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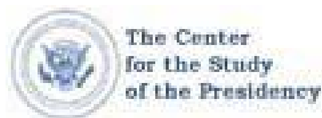

China Policy and Presidential Politics, 1952

Author(s): David L. Anderson

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(1929)—348 (1933); Factory Workers 6,535 (1929)—4,731 (1933); Manufacturing Wages $8,132,000 (1929)—$4,731,000 (1933); Value of Industrial Products $97,698,000 (1929)—$46,266,000 (1933).

45. In 1932 Roosevelt carried the seven states surrounding South Dakota by the following majorities: North Dakota 106,578; Minnesota 236,847; Iowa 183,586; Nebraska 157,905; Colorado 61,787; Wyoming 14,787; and Montana 49,208. In scoring an overwhelming victory Roosevelt won the popular vote 22,809,638-15,758,901 and the electoral vote 472-59. *Statistical History of American Presidential Elections*, p. 92.
46. In South Dakota the difference between Hoover's impressive 1928 plurality and his substantial 1932 deficit amounted to 139,247 votes.
47. Since 1932 the Democrats have won South Dakota's governorship in 1934, 1958, 1970, 1972, and 1974. They have also won seats in the United States Senate in 1936, 1962, 1968, 1972, and 1974 and contests for the House of Representatives in 1934, 1936, 1956, 1958, 1970, 1972, and 1978.

CHINA POLICY AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, 1952

by
DAVID L. ANDERSON
Assistant Professor of History
Sam Houston State University

"Today, after a generation of isolation from each other, the United States of America and the People's Republic of China establish full diplomatic relations between our governments. The cause of world peace will be served by this historic act of reconciliation."[1]

President Jimmy Carter addressed these words to Premier Hua Kuo-feng of the People's Republic of China on January 1, 1979. Why did it require almost three decades before an American President could send a message such as this to a Chinese Communist leader? A definitive answer to that question would require a study of the diplomatic, political, ideological, and emotional considerations of seven Presidents from Truman to Carter. The basic parameters of Presidential decision making on the issue of accepting a Communist government in Peking were clearly apparent, however, from the time of the first public debate of the issue between two Presidential aspirants—Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai E. Stevenson—in 1952.[2]

The election of 1952 was the first Presidential contest following Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung's proclamation of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949. Also in 1949 Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the anti-Communist Nationalists and America's ally, had fled with his followers to Taiwan. Mao's triumph and Chiang's defeat precipitated an active reassessment of existing American policies and attitudes toward China. The outbreak of war in Korea in 1950, which by the end of the year brought the United States and China into military conflict, turned this reevaluation into a foreign policy upheaval. The depth of the ideological and emotional crisis created by these events in Asia was graphically displayed in the national debate over President Harry Truman's recall of General Douglas MacArthur from Korea in April, 1951. By the summer and fall of 1952 the old soldier had finally begun to fade away, but deep-seated emotions and conflicting ideas remained. In the midst of this critical period—war in Korea, rancorous debate over foreign policy, and fear of a possible third world war—America went to the polls to elect a President. As in 1916, 1940, 1944, and other times of war or threatening war, Americans had to decide into whose hands to entrust na-

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tional leadership. Although unforeseen at the time, the nation was also solidifying an intransigent attitude toward Peking that would isolate the United States and China from each other for the next twenty years—until President Richard Nixon's dramatic trip to the PRC in 1972.

Anxiety and unrest permeated the United States in 1952. The war in Korea and fear of a major conflict with the Soviet Union were of primary concern, but there were also pressing domestic difficulties. An unfortunate laxity in public affairs, dramatized by several Washington scandals, paralleled the apparent ineffectiveness of foreign policy. The conviction of Alger Hiss in 1950 had set off a chain reaction of charges and suspicions of Communists in the government, which Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin recklessly exploited. McCarthy's unsubstantiated allegations of Communist infiltration at the highest levels of government had snowballed into a major issue of 1952 and included charges that certain diplomats and State Department officials were Communist sympathizers who had actively worked for Mao's success in China. High taxes, inflation, and the size of the federal bureaucracy had also created a sense of frustration in the nation. In addition, almost twenty years of Democratic administrations further convinced many people of the need for a change.[3]

The Korean War, however, was the one most widespread and urgent question on the public mind in 1952, according to polls by Samuel Lubell, Louis Harris, and Elmo Roper. Since November 16, 1950, when "volunteers" from Mao's army had crossed the border into Korea to counterattack against American forces, the Asian conflict had been the war against Communist China. After two years of fighting, the war had become a seemingly endless and indecisive burden to the American people.

President Truman personally bore much of the responsibility for the public mood of anger and helplessness; by following Senator Arthur Vandenberg's advice to "scare hell out of the American people," the President had succeeded in overselling the threat of international Communism. When Truman dismissed General MacArthur from command in Korea on April 11, 1951, many Americans believed that the struggle against Communism had been betrayed. MacArthur became a symbol of the widespread opposition to the East Asian policy of the administration. The nation was outraged at the dismissal and went on "a great emotional binge." The Gallup Poll showed 69 percent of the public for MacArthur and only 29 percent for the President. Senator Robert Taft and Representative Joseph Martin took the initiative in arranging for the general to address Congress and for a Congressional investigation of the administration's foreign and military policies.[4]

On the surface the public disagreement between Truman and MacArthur that had prompted the dismissal suggested a deep fissure in American opinion. MacArthur and his supporters advocated taking advantage of China's intervention in Korea to strike a knockout blow against the Peking government. MacArthur proposed an American air bombardment and naval blockade of China itself and an attack from Taiwan against the mainland by Chiang Kai-shek's forces. This strategy, according to the general, would not only unify Korea but also save Asia from Chinese Communist conquest. Truman and his advisors, on the other hand, rejected MacArthur's plan as being too dangerous. In the opinion of the administration, the proposal was not militarily feasible, jeopardized Europe by overcommitting U.S. resources in Asia, and risked World War III by provoking China's principal ally the Soviet Union.[5]

There did not appear to be too many points of agreement between MacArthur's call for an attack on China and Truman's determination to keep the war limited to Korea. In the minds of the American people, however, the two positions could not easily be separated. The nation possessed simultaneously a militant attitude against international Communism and an equally strong desire to avoid war. The initial emotional outburst for MacArthur demonstrated the frustration with the new experience of failure in foreign policy rather than a strong accep-

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tance of the general's specific program. There was in fact a basically favorable public response to Secretary of State Dean Acheson's defense of administration policy during the Congressional hearings on the general's dismissal. By late May, 1951, public opinion polls were showing a shift away from MacArthur. The Truman-MacArthur controversy illustrated that much of the public mood of frustration and anxiety arose from the ambiguous nature of fundamental issues. In the case of China, there was not a single, clear, promising policy apparent. The people were convinced that Red China was their enemy, but both they and their leaders were far from certain what to do about it.[6]

As the campaign of 1952 approached, the China policy issue was deeply enmeshed in party politics in a complex intellectual and emotional atmosphere that did not lend itself to rational public debate. The willingness of conservative Republicans in Congress to oppose the administration's foreign policy both reflected and reinforced the public's anxiety. Senators like Robert Taft and Kenneth Wherry and Representatives such as Joseph Martin and Walter Judd helped make the nation's Asian policy a partisan political issue. The Presidential election contest of 1952 not only provided a forum for public discussion of China policy between the democratic administration and the Republican opposition but also revealed the intellectual framework that led to the generation of estrangement between Washington and Peking.[7]

The two men chosen by their parties to lead the public debate were both newcomers to the politics of foreign policy. The Republicans nominated General Dwight D. Eisenhower after a hard fought battle with Ohio Senator Robert Taft, a conservative isolationist and "Mr. Republican" to many of the party's rank and file. A national hero with no political history, Eisenhower had an immense wartime reputation both as a military leader and as a skillful diplomat who had maintained Allied unity under intense stress and strain. Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic nominee, was a first-term governor of Illinois and was not identified with any particular party faction. Before becoming governor, Stevenson had been a Chicago lawyer and had held several government positions, including membership on America's United Nations delegation. Both Stevenson and Eisenhower entered the campaign virtually uncommitted to any one position on China. Inside the political crucible, however, they soon conformed to postures within the parameters established by partisan competition.[8]

Much of the 1952 debate turned on the "loss of China." In general the Democrats defended Truman's policies during the Chinese civil war, 1945–1949, by stressing the limits of America's ability to influence the outcome of an internal revolution. The United States had provided aid to Chiang Kai-shek as part of Truman's containment policy to help governments threatened by Communist expansionism. Democrats argued that despite this U.S. assistance to Chiang, his regime fell because its incompetence and corruption made it unable to resolve the social ferment within China in a manner acceptable to the Chinese people. Mao Tse-tung's Communists, according to the Democrats, were Soviet-inspired subversives who opportunistically exploited the revolutionary stituation by posing as proponents of nationalism and "agrarian reform." While recognizing the element of social discontent within China, many Republicans, on the other hand, contended that external influences were the critical factors in the Communist success. GOP critics singled out not only Soviet assistance to Mao but also the Truman administration's failure to give the Nationalists sufficient moral and material support to suppress the enemy. Both parties considered China to be "lost" to international Communism, but they disagreed sharply on America's responsibility for that tragedy.[9]

Eisenhower began the China debate on September 4, 1952, in a speech at Philadelphia that was billed as the formal opening of his campaign. Charging that President Truman had bungled foreign policy in Asia, he asserted: "We are at war [in Korea] because this Administra-

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tion abandoned China to the Communists."[10] Even after the Communist victory in China was shocking reality, according to the general, the administration had announced to the world that the United States had written off the Far East. This charge was an allusion to Secretary of State Acheson's speech in 1950 that described an American defense-perimeter in the Pacific excluding such key areas as Korea, Taiwan, and the East Asian mainland.[11]

In his Philadelphia speech Eisenhower outlined a ten-point program for peace that would avoid "future Koreas," and with this plan he established two themes for the campaign: strength and peace. He called for the maintenance of American economic and military might. According to Eisenhower the United States was in Korea because Truman had underestimated the threat in Asia and he permitted America to become weak at a time "when strength was needed." Despite this militant rhetoric, however, he ended the address, as he did almost all of his speeches, with an invocation of the peace theme. He reassured his listeners of his awareness that "the people of America do not want war."[12]

Four days later on September 8 at Indianapolis in the heartland of Midwestern Republicanism, Eisenhower again took up the China issue. On this occasion he evoked an emotional concept commonly employed in 1952—the enslavement of the Chinese people. He charged the Truman administration with "the loss of 700,000,000 human beings to the Communist slave world in spite of our thousands of casualties and billions of dollars."[13] Apparently many Americans made a clear distinction between the Chinese government and Chinese people. Much of the campaign rhetoric of both sides revealed the assumption that Mao was Stalin's puppet and thus the people of China were being subjected to an alien tyranny. Even those remarks that allowed for the "Chineseness" of Mao's regime displayed a feeling that it was a government arbitrarily imposed on the freedom-loving, peace-loving, individualist Chinese. The belief that the Peking regime was a pawn of Russia was fundamental to the proposition that China was "lost."[14]

On September 9, following Eisenhower's Philadelphia and Indianapolis speeches, Governor Stevenson made his first major foreign policy address of the campaign. Before the campaign began the Democratic nominee had believed, naively perhaps, that there would not be substantial disagreement between the general and himself on international issues.[15] In this speech at San Francisco, however, Stevenson counterattacked:

> The General's ten-point foreign program, of which three points were "throw the rascals out," and seven were a recital of the same foreign-policy goals which the "Democratic rascals" have been following for years, does not, it seems to me, contribute much to our foreign-policy discussion.[16]

The governor's own contribution to the discussion was a defense of the administration's past actions. In support of Truman's containment policy he asserted that the "contest between freedom and despotism . . . is acute" and that "it is our turn to be freedom's shield and sanctuary." The Democratic nominee did not believe, however, that war was inevitable. This curious paradox of being "freedom's shield" while avoiding war was underscored several paragraphs later when he argued that we must "first develop our strength and then . . . find the means of ending the armaments race." Stevenson's own theme of strength, similar to Eisenhower's, was apparent in the Democrat's declaration that "we who are free must have great strength in order that weakness will not tempt the ambitious."[17]

Turning to the Far East, the governor reminded his San Francisco audience of the realities of Asian nationalism. The people of Asia wanted freedom and a decent living, he proclaimed, and these aspirations were the essence of their nationalism. The "expansionist aims of Russia," according to the Democratic candidate, threatened these Asian hopes and created a two-part task for the United States: "defense and development." The defense aspect was exemplified by Korea where

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America "had the courage to resist . . . ruthless, cynical aggression." America has also demonstrated that collective security was possible. Further, the defensive effort in Korea and elsewhere in Asia provided a shield for the second great task ahead—development.[18]

Referring specifically to China, Stevenson argued that it was time to look forward not backward. He charged that the Republicans were advocating "a hindsight war" to help China, and he proceeded to lecture his critics: "I don't think that tearful and interminable post-mortems about China will save any souls for democracy in the rest of Asia."[19] Instead of futilely mourning the loss of China, the governor suggested, the U.S. should provide economic and technical assistance to India and Pakistan to help them resist Communist exploitation.[20]

The Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and San Francisco speeches—the first major foreign policy salvos of the campaign—revealed the fundamental assumptions of both candidates in regard to United States policy in Asia. Eisenhower unequivocally charged the Democrats with the "loss" of China to the Communists. Stevenson countered by defending the administration's record and by pointing out America's limited ability to affect the outcome of the Chinese civil war. Although neither candidate offered the electorate a specific solution to the problem of Communist success in Asia, both envisioned an American response based on economic and military strength. Eisenhower's ten-point program sought to create this strong base by cleaning up the "mess" in Washington, emphasizing economic production, and maintaining the nation's armed might. Essentially a reiteration of Truman's containment policy, Stevenson's "defense and development" program also traced its source to American military and material strength.

Why were both candidates attempting to appeal to the American public by suggesting that the mere existence and display of strength would somehow counter Communism in China and the rest of Asia? The answer was revealed by an Elmo Roper-NBC survey conducted in June 1952. Those polled were asked if they preferred to see war with Russia, an agreement with the Soviet Union even if it meant making important concessions, or a buildup of United States armed and economic strength to deter Moscow from starting a war. Almost two-thirds of the respondents advocated the "peace through strength" approach. To conclude, however, that the people believed that a strong American posture was the answer to their frustrations in Asia would be misleading. Only 26 percent of those polled on the eve of the 1952 election campaign indicated their willingness to stand by the "peace through strength" position to the end of a prolonged limited war. Louis Harris concluded from this information that "we were not in favor of any of the real alternatives open to us."[21]

The two Presidential nominees were attempting to assuage the public's frustration by accentuating the potential effectiveness of America's strength. As for specific solutions, however, the candidates and their advisors were as much at a loss as the voters. The Philadelphia and San Francisco speeches reveal that both parties were searching for an answer. In California, Stevenson was saying that the United States must be "freedom's shield and sanctuary" but war was not "an inevitable part of this contest." In Pennsylvania Eisenhower, after talking about America's "will to fight for freedom," declared that "the people do not want war." Both candidates were expressing the two equally strong desires of the people—stop international Communism but stay out of war.

For Eisenhower the task of successfully articulating a remedy for America's frustrations in Asia was made more difficult by the existence within his own party of a highly vocal, extremist faction that in essence equated American failure in China with treason. This GOP right wing included Senator McCarthy, who explicitly charged that American traitors worked for Mao Tse-tung's success, and Senator Taft, who was not as specific in his assertions as McCarthy but who indulged in intensely personal and partisan condemnations of the Truman administration.

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George Kennan, among others, warned that public discussion that was "too harsh, too intolerant, too abusive" would hurt rather than help any meaningful assessment of foreign policy.[22]

On September 13, 1952, Taft and Eisenhower met at the residence of the President of Columbia University on Morningside Heights in New York City. After their meeting Taft announced a rapprochement with the general that was intended to subdue the volatile internal politics of the GOP. Taft, the recognized leader of the Republicans' conservative wing, had been the foremost contender for the party's Presidential nomination until Eisenhower's convention victory. Taft's defeat had a great deal of significance for the foreign policy aspect of the Republican campaign, since the Ohio senator was in the vaguard of the nation's isolationists. A leading Congressional backer of Chiang Kai-shek, he had supported General MacArthur for a more militant United States policy toward China. Eisenhower on the other hand was considered to be more "middle of the road" on foreign, especially Asian, policy. Thus Taft's support of Eisenhower had implications not only for the votes he could draw, especially in the Midwest, but also for the future course of foreign policy discussion. In his initial endorsement of the candidate, however, the Old Guard leader side-stepped the foreign issues. Taft pointed out his agreement with the general on the internal threat of big government (anti-New Deal), the tax burden, economy in government, and the need for limitation of executive power. In response to a reporter's question the senator indicated without elaboration that his difference with Eisenhower on foreign policy was only one of "degree."[23]

Throughout the 1952 campaign Stevenson and the Democrats attempted to aggrevate the dissension within the Republican Party. Speaking in Albuquerque on September 12, the evening before the Taft-Eisenhower meeting, Stevenson attacked the right-wing Republicans as "salesmen of confusion." He reminded his audience of a well known statement by Major General Patrick Hurley, the conservative Republican candidate for the Senate from New Mexico and a former ambassador to China. The Illinois governor declared that "it is a shabby thing for a man [Hurley] now to cry treachery who only a few years ago said that the only difference between Chinese Communists and Oklahoma Republicans was that the latter did not carry guns."[24] The Democratic nominee pointed out to these New Mexico voters, who in November would vote against Hurley but for Eisenhower, that those who say that traitors "gave away" China "corrupt the public mind."[25]

President Truman began his own campaign swing through the country on September 16. On the second day of his whistle-stop tour, he attacked the Republicans's "big lie"—a clear reference to allegations by McCarthy and Indiana Senator William Jenner against American diplomats involved with China. The following evening, September 18, Senator Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, Republican Senate Campaign Committee Chairman, displayed no reticence in defending McCarthy before a Chicago audience. "The Democrats sold Poland into the arms of Stalin," according to the Illinois senator, "and forced China into the same embrace. . . . Joe McCarthy was essentially on good ground, and don't let anyone kid you about it."[26]

With Truman and Dirksen providing the partisan fireworks, the two Presidential candidates were relatively silent on foreign policy for over a week following the Taft-Eisenhower meeting. During that period reports appeared about a secret campaign fund for Republican Vice-Presidential nominee Richard Nixon, and charges and explanations of finances from both parties pushed other issues aside.[27] During the height of the Nixon-fund episode, however, the Republican campaign train arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio. Eisenhower chose this occasion—with Taft on the platform—to make his first major foreign policy address since the meeting on Morningside Heights.

This speech on September 22 must certainly have pleased Taft's supporters because it was a firm statement in favor of American defense of Asia. Eisenhower

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again blamed the democratic administration for incompetence and listed what he considered its three greatest blunders: the Berlin Blockade, the Korean War, and the loss of China. In his criticism of Truman's actions in China, Eisenhower went back an entire century to cite Secretary of State William Seward on the importance of Asia to the United States. According to the general, the "perverse" policies of the Democrats denied the "plain truth" of Asia's significance, and the result was the loss of China. Referring to Secretary of State Dean Acheson's speech of January 12, 1950, that excluded Korea from America's defense-perimeter in the Pacific, he charged the Democrats with making eventual military involvement in Korea unavoidable. In Europe, Eisenhower chided, "at least America did not wait for the dust to settle." This remark was a paraphrase of another statement made by Acheson in 1950 that the government was not going to do anything in China "until the dust settled." As for Stevenson, Eisenhower accused his Democratic opponent of answering questions about China by talking about India. The Republican nominee went on to proclaim that the United States had a commitment to the free world based both on morality and "enlightened self-interest." He charged that the administration's actions were "a purgatory of improvisation" and that the Democrats had "no single coherent policy in Asia." According to James Reston of the *New York Times*, Eisenhower's Cincinnati speech was the "sharpest attack on foreign policy in the last decade."[28]

Truman and Acheson, both targets of Eisenhower's Cincinnati address, were quick to defend themselves. Protesting that Eisenhower "tortures the facts on Korea," Acheson pointed out that as Army Chief of staff the general had been in complete agreement with a Pacific defense line similar to that announced in January, 1950. Truman noted how "old isolationists . . . lament the loss of millions of people to Communist enslavement and yet, at the same time, they recommend that we should cut off aid to those who are still free."[29] The President's rejoinder was directed not only at the Cincinnati speech but also at an address on September 25 in Baltimore where Eisenhower had coupled foreign policy and domestic economics in a program of "security and solvency." A key provision in this plan was a cutback in foreign aid.[30]

Stevenson responded to Ike's Cincinnati speech on September 27 in Louisville, Kentucky. The governor's remarks reflected an increased concern with the Republicans' newly found unity:

> My distinguished opponent has recently begun to parrot the charge of some of his recently acquired political tutors that the administration abandoned China to the communists. He did not talk this way once; but then he has changed in a good many respects of late. Maybe he's competing for the title of Mr. Republican as well as Mr. President.[31]

Despite Stevenson's sarcasm, Eisenhower was, indeed, successfully accommodating both Republican factions.

Almost all of Stevenson's Louisville address was a discourse on Asia. He characterized the Republicans as a team of "Sunday-morning quarterbacks" on the subject of China. The governor asserted that Eisenhower knew that nothing less than United States military intervention could have prevented the Communist victory in China, but he recalled that neither the general nor any other Republicans had ever proposed that policy. In fact, the Democrat wondered if his opponent had forgotten the words of the highly respected Republican Senator Vandenberg in 1948: "The vital importance of saving China cannot be exaggerated. But there are limits of our resources and boundaries to our miracles."[32] Stevenson also challenged the validity of Eisenhower's comments on "security and solvency." He declared that where America's defense and survival are involved, there is no place for an arbitrary budget. The Illinois governor quipped that the Republican candidate was advocating a policy of "talk tough and carry a twig." Gordon Englehart of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* labelled Stevenson's remarks the "sharpest per-

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sonal attack yet on his GOP opponent."[33] Concluding the Kentucky speech on a positive note, Stevenson listed some of the accomplishments resulting from the Democratic administration's determination to fight in Korea. Among others he included: "We have blocked the road to communist domination of the Far East and frustrated the creation of a position of power which would have threatened the whole world."[34] The Democratic candidate refused to concede the Republican allegation that the Truman administration had been soft on Communism in East Asia.[35]

As the Cincinnati and Louisville speeches indicate, at the midway point in the campaign the two candidates were still adhering to the original framework laid down in Philadelphia and San Francisco. The Republicans were attacking the administration's China policy, and the Democrats were attempting to defend themselves. In this kind of debate the GOP had the advantage. It was easy for Eisenhower, who personally preferred plain talk to abstract generalizations, to be specific in criticizing an unpopular foreign policy. Conversely Stevenson faced the difficult problem of coming up with some specific solutions. Despite their pointed criticisms, however, the Republicans too were unable to offer the electorate any definite program to "undo" the Communist conquest of China.[36]

"Foreign policy," according to one post-election analysis, "became a dynamic component of public motivation in 1952."[37] The Republicans were the benefactors of this motivation, and they knew it. During the last month of the campaign Eisenhower worked to protect his lead. In the final stretch Stevenson attempted to appeal to the voters by reminding them of the successes of Truman's Fair Deal and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Democratic strength lay in domestic, not foreign, issues, and therefore most of Stevenson's and Truman's speeches in October dealt with domestic and especially economic questions.

On October 5 Eisenhower's campaign headquarters issued a point by point response to various remarks that Stevenson had made during the previous weeks. Among other things it challenged the assertion that only American military intervention could have prevented Mao's victory, and it contended that Stevenson implied that the aid given to Chiang Kai-shek was a "frivolous waste." The GOP statement professed astonishment at Stevenson's claim that the Democratic administration had "blocked the road to Communist domination in the Far East." The Republican document asked:

> Can this man be serious? Can an Administration frankly confessing that it could not prevent the loss of China—the whole heart of Asia—have the audacity to boast none the less of having "blocked" the Communists in Asia?[38]

In an attempt to relieve the intensity of the Republican charges against the administration, Truman offered a spirited defense of his own actions. "By meeting aggression in Korea," he maintained, "we have saved the free nations of Asia from catastrophe."[39] The President also declared that the United States presence in Korea had helped Europe and the United Nations by proving that "communism is not invincible." Turning to the attack, Truman charged that Eisenhower's "reckless statements" on foreign policy threatened national security. The President also reminded Americans that as Army Chief of Staff from 1945 to 1948 Eisenhower had been deeply involved in many of the decisions that he now assailed. A few days later Truman attempted to put the burden of difficult choices on Eisenhower and challenged the general to reveal his plan to end the war in Korea, if indeed he had one.[40]

On the evening of October 16 on national radio and television, Stevenson delivered a "Fireside Speech" on Korea and the broader implications of the war. Dismissing Republican charges, he argued that both parties were accountable for foreign problems. He then proceeded to consider the alternatives for the U.S. in Korea. What he termed the "scuttle and run" policy of unilateral withdrawal would be a sign of weakness and result in

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a domino-effect in Asia. The Democrat noted that early in October Eisenhower had said that "only Asians should fight Asians."[41] Stevenson countered that "this view completely misses the significance of the Korean War." The Communist attack on South Korea was not an isolated event, he emphasized, but a "Soviet-directed drive." In singling out Russia as the enemy in Korea Stevenson was being consistent with the popular view of the U.S.S.R. as the exploiter of China. Despite his global rhetoric, however, he also rejected extending the war into China because that move could precipitate "the tragedy and bloodshed of world war." Declaring that he could "offer no miracles," Stevenson's own solution was a continuation of existing policy: "We will, by this policy—by perserverence—win the military decision in Korea."[42]

Calling Korea a "symbol" of United States foreign policy, Eisenhower on October 24 made his famous, dramatic promise to go to Korea. The general's announcement held out the hope to a frustrated electorate that somehow the architect of victory in World War II would again restore peace to the nation. In early August Stevenson had made a similar decision to go to Korea, but, as he wrote after the election, "We kept the plan secret, fearful that it might be construed as a political gesture."[43] The day after Ike's pledge to go to Korea, the Democrat warned the voters that there was no quick way out of the Asian conflict because "the root of the Korean problem does not lie in Korea—it lies in Moscow."[44] In another effort a few days later to discredit Eisenhower's promise, Stevenson scoffed: "The General talked as if we had entered Korea to fight Asians."[45] Although Stevenson was correct that the significance of the Korean War transcended Asia, those doing the fighting and dying were Koreans and Chinese and not Russians. Most Americans would have agreed with the governor's labelling of Moscow as the enemy, but the American preoccupation with the Soviets preempted the delineation of a separate Asian policy rooted in reality not rhetoric.[46]

In the emotion-laden contest of 1952 Eisenhower had the advantage. As the candidate of the loyal opposition, he could criticize Truman for losing China to Communism while simultaneously faulting the President for involving the United States in a stalemated war in Korea against the Chinese Communists. He refused, however, to say that Truman should not have responded to the Communist attack on South Korea. With equal finesse he also avoided advocating MacArthur's plan to carry the war to China. Ike's themes of "strength and peace" implied a firm stance against Communism without more Koreas. How this was to be accomplished he did not say. Stevenson on the other hand was saddled with defending the Truman administration for "losing China" and for involving the nation in an increasingly unpopular war in Korea. The governor maintained that he would talk sense to the people and tell them the truth. Like Eisenhower, however, he could not offer the people of the United States any easy solutions in Asia.

The campaign of 1952 clearly demonstrated the debilitating dilemma that plagued American China policy for the three decades after 1949. On one hand was the constraint of toughness and strength. Neither Democrat nor Republican dared to risk appearing soft on Communism. Edmund Clubb, director of the Office of Chinese Affairs in the Truman administration, has reminisced that "to think that Chinese Communism was complex rather than simple or opine that the Sino-Soviet relationship was not monolithic . . . were all signs of moral deviation and to be condemned."[47] Quasi-religious idealism replaced realism in viewing the China problem. Even the talk-sense candidate in 1952, Stevenson, was able to criticize Eisenhower for talking "as if we had entered Korea to fight Asians."[48]

On the other hand, despite the global magnitude and moral rectitude of the fight against Communism, the American public opposed the idea of war with the People's Republic of China. To most Americans Mao's defeat of Chiang and Chinese intervention in Korea were not sufficient justification for actual war with

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the PRC. The campaign rhetoric of 1952 declared that there would be no concessions to Chinese Communism, but it simultaneously assured Americans that there would be no war. What then was U.S. policy to be? Dean Rusk, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Truman and as Secretary of State under Kennedy and Johnson, once mused: "We should like an easy way to carry a heavy burden, an agreeable way to perform disagreeable tasks, a cheap way to bring about an expensive result."[49] At no time was this wishful thinking more emasculating than in the discussion of the China policy of the United States in the 1952 Presidential election campaign.[50]

In the early fifties the human and material sacrifices of the war in Korea, as well as memories of the personal costs of World War II, stimulated a strong public resistance to direct United States military action against the PRC. The strength of this anti-war mood was evidenced by the success of Eisenhower's campaign in 1952 as a peace candidate. Eisenhower's election victory over Stevenson was primarily owing to the general's personal popularity and the often expressed sentiment that it was time for a change. The fact that a military man could be victorious as a prophet of peace, however, indicated the ambiguity of mass opinion on China. During the previous decade America had led the world to victory over dictatorship. After World War II such actions as the Marshall Plan, the formation of NATO, and the intervention in Greece had countered, at least temporarily, the Communist threat in Europe. In Asia and particularly in China, however, the myth that America could always determine the direction of international developments had been shattered. The American people were plagued by a new and uncomfortable notion in 1952—the United States was no longer the omnipotent world champion of democracy.[51]

Although Eisenhower and his opponent had been unsuccessful in articulating an incisive China policy during the campaign, once in office he formulated some definite ideas on the issue. He was not persuaded that prolonged nonrecognition of China served U.S. interests, but as President he never attempted to restore friendly relations with Peking because he believed that such a move would have precipitated another acrimonious and bitterly divisive national debate. For the same reason, throughout the 1950s other men in public life avoided raising the question of recognizing the government in Peking. The 1960s brought the Vietnam War, which made amelioration of tension with the PRC even more difficult. The United States often justified its military presence in Indochina in terms of containing the expansion of Chinese Communism. This rationale kept current the strategic and political thinking that had begun with the Sino-American confrontation in Korea.[52] Forgotten was the Eisenhower warning against involvement in land wars on the Asian continent.

Finally in the 1970s American attitudes toward China came around full circle. Mao's success in 1949 and the Korean War frustrated Americans who could not accept the limitations of American power. After the limitations of American might had been experienced again in Asia, this time in a protracted ground war in Vietnam, the China dilemma could be finally resolved. Following the U.S. withdrawal and the subsequent fall of South Vietnam, Americans at last acknowledged that there must be a better strategy. The Nixon-Kissinger strategy was to make an accommodation with Chinese Communism. Americans, after the passage of twenty years, undertook a reasoned and cautious new beginning in Sino-American friendship.

NOTES

1. U.S., Department of State, *U.S. Policy Toward China, July 15, 1971–January 15, 1979,* Publication 8967, East Asian and Pacific Series 216 (Washington, 1979), p. 52.
2. The 1952 election has not been extensively studied by historians. See Alonzo L. Hamby, "The Clash of Perspectives and the Need for New Syntheses," in Richard S. Kirkendall, ed., *The Truman Period as a Research Field: A Reappraisal, 1972* (Columbia, Mo., 1974), p.

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128. For a general overview of the 1952 campaign see Barton Bernstein, "Election of 1952," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Fred L. Israel, ed., *A History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968* (New York, 1971), IV, 3215-66.
3. Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade—and After: America, 1945-1960* (New York, 1960), pp. 100-12, 134-45, 217.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 202-03; Ronald J. Caridi, *The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 210-11; John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (rev. ed.; New York, 1965), p. 2; Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1971* (2d ed.; New York, 1972), p. 45.
5. Spanier, *Truman-MacArthur*, pp. 221-56; George C. Roche III, "Public Opinion and the China Policy of the United States, 1941-1951" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1965), pp. 459-60.
6. Spanier, *Truman-MacArthur*, pp. 218-19; Goldman, *Crucial Decade*, pp. 210-12; Roche, "Public Opinion," p. 467.
7. Roche, "Public Opinion," p. 495; H. Bradford Westerfield, *Foreign Policy and Party Politics: Pearl Harbor to Korea* (New Haven, 1955), p. 343.
8. Herbert S. Parmet, *Eisenhower and the American Crusades* (New York, 1972), pp. 26-29; Kenneth S. Davis, *A Prophet in His Own Country: The Triumphs and Defeats of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), pp. 388-89.
9. Francis R. Valeo, "China and United States Foreign Policy," in Eilene Galloway, ed., *Public Affairs Abstract*, Legislative Reference Service (Washington, 1951); U.S., Department of State, *United States Relations with China, With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949*, Publication 3573, Far Eastern Series 30 (Washington, 1949), p. xvi.
10. *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1952, p. 12.
11. *Ibid.* For Acheson's speech see "Crisis in Asia —An Examination of U.S. Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, XXII (January 23, 1950), 115-16.
12. *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1952, p. 12.
13. *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1952, p. 19.
14. *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1952, p. 30.
15. Bert Cochran, *Adlai Stevenson: Patrician Among the Politicians* (New York, 1969), p. 226; John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), p. 611; Davis, *Prophet*, p. 420.
16. Adlai E. Stevenson, *Major Campaign Speeches of Adlai E. Stevenson 1952* (New York, 1953), p. 92.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-97.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
21. Louis Harris, *Is There a Republican Majority?* (New York, 1954), pp. 29-31; Cochran, *Stevenson*, p. 225.
22. George F. Kennan, "Current Problems in the Conduct of Foreign Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, XXII (May 15, 1950), 750.
23. *New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1952, p. 1; James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston, 1972), pp. 576-78; Parmet, *Eisenhower*, pp. 128-30.
24. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. 130.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-33.
26. *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1952, p. 16; *New York Times*, Sept. 18, 1952, p. 1; Neil MacNeil, *Dirksen: Portrait of a Public Man* (New York, 1970), p. 108.
27. *New York Times*, Sept. 19-28, 1952; Earl Mazo, Richard Nixon (New York, 1960), pp. 93-124; Parmet, *Eisenhower*, pp. 134-41.
28. *New York Times*, Sept. 23, 1952, pp. 1, 17; Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China*, 1941-50 (Chicago, 1963), p. 499.
29. *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1952, p. 1.
30. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1952, p. 1.
31. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. 183.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Sept. 28, 1952, p. 1.
34. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. 188.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-88. Sevenson's remarks paralleled official Truman administration statements. See U.S., Department of State, *American Policy Toward China*, Publication 4255, Far Eastern Series 43 (Washington, 1951).
36. Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years* (New York, 1963), pp. 18, 29-30; *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1952, p. 14; Norman A. Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy Since 1950* (New York, 1956), pp. 97-111.
37. Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, Ill., 1954), p. 125.
38. *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1952, p. 80.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
40. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1952, p. 1.
41. Eisenhower's actual phrase was "let it be Asians against Asians." See *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1952, p. 1.
42. Stevenson, *Speeches*, pp. 253-56; Cochran, *Stevenson*, pp. 227-29.
43. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. xxxvii; Martin, *Stevenson*, p. 705.
44. *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1952, p. 1.
45. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. 301.
46. *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1952, p. 1; Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power*, pp. 31-33; Parmet, *Eisenhower*, pp. 142-43; Caridi, *Korean War*, p. 230.
47. O. Edmund Clubb, "McCarthyism and our Asian Policy," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, IV (May, 1969), 23.
48. Stevenson, *Speeches*, p. 301; Claude A. Buss, *China: The People's Republic of China and Richard Nixon* (San Francisco, 1974), p. 71; A.

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49. Quoted in Norman A. Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960* (Princeton, 1962), p. 10.
50. Norman A. Graebner, "China and Asian Security: An American Dilemma," *International Journal*, XVI (Summer, 1961), p. 224.
51. John M. Fenton, *In Your Opinion . . .* (Boston, 1960), p. 112; Martin, *Stevenson*, pp. 760-61; Bernstein, "Election of 1952," p. 3260; John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (6th ed.; New York, 1973), p. 101; William L. Neumann, "Determinism, Destiny, and Myth in the American Image of China," in George L. Anderson, ed., *Issues and Conflicts: Studies in Twentieth Century American Diplomacy* (Lawrence, Kan., 1959), pp. 18-19.
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EISENHOWER AND McCARTHY: AN APPRAISAL OF PRESIDENTIAL STRATEGY*

by
ALLEN YARNELL
Executive Officer, Academic Programs
University of California, Los Angeles

In recent years Dwight Eisenhower's presidential leadership has undergone a positive re-evaluation by a number of journalists and scholars. From Murray Kempton's 1967 over-enthusiastic but important assessment, to Herbert Parmet's careful and judicious account of 1972, to Gary Reichard's impressive monographic study of the President and the Eighty-Third Congress published in 1975, analysts are now beginning to maintain that Eisenhower was a much more impressive executive than many had previously believed.[1]

While this revisionism is a necessary antidote for the rather stale Ike jokes that have pervaded the historical profession, a word of caution is needed. Scholars working in this period have only recently gained access to previously closed manuscripts housed at the Eisenhower Library. Furthermore, in what is an apparent backlash to the "imperial presidency," there is a tendency at times to become carried away in admiration and, for example, to make Eisenhower appear to have been the only decent chief executive in the realm of foreign affairs in the twentieth-century.[2] The intent of this article is nowhere near as grandiose. The belief here is that Eisenhower was a much shrewder and more political President than most people realized. By focusing on the specific issue of Eisenhower's response to Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, his political skill can be seen as can his overall approach to the office of the presidency.

A number of explanations already exist which attempt to explain Eisenhower's conduct with respect to McCarthy. Nelson Polsby who has classified the Eisenhower presidency as "passive" believes that the President had a strategy with regard to dealing with the junior senator from Wisconsin. "In the case of McCarthy, it is clear that the fact that 'nothing happened' in the White House was the result of deliberate choice."[3] While it is correct to argue that a "deliberate choice" was made with respect to strategy, the conclusion that "nothing happened" is unwarranted as will be shown in the paper. Robert Griffith in his masterful

* This essay is based upon the author's paper presented at the meeting of Organization of American Historians, April 9, 1976.

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