slack, he fought hard to maintain his freedom to maneuver and to carry out his broad foreign policy agenda for the rest of his presidency. Perhaps this is because, while the Republican Party suffered in 1958 and Eisenhower’s post Sputnik approval ratings reached an all time low (dipping briefly below 50 percent), the president soon regained the public’s trust. For example, at a meeting in January 1959 to discuss a proposed Commission on National Goals for the Republican Party, Eisenhower’s advisers reported that “The President was popular and the Republican Party steadily losing popularity. In discussing this with the President he said it was a brutal but almost inescapable fact that he seemed to have failed to make himself ‘Mr. Republican’—and that he considered that a failure on his part.”

In mid-August 1959, Eisenhower’s Secretary Ann Whitman commented that the rash of newspaper comments claiming a “new Eisenhower” had emerged, particularly since the passing of John Foster Dulles and Sherman Adams (i.e. two dominant figures in his administration), had missed the mark. The newspapers had simply found they had been wrong in their previous assessment of Eisenhower, “he is not an ‘old and sick and feeble’ man, with no powers because of the fact that he cannot run again. They have discovered that his popularity is higher than ever, that the people of the country would solidly re-elect him tomorrow.” With less than two years left in his presidency, Eisenhower

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was acting freer, more sure of himself, than at any time since war days. I do think there is one thing to be said. I believe that he came to office with a healthy fear of Congress and a carryover from days when he appeared before committees of kowtowing to Congress. And I think that in these last six years he has learned how to handle Congress, that you must fight them to win their respect. To that extent I believe there has been a change.  

In other words, Eisenhower, like any president, always faced conflicting pressures from Congress. The only consistent pressure from the Democrats was the desire to win more seats and more power. The only consistent, bipartisan pressure Eisenhower felt throughout his presidency was to cut the foreign assistance programs he deemed vital. Sputnik complicated his ability to control costs, but he was still able to avoid massive spending on the order recommended by the Gaither Committee. And in some cases, such as the passage of the National Defense Education Act and Defense reorganization, Eisenhower was able to harness domestic political pressures to his advantage. Thus, my second hypothesis did not perform well in this case—even after the most visible measures of slack disappeared (i.e. losses in the Mid-term, severe drop in approval rating), Eisenhower still had room to maneuver and to advance his agenda. The president had to compromise on key issues with Congress, but it had always been thus. Eisenhower did not want to change course and as a result he had to get creative and he created enough slack to stay on course. He also created this slack through a concerted public relations effort.

Independent Variable #3: Conceptual Complexity

Since Eisenhower scores high in conceptual complexity, higher than Truman, my initial typology hypothesizes that he would be more open to discrepant information from the surrounding environment, and thus more willing to make adjustments to his grand strategy. But since complexity is a fixed personality trait, it does not vary from case to case, and one cannot use a qualitative case study as evidence that a president exhibited a higher or lower degree of

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complexity. If anything, the preceding case suggests Eisenhower was less open to alternative views than his complexity score predicts—he remained committed to the fundamentals of the New Look even after Sputnik suggested the need to adjust. But as previously discussed, there are good reasons Eisenhower and his advisers did not view Sputnik entirely as a strategic shock, and thus his intransigence should not be mistaken for close-mindedness or conceptual simplicity. Rather, Eisenhower’s commitment to the New Look stemmed from his consistent view of the strategic situation, his deep understanding of the Soviet threat, and his fear of the domestic threat posed by persistent deficits and high inflation. Nevertheless, Eisenhower did make adjustments, and responded to Sputnik by compromising with Democrats in Congress. This evidence supports my third hypothesis.

Perhaps a conceptually simpler president would have reacted differently to Sputnik. If complexity implies an ability to perceive nuance and see the world in shades of grey, then it stands to reason a simpler president would not have been able to distinguish between the primarily psychological threat posed by the Soviet space achievements and the military threat posed by Soviet intentions and missile capabilities. A “black and white” president would see Sputnik simply as a rise in the overall threat. Certainly, as we have seen with Truman, a simple president can perceive shock and make major adjustments in response. This suggests complexity does not predict flexibility and simplicity intransigence. Rather a simpler president faced with a true strategic shock is likely to react more aggressively to it—a simpler view of the world implies a simpler view of possible responses. For the simpler president, threats must be confronted to maintain the status quo and the president’s simpler image of himself and the world.

Eisenhower also remained committed to defending foreign assistance, a commitment connected to his belief that the Marshall Plan had saved Western Europe from Communism. Moreover, he admired the administrator, Paul Hoffman, for completing and terminating the program at a total cost of $13 billion, less than the $17 billion originally projected. Eisenhower to Bion R. East, September 12, 1957, EPL, Ann Whitman Files, DDE Diary Series, Box 27, “September - 1957 - DDE Dictation (2).”
A more complex president would not see a rise in threat as a challenge to his understanding of the world, because that understanding is more nuanced.

Independent Variable #4: Foreign Policy Experience

The Sputnik crisis put Eisenhower’s lifetime of military and foreign policy experience to the test. It was the first time Eisenhower was truly vulnerable on foreign policy issues, and the first time the American people began to question his steady his hand at the helm of the ship of state. Not only were critics in Congress trying to push him away from the principles of the New Look, but his own military advisers were trying to push him in the direction of more military spending and toward the Gaither Committee’s recommendations. Sputnik threatened the premise of his presidency—the victorious general who would guide the nation in peace as he had done in war. Sputnik challenged the reason he ran for president in the first place—to strike a balance between isolationist Republicans and overspending Democrats.

Eisenhower confronted these attacks head on and stuck to his guns. As Goodpaster would later describe, Eisenhower as president exhibited true “generalship” in the sense of both understanding his fellow man, his values and his aspirations and being driven “toward clear, simple goals that stand out above all lesser distractions—peace, well-being and ever-higher public and private standards of decency and integrity.” And just as we saw in Chapter III, Eisenhower did not hesitate to wield his foreign policy experience as a weapon. For example, in March 1958 during a discussion of whether the Soviets would risk taking over a satellite as they had done in Czechoslovakia, Eisenhower said “he could speak from personal experience that fear of Soviet Communism was what had induced the democratic leaders of Czechoslovakia to cave

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836 Goodpaster to Eisenhower, January 24, 1961, EPL, Post-Presidential Papers, Principal File 1961, “Goodpaster, Andrew J.”
In March 1959, as DCI Dulles described the relationship between Castro and Figueres, Eisenhower “interrupted to say that he knew from personal experience that Figueres loved to hear himself talk.” While discussing possible outcomes for the Berlin crisis in April 1959 and the necessity of continuing to plan for general war (despite their efforts to avoid it), Eisenhower said he was reminded of 1916, when President Wilson:

would not even permit our little War College to make any studies about what we might do if we became involved in the War. Nor would he permit any contingency war planning by the war of the Navy Departments lest such planning seem to constitute belligerent action by the U.S. Today we are of course taking the opposite course. Certainly there were a number of things we could try to do to change the Soviet mind but we should never forget the possibility of war even though in the President’s judgment there would not be a war.

Not only could Eisenhower discuss military strategy and technology, he could also dig into the weeds of foreign assistance. For example, in discussing foreign assistance to India in January 1957, Treasury Secretary Humphrey argued that it was foolish to take money developed from free enterprise in the U.S. and give it to a foreign government that would put this money in socialist enterprises rather than free enterprise. Eisenhower disagreed, and asked Secretary Humphrey if he had ever read the new Indian Five-Year Plan. Humphrey had not and Eisenhower “proceeded to comment on certain highlights of the Five-Year Plan…noting the belief in India that some 17 large and vital industries would have to be run by the Indian

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Government; whereas the remainder could safely be left to development through private enterprise.  

These are not just interesting historical anecdotes. The point is Eisenhower conceived of himself as genuinely knowledgeable on these topics and routinely identified himself with his military credentials. He then used these credentials to push back against subordinates and advance his agenda. Eisenhower exhibited earned confidence. He felt he was uniquely qualified to cut the military budget because he was a military man who knew what could be cut without damaging U.S. national security.

Further, Eisenhower felt this level and type of experience was important for a president leading during the Cold War. He feared that in the future a president who was “not raised in the military services” would assume the office and “If that should happen while we still have the state of tension that now exists in the world, I shudder to think what could happen to this country.” Eisenhower was right to be concerned about how a less experienced president would respond to military advice, primarily because even he struggled to contain Defense Department costs. As he told Gordon Gray, his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, he felt trapped in approving the increases in the 1960 Defense budget. He said that he could find $5 billion in savings if he was in charge of the Pentagon, but since the military officials had protected their

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841 Eisenhower’s secretary, Ann Whitman, recorded Eisenhower’s response to a particularly chaotic day on May 13, 1958, “Another of the worst days of our lives.” Vice President Nixon had just been attacked in Venezuela, two libraries had been burned in Lebanon, the French were struggling in Algeria, anti-American demonstrations were taking place in Burma, and that day Eisenhower had ordered 1,000 troops to be flown to Cuba and Puerto Rico to assist in evacuating Nixon and directed the Sixth Fleet to head to Lebanon. “The President said to me in mid-afternoon, ‘this is bad enough, but by next week I think we’ll be in even greater danger.’ He also said at one point, ‘I am about ready to go put my uniform on.’” Ann Whitman Diary, May 13, 1958, EPL, Ann Whitman File, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 10, “ACW Diary, May, 1958 (1).”
programs as “essential to the national security, he had little choice but to approve them.”

This case has not disconfirmed my fourth hypothesis, but it does suggest that the same foreign policy experience that allows the president to implement a strategic adjustment allows him to resist implementing a greater adjustment. The case also supports for the sheer challenge of implementing any grand strategy amidst foreign policy crises. Even in his second term Eisenhower was struggling to implement the New Look and to convince his subordinates to accept it. Eisenhower would fight this battle, using all of his foreign policy experience to convince those around him to come on board, until the very last day of his presidency.

The case also suggests two corollaries to my fourth hypothesis. First, presidents with greater foreign policy experience are more likely to correctly assess the strategic situation at the beginning of their presidency, set the right course, and therefore avoid strategic shock. After all, what is the value of foreign policy experience if it does not allow you to formulate and implement a more sound and resilient grand strategy, one that is continually refined so as to obviate the need for major changes down the road? Second, foreign policy experience, or the perception of foreign policy acumen, is particularly valuable when confronting a rise in the threat level, or the perception of vulnerability. Eisenhower was able to push back on the charges that his administration was weak in the face of a rising Soviet threat, largely because the nation trusted him to be strong and he had a proven record of defeating America’s enemies on the battlefield. Eisenhower could not be cowed by the military brass arguing for more resources because he was of the military and had earned their respect, and he understood all of the militaries flaws and weaknesses.

**Conclusion**

In an interview with Walter Cronkite at the end of his presidency, a discussion that took

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843 Quoted in Divine, 203.
place from May 23-29, 1961, Eisenhower reflected on his experience in the White House and on the power of the presidency more broadly. The interview provides a fascinating summary of how Eisenhower perceived his role as president, the political pressures he confronted, and his foreign policy experience. Eisenhower explained that he had taken office at a time when there was a split in the Republican Party owing largely to the “great struggle in the 1952 convention.” But he and Senator Taft had worked out their differences and become great friends, which in turn bridged many of the divisions within the party. Yet for the first two years of his presidency, when the Senate was controlled by Republicans, Eisenhower still faced a “politically hostile” Congress because the Republicans had been in minority exile for twenty years—“There was not a single Republican Senator in the Senate when I came in there who had ever served a Republican President.” As a result, Congressional Republicans had developed an instinct or a culture of antagonizing the executive branch and cutting down the president. Rather than demanding their obedience or threatening them, Eisenhower had to demonstrate “strength and patience” to eventually enlist their support.

Yet for the remaining six years Eisenhower had to deal with Democrats, and “different methods have to be used to bring the programs about.” As Chief Executive, as the nation’s spokesman, and the figure with the Constitutional responsibility for conducting foreign affairs, Eisenhower felt the president has enormous advantages in dealing with Congress. As head of the richest, most powerful, and most progressive nation on earth, the President “becomes a world figure in spite of himself, if you want to put it that way.” This does not make him immune from domestic political pressures, and if the president goes over the line, political figures from both parties in Congress can check him. But with the backing of a “fairly unified” political party, “there’s almost no limit to his power if he’s got any kind of a personality or persuasive
characteristic whatsoever.” Eisenhower cited the difficulties in pursuing Defense reorganization in the wake of Sputnik:

instantly, from the Congress, just came almost howls of derision…Well, I went to the people. I went to the people in every way I could. I went to them for television. And then I started a letter campaign. And I think I wrote to at least five hundred men in this country—in every city and every hamlet that I knew the individual. And I told him the story. And I told him we had to have support for this. Well, I will tell you—here is a place where I think he people thought I had some experience—and therefore they trusted me probably a little bit more than they would in some purely political thing. And the response was such, that within a matter of three or four paragraphs I got exactly what I wanted.  

At the level of grand strategy, Eisenhower got most of what he wanted. He fought for eight years to implement an adjustment away from NSC 68 towards the New Look, to steer the country in what he thought was a safer, more sustainable direction. When faced with a psychological, propaganda disaster in Sputnik, one that emboldened his critics in Congress, Eisenhower made tactical adjustments but stuck to the grand strategic principles of the New Look. His experience allowed him to see Sputnik as less than a strategic response, and he responded correspondingly in a sober and nuanced manner. Perhaps most importantly, he wielded his foreign policy experience to maintain domestic political slack. Eisenhower’s handling of the Sputnik crisis demonstrates the extent of presidential power on foreign policy issues. A president that is truly committed to his grand strategy is not easily blown of course by international or domestic headwinds.

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CHAPTER V: REFINING THE THEORY OF STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENT

“Application of these principles is not always easy and simple in a society as complex as ours.”
-Eisenhower, March 18, 1958

The goal of this dissertation is to build a typological theory of strategic adjustment. In this chapter I will use the findings from my case studies to review outcomes on the dependent variable, assess my exploratory hypotheses and candidate causal variables, and refine the initial typological theory. I will then present further hypotheses to flesh out how the refined theory works.

Dependent Variable: Strategic Adjustment

My initial typology conceptualized change as taking place in two stages: formulation and implementation. My focus was on the degree of grand strategy change—the extent to which a new grand strategic course deviates from the prior course a president set—not the type or quality of change. I expected strategic adjustment to be a difficult process, and for the status quo to dominate. Indeed, all three case studies supported the idea of inertia in U.S. foreign policy in general and grand strategy in particular. I specified four possible outcomes on the dependent variable: (1) continuity (no change); (2) refinement (minor change); (3) reform (moderate change); and (4) restructuring (major change). Since the focus was on adjustment within a

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847 Inertia takes hold of grand strategy not only after the president has set his initial course, but also prior to assuming the presidency. Inertia affects even presidents like Eisenhower, who was intent on adjusting from the course set by his predecessor, who enjoyed a popular mandate to do so, and who brought to the office a background conducive to convincing his advisers and the American people to go in a new direction. Four years after he had decided on the New Look, Eisenhower was still struggling to bend the bureaucracy to his will, to prod the military to accept an enhanced reliance on nuclear weapons rather than conventional forces, to eliminate duplicative missile programs, and to balance the budget. The existence of inertia is what motivated the idea of strategic shock as a necessary condition for strategic adjustment. While I have focused on changes within an administration, the existence of inertia also suggests that changes from one administration to the next—which I initially dismissed as an inevitable part of changing administrations—are puzzling and worthy of greater scholarly attention. In other words, it may be obvious why a new president changes course, but in light of inertia it is not obvious how he is actually able to do it, how he can both formulate and implement a change in grand strategy. As Truman said of his successor in 1952: “He'll sit here...and he'll say, 'Do this! Do that!' And nothing will happen. Poor Ike--it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating.” Quoted in Neustadt, Presidential Power, 10.
dominant strategic framework, I excluded complete overhauls or reorientations of grand strategy from this list.\textsuperscript{848} I defined the different types of adjustment with references to restructurings or major change, using Gaddis’ concept of “geopolitical codes” as a proxy for major change and as a way of selecting cases with which to develop my typological theory.\textsuperscript{849} My theory hypothesized that while reforms or moderate changes involve real adjustments that can be measured in budgets, bases, troops, and treaties, they would stall in the implementation phase. Refinements or minor adjustments would stick to the current course, but change programs or priorities in order to increase efficiency or take advantage of new opportunities.

\textsuperscript{848} At the start of this project, no applicable framework for strategic adjustment existed. The closest is from Charles Hermann, who addresses broader foreign policy change rather than grand strategy change and specifies four possible levels of “self-correcting change—when the current actors change their course in foreign policy” (i.e. as opposed to changes that occur from changes in government). The first is adjustment changes, or changes in the level of effort or the “scope of recipients,” which leaves overall purposes, what is done, and how it is done unchanged. The second is program changes, or changes “in the methods or means by which the goal or problem is addressed,” which tend to be more qualitative than quantitative, such as pursuing diplomacy over military force. The third is problem/goal changes, or changes to the purposes of foreign policy or the problems that policy addresses. The fourth and most extreme is international orientation changes, or a “basic shift in the actor’s international role and activities,” which involves the simultaneous change of many policies. Hermann focuses only on the last three forms of changes, leaving out adjustment changes and focusing instead on changes in “means (program), ends (goal/problem), or overall orientation.” Charles F. Hermann, “Changing Course,” 5-6. Yet as we see with the change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68, and from NSC 68 to the New Look, a change in the level of effort expended towards achieving consistent goals can have a major effect on a country’s foreign policy and on the international system. Thus, the division between Hermann’s first and second categories of change is murky. Additionally, changing the goals of foreign policy would seemingly involve a reorientation of a country’s role in the international system, and Hermann does not develop a clear line between goal change and reorientation.

\textsuperscript{849} Yet Gaddis does not develop the concept of geopolitical codes in a way that allows for specifying the degree of adjustment. Gaddis usefully discusses the how definitions of U.S. interests and perceptions of the threat shape administrations’ strategies, but that presents a problem: if we are concerned with adjustments that play out in the real world, should we measure changes to definition of interests or description of threats, particularly when the influence of inertia predicts these redefinitions may not result in program and policy changes or may be reflected in such changes themselves? Grand strategies may emerge when presidents and their advisers coalesce around a common understanding of the national interest and the threats they face, but my project examines grand strategic changes, not changes in belief systems. The latter can drive the former, but the latter can also occur without a change to the former—the difficulties in implementing change show that this is true. Furthermore, changes to definitions of interests and threats are linked to the perception and degree of strategic shock, and should also be reflected in changes to goals and programs. The key point is that belief changes are not always causal; they do not always lead to changes in policy investments and therefore do not always lead to strategic adjustments. Thus, the impact of threat perception or perception of U.S. interests on adjustment should be captured by changes in goals/ends and changes in ways/means. As Elizabeth Saunders argues in her examination of how presidential beliefs shape military interventions, policy investments can be used as proxies for causal beliefs. Leaders at War, 50-51. She measures policy investments in terms of four indicators: (1) staffing decisions, or how a president chooses to fill key advisory posts within his administration; (2) official policy on strategy, defense posture and the use of force, or “the way military forces and nonmilitary programs are configured to deal with threats”; (3) budgetary allocations; and (4) institutional creation and change.
My case studies showed a process of formulation and implementation taking place, but cast doubt on what dividing the adjustment process in this way adds to my theory. Though all three cases demonstrate the enormous time and effort that goes into questioning the current course and formulating alternative options, adjustments that are formulated but not implemented do not produce change. Fleshing out the formulation phase throws implementation failures into sharp relief, but it cannot be measured as part of the dependent variable. In other words, changes to grand strategy that are formulated but not implemented cannot be classified as adjustments. This means my initial typology, which argued that refinements never fully made it out of the formulation phase into the implementation phase, must be revised. The case studies also demonstrated the difficulty in distinguishing refinement (minor change) and reform (moderate change). Furthermore, even with a healthy respect for inertia and broad continuity within and across administrations, grand strategy is seemingly in a constant state of refinement, of tweaking various programs, of shifting funding across regions, and of reprioritizing assets and personnel. Therefore it makes sense to simplify the possible outcomes on the dependent variable to: (1) no adjustment (previously referred to as continuity); (2) moderate adjustment (previously reform); and (3) major adjustment (previously restructuring). Table 4 below summarizes the three cases in terms of outcomes on the dependent variable.

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850 In a way that is the primary heuristic value of grand strategy, it focuses foreign policy on a consistent set of goals even while constantly reevaluating progress and adapting to changes in the international environment. As Brands, explains: “If a grand strategy is soundly conceived, then the overall goals or guiding principles may remain the same over a period of years or even decades. But the precise combination of policies used to pursue those goals will undoubtedly shift as conditions change and rivals react. As we have seen, the ‘golden age’ of American grand strategy was characterized by near-continual reassessments of what mix of means and commitments was required to contain Soviet power, even as that overarching objective stayed unchanged….Grand strategy, then, should not be seen as something fixed or finite. Rather, it is properly viewed as an iterative, continuous process—one that involves seeking out and interpreting feedback, dealing with surprises, and correcting course where necessary, all while keeping the ultimate objective in view. Planning and reassessment are constants, and the world of the grand strategist is rarely done.” Brands, 198-199.
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<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Type of Adjustment</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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| NSC 68             | Major Adjustment   | - No change in *ends* (goals of grand strategy remained identical)  
|                    |                    | - Change in *ways* (shift from defense of vital areas only to perimeter defense, emphasis on military instruments over diplomatic instruments, engagement in limited war)  
|                    |                    | - Change in *means* (increase of percentage of GDP allocated to defense from 4.8% to 14.2%)  
|                    |                    | - Change in *interests* (eliminated distinction between peripheral and vital interests, interests no longer indivisible, Keynesian assumptions replaces fiscal orthodoxy)
|                    |                    | - Change in *threat perception* (Soviets would risk general war once they acquired enough nuclear weapons to devastate U.S. in 1954, Soviets were not overextended but rather operating from a position of strength) |
| New Look (1953)    | Major Adjustment   | - No change in *ends* (containment, deterrence of Soviet aggression, imposition of pressure on the Soviet bloc remain primary goals, rollback explicitly rejected as an alternative goal)  
|                    | (from NSC 68)      | - Change in *ways* (shift from symmetrical to asymmetrical containment or from perimeter to strongpoint defense, reliance on massive retaliatory power, prioritizing nuclear weapons while reducing reliance on conventional forces, “long haul” effort vs. “year of maximum danger,”)  
|                    | Moderate Adjustment (from early commitments rollback) |                                                                                                                                                  |
emphasis on psychological warfare, reliance on indigenous forces in cases of limited war)
-Change in means (resources were finite and limited, defense spending reduced from 14.2% of GDP in FY1953 to 10.1% in FY1957, overall national security expenditures reduced from $52.8 billion in FY1953 to $45.4 billion in FY1957
-Change in threat perception (Soviets unlikely to risk general war, year of maximum danger rejected, Soviets more rational than zealous\(^1\), death of Stalin did not change the nature of the regime or its aims, focus on Soviet intentions rather than capabilities)
-Slight change in interests (unrestrained spending leading to crippling debt and persistent inflation not in the national interest and risked producing a garrison state and “destroy what we are attempting to defend”)

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<th>Sputnik Response</th>
<th>Moderate Adjustment</th>
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-No change in ends (contain the Soviet Union and avoiding destroying the American way of life)
-No significant change in ways (build up and enhance reliance U.S. strengths such as massive retaliatory power and the appeal of U.S. values or “spiritual power” and apply these strength to Soviet weaknesses such as appealing to non-Communist areas and convincing the Soviets you were absolutely prepared to
use nuclear weapons, avoidance of conventional ground force involvement in limited or local conflicts, continuance of diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets and Chinese without any real breakthroughs or lasting arms control agreements, dogged defense of mutual security or foreign aid; continued reliance on propaganda and covert action, such as Radio Free Europe encouraging the Hungarian rebellion) attempted coups in Indonesia and Guatemala ) -Change in means (enhanced support to ICBM program, increased SAC alert, more funding for outer space programs, establishment of NASA, national appeal for prioritizing scientific education)

| Table 4: Summary of Dependent Variable Outcomes for Case Studies |

**Classifying the Change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68**

In Chapter III, I argued that the goals/ends of U.S. grand strategy did not change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68, but that changing means and resources applied to consistent goals is still a major form of adjustment. Again, since this dissertation examines adjustment within an overarching framework such as containment, this case provides support for the conclusion that a more extreme form of grand strategy change, a reorientation producing an entirely different framework, involves changing the either the ends of U.S. grand strategy or the definition of U.S. national interests. Additionally, with NSC 68 Truman shifted the ways of grand strategy, going from defending only vital areas (as counseled by Kennan) to defending previously peripheral areas (i.e. perimeter defense). Truman also emphasized military instruments of national power.
over diplomatic instruments, not only by waging the Korean War but also by explicitly delaying negotiations with the Soviets except as a propaganda tool. Truman also changed the means applied to pursuing his grand strategic goals, most notably by increasing the percentage of GDP allocated to defense from 4.8 percent in FY1949 to 14.2 percent in FY1953.

This highlights three important problems with my initial measure of strategic adjustment. First, it is often difficult to distinguish between ways and means. Means are often thought of in terms of budgets and dollars, but the amount spent on national security programs depends on the types of programs themselves. For example, a portion of the Truman budget increase involved the costs of the Korean War. Was the Korean War a way of advancing toward the goal of NSC 68? If so how can one disentangle this way from the costs of the way (i.e. the cost of the war itself measured in terms of troop levels and budgets). As H. Richard Yarger argues, “Strategy is all about how (way or concept) leadership will use the power (means or resources) available to the state to exercise control over sets of circumstances and geographic locations to achieve objectives (ends) that support state interests…the ways are the ‘concepts’ for accomplishing the objectives, and the means are the ‘resources’ for supporting the concepts.” If resources are spent in pursuit of concepts, this creates a potential tautology and may exaggerate the degree of change, as changes in means could reflect changes in ways, and vice versa.

A second and related tautological problem is that changes in ways could also be construed as changes in interests. For example, NSC 68 eliminated the distinction between peripheral and vital areas. Does this also mean, as Gaddis has argued, that it eliminated the distinction between peripheral and vital interests? Since territorial gains by the Soviets anywhere on the globe could not be tolerated, by extension interests could no longer be divided and

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rigorously prioritized. Just as articulating certain goals or ends reflects the president’s conception and prioritization of interests, the ways of how to accomplish those goals reflect the president’s concept of what is in the national interest, or what interests are vital vs. peripheral.

Third, Chapter III demonstrated the adjustment from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 involved a significant change in threat perception. Whereas Kennan had maintained the Soviets were overextended, NSC 68 posited they were operating from a position of strength. Whereas NSC 20/4 played down the idea that Soviets would risk general war, NSC 68 talked about the year of maximum danger (1954) as the likely time for the Soviets to risk general war once they acquired enough nuclear weapons to devastate U.S. But again we confront a problem—a change in threat perception does not automatically produce a change in action. Moreover, measuring the changes in ways and means that result from an increased or decreased perception of the threat again might overestimate the degree of change. For example, NSC 68 ruled out genuine negotiations with the Soviets because the administration felt the U.S. would be negotiating from a position of weakness; a military build-up had to precede any negotiations. In other words, a change in the threat perception manifested itself as a change in the ways and means. By using all of these elements of change to determine the overall degree or type of adjustment you would in effect be “double counting” if not “triple counting” changes.

Classifying NSC 162/2, the New Look

Chapter IV, the examination of the New Look, found support for the classification of NSC 162/2 as a major strategic adjustment from NSC 68, but it is more difficult to classify the degree of adjustment from rollback. Rollback was never fully formulated or implemented as a strategy and Eisenhower used the death of Stalin to commission Project Solarium and make moderate adjustments in the direction he had already intended to go. Rollback found its fullest
expression in the work of Task Force C during Project Solarium, but Eisenhower assigned Andrew Goodpaster to that Task Force to ensure the strategy did not go too far off the rails. Additionally, Eisenhower’s commitment to rollback involved his acceptance of the Republican Platform in 1952. The expression of rollback in this platform was vague, reflecting Dulles’ rhetorical commitment to liberating Eastern Europe with “positive” and “dynamic” steps.

While Eisenhower talked frequently about liberating captive nations, he qualified it by saying they would be liberated by peaceful means and not by taking territory with military assets. Eisenhower, harnessing the opportunity created by Stalin’s death and the subsequent Solarium process, conceived of rollback or liberation in psychological and moral terms, sending a message to those nations and people captive to the Soviets that the U.S. would not rest content until they had been liberated. His subsequent refusal to get involved in the Hungarian uprising in 1956 demonstrates how narrowly Eisenhower construed his conception of rollback. The Chance for Peace speech itself can be viewed as a form of psychological rollback, one aimed at rolling back the Soviets moral claim to want genuine peace and accommodation with the West.

852 The objectives of rollback, however, appear fundamentally different from those of containment—driving back Soviet power and territorial control is a fundamentally different goal than merely containing it. Indeed, Vice Presidential candidate Nixon criticizing the Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson in 1952 as a “PhD graduate of Dean Acheson’s cowardly college of Communist containment,” and the Republican platform calling containment immoral and futile demonstrates how different these conceptions of grand strategy were. Quoted in Dueck, Hard Line, 87.

853 Rollback as a psychological weapon rather than a territorial objective came into fullest expression in the work of Task Force C, which emphasized waging propaganda warfare and aggressive covert operations. Waging propaganda warfare was subsequently operationalized by the Psychology Strategy Board under the leadership of C. D. Jackson. Covert actions was often employed during this “golden age of intelligence” under Allen Dulles and the CIA, leading to CIA organized coups in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, and unsuccessful attempts to do the same in Indonesia in 1958 and Cuba in 1960-61.

854 Even Dulles qualified his calls for rollback by emphasizing non-military actions and a “peaceful separation from Moscow” in Eastern Europe. As Eisenhower said while campaigning in San Francisco: “We are not going to win the struggle for men’s minds merely by tripling Congressional appropriations for a super-loud Voice of America. Rather, it will be the message which we give the Voice to speak…We must realize that as a nation everything we say, everything we do, and everything we fail to say or do, will have its impact in other lands. It will affect the minds and wills of men and women there.” Bowie and Immerman, 76-77.
In other words, once in office Eisenhower modified elements of rollback that were acceptable to suit his purposes, a moderate form of adjustment.\footnote{Had Eisenhower ever fully accepted rollback, this may have gone beyond an adjustment of grand strategy and qualified as a reorientation. By extension, though NSC 162/2 reflected elements of Task Force C’s work (particularly in the realm of psychological warfare), the change from Task Force C’s strategy (if implemented) from NSC 68, or from Task Force C’s strategy to the New Look would have involved a change in the ends of U.S. grand strategy and therefore be categorized as a complete reorientation. Perhaps since both rollback and containment involved confronting and ultimately defeating the Soviet threat, one could argue this is a change of ways rather than ends, but the fact remains that driving back Soviet territorial gains is fundamentally a different objective from preventing further gains. In war this would be the difference between a raid seeking to capture an enemy held position and a barrage of artillery fire seeking to deter the enemy’s ability to maneuver beyond that position. But the broader objective of defeating the enemy remains consistent. From this perspective containment and rollback both look like different ways to defeat the Soviet Union. Containment held that by exerting pressure on the Soviet Union over the long-term, the Soviet system would eventually collapse under its own weight. Rollback or liberation was premised on the idea that in order to win the Cold War, the U.S. had to seize the initiative and actively turn back the status quo, avoiding accommodation with the Soviets and defeating them rather than waiting for them to defeat themselves.} And even though the change from rollback to the New Look cannot be considered a true case of strategic adjustment since Eisenhower had not fully implemented a grand strategy before Stalin died and Solarium began, the skill with which Eisenhower transitioned from campaign rhetoric about liberation and co-opted proponents of rollback as he designed NSC 162/2 is still instructive for the purposes of this dissertation. It shows how a president can both harness and also contain pressures within his or her administration. The amount of resources devoted to exploring rollback through Project Solarium gave its defenders a genuine sense that their strategic alternative was being taken seriously.

The process itself also exposed the risks of rollback and the dangers of provoking general war, nuances that were lost on the campaign trail. In this way, Eisenhower contained the proponents of rollback. But elements of Task Force C’s strategy, particularly recommendations on using propaganda and covert action, still made it into NSC 162/2. Furthermore, as Gaddis argues, Task Force A under Kennan’s leadership, by arguing for “the creation generally within the non-Communist area of an atmosphere of confidence and hope” (the vanguard of which was for Kennan seeking a reunified, independent, and democratic Germany), demonstrated that
containment and liberation “were not mutually exclusive, indeed that the first could bring about the second.”

Eisenhower also shifted from NSC 68’s cynical view of negotiations with the Soviet Union, enhancing frequent contacts with the Soviets and the Chinese, and NSC 162/2 contained explicit language that the U.S. should remain open to opportunities for negotiations. Another key change in the New Look was the newfound reliance on massive retaliatory power, with a corresponding reduction in the reliance on conventional military forces. Though Truman had begun in the final months of his presidency to build a secure second strike capability, Eisenhower prioritized the effort and built the strategic nuclear triad that would protect the U.S. for the rest of the Cold War: (1) the Polaris submarine missiles system; (2) ballistic missiles; and (3) the B-52 bomber. Additional projects such as the U-2 spy plane and spy satellites allowed for better intelligence on Soviet capabilities in order to protect the U.S. from a preventive strike.

One could further argue that rejecting the “year of maximum danger” and instead conceiving of containment as a “long-haul” effort was a change in the ways containment would be pursued. Eisenhower also shifted, in part due to his view of the Korean war, away from committing U.S. ground troops to local or limited conflicts, and the New Look instead emphasized building up indigenous forces and enabling them with U.S. stand-off air and naval assets. In terms of mutual security, Eisenhower was a staunch defender of foreign assistance programs. Though he initially prioritized trade over aid, he subsequently spent much time defending foreign aid appropriations from critics in Congress and secured funding for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (i.e. World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund. On balance, mutual security funding increased every year of his presidency despite the attempts of Congress to cut it. The issue of mutual security also further muddies the

857 Bowie and Immerman, 248.
distinction between *ways* and *means*. Is a steady increase in foreign aid a change in *means* or does it reflect a change in how to pursue containment (i.e. more assistance for the non-Communist, developing world, which is a change in *ways*)? When measuring adjustment, how can we avoid “double-counting” these metrics?

Similarly, Eisenhower cut the defense budget by 32 percent in FY1955 and 11 percent in FY 1956 (cutting $4.1 billion from the Army budget in FY 1955 alone), with military spending as a percentage of the total budget declining from nearly 70 percent in 1954 to 50 percent in 1961, reducing Army manpower by 500,000. But do these changes in *means* ultimately reflect the conceptual change of relying more on massive retaliatory power than conventional force levels? Further, while the Army’s share of the defense budget decreased, the Air Forces’ increased from 34.2 percent in the last year of the Truman Administration to 46.2 percent by FY 1955, which is a reflection of the change in *ways* masked by a broader reduction in *means*.

Conversely, given that all of the *ways* of Eisenhower’s strategy—nuclear deterrence through massive retaliatory power, avoidance of ground force involvement in limited war, enhanced psychological and covert operations—were linked by the desire to get the most defense at least cost (and these *ways* all had the advantage of being cheaper than their alternatives), was Eisenhower’s perception of the *means* available to his administration and conception of U.S. resources as finite and inelastic driving the *ways* he selected to pursue Containment? Were Eisenhower’s theories about nuclear deterrence reducing the necessity of conventional forces an ex post facto justification for allowing Soviet conventional superiority to continue, a strategic logic deployed to gloss over a problem of limited means?

This raises similar problems with changes in *threat perception*. The most prominent change from NSC 68 to the New Look was emphasizing the internal threat to the American way
of life in addition to the external Soviet threat. For Eisenhower, while the death of Stalin did not change the overall external Soviet threat, and while the New Look played down the likelihood of general war, it also increased the perception of an internal threat to U.S. interests. Eisenhower remained genuinely concerned that if they continued on the course charted by NSC 68, they would destroy the way of life they were seeking to protect and turn America into a garrison state. Here again threat perception gets entangled with means. On one hand, how you perceive the threat does not matter for adjustment if the president decides not to do anything about it. On the other, changes in means can be connected to changes in threat perceptions. Eisenhower reduced the means spent on containment because he conceived of an internal threat to U.S. economic and national security as insidious and destructive as the external threat of the Soviet Union. The change in threat perception here seems to drive the change in means, and both cannot be added together to arrive at the overall level of adjustment.858

Classifying the Response to the Sputnik Moment(s)

The implementation of NSC 162/2 shows the enormous investment of personal presidential leadership that was required to overcome inertia and adjust grand strategy in a direction that many political supporters, key advisers, and entrenched bureaucrats had not originally intended to go. Even in his second term, Eisenhower was still struggling to move the ship of state in a different direction, battling bureaucratic inertia, rising budgets, and intransigent

858 Threat perception also gets tangled up with interests and means. Eisenhower also believed economic controls and excessive government regulation of the economy were damaging. It was contrary to his concept of American liberty for the government to spend without regard for deficits and inflation. Fiscal conservatism, in other words, was for Eisenhower in the interests of American society. Thus, fiscal profligacy created threats to the American way of life and impeded the average American’s ability to make a living, reducing private enterprise, creativity, and individual choice. Or as NSC 162/2 put it, national security policies should aim to preserve the “vitality of its fundamental values and institutions.” Eisenhower’s perception of values differed from his predecessor, and if these values and interests were neglected, Eisenhower felt it could create national security threats. As Gaddis argues, the perception of means influenced the perceptions of interests, and Eisenhower broke from NSC 68 in rejecting the idea that “means could be expanded as needed to fit interests; the nation could afford whatever it took to achieve security.” Gaddis, Strategies, 130. Thus, Eisenhower’s Chance for Peace emphasized painful tradeoffs: a modern bomber robbed America of a modern brick school in 30 cities, two electric power plants, two hospitals, 50 miles of highway, 500,000 bushels of wheat, and new homes for more than 8,000 people.
advisers. When the Sputnik crisis occurred, it shifted Congressional pressures from Republican pressure for greater defense economies to Democratic pressure for greater spending. The Gaither Committee, like NSC 68 (and involving some of the same key people, who were re-litigating the case they had failed to win in the Solarium process), had charted an alternative course for Eisenhower to pursue, reversing the defense economies sought under the New Look and embarking on a military and scientific buildup to confront a Soviet threat that now seemed to have increased dramatically, a buildup that would have cost $44 billion over the next five years. Moreover, outside groups, spurred on by leaks of the Gaither Committee’s findings, marshaled to pressure the administration into heeding it’s warning just as the Committee on Present Danger had done with NSC 68.

Yet Eisenhower remained largely committed to the New Look. Despite Congressional criticism and agitation from academic and military circles to take bold steps to restore the U.S. scientific and military advantage, Eisenhower did not make major changes to his grand strategy. Eisenhower correctly perceived that Sputnik was not a strategic shock—the Soviets never possessed a strategic edge on the scale that the public feared and the so-called “missile gap” was pure political theater. U-2 flights beginning in 1956 gave Eisenhower a clearer view of the Soviet threat than his critics, and he refused to compromise this source of national security intelligence to defray his critics. He knew the Soviets were not about to embark on a massive ICBM program. As such, Eisenhower treated most of the Gaither Committee’s recommendations with great skepticism. Eisenhower, with a powerful ally in Treasury Secretary Humphrey and often Secretary Dulles, kept fighting to control spending. While total spending increased from $76.6 billion in FY1957 to $97.7 billion in FY1961, total national security expenditures during that same period increased at a more modest rate, from $45.5 billion in FY1957 to $49.6 billion in
FY1961. The amount allocated to defense as a percentage of GDP briefly increased from FY1957 to FY1958 from 10.1 to 10.2 percent. But this increase happened before Sputnik and it subsequently decreased, reaching 9.4 percent in FY 1961. Eisenhower also further fleshed out the reasoning behind containing defense spending, as the post-Sputnik debate allowed him to articulate a concept of diminishing returns and strategic sufficiency in terms of national security expenditures, particularly when it came to investing money in building fallout shelters and duplicative missile systems.

But while Eisenhower rejected the Gaither Committee’s report and remained committed to the basic tenets of the New Look, he took important steps to address the public hysteria created by Sputnik and correct real deficiencies in U.S. strategic planning. These included increasing the number of ICBMs, deploying IRBMs to Western Europe, raising SAC alert status, approving pay increases for military and civilian personnel, and allocating more resources to ballistic missile detection, satellite and outer space programs, and antisubmarine warfare. Moreover, Eisenhower embarked on a national campaign to heighten the importance of scientific education in order to keep pace with Soviet scientists, resulting in the passage of the National Education Act and the creation of ARPA and NASA. In other words, Eisenhower demonstrated his flexibility, harnessing the Sputnik hysteria to make important changes in military spending, defense reorganization, national education and space policy. Thus, while my I selected Sputnik as a case of no change, subsequent work shows it to be a case of moderate change.

The case studies reveal the need for a better method for measuring the dependent variable and classifying the type of adjustment we observe. I strongly hesitate to suggest precise rules other than to rely upon Gaddis’ concept of geopolitical codes as a proxy for major adjustment and in-depth process tracing to classify moderate adjustment versus no adjustment. The
Appendix, however, proposes a new framework for measuring adjustment based on what we observed in Chapters II-IV, one that attempts to overcome the difficulty in separating ways and means. It is intended as a resource for future case studies that seek to build off and test my refined typological theory.

**Independent Variable #1: Strategic Shock**

In my initial typology, I defined strategic shock according to two criteria: (1) a high-profile foreign policy “surprise” and (2) an event containing discrepant information about the current grand strategic course the administration is on. In other words, to be shocking an event must catch the administration off-guard, cannot be ignored, and must cast doubt upon the direction the president is headed with his overall foreign policy approach, challenging the assumptions of his grand strategy. I argued shocks are not determinative; they merely create the possibility for adjustment, jumpstarting the process of reviewing the existing grand strategy and creating an opportunity for the administration to formulate and implement new approaches. In other words, shocks are a necessary but insufficient condition for adjustment. This concept of shock suggested the first exploratory hypothesis:

**H1:** Strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment.

The three case studies support this hypothesis. Truman confronted two major strategic shocks: the 1949 Soviet nuclear test and the 1950 North Korean invasion of South Korea. The former caught the administration and the American people off guard, creating high perceptions of vulnerability similar to Pearl Harbor. It also cast doubt on the administration’s ability to meet the Soviet threat and keep the American people safe. Forced with the necessity of “doing something”, Truman approved the development of the “super” and commissioned the group led
by Nitze to review existing grand strategy, a process that led to NSC 68. Yet Truman tabled the implementation of NSC 68, concerned over the massive costs it would entail and his ability to sell the program to Congress. The Korean invasion then seemed to confirm the assumption that the Soviets might risk general war and cast doubt on Kennan’s concept of geographic prioritization. All areas of the world were now vital in the struggle against the Soviets. If the atomic test of 1949 had convinced the Truman Administration of increasing Soviet capability, the invasion of South Korea convinced them of more menacing Soviet intentions. As Truman’s public addresses in the wake of the crisis made clear, to allow this act of aggression to stand would be another “Munich,” a surrender inviting further aggression. An attack on freedom in the Far East was now tantamount to an attack on freedom at home.

The scale of these strategic shocks seems relatively proportional to the scale of the subsequent adjustments: the change from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 was the most dramatic of the Cold War, the largest post-WWII buildup of American power. Both shocks suggested Truman was not doing enough to confront the Soviet threat. In this sense, both the Soviet nuclear test and the Korean invasion allowed Truman to go faster and farther in the direction he was already heading, mustering more resources to confront the Soviet threat. The Korean War seemed to validate NSC 68’s conclusions, but it did not foist NSC 68 upon Truman—Truman deliberately used the event to abandon his budget ceiling and sell NSC 68 to Congress and to the American people. In other words, Truman retained agency and the shocks gave Truman more options and political slack, allowing him to play on the perceptions of Western weakness in order to advance his agenda.

The death of Stalin in 1953, on the other hand, did not meet the criteria for strategic shock. The event was surprising and created significant confusion within the administration (and
frustration within Eisenhower over the fact that the intelligence community lacked insight into how the death would affect Soviet foreign policy), but it did not obviously disconfirm the course Eisenhower had begun to pursue. Perhaps this is because it occurred early in the administration, at a time when Eisenhower was politically committed to the concept of rollback, but had not yet fully implemented his own grand strategy. Eisenhower was still in the honeymoon phase of his administration, with the freedom to maneuver as he saw fit. The death of Stalin was also fundamentally different from the shock of the Soviet nuclear test or the Korean invasion in that it was a potentially positive development, a benign shock as opposed to a threatening shock. Yet Eisenhower and most of his advisers felt that Stalin’s successors—notwithstanding the Soviet “peace offensive”—would not dramatically change their behavior. Additionally, Chapter IV demonstrated that Eisenhower’s “Chance for Peace” speech was both a genuine expression of his preexisting desire to reduce U.S.-Soviet tensions and an act of psychological warfare intended to undermine Soviet credibility on the world stage.

Thus, it seems Eisenhower was able to adjust in the absence of a true shock. This presents a problem for my typology, which treats shock as a necessary but insufficient condition for strategic adjustment. Stalin’s death did not “change the game,” yet Eisenhower still changed U.S. grand strategy, deviating both from his commitment to rollback and his inheritance of NSC 68. Indeed, Eisenhower used the event to advance his agenda. Starting with his discussion in the White House Solarium with Dulles, Eisenhower exploited the event as if it were a shock, using it to jumpstart the process of reviewing grand strategy and adjusting it in the direction he wanted to go. By commissioning Project Solarium after Stalin’s death, Eisenhower created a process through which he could review and reject rollback, generating consensus around a grand strategy closer to Kennan’s original concept of containment. As with Truman and the Korean War, the
surprise of Stalin’s death gave Eisenhower options, and allowed him to go faster and farther in a direction that he already wanted to go, away from Truman’s approach and towards getting the most defense at least cost. This shows that foreign policy “surprises” can set in motion the same processes that strategic shocks do: they open up possibilities for presidents, create pressure among the public and within the administration, and force a general reflection on the current course. Even if a surprise does not truly cast doubt on the current course, it still forces the president to “do something” or appear to be taking the surprise seriously. Alternatively, Eisenhower could have been responding to the general war-weariness and budgetary weariness created by the Korean War, such that his adjustment did not require shock because he was going in the direction the public wanted.

Chapter V disagreed with Gaddis’ characterization of Sputnik as a dramatic shock and demonstrated that Sputnik shocked the nation, but it did not shock the Eisenhower Administration. Sputnik was surprising in terms of its precise timing, but it did not completely catch the administration off guard. More importantly, Eisenhower did not consider it to contradict the assumptions upon which the New Look was built. He felt Sputnik held enormous psychological power, but few military applications. Sputnik did not indicate a change in Soviet intentions or signal they would now risk general war. It was merely embarrassing for the United States to have been beaten to the punch. Eisenhower tried to calm the nation but also harness the Sputnik-induced public hysteria to productive ends. Nevertheless, while Eisenhower did not accept Sputnik as disconfirming his grand strategic course, the surprise of Sputnik still set in motion the same processes that a more shocking event would have. Sputnik created public

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859 All of the case studies provide support for the idea of individual bias adding to inertia: presidents, like most people, are stubborn, favoring their preexisting views and commitments even when confronted with shock. See Yarhi-Milo, 4; Richard E. Nisbett and Lee Ross, Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), 167-88; and Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, Social Cognition (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1984), 270-273.
anxiety, it could not be ignored, it forced debate within the administration, and it ultimately prodded Eisenhower to make important changes. In other words, while history may favor Eisenhower’s more sober view of Sputnik, at the time the event shocked the public, pressuring Eisenhower to make adjustments.

This raises the difficulty in disentangling shock from domestic political slack: even if a president does not view a strategic shock as such, if the public (and by extension Congress) does, then the perception of shock can create its own reality. In other words, if the perception of shock creates enough political pressure to “do something,” even a sober, experienced president may be forced to respond. It depends on how the president chooses to use shock or the public perception of shock—my case studies support the idea that the president retains agency and can chooses how to respond to shock in a particular way. A strategic shock creates pressure to “do something,” but it is often unclear what that something is; there is rarely an obvious and easy solution to a complex geopolitical problem. The shock also creates an opportunity, one that the president can exploit to his advantage.

The cases also suggest that the way in which the president adjusts in response to shock can create its own set of domestic political pressures. Shocks that lead to costly new investments, in war or technology, can eventually create war-weariness and budgetary exhaustion, both of which had set by the end of the Truman Administration. This creates the feast-or-famine problems that Eisenhower understood well and tried to counterbalance, first by fighting against Congressional pressures to cut too deeply and later against pressures to spend too profligately.860

**Independent Variable #2: Domestic Political Slack**

My second candidate causal variable was derived from the common-sense assumption that domestic political pressures influence a president’s foreign policy choices. As Chapter I

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860 I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
argued, even the most powerful and experienced president is constrained in terms of the degree of change he can implement. Preexisting foreign policy initiatives and national security agencies that implement foreign policy also develop powerful domestic political constituencies that contribute to the general inertia of an administration’s grand strategy. Thus, my second hypothesis:

**H2:** *In order to implement a strategic adjustment, the president must perceive he has the domestic political slack to convince the public and overcome Congressional opposition. A president will not commit political suicide for the sake of strategic adjustment.*

In other words, the president will rarely if ever say “the public be damned” and adjust without regard for domestic political blowback. A president will take steps to account for domestic political pressures, change these pressures, or to adjust within the acceptable limits of these pressures. To paraphrase Clinton Rossiter, the president is free to roam, but he must still generally stay on the reservation.

The preceding case studies provide mixed support this hypothesis and cast doubt on how much value it adds to the typology. For example, Truman faced competing domestic political pressures as he considered NSC 68—some felt he was doing too little and some felt he was doing too much. The Republican Party was divided within itself between nationalists such as Taft and emerging internationalists that Eisenhower would eventually bolster and lead. Truman himself remained committed to a budgetary ceiling and unconvinced of his own ability to push a more ambitious agenda and must more resources to compete with the Soviets.

Perhaps most importantly, the case studies revealed the interaction effects of shock and slack—the Soviet nuclear test and (especially) the Korean invasion changed the domestic political landscape, eliminating many of the resource constraints Truman initially faced. In these cases, shock did the work, not slack, and yet Truman still had to aggressively sell his adjustment
and work on its implementation for the rest of his administration. To say he had domestic political slack, or perceived he had slack after the Korean invasion in a way he did not after the Soviet nuclear test, is to say that the shock created domestic political slack. This allowed Truman to sell NSC 68’s aggressive buildup of American power and abandon his budget ceiling because the world now looked more dangerous. Presidents are constantly engaged in such a process of assessing the likelihood of advancing their agenda, which suggests slack is in a constant state of flux depending on: (1) the issue; (2) the makeup of Congress; (3) the president’s own risk-tolerance and willingness to invest his political capital into making a change; and (4) the president’s issue-specific reputation and general reputation for competence and judgment (and whether these have been undermined or enhanced by the shock)\(^{861}\), among other things.

Unlike Truman, Eisenhower enjoyed consistently high approval ratings throughout his presidency. Moreover, the strongest and most consistent domestic political pressures he felt were twofold. First, his foreign policy advisers—particularly his military advisers—consistently pressed him for more resources to be devoted to their home agencies and pet projects, regardless of what that would mean for balancing the budget. Second, he faced pressure from within the Taft wing of the Republican Party, even after Taft’s death, to do less, to retrench and reduce U.S. international commitments, particularly U.S. aid programs. But even these pressures were not a direct headwind against Eisenhower’s grand strategy. As Dueck argues:

> the two wings of the GOP had more in common by this time than is usually recognized. Both wings were staunchly anti-Communist, hawkish, and economically conservative, committed to the cold war and to American military power; neither faction was truly isolationist, much less liberal in today’s sense of the term. Moreover, many Republicans were inclined to support a new and popular Republican president more than they would have a Democrat, regardless of substantive policy concerns.\(^{862}\)

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\(^{861}\) I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this fourth point.

\(^{862}\) Dueck, *Hard Line*, 92
Foreign policy also created strange bedfellows in the Eisenhower Administration. Eisenhower did not face unified opposition from Democrats during his first term and often found willing allies in the Democratic Party. The Democrats also faced their own internal divide, with northern Democrats tending to support Eisenhower’s internationalist efforts and Southern Democrats moving in the direction of the nationalist wing of the GOP. Even when, as we saw in Chapter IV, Eisenhower’s approval ratings reached an all time low, the Republican Party suffered a historic midterm defeat in 1958, and Democrats began to smell blood in the water on foreign policy issues after Sputnik, Eisenhower was able to withstand the pressure and retain the public’s trust. In other words, throughout his administration, Eisenhower faced conflicting pressures from Congress. The only consistent pressure from the Democrats was a desire to win more seats and more power. Even when forced to compromise on key issues with Congress, he found creative ways to stay on course and to create slack through concerted public relations efforts.

**Independent Variable #3: Conceptual Complexity**

My third candidate causal variable in the initial typological theory, conceptual complexity, aimed to measure how receptive a president is to negative feedback from the surrounding environment suggesting his or her grand strategy is not working. This is not a measure of intelligence, rather a proxy for a president’s willingness to change course. From this I derived my third hypothesis:

**H3:** *Presidents with higher levels of conceptual complexity are more likely to respond to strategic shocks by formulating options for strategic adjustment.*

My three case studies provide mixed support, at best, for this third hypothesis. My case studies allowed for a comparison between a low complexity leader, Truman, and a high complexity leader, Eisenhower. At first glance, Truman’s initial resistance to NSC 68 and subsequent rapid decision to “let them have it” after the Korean invasion would seem to support
the hypothesis. Here we see a low complexity leader viewing the world in black and white terms. Yet Truman nonetheless commissioned the formulation of a major adjustment after the Soviet nuclear test and he did not reject its conclusions out of hand. Indeed, he recognized the need for an adjustment, commissioned the development of the “super,” and was inclined to support NSC 68’s broader recommendations, but he balked at implementing the new approach because he did not think he could sell it in Congress. If anything this showed sensitivity to political context rather than close-mindedness on Truman’s part.

Complexity predicts Eisenhower should be more willing to formulate adjustment options in response to strategic shocks. Eisenhower certainly structured his foreign policy decision-making process in a way we would expect from a conceptually complex president, in that it welcomed a wide range of information, aimed to foster debate, and encouraged testing alternative courses of action against each other. This was particularly evident in Project Solarium, which was designed to test the current grand strategic course and allow three different teams advocated for three distinct course changes to compete against each other on equal footing. Solarium seems like the ultimate manifestation of a complex president making foreign policy decisions. Yet historians still question the extent to which Project Solarium was a good faith effort by Eisenhower or rather an attempt to discard rollback and generate bureaucratic consensus around the course that he had already chosen prior to the exercise.

At first glance, Eisenhower’s response to Sputnik does not support the third hypothesis—he remained committed to the fundamentals of the New Look even after Sputnik suggested the need to adjust. But as Chapter IV showed, Eisenhower and many of his advisers did not view Sputnik as a strategic shock; they did not get carried away by the public hysteria surrounding the event. Moreover, Eisenhower did make adjustments, and responded to Sputnik by compromising...
with Democrats in Congress. Perhaps a conceptually simpler president would have would not have been able to distinguish between the primarily psychological threat posed by the Soviet space achievements and the military threat posed by Soviet intentions and missile capabilities. A “black and white” president would have seen Sputnik simply as a rise in the overall threat and therefore have made a major adjustment in response. This suggests complexity does not predict flexibility and simplicity intransigence. Rather a simpler president faced with a true strategic shock is likely to react more aggressively to it—a simpler view of the world implies a simpler view of possible responses. Rather than ignoring threats, the simpler president may be compelled to confront threats aggressively in order to restore the status quo and preserve the integrity of his initial conceptual framework. A more complex president would not see a rise in threat as a challenge to his understanding of the world, because that understanding is more nuanced. In this way, complexity is more likely to lead to forebearance from over-reaction, while cognitive simplicity is more prone to over-reaction. Or perhaps more accurately, complexity leads to nuanced reactions—policies that encompass offsetting and seemingly inconsistent tendencies—while simplicity leads to over-simplified policies.

Independent Variable #4: Foreign Policy Experience

My fourth variable, foreign policy experience, attempted to account for a president’s ability to implement an adjustment and the influence of his foreign policy decision making process. Experience, so the conventional wisdom suggests, not only carries political and electoral benefits, it also helps presidents process information, understand and diagnose foreign policy problems, and drive their subordinates to implement changes. Experience, as Preston’s work predicts, also makes presidents predisposed to be personally involved in the decision-making process. Presidents with high levels of experience are thus likely to structure their advisory

863 I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
systems in such a way that they are placed at the center. Inexperienced presidents will tend to instead outsource the process of formulation and implementation to their more experienced subordinates. In light of this, my fourth exploratory hypothesis held:

**H4:** *Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to successfully implement a strategic adjustment.*

The cases provide modest support for this hypothesis. My examination of Truman’s adjustment from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 was a tough test for my fourth hypothesis: an inexperienced president successfully implementing a major adjustment. Nevertheless, Truman’s behavior was consistent with Preston’s predictions—after the Soviet nuclear test he largely outsourced the process of formulating an adjustment to Nitze’s group and as a result NSC 68 took on a life of its own; Truman lost control of the process. The fact that NSC 68 did not survive into the Eisenhower Administration, and has since been criticized as unsustainable and non-strategic, suggests Truman went overboard. He may have felt he had the requisite experience implement the necessary adjustment, but his major strategic adjustment did not stand the test of time.

The case study also revealed a potential problem with the Preston-Dyson experience calculator. According to this system, Truman receives an extremely low score (1 point), despite his service in the Missouri National Guard from 1905 to 1911 and experience in combat as a Captain in WWI (Truman reached the rank of Colonel after rejoining the reserves after the War), experiences he would reference as president. The system also does not account for the experience Truman gained on the job, which he felt was important.\(^\text{864}\) Yet there are four

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\(^{864}\) Additionally, Truman was chosen as Vice President largely because he had chaired the Special Committee on National Defense, a domestic basing review with obvious foreign policy implications. Truman also had the ultimate crash course in foreign policy upon assuming the presidency, and had higher foreign policy experience when considering a course change in 1950 than when deciding upon his initial course in 1947. By the time he changed course he had experienced a series of foreign policy tests and crises (i.e. generating support for the Truman Doctrine.
problems with modifying the scoring system. First, based on the findings of the preceding case studies, if we try to account for active duty military service (even service at a low level such as Truman), it does not change the classification of any president’s from low to high experience. Even generously giving Truman, Ford, and Carter (possibly even Bush 43) 5 points for their military service—weighting it the same as a Ph.D. in a foreign policy-related field—does not bring them close to or above the average of 11 points in the leader set. Second, giving presidents an additional 5 points to account for the experience they gain on the job (in the Preston and Dyson scoring system a president earns 5 points for each job held for a minimum of 1 year and 2 points for each job held less than 1 year, but this currently does not include the job of being president itself), would not change the overall classifications at the time of adjustment. In both cases the average (i.e. dividing line would between experienced and inexperienced) in the data set would increase from 11. It would increase to 12 if we award 5 more points to Truman, Ford, Carter, Bush 41, and Bush 43 for their military service. If we factored in on-the-job experience (perhaps by awarding presidents 5 points for their first year and 1 point for every subsequent year), the average would have to be taken at the time of shock relative to the universe of presidents (i.e. totaling up experience points at the exact same point in their administrations) and this modification would be meaningless. Truman, Ford, and Carter would also still be stuck at 10 points. Third, presidents earn the label of experienced or inexperienced on foreign policy early on when they campaign for the office. This perception, once formed, is hard to shake. And as we have seen in these case studies, it is the perception of experience among the public and his advisers that allows the president to resist or implement change as he sees fit. Fourth, we must

and the Marshall Plan, staring down the Soviets in the Berlin airlift). By 1950 Truman had gained confidence in his own mastery of international affairs, his key foreign policy advisers, and his administration’s general foreign policy approach. Reflecting on his presidency, Truman thought himself a “shining example” of the fact that one does not need prior foreign policy experience to perform well as president on national security issues because one is able to learn on the job. Truman, interview by David Noyes and William Hillman, Independence, MO, September 8, 1959.
contend with Kissinger, who argues “the convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office.”

Kissinger is suggesting experience is resource consumed rather than gained over the course of the presidency. My research has shown this to be a debatable proposition worthy of further testing through comparative case studies, which I identify in the following chapter. If nothing else, and in contrast to Kissinger, we would expect a president to gain a better understanding of the policy process and what he can possibly achieve during his presidency. Yet there is still no convincing reason to modify the Preston and Dyson scoring sheet.

Chapter III examined Eisenhower’s “golden halo” of military experience and how it affected his process of strategic adjustment. Eisenhower’s unusually high degree of foreign policy experience aided him in abandoning the promises of “rollback” and adjusting from NSC 68 to the New Look. In particular, this case study showed Eisenhower to be uniquely suited to the type of adjustment he was pursuing, cutting defense spending despite a persistently high geopolitical threat. A less experienced president—particularly one without military experience—would likely have encountered significant difficulty in defying the Pentagon brass. A president seeking to reduce defense spending opens himself up to charges of weakness and surrender, particularly when global tensions are high. Eisenhower was able to defuse this with his own unimpeachable war record—no one could accuse him of being weak on national security,

865 Quoted in Saunders, 13. Saunders finds support for Kissinger’s argument in her work, showing that leaders use existing beliefs and experience as a prism through which to process feedback from the surrounding environment.
866 I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
867 High scoring presidents include: Eisenhower (45 points), Kennedy (15 points), Nixon (16 points), and Bush 41 (36 points). Low scoring presidents include: Truman (1 point), Johnson (6 points), Ford (1 point), Carter (1 point), Reagan (1 point), Clinton (1 point), Bush 43 (0 points), Obama (3 points). Dyson and Preston do not score Bush 43 or Obama, but using their system I give Bush 43 no points despite his National Guard service, which was controversial (also Truman gets no points for 37 years of reserve duty). I give Obama 3 points, 1 point for his three years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (i.e. a job that “while not primarily focused upon foreign affairs, involved the individual substantively in the formulation, implementation or conduct of foreign policy during specific episodes”= 1 point/experience) and two years living in Jakarta from 1967-1969 (i.e. “significant foreign travel experience”= 1 point/year).
everyone assumed he knew more than most of the generals working for him, and the country trusted him to steer the ship of state in the right direction. The archival record also demonstrates how Eisenhower was willing to wield his military experience to push back against the arguments for greater military spending in order to stay steady on the course he had mapped out with the New Look. Eisenhower’s pre-presidential pledge to “go to Korea” was itself an extremely aggressive exploitation of his military record for political as well as geopolitical purposes. This was a major finding from both Eisenhower cases: experience can be wielded by the president as a weapon to diffuse pressure from the public and from advisers.868

Chapter IV showed how Eisenhower’s experience was put to the test in the Sputnik crisis. The very premise of his presidency—the war hero who could keep the country safe—was called into question and his political opponents sensed he was finally vulnerable on foreign policy. Yet Eisenhower repeatedly invoked his military credentials to support his arguments, neutralize his opponents, and avoid a major change in course. He felt his experience was crucial during such a time of geopolitical tension and feared what a less experienced president would do when faced with a similar crisis. (This is an interesting contrast with Truman, who claimed a president could learn on the job). Overall, this final case showed how the same foreign policy experience that allowed Eisenhower to implement a strategic adjustment allowed him to stay the course when confronted by international and domestic challenges. Additionally, this case showed that Eisenhower was still struggling to implement the New Look in the twilight of his presidency,

868 Eisenhower’s military experience gave him self confidence, extraordinary self-confidence in Gaddis’ view, for he knew far more about the military than most of his military advisers, so much that they could not cajole him into accepted needless new programs. Yet it is important to note that these findings run contrary to Gaddis’ argument that Eisenhower, despite his instinctive ability to grasp the big picture and the right strategic approach, exhibited “a curious unwillingness to grasp the reign of power at all levels” and lacked “the determination to monitor implementation closely to ensure correspondence with original intent.” Gaddis, Strategies, 161. The way in which Eisenhower structured his NSC, with an Operations Coordination Board to monitor the implementation of policy, demonstrates an unusual determination to monitor implementation closely. The fact that Eisenhower himself chaired an historic number of NSC meetings also demonstrates a deep engagement with foreign policy details.
which throws the sheer challenge of fully realizing any strategic adjustment into sharp relief. Yet Eisenhower got most of what he wanted and, in reflecting upon the presidency, he felt he had enormous advantages over Congress owing to (1) the nature of the office and (2) his unique level of foreign policy experience.

This final case also revealed two potential corollaries to my fourth hypothesis. First, presidents with greater foreign policy experience are more likely to correctly assess the strategic situation at the beginning of their presidency, set the right course, and therefore avoid strategic shock or severe, negative shock. The entire point of foreign policy experience is that it allows you to recognize patterns, establish methods or routines for processing information and dealing with problems, and make prudent decisions. Obviously foreign policy experience does not guarantee foreign policy success—and all presidents confront foreign policy surprises and crises—but it increases the likelihood that one will be able to avoid failure. Second, foreign policy experience, or the perception of foreign policy acumen, is particularly valuable when confronting a rise in the threat level, or the perception of vulnerability. Presidents such as Eisenhower, with high foreign policy experience, are better able to confront and diffuse charges of “weakness” on the world stage and thereby resist a dramatic change. This is politically valuable, increasing the likelihood that a president will be reelected and thereby have more time to fully implement an adjustment or prevent his successor from changing course away from his preferred grand strategy. It is also strategically valuable, in that it does not allow one’s insecurity or need to prove one’s “strength” to overwhelm the decision-making process.

In sum, my case studies provide modest support for my fourth hypothesis, but expose the need for a more thorough specification of how foreign policy experience affects strategic adjustment. The cases also show that experience is difficult to disentangle from complexity. On
the one hand, a more complex president is likely to seek more information about problems, which may lead him to acquire more experience than a less complex individual. On the other, the acquisition of foreign policy experience may result in the establishment of pattern recognition and decision-making heuristics that allow presidents to simplify a complex reality based on a few assumptions born of experience. The more experience one gains, the more one may realize the value of deliberately adopting a conceptual framework that ignores certain information. Experience could also convince an individual that they were too black and white in their thinking about the world. Though complexity is supposed to remain constant, people can evolve in the level of nuance with which they view the world.869

Furthermore, if foreign policy experience predicts that a president will situate himself at the center of the decision-making process and assume greater control over formulation and implementation, then it stands to reason he will be exposed to a wider range of foreign policy information. Even if he is conceptually simple, he will not be able to ignore this information. This is particularly true at the level of grand strategy where, in contrast to the urgency of crisis scenarios, the president is engaged in a months-long process of deliberation and can overcome cognitive closure.870

Thus, while short-term crises may exaggerate a president’s simplicity or

869 Perhaps this is why, in Preston’s typology, there is only one example of a “sentinel”—a president with low complexity and high foreign policy experience—Nixon. Sentinels are supposedly vigilant; they “tend to avoid broad searches for policy information beyond what is deemed relevant given their own past experience, existing principles or views. This is especially true if that information is likely to be critical of these elements or challenge them.” Yet their expertise leads them to trust their own instincts, even when those instincts contradict the advice of their closest advisers. Sentinels understand potential outside constraints on policy and capable of tailoring policy to the existing environment. Sentinels are quick to act, decisive, and “reluctant to reconsider their views once an action had been taken.” Sentinels not only seek the geopolitical environment in simple, black-and-white terms, but also insist on dominating a narrow, isolated decision making environment. Preston, 24.

870 Dyson and ‘T Hart defined crises as “a serious threat to the basic structures or fundamental values and norms underpinning the status quo, creating highly uncertain circumstances that call for urgent responses.” Dyson and ‘T Hart, 397. “Governments and bureaucracies can deal with tough problems if they have time to work them through. They commission studies, conduct negotiations, and use trial and error to learn what policies work to tame the problem. When problems escalate very quickly and no time is available, the political system is forced into improvisational mode.” Stephen Benedict Dyson and Paul ‘T Hart, “Crisis Management,” in The Oxford Handbook
complexity, when it comes to debating whether to change course, the effect of this variable is likely to dissipate.\textsuperscript{871}

**A New Typological Theory of Strategic Adjustment**

The case studies demonstrated that my initial typological theory of strategic adjustment, displayed below, was too unwieldy. In particular, the domestic political slack and conceptual complexity did not add much to the theory when tested against the empirical record. The benefits of including these two variables in the theory are outweighed by the costs in simplicity.

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\textbf{Figure 1: An Initial Model of Strategic Adjustment}

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\textsuperscript{871} Grand strategic decision-making also allows more time for the influence of advisers to affect a president. If these advisers are more complex, they inject more complexity into the decision-making process. This suggests another area where experience and complexity may overlap: how a president interacts with his subordinates and advisers. Complexity predicts the extent to which a president will be closed or open to feedback from the surrounding environment, most often filtered through his advisers. Thus, a more complex president is seemingly more likely to listen to the views of his advisers, even when they contradict his own. Less complex presidents, on the other hand, are more likely to close themselves off from information. Yet Eisenhower’s military experience imparted upon him the need for establishing a decision-making process that was inclusive of a wide range of information—and forced people to voice their divergent opinions—not only to improve the quality of information and decision, but also to generate consensus and allow his subordinates to feel they had been heard. In other words, Eisenhower’s experience led him to structure his decision-making process in a similar way that his conceptual complexity would have.
Table 2: An Initial Typology of Strategic Adjustment

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<th>Shock</th>
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<th>President Experienced</th>
<th>Expected Outcome</th>
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Support for Hypotheses from Case Studies

H1: Strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment. (Strong Support)

H2: In order to implement a strategic adjustment, the president must perceive he has the domestic political slack to convince the public and overcome Congressional opposition. A president will not commit political suicide for the sake of strategic adjustment. (Mixed Support)

H3: Presidents with higher levels of conceptual complexity are more likely to respond to strategic shocks by formulating options for strategic adjustment. (Mixed Support)

H4: Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to successfully implement a strategic adjustment. (Support)

The Limits of Domestic Political Slack

For domestic political slack, there are at least three reasons for taking it out of the theory.

First, strategic shock is likely to create an opportunity for the president to overcome domestic
political opposition (i.e. shock creates slack), thereby capturing much of its influence on strategic adjustment. Second, domestic political pressures on foreign policy choices cannot be modeled in a simple and consistent way—foreign policy creates strange bedfellows and opportunities for collaboration across party lines.\textsuperscript{872} The overriding domestic political pressures on a president change depending on the stage of the presidency, the makeup of the party coalition at the time of a prospective adjustment, and the president’s personality and priorities.\textsuperscript{873} Third and most importantly, though public opinion and the politics of foreign policy are protean, the most reliable assumption is that the president has the upper hand and retains broad powers in matters of foreign policy. Both Truman and Eisenhower felt this was the case. The commander-in-chief is in a dominant position to persuade and convince Congress to support his overall grand strategic approach and any subsequent adjustments. The president may not get everything he wants, but if he is skilled, he can adjust and maneuver as he sees fit.

\textit{The Limits of Conceptual Complexity}

For conceptual complexity, I found that all presidents are resistant to adjustment, and shocks create pressures that even conceptually simple presidents cannot ignore.\textsuperscript{874} It is hard to

\textsuperscript{872} And since, as Dueck notes, “the practice of grand strategy involves building and maintaining policy tools of varying cost and expense to society at large,” while there is inevitably a domestic political component to it, the domestic political component is likely to vary depending on the particular tools and ideas rather than the strategy as a whole. Colin Dueck, \textit{The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23. “If ideas drive American responses to foreign affairs, how presidents and their party supporters see the world may tell us more about the swings in American foreign policy than simple party identification. Indeed, it suggests that partisanship has an intellectual as well as reactive dimension.” Nau, 64.

\textsuperscript{873} “Presidents are commanders-in-chief and heads of state, but they are also party leaders and politicians—often savvy ones—who head particular domestic coalitions with specific interests and preferences across a wide range of policy issues. As such, they typically seek not only to act upon their own beliefs regarding international affairs, but to also achieve domestic policy goals, reward party loyalists, win re-election, and secure a lasting historical legacy. They party coalitions that presidents lead each differ in terms of their readiness to invest national resources and attention into various tools of grand strategy. As leaders and managers of distinct partisan coalitions, presidents therefore differ widely in terms of the political capital they are willing to expend in pursuit of costly international strategies.” Dueck, \textit{The Obama Doctrine}, 23.

\textsuperscript{874} Leaders, even when faced with repeated inconsistencies from the surrounding environment, will change their least-central beliefs first. “Important beliefs are challenged only when there is no other way to account for contradictory data that people consider diagnostic. Greater change will occur when information arrives in large batches, rather than bit by bit. President George H. W. Bush did not change his estimate of the threat posed by the
imagine a conceptually simple president precluding a discussion of options after a shock has occurred. In times of foreign policy crisis, rare is the president who refuses to take his daily brief or will not convene his NSC. Relatedly, complexity can be overridden by strategic shock—a simpler president may need a greater shock to change course, but the whole point of shock is that it cannot be ignored, it is visible enough to create pressure to respond within the administration and from the public. Since the unit of analysis is the presidency, not just the president, the complexity of key foreign policy advisers are also likely to affect how the administration responds to shock. Conversely, even a complex president is predisposed to maintain the outward image of strength and decisiveness when confronted by foreign policy challenges, otherwise he risks losing respect and support within his administration and among the public. After all this is the very confidence, or the illusion of confidence and principled beliefs, that propelled them to the presidency in the first place.875

Additionally, and as discussed above, the interaction of complexity and experience is difficult to disentangle, and the latter variable provides more explanatory power. Consider the fact that psychologists group individual personality traits into five major factors, often referred to as the “Big Five.” One of these is “openness to experience,” which measures the extent to which an individual is curious and learns from experiences or is rigid and close-minded. This suggests a strong interrelation between experience and complexity. Leaders may gain experience by

Soviet Union even though the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, made a series of unilateral gestures to the United States. Only when information about large changes arrived in a rush did he finally change his threat perception. Even the strongest beliefs cannot withstand the challenge of strongly incongruent information over time.” Janice Gross Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” in The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, 371, 364-394.

875 “One must wonder, nevertheless, whether the same attributes that enable someone to achieve the presidency of the United States, or a position almost as high up the political food chain, militate against his or her receptiveness to information and advice that is discordant with his or her preexisting beliefs, images, and even values. Electoral success normally requires holding strong beliefs or convincing the electorate that beliefs held are strong—and sound. How likely is it, one must therefore ask, for those who are politically successful to learn from intelligence once in office that these beliefs are unfounded? I'll leave this examination to those with the required expertise. Besides, I'm afraid of the answer.” Immerman, “Intelligence and Strategy,” 23.
accident, but likely they are seeking experience because they are curious and hungry for more information and to improve their understanding of the world. Using both experience and complexity puts us dangerously close to circular reasoning. There is also reason to believe that once presidents have publicly committed to a certain course or a particular interpretation of events, they become more cognitively closed to new information that would contradict this course, regardless of how complex they are to begin with. In other words the formulation of an initial grand strategy affects their level of openness to subsequently changing course.

Prospect Theory and Different Types of Shock

We are left with two variables—strategic shock and foreign policy experience—and a simpler typological theory to explain strategic adjustment. Starting with strategic shock, even if presidents do not perceive a surprise to be truly shocking, the public and his advisers often do. Thus, surprises can set the same processes in motion as shock, creating pressure for the president to “do something.” It is also clear that not all shocks are created equal. Whereas the Soviet nuclear test and the invasion of Korean presented significant threats to U.S. national security—thereby forcing Truman into a defensive position—the death of Stalin opened up a potential opportunity for Eisenhower to reduce U.S.-Soviet hostilities. The Sputnik launch years later

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876 For example, a study of Abraham Lincoln shows him as “high on openness to experience and low on emotional stability. These scores were based on biographers’ judgments, which were in turn based on their knowledge of the facts of Lincoln’s life. In other words, the trait ‘scores’ are really summary descriptions of Lincoln’s consistent public behavior. If we then use these scores to explain specific Lincoln behaviors—for example, that some neurotic action, such as calling of his initial engagement with Mary Todd, was ‘caused’ by Lincoln’s low emotional stability—we are in danger of circular reasoning.” David G. Winter, “Personality Profiles of Political Elites,” in The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, 440, 423-458440. Winter here refers to Steven J. Rubenzer and Thomas R. Faschingbauer, Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House: Psychologists Asses the Presidents (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 2004).

877 See Dyson and ’T Hart, 401.

878 This raises the related question of whether complexity is indeed a stable trait of individual personality as Hermann suggests or something that varies form situation to situation and can be affected by things such as stress and fear. In general, one cannot separate emotion and cognition, and a basic interest in events and information is itself an emotion. See Dyson and ’T Hart, 409, 414. Perhaps complexity is outweighed by the general tendency of political leaders to simplify a complex reality, stripping out context when assessing threat, such as when the supposedly complex George H. W. Bush said in 1990 that Saddam Hussein was “another Hitler.” Janice Gross Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 371, 364-394.
threatened American security as well as Eisenhower’s foreign policy credibility. In all of these cases, psychology and the influence of inertia predicts presidents would strongly favor and be bound to the status quo.\textsuperscript{879} But while the status quo dominates, we would expect presidents to react differently to these different types of shock.

Prospect theory offers a useful way forward for classifying different types of shock. Prospect theory is particularly useful for a theory of strategic adjustment because it is “reference dependent”—it holds that individuals make choices relative to a reference point, and “give more weight to losses from that reference point than to comparable gains (‘loss aversion’), and make risk-averse choices when possible outcomes are positive and risk-acceptant choices where possible outcomes are negative (the ‘domain of losses’).”\textsuperscript{880} We would thus expect presidents to take more risk when confronted with a shock that put them in the domain of losses, to gamble to avoid loss, than a shock that revealed gains or opportunities. Though the bias will always favor the status quo, we would expect a greater deviation from the status quo when the shock is threatening as opposed to benign, as “[s]tate leaders take more risks to maintain their international positions, territory, and reputations against potential losses than they do to enhance their positions.”\textsuperscript{881} This is connected to feelings of fear. Fear draws its power from the fact that “the pain of loss is commensurately greater than the pleasure of equivalent gain.”\textsuperscript{882}

\textsuperscript{879} Presidents, like all individuals, are not rational utility maximizers and they will not comply with Baye’s rules because they weight prior beliefs more heavily than new information. “In most cases, a decision maker’s learning process diverges from that described in a rational Bayesian formula. The principle of belief perseverance or cognitive consistency led most decision makers in the three cases to interpret their adversary’s behavior initially as consistent with their preexisting beliefs. Accordingly, they revised their beliefs slowly over time in response to repeated moves that were inconsistent with these beliefs and especially salient in nature; for some decision makers (Carter for instance), this updating process was particularly drastic. Nonetheless, some decision makers failed to revise their beliefs even in the face of contradictory evidence.” Yarhi-Milo, 249, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{880} Jack S. Levy, “Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” in The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, 314.

In light of this, we can classify shocks initially in two ways: (1) *positive* shocks that reveal potential gains/opportunities, or (2) *negative* shocks that reveal potential losses/threats. We would expect presidents to make a greater adjustment in response to negative shocks than they would in response to positive shocks. In other words, presidents will take greater risks to defend U.S. national interests from threat than to advance U.S. national interests in response to opportunities.\(^883\) Relatedly, and as seen in the Truman case study, negative shocks, by exposing U.S. vulnerability, loosen resource constraints on grand strategy, giving the president more freedom to navigate away from the status quo. Figure 9 below displays this process with corresponding hypotheses.

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"People generally consider losses more painful than gains pleasurable; hence they will tend to accept poor gambles in order to avoid certain losses, but they will gain and shun good gambles for large gains in favor of smaller sure gains. People tend, in other words to be loss-averse, risk-acceptant when facing prospects of loss, and risk-averse when facing prospects of gain." Welch, *Painful Choices*, 42. "Leaders tend to be risk averse in the domain of gain and risk acceptant in the domain of loss, when they perceive a heightened threat, or when they face the likelihood of loss of something that matters to them. Sadat never normalized for the loss of the Sinai in 1967 and therefore chose as his reference point not the status quo but Egyptian possession of the Sinai. He was consequently in the domain of loss and prepared to be extraordinarily risk-acceptant in his choices. He designed his strategy around Israel’s deterrence—its superiority in the air and on the ground—and his generals planned a limited strike across the Suez Canal under the protection of a missile shield." Janice Gross Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," 377.

\(^882\) "It is this kind of dynamic, for example, that has led decision-makers who feel threatened to sue their weapons early—sometimes to start a war—rather than risk the loss of these weapons later on…This logic of fear of loss underlay the dangerous early decade of the Cold War, which then took decades of effort and billions of dollars of investment in hardening missile sites to wind down.” Janice Gross Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 384.

\(^883\) Political psychology literature further suggests leaders will demonize other countries when threatened, a relaxation of “normative prohibitions a person would otherwise feel should constrain his or her behavior. It creates a context in which lying, torture, and even killing can become seen as warranted…Feeling great threat from another country that is powerful could motivate people to construct a picture of that country that justifies destroying it or at least its government. The full force of these feelings of fear may be unconscious, but they are thought to produce conscious description of the other country that highlights its evil intentions, unlimited ambitions, and ruthless brutality.” Richard K. Herrmann, “Perceptions and Image Theory in International Relations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, 350. Research also suggests: “Basic psychological impulses incline national leaders to exaggerate the evil intentions of adversaries.” Due to this, and based on a comprehensive list of psychological biases identified in the last 40 years of research, all theses biases predispose leaders to believe advisers who are hawks rather than doves. Janice Gross Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 373. When a crisis challenges fundamental issues about state identity and survival, “Any change in the established view of the enemy and of the imperatives of national defense comes to be seen as a threat to the nation’s very existence.” Ronald J. Fisher, Herbert C. Kelman, and Susan Allen Nan, “Conflict Analysis and Resolution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, 501, 489-521.
H1A: Strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment.

H1B: Foreign policy “surprises”—unexpected events that do not disconfirm the existing grand strategic approach—can still agitate the public and the president’s advisers, creating the pressure for and the possibility of a strategic adjustment.

H1C: Positive shocks and surprises, those that reveal new opportunities to advance U.S. interests or suggest a more benign international environment, put presidents in the domain of gains, making them more risk averse and more likely to make no adjustment or a moderate adjustment.

H1D: Negative shocks and surprises, those that reveal threats to U.S. interests or suggest a more hostile international environment, put presidents in the domain of losses, making them more risk acceptant and likely to make moderate adjustments or major adjustments.

H1E: In the face of strategic shocks and surprises, the president retains agency and the ability channel the pressure created by shocks and surprises in a particular direction.
**Focusing on Foreign Policy Experience**

This last hypothesis (H1E) stems from another major finding from the case studies: the process of adjustment remains president-centric. Even when under pressure, the president retains a great deal of agency and the ability to channel shock in a direction of his choosing and to frame narratives about shock to the public. Thus, the next step in revising my typological theory is to update the variable related to the president’s individual profile/personality that my cases suggest actually matters: foreign policy experience.

Experience works in three primary ways. First, as Preston predicts, it compels a president to be actively involved in the foreign policy decision-making process. In a national security bureaucracy weighed down by inertia and parochialism, personal presidential involvement is essential for getting things done and ensuring the effective implementation of a president’s foreign policy agenda. Personal presidential involvement also reduces the likelihood that ambitious advisers will outstrip the president’s intentions (e.g. NSC 68, Iran contra). By staying involved, a president can ensure any adjustment hews closely to his overarching vision.

Second, experience gives presidents prudence, increasing the likelihood that they will avoid shock in the first place by setting the right course at the beginning of their presidency.

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884 As Yarhi-Milo shows, “regardless of whether it is the civilian decision makers or intelligence assessments that get the question of intentions ‘right,’ this study suggests decision makers tend to reach conclusions about the adversary’s foreign policy objectives independent of intelligence estimates, based instead on their own knowledge, personal insights, and intuition,” 253. “Additionally, decision makers may lack the nuanced expertise required to interpret and draw inferences from complex abstract information about the adversary’s military capabilities and doctrine. Since they are comparatively disadvantaged in interpreting capabilities, decision makers are likely to leave that to their intelligence agencies and focus on other criteria to assess intentions. This distinction is not generalizable to all decision makers, since there is variation in decision makers’ military experience and education. Some decision makers have no military background; others have extensive military experience, such as President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who served as a US Army General.” Yarhi-Milo, 268.

885 As Kissinger said: “As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make.” Quoted in Winter, “Personality Profiles of Political Elites,” 423, 423-458. Additionally, research suggests that the personalities of individual leaders are likely to matter “when the leader first organizes the administrative apparatus after assuming power, during crises (especially foreign policy crises involving ‘enemy’ nations), and whenever events pose a threat to deeply held values.” Winter, “Personality Profiles of Political Elites,” 425.
Experience also helps presidents in analyzing a new foreign policy development in a sound manner and diagnosing a foreign policy problem correctly. Experienced decision-makers have confidence not only in their own judgment, but also in the people and process they have set up and empowered to deal with foreign policy challenges. Relatedly, experience also breeds humility—experience gives leaders a healthy respect for the complexity of international politics, the limits of American power, and the constraints on their own ability to advance an ambitious agenda through an intransigent national security bureaucracy. Military experience in particular teaches leaders first-hand of the truth of the Clausewitzian dictum that in war, everything is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. Experienced presidents, in other words, have earned confidence but are comfortable with what they do not know and cognizant of the limits of their power. This does not mean that prudence and humility consistently predict caution and inaction. Indeed, an enduring lesson of experience is that problems do not age well, and the prudent move in many cases may be to confront a problem with a robust investment of U.S. resources up front so that it does not spiral into a major crisis down the road. Indeed, when confronted with a shock and a corresponding debate about how to respond, a less-experienced president is likely to split the difference among his advisers and decide on a half-measure that does not improve the geopolitical situation and (ironically) requires a greater investment of U.S. resources down the line. His more experienced counterpart, on the other hand, would understand that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Yet since it is always impossible for a president to prove the

counterfactual that such early crisis prevention worked, they must rely upon their experience to maintain the public’s trust when taking early, aggressive action. They must rely upon their experience to maintain the public’s trust when taking early, aggressive action.887

This is related to a third and final way that experience works. Experience gives presidents a weapon they can wield against their critics, one that is particularly valuable if they adopt a more dovish position.888 Experience creates reservoirs of trust and goodwill among the foreign policy community and among the American people that presidents can use when confronted with foreign policy challenges. Experienced presidents can more effectively push back on intimidating military advisers, harness public hysteria towards productive ends, and retain the confidence of the American people in turbulent times. Experience, in other words, allows experienced presidents to overcome the perceptions and pathologies of “strength” and “weakness” and avoid lashing out in response to crisis or criticism.

This is particularly important because negative strategic shocks can provoke an emotional response of fear. As Hymans shows, if high-level decision-makers experience fear, they are more likely to ignore the implications of shock and take no action, or may be motivated to escape that feeling by taking action, any action, to escape fear without extensive analysis or deliberation.889

887 This is related to what Kissinger called the “problem of conjecture.” “Each political leader has the choice between making the assessment which requires the least effort or making an assessment which requires more effort. If he makes the assessment that requires the least effort, then as time goes on it may turn out that he was wrong and then he will have to pay a heavy price. If he acts on the basis of a guess, he will never be able to prove that his effort was necessary, but he may save himself a great deal of grief later on…If he acts early, he cannot know whether it was necessary. If he waits, he may be lucky or he may be unlucky.” Quoted in Niall Ferguson, “The Meaning of Kissinger: A Realist Reconsidered,” Foreign Affairs 94, no. 5 (September/October 2015): 138-139.


889 Jacques E. C. Hymans, The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). “Novelty, or uncertainty, can trigger anxiety, since what is unknown may also be dangerous. Fear interrupts ongoing behavior while redirecting attention and other cognitive activity toward dealing with the threat. Specifically, it prompts individuals to seek out information related to the threat and to reconsider courses of action to deal with the danger in light of present circumstances. It motivates people to remove the danger, if that is readily doable, or, if not, to remove themselves from the danger. Thus, fear motivates (and prepares the body for) risk-aversive behavior, including actions aimed at prevention and protection, conciliatory
Hymans also argues that pride interacts with fear to determine whether one backs down and flees in response to fear or whether one stands one’s ground. Since inexperienced presidents face greater penalties for showing “weakness” or “equivocation” on the world stage—they do not get the benefit of the doubt from the public—they must either continue on their course, convincing themselves and others that they are right, or take more dramatic action in response to shock, going along with the general public pressure for “doing something” so as to look decisive and strong when caught off guard. Thus, when caught up in the chaos and pressures of the presidency, inexperience creates insecurity, the need to constantly prove that one is qualified to be commander-in-chief. Without experience to cite and hold up to advisers and voters, inexperienced presidents are likely to respond to shock, fear, and their own insecurity either by “fighting”—staying doggedly committed to the current course despite the evidence—or “fleeing”, embarking on a major change depending on the level of shock so as to convince themselves and those around them that they are doing something.

In sum, this means that high-experience presidents are likely to respond to shock by making more moderate adjustments. In the first instance, we would expect a more experienced president to avoid shock—or avoid negative and more extreme shocks—having read the geopolitical situation correctly from the outset and implemented the apposite grand strategy. Experience also increases the likelihood that presidents can resist public pressure and pressure acts, hiding, and flight.”

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890 This can be seen as the influence of “motivated biases” on decision-making, which are likely to manifest themselves in situations where the stakes are high and there are threats to leaders’ basic values, causing stress that can lead decision-makers to discount these threats. “Motivated biases are driven by people’s emotional needs, by their need to maintain self-esteem, and by their interests—diplomatic, political, organizational, or personal. The result is ‘wishful thinking’: people what they want to see rather than what they expect to see. Motivated reasoning serves to rationalize policies that support one’s interests and emotional needs.” Jack S. Levy, “Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” 309.

891 This is related to what Janis calls the “panic” or “hypervigilence” response whereby a decision-maker “impulsively seizes upon a hastily contrived solution that seems to offer immediate relief.” Irving L. Janis, “Decision Making Under Stress,” in Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and Clinical Aspects, eds L. Goldberger and S. Breznitz (New York: Free Press, 1993), 71-75.
from advisers. They will neither ignore the implications of shock nor overreact by making major change. They will see the situation in a more sober light, and have greater respect for the complexities of the international situation and the fact that even the most shocking events are unlikely to point to obvious solutions or quick fixes. When confronted with a positive shock and operating in the domain of gain, more experienced presidents can afford to take a risk to exploit the more benign security environment, because they are less vulnerable to being criticized for “weakness” or “surrender.” They can look dovish, because their experience protects them from hawkish attacks (i.e. only Nixon could go to China). When confronted with negative shocks and operating in the domain of loss, their experience allows them to avoid being carried along by pressures from shock or from aggressive, impatient, and parochial advisers. They can afford to stay the course and can diffuse hawkish attacks. Thus, experience inures a president from major adjustment when in the domain of losses, while also making him able to nimbly exploit the world situation when in the domain of gains.

Low-experience presidents, on the other hand, are likely to do-nothing or to make a major change. They must avoid the perception of weakness or foreign policy mismanagement by either (1) remaining committed to the course they have laid out or (2) succumbing to the public pressure that shock creates. Whether the fight or flight instinct is triggered, however, depends on the complex interaction of fear and pride, which cannot be consistently modeled and requires an in-depth personality study of the particular president that is confronted with a shock. In general, while we expect low-experience presidents to make major adjustments, it is likely to take a major negative shock, or repeated and highly visible negative shocks to shift from the fight to flight mentality. And since inexperienced presidents are less likely to take robust and immediate action up front and less likely to structure their foreign policy decision-making process in such a way
that they remain at the center, they are more likely to lose control of the adjustment process. In the domain of gain, since there will be less pressure from the public and from advisers to take risks, the lack of presidential involvement means a potential adjustment will fail to be implemented. In the domain of loss, this means the adjustment process will take on a life of its own, going beyond the bounds of what the president had in mind and leading to a major adjustment the inexperienced president is powerless to resist (i.e. Truman and NSC 68, George W. Bush after 9/11). In either case, their lack of experience predicts an extreme response: doing nothing or doing something big and bold. On balance, whether a president is operating in the domain of gains or losses should tip the balance towards doing nothing or making a major change respectively.

*A Refined Model of Strategic Adjustment*

Figure 2 below adds this more detailed understanding of how foreign policy experience works to the way in which positive and negative shocks affect presidents to arrive at a new model of strategic adjustment. I also provide corresponding hypotheses for foreign policy experience.
**Figure 2: A Refined Model of Strategic Adjustment**

**H2A:** Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to adopt a grand strategy that avoids shock or severe, negative shock.

**H2B:** When operating in the domain of gain, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to take risks (i.e. only Nixon can go to China) and can overcome adviser risk-aversion and general inertia through their personal involvement in the foreign policy decision making process, and are therefore are more likely to make moderate adjustments.

**H2C:** When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to stay the course, resist pressure, maintain control of the adjustments process, and diffuse charges of “weakness,” and therefore are more likely to make moderate adjustments.

**H2D:** Presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to adopt a grand strategy that encounters shock, particularly negative shock.

**H2E:** When operating in the domain of gain, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are less likely to take risks or get involved in the adjustment process and are
therefore more likely to make no adjustment.

**H2F:** *When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more vulnerable to charges of “weakness,” more likely to take risks or lose control of the adjustment process and are therefore more likely to make major adjustments.*

**H2G:** *Since a major adjustment requires a shift from “fight” (staying stubbornly committed to the current course) to “flight” (overreacting to shock and corresponding pressure) it likely requires a dramatic, negative shock or a series of negative shocks.*

These are ideal-typical outcomes, highly contingent on the particular shock and the particular presidential personality at play. Additionally, the president retains agency and choice throughout the process. Yet Table 5 displays the range of five possible outcomes under my new typological theory. Without shock, my theory predicts no adjustment. My model also depicts the possibility of a fundamental reorientation of U.S. grand strategy due to a severe shock (e.g. Pearl Harbor), but this remains outside my theory.

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**Table 5: A Refined Typology of Strategic Adjustment**

In the next and final chapter, I will apply this refined typological theory for strategic adjustment and my more detailed specification of the dependent variable to the empirical record. I will “test drive” the theory in two Cold War cases and apply it to the present-day. I will include by summarizing my findings and the implications for scholarship and policy.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

“I would say in honesty…that my views, because I was in the Eisenhower administration, were similar to those of Mr. Dulles at that time. But the world has changed since then…the helmsman must ride with the waves or he will be submerged with the tide.”

-Richard Nixon to Zhou Enlai, Beijing, 1972

In this chapter I will apply my refined typological theory of strategic adjustment to the Cold War and post-Cold War empirical record. I will examine two mini-cases—Nixon and Carter—and identify promising cases for further study to advance the research agenda. I will conclude by assessing the limits and contributions of my work to theory and policy.

Cold War Cases: Strategic Adjustment Within the Framework of Containment

Table 6 below applies the theoretical property space to the universe of Cold War cases or all of the presidents operating within the dominant strategic framework of containment (a subsequent table below looks at post-Cold War cases).

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892 Quoted in Gaddis, Strategies, 282.
Table 6: Strategic Adjustment During the Cold War

Correctly classifying the type of shock and the actual outcome on the dependent variable will require in-depth case studies. Yet this first cut suggests the theory perform well in some cases. For example, Kennedy could have made a more aggressive adjustment in response to the Cuban Missile crisis—such as attacking Cuba—but instead chose a more moderate path. Other cases such as Johnson and Ford—two Vice Presidents who unexpectedly assumed the presidency and experienced negative shocks related to the Vietnam War—are more problematic. To test-

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893 Kennedy not only struck a deal with the Soviets to defuse the crisis but also pursued a more straightforward version of détente after the crisis subsided. Gaddis, Strategies, 206. Kennedy also confronted a negative shock in the Berlin Crisis lasting from January 1961 until November 1961. Comparing Kennedy’s handling of Berlin to Eisenhower’s may prove fruitful as a same or most-similar case types. As historian Marc Trachtenberg argues, this comparison “provides us with something as close to a controlled experiment as is ever found in the history of international politics.” Marc Trachtenburg, History and Strategy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 279.

894 The Tet Offensive on January 30, 1968—though it would end as a major military defeat for Hanoi—had a “devastating” immediate psychological impact in the United States, yet Johnson does not appear to have made a major adjustment. Gaddis, Strategies, 246. See also, Sestanovich, 157-165 and Walker and Schafer, “The Political
drive the theory, below I take a closer look at strategic adjustment in the Nixon Administration and Carter Administration.

*Nixon Goes to China: High-Experience President Dealing with (Positive) Shock*

Nixon is the third most experienced president according to Dyson and Preston’s scoring system, behind only Eisenhower and George H. W. Bush. Nixon demonstrated an interest in international affairs from a young age and was recruited to run for Congress in 1946 largely because of his Naval service during WWII. Once elected, he made a name for himself on foreign policy, became a leading anti-Communist voice via his involvement in the Alger Hiss case, and ran successfully for Senate in 1950. And as Chapters III and IV demonstrated, during his eight years as Vice President, Nixon was actively engaged in NSC debates and demonstrated a particular prowess for teasing out the domestic political implications of foreign policy choices. During a campaign radio address in 1968 he touted this experience serving on and occasionally chairing the NSC.

After losing the presidential election in 1960 and the California gubernatorial election in 1962, Nixon used his foreign policy prowess as a means of political resurrection. He traveled internationally and wrote important foreign policy analyses to re-establish himself as a party leader, one well-suited to becoming commander-in-chief at a time when the deteriorating situation in Vietnam was a key campaign issue. Despite the importance of national security in the 1968 election, Nixon made few concrete campaign promises on foreign policy other than pledging to achieve “peace with honor” in Vietnam, assuring southern delegates he would be strong on national defense and support anti-ballistic missile programs, and hinting at seeking

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Universe of Lyndon B. Johnson and His Advisors,” 529-543. Ford, prodded by Kissinger, tried and failed to rally military assistance to South Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and “the only real questions were how quickly the United States would evacuate its own people, and how many South Vietnamese it would take with it.” Sestanovich, 204.
reduced tensions with the Soviet Union. When he assumed the presidency, the prospects for reducing tensions seemed remote.\textsuperscript{895}

Though Nixon was known for largely for his hawkish anticommunist views, he was a foreign policy pragmatist who genuinely desired to be known as a “peacemaker” on the international scene. He favored and was “capable of bold, creative, even visionary departures in policy.”\textsuperscript{896} In selecting and empowering Henry Kissinger as his National Security Adviser, Nixon also demonstrated a degree of self-confidence on foreign policy issues. He admired and was not intimidated by Kissinger’s intellect and “had judged, correctly, that they shared a strategic—and geopolitical-minded view of the world.”\textsuperscript{897}

Together, Nixon and Kissinger quickly charted a bold new course for U.S. foreign policy by pursuing an asymmetrical form of containment that would be called détente. This variant of containment sought to simultaneously balance Soviet power via an internationalist foreign policy while selectively retrenching in order to reduce U.S. commitments and cut costs.\textsuperscript{898} The goal was not to change the nature of the Soviet regime, but to change its behavior and integrate it into a more stable, more peaceful world order.\textsuperscript{899} The Nixon-Kissinger grand strategy prioritized great power relations and reducing the risk of nuclear war above more peripheral matters such as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{895} “All U.S.-Soviet negotiations had come to a virtual halt after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and the Kremlin was wary of Nixon and his reputation as a Cold War hard-liner.” Peter W. Rodman, \textit{Presidential Command} (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 50.
\item \textsuperscript{896} Dueck, \textit{Hard Line}, 143. As Dueck writes: “International politics fascinated [Nixon] and tended to bring out his more impressive qualities. He had a shrewd sense of global power relations and of competing national interests in world affairs. He was able to conceptualize innovative, long-term strategies and then act on them in a bold and tactically skillful manner.” As a Congressman, Nixon was also willing to take foreign policy positions that ran counter to the preferences of his constituents, such as support for the Marshall Plan. Dueck, \textit{Hard Line}, 150.
\item \textsuperscript{897} Rodman, 36. The infamously suspicious Nixon was also not deterred by the fact that Kissinger had long advised Nixon’s rival Nelson Rockefeller. Kissinger argues this was part of the attraction for Nixon—by hiring Kissinger he would be co-opting a Harvard academic and the chief foreign policy adviser of his political rival. Kissinger, \textit{White House Years}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{898} Dueck, \textit{Hard Line}, 142, 184.
\item \textsuperscript{899} Or as Gaddis says: “change the Soviet Union’s conception of international relations, to integrate it as a stable element in the existing world order and to build on the resulting equilibrium a ‘structure of peace’ that would end once and for all that persistent abnormality known as the ‘Cold War’” Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 287.
\end{itemize}
human rights and ideology. Nixon and Kissinger would manage great power competition using a mix of sticks and carrots: (1) pursuing serious negotiations with the Soviets on issues of arms control and the status of Berlin; (2) refusing to compartmentalize geopolitical issues in order to deter Soviet adventurism (i.e. linkage); (3) taking aggressive, unpredictable military action in Vietnam to induce a negotiated settlement of the conflict (i.e. madman theory of diplomacy); (4) devolving responsibility down to allies for their own defense (i.e. Nixon Doctrine); and (5) engaging China in order to balance against the Soviet Union.

The opening to China proved particularly important in implementing détente. The move would (to paraphrase Ike) give the Nixon Administration the most defense at the least cost. While it would not come to fruition until the end of Nixon’s first term, the idea took shape prior to his presidency. In a famous Foreign Affairs article in October 1967 entitled “Asia After Vietnam,” Nixon argued for a new strategy with respect to China, “containment without isolation” that would seek to pull “China back into the world community—but as a great and progressing nation, not as the epicenter of world revolution.” Nixon (and later Kissinger) felt they could build on China’s natural enmity towards the U.S.S.R, and this shared Sino-American interest could transcend other differences, thereby allowing the U.S. to drive a wedge in the heart of the international communist movement.

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900 “We will judge other countries, including Communist countries…on the basis of their actions and not on the basis of their domestic ideology.” Kissinger quoted in Dueck, Hard Line, 155.
901 “It is difficult to think of anything the Nixon administration could have done that would have produced a more dramatic shift in world power relationship of greater benefit to the United States at less cost.” Gaddis, Strategies, 295.
903 Establishing relations with China to exert pressure on the U.S.S.R. stemmed from the simple logic that the Soviets and the Chinese had been engaged in competition and conflict for more than a decade. No president had yet exploited the Sino-Soviet rift, which had actually been going on for a decade, because of China’s aid to North Vietnam and the memory of its role in the Korean War, as well as the domestic political pressure to support Nationalist China. Additionally, “Communist China during the mid-1960’s seemed determined to cut itself off from the rest of the world as a by-product of Mao Zedong’s quixotic quest of an institutionalized revolution.” Gaddis, Strategies, 293. The outreach to China signified that for Nixon and Kissinger, international communism in general was not the primary threat to U.S. interests, but rather the Soviet Union in particular. The Soviets had already made
During the election, however, the Democrats emphasized rapprochement with China while the Republicans remained largely silent on the issue (hard core conservatives opposed it).\textsuperscript{904} At the beginning of the administration, Nixon instructed Kissinger to explore “the possibilities of rapprochement with the Chinese.”\textsuperscript{905} This resulted in an interagency paper assessing the costs and benefits of engaging with China, but before it was completed fighting broke out in March 1969 between Soviet and Chinese forces along the Ussuri River. This “series of unprecedented military clashes along their border” quickly raised the chance of all out war between two nuclear powers and the grim prospect of a Soviet takeover of China.\textsuperscript{906} It seems reasonable to classify the Sino-Soviet clashes as a shock, but it is harder to say whether the shock was positive or negative. On the one hand, the prospect of great power conflict and nuclear war—even between two adversaries of the United States who could substantially weaken one another—seems a negative development, thus putting Nixon and his advisers in the domain of losses. On the other hand, Nixon and Kissinger saw the shock as an opportunity to test engagement with the Chinese in order to weaken the Soviets.\textsuperscript{907} This suggests the shock was positive and they operated as if in the domain of gains.\textsuperscript{908}

\textsuperscript{904} Even Kissinger initially derided the idea as a “flight of fancy.” Sestanovich, 176.
\textsuperscript{906} Rodman, 53.
\textsuperscript{907} As Brands argues, Sino-Soviet split opened up the possibility of rapprochement, which had earlier been muddied by the ongoing Cultural Revolution and the radicalism of Mao’s regime. Brands, 70. Sestanovich argues the crisis forced Kissinger to rethink his initial skepticism of reaching out to China. Sestanovich, 176.
\textsuperscript{908} Yet they kept their cards initially close to the vest. Nixon’s first annual report to Congress on February 18, 1970, spoke of the shattering of the international Communism and cited the bitter animosity between the Soviets and the Chinese, but it emphasized strengthening ties with Japan and Vietnamization rather than rapprochement with China. At a broader level the report outlined a “new framework for durable peace” with only three pillars: (1) partnership (i.e. the Nixon Doctrine); (2) strength; and (3) a willingness to negotiate. Richard Nixon, “First Annual Report to
Regardless, Nixon and Kissinger moved quickly to exploit the crisis for their benefit. When the Russians reached out to the Nixon Administration to gauge their likely response if the Soviets launched a preventive strike against Chinese nuclear facilities, Nixon responded that they would oppose it. This was a dramatic move at the time—Nixon’s predecessor had considered a joint Soviet-American strike against Chinese nuclear facilities just five years earlier. As Gaddis argues, this was a “remarkable position to take, well before diplomatic contacts of consequence had begun with the Chinese, well before Washington knew how Beijing would react,” reflecting the calculation that China was critical in maintaining the global balance of power and that the U.S. had an interest in the survival of the China despite ideological differences. Nixon took further steps such as “easing trade and travel restrictions with the mainland, removing the Seventh Fleet from permanent patrol of the Taiwan Strait, and asking diplomatic intermediaries in France, Romanian, and Pakistan to pass on his interest in better relations to Beijing.” In so doing, Nixon also defied domestic political pressures. While the doves in the liberal wing of both parties (who were gaining power) supported rapprochement with China, conservatives strongly resisted the idea and the related risk of abandoning Taiwan.


Nixon, on the other hand, in August 1969 argued: “The worst thing that could happen for us would be for the Soviet Union to gobble up Red China…We can’t let it happen…We’re not doing this because we love the Chinese. We just have to see to it that the U.S. plays both sides.” Gaddis, Strategies, 294.

Gaddis, Strategies, 294.

Dueck, Hard Line, 156.

The Vietnam War led to the breakdown of the so-called “Cold War consensus,” which enabled the rise of a new generation of foreign policy doves. Yet the rise of the doves did not lead to consistent domestic political pressure on Nixon other than a general dissatisfaction with Vietnam and desire to bring the boys home. As Dueck argues: “Liberals in both parties generally became more dovish during the Nixon years, while conservatives remained cold war hawks, but the hawk-dove division as yet bore almost no relationship to party identification among the general public. The relative strength of hawks and doves depended on the specific issue, venue, and moment; there were many varieties and shades of opinion in between the two positions.” Dueck, Hard Line, 153. The State Department Soviet specialists also resisted the opening to China, which gave Nixon and Kissinger a further impetus to centralize decision-making and shroud their activities in secrecy. Nixon exhibited “a curious dependence upon personal isolation from all but a tiny circle of advisers, partly to allow time for reflection and self-control, party to avoid unpleasant confrontations with subordinates (which Nixon seemed to fear more than any president since Franklin
The Chinese did not fully respond to these overtures until 1971, when they invited Kissinger to China. By that time the Nixon Administration had supported China’s full admission into the UN. Nixon’s subsequent visit to China in February 1972 resulted in significant policy achievements, such as the Shanghai Communiqué codifying the “one China policy” and expressing a common interest in opposing Soviet “hegemony.” The outreach to China thereby enhanced U.S. leverage over the Soviets even as the Soviets continued to increase their strategic weapons arsenals and conventional force levels, allowing the Nixon Administration to make further adjustments such as adopting a “one-and-a-half war” force-sizing construct.

Thus, pending further research involving archival and primary sources, the response to the Sino-Soviet shock seems to be a case of moderate adjustment. But Nixon adjusted in the direction he had already intended to go prior to becoming president. This is similar to what we saw in Chapter III with Eisenhower and the death of Stalin—a positive (or at least ambiguous) shock early in the administration created an opportunity for the president to adjust U.S. grand strategy faster and farther in the direction he wanted to go and to get his subordinates on board. Operating in the domain of gains, Nixon and Eisenhower took greater risks than their less experienced counterparts might have. Like Eisenhower, Nixon’s foreign policy experience—particularly his hawkish bona fides—gave him greater freedom to adjust and outmaneuver
domestic political opponents. Just as only Eisenhower the soldier could offer the Soviets a chance for peace, only Nixon the anti-communist warrior could go to China.916

In their annual reports to Congress on foreign policy, Nixon and Kissinger consistently projected a sense of grand strategic success and continuity.917 Yet when confronted with subsequent shocks, they would prove nimble and willing to adjust (Kissinger eventually abandoned linkage, a key pillar of détente). Consider the Egyptian-Syrian-Iraqi attack of Israel on Yom Kippur in 1973, which occurred just days after Kissinger was sworn in as Secretary of State. The Nixon Administration quickly responded by providing over $2 billion in weapons and supplies to ensure Israel did not collapse and thereby “put aside the cooperative assumptions of détente in the name of geopolitical advantage.”918 The Arab reaction to U.S. policy produced a subsidiary shock—the petroleum embargo against the U.S, what Kissinger called “one of the most pivotal events in the history of this century.”919 Again, Nixon and Kissinger responded aggressively, ensuring Israel did not destroy the Egyptian army, preventing the Soviets from intervening directly in the conflict by putting the U.S. armed forces on worldwide nuclear alert, and later securing agreements between Israel and its Arab enemies (as well as getting the oil embargo lifted).920

Yet Nixon and Kissinger did not adjust when it came to perhaps the most important issue:

916 Nixon’s ideological flexibility was “the product of an earlier inflexibility so consistent in its anti-communism that critics could now hardly accuse him of ‘softness’ or naïveté,” Gaddis, Strategies, 282. “Nixon had been so staunch an anti-communist over the years that flexibility now took on the aura of statesmanship rather than softness thus accord[ing] him greater freedom of action than his more liberal rivals for the presidency could have expected.” Gaddis, Strategies, 273.
918 Sestanovich, 194.
919 Quoted in Sestanovich, 195.
920 Dueck, Hard Line, 175.
American military capabilities relative to the Soviets. Faced with a consistent buildup of Soviet power, they proved either unwilling or unable to adjust, and instead reduced defense spending from 8.1 percent of GDP in FY1970 to 5.2 percent in FY1976.\textsuperscript{921} This suggests Nixon would be a tough test for the idea that shock allows presidents to overcome domestic political pressures. Alternatively it supports the idea mentioned in the previous chapter that war or budget weariness can accumulate over time and counter-balance negative shocks, which would also vitiate the idea that we can eliminate domestic political slack from the typology.\textsuperscript{922} Gaddis argues that Nixon, Kissinger, and Defense Secretary Laird accepted downward pressures on defense spending as an unavoidable structural constraint, as the public wearied of Vietnam war spending, and engaged in a process of minimizing the damage rather than pushing back aggressively.\textsuperscript{923} Similarly, Dueck highlights that while Nixon’s achievements with respect to China, the Soviet Union, and his attempts to withdraw from Vietnam with dignity helped his reelection effort, domestic political support for détente steadily declined over the course of the administration and Congressional critics denied Nixon-Kissinger and Ford-Kissinger the carrots and sticks necessary to make détente work.\textsuperscript{924} Brands argues that while détente helped Nixon win reelection, once the aura of success wore off it “proved poorly suited to U.S. politics. By

\textsuperscript{921} “[T]he Nixon-Ford years saw the most substantial reductions in American military capabilities relative to those of the Soviet Union in the entire postwar era.” Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 318. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird proved skillful in minimizing the damage of these cuts and even planting the seeds for important new strategic weapons systems such as the B-1, Trident sub, and cruise missile. “Between 1969 and 1972, total military personnel dropped from 3.4 million to 2.3 million, the lowest level since before the Korean War. Half a million men were withdrawn from Vietnam; the U.S. troop presence in Japan and South Korea was cut by a third, in the Philippines by half. From its peak in 1969, the Pentagon budget began almost a decade of steady cuts.” Sestanovich, 168.

\textsuperscript{922} I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.

\textsuperscript{923} And throughout the administration, striking a balance between Nixon’s belief in the unbounded authority of the president on foreign policy and Kissinger’s more nuanced view that Congress should play a major role in foreign policy without micromanaging the executive would prove difficult and “would bedevil, during the last four years of Kissinger’s incumbency as chief diplomat, implementation of the strategy he and Nixon had originated.” Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 305, 318-327.

\textsuperscript{924} “Congressional hawks denied the White House the ability to provide Moscow incentives for cooperation through arms control or trade agreements. Congressional doves denied it the ability to bolster U.S. defense spending, preserve American intelligence capacities, or even attempt to block Marxist advances in Vietnam and Angola.” Dueck, \textit{Hard Line}, 185.
combining containment with negotiations, détente moved foreign policy to the political center, but it did so at a time when the center was becoming a lonely place.”

This case also provides a tough test for the assumption that foreign policy experience predicts prudence. Nixon was constantly looking to make bold foreign policy moves and encouraging his subordinates to the same. He deplored half-measures, feeling they generated just as much opposition as bolder changes without actually solving the underlying problem. This was particularly evident in his approach to Vietnam, where through bold military escalation and brutal bombing campaigns he sought to induce a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. Nixon, in other words, made bold tactical adjustments, but largely in pursuit of consistent strategic ends. Indeed, by taking bold actions in his immediate response to crises, he may have avoided greater shocks down the road. Perhaps more experienced presidents, through their greater engagement in the foreign policy process, force decision and aggressive action up front rather than avoiding or delaying decisions. More experienced presidents may also be more willing to suffer the consequences of such decisions, to deal with the repercussions of “going for broke” as Nixon frequently described it.

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925 Vietnam turned liberals more dovish while conservatives and neoconservatives led by Scoop Jackson grew more hawkish. Combined with the backlash over Watergate and growing executive authority, this “combination of headwinds and crosscurrents left Kissinger struggling to hold a steady course.” Brands, 84.
926 Sestanovich, 169.
927 This boldness produced mixed results. Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia sparked domestic backlash—Congress subsequently prohibited using U.S. troops outside of South Vietnam, and Nixon moderated his negotiating position with the North Vietnamese. One could further argue that the disastrous invasion of Laos in February 1971—conducted by South Vietnamese forces with U.S. support—was itself a shock that cast doubt on the effectiveness of “Vietnamization.” “Until the summer of 1971, the Nixon administration’s effort to find a less costly, more sustainable new foreign policy was overshadowed by the president’s military shocks in Vietnam. He had escalated the war, and revived public opposition, without weakening the enemy in any lasting way. Meanwhile, American forces continued to shrink.” Sestanovich, 175. On the other hand, after Nixon mined Haiphong harbor and the Soviets did not cancel their diplomatic summit with the U.S., Nixon sensed he had the advantage and called it “one of the great diplomatic coups of all times.” Quoted in Sestanovich, 182.
928 “No thought pops up more often in Nixon’s memoirs, or on the tapes and transcripts of his Oval Office conversations, than the importance of being ready to ‘go for broke.’ His instinct was always, as Kissinger saw it, to ‘play for all the marbles.’” Sestanovich, 169
Carter Tries to be Truman: Low-Experience President Dealing with Negative Shock

Presidential historians rarely group Jimmy Carter and Harry Truman together. Truman remains the paradigm for a decisive president, while Carter is criticized for his indecision and obsession with minutiae. But when it comes to the intersection of shock, experience, and strategic adjustment, there are important similarities that may help test the theory. Like Truman, Carter gets one point on the Dyson-Preston scale despite serving in the military prior to assuming the presidency (he attended the Naval Academy and was an engineering officer on a nuclear submarine). Both Truman and Carter dealt with severe negative shocks: the Soviet nuclear test and Korean War for Truman and the general Soviet adventurism culminating in the invasion of Afghanistan for Carter. Additionally, it seems Carter and Truman were the only Cold War presidents that made major strategic adjustments within their administrations. This would support my theory, which predicts that low experience presidents confronted with negative shocks—and thus operating in the domain of losses—will make major adjustments. And while my theory focuses on the degree and not the type of adjustment, both Carter and Truman adjusted from a relatively dovish grand strategy to a more hawkish build up of U.S. power.

Taking a closer look, in the first two years of his presidency Carter attempted to

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929 His fixation on minor details and trivial policy prescriptions earned him the nickname “the nation’s chief grammarian.” Rodman encapsulates the conventional wisdom in describing the “philosophical schizophrenia of the president [Carter], of his worldview and of his resulting policies,” 121. Carter “prided himself on being both a moralist and an engineer, a combination conducive to self-confidence, to be sure, but also to a certain fascination with technical and ultimate questions that left little room for the realm of strategy that lay in between.” Gaddis, Strategies, 346.

930 Yet Gaddis argues that while Truman went from asymmetrical containment to symmetrical, Carter’s approach “had difficulty aligning itself with either tradition, or indeed with any coherent conception of American interests in the world, potential threats to them, or feasible responses.” Strategies, 344, 346. George W. Bush is another low experience president that appears to have made a major adjustment within his administration. But my theory deals with adjustment within a dominant strategic framework, and Bush 43 was operating outside the bounds of the Cold War and containment. Nevertheless, since he, Truman and Carter appear to be the only cases of major adjustment within an administration, a detailed analysis of Bush 43’s response to the shock of 9/11 should yield important insights into the necessary threshold for a major adjustment to occur. And in its overall outlines—a president with little foreign policy experience, a negative shock, and a major adjustment—Bush’s presidency appears to fit my theory.
implement an asymmetric form of containment similar to détente, but with greater transparency in the overall conduct of foreign policy and greater emphasis on human rights. Carter also departed from Nixon and Kissinger in his desire for a more aggressive posture towards China—he felt they had embarrassed the country with their conduct towards Beijing, and vowed not to “ass-kiss them” in the same way. While Carter authorized enhanced covert action to encourage Soviet dissidents, the overall direction of Carter’s strategy aimed at cooperation with the Soviets and retrenchment of U.S. power. In his first letter to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev, Carter stated his goal was to “improve relations with the U.S.S.R. on the basis of reciprocity, mutual respect and benefits.” Towards this end, Carter authorized Secretary Vance to pursue an agreement with the Soviets aiming for (and failing to achieve) an unprecedented 25 percent cut in strategic weapons. As Carter argued in his inaugural address, the country had learned “that more is not necessarily better, that even our great Nation has its recognized limits, and that we can neither answer all the questions nor solve all problems.” As such, early on he sought to reduce the proposed defense budget by $6 billion, cancelled the neutron bomb and tried to cancel the B-1 bomber, and initiated the reduction of U.S. forces in South Korea by half.

Yet Carter soon experienced a series of negative shocks that would blow him off this course. The Soviets soon experienced a massive military buildup in the late 1960s and by the time Carter assumed office, there was growing consensus among the U.S. intelligence community, the

932 Quoted in Yarhi-Milo, 127.
933 Quoted in Sestanovich, 208.
934 Military spending from 1977 to 1978 went from $97.2 to $104.5 billion (4.9%-4.7% of GDP). Funding for “general, science, space, and technology” from $4.7 to $4.9 billion during same period. There was an overall reduction of military manpower from 2,074,543 in 1977 to 2,027,494 in 1979. While the Army remained at 24 divisions (16 active and 8 reserve), there was evidence of a “hollow force.” By 1979, 6 of 10 Army divisions in U.S. and 1 of 4 in Europe were not “not combat-ready”. Carter only added 4 ships to the Navy for total of 468 by 1978 (he supported Ford’s cancellation of fourth Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier CVN-71 and vetoed FY1979 defense authorization containing funding for CVN-71). Carter kept the Nixon-Kissinger one-and-a-half war construct (major war in Central Europe and a minor war in East Asia) and the only military operation approximating a “use of force” during this time was support to French rescue operation in Zaire. The CIA also reduced staff in the directorate of operations by 800 people.
Department of Defense, and the NSC that the balance of power had begun to favor the Soviets. The Soviets not only rejected Carter’s initial attempts at an arms control agreement, which shocked the administration, they were also increasingly adventurous, deploying intermediate range SS-20 missiles to Europe and intervening in twenty-six crises between 1975 and 1980. The 1979 Iranian revolution and subsequent hostage crisis, the rise of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, a coup in South Yemen pushing the government into the pro-Soviet camp, and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia (after the Soviets signed a “friendship treaty” with Hanoi) added to the general sense of crisis.

The invasion of Afghanistan, the first use of the Soviet troops outside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since WWII and the Soviet’s first direct use of force to restore a non-Warsaw Pact pro-Soviet regime, was thus “only the most dramatic of a series of humiliations for the United States that were raising question about whether any form of containment—symmetrical or asymmetrical—could reverse a tide of history that seemed to be flowing in a decidedly unfavorable direction.” Carter felt the negative impact of the shock—he called the invasion the “greatest threat to peace since the Second World War…[a] radical departure form the policy and actions of the Soviet Union since the Second World War.”

935 In particular, experts felt the Soviets had advanced ahead of the U.S. in the number of delivery vehicles, as well as in ICBM accuracy and missile silo survivability. See Yarhi-Milo, 117-118.
936 Vance, on returning home, had to admit an American miscalculation and the administration was roundly criticized in the media for incompetence. The Washington Post called it the most disorderly retreat form Moscow since Napoleon’s.” Rodman, 127.
937 This included Soviet-Cuban military interventions in Angola in 1975 and Zaire and Ethiopia in 1977. They intervened again in Zaire the following year. Yarhi-Milo, 123.
938 Rodman, 128.
939 Gaddis, Strategies, 348.
940 Quoted in Yarhi-Milo, 136. “Earlier, Washington had felt concern at Moscow’s growing boldness; now it felt panic. Earlier, the U.S. aim had been to preserve a mixed relationship of competition and cooperation; now there was an urgent search for every conceivable way to push back against what was seen as a colossal outrage” Sestanovich, 214. See also Yarhi-Milo, 123.
the previous two and a half years.”

The balance of power within the administration subsequently shifted to the hawks led by Brzezinski and Carter began abandoning détente and implementing a more aggressive grand strategy. He authorized increased military support to the Afghan mujahideen, which included a corresponding assistance package for Pakistan, withdrew the SALT II treaty from Senate consideration, cancelled grain exports to the Soviet Union, and called for a boycott of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow. Carter also called for steps to reinstitute the military draft, sought to lift “unwarranted restraints” on intelligence collection capabilities, asked Congress to increase defense spending, and accelerated the improvement of U.S. strategic forces. And in a move away from his initially more confrontational posture towards China he approved non-lethal military sales to Beijing, which he had refused to authorize a month before. In his 1980 State of the Union address, the president articulated a new “Carter Doctrine” in the Middle East whereby “any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”

Carter was determined to get tough across the board, to “make the Soviets pay for their

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941 Sestanovich, 215. “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, however, induced a turning point in Carter’s beliefs about Soviet intentions. His statements, private and public, as well as actions and policies during and after the invasion clearly indicate that his perception of Soviet intentions changed dramatically.” Yarhi-Milo, 136.

942 Sestanovich, 214. From 1979 to 1980, defense spending rose to $157.5 billion (5.1% of GDP, a 5% annual increase, and an $8.1 billion increase in real terms over FY1980. Funding for general/science/space tech rose from $5.2-$5.8 billion. Manpower increased to 2,082,560 by 1981 and the number of ships rose to 477 ships in 1980 and 490 in 1981. Carter finally funded the CVN-71 aircraft carrier and announced greater military exercises and basing in Southeastern U.S. as a response to Soviet-Cuban cooperation. He accelerated strategic force improvement, initiated the Rapid Deployment Force, and authorized the deployment of MX missile system. The emphasis on Persian Gulf security can be seen as a move toward two-war construct, and Operation Eagle Claw and Operation Bright Star were two major military operations.

unwarranted aggression without yielding to political pressures here at home.”

As Brzezinski told Carter, “Before you are a President Wilson, you have to be for a few years a President Truman.” The shock, like the Korean invasion for Truman, seems to have given the president some freedom to maneuver. Even where Carter experienced countervailing pressures—such as in implementing his grain embargo and the boycott of the Olympics—he was able to forge ahead. His approval rating jumped from 32 percent to 61 percent in the span of a month.

This supports the conclusion that Carter made a major strategic adjustment in response to negative shock. Consider Presidential Directive/NSC-18, “U.S. National Strategy,” approved by Carter on August 24, 1977, which listed five goals for Carter’s grand strategy: (1) “counterbalance, together with our allies and friends, by a combination of military forces, political efforts, and economic programs, Soviet military power and adverse influence in key areas, particularly Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia”; (2) “compete politically with the Soviet Union by pursuing the basic American commitment to human rights and national independence”; (3) “seek Soviet cooperation in resolving regional conflicts and reducing areas of tension that could lead to confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union”; (4) “advance American security interests through negotiations with the Soviet Union of adequately

944 Carter quoted in Yarhi-Milo, 154.
945 Quoted in Sestanovich, 214.
946 Brzezinski had earlier argued that a hawkish adjustment was necessary because of domestic political pressure. Soviet adventurism risked provoking a “rebellion at home” unless Carter stopped letting the Russians push them around. As he wrote to the president: “Every poll shows that the country wants you to be tougher…By toughening up our posture vis-à-vis the Soviets, you will either force [Senator Ted] Kennedy to back you, or to oppose you…If he backs you, he is backing an assertive and tough President; if he opposes you, he can easily be stamped as a latter-day McGovernite.” Quoted in Yarhi-Milo, 157. It is hard to imagine a more experienced president feeling the same pressure to get tough and demonstrate strength.
947 “Throughout 1980, the administration’s foreign policy behavior vis-à-vis the U.S.S.R. shifted radically toward a confrontational posture. This critical shift produced decisions deemed necessary to punish, deter, and contain the U.S.S.R. and reflected Carter’s own dramatic change in views about the nature of Soviet intentional Internal debates within the administration reveal that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the primary generator of the most significant policy shift.” Yarhi-Milo, 147. Carter went from attempting to move beyond containment and downplay U.S.-Soviet competition in 1977 to describing this competition as “the most critical factor in determining whether the world will live in peace or be engulfed in global conflict” less than three years later, and “praising past efforts at containment.” Gaddis, Strategies, 343-344.
verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements that enhance stability and curb arms competition”; and (5) “seek to involve the Soviet Union constructively in global activities, such as economic and social developments and peaceful non-strategic trade.”

By 1981 it seems numbers 3-5 had been abandoned. Rather than seeking regional cooperation with the Soviets, Carter authorized covert action to undermine the Soviets in Afghanistan and the Carter Doctrine sought to contain and deter further Soviet advances in the Middle East. Rather than negotiating adequately verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements to reduce the likelihood of war, Carter withdrew SALT II from Senate consideration and began a general build up of U.S. military power. Rather than seeking to engage the U.S.S.R. economically, Carter sanctioned the Soviets.

Yet Carter’s ambivalence, self-doubt, and instinct for the capillary continued, creating problems for the administration as they attempted to change course. A more thorough examination of this case should shed light on whether Carter’s tendency to split the difference among advisers and decide on half-measures was related to his lack of experience and whether this allowed minor shocks to mount until a major adjustment was necessary. Perhaps, had Carter followed the Nixon playbook of bold action up front, he may have avoided more severe negative shock and made only moderate adjustments. Carter did not seem to have a sense, at least

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949 When he flew to meet Brezhnev in Vienna in 1979 he refused to get off the plane with an umbrella for fear it would make him look like Neville Chamberlain. After announcing the Olympic boycott, Carter then tried to send a note to Brezhnev proposing a mere one-year postponement of the games if the Soviets left Afghanistan. He approved a higher defense budget at the end of this administration, but privately confessed the nation could not afford it. He remained committed to the thrust of détente, albeit a “shaky détente,” and his desire to be “Wilson and Truman at the same time” left him neither here nor there. Hamilton Jordan, Carter’s chief of staff, reflected on Carter’s confused June 1978 Naval Academy speech (though this was before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan): “Who the hell knows whether the president will not veer in some direction tomorrow or the day after tomorrow?” Quoted in Sestanovich, 213. Sestanovich argues Carter’s adjustment did not go far enough, that “he stubbornly defended his past choices even as he tried to move on. And the more he did so, the less voters were likely to understand him, or to think that an ambivalent president would help the country deal with the problems it faced.” Sestanovich, 217, 215.
initially, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Nor, as an inexperienced president, could he draw on a reservoir of public trust and confidence on foreign policy issues that is often necessary to weather negative shocks or to sell such preventive measures to voters (which when they are successfully can never be proven as such).

The following shows which of my hypotheses the Nixon and Carter mini-cases seem to support:

**H1A:** Strategic shocks, by revealing shortcomings in the current grand strategy and forcing debate within the presidency, create the pressure for and possibility of a strategic adjustment. *(Support)*

**H1B:** Foreign policy “surprises”—unexpected events that do not disconfirm the existing grand strategic approach—can still agitate the public and the president’s advisers, creating the pressure for and the possibility of a strategic adjustment. *(Support—but the distinction demands more detailed process tracing)*

**H1C:** Positive shocks and surprises, those that reveal new opportunities to advance U.S. interests or suggest a more benign international environment, put presidents in the domain of gains, making them more risk averse and more likely to make no adjustment or a moderate adjustment. *(Mixed Support)*

**H1D:** Negative shocks and surprises, those that reveal threats to U.S. interests or suggest a more hostile international environment, put presidents in the domain of losses, making them more risk acceptant and likely to make moderate adjustments or major adjustments. *(Support)*

**H1E:** In the face of strategic shocks and surprises, the president retains agency and the ability channel the pressure created by shocks and surprises in a particular direction. *(Support)*

**H2A:** Presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to adopt a grand strategy that avoids shock or severe, negative shock. *(Support)*

**H2B:** When operating in the domain of gain, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to take risks (i.e. only Nixon can go to China) and can overcome adviser risk-aversion and general inertia through their personal involvement in the foreign policy decision making process, and are therefore are more likely to make moderate adjustments. *(Support)*

**H2C:** When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with higher levels of foreign policy experience can afford to stay the course, resist pressure, maintain control of the adjustments process, and diffuse charges of “weakness,” and therefore are more likely to
make moderate adjustments. (Support)

**H2D:** Presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to adopt a grand strategy that encounters shock, particularly negative shock. (Support)

**H2E:** When operating in the domain of gain, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are less likely to take risks or get involved in the adjustment process and are therefore more likely to make no adjustment. (N/A—Reagan’s response to Gorbachev’s rise would be a good test of this hypothesis)

**H2F:** When operating in the domain of loss, presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more vulnerable to charges of “weakness,” more likely to take risks or lose control of the adjustment process and are therefore more likely to make major adjustments. (Support)

**H2G:** Since a major adjustment requires a shift from “fight” (staying stubbornly committed to the current course) to “flight” (overreacting to shock and corresponding pressure) it likely requires a dramatic, negative shock or a series of negative shocks. (Support)

This preliminary assessment shows that a detailed, focused comparison between Eisenhower and Nixon and Truman and Carter is a promising course of action to test the theory and advance this research agenda. These comparative cases should also shed light on whether foreign policy experience is appropriately measured and classified. For example, one could argue Nixon’s score on the Dyson-Preston scale is too low—he gets only one more point than Kennedy despite eight years as Vice President and eight subsequent years as a thought leader on national security issues. One could even make the case that Nixon assumed the presidency with more relevant experience than Eisenhower, as Eisenhower did not apprentice to be president for eight years.950

Despite their identical experience scores, Carter had executive experience as a governor

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that Truman did not.\textsuperscript{951} Both Carter and Truman had military experience, but Truman had a better combat record and served 37 years total if we account for his reserve duty (he retired as a Colonel). Comparing Carter to Truman should allow us to see if a major adjustment requires a higher threshold of shock or a series of similar shocks. Both Truman and Carter also raise the idea of whether shock will continue if a president refused to adjust—a failure to address the problem and a stubborn insistence on staying the course will only exacerbate global tensions and produce more negative feedback.\textsuperscript{952}

It may also be useful to compare Carter’s handling of a negative Soviet shock to Reagan’s handling of a positive Soviet shock of Mikhail Gorbachev becoming General Secretary of the Soviet Union on March 11, 1985. Here we have two low experience presidents dealing with different types of shock and thus operating in different domains. My theory predicts that Reagan would be more risk averse and thus stay the course.\textsuperscript{953} Some argue Reagan began driving a “reversal” in grand strategy while Yuri Andropov was still in power.\textsuperscript{954} Others contend that while Reagan exploited the shocking rise of Gorbachev and subsequent Soviet conciliations, he did not reverse his hard-line strategy, he simply watched it work.\textsuperscript{955} The Reagan case is also a

\textsuperscript{951} As Rodman argues, Carter’s experience as an engineer may have molded him into part of the “American pragmatic tradition, which considers issues case by case, leaning sometimes toward one view and sometimes toward the other, ‘on their merits.’” Rodman, 122.

\textsuperscript{952} For example, Brzezinski felt their failure to push back on the Soviet’s intervention in Ethiopia in early 1978 encouraged further Russian adventurism and doomed SALT even before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Rodman, 129.

\textsuperscript{953} The fact that Kissinger, Nixon, and many other foreign policy experts such as Senator Jesse Helms criticized Reagan harshly at the time for his optimistic (i.e. naïve) assessment of Gorbachev and his efforts to build trust with the Soviets also suggests Reagan was taking risks, which would disconfirm my theory. “What ultimately allowed Reagan’s grand strategy to succeed was his ability to learn from these early experiences [Able Archer crisis of 1983] and recalibrate accordingly. This constituted less of a ‘reversal’ than sometimes claimed, for Reagan persisted in many of his basic policies, and he had always planned to negotiations with Moscow eventually. But beginning in late 1983 and early 1984, the president did execute a key tactical shift by toning down his incendiary rhetoric, calling for an expanded bilateral dialogue, and seeking to build trust with the same Kremlin leadership he had so vociferously condemned.” Brands, 104.

\textsuperscript{954} Beth A. Fischer, The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

\textsuperscript{955} As Kissinger remarked, “When it was all said and done, a president with the shallowest academic background was to develop a foreign policy of extraordinary consistency and relevance.” Quoted in Gaddis, Strategies, 376. See
tough test of the hypothesis (H2D) that predicts presidents with lower levels of foreign policy experience are more likely to adopt a grand strategy that encounters negative shock. Reagan was an allegedly low-experience president who seems to have read the geopolitical situation correctly and, by staying committed to his strategic course, he avoided severe, negative shock. Yet Reagan did experience major setbacks along the way—the 1983 Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut leading to the withdrawal from Lebanon, the Soviets shooting down KAL 007 in September 1983, and the Iran-Contra scandal to name a few—and examining his response to negative shocks should prove a good test for the theory. 956

Post-Cold War Cases: Strategic Adjustment Within the Framework of Primacy

Since my theory only explains adjustment within a dominant strategic framework, and I sought to control the polarity of the system in my case selection, we cannot compare Cold War cases to post-Cold War cases. 957 Many argue that no dominant strategic framework has yet replaced containment. 958 Some question whether grand strategy is even possible in the present day. 959 Others suggest it may not be necessary. 960 Notwithstanding these challenges, the refined

also Dueck, Hard Line, 189-231. “The Ronald Reagan of our current historical imaginings was someone who liked to put himself in the other guy’s shoes, who wanted to discover that there was just no good reason to keep fighting the Cold War. The Ronald Reagan who sat in the Oval Office had a different view. He did not like to give in.” Sestanovich, 223.
956 “The process by which the president [Reagan] and his advisers turned this strategy into the everyday work of government was often an embarrassment. The administration lurched from crisis to crisis. That it avoided major direct military involvement was a virtual necessity; senior officials were too divided for the rigors of wartime.” Sestanovich, 242.
957 Containment disappeared with the Soviet Union. “As a result, Reagan’s successor, George H. W. Bush, inherited a world in which the threat containment was meant to contain no longer existed.” Gaddis, Strategies, 343. Yet Colin Dueck contends the U.S. has always pursued a mix of strategies or “hybrid strategies, which vary by time and place, and combine the advantages (or disadvantages) of pure strategic types such as integration and containment.” The Obama Doctrine, 23.
958 Gaddis argues that in contrast to the Cold War, the U.S. now faces a “grand strategic deficit.” “What is Grand Strategy?” Others suggest the U.S. has pursued a coherent grand strategy of building democratic peace since the end of the Cold War. See Paul D. Miller, 49-76; Colby, 8; Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, Regaining Strategic Competence: Strategy for the Long Haul (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009).
typological theory should offer insights into how presidents after Reagan have changed and will change course. Post-Cold War presidents have worked within similar geopolitical conditions of U.S. primacy, with the U.S. as the world’s sole superpower. Most have explicitly sought as the goal of their grand strategy to preserve and extend this primacy, maintaining the U.S.-led international order.\footnote{President Clinton rejected not only the usefulness of grand strategy, but also its existence, arguing strategic coherence was imposed on presidential decisions after the fact by scholars and historians. Clinton, however, was criticized for lacking a grand strategy. In emphasizing the limits of U.S. power and deemphasizing the need for a new grand strategy, President Obama said: “I don’t really even need George Kennan right now.” Quoted in David Remnick, “Going the Distance: On and Off the Road with Barack Obama,” The New Yorker, January, 27, 2014.} Table 7 displays what my typological theory predicts for post-Cold War presidents operating within this framework.

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**Table 7: Strategic Adjustment After the Cold War**

George H. W. Bush (Bush 41) is the only high-experience president among the post-Cold War cases. With a score of 36 on the Dyson-Preston scale, he brought more foreign policy experience to the White House than anyone since Eisenhower. He faced a negative shock when

\footnote{As Sestanovitch argues, the myth of foreign policy consensus during the Cold War has been repackaged and replaced by another myth: a single set of ideas about American global primacy. Presidents fear challenging this primacy narrative because if they do they will look weak. Thus, Barack Obama’s opposition to the Iraq War meant he had to find another war to be for and he embraced Afghanistan to look tough. “Our leaders have been so afraid of populist nationalism that they supported policies they didn’t believe in, even wars they knew would end badly.” Sestanovitch, 10. “Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, no other power—not Japan, China, India, or Russia, nor any European country, nor the EU (European Union)—has increased its capabilities sufficiently to transform itself into a pole.” Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 13.}
Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on August 1, 1990, which challenged some of the optimistic assumptions of Bush 41’s emerging “New World Order” and forestalled a defense reduction plan that the administration was going to roll out the very month that Iraq invaded.\textsuperscript{962} We remember the ensuing Persian Gulf War not only for the Bush Administration’s stunning military success, but also for the president’s restraint (i.e. moderation) in deciding “to end the ground combat after one hundred hours, leaving important units of Saddam’s Republican Guard to escape and forsaking any military action to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime in Baghdad.”\textsuperscript{963} Thus, faced with a negative shock, it seems Bush 41 made a moderate adjustment and did not veer wildly off course. It may also be useful to evaluate Bush 41’s management of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, what can be viewed as a positive shock and which prompted an extended strategic review of U.S.-Soviet policy as the beginning of his administration. This however, may be a reorientation of grand strategy driven by a change in the polarity of the system and thus outside my theory.

Bill Clinton had executive experience as a governor, but little foreign policy experience (he gets one point from Preston and Dyson). He was also elected at a time when foreign policy issues were overshadowed by economic concerns, and the Clinton campaign even argued that Bush 41’s focus on foreign policy distracted him from more important issues. Similar to Carter, Clinton’s advisers were a mix of doves skeptical of military intervention such as Secretary of State Warren Christopher and those with more hawkish views such as Al Gore and Madeleine Albright. His administration stumbled early on with timid, ineffectual responses to crises in Bosnia, Iraq, and Haiti. Clinton experienced an acute negative shock with the downing of two

\textsuperscript{962} Margaret Thatcher reportedly played a role in convincing Bush 41 in Aspen that Saddam Hussein was like Hitler and that appeasement would only invite further aggression. “Bush resolved then and there to roll back the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.” Welch, \textit{Painful Choices}, 11.

\textsuperscript{963} Rodman, 199.
helicopters and death of 18 servicemen in Somalia in 1993. This seemed initially to reinforce his anti-interventionist tendencies and timidity when dealing with subsequent crises in Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Yemen. Yet as problems mounted in Bosnia and Kosovo, Clinton eventually overcame bureaucratic infighting within his administration, domestic criticism, and his own hesitation to implement a more robust and successful foreign policy in his second term.964

George W. Bush (Bush 43) gets zero experience points from the Dyson-Preston system, though he had executive experience in both business and government and had served in the Air National Guard. He campaigned criticizing the Clinton administration’s belief in nation-building and promised to be selective and discriminating in his use of military force.965 Prior to 9/11 his main foreign policy priority was to deploy missile defense systems. Confronted with 9/11, perhaps the most severe negative shock since Pearl Harbor, he embarked on a major strategic adjustment, what could even be considered a complete reorientation of U.S. grand strategy.966 Yet the degree of his adjustment cannot be explained solely in terms of the degree of shock.967 While Bush definitely faced enormous pressure to “do something,” he did not have to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, or embark on a broader program of democracy promotion in the Middle

964 “American involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo in Bill Clinton’s second term is the story of a recovery of lost ground—of a president gradually leading his government to overcome his inhibitions and internal divisions and marshal the leverage to give effect to its diplomatic aspirations.” Rodman, 220.  

965 “I would take the use of force very seriously. I would be guarded in my approach. I don’t think we can be all things to all people in the world. I think we’ve got to be very careful when we commit our troops. The vice president and I have a disagreement about the use of troops. He believes in nation-building. I would be very careful about using our troops as nation-builders.” Quoted in Welch, Painful Choices, 1. Bush 43 assumed office promoting a kind of “hard-nosed realism in foreign affairs, but not toward increased interventionism abroad.” Dueck, Hard Line, 270.  

966 The 2002 National Security Strategy of “primacy and preemption” not only shifted from Bush’s pre-9/11 geopolitical code but was also potentially “the most important reformulation of U.S. grand strategy in over half a century.” Gaddis, A Grand Strategy of Transformation. Bush wrote in his diary on the night of 9/11: “The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today.” Quoted in Welch, Painful Choices, 2.  

967 The fact that U.S. grand strategy failed to prioritize terrorism prior to 9/11, despite the al Qaeda’s earlier attack on the World Trade Center and Bin Laden’s declaration of war on the United States, is also puzzling and may support the idea of mounting negative shocks that, if left unaddressed, culminate in severe shock. “What is striking and surprising in retrospect, in other words, is not how dramatically American policy changed after 9/11 so much as how little it changed beforehand.” Welch, Painful Choices, 3.
East. As president, he retained agency and chose this course. Yet as an inexperienced president, he seems to have lost control of the adjustment process to strong-willed and more-experienced advisers. In contrast to his father, he set ambitious objectives in Iraq that were not adequately resourced and he was not able withstand mission creep. Yet in ordering the surge, Bush 43 subsequently bent the national security bureaucracy to his will, defied significant domestic political pressures, and implemented an appropriately resourced (and largely successful) strategy.

President Obama is a difficult case for my theory. He is a low-experience president and gets three points on the Dyson-Preston calculator for his three years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and two years living in Jakarta.\(^\text{968}\) Despite this low score, Obama gained national prominence as a state senator in 2002 for his early opposition to the Iraq War, what he called a “dumb war…a rash war.”\(^\text{969}\) By the time he ran for president, his anti-war stance paid political dividends, turning a key foreign policy issue into a source of strength against Hillary Clinton. For her part, Clinton tried to exploit Obama’s lack of experience, suggesting he was unready to receive a “3:00am phone call” as commander-in-chief. Obama further argued the “dumb war” in Iraq had distracted from the just war in Afghanistan and the urgent task of catching Osama Bin Laden. During his first presidential debate with John McCain on September 26, 2008, he called for a military surge in Afghanistan with 2 to 3 additional brigades. Writing in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* in 2007 he pledged to bring the Iraq war to a “responsible end” (removing all combat brigades by March 31, 2008 and leaving behind a minimal “over-the-horizon” force), to refocus attention on Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of a “comprehensive

\(^{968}\) He chaired the Subcommittee on European Affairs and also served on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs in the 110th Congress. An alternative interpretation of the Dyson-Preston system would give him 5 points for his time in the Senate (7 total), but Obama would still be inexperienced.

strategy to defeat global terrorists,” and to reinvigorate the Arab-Israeli peace process.970

Once in office, President Obama charted a course largely consistent with these promises. On February 27, 2009, he announced he was extending the timeline for Iraq withdrawal by 10 months, but declared the combat mission over by August 31, 2010 and announced the full withdrawal on October 21, 2011 (the last troops would not leave until December 18, 2011). Though he failed to secure a status-of-forces agreement that would have enabled the “over-the-horizon” force he had earlier advocated, Obama nonetheless argued the U.S. was leaving behind a “sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq.”

In Afghanistan, he approved sending 17,000 additional troops on February 17, 2009. After commissioning a broader review of Afghanistan-Pakistan policy, he announced a surge of 30,000 additional troops at West Point on December 1, 2009 and set July 2011 as the date he would withdraw these troops. He largely kept these promises. On June 22, 2011 Obama announced he would withdraw 10,000 troops by the end of 2011 and 23,000 more by summer 2012. Obama subsequently withdrew the last of the surge forces by September 2012 and phased withdrawals of remaining forces continue. The president announced the end of the combat mission in Afghanistan on December 28, 2014. At present, approximately 9,800 troops remain in Afghanistan. But recently, in response to deteriorating conditions on the ground and requests for help from Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Obama abandoned his plans to withdraw all U.S. troops by the end of his presidency. Instead he intends to leave 5,500 troops to conduct training and counterterrorism missions.971

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971 “Following the 2009 ‘surge,’ U.S. force levels reached a high of 100,000 in mid-2011, then fell to 68,000 (‘surge recovery’) by September 20, 2012, and to 34,000 by February 2014. Current U.S. force level is about 9,800 plus about 6,400 forces from NATO partners in the ‘Resolute Support Mission’ that trains and enables the ANDSF,” Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” U.S. Congressional
Separately, Obama pursued diplomatic rapprochement with Iran, Cuba, and Russia, authorized the special operations raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, and called for a “New Beginning” with the Muslim world at a prominent speech in Cairo in June 2, 2009, with a particular emphasis on the need for a Palestinian state. All of these initiatives were part of a broader grand strategic effort to reduce American commitments in the Middle East, rebalance to Asia, and focus on “nation-building at home.”

Most of the shocks President Obama has confronted have been negative, particularly in the Middle East. On December 17, 2010, a Tunisian street vendor lit himself on fire in response to government abuse, sparking popular uprisings throughout the Arab world. The Obama Administration initially tried to seize this shock as what the President in May 2011 called a “historic opportunity” and a “chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator.” (Two years before, however, Obama had refused to support the “Green Movement” popular uprising in Iran.) While Tunisia continues to muddle along in its transition to democracy, seizing this opportunity in other parts of the Middle

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972 As two of Obama’s top Middle East advisers recently argued: “The Obama administration has clearly pulled back from the United States’ recent interventionism in the Middle East, notwithstanding the rise of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) and the U.S.-led air war against it.” Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, “The End of Pax Americana: Why Washington’s Middle East Pullback Makes Sense,” Foreign Affairs 94, no. 6 (November/December 2015): 2-10. Dueck argues this is a hybrid strategy “with a special emphasis on international accommodation and retrenchment, an the ultimate purpose of that new strategy—as Obama also made clear—was not only to encourage a more cooperative and peaceful international order, but to permit a fresh domestic focus on liberal or progressive policy reforms within the United States.” The Obama Doctrine, 47. During his West Point speech President Obama highlighted Eisenhower’s deliberate approach to U.S. national security, one in which competing proposals were carefully weighed against the broader “need to maintain balance in and among national programs.” Critics contended that Obama’s allusion (though clever considering it was delivered at the Eisenhower Hall Theater at WestPoint) was mere illusion—announcing a new regional strategy in Southwest Asia made little sense absent an overarching, grand strategy. See, for example, Lawrence J. Korb, Sean Duggan and Laura Conley, “Overall Strategy is Needed,” Washington Times, December 17, 2009, 21. More sympathetic observers such as Dan Drezner have argued Obama has had two grand strategies: (1) multilateral retrenchment “designed to curtail the United States’ overseas commitments, restore its standing in the world, and shift burdens on to global partners,” and, after this strategy did not perform well, (2) counterpunching or asserting “its influence and ideals across the globe when challenged by other countries, reassuring allies and signaling resolve to rivals.” “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?”
East has been difficult. In Egypt, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood provoked a military coup (though the Obama Administration refused to name it as such), a return to increasingly authoritarian government, and a return to the status quo of supporting the repressive regime. In Libya, Obama conducted a bombing campaign that led to the fall of Gaddafi and that was initially held up by the administration of a model of an effective, multilateral military operation in support of clear and limited objectives.\(^973\) Subsequently four Americans, including the U.S. Ambassador, were killed in Libya, which according to the State Department is now officially a terrorist safe haven. Yemen is still engulfed in civil war, and the administration has provided only limited support to a Saudi-led military intervention.

The most severe negative shocks, however, have come from Syria and Iraq. In Syria, the civil war has killed over 250,000 and produced the greatest refugee crisis since World War II, one that is destabilizing the European Union. The Syrian conflict also enabled the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS). ISIS used its safe haven in Syria to take over Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, in June 2014, some six months after seizing Fallujah and Ramadi. In response the Obama Administration has conducted a multilateral air campaign in Iraq and Syria and sent approximately 3,100 military advisers to Iraq.\(^974\)

\(^973\) “In just one month, the United States has worked with our international partners to mobilize a broad coalition, secure an international mandate to protect civilians, stop an advancing army, prevent a massacre, and establish a no-fly zone with our allies and partners. To lend some perspective on how rapidly this military and diplomatic response came together, when people were being brutalized in Bosnia in the 1990s, it took the international community more than a year to intervene with air power to protect civilians. It took us 31 days.” Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya,” Presidential Remarks, National Defense University, Washington, DC, March 28, 2011.

\(^974\) Despite ISIS’s active presence in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq for two years prior, this rapid seizure of large swaths of territory seemed to shock the foreign policy establishment. Congressional hawks such as John McCain inveighed against the administration not only for hastily pulling all U.S. troop out of Iraq in 2011, but also for failing to act immediately to respond “as ISIS, the most radical terrorist group alive, sweeps across Iraq.” McCain further suggested the Obama’s entire national security team should resign in disgrace. A week after the Mosul crisis Obama’s approval ratings on foreign policy hit a new low of 37 percent. Kevin Baron, “McCain Calls for Obama's National Security Team to Resign Over Iraq,” National Journal, June 12, 2014. “As clouds gather abroad, a new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll finds Mr. Obama's job approval rating at 41%, matching a previous low. Approval of his handling of foreign policy hit a new low of 37%. Both numbers are driven in part by conflicts.
Separately, Secretary of State John Kerry’s nine-month intensive push for an Arab-Israeli peace deal collapsed and war broke out between Hamas and Israel in Gaza. Beyond the Middle East, Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and seizure of Crimea has ended any hope for a “reset” with Russia. China’s cyber attacks against the U.S. and increasingly provocative actions in the South and East China Sea have also added to the general sense of foreign policy crisis. Appearing on Face the Nation on July 27, 2014, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright captured the mood: “To put it mildly, the world is a mess.”

My theory predicts that President Obama, as an inexperienced president, would make a major strategic adjustment in response to such negative shocks, either by losing control of the adjustment process to strong-willed advisers or triggering the “flight” instinct and a need to “do something.” It is too early to tell, but the evidence so far suggests no such adjustment is underway. Certainly the administration has made tactical adjustments in Iraq and Afghanistan,

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976 Obama seems to have consistently overruled more hawkish advisers such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and David Petraeus and stuck to his overriding desire to reduce commitments to the Middle East. As the former deputy national security advisor to Vice President Biden described, Obama truly believes he was elected to end wars and wean America off its reliance on military instruments of power: “There’s just a fundamental strategic framework for him that tilts toward not intervening and looking to see what other instruments are available to deal with a crisis.” Quoted in Kathleen Hennessey and Christi Parsons, “Obama’s Mideast Airstrike Refrain: ‘And Then What?’” Los Angeles Times, June 19, 2014. Obama’s strategic framework was more colorfully described, reportedly by the president’s himself in a conversation with journalists aboard air force one: “don’t do stupid shit.” David Rothkopf, “Obama’s ‘Don’t Do Stupid Shit’ Foreign Policy,” Foreign Policy, June 4, 2014
and one can even argue Obama lost control of the adjustment process early on when it came to
the Afghanistan surge.\footnote{http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/04/obama_dont_do_stupid_shit_foreign_policy_bowe_bergdahl, (accessed June 19, 2014). This was a more concise formulation of Obama’s unplanned response to a question during a press conference in Manila on April 28, 2014. The president was asked to lay out his foreign policy vision, to describe the guiding principle of the Obama Doctrine and respond to the critics suggesting this guiding principle is weakness. Obama pushed back on the critics for promoting the use of military force, accusing them of not thinking through what military force might actually accomplish. Military force, Obama continued, should only be deployed wisely and as a last resort. The critics, on the other hand, “would go headlong into a bunch of military adventures that the American people had no interest in participating in and would not advance our core security interests.” The problem, as Obama saw it, is that the critics have not learned the lesson of the last decade of war, particularly the “disastrous decision” to invade Iraq. He had learned the lesson and his job as Commander-in-Chief is to resist the militaristic impulse and recognize that not all of the world’s problems are immediately solvable by the United States. Obama finished with: “And that may not always be sexy. That may not always attract a lot of attention, and it doesn’t make for good argument on Sunday morning shows. But it avoids errors. You hit singles, you hit doubles; every once in a while we may be able to hit a home run. But we steadily advance the interests of the American people and our partnership with folks around the world.” Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by President Obama and President Benigno Aquino III of the Philippines in Joint Press Conference,” Presidential Remarks, Manila, Philippines, April 28, 2014.} Yet most critics contend the president remains unwilling to adjust and committed to his course, particularly committed to avoiding deploying “boots on the ground” in the Middle East.\footnote{``Does he have the intellectual honesty, the cognitive flexibility, to admit his approach has utterly failed and that a new one is in order? Can the man whose presidency was predicated on ending wars now summon the will and fortitude to prosecute one against a group that “now controls a volume of resources and territory unmatched in the history of extremist organizations”?’’ Peter Wehner, “Why Obama Must Sharpen His Strategy Against Islamic Militants,” Wall Street Journal, August 22, 2014, http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2014/08/22/why-obama-must-sharpen-his-strategy-against-islamic-militants/ (accessed August 25, 2014).} David Rothkopf argues Obama’s insistence on being the anti-Bush has placed blinders on his foreign policy approach, making him resistant “both to learning from his past errors and to managing his team so that future errors are prevented. It is hard to think of a recent president who has grown so little in office.”\footnote{Rothkopf also highlights enduring weaknesses in Obama’s management style and the structure of his decision-making process. Rothkopf argues these deficiencies stem from Obama’s lack of foreign policy experience. David Rothkopf, “National Insecurity: Can Obama’s Foreign Policy be Saved?” Foreign Policy (September/October, 2014), http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/09/national-insecurity/ (accessed November 5, 2014), 46.} A related criticism is that the president backed away from his red line in Syria and has failed to enlist key regional allies in the fight against ISIS.
because of his broader rapprochement with Iran and corresponding pursuit of a “new equilibrium” in the region.980

Certainly the Obama Administration views the nuclear deal with Iran—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—as a major foreign policy achievement and a positive development that could outweigh the other negative shocks coming from the Middle East. Additionally, the administration’s rhetoric when announcing important policy changes such as sending special operations forces to Northern Syria (which they argue does not constitute “boots on the ground”), has stressed these are small changes in pursuit of a consistent strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS.981 Even when faced with criticism after ISIS killed 129 people in Paris, 224 people on board a Russian airliner downed in the Sinai, and 43 people in

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980 See, for example, Michael Doran, “Obama’s Secret Iran Strategy,” Mosaic, February 2, 2015, http://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/2015/02/obamas-secret-iran-strategy/ Secretary Hagel was reportedly fired by Obama largely due to differences over the administration’s Syria policy. Hagel wrote a sharp, highly-critical two-page memo to Susan Rice warning that the anti-ISIS coalition was doomed to fail unless the administration clarified its policy with respect to Assad. Hagel was concerned U.S. airstrikes would be perceived as indirectly helping Asad, and thereby serve to alienate key Sunni Arab allies in Syria, Iraq, and throughout the region. Hagel was also criticized for describing the ISIS threats in expansive terms—“unlike anything we’ve ever seen”—at a time when the administration was trying to be more measured. See Hussein Ibish, “Hagel-Ian Dialectic: Hagel’s Dismissal Won’t Make Obama’s Syria Conundrum Go Away,” NOW Lebanon, November 26, 2014. “Hagel therefore joins the distinguished and growing list of former administration officials deeply connected to Syria policy who have openly expressed their frustration at the Obama approach. Numerous former officials including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former CIA director David Petraeus, former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, former adviser for transition in Syria Frederic Hof, and many others are on record as not only disagreeing with the administration policy on Syria, but identifying some of it as part of the problem.” See also, Elizabeth Drew, “The Firing of Chuck Hagel,” The New York Review, November 25, 2014. See also, Jeffrey Goldberg, “A Withering Critique of Obama’s National Security Council,” The Atlantic, November 12, 2014.

981 On September 24, 2013, President Obama addressed the UN General Assembly and highlighted his administration’s efforts to end conflicts in the Middle East. “Five years ago, nearly 180,000 Americans were serving in harm’s way, and the war in Iraq was the dominant issue in our relationship with the rest of the world. Today all of our troops have left Iraq. Next year an international coalition will end its war in Afghanistan, having achieved its mission of dismantling the core of al Qaeda that attacked us on 9/11.” This was part of broader effort to shift away from “a perpetual war footing” by bringing troops home and more broadly attempting to deploy military capabilities in a way that aligns with American ideals. Obama argued that these efforts have paid off: “the world is more stable than it was five years ago.” Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly,” Presidential Remarks, New York, September 24, 2013. A year later, after the rise of ISIS, Obama spoke to the UN General Assembly about the “cancer of violent extremism” which he cast as a symptom of a broader problem: “the failure of our international system to keep pace with an interconnected world.” But Obama framed confronting this threat in terms of past success, his “focused” and “methodical” campaign against core al Qaeda in Afghanistan and against al Qaeda’s associated forces more broadly, and ability to avoid basing his entire foreign policy on a reaction to terrorism. Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly,” Presidential Remarks, New York, September 24, 2014.
Lebanon, President Obama has struck a defiant tone and rejected the idea that he needs to change his strategy.\(^982\)

In other words, Obama seems determined to stay the course, and time will tell whether he is able to.\(^983\) This will have important implications for my theory. Indeed, as an inexperienced president attempting to implement a grand strategy that relies heavily on engagement with longstanding adversaries, Obama may offer the best test of the “only Nixon can go to China” hypothesis.

**Limits**

There are at least five limits to my refined typological theory of strategic adjustment.

First eliminating the domestic political slack variable seems to ignore a simple and consistent lesson of history: domestic political pressures affect presidential foreign policy choices. Moreover, presidents who wish to sustain their grand strategies over the long-term must get buy-in from the American people and their elected representatives.\(^984\) Given the desire by the political party opposed to the president to gain power, all strategic choices by a president will eventually encounter resistance, irrespective of their success or broader appeals to the “national interest.”\(^985\)

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\(^982\) He further criticized those advocating for putting military troops on the ground as posing and trying to look tough. “But what I'm not interested in doing is posing or pursuing some notion of American leadership or America winning, or whatever other slogans they come up with that has no relationship to what is actually going to work to protect the American people, and to protect people in the region who are getting killed, and to protect our allies and people like France. I'm too busy for that.” Barack Obama, “Press Conference by President Obama -- Antalya, Turkey,” Presidential Press Conference, Antalya, Turkey, November 16, 2015, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/press-conference-president-obama-antalya-turkey](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/press-conference-president-obama-antalya-turkey) (accessed November 18, 2015).

\(^983\) As Robert Kagan recently argued, Americans remain paralyzed by Iraq, and Obama “is both the political beneficiary and the living symbol of this paralysis. Whether he has the desire or capacity to adjust to changing circumstances is an open question. Other presidents have—from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Roosevelt to Bill Clinton—each of whom was forced to recalibrate what the loss or fracturing of Europe would mean to American interests. In Mr. Obama’s case, however, such a late-in-the-game recalculation seems less likely. He may be the first president since the end of World War II who simply doesn’t care what happens to Europe.” Robert Kagan, “The Crisis of World Order,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 20, 2015.

\(^984\) “Symmetrical or asymmetrical strategies if they are to succeed must be capable of winning public and Congressional support.” Gaddis, *Strategies*, 302; 313.

\(^985\) Different actors and political parties can define the national interest in different ways to suit their political interests or regional bias. See, for example, Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
As Chapters II-IV revealed, even the so-called “Cold War consensus” was a time of intense political debates over national security issues. But beyond the deficiencies in modeling shock (and in Trubowitz’s innenpolitik argument) explored in Chapter I, my empirical work suggests strategic shock creates an opportunity for presidents to shape and harness domestic political pressures to their advantage. When combined with the enormous structural advantage of the presidency on matters of national security in general and grand strategy in particular, I am left to conclude that presidents who are truly committed can change course. The Nixon and Carter cases should provide a good test of this argument.

Second, while my refined theory now accounts for different types of shock—positive vs. negative—it does not account for the degree of shock. All other things being equal, we would expect greater shocks to produce greater adjustments. We could add a classification of shock as major or minor to produce a more complex typological theory, but without further research it is unclear whether this would add anything. A related problem is that severe shocks like Pearl Harbor and 9/11 (i.e. attacks on U.S. soil) rare, and the norm for most administrations is a series of smaller shocks mounting up over time. My typology currently has no way of aggregating shock or accounting for the fact that negative and positive shocks occur simultaneously throughout administrations. Negative shocks also seem to be far more common than positive shocks, which raises the question of whether positive vs. negative is the right and most important distinction. The timing of the shock may also matter. For example, a shock that occurs in the “honeymoon period” early in a president’s first term may have a greater impact than one that occurs in the lame-duck period, when a president may feel it is not worth embarking on a major adjustment. Relatedly, while I hypothesize that the type of shock places presidents in either the domain of gains or domain of losses, pursuing a geopolitical gain might actually involve
weathering a domestic loss—these domains might have different dynamics at home or abroad.

Third, while using Gaddis’ concept of geopolitical codes and the shifts from asymmetric to symmetric containment is a useful proxy for major adjustment, it is hard to apply to the post-Cold War universe of cases. Since I have controlled for the polarity of the system, this means I cannot say much about the effects of changes in polarity or system structure. There is also no clear proxy for lesser forms of adjustment or a consistent rule that easily allows us to distinguish between no adjustment and moderate adjustment. The Appendix proposes a detailed framework for modeling outcomes on the dependent variable, but even this system still requires the researcher to make a call after doing process tracing and evaluating the case in-depth. This is often difficult because changes to grand strategy do not need to be obvious changes of direction, they can instead be changes in speed/resources/intensity towards the same goal/direction. For example, while President Obama may have rejected the idea he would change his strategy for degrading and ultimately defeating ISIS, he did call for an intensification of this existing strategy.

Fourth, the agnosticism of the theory may be a problem. Currently, I do not care about the type of grand strategy a president pursues or the type of adjustment he or she makes, just the degree of adjustment from the initial course. And yet different types of strategies seem to trigger different processes and value judgments about the success or failure of these strategies inevitably affect my analysis. For example, it may not be a coincidence that more dovish or “détente type” strategies—Carter, early Bush 43, and Obama (possibly Truman 1.0)—encountered negative shock. Negative shock could be nothing more than U.S. adversaries attempting to fill a vacuum left by a president they view as a retrencher. In other words, there may be something to the aphorism that “weakness” invites aggression. Alternatively, overly aggressive grand strategies—

986 I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
Truman 2.0 and Bush 43 post 9/11—may themselves produce negative shock. In either case, the type of strategy the president chooses matters. The type of strategy or strategic adjustment the president chooses may also be influenced by party affiliation. For example, in the present-day Republicans have to placate a base that is generally more hawkish than their Democratic counterparts, one that punishes perceptions of “weakness” and rewards “strength.” Thus, they may find it more difficult to resist making a major adjustment in response to negative shocks or more difficult to take advantage of positive shocks, despite their level of experience.

Republicans may also benefit from certain psychological factors that favor hawkish positions.

Figure 10 below demonstrates that Republicans have, on balance, recently enjoyed an advantage on foreign policy issues. And yet the Republican party has housed perhaps the most powerful strain of isolationist foreign policy in recent years. Both parties have been on the internationalist side regarding policy when they hold the Presidency, or on the isolationist/populist side when they do not hold the Presidency.

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987 Nau describes a cycle of retreat, in which America indulges in self-restraint, leaving the world “at its own peril. When it left Europe in 1919, World War II followed. When it left Europe again in 1945, the Cold War followed. And when it retreated from Vietnam, the Soviet Union established naval bases in Cam Ranh Bay, invaded Afghanistan, and projected Soviet military power for the first time into Africa. As America leaves Iraq and Afghanistan, different but equally dangerous events are likely to follow. America is ending its involvements in wars, but wars themselves are not ending. Indeed, witness Syria, Lebanon, and Pakistan. The country enjoys a brief and false respite of peace, but when it returns to the fight, as history predicts it will, the costs will be much higher and more blood will be shed because the United States failed to arm its diplomacy throughout.” Nau, 6-7

988 There also seem to be partisan implications for how presidents structure their national security process, with most Democrats favoring a collegial/informal model and Republicans favoring a more formalistic/structured model. See Rodman, 123.


990 Poughies, “Republicans Have Regained the Foreign Policy Edge,” FiveThirtyEight, June 19, 2014

http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/republicans-have-regained-the-foreign-policy-edge/ (accessed June 19, 2014). This coincides with a 2014 poll from Fox News showing 46 percent of registered voters prefer Republicans on foreign policy compared to the Democrats 35 percent. This is a wider gap than on any other issue in the survey except for the question of which party is more pro-business. In late June, a joint New York Times/CBS News poll of Republicans and Democrats showed 58 percent of Americans (including a third of democrats) disapproved of Obama’s handling of foreign policy, the highest disapproval level since he took office. At the same time, 51 percent of American approved of his decision to send 300 military advisers to Iraq in response to ISIS’s takeover of large parts of the country and 56 percent supported the use of drones in Iraq. Michael D. Shear and Dalia Sussman, “Poll Finds Dissatisfaction Over Iraq,” New York Times, June 23, 2014.

991 I thank Andy Bennett for suggesting this point.
Fifth and finally, my case studies show that outcomes on the dependent variable are highly contingent not only on the type of shock, but also on the individual personalities of the president and his closest advisers. It is extremely difficult to consistently model such personalities and how they interact to affect policy outcomes. Presidents, like all humans, are a mix of often-contradictory impulses and emotions. Nixon is usually cited as the best example of this, but even presidents that we remember as simple and straightforward such as Truman exhibit such contradictions.

Thus, while the major decision of my dissertation has been to simplify the typological theory, by moving further towards the individual-level of analysis and wading deeper

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992 This is particularly true when an administration is involved in war. “Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable an uncontrollable events.” Sir Winston Churchill, My Early Life: A Roving Commission (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930), 214.

993 “Harry Truman, the simple man from Missouri, showed a number of contradictions and complexities. He was a humble yet cocky, gentle but tough, honest yet accepted dishonesty in associates, anti-intellectual but well read in history, personally unimaginative but innovative in office. He could become angry quickly but did not become violent. A ‘common man,’ he saw himself as Cincinnatus, the Roman citizen/political leader. He could talk bluntly and sometimes indiscreetly to the press, yet, as a senator, he was never known to snap at a staff member. He was a reformer who was both personally conservative and hailed from a corrupt political machine; a racist by upbringing who split his party back backing civil rights legislation.” Rubenzer and Faschingbauer, 193.
into political psychology, I may have actually made the theory more contingent upon the personality of each particular president and thus less generalizable.

**Contributions to Theory and Policy**

Despite these limits, by exploring the case studies mentioned above, I hope to improve my theory and advance this research agenda over time. These are relatively uncharted waters. International relations theory currently has models for grand strategy change between dominant frameworks, but not for adjustment within a dominant framework such as containment. I have attempted to build such a theory and hope to have made a small contribution not only to theory but also, through my archival research, to the historical understanding of my particular cases.

If the refined typological theory and related hypotheses remain unconvincing, this dissertation has at least provided support for some prevailing wisdom. For example, I found inertia to be a dominant force in presidential administrations. There seems to be a honeymoon period at the outset of administrations, but once a president decides on a grand strategic course, the bias favors the status quo and changing course requires shock. The national security bureaucracy and individual biases resist change.994 Not only does changing course amount to a de facto admission that the president was wrong, but since nearly all presidents come into office inveighing against the poor performance of their predecessor, it may also amount to de facto recognition that their opponent was right.995 This is also why cases of continuity between

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994 Perhaps this is why the most powerful person in the world often feel powerless to effect change: “I’m inheriting a world that could blow up any minute in half a dozen ways, and I will have some powerful but limited and perhaps dubious tools to keep it from happening.” Barack Obama, quoted in Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 11.

995 “Presidents are rarely made by endorsing their predecessors.” Gaddis, Strategies, 124. “American foreign policy swings like a pendulum. It promotes realist goals of stability at one time, liberal internationalist goals of spreading democracy at another. And it rotates realist means of military power with liberal internationalist instruments of multilateralism. Often it swings between presidents. But sometimes it swings in the middle of the same presidency.” Nau attributes these pendulum swings in large part to partisanship, or the president’s desire to distance himself from his predecessor. Thus W. Bush’s foreign policy was “anything but Clinton” while Obama’s was “anything but Bush.” Nau, 61.
administrations, particularly administrations of opposite political parties, are puzzling and worthy of greater scholarly attention.

I also found support for the aphorism that “only Nixon can go to China,” and I have tried teasing out how this works and turning it into a more testable hypothesis. This points to a broader and obvious conclusion: foreign policy experience matters and seems to improve presidential performance. Presidents with experience are more likely to formulate and implement a workable grand strategy that is sustainable and avoids negative strategic shock. Presidents who chart the wrong course and do not adjust are punished, and change only when they realize staying the course will result in greater punishment. The experienced commander-in-chief tends to take immediate action, making moderate adjustments and thus avoiding a bigger change later on.

Testing my refined theory and extending this research agenda also has important policy implications. We are in the midst of a presidential election where most Republican candidates are eager to prove their foreign policy chops, seemingly disregarding the maxim that economic issues dominate campaigns. Beyond the general tendency of Republicans to rally around the hawkish criticism of the outgoing administration, this could be a response to recent polling, which shows national security and terrorism to be the top priority for Republican voters (27 percent compared with 13 percent for democrats). Alternatively it could reflect the field’s anticipation that any Republican nominee will have to beat a former Secretary of State with

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996 “[F]oreign policy is most likely to change dramatically when leaders expect the status quo to generate continued painful losses.” Welch, Painful Choices, 8.
997 While Truman and Carter provide the best examples of this phenomenon, one could even argue that there were a series of subsidiary shocks leading up to Sputnik: the Suez crisis leading to the Eisenhower Doctrine, and the subsequent defense of the Eisenhower doctrine through sending Marines to Lebanon to support the government of Camille Chamoun against Communist subversion and Nasser’s pan Arabism.
extensive foreign policy experience.

In the 2008 primary, Obama had to do just that, and he adopted an asymmetric strategy. Obama used Hillary Clinton’s experience against her, citing it as evidence she was a Washington insider incapable of bringing true change to capitol. The now ascendant “outsider” candidates in the Republican primary have used a similar tactics, casting Washington experience as a liability and a sign of untrustworthiness. The more experienced candidates are wielding their experience in different ways. The senators are highlighting their national security-related committee assignments, their routine receipt of intelligence briefings, and their support for certain pieces of foreign policy legislation. The governors are highlighting their executive experience and ability to build teams to solve problems and manage crises. Almost all of the candidates reference the “experts” they have consulted and their foreign policy advisory teams in order to bolster the perception of experience.

The lone outlier may be Donald Trump, who seems uninterested in demonstrating a detailed mastery of foreign policy and promises instead to find a modern-day “General Douglas Macarthur in the pack” to solve difficult foreign policy problems for him. Yet Donald Trump here provides support for the idea that inexperienced presidents tend to outsource their foreign policy process to strong subordinates, which I argue increases the likelihood that they will lose control and make major adjustments. This also raises the questions of whether voters truly value foreign policy experience, or whether a genuine recognition of one’s lack of experience coupled with a willingness to learn and surround oneself with experts can offset inexperience.

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1001 As Dueck argues, Bush 43 maintained an edge over Gore on foreign policy that was not based “on any pretense that Bush himself was a foreign policy expert but rather on the impression that he was a strong, sincere leader surrounded by a team of heavyweights who would restore U.S. military capabilities and bring a more tough-minded approach to international problems.” Hard Line, 270.
In other words, foreign policy experience seems to matter when it comes to electing U.S. presidents. My dissertation has argued that it also matters when it comes time for that candidate to perform the job of commander-in-chief. Given the stakes involved in changing course— the hazards and opportunities that abound when the president attempts to steer the ship of state in a new direction—this is a promising research agenda and a puzzle worthy of further attention.
Appendix: A New Framework for Measuring Strategic Adjustment

As Chapter V showed, separating ways and means can be a messy process. Citing qualitative changes in programs or instruments of national security and quantitative changes in the level of resources invested in those programs seems duplicative and potentially distorting for my theory. A more useful concept comes from Lawrence Freedman, who develops the idea of “strategic scripts as a way of thinking about strategy as a story told in the future sense,” narratives that can convince a group of how their initial choices are likely to play out. These scripts are working theories about how security can be created by linking ends to means, and about what means are most effective in advancing goals (i.e. using force vs. diplomacy). Similarly, Hal Brands describes grand strategy as a kind of logic chain or causality: “the intellectual architecture that lends structure to foreign policy; it is the logic that helps states navigate a complex and dangerous world”. In other words, grand strategy is a theory, or a working series of hypotheses, that administration officials hold about what they seek to accomplish in the world and how they should do it. The primary purpose is aligning means with

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1002 This leaves us in the same place as Charles Hermann, who confronts the same entanglement of means and ways discussed above. It is evident in his definitions: program changes are more qualitative yet involve changes in means, which he suggests amount to programs. He does not address the issue that changes in programs involve corresponding changes in the costs of those programs: how does one avoid double-counting these changes when defining the degree of adjustment? For example, was Nixon going to China a change in ways or means or both? Certainly the prioritization of diplomatic instruments of national power rather than military, sending Secretary of State Kissinger on a secret visit to Beijing then conducting the first presidential visit to China, seems a change in ways. But this also involve a corresponding change in means, both the actual costs of enhanced diplomacy in the Pacific but also an increase in trade and cultural exchanges to China. In other words, does one measure Kissinger’s trip itself or the cost of Kissinger’s jet fuel in order to determine the degree of adjustment?


1004 For example, Eisenhower developed a script, both for how continuing down Truman’s course would turn the U.S. into a garrison state, and how reducing costs while relying heavily on massive retaliation would contain the Soviets while preserving the American way of life. In fact, Eisenhower came into office with a broader strategic script he had developed in his military career, what he called the “Great Equation.” His equation was as follows: “Spiritual force, multiplied by economic force, multiplied by military force, is roughly equal to security. If one of these factors falls to zero, or near zero, the resulting product does likewise.” Quoted in Bowie and Immerman, 44-45.

1005 Brands, 1.
ends, “combining the former to achieve the latter, but also adjusting the latter so as to not overtax the former.”

These insights, combined with the previously mentioned difficulty of disentangling ways and means, leads me to conclude that we can simplify the specification of the dependent variable by eliminating threat perception, interests, and ways, and focusing instead on (1) ends and (2) means and their associated scripts/logic. Rather than just listing the raw numbers to demonstrate changes in means, talking about scripts and logic associated with these numbers provides greater context and should make the connection to ends clearer.

**Changes in Ends**

To operationalize this framework, it makes sense to first measure changes in goals or ends. To measure a change in ends we list the ends at t₀ next to the ends at t₁. These goals of grand strategy should be listed in order of priority. Since prioritization is a key task of strategy, this process itself will reveal insights into how an administration defines interests and assesses threats. More or less goals may emerge going from t₀ to t₁, and this should factor into the judgment on the degree of adjustment. For example, applied to the adjustment from NSC 20/4 to NSC 68 this would look as follows:

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1. **tₙSC 20/4**: (1) Contain Soviet power and influence.
   2. **tₙSC 68**: (1) Block expansion of Soviet power.

1. **tₙSC 20/4**: (2) Drive a wedge between the Soviets and their satellites.
   2. **tₙSC 68**: (2) Induce a retraction of Soviet control and influence.

1. **tₙSC 20/4**: (3) Effect a change in Soviet conduct of international relations (such that they behave in accordance with the UN Charter).
   2. **tₙSC 68**: (3) “Foster the seeds of destruction with the Soviet system” in order to modify Soviet behavior to conform with international standards.

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1006 Brands, 2-3.
t_{NSC\ 20/4}:
(4) Avoid permanently impairing the U.S. economy, values, and institutions.

t_{NSC\ 68}:
(4) Assure the integrity and vitality of U.S. free society founded on dignity and worth of the individual.

This technique highlights the continuity in ends between NSC 20/4 and NSC 68, which are nearly identical both in intent and priority. Comparing ends in this way does not allow for a precise score or measure of adjustment, rather it serves as an initial cue for whether we are operating in the adjustment framework or the more extreme reorientation framework. Though I strongly hesitate to suggest precise rules for measuring ends changes to arrive at the classification of strategic adjustment, this simplest and most logical method is to focus only on the top three goals of the strategy at $t_0$ and $t_1$. If there are no common goals, then we are not operating in the adjustment framework. If there is one common goal, then we are likely still not operating in the adjustment framework, but it is possible that this could be a case of major adjustment. If they share two or three goals, then we are solidly within the adjustment framework. If they share goals but these goals are prioritized differently, then this is likely to be a case of major adjustment, but as the above comparison shows, major adjustment can occur even as goals are prioritized in the same way.

**Means and Associated Scripts: The MID Framework**

Goals can specify the direction of a new course for grand strategy, but the president still has to expend the energy and resources to move in that direction. I am also hesitant to devise

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superscript 1007 One could object that this approach masks changes in the underlying assumptions driving grand strategy. For example, consistency in goals masks the distinction between NSC 20/4’s (and Kennan’s) concept of defending only the vital industrial-military centers from Soviet advances and deprivatizing the periphery, and NSC 68’s assumption that an extension of Soviet control in any area of the world would resound globally, what Gaddis calls a distinction between strongpoint vs. perimeter defense. But if the second phase of Truman’s strategy involved a shift to perimeter defense, this shift should be reflected in Truman’s investment of resources (i.e. changes in means) not ends, such as deploying troops in defense of Korea, increasing military assistance to Indochina from $10$ million in May 1950 to $107$ million in August, and providing $20$ billion in military assistance to NATO allies between 1951 and 1953. The actual investment of resources is the best reflection of priorities, and in the case of NSC 68 the best metric for demonstrating a shift in tolerating Soviet advances in peripheral areas to challenging Soviet aggression everywhere. Brands, 52.
precise rules or scoring methods for measuring changes in means and associated scripts. But there are existing frameworks to draw from, particularly the DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement) and PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information Systems) frameworks for describing the elements of national power. In practice, DIMEFUL and PMESII become unwieldy and at the level of grand strategy it is often difficult to measure the contributions of law enforcement or to distinguish clearly between information and intelligence as well as economic instruments of national security and financial instruments of national security. With this in mind and based on what the case studies revealed to be the most salient aspects of strategic adjustments, I simplify the DIMEFIL framework to focus on three instruments of national security: Military, Intelligence, and Diplomacy (MID). This reduces the likelihood of “double-counting” changes in means while still capturing changes in threat assessment and interests. These are three broad categories or buckets we can use to organize changes in means and better assess the type of adjustment. For each category, I propose three metrics to identify this change means and their associated scripts. My aim is to describe the overall money investing into or divested from these instruments of grand strategy, what this money buys, and why the president chose to invest or divest/how the president uses this instrument.

1008 For examples of the use of DIMEFUL and PMESII see David E. Johnson, “Fighting the ‘Islamic State’ the Case for U.S. Ground Forces,” Parameters 45, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 7; Vincent Alcazar, “Crisis Management and the Anti-Access/Area Denial Problem,” Strategic Studies Quarterly 6, no. 4 (Winter 2012); and Bartholomees Jr.

1009 This focuses analysis on the Defense Department, the Intelligence Community (CIA, NSA, DNI), and the State Department (which includes USAID). Given the prominent role Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey played in Eisenhower’s grand strategic debates and the prominent role sanctions currently play in U.S. foreign policy, one might object to the absence of “Economic” in the framework. But while Treasury has the lead on implementing sanctions, State also has a significant sanctions shop and often controls the policy decision to implement sanctions in the first place. Additionally, changes in the number and types of sanctions are not always reflected in changes in Treasury’s staffing levels and overall budget. The President is not necessarily investing finite resources into new sanctions, he is sending a message to U.S. businesses and foreign countries that certain actors are off limits. How does one measure the freezing of foreign assets, by measuring the salary of the Treasury employee paid to carry it out?
Military changes get the closest to measuring changes in “hard power” investments. As Truman’s massive buildup of military capabilities and Eisenhower’s attempts to constrain the defense budget illustrate, debates over the Pentagon’s role and corresponding budget are the most salient aspects of grand strategic change. One need only look at present-day debates about the utility of “sequester” to see that questions regarding appropriate levels for defense spending continue to dominate grand strategic debates, and no presidential candidate or president in office can avoid articulating a position on the issue. The Defense Department is also the largest executive branch agency (and the largest bureaucracy in the world). Thus, even small changes in the Pentagon’s budget are likely to resonate at home and abroad and result in observable, real world adjustment.

The first measure of changes in military means across time is the total topline defense budget (in constant dollars and as a percentage of gross domestic product). This gives us the broadest indication of how the president prioritizes defense and can be displayed as in Figure 11 below.

**Figure 11: Historical Defense Spending**

In order to show what this money buys, I propose a second metric: *comparative force structure*. This includes total ships, aircraft, landing forces, and active and reserve end strength for each service. An extremely detailed breakdown of these figures in the present day is provided in Figure 12 below, from the National Defense Panel review of the Quadrennial Defense Review, but the key thing is to capture changes to overall force levels among the services and investments in high-end, strategic weapons systems such as nuclear weapons and aircraft carriers.

![Figure 12: National Defense Panel Comparative Force Structure](image)
Yet using these topline numbers may not fully capture shifts in doctrine or capabilities that might change the way the president projects military power or his generals fight wars. For example, simply adding the $1.3 trillion spent since 9/11 on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the overall defense budget in order to arrive at military spending as a percentage of GDP does not tell the researcher much about the intense debates over using counterinsurgency strategy in those countries and how counterinsurgency doctrine shaped the post 9/11 force. Additionally, given the length of the procurement pipeline, the emergence of new technologies may be lagged indicators, reflections of investments made in previous administrations.

In other words, measuring changes in defense spending and force structure provides an important indicator of adjustment, but the case study must still explain what is beneath the budget bottom line. This is why it is important to simultaneously explain the logic or strategic scripts accompanying these budget and force structure changes. My third metric also attempts to address this. I propose using force-sizing construct and actual uses of force as a way to capture the logic or strategic script underlying changes in defense means. As the 2014 National Defense Panel concluded, “A force-sizing construct is not a strategy per se, but it is an articulation of strategy in easily understandable terms; it is an important and tangible expression of U.S. defense capabilities,” one that gives the president an understanding of their military force options. For example, since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has generally pursued a “two-war force sizing construct,” or the capability to simultaneously defeat adversaries in two geographically distinct theaters.  

Pairing this force-sizing construct with descriptions of actual uses of force allows us to gauge the extent to which the administration is adhering to its force-sizing construct or theory for

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exercising hard power. This must include an assessment of the administration’s approach to the use of nuclear weapons, connected to overall changes in strategic force levels. To be sure, most presidents are not forced to test their force-sizing construct to its limit (i.e. fighting two wars simultaneously, or using nuclear weapons), and the primary point of maintaining a robust armed forces is so that you do not have to use them—to deter real and potential adversaries before they threaten U.S. interests. But by reading documents such as the National Security Strategy, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the National Military Strategy, and tracing debates within the administration, we can arrive at an understanding of how the administration views the utility of force as a tool of foreign policy, the conditions under which the president will deploy military force abroad, and the types of military force (i.e. low footprint special operators or standoff naval and air asset) the president prefers. This should reveal something about the logic or script behind hard counts of military capabilities.

Intelligence

Use of military force is often overt—a highly public exercise of U.S. power where the president makes little attempt to conceal his hand. Yet the intelligence community gives the president the ability to shape events below the radar. Since 1948, the CIA has been authorized to carry out covert operations, and in the early Cold War the budget for covert operations increased sharply from $4.7 million in 1949 to $82 million in 1952, corresponding with an increase from 302 personnel involved to 2,812.\(^{1011}\) In the present day, drone strikes and special operations raids have offered President Obama the ability to frequently use force while retaining (some) plausible deniability and avoiding the domestic drawbacks of large-scale overt military interventions. Even when such activities are not entirely covert, the intelligence community offers a comparatively

\(^{1011}\) Gaddis, *Strategies*, 155.
low-cost option compared with overt military power.¹⁰¹²

The first measure of changes in intelligence means is a simple measure of the intelligence community’s topline budget, both the national intelligence program (NIP) and the military intelligence program (MIP). While the defense budget dwarfs the intelligence community budget, Figure 13 below shows why it is useful to capture changes in intelligence funding. From 1980 to 1989, total intelligence funding grew by 125 percent in real (constant dollar), a significantly higher growth rate than defense spending.

Figure 13: Intelligence Spending Compared to Defense Spending¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹² As evidenced by Obama boasting about his counterterrorism campaign “using our air power and our support for partner forces on the ground. This strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years.” Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on ISIL,” Presidential Remarks, Washington DC, September 10, 2014. Yet it is important to note, particularly since 9/11, that in practice military and intelligence operatives are often deployed in tandem, co-located at various embassies and other government facilities abroad, and work together on sensitive missions. It is impossible to completely separate these variables, but we are looking for a broad measure of how a president views intelligence as an instrument of national security, what resources he invests into this instrument, and how he actually wields it.

¹⁰¹³ Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the United States Intelligence Community, Preparing for the 21st
Though we have a general understanding of how all the different intelligence community agencies work, and occasionally exogenous shocks lead to major organizational reforms within these agencies (i.e. 9/11 leading to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004), much of the intelligence community’s “force structure” (i.e. number of agents, operatives, assets, and gadgets) remains shrouded in secrecy. And while the intelligence community has people, agencies, and foreign stations that theoretically can be counted, these numbers are difficult if not impossible to come by, and there are no high profile pieces of equipment such as an aircraft carriers we use as proxies.

At a broader level, the intelligence community exists to collect information, analyze it, and present it to decision-makers as intelligence so as to improve their picture of global threats and opportunities and thereby improve their decision-making.\textsuperscript{1014} Earlier in this chapter I argued for eliminating a stand-alone measure of threat assessment—a core intelligence community function—but not because it was useless, rather because it was difficult to disentangle from means and ways. Having eliminated ways and aiming for a more precise specification of means, it makes sense to nest threat assessment here under intelligence as a second way to measure changes in the intelligence instrument of national security. Drawing upon National Intelligence Estimates, NSC debates over these and other intelligence community products, and threat assessments contained in official the official National Security Strategy and other high-level strategic documents, threat assessment aims to describe how an administration’s understanding of threats to U.S. interests changes from $t_0$ to $t_1$. One might object to making comparative threat

picture a dependent variable, as a change in the picture is what might drive a change in grand strategy. Yet as Chapters II-IV showed, the president and his advisers have enormous influence on how a shock, and a change in threat, is interpreted and what interpretation ultimately prevails. A president must invest his personal capital into a particular interpretation of events, such that the change in threat picture should reflect how a president makes use of the work of the intelligence community. In other words, the change in threat picture is part of the overall script or logic justifying why such an adjustment is necessary.

Just as the president has a force-sizing construct for the military, he has a sense of how he wants to use the tools the intelligence community provides. I propose a third and final measure of intelligence, one that attempts to articulate an intelligence force-sizing construct and “uses of force,” by measuring uses of covert action. Since comparative threat picture should capture the actual use of intelligence analysis by the president, uses of covert action gets at how a president employs intelligence in the real world to create change. This would include activities such as propaganda and psychological warfare, drone strikes, arming of indigenous groups and local forces, denial and deception activities, and enhanced interrogation.

*Diplomacy*

The first measure of changes in diplomatic means is changes in *topline State Department* and *USAID budget*, including all foreign assistance and foreign military financing. Like intelligence, the foreign assistance budget pales in comparison to the military (e.g. foreign aid is less than 1 percent of the overall budget) but these numbers demonstrate the priority a president places on non-military instruments of national power. And as the Eisenhower case studies illustrate, a president who believes in foreign aid must fight to protect it from cuts in Congress.

To get at what this money buys, a measure of comparative force structure for the
diplomatic world, I propose evaluating *alliance maintenance*. In general, U.S. diplomacy aims to strengthen our alliances with other countries. Strong, stable allies who engage in burden sharing are the best way to preserve and extend U.S. power. No president takes office with the notion that he wants to undermine our relationship with the rest of the world. A president may view certain alliances as onerous and thus seek to disentangle the country from a longstanding alliance that is now stale, but no president has rejected the concept of maintaining alliances in general.\(^{1015}\)

Beyond a qualitative description of which country the president invests his time and attention into improving the relationship, which countries the president seeks to distance himself from, and which enemies the president seeks to turn into friends, a useful metric to include in alliance maintenance is the number of UN Security Council resolutions and the number of formal agreements (treaties, congressional executive agreements, or executive agreements) concluded with other countries.\(^{1016}\)

Another way to measure alliance maintenance is through a qualitative description of an administration’s approach to multilateral organizations such as NATO, the UN, the IMF, the WTO, the World Bank, free trade agreements, and ad hoc coalitions constructed in pursuit of a common goal.

A third and final measure of changes in diplomatic instruments in grand strategy is the *use of sanctions*. Just as we invest in countries with foreign aid with discourage investment through sanctions. Though sanctions are often thought of as an economic instrument of national security, and the Treasury not State Department has the primary responsibility for implementing

\(^{1015}\) As Colin Powell has argued: “One of diplomacy’s key tasks is to arrange coalitions so that one’s power and its reputation are multiplied through them. Power cannot do this by itself because power repels as well as attracts. A wise diplomacy magnifies power’s attractive quality and minimizes its repellent quality by using power to benefit others as well as oneself. A wise diplomacy persuades other states that their most important interests and principles will be advanced if they cooperate with you. The epitome of this principle is a formal alliance.” Colin Powell, “The Craft of Diplomacy,” in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy*, 5th ed., eds. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 217, 213-222.

\(^{1016}\) For example, by the time he left office, Truman had concluded formal alliances with forty-one countries. Gaddis, *Strategies* 150.
and enforcing sanctions, diplomacy is not the exclusive province of the State Department and sanctions require extensive diplomatic negotiations to be put in place. The State Department also maintains its own cadre of sanctions specialists and sanctions legislation goes through the House Foreign Affairs Committee and (until recently) the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (the primary committees of jurisdiction for the State Department). The way a president uses sanctions should tell us how he wields diplomacy as an instrument of national power, particularly his approach to enemies. Even where easing sanctions to induce cooperation from enemies does not produce an obvious diplomatic triumph, the fact that the president devotes valuable resources to the effort is an important indication of his priorities and intentions. Some presidents may choose complete isolation of enemies through sanctions. Others may choose to provide carrots to lure enemies out of isolation and turn them into potential partners. Others may employ a mix of methods depending on the country.
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