

resemblance to Roosevelt's actual foreign policy record as president—a record characterized by considerable skill, care, and restraint. This practical restraint was all the more impressive, since it was obviously in tension with some of TR's personally combative instincts. Roosevelt had learned a lesson from the Badlands that he found useful internationally as well: "Don't bluster, don't flourish your revolver, and never draw unless you intend to shoot."¹

TR's version of Republican politics was activist and reform-minded, willing to nurture a robust central government in order to promote national stability and cohesion. To his mind, these were public goods that rose above the interests of any particular group or class.² For the same reason, he supported what he called "unhyphenated Americanism," or the successful integration of new immigrants into the United States. As he put it: "We should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American. . . . There can be no divided allegiance here."

Foreign policy was one of TR's foremost concerns, because in foreign policy one saw most clearly the necessity for pursuing national as opposed to individual or subnational group interests. TR believed in a leading, active role for the United States in world affairs. He viewed American national security as best protected in a competitive great-power environment by a more forward US presence overseas. And he believed the United States had a duty to exercise a kind of international police power in combination with other Western nations. Yet domestic political constraints at the time pressed against these ambitions.

The overarching characteristic of American public opinion in the opening years of the twentieth century was its basic indifference to foreign affairs. Domestic political issues dominated both popular concern and partisan debate. Whatever enthusiasm existed for imperialism in 1898 had since dissipated. Public opinion could still be hawkish when visible threats to US interests emerged, such as in the Caribbean. But in general,

2 —

Global versus National

From TR to Eisenhower

Conservative nationalism has always been a major theme in Republican foreign policy. When the GOP holds the White House, the precise expression of that nationalism has long been determined primarily by the chief executive. Every Republican president has combined noninterventionist, hardline, and internationalist impulses and policies to craft their own unique approach—some more successfully than others. In this sense, at least, the Trump administration is not that unusual. Yet periods out of power have also been significant in permitting conservatives to rethink the appropriate relationship between American nationalism and US foreign policy specifics. For Republican conservatives the tension between the global and the national is persistent, allowing for various possible balances and combinations. A brief look at GOP presidencies from Theodore Roosevelt to Dwight Eisenhower, along with some periods in opposition, helps to illustrate the point.

Theodore Roosevelt's legacy is shaped by the lasting impression he made as a cavalry volunteer during America's 1898 war with Spain: a former Dakota Badlands rancher and war hero, in love with empire and eager for battle. Ohio Senator Mark Hanna reacted to Roosevelt's ascension to the presidency by bemoaning the rise of "that damned cowboy." Yet the common image of an aggressive, bombastic Rough Rider bears little

the preference of the American public was for nonintervention overseas. Congress also tended to be very skeptical of new foreign commitments, and of any conceivable infringements on US national sovereignty. Organized business interests with ties to the Republican Party sometimes had strong preferences on selected international matters, such as the issue of protective tariffs. TR supported the traditional Republican policy of trade protection, alongside a willingness to consider tariff reform. But the influence of specific business interests on TR's broader foreign policy was actually quite limited. For one thing, the primary foreign interest of American business was in international peace and stability, not costly imperial adventures. Nor did corporate interests usually have strong, united, or well-formed views on particular questions of US intervention or diplomacy. In any case, TR was contemptuous of policies formulated to satisfy narrow economic interests. He intervened overseas when he saw broader US national, strategic, ideological, and economic interests at stake.³

TR responded to domestic political constraints not by leapfrogging them, but by pushing the boundaries of what was possible through energetic action and forceful appeals, while ultimately respecting those limits the American public would tolerate. His policy was—insofar as possible—to encourage balances of power in the Old World, and American predominance in the New.

In Latin America, TR worked to secure US naval and diplomatic pre-dominance within the Caribbean, against any possibility of great-power competition. He deployed US forces to both Cuba and the Dominican Republic, reluctantly, on this very basis—so that civil or financial disorder in those countries would not become an excuse for European intervention. He warned the Kaiser's Germany off from any intervention in Venezuela, for similar reasons. And in a move that really was popular within the United States, however controversial, he secured effective US control over a new Panama Canal Zone, ensuring speedier US naval access between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. In the Asia-Pacific region, TR worked to bolster regional balances first against Russia, then Japan, notably via the 1905 Portsmouth peace conference. And in Europe and North Africa, he did what little he could to support Britain and France

diplomatically, and check Germany, again by helping to mediate a 1906 peace conference at Algeciras.⁴

On a day-to-day level, the most striking feature of TR's diplomacy was its realistic understanding of certain perennial truths regarding effective statecraft. He summarized these truths in his pithy maxim, which he borrowed from an African saying: "Speak softly and carry a big stick."⁵ When Roosevelt said speak softly, he meant it. He understood that a tactful style or tone makes a difference in foreign policy. In most crisis situations, he went out of his way to allow opponents to save face. He typically conducted international negotiations with considerable patience, skill, and care. And when he had to issue a warning to another country, over some vital interest, he would do so firmly but diplomatically and in private. Speaking softly also meant refusing to make any threats or promises that could not actually be kept. Roosevelt hated bluff and buster in diplomacy. He tried to avoid making new commitments that might overstrain America's limited military capabilities. And he avoided sending US armed forces into circumstances where the intervention would be half-hearted or ineffective.

Carrying a big stick was the other half of Roosevelt's maxim. This meant, quite simply, possessing the power—especially the military power—to support one's stated interests. Roosevelt understood that in the arena of world politics, diplomacy is ineffective unless backed by power. He scorned what he called the "world gush creatures" and "maudlin sentimentalists" of the growing American peace movement, because they refused to see that international tribunals and world public opinion were no substitute for military strength.⁶ In Roosevelt's mind, military preparedness was not only a necessary complement to American diplomacy—it was actually the best guarantee of peace, since a strong armed force would deter aggressors and prevent wars from occurring in the first place. As he put it in his 1906 Nobel peace prize acceptance speech:

As yet there is no likelihood of establishing any kind of international power . . . which can effectively check wrong-doing, and in these circumstances it would be both a foolish and an evil thing for a great

and free nation to deprive itself of the power to protect its own rights and even in exceptional cases to stand up for the rights of others. Nothing would more promote iniquity . . . than for the free and enlightened peoples . . . deliberately to render themselves powerless while leaving every despotism and barbarism armed.⁷

A strong US navy was a natural and necessary component of this approach. To his way of thinking, a first-class navy was needed to keep the peace, meet existing commitments, and support an active foreign policy within the Pacific as well as the Caribbean. TR regularly called upon Congress to increase naval expenditures, and he tried to rally popular support for a bigger navy. During his last two years in office, this naval building program met serious resistance from a bipartisan coalition of fiscal conservatives, anti-imperialists, and noninterventionists in Congress. In the end, after lengthy negotiations, TR was able to get much of what he wanted: two new dreadnaughts each year, along with a dramatic and successful world cruise of American battleships. But the struggle over the navy illustrated the limits of support for military sending, even within the Republican Party.⁸

As a younger man, Roosevelt had welcomed the prospect of serving in combat. But after assuming the presidency, he showed no eagerness to launch the United States into any new armed conflict. As he wrote in a 1906 letter to the English author George Trevelyan: "I have no sympathy with those who would lightly undergo the chance of war in a spirit of mere frivolity." TR's ideal was not the pacifist, but "the just man armed who wishes to keep the peace." His actual conduct of American diplomacy as president was characterized by a desire to prevent and avoid war.⁹

Altogether, Roosevelt navigated international and domestic foreign policy pressures with considerable success, striking useful and effective balances along multiple fronts. He was an instinctive national defense hawk who, as president, avoided either open warfare or strategic overextension. He was a natural foreign policy realist with a powerful sense of moral responsibility for himself and his country. And he was a fierce American nationalist who laid the groundwork for modern Republican

internationalism. Mark Hanna need not have worried about this particular Rough Rider. In the end, TR's presidency was a successful exercise in cowboy diplomacy.

The Roosevelt years witnessed a growing divide between conservatives and populist progressives within the Republican Party over issues of domestic political economy. But as long as Roosevelt was president, this division had limited impact on foreign affairs. TR had his own distinct foreign policy views agreeable to conservatives; populist progressives liked him personally, supported his domestic policy program, and had not yet developed an alternative international vision of their own. During the tenure of Roosevelt's successor in the White House, William Howard Taft, the intraparty Republican divide between conservatives and populists finally spilt over into foreign policy matters. Conservative Northeastern Republicans continued to view US military intervention overseas as occasionally necessary in order to protect American strategic and economic interests. Western GOP populists, on the other hand, began to develop a critique of imperialist interventions as powered by the same narrow financial and corporate interests that progressives were battling at home. This intraparty divide would also help shape Republican foreign policy debates during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, including throughout the First World War.¹⁰

Republicans were initially deeply divided over how to respond to the titanic conflict in Europe. Eastern, establishment Republicans—like the sardonic patrician Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA)—tended to be deeply sympathetic to the British, hostile toward Germany, and supportive of increased military spending or preparedness, along with extended credit to the Allies. Western GOP populists or progressives—such as Senators William Borah (R-ID) and Robert LaFollette (R-WI)—were adamantly opposed to US intervention, viewing the war as nothing but a distant, morally indifferent contest between rival militaristic empires. Such passionate anti-interventionist sentiments were only reinforced by the fact that many western-GOP leaders represented heavily German American constituencies, resistant to the idea of going to war against their ancestral

home. However, Borah and LaFollette diverged on their specific responses. LaFollette opposed increased defense expenditures as well as any US military response to the war whatsoever. Borah, on the other hand, favored a built-up US navy, precisely in order to protect American neutral rights—and to punish any violation of them by either Germany or Great Britain. Here was an early indicator of a new divergence between conservative internationalists, hardline unilateralists, and GOP noninterventionists over the coming century.¹¹

Wilson, for his part, prepared for re-election by initiating a series of domestic and foreign policy adjustments in the opening months of 1916. At home he tacked to the left, sending progressive legislation through Congress on matters such as taxation. On foreign policy, he co-opted the issue of military preparedness while embracing the concept of an international league to enforce the peace. Republicans had a hard time matching this performance, especially since they themselves were profoundly divided over both foreign and domestic matters. The party's 1916 campaign platform called for limited reforms at home, and a "thorough and complete national defense" alongside "strict and honest neutrality" in relation to all European combatants. The resulting double straddle on both foreign and domestic issues was awkward rather than compelling, and nominee Charles Evans Hughes compounded the problem with a colorless and ineffective campaign. The combination of peace, economic prosperity, and domestic reform was sufficient to tilt key Western states as well as nominally Republican Ohio into Wilson's electoral column.¹²

With his re-election secured, Wilson laid out an extremely ambitious vision as to how the conclusion of the First World War might serve broad liberal goals worldwide. In a January 1917 address to the Senate he called for a "peace without victory," in which a new League of Nations would underwrite the spread of democracy, collective security, national self-determination, freedom of the seas, and international disarmament. On April 2 of that year, he asked Congress to declare war. LaFollette was one of only six senators to vote against this declaration. Lodge was relieved to vote in favor. Borah, for his part, was reluctant to see the United States dragged into this conflict. But he had come to view German submarine

assaults on US civilian shipping as an intolerable attack on American lives, honor, and neutral rights. So he voted in favor of war against Germany, noting: "I join no crusade, I seek or accept no alliance. . . . I obligate this government to no other power."¹³

Once Germany finally sued for peace, in November 1918, Wilson traveled to Versailles to help formulate a peace treaty. The outcome was negotiated among the various Allies over the spring of 1919, and presented to Berlin as a fait accompli. In exchange for victor's terms, Britain, France, and Japan agreed to sign on to Wilson's version of a new League of Nations. This included a collective promise to uphold the integrity and independence of all League members and to combat any international aggression, preferably through sanctions and arbitration, but by force if necessary—a promise enshrined in Article 10 of the League covenant. Most Democratic senators supported Wilson on the League, but with only forty-seven members, still fell far short of the two-thirds vote required for treaty passage. Wilson needed a significant number of GOP votes.¹⁴

Most Republicans had supported US military efforts against Germany wholeheartedly, once at war, but held deep misgivings about Wilson's League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. In the Senate, GOP senators again split into noninterventionist, hardline unilateralist, and conservative internationalist factions. Hardliners like Borah and noninterventionists like LaFollette objected to the Versailles Treaty and the League altogether, preferring postwar US strategic disengagement from Europe. Most such senators were Western populists or progressives, capable of mustering anywhere from five to twenty Senate votes, depending upon the issue. LaFollette opposed the Treaty of Versailles as insufficiently progressive and bound to militarize US foreign policy. Borah shared these concerns, along with some practical strategic ones. As he put it: "What will your League do if it does not contain powers that no one dreams of giving it?"¹⁵ Above all, Borah looked to maintain a free hand for the United States. Yet a majority of Republican senators were conservative internationalists, open to some version of the League. These conservative internationalists, like Lodge—by this time, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—actually supported a firm US postwar commitment to Europe, including

a straightforward alliance with Britain and France, but viewed as impractical the notion that Americans would commit to defend the territorial integrity of virtually every other country on earth. In the words of former Secretary State Elihu Root, an ally of Lodge:

If it is necessary for the security of Western Europe that we should agree to go to the support say of France if attacked, let us agree to do that particular thing plainly, so that every man and woman in the country will understand that. But let us not wrap up such a purpose in a vague universal obligation, under the impression that it really does not mean anything [is] likely to happen.¹⁶

Amazingly, in order to secure French support for the League, Wilson agreed to a specific US commitment defending France against any future German attack. Republican reservationists were therefore willing to support both the League and the Treaty of Versailles, so long as Wilson also removed some of its more unlikely provisions, including the promise of universal collective security under Article 10. This, Wilson would not do. Determined to maintain the purity of his foreign policy vision, while punishing his critics—and with his physical and mental agility undermined by a series of strokes—Wilson simply refused to bend. Instead, he went on a public speaking tour to drum up support for the League. These speeches, while well received, did not alter political realities in the Senate: GOP senators would not accept an unaltered Treaty of Versailles, and Wilson would not accept a modified one. Moreover, many leading conservative Republicans such as Lodge had their own domestic political concerns, feeding into this deadlock. They were reluctant to give Wilson sole credit for a major new policy initiative, heading into the elections of 1920. They genuinely disliked significant components of that initiative. They viewed the League as part of an overall and unwelcome expansion of federal government power that Wilson and the Democrats had supported since 1912. And eastern GOP conservatives looked to maintain party unity with western GOP populists, so far as possible. The simplest way to meet all of these concerns was to oppose Wilson's particular version of the League. So

that is exactly what Lodge did. As he told Elihu Root in 1920, "I am much more interested in getting the whole party to fight together against Wilson and the League than I am in myself or anything else." Over a period of several months, Lodge marshalled opposition toward Wilson very skillfully from all quarters in the Senate, while maintaining a "reservationist" stance. The preservation of US national sovereignty was central to that stance. Republicans rallied around the position laid out by RNC Chairman Will Hays: "While we seek earnestly and prayerfully for methods lessening future wars, and will go far indeed in an honest effort to that end, and will accomplish very much, we will accept no indefinite internationalism as a substitute for fervent American nationalism." Or as Lodge put it before the Senate: "I would keep America as she has been—master of her own fate."¹⁷

Under these conditions, no one version of the treaty could make its way through the Senate. Wilson continued to withhold his support for any modified version of the League throughout 1920, hoping Democratic success in the presidential election that fall might resuscitate the League's chances. But the public had grown tired of the League debate, tired of international policy controversies, and tired of the sociopolitical experiments of the Wilson era. With this as the prevailing mood, Republicans nominated Warren Harding for president, a well-liked US Senator from Ohio who promised the country what he called a "return to normalcy." Lodge, for his part, hoped this might entail a modified League commitment, including a Western alliance with Britain and France.

Harding was—and is—often underestimated. While solidly conservative, his own private view of the League was closest to that of GOP noninterventionists. Yet he issued vague, bland statements throughout most of his election campaign, to reassure potential supporters on all sides that he had no fixed position against them. Once well on his way to a landslide electoral victory, he confirmed that his administration would resuscitate American commitment toward neither the Treaty of Versailles, nor the League of Nations, nor any postwar alliance with European powers. As Harding put it, "I do not want to clarify these obligations. I want to turn my back on them." In this way, the new Republican foreign policy direction was fixed. By quietly killing off any remaining chance of a foreign

policy direction he did not support; the genial Harding appears to have outmaneuvered a great many famous figures considered more brilliant than him.¹⁸

The death of the League in the US Senate is generally considered a great tragedy, and in some ways it was, although not for the reasons usually ascribed. Wilson's insistence on a literal interpretation of Article 10 truly was unrealistic, since as events would later reveal, nations do not generally sustain great costs on behalf of universal collective security principles unless it is in their interest to do so. However, where Wilson and Lodge actually agreed was around the notion that Britain, France, and the United States would have to cooperate in the postwar era to check any future German aggression. In fact, this—and not a global collective security system—was Lodge's number-one concern. What Lodge and most Republican senators wanted to see in 1919 was something like the later North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And if Wilson had compromised on his more universalistic ambitions, he could have had it. This would have meant a solid US postwar strategic commitment to European peace and stability, including a specific pledge to defend France against Germany if attacked. At the very least, this would have complicated Hitler's calculations during the late 1930s, and possibly deterred him. It would have been a commitment worth making. So the real tragedy was not the death of Wilson's vision. The real tragedy was the death of Lodge's—namely the very real prospect of an earlier creation of NATO, to help deter a second world war.

In many respects Republican foreign policy during the 1920s was strikingly modern, carrying as it did a strong emphasis on the pacifying effects of globalization. Leading politicians, bankers, and businessmen within the Republican Party believed that a combination of arms reductions, open markets, and worldwide economic growth would help to transform the international system in a peaceful, democratic direction.¹⁹ At the same time—and partly because of their very optimism—Republican officials placed clear limitations on American obligations overseas. In the military-diplomatic realm they would accept no binding commitments, and no entangling alliances in relation to the defense of particular countries. No

one represented this combination of assumptions more completely than Herbert Hoover.

Throughout his early life, Hoover impressed virtually everyone he met with his exceptional (if humorless) ability, intelligence, honesty, and efficiency. Considered a potential candidate for president in 1920, he was made Secretary of Commerce the following year by Warren Harding, who called Hoover "the smartest 'gink' I know." President Harding left Hoover—together with the very capable and onetime Republican presidential nominee Charles Evans Hughes as Secretary of State—broad leeway over the making of US foreign policy. Harding's successor Calvin Coolidge would do the same for Hoover, albeit with greater Yankee skepticism regarding the man he called "wonder boy."²⁰

Hoover proved to be an unusually strong, active Secretary, with informal influence over all areas of American diplomacy. He sought energetically and successfully to promote US exports abroad. He generally opposed the use of military force by the United States—indeed he opposed increased military spending, and called for multilateral disarmament instead. He allowed the private sector to take the lead in promoting economic development overseas. He believed that these policies would encourage the liberalization of the international system.²¹

Hoover was also a firm supporter of high tariffs against foreign competition—a policy that still carried broad support within the Republican Party. He opposed the cancellation of war debts, in the absence of dramatic concessions by European states on issues such as disarmament. And while he promoted American exports with unprecedented energy, at the end of the day he knew that the American economy was far more self-sufficient than most other major powers, and he looked to domestic production as the key to American prosperity. He was therefore a kind of peaceful nationalist on foreign economic policy, combining a genuine commitment to the pacification of the international system with a hard-nosed pursuit of relative national advantage on international economic matters.²²

Hoover's broad foreign policy preferences, though genuinely held, were well aligned with domestic political pressures. Western agrarian populists

each nation's warship tonnage, and agreeing to respect Chinese independence. These arms control arrangements had the support of multiple GOP constituencies including agrarian progressives, fiscal conservatives, peace reform lobbies, and business leaders.²⁷ In relation to Europe, the Coolidge administration deployed Chicago banker Charles Dawes to help renegotiate German war debt reparations with Paris and London. The Dawes Plan, as it was called, encouraged a budding détente between Germany and France, whereby the two sides mutually guaranteed their border at the 1925 conference of Locarno.²⁸ And in relation to Latin America, Republican administrations scaled back the interventionism of the Wilson era, by starting to wind down US military deployments in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.²⁹ The noninterventionist trend in Latin America was possible, in part, because no major powers threatened basic US interests in the region at the time. But US influence in Europe and East Asia was far more limited, resting on hopeful declarations and treaty systems that were essentially unenforceable by Washington.³⁰

Once Hoover became president in 1929, he had the opportunity to exercise even greater influence over US foreign policy than as Secretary of Commerce. His basic foreign policy priorities from the start of his administration were to promote American commercial interests, pursue arms control agreements, and avoid US military intervention abroad, while keeping costs to a minimum. He resisted new naval construction altogether, and signed a naval disarmament treaty with Britain and Japan in 1930—ill-fated, because Japan withdrew almost immediately. He further hoped to promote peaceful economic and political cooperation in Latin America, Europe, and East Asia. At the same time he “had no desire to see the United States involved” in Old World “power politics” and “rival imperialisms,” especially in relation to the European continent, which he described as a “boiling social and economic cauldron” producing “misericórdias.” In the final analysis, Hoover believed there to be two basic alternatives for the United States: the first was to “stand on moral forces alone in support of law between nations,” while the second was “to use economic and inevitably military force against aggressors.” Hoover was careful to stand on moral force alone.³¹

and progressives in Congress such as Senators Borah, LaFollette, Gerald Nye (R-ND), and George Norris (R-NE) tended to be strongly opposed to international political or financial entanglements, imperialism, arms expenditures, and US military intervention. Republican administrations frequently tacked in the progressives' direction on foreign policy, precisely in order to help maintain an already somewhat tenuous party unity on domestic issues.²³

Business interests were another domestic factor of immense importance to US foreign policy during the 1920s. Indeed, through the mechanism of proxy diplomats and unofficial economic diplomacy, it was often literally private bankers and businessmen that represented the United States abroad. The great majority of US business leaders agreed upon an overarching foreign policy framework that simultaneously included high tariffs, a search for exports, arms limitations, strategic nonentanglement, debt repayment, and the use of surrogate diplomats from the private sector to promote international cooperation on financial matters. This foreign policy framework, in turn, permitted a régime of low taxes, balanced budgets, and limited government interference at home, which after all was the primary concern of American business.²⁴

Peace groups of various kinds also carried unprecedented influence during this period.²⁵ Altogether, a broad domestic political coalition was built and sustained in favor of a foreign policy platform based upon economic nationalism, strategic nonentanglement, and anti-interventionist assumptions. This was an approach that progressives, farmers, urban professionals, businessmen, pacifists, industrial workers, ethnic minorities, and conservatives at the time could all support. It was an immensely popular approach, and it provided a focal point around which Republicans could rally, effectively eliminating foreign policy as a particularly controversial, salient or damaging political issue.²⁶

From 1921 to 1928, the business-oriented and dovish diplomacy of Hoover and his associates played out in three major regions: Europe, East Asia, and Latin America. In relation to East Asia, the Harding administration signed a series of naval disarmament treaties with Tokyo and London—the Washington treaties of 1921–1922—setting limits on

In Latin America, Hoover accelerated the trend toward nonintervention begun in the 1920s. The lesson that he took from America's continuing military entanglement in Nicaragua was to avoid such engagements in the future. None of this constituted a surrender of America's position as the predominant outside power in Latin America. Preponderant influence was simply exercised a little more tactfully.³² But Latin America was something of an exception.

In Europe, where US influence was far from predominant, Hoover's decision to avoid significant international costs or commitments meant the effective surrender of America's ability to help stave off deteriorating political and economic conditions. The administration's European policy began promisingly enough in 1929, with a new renegotiation and reduction of German reparations debt—the Young plan, named after American businessman and proxy diplomat Owen Young. The onset of the Depression that autumn, however, threw a wrench into the transatlantic financial order. Private US loans to Germany and the rest of Europe soon dried up. Debtor countries were unable to make their payments. American popular and congressional attention focused entirely on domestic economic conditions. The United States Congress followed in 1930 with the infamous Smoot-Hawley tariff, a highly protectionist measure that further shut out European exporters from the US market. In effect, the international economic order was breaking down, and the tenuous cycle of loans and repayments between the United States, France, Britain and Germany was simply no longer viable.³³

Hoover had privately come to realize that all of these issues were interrelated, and that war debt, reparations and disarmament might only be handled together, but there were still strict limits on what he was willing or able to offer. In the end the Germans defaulted on their foreign debt payments altogether, as eventually did Britain, France, and virtually every other debtor country. The international trading and monetary system continued to spiral downward into regionally autarchic blocs, creating material hardships worldwide and further undermining support for democratic political elements in Germany and Japan. By the time Hoover left the White House, Adolf Hitler was Chancellor of Germany.

A similar pattern was evident in East Asia, where the rickety basis of the Washington treaty system was fully revealed. In September 1931, freelance elements of the Japanese army invaded the Chinese province of Manchuria. But Hoover was adamantly opposed to any American response beyond a purely moral one. Even sanctions, he insisted, would only lead to "the development of incurable hatreds."³⁴ He did however place great faith in what he called "the moral reprobation of the world," and was unwilling to let Japanese actions stand without some sort of formal declaration. He therefore agreed to let Secretary of State Henry Stimson issue a series of statements condemning the Japanese attacks.³⁵ In January 1932 Stimson released what became known as the "Stimson doctrine," declaring that the United States would not formally recognize Japanese conquests or puppet governments within Manchuria. Of course the Stimson doctrine did nothing to alter the situation in East Asia, or to help the Chinese, but it was extremely popular within the United States, with peace groups, Congress, and public opinion for its thundering condemnations of international immorality. The lesson drawn in Tokyo was that the United States would chastise and remonstrate but not act concretely to oppose Japanese expansion. At the same time, Washington's legalistic condemnation of Tokyo's behavior infuriated Japanese opinion. The result was really the worst of all possible outcomes: the United States had openly displayed its irrelevance within the region, while promising long-term hostility toward Japan over an issue that Tokyo obviously deemed vital and the United States did not. Yet American opinion did not sour on the Stimson doctrine; far from it. Incredibly, the issuance of that doctrine was widely viewed for several years within the United States, including elite circles, as having been a great foreign policy success, and one that would inevitably force a Japanese retreat through the sheer pressure of economic interdependence and international opinion. Herbert Hoover shared this view.³⁶

As Hoover left office in 1933, both the Washington treaty system in Asia and the Locarno treaty system in Europe were clearly in shambles. The preceding twelve years had been characterized by a Republican foreign policy approach so optimistic that it finally dissolved into air. Certainly, Hoover and many of his leading associates during this period

debate among Americans over how to respond. For Republicans, this was arguably the most fateful and divisive foreign policy disagreement in the history of their party.

On one side of the debate were GOP unilateralists and noninterventionists, like US Senator Robert Taft of Ohio. The son of former president William Howard Taft, Robert was a rather stern, honest, intelligent champion of balanced budgets, sound credit, and individual liberty. Like many GOP conservatives, he viewed FDR's New Deal as nothing less than revolutionary in eroding American traditions of limited government. His great fear regarding US foreign policy was that America's involvement in overseas wars would further erode these domestic traditions. Moreover, he believed the United States to be essentially invulnerable and self-sufficient—geographically, economically, and strategically—allowing for a posture of continental or at most Western hemispheric defense. As he put it:

I believe the peace and happiness of this country can best be secured by refusing to intervene in war outside the America and by establishing our defense line based on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. I believe that the difficulty of attacking America across these oceans will forever prevent any such attack being even considered, if we maintain an adequate defense on the sea and in the air. I believe that airpower has made it more difficult, not easier, to transport an army across an ocean and that conquest must still be by a land army.³⁷

Taft's views were the dominant ones not only among Midwestern conservatives, but among congressional Republicans. Most GOP House and Senate members therefore lined up against any measures that might deepen American involvement in this new European war. They found like-minded support from import-competing, small- and medium-sized business interests; Christian pacifists; the publishing empires of Robert McCormick and William Randolph Hearst; and celebrity spokesmen like aviator Charles Lindbergh. Noninterventionist foreign policy organizations sprang up, notably the America First Committee, attracting a

were not lacking in intelligence, vision, or good intentions. Nor were they isolationists in the sense of wanting to avoid international involvement altogether. The question, however, is whether their relatively pacifist approach secured its own objectives, and here the answer must be overwhelmingly negative outside of Latin America. Hoover and other Republican foreign policy leaders at the time declared and apparently believed that the United States would successfully promote a more democratic, prosperous, and peaceful world order simply through the combined effects of international law, arms negotiations, commercial exchange, and public opinion. This was no strategy of offshore balancing; on the contrary, it was an attempt to transcend and escape international power politics altogether. The goals were extremely ambitious, idealistic, and global. Yet the unwillingness to back up those goals with significant material commitments—whether economic or military—left the United States with minimal practical leverage over most foreign policy questions outside the western hemisphere. America's home markets were not opened to potential allies; foreign aid was not utilized; international economic leadership was not provided. This determination to avoid costs or expenditures of virtually any kind left US officials with precious few sticks or carrots on international economic matters, despite America's great wealth. In terms of military capabilities, the lack of diplomatic leverage was even more obvious. With a constabulary Army, a treaty-limited Navy, and an absolute avoidance of new security commitments in Europe or Asia, the United States could not expect to have much influence over international questions that might involve the use of force. Overall, whatever its ambitions, the Republican foreign policy approach between 1921 and 1933 did little to contribute to international order. The nascent democratic systems of the era were fragile and unstable enough as it was. Without concrete American support, they hardly stood a chance against the coming storm.

Throughout the mid-1930s, while Democrats and Republicans debated the merits of FDR's New Deal, they agreed on the need to avoid international entanglements. In 1939–1940, however, the outbreak of war in Europe—and even more shocking, the fall of France—triggered a great

certain number of conspiracy theorists, anti-Semites, and Anglophobes. FDR used the resulting implication of fascism to wiretap his political opponents, and to suggest—wrongly—that GOP noninterventionists as a whole were led by Nazi sympathizers. But the weightiest share of support for views like Taft's simply came from a sincere desire to avoid war, and to protect American liberties at home.³⁸

On the other side of this great debate were Republican hawks and internationalists, arguing for increased US military and economic aid to Great Britain. GOP hawks found much of their elite leadership among deeply conservative, urban, Northeastern, upper-income Anglo-Saxon Protestants with international diplomatic, financial, and legal experience. They feared that German victory in Europe would threaten vital sea lanes, collapse the international balance of power, close off vast regions from US trade and investment, and encourage Nazi influence in Latin America. They often worked with New York banks, export-oriented industries, internationalist organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, and conservative publishers like Henry Luce to press for US aid to Britain. But GOP internationalism was hardly limited to Wall Street. Millions of Republicans nationwide, even within the Midwest, shared this perspective, favoring a more assertive US posture against Nazi Germany. If anything Republican internationalists were underrepresented in Congress, relative to their popular numbers. In January 1941, for example, a solid majority of Republican voters said they supported "all-out" aid to Great Britain. Some congressional Republicans such as Senators Warren Austin (R-VT), Styles Bridges (R-NH), and Warren Barbour (R-NJ) could be relied upon to make the case for intervention even more aggressively than the president. These GOP hawks provided Roosevelt with political cover, allowing him to argue that his preferred policies against Nazi Germany had bipartisan support. He brought key Republicans into his cabinet—Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox—for that very same reason.³⁹

With Republicans divided, FDR nudged the United States toward informal wartime alliance with Churchill's Britain in a way that was politically

dexterous, incremental, frequently misleading, and ultimately successful. In 1939 he proposed that Britain be allowed to purchase American war materials, so long as it could pay for them—a program known as "cash and carry." In 1940, he traded fifty American destroyers to the UK on his own authority, in return for leasing rights over a number of British Caribbean bases. That same year, Congress and the administration reintroduced military conscription—the first peacetime draft in the history of the United States. Republicans debated these various measures, some in favor, some opposed. Conservative noninterventionist senators like Robert Taft and Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI) contended for their party's presidential nomination, opposing the drift to war. But in the wake of France's collapse, Republicans decided to nominate for president a likeable utilities executive and moderate internationalist, Wendell Willkie, as the best chance to beat Roosevelt. FDR responded by reactivating his winning New Deal coalition—and by reassuring Americans that "your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign war."⁴⁰

Having secured re-election, Roosevelt proceeded to suggest that the United States could lease, grant, or loan weapons to Great Britain with no need for instant repayment—in effect a massive military aid program, known as Lend-Lease. In 1941 he extended a security zone across the North Atlantic, providing US Navy convoys for merchant ships crossing the ocean, and ordering American warships to shoot German submarines on sight. And in 1940–1941 he imposed tough economic sanctions on Japan, demanding its withdrawal from Chinese territory. Unintentionally, these sanctions helped trigger a desperate Japanese gamble for supremacy within the Western Pacific, including a surprise attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. That attack of course unified Americans against Japan more effectively than anything else, and Hitler obliged with a formal declaration of war upon the United States that was immediately reciprocated. The great intra-GOP foreign policy debate of 1940–1941 thus came to a dramatic close. Senator Vandenberg spoke for many Republicans on December 8, 1941, when he wrote in his diary, "Now we are in it. Nothing matters except victory."⁴¹

After Pearl Harbor, Republicans rallied to the common US war effort against the Axis. However, they continued to debate the shape of America's postwar global commitments. The war itself rendered isolationism a losing stance, politically. Elite opinion in both parties had shifted in favor of overseas engagement. Moreover, a solid majority of Republicans—like a solid majority of Americans as a whole—were now convinced of the need for some kind of revived League of Nations, combined with a larger place for the United States in world affairs. This still left open a variety of possibilities. On one end of the GOP spectrum, in his bestselling 1943 book *One World*, Wendell Willkie embraced an especially idealistic liberal internationalism, arguing for “a new society of interdependent nations” characterized by “effective organization of world unity.” Publisher Henry Luce of *Life* magazine called for the United States to seize the lead in creating an open international postwar economic order in a new “American Century,” and “assume the leadership of the world.” On the other end of the spectrum, Senator Taft worried that all such international schemes would turn the United States into a “meddlesome Mattie, interfering in every trouble throughout the world.” As he said of Luce's position: “it reminds me of the idealism of the bureaucrats in Washington who want to regulate the lives of every American along the lines that the bureaucrats think are best for them.” Taft and the GOP nationalist bloc in Congress looked to keep America's postwar entanglements to a minimum.⁴²

It was left to Senator Vandenberg, with his impeccable conservative, Midwestern, and prewar noninterventionist credentials, to navigate these intraparty differences. At Lake Huron's Mackinac Island, in September 1943, prominent Republican met to hash out a combined position on the question of a new league of nations. The resulting statement, mediated by Vandenberg, supported “responsible participation by the United States in a postwar cooperative organization among sovereign nations to prevent aggression.” It also protected the prerogatives of Congress in foreign affairs. This was a stance virtually all Republicans could support heading into the 1944 elections, and indeed it was adopted by GOP presidential nominee Thomas Dewey. The Mackinac declaration, together with

Dewey's own position on the matter, also permitted FDR to move ahead with broad bipartisan support for a new United Nations. At the same time, it shaped the limit of America's commitment, since Republicans clarified they would accept no radical cession of US national sovereignty under the new organization. Unlike Woodrow Wilson, FDR was pragmatic enough to accept this condition. The final vote for a new United Nations sailed through Congress in July 1945, with the support of every senator but two. Even Taft voted in favor, while clarifying that Congress retained the right to declare war, apart from the UN.⁴³

On the question of postwar international economic arrangements, Republicans were clearly divided. FDR had already begun moving toward reduced US tariff barriers during the mid-1930s. In 1944, US officials met with their British counterparts at Bretton Woods. They agreed that Washington and London take the lead in developing both a new World Bank and an International Monetary Fund to nurture global trade, stable currencies, international development, and investment, along with postwar reconstruction. The moderate Northeastern wing of the GOP, along with key figures like Dewey and Vandenberg, were convinced by their wartime experience of these arrangements' utility. Robert Taft was not so convinced. The Ohio senator and other conservative Midwestern nationalists remained committed to a more traditional mercantilist approach, including high US tariff barriers, independent national economic development, “freedom of action,” and bilateral or regional commercial and monetary agreements where appropriate. Roosevelt and his successor Harry Truman moved forward on the Bretton Woods agenda, supported by one wing of the GOP but opposed by its other half.⁴⁴

As the Soviet Union expanded its postwar influence throughout Eastern Europe and beyond, Republicans were as alarmed as anyone. From 1946 to 1948, GOP members of Congress largely cooperated with the Truman administration in adopting a firm US policy against the USSR, albeit with concern over the cost of such initiatives. As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Vandenberg helped shepherd supportive legislation through Congress, nudging GOP internationalists along. The 1948 GOP nominee for president, Thomas Dewey, also took a

foreign policy stance largely indistinguishable from that of Harry Truman. Senator Taft, for his part, worried that anti-Soviet containment would lead to indefinite big-government deficits, inflation, taxation, and centralized planning at home. He also feared that massive US foreign aid programs like the Marshall Plan were simply a "policy of scattering dollars freely around the world." Yet he voted for it in the end, concerned as he was about the Soviet Communist threat. Midwestern conservative nationalists did not block most anti-Communist policies. They did, however, insist upon keeping certain limits on taxation and government spending—including foreign aid and defense expenditures—as well as on coercive measures such as universal military training. In this way, they had a significant impact upon the unfolding US strategy of containment.⁴⁵

Dewey's unexpected loss to Truman, combined with a series of shocking Cold War setbacks the following year, infuriated GOP conservatives and undermined any bipartisan US foreign policy consensus. Over the course of 1949, the test of a Soviet atomic bomb, the victory of Mao Zedong's Communists on the Chinese mainland, and continuing revelations around Soviet spies inside the United States convinced many staunch conservatives like Taft that the Truman and Roosevelt administrations had actively indulged Communist gains within Europe, Asia, and even the United States itself. It was within this tinderbox context that the previously obscure Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI) gave a February 1950 speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, drawing massive attention to allegations of Communist spies inside the State Department. As a matter of fact during and before the Second World War there really had been a broad Moscow-backed espionage ring inside the United States, including not only hundreds of US Communist Party members but government officials like Alger Hiss, as well as sympathetic American scientists and engineers secretly aiding a Soviet atomic bomb project. McCarthy's special contribution to this debate, so to speak, was to generate a number of specific accusations out of thin air, imply treason on the part of the president himself, and accuse the entire Northeastern liberal elite of disloyalty: those, as he put it, "who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer—the finest homes, the finest college

educations, and the finest jobs in Government we can give." This new posture of populist outrage helped the GOP to appeal to fresh constituencies, such as Irish Catholics, in the short term. In the long term, however, the sheer irresponsibility of McCarthy's behavior actually diverted focus away from Soviet espionage as a genuine threat.⁴⁶

The outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula in June 1950, and Truman's decision to respond with the deployment of US forces, again rallied Republicans to a major American war effort. But costly setbacks in that effort, combined with mounting US casualties, soon triggered popular dissatisfaction within the United States—not only with the bloodshed in Korea, but with the entire strategy of containment. General Douglas MacArthur openly suggested the United States bomb Chinese bases in Manchuria. Leading conservative nationalists like Taft seized the opportunity to support MacArthur, while offering their own overarching foreign policy alternatives. In 1951 Taft published his book, *A Foreign Policy for Americans*. In it, Taft recognized the deadly threat from the Soviet Union and its Communist allies, including to Western Europe. In fact he argued that the Truman administration had not taken this threat seriously enough. Yet Taft also felt that Truman's strategy of indefinite containment threatened America's system of limited government, and could very well "wreck the country's economy and, in time, its morale." Consequently the Ohio senator argued for a less costly approach, emphasizing US geographic and technological advantages, with "occasional extensions of action into Europe, Asia, or Africa, as promise success in selected areas." Under Taft's strategy the United States would rely primarily on its maritime and atomic airpower, together with a ring of bases in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, while avoiding major ground commitments on the mainland of either Europe or Asia. Simultaneously, it would ramp up rollback efforts against the entire Communist bloc, through covert action, psychological subversion, support for Chinese Nationalists, and military escalation against mainland China. In this way, Taft hoped to retake the initiative from the USSR and its allies, while avoiding the frustrations and costly entanglements of containment. These recommendations bore some resemblance to those of

former president Herbert Hoover, who called for a return to "Fortress America."⁴⁷

Concerned by the apparently endless growth in the expenditure and authority of the federal government, Taft took the opportunity in 1952 to again run for the Republican presidential nomination. This time he had the solid backing of the party's Midwestern and conservative wing. But the GOP's Northeastern moderates found an unusually compelling candidate in General Dwight Eisenhower, a staunch internationalist and fiscal conservative with unmatched credibility on security issues. In a very close and hard-fought convention contest, key party delegates came down in favor of Eisenhower as the more electable candidate. Midwestern conservative nationalists thus failed four times in a row, between 1940 and 1952, to nominate one of their champions. Yet Taft quickly recognized that Eisenhower was a genuine economic conservative who would endeavor to keep federal expenditures in check. In fact, the two men agreed on a great deal by this time. Both, for example, believed in emphasizing US atomic airpower, in order to keep a lid on military spending. Both looked to limit costly commitments overseas, including foreign aid. And of course both were fierce anti-Communists. These underlying commonalities allowed Taft to play a remarkably constructive role in relation to the new administration, until his death in July 1953. Taft personally never managed to locate a politically winning or satisfactory alternative to the liberal internationalist policies he opposed. By the 1950s, like most Republicans, he had moved far from strict nonintervention. But the conservative nationalism he embodied quite sincerely left a significant impact on US foreign policy even under Democratic administrations, and would continue to reverberate in different forms on the Republican side.⁴⁸

Dwight Eisenhower's chief foreign policy goal as president was to preserve the new US world role—and to counteract international Communist advances—without bankrupting America's economy or its traditional ways of life. Raised in small-town Kansas, the gregarious "Ike" entered on a professional military career, and after 1941 experienced a meteoric rise, eventually becoming commander of Allies forces in Europe.

Demonstrating effective success and goodwill in this role, by the end of the war he won international renown. Drafted by moderate Northeastern GOP internationalists, Eisenhower ran for the presidency in 1952 as a Cold Warrior and a fiscal conservative. He promised to halt the domestic US drift toward what he called "creeping socialism"; resolve the bloody stalemate in Korea; press back more aggressively against world Communism; and refocus America's foreign policy toward "liberating captive nations" by "peaceful means." Indeed the 1952 GOP platform condemned Truman's existing strategy of containment as "negative, futile, and immoral."⁴⁹

The November electoral outcome was a landslide personal victory for Eisenhower—notably, eating into Democratic support among middle-income Southern suburbanites—even as Republicans took back a narrow majority in Congress. On domestic issues, Eisenhower agreed with GOP conservatives that centralized government planning, high taxes, inflation, budget deficits, and regulation—what he called the New Deal "graveyard train"—were all undermining US economic growth and individual liberty. At the same time, he viewed a full-blown return to the model of the 1920s as unrealistic, both politically and on its own merits. In practical terms he therefore embraced a center-right posture on matters of domestic political economy, a consensus-building approach he described as "modern Republicanism" or "the middle way."⁵⁰

Eisenhower was entirely convinced that international Communism posed a terrible threat to the United States, and that this threat had a moral component along with a strategic one. As he framed it in his inaugural address, "Freedom is pitted against slavery; lightness against the dark." He therefore supported a strengthening and consolidation of US-led, anti-Communist alliances worldwide. Yet he feared that indefinite expenses on the scale of the Korean War were unsustainable in either fiscal or constitutional terms: "We must not destroy what we are attempting to defend." He consequently looked for lower-cost alternatives to conventional military expenditures, including nuclear deterrents, covert action, and psychological warfare. With regard to multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, Eisenhower welcomed international support for US foreign policy goals whenever possible, but had no objection to unilateral action

when necessary. In the words of one historian regarding Eisenhower and the UN, "the administration . . . embraced the multilateral forum when it was perceived to best serve American interests, but ignored it with virtual impunity when it chose to act unilaterally."⁵¹

Eisenhower's first international task was to resolve the Korean War deadlock. He signaled to Beijing that US escalation of the war into mainland China was a real possibility. Mao's concern over this possibility—together with Stalin's death in March 1953—opened up diplomatic opportunities for an armistice that formally partitioned the Korean peninsula in two. Most Americans were relieved to see the war ended. Eisenhower further initiated a thorough review of US national security strategy, considering all of the various options, to determine how best to achieve his goal of "security without paying the price of bankruptcy." The answer he hit upon, known as the "New Look" or "massive retaliation," was to emphasize America's ability to respond with nuclear airstrikes against any Communist bloc aggression. This reliance on nuclear deterrence rather than more expensive conventional forces—combined with the conclusion of the Korean War—allowed Eisenhower to cut manpower levels and hold US defense spending under \$50 billion in fiscal year 1954, a limit to which it was kept for the rest of his presidency.⁵²

As commander-in-chief, Eisenhower emphasized allied burden-sharing. He was a staunch supporter of NATO, including the stationing of US ground forces in Europe. Yet out of concern for the resulting budgetary cost, he did not mean for such forces to be deployed indefinitely: "We cannot be a modern Rome guarding the far frontiers with our legions." For this reason he favored rearming West Germany, even up to and including shared control over US tactical nuclear weapons. His hope was that Western European integration and rearmament would create a "third great power complex in the world," capable of resisting the Soviet Union, thereby allowing the bulk of American forces to come home.⁵³

Eisenhower's strategy toward the Soviet Union was one of relentless competition, coupled with a genuine desire for arms control. He understood that new technological developments such as the hydrogen bomb made the prospect of full-scale atomic warfare so horrendous, that if it

occurred "you might as well go out and shoot everyone you see and then shoot yourself." He looked to reduce that risk, and to keep the cost of new weapons under check, partly through the pursuit of realistic arms limitation initiatives. Fundamental policy differences between the two superpowers, including Soviet objections to aerial inspection, made any such agreement difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Eisenhower continued to hold that "you don't promote the cause of peace by talking only to people with whom you agree."⁵⁴

In relation to Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe, Eisenhower emphasized "liberation," including through Radio Free Europe as well as covert action programs, but he ruled out direct or preventive warfare against Soviet forces as impossible. When the chance of liberation was finally tested in Hungary by that country's citizens during 1956, Eisenhower was forced to clarify that the United States would do nothing materially to help them. As he admitted, "We have excited Hungarians for all these years, and [are] now turning our backs on them when they are in a jam." But strategically, Hungary was "as inaccessible to us as Tibet."⁵⁵

In Congress, Eisenhower was usually able to count on the foreign policy support of a significant bloc of Republican internationalists, along with many Democrats. In fact the most significant early opposition came from within his own party. During the opening years of Eisenhower's presidency, a powerful congressional bloc of largely Midwestern, conservative-GOP nationalists led by Senators like John Bricker (R-OH), Everett Dirksen (R-IL), William Jenner (R-IN), William Knowland (R-CA), and William Langer (R-ND) gave the president trouble on numerous foreign policy issues. As a group, they tended to oppose free trade; backed Joseph McCarthy; favored Western European self-help; resisted presidential authority; safeguarded US national sovereignty jealously; supported "roll-back" against the Communist bloc; criticized US foreign aid; emphasized the possible uses of atomic airpower; championed Taiwan; opposed contact with Communist countries; and were deeply suspicious of the State Department, the United Nations, and the FDR-Truman policy legacy. Some of this was compatible with Eisenhower's preferred approach. Some of it was not. For the most part, however, he responded not by fighting

the nationalists head-on but by consulting with them on policy substance, tacking in their direction where possible, and when necessary outmaneuvering them behind the scenes. It worked. For example, when Senator Bricker proposed a constitutional amendment scaling back the expanded use of executive agreements with other countries, Eisenhower did not fight the proposed Bricker amendment openly, but encouraged its defeat from backstage. In relation to Joseph McCarthy, Eisenhower did something similar, first holding his tongue, and then quietly working toward the Wisconsin senator's censure and self-destruction in 1954. At the same time, as a hawkish anti-Communist and economic conservative, in practical terms Eisenhower gave mainstream Republicans a good part of what they wanted, mixed into his own preferred approach. Midwestern GOP nationalists faded as a distinct faction. By 1955-1956, the great majority of Republicans in Congress and around the country—including key figures like Senator Dirksen—came to support Eisenhower's hybrid foreign policy, deferring to the president's leadership in multiple crises. His success in helping to convert most rank-and-file Republicans to a consensual posture of activist Cold War internationalism was one of his most striking and lasting political achievements.⁵⁶

Eisenhower also succeeded in leading an historic change in GOP priorities on trade and foreign assistance. Historically, of course, Republicans had resisted free-trade initiatives, and in the early 1950s congressional Midwestern conservatives continued to do so. Eisenhower, however, was committed to the promotion of an open international trade regime and to US foreign aid programs, as two parts of an anti-Communist global strategy. Under pressure from congressional conservatives he did not dismantle but instead pruned US foreign aid, while agreeing that private investment would be the main vehicle for economic development overseas. Meanwhile, heartland GOP farmers and businessmen grew increasingly export-oriented. Reflecting on the lessons of the 1930s—and staunchly anti-Soviet in any case—most mainline Republicans gradually accepted the premise of US foreign policy activism, including with regard to free trade. As the ideological and economic bases for protection declined within the Midwest, Republicans came to defer in the direction

of Eisenhower's leadership' on foreign economic policy, extending his authority over reciprocal trading arrangements. In this little-noticed but remarkable shift, Eisenhower helped convert the GOP to free trade from protection.⁵⁷

In the developing world, Eisenhower's greatest priority was the containment of Communism. This often meant backing autocratic regimes when the most likely alternative was Marxist autocracy. It also entailed opposing radical nationalist movements, including non-Communist ones, when Eisenhower feared the Soviet bloc might benefit indirectly from their success. So in 1953-1954, for example, Eisenhower agreed to lend CIA support to coups against the Iranian nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadeq as well as the Guatemalan Marxist government of Jacobo Arbenz. In both cases the impression created was of CIA omnipotence, when in reality the outcome on the ground was primarily the result of local traditionalist forces mobilizing against increasingly erratic radical regimes. In other cases, Eisenhower was indifferent to or even supportive of anti-colonial nationalists, when convinced they might promote anti-Communist goals. This did not always end happily. In the case of the 1956 Suez crisis, notably, Eisenhower sided with Egypt's Nasser against the British. But he eventually came to regret this decision, believing he had been duped by Nasser, and concluding that the safest course was simply to support plausible regional allies and partners such as Israel.⁵⁸

In East Asia, Eisenhower signed a formal defense pact with Taiwan, backing its Nationalist government against Communist China. He oversaw the creation of a new Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, with Britain, France, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines as members. With regard to the war between France and the Communist-led Viet Minh, Eisenhower decided against bailing out the French at Dien Bien Phu, saying he "simply could not imagine the United States putting ground forces anywhere in Southeast Asia." This entailed the de facto acceptance of a 1954 partition of Vietnam into a Communist North and an independent, non-Communist South. But Eisenhower followed up with a great deal of American economic and military assistance to South Vietnam, while reserving the right to intervene

in that country militarily. He did not doubt that Communist success in Vietnam would represent a severe blow to America's alliances worldwide.⁵⁹

Ike ran for re-election in 1956 on a record of economic growth, peace, strong foreign policy leadership, and "modern Republicanism." He had ended the war in Korea, dampened domestic controversies such as McCarthyism, and halted the previous growth of federal government powers, while recognizing that most Americans did not actively look to dismantle the New Deal. This combination of appeals, together with own unique personal credibility, was more than enough to secure re-election.⁶⁰

Eisenhower's second term was preoccupied by a sense of Cold War setbacks and foreign policy crises. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched the satellite Sputnik, creating great popular alarm inside the United States over a "missile gap" with the Soviet Union. In the Middle East, Eisenhower deployed troops to Lebanon to bolster a pro-US government. In relation to Berlin, Eisenhower faced down Khrushchev in a protracted contest over Western access rights. In Cuba, he initially reached out diplomatically to the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro. But once Castro turned Cuba's foreign policy in a pro-Soviet direction, Eisenhower initiated plans to overthrow the leftist dictator. On the subject of effective covert action against Castro, Eisenhower's one warning to his advisers was: "Boys, if you don't intend to go through with this, let's stop talking about it."⁶¹

By the late 1950s, critics offered two main lines of argument against Eisenhower's distinct foreign policy approach. One was that he paid insufficient attention to the anti-colonial and socioeconomic aspirations of newly independent peoples within the developing world. The other was that he did not spend enough on defense. These two lines of argument were skillfully combined by Senator John F. Kennedy (D-MA), who ran for president in 1960 on the premise that Eisenhower had been overly passive in the face of worldwide Communist advances. Kennedy and his team were determined to boost US foreign aid, strengthen counterinsurgency programs, increase defense expenditures including on conventional forces, and invigorate nation-building efforts in the developing world, on the assumption that the United States would help engineer Third World modernization in a non-Communist direction.⁶²

Unlike Kennedy's best and brightest, Eisenhower was appropriately skeptical of America's ability to engineer social change in the developing world. Kennedy was not wrong to look for more calibrated alternatives to massive retaliation. But for the most part, his depiction of Eisenhower's international record was off-base. Contrary to contemporary academic and political caricatures, the Eisenhower archives reveal a foreign policy leader far from passive and instead highly diligent, calculating, and commanding behind the scenes. Eisenhower did indeed limit his own military options, but the limits were deliberate. He relied on implicit nuclear threats in cases such as Berlin and Quemoy-Matsu precisely to deter aggression, and to prevent gradual escalation toward full-scale warfare, while keeping US military spending under control.

The argument that Eisenhower was passive in the face of Communist expansion is untenable. He was really the opposite. He did however look to place certain limits on US military expense, and to preserve America's traditional forms of limited government, while simultaneously leading anti-Communist efforts overseas. And in this, he succeeded. Within the context of the late 1950s, keeping defense spending at just under 10 percent of GDP was not insufficiently high. In fact the only missile gap was one in favor of the United States. Eisenhower balanced domestic economic and constitutional purposes with international imperatives. He was a fierce anti-Communist and Cold War activist who believed fervently in the US political model. At the same time, he looked for peaceful outcomes, was genuinely open to diplomacy, did not believe the American model easy to export, was skeptical of preventive warfare, and understood from personal experience how quickly military entanglements could spin out of control. Precisely by respecting the limits of conservative nationalism, he internationalized the Republican Party.