

BETWEEN GUNS AND BUTTER: COLD WAR PRESIDENTS, AGENDA-SETTING,
AND VISIONS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: *Between Guns and Butter: Cold War Presidents, Agenda-Setting, and Visions of National Strength*

This project investigates how the emergent ideological, institutional, and political commitments of the national defense and security state shape the domestic programmatic agendas of modern presidents. Applying a historical and developmental analysis, I trace this dynamic from its origin in the twin crises of the Great Depression and World War II to examine how subsequent presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt have navigated the intersecting politics of this warfare -welfare nexus. I use original, archival research to examine communications between the president and his staff, cabinet members, administration officials, and Congressional leaders to better appreciate how the interaction of these dual political commitments are reflected in the formulation and promotion of the president's budgetary requests and domestic policy initiatives. More directly, I focus on the relationship between the national security politics of the Cold War and the efforts of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to support their objectives in either the expansion or retrenchment of the New Deal-liberal welfare state.

My research suggests that Cold War concerns occasionally aided the growth of the welfare state in areas such as public health and federal aid to education, while at other times defense and security anxieties provided the backdrop for presidential efforts to

diminish the political capacity of the welfare state. More specifically, I find that both Truman and Eisenhower constructed visions of national strength which framed their initiatives in national defense and social welfare as interrelated goals. In the end, I argue that the changing institutions, ideologies, and international commitments of the warfare state present both opportunities and challenges for presidents to articulate political visions in service of domestic policy advancement.

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For my Mom

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In May 2009, President Barack Obama hosted a group of renowned presidential historians at a White House dinner which included an informal discussion about his administration and the state of American politics (over the next few years, four additional such dinners would take place). Ever the intellectual, the President was interested in hearing what these scholars had to say about the potential challenges he might face and what lessons he could glean from his predecessors' tenures in office. At the time of this particular meeting, Obama was giving serious consideration to increasing the number of combat troops in Afghanistan and, inevitably, the night's conversation turned to how such a decision, and the broader conduct of the War on Terror, might impact his domestic agenda of economic recovery and health care reform. Robert Dallek, one of those present at the meeting, writes that he and the other scholars cautioned the President against the troop surge, telling him that "History has shown the difficulty of combining guns and butter."¹

The problem to which Dallek and his peers referred was meant to evoke the political struggles encountered by past reform-minded presidents such as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson, all of whom tried to wage a successful war (providing "guns") while simultaneously pursuing an ambitious domestic

¹ Robert Dallek, "Obama Learns LBJ's Tough Lesson: You Can Have Guns or Butter, not Both," *Reuters*, October 22, 2014, <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/10/22/obama-learns-lbjs-tough-lesson-you-can-have-guns-or-butter-not-both/>.

agenda on the home front (seeking “butter”).² More broadly, however, the concept of “guns vs. butter” also speaks to the real programmatic and budgetary choices that all modern presidents have to confront in service of providing for both the country’s national defense and general welfare. This dilemma is so well-recognized, and its assumptions commonly understood, that it has become a useful short-hand in our public discourse for debating the merits of defense spending vs. domestic spending.³ For instance, Laura D. Tyson, former chief economic adviser to President Bill Clinton, sums up this perspective simply: “Guns versus butter is elementary economics: a society that chooses to spend more of its resources on defense and security will have less available for things like education, health, retirement security, productive investment and consumption.”⁴

Yet, in spite of this conventional wisdom, political scientists have inadequately addressed the dynamic between presidents and this supposed defense/domestic policy tradeoff. This oversight is primarily a result of a tendency in the discipline to neglect analyses that capture the intersection of foreign and domestic politics and policy-making on the president’s agenda. However, appreciating this connection is critical if we are to analyze the politics of guns vs. butter on the president’s agenda.

² For accounts of individual presidents, see: Arthur S. Link, *The Impact of World War I* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Alan Brinkley, *End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995); Irving Bernstein, *Guns and Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³ For examples, see: Jonathan Tasini, “Guns versus butter -- our real economic challenge,” *The Huffington Post*, August 13, 2007, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-tasini/guns-versus-butter-our-re_b_60150.html; John Feffer, “Obama's Guns vs. Butter Dilemma,” *The Huffington Post*, September 22, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/obamas-guns-vs-butter-dil_b_294976.html; Kenneth T. Walsh, “Wars Could Jeopardize Obama’s Domestic Agenda,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 10, 2009, <http://www.usnews.com/news/obama/articles/2009/12/10/wars-could-jeopardize-obamas-domestic-agenda>; James Surowiecki, “Guns vs. Butter” *The New Yorker*, February 11, 2002, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/02/11/guns-vs-butter>.

⁴ Julian Zelizer, “The Nation: Guns and Butter; Government Can Run More Than a War,” *The New York Times*, December 30, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/30/weekinreview/the-nation-guns-and-butter-government-can-run-more-than-a-war.html>.

This problematic domestic-foreign separation bias is especially pronounced among scholars of the presidency and is represented most clearly in the “two presidencies” thesis.⁵ Developed out of earlier research on the various “roles”⁶ of the American president and the distinctive areas of “political bargaining” in which he operates, this thesis encouraged scholars to examine the relative influence of presidential leadership and legislative success in domestic *versus* foreign policy.⁷ While seemingly a byproduct of a previous generation of scholarship, this notion continues to be investigated and reasserted.⁸

What is more, where the domestic-foreign delineation is explicit in the analytical assumptions of research on the “two presidencies,” this divide is implicitly carried forward in the practical approach taken by the majority of presidential scholars. In this manner, presidential leadership and policy-making are examined from the vantage point of *either* domestic or foreign policy. For example, from the domestic front, presidents are analyzed in terms of their ability to “hit the ground running” with their legislative agenda,⁹ manipulate and craft public opinion,¹⁰ construct political authority in relation to

⁵ Put simply, in the words of this theory’s originator: “The United States has one president, but it has two presidencies; one presidency is for domestic affairs, and the other is concerned with defense and foreign policy.” Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies,” in *The Two Presidencies: A Quarter Century Assessment*, ed. Steven A. Shull (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, Inc., 1991), p. 11.

⁶ Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960).

⁷ Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: Wiley, 1980).

⁸ For examples, see Brandice Canes-Wrone, William G. Howell, and David E. Lewis, “Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis,” *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008): 1-16; Bryan W. Marshall and Richard L. Pacelle, jr, “Revisiting the Two Presidencies: The Strategic Use of Executive Orders,” *American Politics Research* 33, no. 1 (2005): 81-105; Brandice Canes-Wrone, *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁹ James P. Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1988).

established partisan regimes,¹¹ and employ the necessary skill and strategy to affect policy change.¹² Alternatively, when turning to foreign policy, scholars have studied how presidents gain public and congressional support for their initiatives,¹³ how they structure “advisory systems” for decision-making,¹⁴ how they use executive agreements to circumvent the treaty-making process,¹⁵ and how they set the agenda in foreign affairs.¹⁶

Unfortunately, the analytical and practical application of the “two presidencies” syndrome continues to obscure, and thus, leaves questions unasked regarding, the interconnection of the presidency, domestic policy, and foreign policy. Ironically, Clinton Rossiter, whose framework of presidential “roles” was foundational for the trajectory of the existing academic divide, stressed that his “exercise in political taxonomy” should not overshadow the fact that “the President is not one kind of official during one part of the day, another kind during another part...He is all these things all the time, and any one of his functions feeds upon and into all the others.”¹⁷

¹⁰ Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹¹ Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993).

¹² William W. Lammers and Michael A. Genovese, *The Presidency and Domestic Policy: Comparing Leadership Styles, FDR to Clinton* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000).

¹³ James Meernik, “Presidential Support in Congress: Conflict and Consensus on Foreign and Defense Policy,” *Journal of Politics* 55, no 3 (1993): 569-587.

¹⁴ John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954 and 1965* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989).

¹⁵ Glen S. Krutz and Jeffrey S. Peake, *Treaty Politics and the Rise of Executive Agreements: International Commitments in a System of Shared Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Lydia Andrade and Garry Young, “Presidential Agenda Setting: Influences on the Emphasis of Foreign Policy,” *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1996): 591-605.

¹⁷ Rossiter, *The American Presidency*, 31

Those accounts of the presidency that do take the intersection of foreign and domestic politics seriously focus exclusively on the domestic setbacks and advances that specific presidents have experienced during wartime.¹⁸ Unfortunately, such studies fail to appreciate how presidents have managed the politics of guns vs. butter beyond periods of armed military conflict. This shortcoming is particularly pointed in light of Mary Dudziak's contention that traditional conceptions of 'wartime' and 'peacetime' have begun to blur with the United States' continual engagement in foreign conflicts since World War II, causing a fluidity and unboundedness to war's legal and political effects.¹⁹ Moreover, such a re-conceptualization of war's implications for policy-making takes seriously what historian Michael Sherry has described as the development of "militarization" in the nation's politics and culture. That is, "the process by which war and national security became consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of national life."²⁰ This historical, institutional, and ideological perspective leads us to inquire about how the dynamic between warfare, the presidency, and domestic policy has unfolded in the post-war era.

In this dissertation, I argue that the politics of guns vs. butter have been fully institutionalized in the presidency since World War II. More specifically, we can locate this process, and its attendant politics, in the critical period of the 1930s and 1940s when

¹⁸ Andrew J. Polsky, *Elusive Victories: The American Presidency at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert P. Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics Since 1898* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); William G. Howell, Saul P. Jackman, and Jon C. Rogowski, *The Wartime President: Executive Influence and the Nationalizing Politics of Threat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁰ Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: the United States since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xi.

the commitments of the presidency were fundamentally altered through the twin developments of the welfare state and the warfare state. Through archival and historical research, I find that in navigating the welfare-warfare state nexus, presidents engage in what I call the *politics of linkage*. In particular, I argue that presidents link their initiatives in national defense and domestic policy as interrelated goals by articulating a *vision of national strength*. In the end, I show that the changing institutions, ideologies, and international commitments of the warfare state present both opportunities and challenges for presidents to articulate political visions in service of domestic policy advancement.

The Modern Presidency, the Welfare State-Warfare State Nexus, and the Politics of Linkage

To analyze the intersection of the presidency, domestic policy, and foreign policy, I provide an analytic framework of the modern presidency in the shadow of the welfare state-warfare state nexus. I will briefly discuss each development and the presidency's political commitments in each in turn.

First, in confronting the economic crisis of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt redefined the role of the executive in championing the rights of individuals, thus ushering in a public philosophy of “programmatically liberalism” that emphasized the national government’s responsibility of protecting citizens against economic and social destitution.²¹ With the aim of promoting this new conception of rights, Roosevelt forged a link between the people, the presidency, and national administrative power. In this manner, the “welfare state” was formed and with it came a

²¹ Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties: the Transformation of the American Party System since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

new type of politics: officially cementing the presidency as “the steward of the public welfare.”²² Along with the redefinition of liberalism, modern presidents would need to contend with the budgetary and political commitments of the emergent domestic policies, institutions, and interests regarding the general welfare of the nation.²³

Simultaneously, as Commander-in-Chief during the events of the Second World War, President Roosevelt oversaw a massive rearmament of the nation’s military and the rise of the United States as a leader on the world stage. As historian Julian Zelizer writes, Roosevelt’s vision of the Arsenal of Democracy became a “complex network of institutions, policies, ideologies, and political commitments – that is, a permanent national security state.”²⁴ With the founding of this “warfare state,” the presidency is now bound to ensuring permanent military preparedness, promoting an ideology of national defense and security, and protecting the national interest through diplomacy and military action.²⁵

²² I employ a much broader conception of the welfare state than do scholars of social policy. For contrasting examples, see Edwin Amenta, *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern American Social Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: the Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Christopher Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths about U.S. Social Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²³ In many ways, the notion of “the politics of the welfare state” resembles notions of political regimes and political orders. For examples, see Gary Gerstle and Steve Fraser, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); David Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order: Reshaping American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, “Regimes and Regime Building in American Government: A Review of Literature on the 1940s” *Political Science Quarterly* 113, no. 4 (1998): 689-702.

²⁴ Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security - From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 2.

²⁵ For other perspectives on the “warfare state” and “the security state,” see Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bartholomew Sparrow, “American Political Development, State-Building, and the “Security State” *Polity* 40 (July 2008): 358-359.

These two developments raise interesting questions about modern presidential leadership and presidential policy-making. First, how have post-war presidents balanced the political commitments of both the welfare state and the warfare state on the national agenda? That is, how have presidents envisioned the relationship between national purpose in both domestic and defense policy? How have presidents linked these two objectives and articulated them to the public? Second, in linking the two, how have presidents sought to realize their objectives through their programmatic agendas and administrative policies? In particular, those agendas aimed at either expansion or retrenchment of social welfare spending and policies?

In addressing these questions, my dissertation has two main objectives. First, I utilize original, archival evidence and secondary sources to provide cross-case comparisons of individual presidents in order to assess how they set their programmatic agenda, constructed speeches and public statements, and formulated their administration's annual budget. In doing so, I attempt to identify patterns and variations in the types of politics constructed by these presidents in their navigation of the welfare state-warfare state nexus. This requires going to the source, often presidential libraries, to comb through speech drafts, policy memos, budget reports, minutes from legislative meetings, and personal diaries so as to better understand *how* presidents managed the often chaotic work of balancing domestic and foreign policy commitments. Second, from these individual cases, I turn my analytic gaze to the broader development of the presidency to examine how the necessity of balancing guns and butter has shaped the politics of the institution over time.

The underlying assumption of my research is that presidents make choices; whether it is the decision to use a particular phrase in a speech, advocate for a particular program, or push for specific funding. So, to analyze how presidents navigate the politics of the welfare-warfare state nexus, my archival research focused on three areas of presidential choice: 1) the construction of the president's vision, 2) their programmatic agenda, 3) and the formulation of the budget.

According to presidential scholar Fred Greenstein, two important characteristics of the modern presidency (as a political operator) are political skill and the harnessing of a *vision* reflected in public policy.²⁶ In this manner, as Thomas Cronin and Michael Genovese write, “Strong presidential leadership can provide a vision that empowers all of us to rise above the routine and make real contributions to our common purpose.”²⁷ Moreover, visions can give “purpose to action” and “direction to a community.”²⁸ As I argue, in navigating the politics of the welfare state-warfare state nexus, presidents construct visions that link themes of warfare, nationalism, and common purpose. In doing so, they hope to articulate their objectives in both foreign and domestic policy.

But their appeals are more than just rhetoric. Such visions are also about constructing projects. A defining characteristic of the modern presidency is the development of the president's program, represented by legislative requests and

²⁶ Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5-6.

²⁷ Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

administrative objectives.²⁹ Additionally, the president's objectives can be identified through the budget request he puts forth.

Developmental Approach and Chapter Overview

In the chapters that follow, I advance a developmental argument about how presidents construct meaning and authority around the dual purposes they face in governing atop the welfare state and the warfare state and how they attempt to realize this in practice. In each individual case, I pay close attention to the dynamic between the orientation of the president's domestic program (ambitious vs. modest), the rise and fall of defense and security issues on the national agenda (presence of war or crises; ideology), and the institutional politics of the defense budget (defense interests both within and without the administration). This particular dynamic sets the boundaries for the variation in how each individual president navigates the politics of guns vs. butter. In doing so, they each construct *politics of linkage* that become institutionalized, and set the stage for subsequent presidents. That is, the foundation for such a vision is laid by previous president's discourse (which is itself shaped by international, political, historical context). This is most evident in the articulation of *visions of national strength*. The focal point of my argument is that in constructing visions of national strength (consisting of various themes/ideas) the terrain is then set for other political actors to respond to and, thus, redeploy in their own way. However, the limits of success are based on institutional context.

²⁹ Andrew Rudalevige, *Managing the President's program: Presidential Leadership and Legislative Policy Formulation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

The second chapter analyzes the origins of this vision in the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In this developmental chapter, I first describe Theodore Roosevelt's boldness in trying to instill the presidency's image and actions with warlike sacrifice and common purpose. Wilson's presidency is a case in point about the limits of reform during wartime and suggests what later presidents would could to learn about the quick shifts in the politics of the national agenda. The 1932 campaign between Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt is noteworthy for its multitude of references to war and sacrifice in the shadow of the Great Depression. With Roosevelt's actions in the New Deal and World War II, the politics of guns and butter became institutionalized in the presidency.

The third and fourth chapters deal with the presidency of Harry S Truman who was dealt the unlucky hand of following in the footsteps of Roosevelt, inheriting his agenda in both the welfare state and the warfare state. Moreover, Truman's time in office was bookended by two wars and he continually struggled against conservative opposition in Congress. However, Truman perfectly illustrates the deep conviction presidents have shown in articulating and trying to realize their vision of national strength. The fifth chapter examines Dwight D. Eisenhower and his efforts to rein in the politics of the warfare state while governing with a less than ambitious domestic agenda. The sixth chapter concludes the dissertation and gives a brief account of the politics of guns and butter and the end of the Cold War. In addition, I provide some food for thought for later research.

CHAPTER II

PRESIDENTIAL VISIONS BEFORE THE WARFARE STATE:

WAR, CRISES, AND THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL STRENGTH

In 1907, future president -- and respected political scientist -- Woodrow Wilson gave a lecture at Columbia University regarding the changing nature of the office of the presidency. Reflecting on the United States' recent rise "to the first rank in power and resources[,]” Wilson posited an expanding role for the president, who could “never again be the mere domestic figure he has been throughout so large a part of our history.”

Because of this development,

Our president must always, henceforth, be one of the great powers of the world, whether he act greatly or wisely or not.... We have but begun to see the presidential office in this light; but it is the light which will more and more beat upon it, and more and more determine its character and its effect upon the politics of the nation.”³⁰

Wilson's new interpretation of the presidency as an office that would bring a sense of unity and direction to the nation could not have been more prescient. By the middle of the twentieth century, the general outlook of the country's standing in the world and the projection of American greatness would become a paramount concern for presidents. Specifically, this necessity established in the American presidency the tendency to promote visions of *national strength*.

Most directly, this development is attributable to the United States-led victory in World War II and the emergence of the nation as a global power. However, taking a cue from Wilson, we can train a spotlight on the presidents of the early twentieth century to

³⁰ Found in Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2007* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 247.

uncover the ideological and political foundations of national strength as a presidential vision. What we find is that prior to the institutionalization of the warfare state and its associated politics (as discussed in Chapter I), at times, presidents invoked visions that linked themes and programs of warfare, nationalism, and common purpose. Such presidential visions were often articulated in service of advancing particular domestic objectives during times of war and economic crises. Ultimately, the concept of national strength was solidified through the country's experience during the New Deal and World War II and would come to have a wide-ranging effect on the politics of agenda-setting, budgeting, and administrative programs.

In this chapter, I detail the historical development of visions of national strength by examining critical moments and dynamics from the presidential administrations of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. First, I begin with a look at Theodore Roosevelt's calls for military preparedness and renewed national purpose while pursuing a robust programmatic agenda, often backed by the usage of warfare metaphors, during the period of American ascendance on the world stage. Second, I examine Woodrow Wilson's presidency and the dynamic of progressivism, preparedness, and World War I mobilization. Third, I turn to the Great Depression and the 1932 election between Hoover and FDR. In this section I contrast their competing visions of the economic crisis as akin to war and their appeals to mobilize the nation in response. Finally, I consider the wartime challenge faced by FDR in navigating the politics of the New Deal and defense mobilization for World War II. I conclude with a brief discussion of how the institutionalization of national strength set the stage for the presidential politics of the post-war era.

The Progressive Presidency during the Era of American Ascension: Theodore Roosevelt's Quest for Glory Abroad and at Home

The shadow of “Rough Rider” Teddy Roosevelt looms large over the presidency’s commitment to projecting American strength. As historian John Morton Blum has written, TR thought the United States “deserved both the recognition and the responsibilities of a great world power” and the executive alone could wield such authority. With this view in mind there emerged “an equivalently large conception of the domestic responsibilities of the federal government, particularly those of the president.”³¹ Together, Roosevelt’s actions in domestic and foreign affairs comprised what has been described as a “single political outlook.”³² Roosevelt himself expressed a similar conviction after having left the presidency, lamenting to a friend that he was no longer in a position to provide the nation a much needed “vision in both national and international matters.”³³

When the assassination of William McKinley thrust Roosevelt into the presidency, the United States was beginning its ascent onto the stage of imperial world powers. He recognized this fact in his 1905 inaugural address, affirming that the country and its citizens had been given much and, thus, that “much will rightfully be expected from us.” America, TR said, had “become a great nation, forced by the fact of its greatness into relations with the other nations of the earth” and we should recognize our

³¹ John Morton Blum, *The Progressive Presidents: Roosevelt, Wilson, Roosevelt, Johnson* (New York: Norton, 1980), 26.

³² John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1983), 201.

³³ *Ibid*, 309.

“duties to others and duties to ourselves.”³⁴ This declaration amounted to a justification for the actions he had taken in foreign affairs during the first four years of his administration. Under the motto of “speak softly and carry a big stick,”³⁵ the President asserted American influence in Latin America through his “Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine, spearheaded the construction of the Panama Canal, and mediated peace between Russia and Japan. Moreover, Roosevelt sought to flaunt American greatness by undertaking a build-up of the U.S. navy and then by subsequently sending the “the Great White Fleet” on a voyage around the globe. While an enhanced naval presence represented a direct manifestation of American defensive strength, the President also understood the nation’s commitment to nurture “human and natural resources” as a form of domestic preparedness.³⁶

On the domestic front, Roosevelt pursued his “Square Deal,” a program generally concerned with conservation efforts, consumer protection, and the reigning in of corporations or “trusts.” He was successful in gaining passage of the Hepburn Act which strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Pure Food and Drug Act which led to food labeling and, on one particular occasion in March 1907, he set aside 16 million acres of public land as a nature reserve before Congress was able to limit his

³⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1905, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/troos.asp.

³⁵ Ambar describes how this emerged during TR’s time in the Albany statehouse. See, Saladin Ambar, *How Governors Built the Modern American Presidency* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 50.

³⁶ Blum, *The Progressive Presidents*, 51.

ability to do so. In this instance, one author suggests that “the Square Deal matched the big stick in substance and show”³⁷

Roosevelt’s actions reflect his belief that nothing could be more glorious than to demonstrate the prowess of the presidency in both domestic and foreign policy by carrying forward the torch of the national interest. As Blum argues, it was this “strenuous leadership at home and abroad [which] gave substance to his vision of his stewardship.”³⁸ More often than not, the President’s vision was infused with appeals to the “warlike spirit of sacrifice and common purpose.”³⁹ The most direct metaphor in this case was the “heroic struggle” of the Civil War. Nowhere was this imagery clearer than during his return to politics under the Progressive mantle, in which he called for a “New Nationalism.”

In 1910, the former president addressed a contingent of the Grand Army of the Republic in Osawatimie, Kansas, the site of a John Brown anti-slavery raid in 1856. In this speech, Roosevelt put forth a new vision that professed the object of government to be “the welfare of the people.” Invoking the war against the states, he argued that “civil life [should] be carried on according to the spirit in which the [Union] army was carried on.”⁴⁰ With references to the ‘mightiest nation,’ Theodore Roosevelt sought “a spirit of broad and far-reaching nationalism.” Echoing his sentiments about the ‘president as steward,’ he argued that

³⁷ Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 79.

³⁸ Blum, *The Progressive Presidents*, 58.

³⁹ Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 201.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 145.

the national government belongs to the whole American people, and where the whole American people are interested, that interest can be guarded effectively only by the national government. The betterment which we seek must be accomplished, I believe, mainly through the national government.⁴¹

Roosevelt continually invoked the linkage of war and nationalism throughout his unsuccessful insurgency campaign for the Presidency in the election of 1912. Moving beyond sectionalism and trying to win support in the South in his last major speech of the campaign he professed, “We appeal to the sons of the men who followed Lee no less than to the sons of the men who followed Grant; for their memory of the great deeds of both is now the common heritage of honor which belongs to all our people, wherever they dwell.” Moreover, re-asserting his commitment to American greatness on the international stage, he made passing references to “Uncle Sam’s interests abroad” and the need for yet a bigger navy and the fortification of Panama Canal.⁴²

Ultimately, as president, Roosevelt “made apparent the significance of American military strength” but governed during a period when the majority of the American population was indifferent to the state of global affairs.⁴³ This fact is reflected in his own recognition that his ability to promote the national interest was constrained by the undemanding times in which he governed. In a speech honoring the birthday of former President McKinley, Roosevelt remarked:

If during the lifetime of a generation no crisis occurs sufficient to call out in marked manner the energies of the strongest leader, then of course the

⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt, The New Nationalism Speech, August 31, 1910, The White House Blog, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/12/06/archives-president-teddy-roosevelts-new-nationalism-speech>.

⁴² Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 203.

⁴³ Blum, *The Progressive Presidents*, 59.

world does not and cannot know of the existence of such a leader; and in consequence there are long periods in the history of every nation during which no man appears who leaves an indelible mark in history.⁴⁴

For Roosevelt, great leaders were given wars and crises to prove their mettle, but as he saw it, few executives were given the opportunity to exert such leadership. His admiration for President Lincoln and the Civil War is a case in point. Roosevelt desired the type of crisis that he felt forged Lincoln into the historical icon he became, once observing that "...a man has to take advantage of his opportunities, but the opportunities have to come. If there is not the war, you don't get the general; if there is not the great occasion, you don't get the great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in times of peace, no one would have known his name now."⁴⁵ While his own 'great opportunity' never came, in the end, President Roosevelt would leave his own indelible mark on the boisterousness of the American executive.

Domestic Ambitions, International Necessities: Woodrow Wilson, the New Freedom, and World War I

The presidency of Woodrow Wilson foreshadows the challenges that subsequent executives would come to face in trying to pursue domestic reform amid times of war. Wilson was foremost concerned with achieving his ambitious domestic agenda, the New Freedom, once remarking to a friend that "it would be an irony of fate if my administration had to deal with foreign problems, for all my preparation has been in

⁴⁴ James Martin Miller ed., *The Triumphant Life of Theodore Roosevelt* (n.p., 1904), 366.

⁴⁵ Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 118.

domestic matters.”⁴⁶ Unfortunately the onset of war in Europe made this exact state of affairs a reality. At first, Wilson was successful in navigating the emerging politics around the condition of the nation’s defenses with his re-tooled progressive domestic agenda by articulating a vision of American idealism that associated peace, prosperity, and preparedness. As one historian has written, Wilson’s idealism was founded on a belief in “the special virtue and mission of the American people.”⁴⁷ However, the United States’ official entry into World War I, and the ensuing mobilization effort led by Wilson, presented various ideological, institutional, and political challenges to the credibility of this linkage, ultimately foreclosing this progressive moment by ushering in a conservative ‘Return to Normalcy.’

Wilson’s presidency began with the enactment of one of the most impressive legislative programs in history, called the “New Freedom.” This program represented a set of victories bested only by Roosevelt’s early New Deal and Johnson’s Great Society. In contrast to Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism,” the philosophy behind Wilson’s “New Freedom” suggested that the best way to handle corporate trusts was by weakening them so as to promote greater economic competition. Broadly, the program was centered on three areas of reform: tariff, banking, and business. Thus, Wilson signed into law such policies as the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, the Federal Trade Act, and the Federal Reserve Act. In addition, he was successful in gaining legislation aimed at helping farmers, laborers, and the general health and welfare of Americans.

⁴⁶ Found in Barbara Hinckley, *The Symbolic Presidency: How Presidents Portray Themselves* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 118.

⁴⁷ Blum, *The Progressive Presidents*, 79.

Such a determined pursuit of domestic reform has been described by one scholar as evidence of Wilson's "one-track mind" prior to World War I.⁴⁸ Even the war's outbreak did not initially disrupt this particular mindset. For example, this was apparent to Colonel Edward M. House, an American diplomat and close confidant to the President, who noted at the time that Wilson "seems more interested in domestic affairs, and I find it difficult to get his attention centered upon the one big question."⁴⁹ However, soon his attention would be drawn toward that "one big question," particularly as the national agenda was being directed toward a debate about the state of the nation's military preparedness.⁵⁰

After weathering some criticism of the nation's defenses from opposition politicians, most prominently former President Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson finally called upon Congress to increase military preparedness in the fall of 1915. Speaking before the Manhattan Club in New York, Wilson referred to "the mission of America" and the nation's need to speak the escalating global language of "force." Americans should be made aware, he argued, of "what our own force is [and] how far we are prepared to maintain ourselves against any interference with our national action and development."⁵¹

The immediate challenge for the President was to square his plan for preparedness with an anxious political coalition of Democrats and Progressives. Where the former

⁴⁸ Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 158.

⁴⁹ Found in Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 275.

⁵⁰ Especially given ongoing German submarine warfare (underscored by the sinking of the passenger ship *Lusitania* which claimed the lives of over 100 American citizens).

⁵¹ Woodrow Wilson, An Address on Preparedness to the Manhattan Club, November 4, 1915, The Library of Congress, <https://archive.org/details/addressofpreside02wilsb>.

group had a history of opposing prior Republican efforts at military buildup going back to 1900, the latter camp feared that the preparedness issue would snuff out any and all movement on the reform front. In an effort to blunt progressive criticism, particularly from William Jennings Bryan, Wilson spoke of the relationship between domestic reform and the preparedness effort in his December 1915 State of the Union.

The President wanted Americans to know that “While we speak of the preparation of the nation to make sure of her security and her effective power, we must not fall into the patent error of supposing that her real strength comes from armaments and mere safeguards of written law.” There was much more that went into developing the nation’s strength, ranging from “her people, their energy, their success in their undertakings... [to] the organization and freedom and vitality of our economic life.” From this perspective, Wilson argued that

The domestic questions which engaged the attention of the last Congress are more vital to the nation in this its time of test than at any other time. We cannot adequately make ready for any trial of our strength unless we wisely and promptly direct the force of our laws into these all-important fields of domestic action (emphasis added).”⁵²

Having expressed to Congress his commitment to build the nation’s defenses, Wilson returned to the rhetorical presidency employed during the early years of the New Freedom by embarking on a speaking tour to take his case for preparedness directly to the people. His nine-day tour comprised eleven speeches of which “preparedness to defend both peace and national honor” were a prominent theme.⁵³ Events abroad were happening beyond America’s control, yet, as Wilson told one group of gathered citizens, “America

⁵² Woodrow Wilson, Third Annual Message, December 7, 1915, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29556>

⁵³ Arthur Link, *Wilson: Confusions and Crises, 1915-1916* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 47.

cannot shut itself out from the rest of the world because all the dangers at this present moment – and they are many – come from her contacts with the rest of the world.”⁵⁴ His appeals worked. By the end of that summer, Congress authorized a preparedness program which included an increase in army and navy personnel and established a civilian mobilization agency, the Council of National Defense.

While the preparedness issue had been at the fore of the national agenda for the better part of the year, as historian Arthur Link contends, “Wilson, even though diverted and distracted by unending foreign complications, had neither abandoned leadership nor plans for far-reaching new measures to complete his reform program.”⁵⁵ In fact, with the 1916 presidential election on the horizon, Wilson sought to recommit himself to domestic policy by adopting a more progressive platform. During the previous year he had changed his position on women’s suffrage, led a fight to confirm Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court, and backed progressive policies such as child labor legislation, workmen’s compensation, and a nonpartisan tariff commission.⁵⁶ Wilson’s support for such issues was critical to his re-election, to be sure, but so was his sustained public opposition to sending troops to fight abroad. This is reflected perfectly in the campaign slogans “He kept us out of war” and “War in the East, peace in the West, thank God for Wilson.”

Republicans, for their part, tried to make a partisan issue out of the preparedness debate in the lead up to the election by portraying Wilson as weak and uncommitted to the nation’s security. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Roosevelt attacked the President’s failure in

⁵⁴ Found in Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 298-9.

⁵⁵ Link, *Wilson*, 321.

⁵⁶ David A. Crockett, *The Opposition Presidency: Leadership and the Constraints of History* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 119.

promoting the nation's prestige, claiming that Wilson "ha[d] dulled the national conscience and relaxed the spring of lofty, national motives by teaching our people to accept high sounding words as the offset and atonement for shabby deeds."⁵⁷ John Hays Hammond, a prominent businessman, wrote an article, which was later circulated as a campaign document for the Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes, challenging the progressives' argument that the cost of defense preparedness would divert "enormous sums of money from the alleviation of human suffering to which it could otherwise be applied." Given the "existing conditions," Hammond found such reasoning "indefensible," maintaining that it would be "execrable parsimony to oppose national defence solely because of the expense involved (sic)." The nation must carry out a sustained program of national defense so as "to enable our Nation to exercise an influence in the Council of Nations commensurate with our position among the nations of the world."⁵⁸ Try as they might, the Republicans' attempts to make the war and preparedness partisan issues were to no avail. However, in short time preparedness would turn into full war mobilization, shifting politics anew.

In response to the Germans' resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare against American shipping vessels, President Wilson went before members of Congress in April of 1917 to ask for a declaration of war, which they granted him shortly thereafter. Famously, the President called upon the United States to "make the world safe for democracy," arguing that our purpose in joining the war should "not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right,

⁵⁷ Found in Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 306.

⁵⁸ John Hays Hammond, "The Issues of 1916," in *World War I at Home: Readings on American Life, 1914-1920*, ed. David F. Trask (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1970), 51-52.

of human right, of which we are only a single champion.”⁵⁹ For the remainder of his term, President Wilson would be primarily devoted to pursuing what he termed “peace without victory” and committing the U.S. to the League of Nations.

Confronted with the realities of a wartime leader, Wilson’s domestic ambitions became a secondary priority on the national agenda and his prior vision of progressive reform took on a more “idealistic language of disinterestedness and sacrifice.”⁶⁰ That is, the president sought to remain above the political fray, arguing that “every program must be shot through and through with utter disinterestedness” and that neither party should “try to serve itself, but every party must try to serve humanity.”⁶¹ However, in the midterm of 1918, Wilson undercut his own argument by mixing patriotism with partisanship. Confronted with increasing Republican opposition to American entrance into the League of Nations, Wilson made a last minute appeal to voters: “If you have approved of my leadership and wish me to be your unembarrassed spokesman in affairs at home and abroad, I earnestly beg that you will express yourself unmistakably to that effect by returning a Democratic majority to both the Senate and the House of Representatives.”⁶² He argued that returning a Republican majority back in Congress would “certainly be interpreted on the other side of the water as a repudiation of my

⁵⁹ Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Requesting a Declaration of War against Germany, April 2, 1917, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65366>.

⁶⁰ Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 260.

⁶¹ Found in *Ibid*, 261.

⁶² Found in Milkis/Nelson, *The American Presidency*, 252.

leadership.”⁶³ His appeal failed, with Republicans winning a majority in both chambers of Congress.

The implications of Wilson’s political failure would only be heightened during the 1920 presidential election. Together with the President’s display of wartime partisanship, the Progressives’ embrace of government intervention during the war was viewed by many as a sign of potentially dangerous times to come. For a nation traditionally unaccustomed to such governmental involvement, agencies like the War Industries Board, the War Finance Corporation, the Committee on Public Information, and the Food Administration smacked of ‘Prussianization.’⁶⁴

Moreover, as historian Robert H. Ferrell writes, many Americans came to disapprove of Wilson’s “constant summoning of the country to idealism. For eight years the nation had listened to calls for Progressivism, a New Freedom, New Diplomacy, Making the World Safe for Democracy, Preserving the Heart of the World.”⁶⁵ In the end, Republican Warren G. Harding would be elected to the presidency on a platform that rejected Wilson’s support for the League of Nations and his broader vision of domestic reform. After all, voters were sensitive to Harding’s, and by extension, the Republicans’ campaign vision: “America’s present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution but restoration.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Found in Blum, *The Progressive Presidents*, 100.

⁶⁴ Barry Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁶⁵ Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917-1921* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 228.

⁶⁶ Found in *Ibid*, 227.

The Great Depression-as-War: The Nation in Crisis and the Contrasting Visions of Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt

With the end of World War I and the Return to Normalcy, the United States would enter a sustained period of isolationism from events abroad and would dramatically scale back its military preparedness. However, even the walls of Fortress America could not shield the nation from the pending international crisis of the Great Depression and the unresolved economic tensions stemming from the Great War.⁶⁷ While the country's international and military prestige may have been in a holding pattern, visions of American resolve and national purpose linked to hardships of war resonated with citizens, and thus, were ripe for articulating how the nation should respond to the economic crisis. In this section of the chapter, I illustrate the two competing visions offered by President Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, his Democratic challenger in the 1932 election.

Hoover, the War for Confidence, and the Shift from Voluntarism to Government

Intervention

The implications of the Great Depression for the presidency of Herbert Hoover represent what political scientist Stephen Skowronek calls a “great misfortune” and speak to the contextual challenges of political leadership. As Skowronek notes, where Theodore Roosevelt believed true misfortune for a president was governing in a crisis-free era, Hoover, a man of “broad national vision,” was a case in point for how the presence of a

⁶⁷ For accounts of post-war economic tensions, see Charles Poor Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

national crisis posed severe limits to articulating such vision.⁶⁸ Hoover had come to office with great hopes of bringing the new science of economic management to bear on the philosophy of governmental intervention. With the coming of the Great Depression, Hoover would soon face the need to put such philosophy into practice, but ultimately failed in justifying such action to the American people.

At the beginning of the crisis, President Hoover sought to instill confidence in the economy and criticized any call for direct government relief that would weaken “the sturdiness of our national character.”⁶⁹ To Hoover, such action on the part of government put the nation’s “moral strength” at stake. According to one scholar, Hoover’s initial response to the Great Depression was to employ economic “rhetoric of recovery that conjoined warfare and spiritualism,”⁷⁰ speaking of the nation’s gift of “spirit and strength.”⁷¹

In October 1931, the President spoke before an audience of bankers and finally made his case for direct relief. As Davis W. Houck argues, Hoover kept up his “warfare dramatization” by justifying “the federal government’s intervention into private finance by analogy.”⁷² Hoover’s plan for relief was to put in place a Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC); an agency, he noted, that was “similar in character and purpose” to

⁶⁸ Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, p. 260.

⁶⁹ Herbert Hoover, “Statement on Public vs. Private Financing of Relief Efforts,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Herbert Hoover, vol. 3, 1931* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 54.

⁷⁰ Davis W. Houck, *Rhetoric as Currency: Hoover, Roosevelt, and the Great Depression* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2001), 59.

⁷¹ Herbert Hoover, “Address to the Annual Convention of the American Red Cross, April 13, 1931,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Herbert Hoover, vol. 3, 1931* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 180.

⁷² Houck, *Rhetoric as Currency*, 69.

the War Finance Corporation that had been in operation during World War I.⁷³ He would continue this theme in his December 1932 State of the Union.

Hoover had employed a similar metaphor in another speech to Detroit's American Legion. Advocating for the Legion to recognize the needs of the government's financial stability, Hoover invited them "to enlist in that fight. The country's need of this service is second only to war."⁷⁴ Shortly after, Hoover expressed this theme in a national radio address: "This broadcast tonight marks the beginning of the mobilization of the whole Nation for a great undertaking." We were in the midst of a "national suffering" but the president's plan was to ask for voluntary relief from individuals and direct federal relief to bankers via the RFC.⁷⁵ As Houck puts it, "Not to participate in the relief campaign was, therefore, to ignore a patriotic call to arms..."⁷⁶ Hoover himself said "no one with a spark of human sympathy can contemplate unmoved the possibilities of suffering that can crush many of our unfortunate fellow Americans if we shall fail them."⁷⁷

As the Great Depression dragged on, Hoover decided to convene a White House meeting to discuss the RFC and the success, or rather failure, of his planned "war against a lack of confidence." During that meeting, General Dawes, head of the RFC, expressed great fears about the situation and criticized the Hoover administration's response. The

⁷³ Herbert Hoover, "Statement on Financial and Economic Problems, October 7, 1931," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Herbert Hoover, vol. 3, 1931* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 467.

⁷⁴ Herbert Hoover, Address to the American Legion at Detroit, Michigan, September 21, 1931, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22808>.

⁷⁵ Herbert Hoover, Radio Address to the Nation on Unemployment Relief, October 18, 1931, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22855>.

⁷⁶ Houck, *Rhetoric as Currency*, 71-2.

⁷⁷ Herbert Hoover, Radio Address to the Nation on Unemployment Relief, October 18, 1931, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22855>

problem as he saw it was twofold: the tendency of individuals to hoard their money and a general distrust of the banks. Hoover responded to such claims, noting that he told reporters “that we were not undertaking this as a bank relief program; we were undertaking it as a patriotic program...[one meant to] appeal to the community to put its money to work.”⁷⁸

Taking yet again to the airwaves, Hoover sought to mobilize support for the campaign against hoarding. In his broadcast, Hoover renewed his call for the people to act voluntarily but noted that the federal government should take the lead because only it could “liberate the inherent resources and strength of the American people.” He continued:

To join in this effort and to respond to this appeal becomes a measure of your faith in our country; it will be the touchstone of your loyalty and of your sense of individual responsibility for the welfare of the whole community; it is your opportunity to prove again that the private citizen of the United States in the exercise of his own independent judgment and his own free will, coerced by no authority save his conscience and *moved only by his own patriotic pride, can be counted upon to meet every emergency in the Nation's economy and to rout every foe of the Nation's security* (emphases added).⁷⁹

Turning away from his earlier calls for voluntarism as the sole solution to the economic crisis, Hoover tried to explain to the American people his program of direct relief to the banks, asking them to envision the nation at war. Just as the government was necessary in mobilizing for war, so would it be necessary in responding to the Great Depression. As would be demonstrated a month later, Hoover’s Democratic rival in the

⁷⁸ Found in Houck, *Rhetoric as Currency*, 78.

⁷⁹ Herbert Hoover, Radio Address on the Hoarding of Currency, March 6, 1932, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=23474>.

1932 campaign, Franklin D. Roosevelt, would articulate a similar argument, but in a much more visionary manner.

FDR, National Purpose, and the “Analogue of War”

On April 7, 1932, candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave a campaign radio address that set the tone for his increasing appeals to what one historian has described as a “vision of united action and transcendent purpose.”⁸⁰ In the address, Roosevelt made an impassioned call for collective action against the war-like crisis of the Great Depression. Overcoming such a conflict, he argued, required a response analogous to that of World War I, in which “the generalship of that moment conceived of a whole Nation mobilized for war.” Harkening back to his days as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt contended that “the nation faces today a more grave emergency than in 1917...It is high time to get back to fundamentals. *It is high time to admit with courage that we are in the midst of an emergency at least equal to that of war* (emphasis added).”⁸¹

Of course, as noted above, Hoover himself was also employing the imagery of war during the election, so Roosevelt looked to turn the President’s own metaphor against him in order to heighten their contrasting visions of governmental intervention. For example, in a speech at a Jefferson Day Dinner that spring, candidate Roosevelt took aim at Hoover by asking Americans to

Compare this panic-stricken policy of delay and improvisation with that devised to meet the emergency of war fifteen years ago. We met specific situations with considered, relevant measures of constructive value. There

⁸⁰ Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 350.

⁸¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Radio Address from Albany, New York, April 7, 1932, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88408>. This address is famously referred to as “The Forgotten Man Speech.”

were the War Industries Board, the Food and Fuel Administration, the War Trade Board, the Shipping Board and many others.⁸²

Historian William Leuchtenburg has famously referred to Roosevelt's expression of the need for warlike, common purpose to respond to the Great Depression as "the analogue of war." As such, it signifies the adoption of both the imagery of war *and* the specific mobilization model of World War I. According to Leuchtenburg, "in the New Deal years, the two strands were inseparable."⁸³ Upon his stunning victory in the 1932 presidential election, Roosevelt would re-deploy the 'analogue' toward mobilizing the nation during his achievements of the New Deal's "First Hundred Days."

Roosevelt began by invoking his campaign's vision in his inauguration as the 32nd President of the United States. He took to the podium like a general addressing his troops and delivered an address that was laden with rhetoric and imagery of a great battle for the economic and civic soul of the American nation. Taking up "the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems," the new President began the process of setting forth a new vision of what basic needs government would protect for its citizens.⁸⁴ Just as he had done in his 'forgotten man' speech, Roosevelt laid claim to the federal government's "social duty" to look after the common man.

Certain New Dealers hoped that the use of the war metaphor would bring about a return to the 'war collectivism' that they felt had existed during the days of World War

⁸² Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address at Jefferson Day Dinner in St. Paul, Minnesota, April 18, 1932, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88409>.

⁸³ William E. Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and His Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 37.

⁸⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14473>.

I.⁸⁵ In short order, Congress delegated authority to the President to develop a host of agencies, soon to be referred to as the Alphabet Soup. Take for instance the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which earned the nickname ‘Roosevelt’s Tree army,’ the National Youth Administration (NYA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).⁸⁶ Throughout the prime years of the New Deal, agencies such as the WPA, CCC, and NYA contributed vastly to the efforts to ensure economic security for those most desperate for relief.

Writing about the relationship of the early New Deal and the “war as analogue,” Leuchtenburg suggests that, in some ways, both the metaphor and the invocation of World War I “proved invaluable” for Roosevelt by “provid[ing] a feeling of national solidarity that made possible the New Deal’s greatest achievement: its success in ‘nation-saving,’ in mending the social fabric.”⁸⁷ Yet, a very real war would soon supplant Roosevelt’s metaphor and its intended vision of national purpose.

FDR’s Linked Program: The New Deal, World War II, and the Institutionalization of National Strength as a Political Vision

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s overwhelming re-election to the presidency in 1936 was interpreted as the nation’s ringing endorsement of the early reform measures of the New Deal. The political winds appeared to be at the backs of New Deal supporters who hoped

⁸⁵ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years*. See in particular, chapter two “The New Deal and the Analogue of War.”

⁸⁶ For accounts of particular agencies see, Betty G. and Ernest K. Lindley, *A New Deal for Youth: The Story of the National Youth Administration* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938); Jason S. Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Nick Taylor, *American-Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2008).

⁸⁷ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years*, 74-5.

to further consolidate the gains of Roosevelt's first four years. In his 1937 inaugural address, the President reflected back on those first four years reminding the American public, that "we of the Republic sensed the truth that democratic government has innate capacity to protect its people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems once considered unsolvable." The past years of governmental action had been in service to American democracy; but more needed to be done. Viewing the New Deal's work far from over, Roosevelt would not forget that there was still "one-third of [the] nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Addressing this problem was Roosevelt's "challenge to democracy."⁸⁸

The struggle that democracy faced at home continued to animate Roosevelt's mobilization of the New Deal agenda. However, the prospect of further reform soon faced numerous constraints. On the legislative front, Roosevelt witnessed the defeat of his Supreme Court bill (court-packing plan), the defeat of his first executive reorganization bill, and the defeat of two wage bills. Politically, the President failed in the 1938 purge of conservative Democrats and saw the conservative coalition gain additional seats in the House. On top of this, the economic woes of 1937-1938 were being labeled the 'Roosevelt Recession.'

While Roosevelt faced troublesome times at home, the machinations of Germany increasingly pervaded conversations about the priorities of the president's agenda. With the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, it seemed as if the New Deal would suffer the same fate Wilson's New Freedom had during World War I. It is this exact "end of

⁸⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1937, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15349>.

reform” narrative that scholars ascribe to Roosevelt’s disinterest toward his domestic program during the war.⁸⁹ For instance, historian David Brody has argued that “to the last, Roosevelt adhered to his wartime strategy of compartmentalizing social reform, and of keeping the door locked so long as defense needs remained paramount.”⁹⁰

However, as I detail below, Roosevelt navigated the ideological and political commitments of the New Deal with the increasing demands of World War II, never fully giving up one for the other on the national agenda. What emerged during both the defense period of 1939-1941 and the ensuing wartime years was a political vision articulated by FDR and supporters of reform that linked domestic initiatives with the growing movement to build up our national defense. There were setbacks, to be sure. But building from the prior visions of the progressive presidents, Roosevelt envisioned the nation drawing upon its strength to successfully wage the war: strength comprised of our domestic aims, productive capacity, and military might. It was through this vision that the President was able to set the post-war agenda.

The Gathering Storm in Europe and FDR’s Linkage of the New Deal-as-Preparedness on the National Agenda

During the first five years of Roosevelt’s administration, international events rarely competed with the ongoing concerns about Americans’ economic security for attention on the national agenda. To be sure, the mood of isolationism that had fallen over the country after World War I remained relatively strong during this period and

⁸⁹ Brinkley, *End of Reform*.

⁹⁰ David Brody, “The New Deal and World War II,” in *The New Deal*, ed. John Braeman et al. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 303.

awareness about the happenings abroad were often understood in terms of their impact on the American economy. But by the end of 1936, the president decided to test the bonds of American isolationism by suggesting a ‘quarantine’ of aggressor nations. Received by a fairly hostile audience, this speech was peppered with aggressive images of a “reign of terror” abroad and an “epidemic” of “world lawlessness.” Roosevelt alerted the public to what he saw as a “growing ill will...[that led to a] marked trends toward aggression...increasing armaments...shortening tempers – a situation which has in it many of the elements that lead to the tragedy of general war.”⁹¹ His forewarnings about increasing international lawlessness were ultimately confirmed by 1938 with Germany’s occupation and annexation of Austria (the Anschluss) and Hitler’s designs on the Sudetenland amid the Munich Conference.

The recent developments abroad led Roosevelt to dramatically alter his administration’s position on global affairs. By the time of his 1939 Annual Message to Congress, Roosevelt officially elevated foreign policy and concerns over preparedness on the national agenda. He began the address with a warning of “disturbance abroad and the need of putting our own house in order in the face of storm signals from across the sea.” Hope of world peace could no longer survive when “all about us rage undeclared wars – military and economic. All about us grow more deadly armaments – military and economic. All about us are threats of new aggression.”

Associating both military and economic types of aggression, Roosevelt established a theme of which he would continually return. For the President, just as the United States had responded vigorously to the economic crisis of the Great Depression

⁹¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address at Chicago, October, 5 1937, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15476>.

with the policies of the New Deal, it was now time to show the same resolve in the face of a military crisis. The key was to develop a program of national defense and preparedness.

Roosevelt prefaced the section of his message to Congress on the nation's state of preparedness by suggesting that, in contrast with the events unfolding in Europe, Africa, and Asia, the "pattern of what we have accomplished since 1933 appears in even clearer focus." That pattern involved the "*united strength* of a democratic nation (emphasis added)" that stood by the "conviction that they are receiving as large a share of opportunity for development, as large a share of material success and of human dignity, as they have a right to receive." Because of this, the "Nation's program of social and economic reform is therefore a part of defense, as basic as armaments themselves."

Roosevelt went on to list the accomplishments of the New Deal, such as natural resource conservation, agricultural support, labor reforms, youth work programs, and aid for the aged, helpless, and needy. When considered as a whole, these "piecemeal struggles" of the last few years added up to "realistic national preparedness." The president then boasted that "never have there been six years of such far-flung internal preparedness in our history."⁹²

With this address, Roosevelt had brought newfound concerns over our nation's defense to bear on the current domestic policies of the New Deal. This association was not missed by journalists of the day. *The New York Times* reported a conversation between some Democrats, who, having been left out of crafting the President's message, surmised a bit of "strategy" on the part of Roosevelt in linking "his account of domestic

⁹² Franklin D. Roosevelt, Annual Message to Congress, January 4, 1939, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15684>.

necessities to the dramatic and impressive passages on international affairs.” According to these Democrats, “nearly everyone thought this well, subtly and effectively done.”⁹³ Others saw in Roosevelt’s address the origins of a “linked program,” prefaced on the claim “that national security and the preservation of American democracy depend on the continuation of his economic and social policies.” The President’s argument was made “plausibly and [he] forged [the] link between foreign and domestic policy with rare craftsmanship.”⁹⁴ In articulating this vision of the New Deal-as-national--preparedness, Roosevelt sought to balance his domestic program with his belief in the need to develop America’s military defenses. However, as Germany’s true intentions became realized, the United States quickly shed its isolationist past and began a massive military buildup that posed significant political and economic challenges to the feasibility of this linkage.

National Strength, Politicizing Defense, and Building the Arsenal of Democracy

While not officially at war, during the years 1939-1941 the United States was in the midst of a “defense period” in which the politics of the national agenda increasingly reflected the turbulent events in Europe. Not long after his 1939 State of the Union, President Roosevelt called upon Congress to appropriate an additional \$500 million to the existing defense budget, which was already at \$1.2 billion, a record high for a time of peace. At the time, many Americans were still committed to the perspective of isolationism and questioned Roosevelt’s preparedness drive and the necessity of rearmament. Yet, this state of affairs would start to shift with Germany’s blitzkrieg

⁹³ Arthur Krock, “In the Nation: Two Significant Passages in the Message,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1939.

⁹⁴ Arthur Krock, “Critics Move to Split Dual Executive Policy,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1939.

through Poland in September of 1939 and its subsequent invasion of France and the Lowlands that following May. In response to the latter, the President spoke directly to the people about the state of the nation's defenses in one of his famed "Fireside Chats."

Addressing the claims of his critics that the nation was "defenseless," Roosevelt asserted the need to "match the strength of the aggressors." Americans, he urged, should ignore the "kinds of stories [being] handed out... about our lack of preparedness" and "not be calamity-howlers and discount our strength." Echoing his vision of the New Deal-as-preparedness, he continued

But as this [defense] program proceeds there are several things *we must continue to watch and safeguard, things which are just as important to the sound defense of a nation as physical armament itself.* While our Navy and our airplanes and our guns and our ships may be our first line of defense, it is still clear that way down at the bottom, underlying them all, giving them their strength, sustenance and power, are the spirit and morale of a free people (emphases added).⁹⁵

Just as Wilson had maintained during the First World War, Roosevelt suggested that the nation drew additional strength from a second line of defense beyond our military. Continuing this argument, it was imperative that the nation

...make sure, in all that we do, that there be no breakdown or cancellation of any of the great social gains which we have made in these past years. We have carried on an offensive on a broad front against social and economic inequalities and abuses which had made our society weak. *That offensive should not now be broken down by the pincers movement of those who would use the present needs of physical military defense to destroy it (sic) (emphasis added).*⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat 15: On National Defense, May 26, 1940, The Miller Center, <http://millercenter.org/president/fdroosevelt/speeches/speech-3316>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Even though the nation should brace itself for the needs of defense, Roosevelt reiterated that nothing would “justify a retreat from any of our social objectives -- from conservation of natural resources, assistance to agriculture, housing, and help to the underprivileged.”⁹⁷ In fact, the President had stressed this exact point just days earlier in a press conference following an address to Congress in which he called for a new defense appropriation of over \$1 billion. Congress was set to take up the defense bill at the same time that it was currently debating legislation for further economic relief, leading one reporter to ask FDR if he preferred the defense appropriation bill “to take precedence over the relief bill which is now pending?” The President replied that “Of course relief has got to go through just as soon as it possibly can... I do not think the country can afford to cut more people off relief... Personally, I should like to see the amount increased so that we could take care of all needy families.”⁹⁸

Roosevelt’s comment was aimed at preempting a general argument that began to emerge in some circles regarding the ability of defense jobs to replace the government’s responsibility for providing economic security. For their part, advocates of social welfare made their thoughts clear on this line of reasoning. Take for instance a statement released by an inter-faith conference on unemployment that warned of “The danger that a nation which has not solved its own economic problem may be tempted to divert attention toward a war psychology and armament economics.” Similarly, the unofficial House unemployment conference released a message stating that “military expenditures may temporarily ease the relief burden to some extent but their nature is such that they should

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Excerpts from the Press Conference, May 17, 1940, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15956>.

not be considered a solution of our problem.”⁹⁹ This overall perspective is summed up well in a remark made by Stuart Chase, an economist and one of Roosevelt’s advisers. In presenting an award to Eleanor Roosevelt in May 1940 for her work in helping social progress, Chase thought it stood repeating that “the New Deal is supposed to be fighting a war, too, a war against depression.”¹⁰⁰

As historian Joseph P. Lash has shown, there were some within the administration that took this belief to heart by “argu[ing] the New Deal case for butter as well as guns.” In a memo titled “National Defense and Fiscal Policy,” one New Dealer wrote to Harry Hopkins, former administrator of the Works Progress Administration and close Roosevelt confidant, to make the case that “We may later be obliged to pull in our belts—all the more reason why today we should raise living standards as far as possible. Later we may demand unprecedented sacrifices—all the more reason why today everyone able and willing to work be given immediate opportunity to do so.” The memo’s author, Richard Gilbert, went on to press the need to expand production even further. “It is not debt, but idleness—factories unbuilt, resources undeveloped—which undermines our strength, which diminishes our capacity to meet the emergencies of the future...”¹⁰¹

To conservatives and anti-administration politicians, such a linkage of New Deal reform and national defense was spurious and exploitable. For example, after the President appointed a seven-man National Defense Commission to oversee the preparedness effort, future Republican presidential nominee Thomas E. Dewey, accused

⁹⁹ “Seek More Relief Despite Defense,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1940.

¹⁰⁰ Found in Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 18.

¹⁰¹ Joseph P. Lash, *Dealers and Dreamers: A New Look at the New Deal* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 400-1.

Roosevelt of “playing cheap politics” with the defense program. Dewey went on to suggest that the commission’s members were no better than “messenger boys for New Deal politicians who insist on keeping politics in the defense job.”¹⁰² During the 1940 presidential election that fall, Republicans would expand on this criticism. William Leuchtenburg writes that GOP nominee Wendell Willkie, “cleverly related his assault on the President’s failure to restore prosperity to the current uneasiness over the state of our defenses.” In this manner, “The New Deal, critics charged, had left the nation vulnerable by promoting internal disunity, squandering billions on unproductive projects, and shamefully neglecting defenses.”¹⁰³ But for all his attacks, Willkie’s support for the general direction of FDR’s policies, both foreign and domestic, failed to grab the electorate and Roosevelt was re-elected to an unprecedented third term.

Assured another four years in office, and having recently concluded a deal with the British to swap naval destroyers-for-military bases, Roosevelt sat down in the winter of 1940 to deliver another fireside chat to the American people in which he described the nation as “the great arsenal of democracy.” The country now faced “an emergency as serious as war itself” and, thus, “We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.”¹⁰⁴ Again invoking the linkage between defense and reform, Roosevelt spoke of the contradiction that would exist were he to ask citizens “to defend a

¹⁰² James C. Hagerty, “Dewey Hits Name of Defense Group,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1940.

¹⁰³ William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 318. Willkie again on the campaign trail, see page 320: “If his promise to keep our boys out of foreign wars is no better than his promise to balance the budget they’re already almost on the transports.”

¹⁰⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, December 29, 1940, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15917>.

democracy which in turn would not defend everyone in the nation against want and privation.” He went on to assert that “The strength of this nation shall not be diluted by the failure of the Government to protect the economic well-being of its citizens.”¹⁰⁵

In a year’s time, the United States would be reeling from the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and the nation would undertake a full-scale mobilization to fully implement the “arsenal of democracy.” To do so, the Roosevelt administration turned to business for help mobilizing the economic resources needed to reach full production, leading to what historian Alan Brinkley as termed the “end of reform.”¹⁰⁶ Reflecting the conventional wisdom of this period, he argues that the emergent reform liberalism of the late New Deal, with its potential for a centrally-planned, social-democratic welfare state, was ultimately lost in the shadow cast by wartime mobilization. However, as I suggest in the following section, while winning the war was paramount in the short run, it was still imperative to plan for the return to peacetime. President Roosevelt would see to it that there would be no return to normalcy as had happened after World War I.

Dr. New Deal, Dr. Win the War, and Setting the Postwar Agenda

As the defense period wore on, Roosevelt set out to explain to Americans *why* the war was being fought and how American war aims should be perceived on the home front. This culminated in his January 1941 state of the union in which he expressed the “Four Freedoms.” They were: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Overall, as one historian notes, the address conveyed “an

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See, Brinkley, *The End of Reform*; Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972).

unerring sense of priorities” and offered “words of vision” (words which were dictated by FDR himself).¹⁰⁷ For those liberals and New Dealers who had to confront the constraints of war, the message “reconciled them to their role as soldiers in the ranks” but calmed some of their concerns. As they saw it, the President had laid down a marker for the pursuit of victory by rearticulating anew the linkage of the New Deal and war effort. For instance, not long after the message Harry Hopkins wrote that triumph in the war could come “By the new order of democracy, which is the New Deal universally extended and applied.”¹⁰⁸

Of course, Roosevelt’s opponents responded to this connection just as they had to his invocation of the “arsenal of democracy.” As a writer for the magazine *Coronet* put it, this vision represented a new phase and new approach: “The New Deal of War.” Raymond Moley, who had previously published a scathing book on Roosevelt’s administration, saw this new linkage as an attempt to establish “throughout the world a still more radical New Deal.” And for Senator Robert Taft (R-OH), this meant the inevitable: “Entrance into the European War will be the next great New Deal experiment.”¹⁰⁹

As the 1942 midterm elections drew closer, conservatives kept up this line of attack hoping to “win the war from the New Deal.”¹¹⁰ In that election, Republicans picked up 44 seats and several prominent New Dealers lost their seats. Contemporary

¹⁰⁷ Lash, *Dealers and Dreamers*, 412. In particular, see FDR’s comment to Samuel Rosenman: “We must look forward to a world based on four essential human freedoms.”

¹⁰⁸ Found in, Thomas J. Fleming, *The New Dealers’ War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War within World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 85.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 81, 84, 87.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

observers drew a parallel with Wilson's 1918 midterm defeat, viewing the election as a referendum on Roosevelt's wartime policies. Unfortunately, it was politics-as-usual during the war, with FDR ultimately giving an "honorable discharge" to New Deal programs and agencies such as the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. In this manner, according to historian Richard Polenberg, the exigencies of the war "obliged reformers to grant priority to military objectives, provided an excuse to liquidate certain New Deal programs ..."¹¹¹

Speaking to reporters in December 1943 about the apparent change in his administration's priorities, President Roosevelt proclaimed that "Dr. New Deal" had given way to "Dr. Win the War."¹¹² Good old Dr. New Deal's patient, the United States, had previously been afflicted by an internal disorder. But upon December 7th, 1941, the patient now suffered more severe wounds needing the attention of Dr. Win-the-War's surgical expertise. Critics from both the left and the right interpreted this supposed shift as the critical period in the relationship between the war and the New Deal. For example, Chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, Congressman Charles A. Halleck of Indiana, gladly stated that the President had "finally been forced to admit that it is the New Deal's mixing of social pipe dreams with the realism of war that breeds confusion on the home front."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Polenberg, *War and Society*, 75-6.

¹¹² Franklin D. Roosevelt, Excerpts from the Press Conference, December 28, 1943, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16358>.

¹¹³ John H. Criders, "Roosevelt Drops 'New Deal' for 'Win-the-War' Slogan," *New York Times*, December 24, 1943.

While anti-New Dealers rejoiced, contemporaries on the left, such as the editorial board of *The New Republic*, bemoaned the president's assumption that the New Deal and the war were unrelated. As they saw it, "the conduct of the war...is an expression of the same national mentality which fashions our domestic policy. America entered under the New Deal into what was, for us, in essence a New Deal war..."¹¹⁴ Reflecting upon the accusation of *The New Republic*, Eleanor Roosevelt argued in an unpublished letter that the news journal and like-critics want to

interpret [the press conference about Dr. Win-the-War] as meaning the President fails to recognize the inter-connectedness between the domestic situation and foreign policy. I don't agree with them in their interpretation of the significance of the President's remarks, nor in their belief that it really represents a retreat... The question of what slogan [future reforms are] done under seems to me insignificant.¹¹⁵

The President himself had made this exact point during the press conference in which he used the "two doctors" metaphor. As he explained to the journalists present "we must now plan for, and help to bring about, an expanded economy which will result in more security, in more employment, in more recreation, in more education, in more health, in better housing for all of our citizens." Doing so would ensure "that the conditions of 1932 and the beginning of 1933 won't come back again."¹¹⁶ Reporting on his comments, *The New York Times* noted that Roosevelt "hinted at the idea of an

¹¹⁴ Editorial, "The New Deal Must Go On," *The New Republic*, January 3, 1944, 6-7.

¹¹⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt unpublished letter, "FDR's Abandonment of 'New Deal' slogan for 'Win the War,'" 1943, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 1414, Roosevelt Papers.

¹¹⁶ Roosevelt, Excerpts from the Press Conference, December 28, 1943.

international New Deal by stating that post-war domestic policies would have to be formed in the light of what was going on in other countries.”¹¹⁷

Roosevelt’s commitment to setting the post-war agenda found full expression in his 1944 address wherein he outlined a Second “Economic” Bill of Rights. Circling back to the origins of the New Deal, he professed the nation’s duty

...to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth- is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill housed, and insecure.

The United States had reached its “present strength” by protecting and promoting “certain inalienable political rights.” Over time, though, the “Nation ha[d] grown in size and stature” and Americans needed to re-envision those rights on the “new basis of security and prosperity.”¹¹⁸ Commenting on the import of this speech, James MacGregor Burns sees a culmination of the prior ideals and commitments of past progressives and liberals “evoked by depression, hardened by war.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, as historian James Sparrow argues, the speech reflects Roosevelt’s efforts to “set the liberal agenda for the postwar world.” His wartime addresses, and the vision he articulated, “resonated so widely because they articulated the fictive social contract on which so much of the war

¹¹⁷ John H. Criders, “Roosevelt Uses Allegory to Explain ‘Win the War,’” *New York Times*, December 29, 1943. Speaking to this point, Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority David Lilienthal recalled summing up his concerns about mobilization and reform to the President. FDR: “I am going to fight back. I’m not going to take this lying down... “I’m really going to tell this next Congress... “Those boys in Guadalcanal and in Africa – does this Congress propose to tell them they are going to come back to fear about jobs, fear about the things a man can’t prevent, like accident, sickness, and so on? Well, they will have a chance to go on record about it, to divide on that political issue.” Found in, James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1970), 301-2.

¹¹⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union Message to Congress, January 11, 1944, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16518>.

¹¹⁹ Burns, *Roosevelt*, 422.

effort depended in order to justify the exertions of mass participation in the mobilization for total war.”¹²⁰ With his death at the tail end of the war, Roosevelt would leave it to his Vice-President, Harry S Truman, to see to it that the post-war agenda was carried on.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an account of how American presidents began to navigate the emerging commitment of pursuing domestic reform while simultaneously grappling with the rise of the United States on the world stage. More specifically, I have shown that two critical developments were on display as early as the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. First, over time, presidents have articulated visions of national strength. Such visions often linked themes of warfare, nationalism, and common purpose. Second, at times, the political demands of war, including concerns about the nation’s defense preparedness were prominent on the national agenda, compelling presidents to make choices about how they would continue to promote their domestic program.

In the case of TR, he anxiously hoped to achieve success in both domestic and foreign affairs, reflecting his commitment to assert American strength and greatness and the role of the presidency in realizing these ends. Unfortunately, from his perspective, he was never given the national crisis he desired to fully affirm his vision for the nation and for the presidency. For Woodrow Wilson, his preference for ambitious domestic reform was severely foreshortened due to the challenges of mobilizing for World War I. Wilson’s presidency offers an early glimpse of the problem modern presidents would come to face in needing to square domestic policy with the warfare state; but the military

¹²⁰ James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

rollback and return to normalcy after the war delayed this development. The contrasting appeals of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression suggest that, even absent a strong military presence, appeals to war and sacrifice resonate as visions of national purpose.

The presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt represents a critical juncture for the intersection of domestic reform and warfare on the president's agenda; the politics of guns and butter. Through Roosevelt's actions in responding to the events of the Great Depression and World War II, a political vision of national strength was institutionalized in the presidency. In this specific case, in trying to project his commitment to national preparedness, and finally war mobilization, FDR linked his prior domestic reform agenda as vital to the strength of the nation. That is, as he saw it, the objectives of New Deal liberalism would not only outlast the war but, more importantly, would aid directly in the effort to defeat the Axis powers.

For starters, Roosevelt told the nation that earlier New Deal legislation like the Social Security Act and the Wagner Act set a foundation of preparedness from which the nation could weather the gathering storm clouds in Europe prior to the United States entry. Beyond weapons of war, the President maintained that totalitarianism and fascism were threats that would be staved off at home through such legislation. When America finally entered the war, he asserted that, in our mobilization effort to build the Arsenal of Democracy, the nation could draw upon the strength of New Deal reforms and the security which they afforded. While many of the early programs of the New Deal would receive an "honorable discharge" during the war, and the scope of the program would be

“redefined,”¹²¹ President Roosevelt’s political vision of national strength was realized in other ways; most directly through the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, the GI Bill.¹²² Additionally, as Jytte Klausen argues, the New Deal’s original concern with planning shifted toward demand management and found full expression in the post-war.¹²³

Moreover, in declaring an economic bill of rights during the war, Roosevelt set the political agenda for his successor, Harry S Truman. In the following chapter, I examine President Truman’s inheritance of this agenda and his re-working of Roosevelt’s vision of national strength from the era of Reconversion to the Korean War.

¹²¹ Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol “Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States,” in *Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹²² Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹²³ Jytte Klausen, “Did World War II End the New Deal?,” in *The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism*, eds. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

CHAPTER III
THE NECESSITY OF “INTERNAL STRENGTH”:
A BALANCED AGENDA, COLD WAR IDEOLOGY, AND TRUMAN’S VISION
FROM RECONVERSION TO THE FAIR DEAL

Reflecting on the immediate post-war years of his presidency and the responsibilities the country faced, both at home and abroad, former President Harry S Truman wrote that it was a time of “transformation” with the United States becoming “a nation of unprecedented power and growing capacity.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, he recalled that “as a leading nation,” America “had an obligation...to build a firm foundation for the future peace of the world. The future of the country was as much at stake as it had been in the days of the war.”¹²⁵ Early in his administration, Truman had invoked a similar theme when he went before Congress to give his first official State of the Union message. The President expressed hoped that the trials of the future would not be “more difficult” than the challenges faced during the war. “But if they are, then I say that our strength and our knowledge and our understanding will be equal to those tasks.”¹²⁶

To be sure, one of the immediate decisions to which Truman referred was the nation’s willingness to come together to ensure a successful demobilization and domestic reconversion from the politics and economy of World War II. Yet, he also understood

¹²⁴ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), 2.

¹²⁵ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume One: Year of Decisions* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 509.

¹²⁶ Harry S. Truman, Message to the Congress on the State of the Union and on the Budget for 1947, January 21, 1946, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12467>.

that the United States had assumed the position of a great military and diplomatic power and, thus, would need to choose its path as a world leader. While Truman envisioned the nation summoning its “strength” to balance the coming domestic and foreign challenges, the reality of partisan politics and emergence of the Cold War would threaten this conception.

A self-proclaimed “New Dealer from the start,” Harry S Truman was first elected to the Senate in 1934 and quickly became a trustworthy loyalist of the Democratic agenda.¹²⁷ Having inherited Roosevelt’s torch of liberalism upon the President’s death, Truman entered the White House seeking to move beyond the New Deal by advancing a liberal agenda with its own distinct bent.¹²⁸ Consisting of quality of life issues, such as medical care, education, housing, and slum removal, Truman’s Fair Deal was a clarion call for liberalism in the post-war era. However, the program’s advancement was consistently challenged by a coalition of conservative Republicans and southern Democrats that seized any opportunity to limit New Deal liberalism.¹²⁹ Whether it was the 80th “Do Nothing” Congress or the 82nd “National Defense” Congress, President

¹²⁷ Truman, *Memoirs, Volume One*, 149.

¹²⁸ Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

¹²⁹ Susan M. Hartmann, *Truman and the 80th Congress* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971); Sean J. Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997); Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, “Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950,” *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (1993): 283-306. India Edwards, Executive Director of the Democratic National Committee, once suggested to Truman that they refer to the conservative, southern Democrats as “Demicans” (a portmanteau of Democrats and Republicans). In a private letter, the President responded that you could also call them “Republicrats” but either way, “I don’t think there is anything that will very well describe them except that good old fashioned word ‘bolter’ and that is the classification they will stay in my book. Just between you and me and the gatepost I don’t care what you call them – you can make it as unprintable as you choose.” Harry S. Truman, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 162.

Truman's advancement of the Fair Deal was constantly under siege and never fully realized during his tenure.

Alongside his commitment to fulfill the domestic legacy of Roosevelt, Truman also inherited the newly-minted international objectives stemming from the Allied victory in World War II. Of course, while Truman rose to the presidency near the end of the war, he was responsible for significant decisions, none more so than the dropping of the atomic bomb and the diplomatic mission to Potsdam; decisions that shaped the contour of the post-war world. In this regard, Truman was the first Cold Warrior.¹³⁰ It was during his time in office that the capacity of the warfare state was constructed through the creation of the National Security Council, the unification of the armed services, and the passage of foreign aid and development programs such as the Marshall Plan.¹³¹

For most scholars of the Truman administration the relationship between the president's commitment to domestic policy versus that of foreign and national security policy was one of a zero-sum situation; time and again the latter trumped the former.¹³² This dominant narrative is illustrated best by historian William E. Pemberton who argues that Truman "frequently sacrificed the Fair Deal to get his foreign policy legislation through Congress."¹³³ This interpretation, however, fails to appreciate the relationship Truman and his administration perceived between the daunting task of continuing the

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

¹³¹ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*; Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹³² Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

¹³³ William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer and Cold Warrior* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989).

domestic legacy of the New Deal and simultaneously leading the emergent defense and security policies of the warfare state.

As I argue in this chapter, just as President Roosevelt had done during the war, Truman advocated that our domestic programs comprised the nation's "internal strength" and therefore, were the foundation of the country's strength abroad. I begin by examining how Truman's vision of national strength spoke to the changing landscape of domestic reconversion, the need to project world leadership, and the impact of Cold War ideology. Next, I analyze how Truman sought to balance these two commitments in the face of the emergent budgetary politics of the warfare state. Having inherited both a domestic and foreign agenda, Truman tried to reconcile both amid attempts by military interests trying to put even more distance between social investment and defense spending. The chapter then turns to the efforts of the Truman administration to reassert its commitment to fighting for domestic progress and New Deal liberalism amid the growing specter of communism on the home front.

The Cold War Necessity of "Internal Strength": President Truman's Post-War Vision and the Linkage of Peace, Prosperity, and American Leadership

Truman had entered the presidency at one of the most unenviable times in America's history. Memorably, as the story goes, upon hearing from Eleanor Roosevelt about FDR's death, Truman asked if there was anything he could do for the new widow. She calmly replied, "Is there anything we can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now."¹³⁴ With World War II and the legacy of FDR's New Deal thrust upon him in April

¹³⁴ Truman, *Memoirs, Volume One*, 5.

of 1945, Truman not only had to bring the war to a successful end and prepare for American post-war leadership, he also had to formulate a domestic agenda that established the priorities and necessities of reconverting the nation back to peacetime. Complicating matters even more, he had to contend with the political and economic challenges that emerged with the beginning of the Cold War.

As I show in this section, President Truman viewed these various commitments as interrelated and, moreover, continually advocated that his administration's domestic objectives, our "internal strength," were the foundation of our objectives abroad. To this point, according to one historian, in Truman's "way of thinking, the national welfare and national security, domestic and international programs, were inextricably linked."¹³⁵ More specifically, I argue that this linkage was built upon the vision of national strength that had emerged out of World War II. At first, the Truman administration thought it vital for the nation to be strong internally so as to establish economic stability, project leadership on the world stage by promoting American ideals, and realize national preparedness for the uncertainties of the future. Yet, this conception of "internal strength" took on new purpose, and become more problematic, as the political, ideological, and military perspectives of the Cold War became more defined.

Once the Allied victory in World War II was assured, President Harry Truman began preparing the country for the critical job of reconverting back to the politics and economy of peacetime. In a January 1946 radio broadcast, the President addressed the progress of his administration's efforts and offered a report on the general state of the nation. He declared that the upcoming year was "our year of decision" and, invoking the

¹³⁵ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 173.

triumphs and challenges of the war, advised the nation of the difficulties that lie ahead. It was imperative that Americans “decide whether or not we shall devote our strength” to meeting the needs of a post-war economy. Most importantly, the approaching months would entail “decisions which will determine whether or not we gain that great future at home and abroad which we fought so valiantly to achieve.”¹³⁶

Truman echoed this vision of strength in his subsequent State of the Union address in which he explained his desire to recommit political and financial resources to social investment and progress at home. As I explain in the following section of this chapter, this commitment was one of the cornerstones of Truman’s program during the first few years of his presidency. In all, a version of the term “strength” appeared 17 times through the course of the President’s 1946 address. In one such example, after providing a survey of our military strength, Truman summed up what the nation had been through over the past few years.

We have won a great war- we, the nations of plain people who hate war. In the test of that war we found a strength of unity that brought us through - a strength that crushed the power of those who sought by force to deny our faith in the dignity of man.¹³⁷

The president’s central theme about the linkage between our domestic and international objectives, and the need for strength, was not lost on the press. In a *New York Times* editorial, Arthur Krock remarked on the state of the Truman administration’s belief that “the delay in solving many pressing home problems will, it is feared, weaken

¹³⁶ Harry S. Truman, Radio Report to the American People on the Status of the Reconversion Program, January 3, 1946, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12489>.

¹³⁷ Truman, Message to the Congress on the State of the Union and on the Budget for 1947, January 21, 1946.

our influence abroad.”¹³⁸ This concern over the United States’ international influence reflected the leadership position that the country, and specifically the president, had taken up in the post-war era. Paramount to holding such a seat of power was the importance of pursuing the objective of peace. As Truman saw it, America’s resolve in realizing this profound obligation was founded on our existing national strength. Yet, this sentiment took on new meaning as the Truman administration’s and the public’s perception of the emerging Cold War and the threat of Soviet ideology began to solidify.

A critical moment in this process came in February of 1946, when George Kennan, an American diplomat, delivered his “Long Telegram” laying out, in stark terms, the ideological objective of Soviet Communism. Broadly, the telegram compared the rival national outlooks of the Soviet Union and the United States of America, and, specifically, offered potential implications that the Soviet outlook had for U.S. policy-making during the evolution of the Cold War. As Kennan argued, this Soviet fanaticism thought it “desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken...” One constructive approach the United States could adopt in response to this conflict of ideological perspectives, and the Soviets’ desire to disrupt our country’s “internal harmony” was for the nation to address its “internal problems.” As one of five general observations offered as to how the Soviet problem was “within our power to solve,” he suggested that

Much depends on health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. *This is point at which domestic and foreign policies meet.* Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve

¹³⁸ Arthur Krock, “Disturbing Facts Seen in State of the Union,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1946.

self confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiques. If we cannot abandon fatalism and indifference in face of deficiencies of our own society, Moscow will profit—Moscow cannot help profiting by them in its foreign policies (emphasis added).¹³⁹

In July of 1947, the core argument of Kennan's Long Telegram was published in the national magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, under the title "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." Although written under a pseudonym, he again stressed the potential danger of the United States not "coping successfully with the problem of [its] internal life." The disastrous effects of "exhibitions of indecision, disunity and internal disintegration within [America would] have an exhilarating effect on the whole Communist movement."¹⁴⁰ To wage the Cold War successfully, the nation needed to be strong internally.

This new ideologically-based perspective of the nature of the Cold War led Truman to reaffirm his vision of national purpose that fused domestic and international objectives. In his 1947 State of the Union, for example, he proclaimed that

Progress in reaching our domestic goals is closely related to our conduct of foreign affairs. All that I have said about maintaining a sound and prosperous economy and improving the welfare of our people has greater meaning because of the world leadership of the United States. What we do, or fail to do, at home affects not only ourselves but millions throughout the world. If we are to fulfill our responsibilities to ourselves and to other peoples, we must make sure that the United States is sound economically, socially, and politically. Only then will we be able to help bring about the elements of peace in other countries--political stability, economic advancement, and social progress.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ George Kennan, The Long Telegram, February 22, 1946, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

¹⁴⁰ X, "Sources of Soviet Conduct" *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct>.

¹⁴¹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 6, 1947, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12762>.

Most significantly, as Mary Dudziak has masterfully shown, this vision of the interconnectedness of domestic and foreign policy and the ideological impact of the Cold War manifested itself most significantly as part of Truman's justification in pursuing civil rights reform, however minimal those efforts may have been.¹⁴² But, as I illustrate in a later section, this perspective was also reflected in the social policies of Truman's Fair Deal. For instance, during the administration's preparation for the 1948 State of the Union, Oscar Ewing, the head of the Federal Security Agency, affirmed that "We must spare no effort in providing our people with the fundamental services which can fit them to play their role in strengthening our own Nation and in preserving world peace... We can have no real national security if millions of our people are unprotected against the fear of want."¹⁴³ Directly invoking the vision of national strength, Ewing thought it should be made clear that "A Nation's strength and its capacity to work for world peace rests (sic) in large measure upon the health, education and economic security of its individual men, women, and children... There is urgent need for strengthening these foundations as a secure defense of peace."¹⁴⁴ The commitment to building up the nation's internal strength which Ewing touched upon, and Truman's broader linkage of domestic and foreign affairs, would take on heightened significance after a rash of international crises in 1948 and 1949 stirred up the national agenda.

The politics of the Cold War began to shift dramatically, when in February of 1948, a Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia brought Communists to power; and event

¹⁴² Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). See also, Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 144-156.

¹⁴³ Oscar Ewing memorandum to Charles Murphy, October 31, 1947, folder "State of the Union 1948 (4 of 8)," Official File 419-F, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

that set off a ‘war-scare’ across the globe.¹⁴⁵ Although the immediate fears of the crisis dissipated, President Truman, upon his re-election to the presidency, took the opportunity to address the state of peace in the world and the international leadership of the United States. As he had over the course of his tenure, he reiterated his vision that “Our domestic programs are the foundation of our foreign policy.”¹⁴⁶ The drafting of this address provides insight into this particular line of reasoning. In an earlier outline, one of Truman’s main speechwriters, David Lloyd, emphasized that “Peace is objective of Foreign Policy.” Specifically, there were three “main lines of peace policy.” While the first two dealt with the strength of the United Nations and the broader community of nations, the third “main line of peace” was premised on a “Strong U.S.” Therefore, promoting social security, middle-income housing, aid to education, and a health program, were “Essential” and such “domestic measures will affect not only U.S. but whole world – will strengthen hand of freedom – lovers everywhere and enable U.S. to play full part in crucial decisions of next 50 years.”¹⁴⁷

The direct relationship between Truman’s domestic program and United States foreign policy would find ultimate expression in the President’s 1949 inaugural address. Referencing the events abroad, he recognized that “The peoples of the earth face the future with grave uncertainty, composed almost equally of great hopes and great fears. In this time of doubt, they look to the United States as never before for good will, strength,

¹⁴⁵ Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 235-237; Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior*, 159-163.

¹⁴⁶ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 5th, 1949, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13293>.

¹⁴⁷ David D. Lloyd initial outline of 1950 State of the Union, November 11, 1949, folder “State of the Union Message January 4, 1950,” Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

and wise leadership.” Furthermore, he promised that America would “devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve” to helping other nation’s achieve “justice, harmony, and peace.”¹⁴⁸ This commitment took the form of technical assistance. Under this program, commonly referred to as Point IV (the fourth point in his inaugural address), the United States provided scientific and industrial aid to foreign nations. In reporting on President Truman’s pledge for such assistance, *The New York Times* dubbed the program a “World Fair Deal” by noting that “... the Fair Deal cannot exist in isolation, it must be extended to the world...” The newspaper went on to capture the essence of Truman’s vision of strength and his linkage of domestic and foreign policy as they discussed his “philosophy”:

With global complexity has come, almost paradoxically, global unity; foreign problems and domestic problems are parts of the same great whole. This becomes quickly apparent when you talk with the President about the pressing issues of the moment: a discussion of Russia, for example, soon becomes a survey of our domestic economy. When you seek some clues as to Mr. Truman’s overall aims you soon discover that the key word is ‘peace.’ ... [He] makes plain his hope that he will be known in history as the President who made the peace—peace among the nations and peace within the nation.¹⁴⁹

While Truman’s commitment to peace remained steadfast, by the end of 1949, however, his particular vision of a peace linked to a nuanced version of internal strength, increasingly became politically and economically untenable as the stakes of the Cold War heated up. In the following sections of this chapter, I trace the development of Truman’s vision of national strength as it is reflected in key dynamics of the programmatic agenda and budgetary politics of his administration prior to the Korean War.

¹⁴⁸ Harry S. Truman, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13282>.

¹⁴⁹ Lester Markel, “After Four Years: Portrait of Harry Truman,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1949.

The Fair Deal as Internal Strength: New Deal Liberalism, the Specter of Communism, and the Politics of Truman's Domestic Agenda

Addressing Congress at the start of 1950, President Truman asserted that the United States' "success in working with other nations to achieve peace depends largely on what we do at home. We must preserve our national strength. Strength is not simply a matter of arms and force. It is a matter of economic growth, and social health, and vigorous institutions, public and private."¹⁵⁰ As the *New York Times* put it the following morning in their publishing of the President's address, those particular remarks suggested that our "National Strength Must Be Preserved."

In this section I provide evidence that Truman and supporters of his social policies viewed his domestic program as important to building internal strength. Initially, their commitment to expanding New Deal liberalism was borne directly out of the needs of helping Americans re-adjust to life after World War II. But as the Cold War became more distressing and uncertain, there arose a strategy to link the long-term health and strength of the nation should be preserved. Unfortunately, enactment of Truman's domestic program, termed the Fair Deal, encountered two main roadblocks: a conservative Congress opposed to any further social gains and the emergence of the previously mentioned Cold War crises on the national agenda. Moreover, these challenges were not exclusive, with the troubling machinations of the Soviet Union feeding into conservatives' specter of socialism's and Communism's advance on the home front.

¹⁵⁰ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 4, 1950, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13567>.

On September 6, 1945, four days after the celebration of V-J day, President Truman sent Congress a message outlining twenty-one points of domestic legislation. The platform included many proposals and initiatives that would eventually come to comprise the Fair Deal, such as housing, health insurance, a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee, farm price supports, and full employment legislation. As the President later described it, the Twenty-One Point Program was meant to “set the tone and direction for the rest of my administration and the goals toward which I would try to lead the nation.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, Samuel Rosenman, who was tasked by Truman to coordinate the speech, recalled that the platform “contained...the general spirit of what [the President] wanted to do.”¹⁵² Truman’s promotion of the Twenty-One Points was meant to follow what one historian calls the “direct blood line” of FDR’s wartime call for an Economic Bill of Rights.¹⁵³ In fact, as the President asserted in his address, attaining those rights should be “the essence of postwar American economic life.”¹⁵⁴

One of the most pressing issues of the reconversion period was the availability of housing and the need for slum clearance. Speaking specifically about the issue, Truman made it clear that “this is an emergency problem which calls for an emergency method of

¹⁵¹ Truman, *Memoirs, Volume One*, 482.

¹⁵² For Rosenman, his advocacy for such a speech was “the most important thing” that he did for President Truman. The speech was not without its detractors, however. According to Rosenman, there was quite a deal of argument among the President’s staff and advisors about the advisability of this message. One of Truman’s closest friends and advisors, John Snyder, who would go on to serve as Truman’s Treasury Secretary, was so upset about the speech that Rosenman recalls that he was “quite emotional about it” and had “tears in his eyes.” Transcript, Samuel I. Rosenman Oral History Interview two, April 23, 1969, by Jerry N. Hess, Truman Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/rosenmn.htm#oh2>.

¹⁵³ Bert Cochran, *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1973), 201.

¹⁵⁴ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to the Congress Presenting a 21-Point Program for the Reconversion Period, September 6, 1945, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12359>.

solution.” Recalling the national unity of the war, he argued that “We must utilize the same imagination, the same determination that back in 1941 enabled us to raise our sights to overcome the Nazi and Japanese military might.” If the country were to do so, “we can mobilize our resources here at home to produce the housing we require.”¹⁵⁵ In addition, upon learning that the House of Representatives was set to take up the Housing Act of 1949, Truman sent Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn (D-TX), a message of encouragement, noting that the legislation would “greatly promote the general welfare” and that such an effort “To strengthen the whole fabric of our American society is to strengthen all of its several parts.”¹⁵⁶

This image of “strengthening” the “fabric of American society” extended to a range of programs from health care (as I discuss in detail in Chapter 4), education, and, even to free school lunch. For example, upon signing the National School Lunch Act, Truman expressed pride that Congress had “acted with great wisdom in providing the basis for strengthening the nation through better nutrition for our school children... In the long view, no nation is any healthier than its children or more prosperous than its farmers.”¹⁵⁷ Likewise, supporters of such policies within the administration, particularly at the Federal Security Agency, further articulated this vision of national strength. In regards to promoting the President’s health program, FSA acting administrator, Watson Miller argued that “Our national security makes it imperative that our nation protect and

¹⁵⁵ Truman, Radio Report to the American People on the Status of the Reconversion Program, January 3, 1946.

¹⁵⁶ Truman letter to Rayburn, June 17, 1949, folder “1949,” Official File 419B, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁵⁷ Harry S. Truman, Statement by the President Upon Signing the National School Lunch Act, June 4, 1946, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12410>.

preserve the health of its people.”¹⁵⁸ Miller’s successor, Oscar Ewing, staunchly supported the administration’s call to promote the FSA to a cabinet level agency. In Ewing’s view: “If the health, education, and security of our individual citizens is a bulwark of our national strength and a defense of world peace, then this area must be represented in the highest councils of Government.”¹⁵⁹

Such a vision, however, was repugnant to most Republicans and conservative Democrats. Without missing a beat, just as they had during the New Deal and World War II, the conservative coalition in Congress hammered away at the ‘socialistic’ measures of the Truman administration and took every opportunity to exploit the public’s uneasiness with the reconversion process. From the perspective of House Minority Leader Joseph Martin (R-MA), Truman’s program during the post-war period represented nothing more than “a plain case of out-New Dealing the New Deal.”¹⁶⁰ Yet, while averse to the administration’s social policies, the seventy-ninth Congress did pass several pieces of legislation, most of which were directly or indirectly related to defense or the war. For example, an early victory for Truman came with the passage of the Employment Act which created the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), providing the presidency with an institution for economic policy formulation. The Atomic Energy Act authorized civilian control over nuclear technology and established the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Finally, the Hospital Construction Act provided federal grants for

¹⁵⁸ Miller letter to Clifford, December 16, 1946, folder “State of the Union 1947,” Official File 419-F, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁵⁹ Oscar Ewing letter to Charles Murphy, October 31, 1947, folder “State of the Union 1948 (4 of 8),” Official File 419-F, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁶⁰ Harold F. Gosnell, *Truman’s Crises: A Political Biography of Harry S. Truman* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 268.

revitalizing the nation's hospital system, sorely needed after the war, and the Veteran's Emergency Housing Act put in place controls and devices for the administration to channel building materials toward middle to low-income housing for veterans.¹⁶¹

In the 1946 midterm elections, the Republican Party captured the majority in the House behind a campaign slogan of "Had Enough? Vote Republican!" Faced with the "Do Nothing" Congress, as Truman un-lovingly referred to them, the President's program remained stalled. In an effort to shake things up, particularly for the upcoming 1948 presidential election, he called Congress into a special summer session and urged them to take up "important legislative measures on which delay would injure us at home and impair our world relations." While seeking immediate action on inflation and housing, he invoked a broader theme that spoke to the Soviets' desire to see our "present prosperity turn[ed] into a depression." He also renewed his call for federal aid to education, raising the minimum wage, and a national health program, among others. In doing so, he argued that

The vigor of our democracy is judged by its ability to take decisive actions--actions which are necessary to maintain our physical and moral strength and to raise our standards of living. In these days of continued stress, the test of that vigor becomes more and more difficult. The legislative and executive branches of our Government can meet that test today.¹⁶²

Perhaps to no one's surprise, the Republican Congress refused to take up any of the President's proposals. Yet, upon his surprise re-election in 1948, Truman would re-articulate his vision of the Fair Deal-as-internal strength. In his 1949 State of the Union,

¹⁶¹ Richard E. Neustadt, "Congress and the Fair Deal: A Legislative Balance Sheet," in *Harry S. Truman and the Fair Deal*, ed. Alonzo L. Hamby (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1974), 22.

¹⁶² Harry S. Truman, Message to the Special Session of the 80th Congress, July 27, 1948, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12967>.

he again renewed his domestic proposals, officially using the term ‘Fair Deal’ to promote them. In concluding his address, he remarked that “The strength of our Nation must continue to be used in the interest of all our people rather than a privileged few. It must continue to be used unselfishly in the struggle for world peace and the betterment of mankind the world over.”¹⁶³

Later that year, in an address to the New York Herald-Tribune Forum, FSA administrator Oscar Ewing would elaborate on the President’s linkage of the Fair Deal, the struggle for peace, and the role of the United States in promoting freedom. As he told the gathered crowd, “We know that today, largely as a result of the depression and the war, our own people are deeply disturbed with anxieties... What does tomorrow hold? What about my job? What would happen if serious illness strikes me or my family? Can my children get a decent education? Can I save enough for a respectable old age?” He continued, “If a free society is to win the battle for men’s hearts and souls, it must furnish some surcease from the apprehensions and anxieties that lead men to surrender their freedom for the phantom promises of totalitarianism. The Fair Deal is doing this by furnishing certain minimum basic securities.” Ewing then went on to describe the ways in which social security, health insurance, housing laws, and aid to education could “strengthen the ring of freedom that centuries of struggle has (sic) drawn around Western man.” Most importantly, he argued, “The opponents of the Fair Deal fail to comprehend today’s problems... They do not realize that a free society must offer positive answers to

¹⁶³ Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 5th, 1949.

the haunting anxieties that beset modern man or else he is left vulnerable to the blandishments of totalitarianism.”¹⁶⁴

The contrast between freedom and totalitarianism of which Ewing spoke was also a prominent theme used by conservatives; yet, they drew the complete opposite conclusion about the social reforms of the Fair Deal, and New Deal liberalism, more broadly. Throughout Truman’s presidency, they invoked the specter of Communism to disregard and discredit Fair Deal measures. In particular, they assailed the ‘socialism’ of the Brannan farm plan, the ‘socialized medicine’ of the national health program, and the ‘un-Americanism’ of federal aid to education.¹⁶⁵

Of course, the conservatives’ fear of the Communist menace intensified as events like the ‘war-scare of 1948’ emerged on the agenda, reaching a fever pitch with the onset of the Korean War. Not only would this make claims of ‘statism’ against the Truman administration more potent (as I discuss in Chapter 4), but the notion that American military spending should be ramped up would severely limit the President’s commitment to a balanced strength.

The Value of Balanced Strength: Truman’s Commitment to Balancing Social and Defense Spending during the Emerging Politics of the Warfare State

In the immediate post-war period, President Truman recognized that there would be no “return to normalcy” in regard to the state of our national defense spending. Unlike

¹⁶⁴ Oscar Ewing speech, “The Philosophy of the Fair Deal,” October 24, 1949, folder “State of the Union Message January 4, 1950,” Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁶⁵ See, Neustadt, “Congress and the Fair Deal: A Legislative Balance Sheet;” Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*.

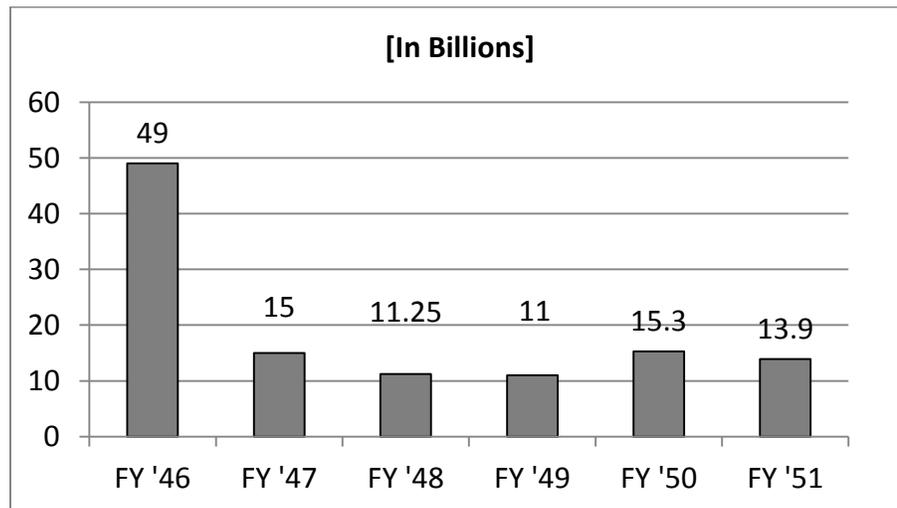
the interwar years of the 1920's and 1930's, the growth of military institutions and the United States' international obligations made it politically necessary that the defense budget be funded at non-negligible levels. At the same time though, Truman did not want the United States to succumb entirely to a garrison state in which the needs of military preparedness undermined traditional commitments to economy. Such a turn of events would mean foregoing re-investment in domestic programs that had been neglected for far too-long through the course of World War II. The warfare state must not subdue the welfare state. Most importantly, Truman viewed the need to balance our domestic needs with that of national defense and security as essential to maintaining the nation's strength. Through his attempts to bring such balance, however, Truman had to navigate vested military interests intent on blocking any cuts to defense spending.

Demobilization and International Crises, 1945-1948

By early fall 1945 just as the war was coming to an end, President Truman's immediate budgetary concern was to coordinate a massive demobilization of the armed forces and a reduction in the military budget, which was an incredible \$50 billion at the time of V-J day (see chart 3.1). Initially, Truman was overly optimistic, telling Bureau of the Budget Director, Howard Smith, that he hoped to eventually see the peacetime federal budget pared down to \$25 billion, with defense taking up no more than 20-25% of that total. Together, Truman and Smith represented the 'economizers' in the administration who were dismayed at the disparity that had emerged between domestic and defense spending since the start of the war. In preparing the budget for fiscal year 1947, both were strong advocates for a reduction in defense expenditures. On the other end of the

spectrum were supporters of the emerging ideology of national security, primarily in the armed forces, who rejected calls for economy and, instead, pushed for an increase to the military's budget.¹⁶⁶ Truman and the economy perspective would win out during the first few years of his administration.

Chart 3.1. National Defense spending proposed by Truman Administration



In January of 1946, the President announced his administration's \$35.8 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Of that, \$15 billion accounted for national defense and other war-related costs, which was significantly lower than those in the armed forces had sought. Additionally, the budget called for slight increases to domestic programs such as education, farm supports, social security, and other non-defense related areas as Truman and Smith had planned.¹⁶⁷ While the Navy, in particular, was none too happy with the budget ceiling imposed on them, in the end, the President was able to keep

¹⁶⁶ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 73.

¹⁶⁷ Truman, Message to the Congress on the State of the Union and on the Budget for 1947, January 21, 1946.

defense spending down. In conjunction with larger than expected tax-revenues, Truman's stance against those defense interests in the administration lead to a balanced budget for the 1947 fiscal year. However, both the War and Navy departments would take up this struggle in the next budgetary go-round.

In the planning stages of the fiscal year 1948 budget, the military again pressed Truman and the Budget Bureau for higher defense expenditures. This prompted the new Budget director, James E. Webb, to complain that "In such a budget...very little room is left for such purposes as education and general research, public health, housing, and development of industry, agriculture, transportation, and our national resources." Affording such "trivial amounts" would injure our "national objectives, including military strength."¹⁶⁸ Similarly, as Truman noted in his message accompanying the administration's \$37.5 billion budget, the nation had "commitments, both international and domestic, that must be honored" and, thus, the current program was "designed to meet these needs, and to execute every program with strict economy."¹⁶⁹

As he had done before, the President was able to fight back against the military's demands; reflected in the administration's proposed budget of \$11 billion for national defense, which represented a reduction from the previous year. Alternatively, domestic programs such as social welfare, education, housing, and agriculture saw slight increases. Together, with other non-defense expenditures like resource conservation, communications, and transportation, the budget allocated over \$6 billion. Another \$7.3 billion went to Veterans' services to fund education and benefits "which will add to our

¹⁶⁸ Quote found in, Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 83.

¹⁶⁹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1948, January 10, 1947, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12861>.

national strength and prosperity.”¹⁷⁰ At the end of the 1948 fiscal year, President Truman announced another balanced budget with a \$5 billion surplus. In a press conference announcing the surplus, he argued that “The international situation has also made it imperative” to achieve a sound budget that will act as “a reserve against emergencies, whether at home or abroad.” For Truman, it was necessary that the surplus be put toward the national debt and re-invested in domestic programs.

For the 1949 fiscal year, the President unveiled a budget totaling \$39.7 billion. The portion allocated for defense practically mirrored the previous budget of \$11 billion. Similarly, the budget planned for another \$5 billion surplus and called for increase spending on education, housing, health insurance, resources conservation, and farm supports. As he put it in the accompanying budget message, “All these programs directly support the twofold objective of building economic and individual strength and health in this nation, and of better preparing the nation to discharge its increased responsibilities in the family of nations.”¹⁷¹ While Truman had hoped to see another balanced budget, a turn of events in Eastern Europe foreshadowed the coming challenge to his desire for continuing a balanced strength of economy and domestic development.

For the first few years of his administration, Truman had been successful at fending off calls from the military to provide additional defense funds. But, with the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia and the ‘war-scare’ of 1948, Congress would pass a subsequent defense appropriation of \$3.1 billion, creating a deficit for the 1949 fiscal year. In conjunction with the President’s announcement of the ‘Truman Doctrine,’

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1949, January 12, 1948, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13127>.

pledging that the United States would provide \$400 million in economic aid to Greece and Turkey to combat the spread of Communism,¹⁷² and the Marshall Plan, which called for economic recovery to help rebuild Europe, the Czech crisis signaled a shift in the politics of budgeting for national strength.

The Defense Program, Congressional Conservatives, and Budgeting for Permanent Preparedness, 1949-1950

Looking to move past the budgetary effects of the war scare of 1948, President Truman renewed his commitment to rein in defense spending and to provide additional funding to domestic programs as his administration prepared the budget for fiscal years 1950 and 1951. In doing so, he continued to articulate his vision that the nation's preparedness and position of strength in the Cold War was determined by the sound budgeting of both social investment and national defense. There was reason to be hopeful given Truman's re-election in 1948 and his improved domestic standing. Unfortunately, as events of the early Cold War began to unfold and came to envelop the national agenda, there emerged a new perspective on the usefulness of building up America's military strength.

Tensions concerning the Czech crisis had eased considerably when President Truman presented his administration's budget for fiscal year 1950, thus, he hoped to return to the balanced approach he had implemented during his first few years. Moreover,

¹⁷² Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior*, 68-71.

during the prior year, he had instituted a \$15 billion cap on defense spending.¹⁷³ Given these two developments, he reiterated a desire to reinvest in domestic programs. The total budget called for \$41.9 billion in total expenditures, a little less than \$2 billion above the previous year. National defense spending was set at \$14.3 billion, compared to \$11.8 for fiscal year 1949. In reference to the defense budget, Truman argued that “The principal objective we should have in mind in planning for our national defense at this time is to build a foundation of military strength which can be sustained for a period of years without excessive strain on our productive resources, and which will permit rapid expansion should the need arise.”¹⁷⁴

This was a critical period for the budgetary politics of the Truman administration, specifically, and for the warfare state, more broadly. In placing a cap on defense spending, the President, along with Council of Economic Advisors Chairman Edwin Nourse, and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, recognized the long-term implications of national preparedness. For example, speaking to the National War College in June 1949, Secretary Johnson remarked that the political commitment of the defense program was now “a major factor in the fiscal life of the nation,” going up against “revenues with measures dedicated to the health, progress, and social welfare of the American people.”¹⁷⁵ More directly, Nourse once asserted that “The country that advances the

¹⁷³ Historian Robert J. Donovan writes: “The consensus [of the cap] was reinforced by another prevalent theory, espoused by some of the highest military leaders themselves, which was that the Soviet Union was deliberately trying to scare the United States into spending itself into bankruptcy.” Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1949-1953* (New York: Norton, 1982), 59.

¹⁷⁴ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1950, January 10, 1949, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13434>.

¹⁷⁵ Found in, Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 273.

welfare of the nation, lays a foundation of preparedness that the garrison state never can.”¹⁷⁶ In essence, Johnson and Nourse spoke to President Truman’s vision of a balanced national strength.

While events abroad clearly posed a significant challenge to the maintenance of this vision, the determination by conservatives in Congress to cut taxes applied additional pressure. In the prior year, Republicans had successfully overridden the President’s veto of a tax cut bill, and, desperate for additional revenue, Truman proposed a \$4 billion revenue bill in response. He addressed this state of affairs in his 1950 State of the Union.

At present, largely because of the ill-considered tax reduction of the 80th Congress, the Government is not receiving enough revenue to meet its necessary expenditures... To meet this situation, I am proposing that Federal expenditures be held to the lowest levels consistent with our international requirements and the essential needs of economic growth, and the well-being of our people. Don't forget that last phrase.¹⁷⁷

The President continued, by noting that “At the same time, we must guard against the folly of attempting budget slashes which would impair our prospects for peace or cripple the programs essential to our *national strength* (emphasis added).”¹⁷⁸ Again, Truman had stressed the need to think about budgeting in relational terms.

For the fiscal year 1951, the administration planned total expenditures at \$42.7 billion. Reflecting what the Bureau of the Budget called a “trend towards economy at the expense of national security programs,” defense spending was set

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 173.

¹⁷⁷ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 4, 1950, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13567>.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

at \$13.9 billion. Spending on social welfare programs was set at \$2.7 billion with general domestic spending seeing an increase of \$1 billion over the prior fiscal year (see table 3.1). If granted the increase, Truman hoped to invest the funds in housing, health care, social security, and education. In presenting the budget, Truman stated that it was “not [a question] whether we are doing too much, but whether the budgetary requirements of the major national security and war-connected programs have constrained us to undertake too little toward supporting and stimulating the realization of our country’s great potential development.”¹⁷⁹ In the end, however, Congressional conservatives eliminated the President’s \$1 billion increase. What is more, when an additional \$385 million defense appropriation was passed, Republicans were able to offset the cost by cutting non-defense spending by \$550 million.¹⁸⁰

Table 3.1. Defense vs. Welfare Spending

(*in billions)	<i>Proposed*</i>	<i>Proposed*</i>
	Nat'l Defense	Social Welfare
FY 1947	15	3.0
FY 1948	11.25	1.7
FY 1949	11.8	2.38
FY 1950	14.3	2.35
FY 1951	13.5	2.7

¹⁷⁹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1951, January 9, 1950, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13765>.

¹⁸⁰ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 291.

Although conservatives kept up their fight against an ever-increasing budget, a shifting perspective within the Truman administration in regards to the defense program brought the President's earlier position on a balanced strength into question. More specifically, the Soviet Union's successful nuclear test and the Communists' takeover of China in 1949 led the National Security Council and others with defense interests, to reconsider the state of America's military strength. According to the release of the document known as NSC-68, the United States should undergo "a more rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength and thereby of confidence in the free world...."¹⁸¹

While the policy recommendations in NSC-68 were never officially adopted, the onset of the Korean War only a few months later would necessarily realize the military buildup envisioned by its architects of new the defense perspective. As I discuss in the next chapter, the budgetary politics of the Korean defense effort officially re-militarized the vision of national strength put forth by President Truman.

Conclusion

The presidency of Harry S Truman was foundational for the politics of national strength. As the first president to govern in the shadow of the warfare-welfare state nexus, he was tasked with balancing both the commitment to New Deal liberalism and the responsibility of military and world leadership that he inherited upon the death of FDR. Just as Roosevelt had linked the domestic objectives of the New Deal with the

¹⁸¹ Draft of NSC-68 found in, Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

wartime purpose of the Allied cause by articulating a vision of national strength, Truman advocated that his reconversion and Fair Deal programs comprised an “internal strength” that represented the foundation of our foreign policy objectives in the immediate post-war era. But with the emergence of the Cold War, and the United States’ objective of peace, Truman envisioned a nuanced conception of strength. While military strength was essential, there was equal importance in sustaining vigorous national strength, which meant much more than our defensive prowess.

From President Truman’s perspective, to be strong internally the nation had to bring balance to the disparity between defense and social spending, while also being wary of an over-extended budget. Of course, the immediate challenges he faced were the demands of post-war demobilization and the domestic politics of reconversion. The budgetary battles he would endure during his first few years in office presaged the similar political obstacles that subsequent presidents would confront in taking on entrenched military interests. But he found early success in balancing the budget on multiple occasions, in spite of, and sometimes due in part to, the efforts of congressional conservatives to push back against domestic reinvestment.

Truman’s leadership of the warfare state had a lasting legacy both institutionally and ideologically. Not only did he unify the armed services into a single Department of Defense and oversee the emergence of the National Security Council, but he pursued a Cold War agenda that fused New Deal liberalism with a vigorous stance against Soviet communism. As part and parcel of his vision of national strength, this Cold War liberalism would have a profound effect on politics for the next several decades.

Truman's support for New Deal liberalism during this era was critical in his articulation of national strength as a political vision. As I have shown, specific social policies of the Fair Deal were viewed as important to building internal strength, particularly in hopes of aiding the reconversion effort and sustaining health, welfare, and prosperity during the indeterminate nature of the Cold War. This linkage of social welfare and strength was evident as early as the end of World War II. Unfortunately, success in his domestic agenda was hard to come by given the Republican led 80th Congress and the consistent opposition of congressional conservatives. Yet, legislation was passed in the form of the Housing Act of 1949, the Social Security Amendments of 1950, and various actions to aid veterans and hospital construction. Together, federal action in these areas represented means of strengthening the nation.

Beginning with the era of reconversion, the warfare state dominated the national agenda with concerns about national defense and international crises crowding out much of Truman's program. While the 1948 election and the Fair Deal re-invigorated the liberal cause, the onset of the Korean War, and the continued resistance of conservatives in Congress, would dampen any hopes of domestic success. However, as I show in the following chapter, President Truman would re-imagine his vision of "internal strength" during the Korean War by articulating the linkage of the Fair Deal and the defense preparedness effort.

CHAPTER IV

BUILDING STRENGTH AT HOME:

REASSERTING TRUMAN'S PRESIDENTIAL VISION THROUGH THE LINKAGE OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND THE KOREAN WAR DEFENSE EFFORT

On December 16th, 1950, following a downturn of events in Korea, President Truman officially proclaimed that the United States was in a state of national emergency. The increasing Communist menace, not only in Korea but around the globe, required that “the national defense of the United States be strengthened as speedily as possible.” Truman stated that achieving this new national objective meant Americans would have to “make a united effort for the security and well-being of our beloved country.” If citizens came together and put the country’s necessities “foremost in thought and action,” the President believed that “the full moral and material strength of the Nation may be readied for the dangers which threaten us.”¹⁸²

In a corresponding radio and television address explaining the extent of the national emergency, Truman assured the American public that “We have the strength and we have the courage to overcome the danger that threatens our country.” At the core of “Our great strength” was a willingness to “pull together when we are in trouble,...not out of fear, but out of love for the great values of our American life, that we all have a share in.” The task of “building a stronger America” was a joint effort undertaken “on our

¹⁸² Harry S. Truman, Proclamation 2914: Proclaiming the Existence of a National Emergency, December 16, 1950, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13684>.

farms, in our factories, and in our homes.” In the end, Truman urged each and every American “to put aside his personal interests for the good of the country.”¹⁸³

During the preparation phase of this particular address, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Leon Keyserling, argued that the President’s emphasis on the nation’s domestic productive strength could be used to introduce “a ray of hope into a dreary situation...[a] ray of hope [which] is most important at this time.” There was great significance in highlighting our potential economic strength, Keyserling stressed. As he put it,

Nothing could be more important than to tell the people that, while we are girding ourselves for defense, we are by the same effort building a structure which will enable us to resume our social progress and move on to new attainments when the immediate struggle is over.¹⁸⁴

The suggestion offered by Keyserling reflected a larger viewpoint that emerged among architects and supporters of President Truman’s domestic program. Offering a nuanced answer to the question, “What will the war in Korea do to the Fair Deal?”, as the *The New York Times* inquired in the fall of 1950¹⁸⁵, many argued that while the needs of the defense effort were paramount, we must not give up the fight for the betterment of our nation’s health and welfare. Truman himself addressed this question in a press conference following his January 1951 State of the Union address. While the President recognized that “first things come first, and our defense programs must have top

¹⁸³ Harry S. Truman, Radio and Television Report to the American People on the National Emergency, December 15, 1950, Harry S. Truman Library, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=993&st=&st1=>.

¹⁸⁴ Keyserling letter to Murphy, December 13, 1950, folder “December 15, 1950, National Emergency Speech,” Presidential Speech File, Charles S. Murphy Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁸⁵ Clayton Knowles, “War Acts as a Check on Fair Deal Program,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1950.

priority,” this did not mean a retreat from his commitment to liberal, domestic reform. As he told the reporters that day, “There has been a great deal of conversation about the Fair Deal, lots of comment on it since the Message. I want to get it straight... , because there has been a lot of speculation about whether I am going back on the Democratic Platform or not. I am not.”¹⁸⁶

Only a few years removed for the demobilization efforts of World War II, the Truman administration was faced yet again with the politics of wartime. Capping off what historian Bert Cochran calls Truman’s “crisis presidency,” the Korean War threatened to become a political albatross around the neck of the President. Most notably, scholars point to the collapse of the Fair Deal agenda upon the beginning of the Korean War and its attendant military buildup. One of the foremost scholars of the Truman presidency, historian Alonzo L. Hamby, refers to this period of defense mobilization as the “end of fair deal liberalism.”¹⁸⁷

Following this traditional narrative of the “disappearance of the Fair Deal from the political agenda,” political scientist Benjamin O. Fordham examines the political bargaining undertaken by interests of both social welfare and national defense and concludes that “The administration valued its national security program more highly than it valued its social welfare agenda.”¹⁸⁸ Offering a more favorable account of this dynamic, presidential scholar Richard E. Neustadt, who served as a member of the

¹⁸⁶ Transcript of President Truman’s Press and Radio Conference #250, January 11, 1951, folder “January-February, 1951,” Historical File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

¹⁸⁷ Alonzo L. Hamby, “Harry S. Truman and Congress: Presidential Effectiveness and the Liberal Scorecard,” in *Congress and Harry S. Truman: A Conflicted Legacy*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2011), 97.

¹⁸⁸ Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus*, 9-10.

Truman administration during this period, recalls that the president “was shifting emphasis, relegating most welfare measures to some secondary order of priority, without quite ceasing to be their advocate. It was too subtle a performance for the press; the distinctions much too fine for headlines or wide public notice...”¹⁸⁹

In this chapter, I take seriously Neustadt’s notion that the Truman administration did not cease to be an “advocate” for social welfare measures during the period of the Korean War and analyze the politics behind the president’s “subtle performance” in being such an advocate. Yet, I challenge Neustadt’s suggestion that such measures were of secondary priority. Moving beyond the traditional narrative, I argue that proponents of the Fair Deal and Truman’s domestic objectives did not see the Korean defense effort as the end all of social investment. Rather, they viewed it as an opportunity to re-articulate and renew the fight for policies and programs which they saw as inherently linked to the mobilization drive for national preparedness. Moreover, just as the administration’s program helped build national strength after World War II, that strength was doubly needed as the country braced itself once again for wartime.

This chapter begins by examining how members of the Truman administration viewed the relationship between their domestic programmatic agenda and the needs of the Korean defense effort in a way that reimagined and reaffirmed their prior vision of national strength. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrate how this vision was reflected in the politics of the president’s health program during the defense mobilization period. Finally, I analyze the limitations of Truman’s linkage of social welfare and national defense and the politics of wartime budgeting.

¹⁸⁹ Neustadt, “Congress and the Fair Deal: A Legislative Balance Sheet,” 36.

Reimagining the Nation's Internal Strength: The Truman Administration's Vision of Social Welfare-as-Defense Preparedness during the Korean War

Truman's proclamation of a national emergency solidified the politics of the national agenda around concerns regarding the need for preparedness and the state of the nation's defensive strength. But, even in the light of defense mobilization, Truman and his liberal supporters were determined not to give up their commitment to New Deal liberalism. Rather, it was *because* of the prospect of a sustained mobilization effort that the nation needed to keep up the fight for social welfare. This was particularly the case given the uncertain duration of the current effort and the importance of planning for the post-emergency era.

Throughout the final years of Truman's presidency, key advisers, executive officials, and liberal interest groups expressed a firm belief that the administration's domestic program was vital to national preparedness. Invoking earlier calls for "internal strength," Truman's wartime presidential programs linked Fair Deal domestic reform with the mission of defense preparedness by maintaining the necessity of "building strength at home." In this section of the chapter, I detail how this reimagining of Truman's prior vision of national strength was understood and constructed through the administration's efforts to maintain support for its programmatic agenda.

"Building Strength at Home"

Amid the shadow of the United States' involvement in Korea, Truman, acting as "a very active team captain," worked with his advisers to prepare his annual messages

outlining the president's program.¹⁹⁰ As with every major address, the administration received advice and suggestions from interested parties about how best to formulate and articulate the programmatic agenda to the American people. During the final years of Truman's tenure, the reality of the defense effort informed both the drafting of the messages conveyed and the purpose of the vision promoted by the President in his wartime program.

The administration's supporters stated their cases. For example, Hoyt Haddock of the AFL-CIO's Maritime Commission, proposed language for the 1951 State of the Union that linked the struggle against Communist aggression in Korea to the need to fulfill President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. In Haddock's view, Truman should tell the American public that

it is an illusion to believe that military might will give us, or the world, the four freedoms which represent mankind's hope... Today, I am confronting you with the conviction that unless we supplement the military program with a positive program of achieving the "four freedoms" on a world wide basis, under our leadership and through the United Nations, we will lose the leadership of the world."¹⁹¹

Faced with the fact that the "nation is neither at war nor at peace," a Mr. Flanagan,¹⁹² suggested "a stirring and authoritative call to action." Such an expression could be partly grounded in the belief that "The State of the Union is the State of the World." Under this premise, the President could declare that "Within its borders the Republic continues to increase in [the] strength of its institutions and the enjoyment of

¹⁹⁰ "Truman messages drafted," *New York Times*, January 7, 1951.

¹⁹¹ Haddock 1951 State of the Union Draft Proposal to Lloyd, undated, folder "State of the Union Message January 8, 1951," Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁹² Available records do not indicate Mr. Flanagan's identity or his position.

freedom among its citizens. We have made notable progress abroad and at home toward strengthening the foundation and encouraging the growth of a free world.”¹⁹³

In some instances, direct legislative recommendations were made by liberal supporters of the president’s program. During the lead up to the 1952 legislative session, Emil Rieve, Administrative Chairman, of the CIO’s Committee on Economic Policy offered his organization’s thoughts on the importance of pursuing progress on the domestic front. Their letter stressed that “While we move forward in our defense program and meet the daily developing problems resulting from the disturbances created by shifting some of our civilian production to military production, we cannot lose sight of maintaining and developing many of our social welfare measures.” Rieve and the CIO urged Truman “with all the conviction possible” that he and the administration “continue to advocate and support good, sound domestic legislation designed to aid and strengthen our own country and our democratic institutions.”¹⁹⁴

Oscar Ewing, as administrator of the Federal Security Agency, made his thoughts on the relationship between the war effort and the fight for social progress very clear when submitting his legislative recommendations to the President. There were different conceptions of strength, according to Ewing. He described how “...the nature of modern warfare is such that although conventional military strength is imperative there are many essential elements of security other than those included in the armed forces.” In his view, the Nation understood that “Certain basic goals of American society are the same in

¹⁹³ “Memo to Mr. Russell from Mr. Flanagan suggesting content of the President’s State of the Union Message,” December 11, 1950, folder “State of the Union Message January 8, 1951,” Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁹⁴ Rieve letter to President Truman, December 10, 1951, folder “1952 State of the Union Message [1 of 3],” Presidential Addresses, Letters, and Messages File, Historical File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

peace and in war...” Echoing back to George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” and the accepted view of Soviet ideology, Ewing argued that

The communists delight in depicting us as a materialistic and militaristic nation. Proper emphasis upon our concern for the well-being of our citizens as a goal in itself as well as a vital part of our national strength against Communist aggression, is therefore doubly necessary.¹⁹⁵

The president’s advisers were tasked with collecting such suggestions and then preparing notes on general themes which could be communicated through the president’s wartime programmatic messages. Charles Stauffacher, an official with the Bureau of the Budget, felt that “all of the specific points on the Fair Deal...could probably be compressed and be more in the setting of the central theme of the speech...” The theme he proposed was for Truman to maintain that the administration was “continuing the program we have...building up our own strength as a basis for peace...”¹⁹⁶

Future presidential scholar Richard Neustadt, a Truman aide at the time, submitted an early state of the union draft which offered a more direct link between the policies of the Fair Deal and the war effort: “Therefore, part of the task of building up our defense of freedom is to keep up the fight for social welfare.”¹⁹⁷ Along the same lines, the unknown author of another draft, thought it constructive for Truman to “state his case in terms which carry the defense effort and the Fair Deal forward as a one-package policy.” The author offered a “rough idea” of what the president could say”

¹⁹⁵ Ewing letter to President Truman suggesting language for 1951 State of the Union message, December 4, 1950, folder “State of the Union 1951 (3 of 4),” Official File 419-F, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁹⁶ Stauffacher informal comments to Lloyd on draft of 1952 State of the Union, “State of the Union Message January 9, 1952 [1 of 3],” Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

¹⁹⁷ Neustadt draft #9 of 1952 State of the Union, December 29, 1951, folder “1952: State of the Union Message [2 of 3],” Presidential Addresses, Letters, and Messages File, Historical File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

Because defense and welfare are world-wide problems, the whole Free World is being knit together in a single united effort to achieve the goal. And because defense and welfare are equally essential over the long pull, the policy of this Nation is to provide for the one and to promote the other – and do both these things at the same time. This is a one-package policy.¹⁹⁸

The eventual theme that came to comprise Truman’s wartime messages was that of “Building Strength at Home.” The development of this vision can be traced through the original sketches for what became the 1951 and 1952 State of the Unions. David Lloyd, one of Truman’s key advisors, drafted an early outline emphasizing that the “nation faces a test,” specifically “an external threat,” but in our favor, “Internally the nation is in good shape.” To engage this threat, the United States was putting forth a “program to meet the danger” that fully utilized “our means and measures.” The first of the program’s six points was our “strength at home.”¹⁹⁹

This general theme was seconded by Marshall Shulman, a close adviser to Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In a memo to the President’s secretary, Shulman suggested that the State of the Union message “should strive for a major impact” on several main points, which included “Inspiring statement of goals (‘Four Freedoms’ effect),” and “Confidence – awareness of our sources of strength.” Moreover, the foreign policy section of the address could incorporate the administration’s plan for “dealing with

¹⁹⁸ Unknown author suggests language for 1952 State of the Union, date unknown, folder “1952: State of the Union Message [2 of 3],” Presidential Addresses, Letters, and Messages File, Historical File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

¹⁹⁹ See, Lloyd early drafts for 1951 and 1952 State of the Union messages. In particular, folder “State of the Union Message January 8, 1951” and folder “State of the Union message January 9, 1952 [1 of 3],” both found in, Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers. In addition, John Hersey submitted an outline for 1952 State of the Union, with suggested language: “Program: 1. Build strength abroad, 2. Build strength at home, 3. Increase vitality of our free society here at home sections on ‘build strength at home’ list of measures including social welfare (schools, housing, aid to education, health), civil rights, farm policy, small business, tax policy”

the domestic measures planned” by framing home-front policies as a national effort at “Building our strength.”

In January 1951, Truman went before Congress and described how the nation could “succeed in the great task that lies before us.” To be sure, much of the address focused on the administration’s plans for building up our military and economic strength, but, as the President noted, we also drew a “great part of our strength” from “Our common ideals.” Unifying our sources of strength was critical, for the Soviets had “made it clear that we must have strength as well as right on our side. If we build our strength-- and we are building it--the Soviet rulers may face the facts and lay aside their plans to take over the world.” To build this necessary strength at home, Truman called for legislative action in areas such as agriculture, defense housing, medical education, and federal aid to the states for elementary and secondary schools.²⁰⁰

Reaffirming this vision a year later, the President’s 1952 address acknowledged that “We cannot do all we want to in times like these--we have to choose the things that will contribute most to defense--but we must continue to make progress if we are to be a strong nation in the years ahead.” We must renew our commitment to progress internally, Truman noted, stressing that

Our strength depends upon the health, the morale, the freedom of our people. We can take on the burden of leadership in the fight for world peace because, for nearly 20 years, the Government and the people have been working together for the general welfare. We have given more and more of our citizens a fair chance at decent, useful, productive lives. That is the reason we are as strong as we are today.

²⁰⁰ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1951, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14017>.

While the present period was trying, and some domestic actions would be limited, if not halted all together, we should not “give up the things that are *vital to our national strength* (emphasis added).²⁰¹

Social Welfare, Liberals, and Mobilizing the Vision of National Strength

During the mobilization period, Truman and key executive officials, especially FSA Administrator Oscar Ewing, articulated the administration’s vision of national strength to groups of liberal supports and social welfare organizations. Together, their arguments spoke to the idea that the circumstances of defense mobilization meant that the commitment to social welfare was critically important, now more than ever. Recalling the experience of World War II and reconversion, we needed to maintain the objective of social progress so that, once the Korean War came to an end, the nation would be better prepared for its return to peacetime. And, more directly, Truman and his supporters saw social welfare itself as vital to the defense effort.

Addressing the sixth annual meeting of the President’s Committee on National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week in August of 1950, just weeks after the start of the Korean War, Truman expressed that, while “some people may feel that [the committee’s] work is now overshadowed by the important events which are occurring in the struggle for a just and lasting peace,” this was clearly “not the case.” He noted that during the present struggle “our national strength is the chief reliance of the free world in its effort to overcome the forces of tyranny and aggression.” The mission of the committee to find productive employment for the physically handicapped was in service

²⁰¹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 9, 1952, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14418>.

of “strengthening our nation.” Promoting such employment was important because “Our Nation is strong because it is loved by its citizens. We love our country not as an abstraction or a theory, but because it offers us the chance to lead useful lives, and to do what we can for those around us.” In this manner, the committee’s work was “not only humanitarian,” it was “also patriotic, because it strengthens the ties that bind us all together in loyalty to our country.”²⁰²

Of course, Truman also expressed gratitude to those in his own administration who served the nation by overseeing the health and welfare of the American people, the men and women of the Federal Security Agency. Unable to attend one of the FSA’s staff conferences in late 1951, Truman had a letter sent to Administrator Ewing wishing to extend his greetings to the attendees present. Admittedly, recent events had led to “set-backs and disappointments” and, moreover, required defense expenditures had limited our social investments for programs at home. The current circumstances, however, were “nothing to be discouraged about.” Rather, as the President’s letter read, the “defense effort itself is creating all sorts of special health and welfare and education problems in hundreds of communities across the country.” The present work of the FSA was vital: their efforts were “helping to keep our mobilization program moving forward.”²⁰³

In many ways, Oscar Ewing, as head of the FSA, led the national strength-mobilization effort on the ground. Given his deep, ideological ties to New Deal liberalism, the rallying came natural. For instance, serving as vice-chairman of the

²⁰² Text of Truman’s Speech to Committee, August 9, 1950, folder “August 9, 1950, Speech Before the President’s Committee on National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week,” Presidential Speech File, Charles S. Murphy Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

²⁰³ Truman letter to Ewing, December 5, 1951, folder “Federal Security Agency,” General File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

Democratic National Committee in the lead up to the 1948 election, Ewing held regular strategy meetings with prominent liberals in the federal government.²⁰⁴ During the defense period, he demonstrated the same commitment to advance the liberal cause of health, education, and welfare.

In the immediate months following the crisis in Korea, Ewing fervently articulated the administration's vision of strengthening the nation, in front of both liberal and defense interests. Speaking before the annual convention of the American Federation of Teachers in August of 1950, Ewing discussed the need for a continued "framework and philosophy of social progress" and touted the Social Security Act amendments²⁰⁵ which had been passed the week prior. This legislation was "part of the social program which the American people desire" and Ewing rejected the calls of those who felt that "we must stop working for this kind of progress because of the international situation."

Ewing went on to invoke the vision of building strength at home:

Certainly our primary effort must be on the strengthening of our country to meet whatever demands may be placed upon us. Nobody who understands the difference between democracy and Communism, between freedom and the police state, will challenge this. *What we must continue to remember, however, is that our country is strong only if our people are strong – and that our people are strong only if our education, our health, and our family security are maintained and strengthened.* There is no conflict here. There is merely the interplay of needs for the making of a powerful American in a turbulent world (emphasis added).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Ken Hechler, *Working With Truman: A Personal Memoir of the White House Years* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 60.

²⁰⁵ In the summer of 1950, Congress passed, and Truman signed, an extension of Social Security benefits to agricultural and domestic workers.

²⁰⁶ Ewing address to AFT convention, August 23, 1950, folder "Speech – American Federation of Teachers Convention, Detroit, Michigan (Aug. 23, 1950)," Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

Not long after visiting with the American Federation of Teachers, Administrator Ewing sounded a similar message to a very different audience at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in which he reaffirmed the policies and vision of President Truman's domestic program. Again referencing the recent SSA amendments, he noted that those who "been the most active in the struggle to strengthen and expand" the safety net were simply reflecting their concern "with the essential strength and morale of the Nation as a whole."²⁰⁷ Finishing his speech to the assembled military officials and students, Ewing wanted to "add just one point."

In outlining what the government now does for health, education and family security – and what still needs to be done – I have tried to suggest some of the ways in which it directly affects your immediate concern with national security. These relationships are not dragged in by the heels. They are not far-fetched. *The strength of the people is, quite simply and literally, the strength of the Nation.* But I want also to make it plain that I do not justify these measures solely – or even mainly – on grounds of national defense. They justify themselves – as necessary and practical elements in the kind of government and the kind of peace-loving society we believe in. They represent democratic self-government at work in the best interests of – and by direction of – the citizens themselves (emphasis added).²⁰⁸

Another administration official that often invoked the administration's vision of national strength was CEA Chairman Leon Keyserling. However, as I explain in more detail below, Keyserling's primary concern for economic strength made him a less idealistic advocate. Nevertheless, he spoke to the true linkage of social welfare and national defense. For example, speaking to the conference of the American Public Welfare Association weeks before the national emergency was declared, he counseled

²⁰⁷ Ewing speech before the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, October 9, 1950, folder "Speech – Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. (October 9, 1950)," Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

that social workers “not regard themselves as being relegated to the sidelines by the new turn of national and world affairs.” Those in the audience, along with their fellow citizens, “should realize that some of the things which some people have called ‘reform’ or ‘social’ as distinguished from ‘economic’ measures, have really been a great source of our economic strength and, consequently of our defense strength.” Invoking the recent memory of World War II, he suggested that the nation’s economic front and production line were made strong by, not only New Deal reforms in health, education, and housing but also “the sense that the nation existed for the welfare of the people instead of the people existing only for the service of the state.”²⁰⁹

In articulating the Fair Deal domestic program as foundational to the nation’s strength, Truman and administration officials helped to reaffirm the objectives of liberal progress, in both peace and war. As I detail in the following section, this vision of strength was premised on advancing the health of the American people, leading Truman to endorse anew his administration’s health program.

The Health and Strength of the Nation: The Experience of World War II, the Defense Emergency, and Truman’s Health Program

Near the end of World War II in the fall of 1945, President Truman was sent a copy of a proposed plan, “The Government’s Responsibility for the Health of the Nation” written by Colonel W. Paul Holbrook, regarding the reorganization of medical military services and their coordination with civilian medical services. In his proposal, Colonel Holbrook noted that concerns over the government’s role in public health were

²⁰⁹ Lucy Freeman, “Welfare Stressed as Defense Factor,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1950.

“necessarily much stimulated by the outbreak of [World War II].” What became evident was that the nation was “profoundly shocked by the high percentage found physically defective among the inductees.” To Holbrook, it was “necessary and urgent that something definite...be done to centralize all government policies effecting the nation’s health (sic).”²¹⁰ While President Truman received many documents from “nearly every fellow” with interests in education, public health, and public welfare, he appreciated Holbrook’s comments and felt the plan would be “very helpful in creating a policy on public health.”²¹¹

Less than two months after receiving Colonel Holbrook’s comments, President Truman made history by sending a special message to Congress outlining his proposal for a comprehensive health program. Directly referencing Roosevelt’s wartime call for an Economic Bill of Rights, Truman reiterated the right of every American “to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.” As proposed, the comprehensive health proposal consisted of five major parts: hospital construction; expansion of public health services; medical education and research; prepayment of medical costs through compulsory insurance; and protection against loss of wages due to sickness and disability. The President’s call to arms for such a program reflected the fact that, although the country had “made great strides” in medical and scientific progress, “each year we lose many more persons from preventable and premature deaths than we

²¹⁰ Letter from Sheridan Downey to President Truman discussing Holbrook’s proposed plan, September 19, 1945, folder “Health,” General File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

²¹¹ Truman letter responding to Downey, September 24, 1945, folder “Health,” General File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

lost in battle or from war injuries during the entire war.”²¹² The experience of World War II (not just the memory of the war, given its immediacy in the minds of the public), was critical in both formulating and promoting the president’s health program.

While Cold War politics would quickly infuse the debates concerning passage of some of Truman’s proposals, the events in Korea and the proclamation of the national emergency heightened the terms of contestation. However, building from the administration’s vision of social welfare as a cornerstone of national strength, Truman and his administration officials used the moment to further state their case for the importance of the nation’s health towards the defense mobilization effort.

Truman’s Health Program Prior to the Korean War

Mere weeks after Truman’s initial proposal in November of 1945, Federal Security Agency Acting Administrator Watson Miller touted the health program in a speech to the New York County Medical Society, a speech which Truman read “with a lot of interest.”²¹³ Speaking with authority as a top policy-maker and administrator in the field, Watson proclaimed health as a “national asset” and a right afforded to the people by the government. The issue of health as an “old fact” had been given “fresh meaning,” particularly “seen in the new and lurid light of this post-war world.” Recounting a statistic often cited by supporters of the president’s program, the Acting Administrator noted that “The 5 million or so young men who failed to measure up to health standards

²¹² Harry S. Truman, Special Message to the Congress Recommending a Comprehensive Health Program, November 19, 1945, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12288>.

²¹³ Miller speech before the New York County Medical Society, “The People’s Health – A National Asset,” December 17, 1945, folder “Message to Congress (9/6/45) - Federal Security Agency Reports,” Official File 419-B, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

for military service [during the war] bid us look to the morbidity of our whole people.” But he did not want to “belabor... these frequently discussed military findings.” While it was imperative that we draw a lesson from the dangers of ill health on our preparedness, there were positives to note from the experience of war, as well. In regards to the need for expanded research, Watson expressed “hope that the benefits of wartime cooperation between Government, universities, hospitals, and foundations may be extended to the even larger tasks of peace.”²¹⁴

In a rather short amount of time, the first plank of the health program came into being with the Hospital Construction Act of 1946, known popularly as the Hill-Burton Act. However, the congressional hearings on legislation for national health insurance became bogged down in a testy debate about the threats of “socialized Medicine”; a threat made more visceral by the assumed machinations of Soviet ideology.

In an effort to show his continued commitment to the issue, President Truman sent a special message to Congress in May 1947 proclaiming that the health program was “crucial to our national welfare.” Without compulsory health insurance as “a part of our national fabric, we shall be wasting our most precious national resource and shall be perpetuating unnecessary misery and human suffering.”²¹⁵ With little movement on the legislative front, Truman asked the Federal Security Agency to review how best to advance the nation’s health over the next ten years. Oscar Ewing, who had taken over the job of FSA Administrator, would present the report, *The Nation’s Health*, during the tail end of the 1948 presidential election.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Truman, *Memoirs, Volume Two*, 20-1.

With Truman's upset victory over Thomas E. Dewey in that campaign, the President renewed his fight for a comprehensive health program. Addressing Congress in April of 1949, Truman offered four recommendations: separate legislation for national health insurance and expansion efforts for medical schools; and increased aid for hospital construction and public health services. The administration would be successful in getting increased funding for hospital construction and research grants. But, as I describe below, they were unable to find support in the conservative House of Representatives for aid to medical education and increased funding for local health services. Amid the backdrop of the international events of 1949 and the emergence of McCarthyism, Truman's efforts to achieve national health insurance were tainted by the specter of Communism. Reflecting back on his efforts, Truman could never quite "understand all the fuss some people make about government wanting to do something to improve and protect the health of the people."²¹⁶ Yet, with the onset of the Korean war, Truman's commitment to improving and protecting the nation's health became imperative, not in spite of the war, but because of its demands.

Korea, the National Emergency, and the President's Committee on the Health Needs of the Nation

While claims of "socialized medicine" were used against Truman's health program prior to the Korean War, afterwards the evocation of such attacks took on much greater meaning. By the fall of 1950, the American Medical Association launched a one-million dollars - in - one month advertising campaign aimed at countering any efforts

²¹⁶ Ibid, 17.

towards compulsory health insurance. Through this coordinated campaign, the AMA and its affiliates distributed pamphlets and flyers to businesses and individuals decrying the “creeping socialism” of the Truman administration. As one such advertisement put it, “We all know that in times of emergency, temporary controls sometimes become necessary – and are loyally accepted. But State Socialism is not for us!”²¹⁷

While such attacks gained steam during this period it would not deter the President from his commitment to advance the nation’s health. For example, during one particular meeting with his principal advisers Truman argued that there would be “No Backing Off” from his support for a national health program.²¹⁸ This sentiment was seconded by the liberal organization, the Committee on the Nation’s Health.

Immediately after Truman’s declaration of national emergency, Michael Davis, a member of the group’s Executive Committee, offered the president and his staffers some thoughts on the importance of staying committed to the advancement of health. They hoped to reaffirm the President’s vision that

We must look forward to meeting the health needs of the people by a workable nation-wide health insurance system and we must take action immediately in this national emergency to meet the needs created by our enlarged armed forces, by industrial mobilization and by the requirements of civilian defense. The federal government, therefore, must supply aid for training more doctors and allied personnel and for ensuring requisite public health and hospital facilities in all parts of our country.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ AMA newsletter in Lloyd’s possession, August 8, 1950, folder “Health File,” Subject File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers. See also, another representative ad from the AMA: “At a time when Americans are defending freedom from aggressive outside attack, the medical profession believes all business and industry will welcome this opportunity to join in an outspoken defense of freedom on the home front.”

²¹⁸ Notes from White House meeting, December 20, 1951, folder “1952 State of the Union Message [1 of 3],” Presidential Speech and Message File, David Lloyd Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

²¹⁹ Davis letter to Murphy, December 27, 1950, folder “January 8, 1951, State of the Union Message [1 of 2],” Presidential Speech File, Charles S. Murphy Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

Conveying his vision to the American people, Truman declared in his 1951 State of the Union that although the nation was facing a “critical time” it nonetheless stood “in a healthy condition.” While there was no reason to fear a weakening of our condition in the immediate future, the country’s citizens should keep in mind that “in a long-term defense effort like this one, we cannot neglect the measures needed to maintain a strong economy and a healthy democratic society.” In calling once again for government insurance “against the loss of earnings through sickness, and against the high costs of modern medical care,” the President advocated for policies that were needed for “the long pull” in order to maintain a “healthy society.”²²⁰

As before, however, Congress was unresponsive to Truman’s proposals. But as the Korean War dragged on, concerns over the nation’s health increased. On October 12, 1951, one of Truman advisers, David Stowe, sent the President a memo titled “Administration’s Health Program.” Stowe felt compelled to write, noting that he and the President had, on several occasions, discussed the “desirability of taking action to push the Administration’s health programs” and thought he should be frank about the current state of affairs. Based on “general agreement among the White House staff and interested private persons,” it was believed that Truman’s health program, and specifically, “plans for financing costs of medical care,” would be an issue in the 1952 election “whether by choice of the Democratic Party or not.” Stowe went on to suggest that

As a result of the effective propaganda machine of the AMA, the Administration’s efforts in the health field have been distorted and made to appear as socialistic devices. This line is almost certain to be taken anew against Democratic candidates in 1952. Moreover, there are many who believe that a comprehensive health program, including at the

²²⁰ Truman, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1951.

minimum some plan to bring adequate medical care within the means of the low income groups, will prove a desirable issue in 1952, particularly in view of available documentation pointing out the need for some action in the health insurance field.²²¹

In response to this situation, and, “without further delay,” it was recommended that President Truman choose one of three “course[s] of action.” Stowe expressed that the first course of action, “soft pedaling the health issue,” was politically dangerous because it “would put the Administration on the defensive for failing to achieve more of its objectives in this field.” Yet, the second course of action, “an all-out effort for a comprehensive program,” was not well developed, and would meet “increased pressure at this time” given “the present situation in Congress.” In light of these two political challenges, the White House staff informed the President that the third course of action was “the most desirable.” This plan called for the appointment of a presidential commission that would “Initiate a comprehensive study of the health needs of the nation as a means of re-evaluating the Administration’s program in light of the impact of the mobilization effort upon civilian health requirements and long-range health objectives.”²²²

Upon reading Stowe’s memorandum, and the draft language of the executive order that would establish such a commission, Truman offered a brief reply: “I think the best thing to do is to go ahead with it.”²²³ And go ahead, he did. On December 29, 1951, the President issued Executive Order 10317 “Establishing the President's Commission on

²²¹ Stow memorandum to Truman, October 12, 1951, folder “The President’s Commission on Health Needs of the Nation,” David H. Stowe Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Truman memorandum to Stowe, October 15, 1951, folder “The President’s Commission on Health Needs of the Nation,” David H. Stowe Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

the Health Needs of the Nation.” The first line of the executive order plainly stated that “our Nation's strength is directly dependent upon the health of its people.” Operating on funds from an appropriation titled, “Emergency Fund for the President, National Defense,”²²⁴ the commission’s task was to study and report on a range of issues related to the administration’s health program.

Invited to speak before the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland, Chairman of the commission, Dr. Paul Magnuson, explained the impetus for its creation. Chairman Magnuson remembered being called up “without a word of warning” to meet with Truman in Washington. The President, it seems, “was deeply concerned with the health of the American people in these trying days of all-out mobilization.” Truman expressed that, prior to the defense period, “he had made certain proposals to bring more and better medical care to the people, but these proposals had precipitated an emotional argument which had clouded the issue.”²²⁵ The President’s Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation was meant to simplify this issue by addressing the critical preparedness concerns brought on by the war.

Yet, “emotional arguments” against the administration’s health program were not laid to rest. Two days after Truman’s announcement of his executive order, John W. Cline, president of the AMA, denounced the White House’s “brazen misuse of defense emergency funds for a program of political propaganda, designed to influence legislation and the outcome of the 1952 election.” Furthermore, Cline felt that there was “no health

²²⁴ Harry S. Truman, Executive Order 10317 - Establishing the President's Commission of the Health Needs of the Nation, December 29, 1951, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=78369>.

²²⁵ Magnuson address before the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland, April 30, 1952, folder “President's Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation (2 of 2),” Official File 103-G, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

emergency in this country to require such an investigation or to justify the use of defense emergency funds by such a commission.”²²⁶

To supporters of the Truman administration, however, the president’s bold action was made necessary by the defense emergency. For instance, shortly after announcing his executive order, Truman received a letter from William Green, the President of the American Federation of Labor. In the letter, subsequently made public on Green’s request, the AFL commended the president on his appointment of the commission. Reflecting the dominant vision Truman had been promoting, Green and the AFL recognized that

Communist aggression has thrust upon the American people a heavy burden of defense and rearmament. In building up the nation’s defensive strength, health is a foremost factor. The defense effort has made especially urgent the task of providing effective remedies for the grave problem of inadequate health services and facilities...

...These are immediate steps. They constitute an indispensable part of America’s preparedness effort. The Commission should be in a position to assemble the main facts bearing upon these current emergency needs and provide firm recommendations for the guidance of the present session of Congress for action.²²⁷

The commission’s final report was finished and presented to Congress near the end of Truman’s time in office. In an accompanying message, the President expressed great appreciation for the work of the commission and their efforts at dealing

with one of the most valuable resources of our Nation--the health of our people. At a time when we are devoting our energies to strengthening our country in the world-wide struggle against communist aggression, we can

²²⁶ “Truman Attacked on Health Inquiry,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1952.

²²⁷ Green letter to Truman, January 14, 1952, folder “President’s Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation (1 of 2),” Official File 103-G, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

ill afford to neglect the essential needs of our people in the protection and improvement of their health.²²⁸

In the end, however, Truman's appointment of the commission was not enough to spur Congress into action on the administration's health program. Together, the continued opposition of congressional conservatives and the lobbying efforts of the AMA exhibited a legislative and political firewall against any and all efforts to reform the nation's system of health insurance. In the following section, I provide evidence of this resistance against the President's wartime legislative push for increased aid for local public health units and a commitment to provide federal funds for medical education.

Defense Preparedness, Public Health Funding, and Aid to Medical Education

As I have mentioned, the mobilization effort for Korea was understood to be truly national in scope, involving many sectors of the home front. Given the experience of World War II, there were direct concerns about the state of the nation's public health services and the limited number of students in medical school during the defense period. At the start of the Korean War, there were bills related to both issues lingering in the House of Representatives, having previously passed the Senate. It was under these circumstances that the Truman administration reiterated its previous support for increased funding for public health and aid to medical education, believing that both were essential to national preparedness.

In his budget message for fiscal year 1952, Truman argued that "If we are to meet successfully the challenge that confronts this Nation, we can less than ever afford to

²²⁸ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to the Congress Transmitting Volume One of the Report of the President's Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation, January 9, 1953, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2079>.

waste the good health of our people. But the present emergency makes even more difficult the maintenance of good health.” The proposed budget called for \$25 million for scholarships and other aid for increasing the training of doctors, dentists, and nurses, and \$5 million for local health services (along with \$300million for grants to states for education).²²⁹

The federal government’s promotion of public health extended as far back as a 1798 law providing relief for sick and disabled sailors, making it one of the oldest areas of responsibility. By the start of Korea, the government’s role in public health had come to include grants in aid for general health services, education for maternal and child health, hospital construction, the treatment of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, and sanitary inspection for food and water supplies. Unfortunately, at that time, about one-third of the nation lacked access to such local health facilities. Because of this, Truman stressed that many local communities would face “added health burdens arising from defense needs” and therefore needed strengthening through increased Federal grants.²³⁰

In regard to aid for medical education, President Truman highlighted the “chronic shortage” of trained health professionals.²³¹ Or, as William Green of the AFL put it in his letter of praise for the President’s Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation, the country must “prevent [this] acute shortage... from developing into a far-reaching

²²⁹ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1952, January 15, 1951, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13810>.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

national crisis.”²³² Because of this, Truman repeated his administration’s call for new legislation to address this problem. With bills addressing both issues stuck in the House, the task fell to Oscar Ewing to attempt to reinvigorate the legislative effort.

In testimony before various congressional committees Ewing stated the administration’s case that increasing public health funding and providing aid for medical education would constitute “major step towards the strengthening of the Nation’s essential health defenses.”²³³ Speaking before the Senate Appropriations Sub-Committee on Labor and Federal Security, Ewing wanted it known that the push for such legislation was not a case of simply “tagging everything one does as an emergency or defense program.” While some programs may be deferred during the present defense period,

it would be shortsighted to postpone if the postponement were to be for a generation. A child does not stop growing when an emergency is proclaimed; people do not stop being sick because there is an emergency; nor do human beings suspend the calendar and defer old age by virtue of the international situation.²³⁴

As Ewing noted, the Federal Security Agency had played a vital role on the home front during World War II,²³⁵ and now, as before, was committed to helping the

²³² Green letter to Truman, January 14, 1952.

²³³ Ewing statement House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, April 10, 1951, folder “Statement - House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce (H.R. 274/913) April 10, 1951,” Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

²³⁴ Ewing statement before Senate Appropriations Sub-committee on Labor-Federal Security, April 12, 1951, folder “Statement - Senate Appropriations Sub-committee on Labor-Federal Security, April 12, 1951,” Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

²³⁵ See, 1952 memorandum outlining FSA history. New Responsibilities: “World War II brought new needs and new responsibilities to all health agencies. For the U.S. Public Health Service, these responsibilities were heavy. They were undertaken under the program of Emergency Health and Sanitation Activities in Defense Areas which was launched in 1941. Specialized health problems emerged – among them the health of war workers, of transients, high-altitude flyers, of civilians on duty in the tropics, and of refugees threatened by typhus and other diseases that feed on the wreckage of war.” Thurston Memo on Public Health, undated, folder “Federal Security Agency – General,” Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

mobilization effort by surveying the state of our health defenses. He reported on the need for full extension of aid to local public health units, telling the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce that “Our most immediate objective is to increase our industrial production. This calls for an able-bodied and productive working force. During an emergency such as this, there is inevitably a substantial movement of workers.” Along with this industrial migration came communicable diseases and the like and “The best weapon we have for fighting these emergency health hazards is the local health departments, who apply their skills to [such issues, as well as,] the assurance of sanitary environments, and to other emergency health problems.”²³⁶ Our commitment to medical education was just as vital. As Ewing noted, the nation’s “rapid mobilization [was] intensifying the needs” of defense and the military had just “announced that by the end of the current fiscal year [1952] they will need a total of 17,500 physicians...”²³⁷

Unfortunately, legislative action in these two areas of the nation’s health remained stalled in the House throughout the rest of the war. As I describe in the following section, this congressional inaction, while nothing new, was reframed as a refusal to consider funds for any programs deemed as “non-defense expenditures.” This general position is summed up best by Senator Robert Taft, who had previously supported aid for medical education. Taft believed the country “reached a point in the mobilization program where we cannot afford to undertake any new program unless its emergency character can be shown beyond any question of doubt.” The Senator’s stance reflected perfectly the

²³⁶ Ewing statement before Executive Session of House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, February 2, 1951, folder “Statement - House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, February 2, 1951, (H.R. 5940),” Ewing Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

²³⁷ Ibid.

political limitations of linking domestic programs with national strength in light of the emerging concern over the country's economic strength.²³⁸

The Political Economy of Strength: The Defense Effort, Partisan Politics, and the Limits of Linkage in Wartime Budgeting, 1951-1952

In his "Special Message to the Congress Reporting on the Situation in Korea," President Truman asserted the need to increase the country's "enormous economic strength." However, engaging this force toward our military strength would "require substantial redirection of economic resources." Additionally, the nation "must recognize that it will be necessary for a number of years to support continuing defense expenditures."²³⁹

Less than five years removed from demobilization, the nation once again found itself in the throes of an immense rearmament phase and Truman faced the wartime dilemma of weighing defense spending vs. social spending, guns vs. butter (see table 4.1). What became politically problematic was Truman's claim, in declaring a national emergency, that nonmilitary expenditures be reduced to a minimum so that the Federal budget could "give effective support to the defense effort."²⁴⁰ What emerged was a political space upon which the debate over what constituted "nonmilitary expenditures" and what was "vital to the defense effort" became contested. In this manner the President

²³⁸ Transcript of "Taft's Views on Aid to Medical Education, October 3, 1951, folder "Education," Correspondence and General File, Charles S. Murphy Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Truman Papers.

²³⁹ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to the Congress Reporting on the Situation in Korea, July 19, 1950, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13560>.

²⁴⁰ Truman, Radio and Television Report to the American People on the National Emergency, December 15, 1950.

engaged a conservative bloc in the 82nd “National Defense” Congress intent on cutting any and all domestic expenditures they could during the Korean defense effort.

Moreover, the political economy of the rearmament period re-militarized the vision of national strength, leading to an emphasis on our military and economic strength at the expense of our internal strength.

Table 4.1. Truman Proposed Budget

	FY1952	FY1953
Defense and International Affairs	\$48.9 billion	\$60.6 billion
Economic (finance, commerce, labor, transportation, communication, natural resources, and agriculture)	\$7.4 billion	\$6.7 billion
Social Welfare	\$7.9 billion	\$8.7 billion
Total (including additional interest payments, governmental operating costs, etc)	\$71.5 billion	\$85.4 billion

Congressional Conservatives and the Debate over “Non-Defense Expenditures”

Surveying the shifting political landscape in early 1951, Cabell Phillips of *the New York Times* noted the likelihood that “Each item on the [administration’s] domestic program... will be subjected to the coldy realistic test, ‘Is this necessary?’”²⁴¹ In the same vein, Frank R. Kent, writing for *The Los Angeles Times*, opined that President Truman would have to offer “concrete assurances” to the people, most importantly, that “no unnecessary dollars will be spent for domestic purposes.” For Kent, there could be nothing worse for the nation’s preparedness than to fail to make the necessary sacrifices

²⁴¹ Cabell Phillips, “Truman Program Faces Hard Going in Congress,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1951.

for our defenses. In the upcoming budget and appropriations negotiations, “No patriotic man in either party wants to be...reluctant about the cost of carrying the Korean conflict to a complete victory against the Soviet-encouraged North Korean aggression.”²⁴²

Unfortunately, as former Truman aide Ken Hechler recalled, while there was an “early semblance of national unity” during this defense period, it “later crumbled in the face of Republican attacks on ‘Mr. Truman’s War.’”²⁴³ In part, the attacks were drawn along contestable lines of what was, and was not, essential spending in the defense effort.

For instance, during the initial start of the war and the accompanying escalation in military expenditures, Senator Harry Byrd (D-WV), the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Reduction of Non-essential Federal Expenditures, demanded that, “With a war on our hands,...[domestic expenditures] must be cut unless we are going to spend ourselves into the kind of bankruptcy the Russians are counting on.”²⁴⁴ Chairman Byrd’s sentiment reflected the broader stance of the conservative coalition in Congress.

Only weeks into the war, the Truman administration was already feeling the pressure from this bloc. In an August 1950 cabinet discussion regarding the relationship between regulatory agencies, the mobilization effort, and Congressional politics, one Truman adviser remarked that “It is amazing how these agencies have been gutted by Congress by reductions in appropriations.” To this notion, Stuart Symington, Chairman of the National Security Resources Board, seconded, arguing that “Congress should be reminded that some of these agencies are participating in war effort and that Congressional cuts are impeding the war effort.” Truman was blunt about his perspective

²⁴² Frank R. Kent, “This is Not the Time for Domestic Spending,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1950.

²⁴³ Hechler, *Working with Truman*.

²⁴⁴ Kent, “This is Not the Time for Domestic Spending.”

on the issue; as he saw it, “This action by congress is a deliberate and planned program of the Right Wing Democrats and the Republicans.”²⁴⁵

In January of 1951, Truman presented his administration’s \$71.5 billion budget for fiscal year 1952, a budget drawn up “for our national security in a period of grave danger.” As a whole, “the requirements of national security [were] reflected in every major function,” including those domestic

expenditures for programs which will maintain and develop our national strength over the long run, keeping in mind that the present emergency may be of long duration and we must therefore be prepared for crises in the more distant as well as in the immediate future.²⁴⁶

Those domestic programs that help “maintain and develop our national strength” included housing and community development, education and general research, social security, welfare and health. Altogether, the administration’s proposal on this set of domestic expenditures totaled \$7.9 billion, comprising about 11% of the total budget. As Truman noted, this was a reduction of close to one billion dollars from the current year’s projections. Unfortunately, such a reduction was not enough for the conservative bloc in Congress.

Summarizing the general reaction of conservatives to the President’s proposed budget, *The New York Times* reported a shared belief that “the Fair Deal, instead of being relegated to the background for the emergency, had been let in at the back door to join in the expenditure of defense billions.” According to Senator Byrd, President Truman “failed to keep his pledge” on the reduction of non-defense spending by presenting a

²⁴⁵ Minutes from Cabinet Meeting, August 18, 1950, folder “August 1950,” Notes on Cabinet Meetings II, 1946-1953, Matthew J. Connelly Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

²⁴⁶ Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1952, January 15, 1951.

budget that “represents the very height of fiscal irresponsibility.” House Republican leaders made it clear that they intended “to scrutinize every defense and nondefense item that is sought. We are agreed that military security is the first consideration. We are in disagreement with the Administration that ‘spending-as-usual’ on nondefense items must continue.” From their perspective, Truman’s assertion that domestic programs were requisite for national strength was just a plea for expenditures “brazenly sought amid trumpet calls for stronger national defense.”²⁴⁷

However, as I have illustrated above, this linkage was more than a rhetorical ploy. Throughout the Truman administration, the issue of what constituted “non-defense expenditures” was contemplated and debated. For example, Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Frederick Lawton discussed this exact issue while going over the administration’s proposed \$85 billion 1953 fiscal year budget. Of that amount less than \$10 billion was to go toward “the so-called, ‘non-defense’ and ‘non-essential’ activities of the Government we are urged so often to cut.” Lawton went on to ask:

But what is non-defense and what is non-essential? Defense housing? The Coast Guard? The FBI? Forest protection and management? The Post Office? Undoubtedly, many regular governmental activities could be abandoned or severely curtailed in all out war effort. But what about the long pull? Can we afford to abandon or cripple some of these programs during a prolonged defense effort?... As you can see the problem of WHAT and WHERE to cut is not an easy one?²⁴⁸

Striking a similar note, a working group of the Council of Economic Advisers expressed an opinion that “[certain] programs, it should be recognized, are equally essential for defense and for nondefense purposes.” The group was tasked with surveying

²⁴⁷ C.P. Trussell, “Nondefense Phase of Budget Assailed,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1951.

²⁴⁸ Lawton address before the annual meeting of the American Retail Federation, May 14, 1952, folder unknown, Official File 79, White House Central Files, Truman Papers.

proposed development and welfare programs during the ongoing defense effort.

According to their memo on the subject, the government

should not feel that simply because budget categories separate defense from other expenditures, we are therefore barred from other approaches which recognize that most so-called nondefense development programs are vital to long-range security. A particular...public health item..., may, for example, be more necessary for defense than a particular military expenditure.”²⁴⁹

For Truman and his administration, the importance of their domestic programs to the ongoing defense effort was undeniable. However, the debate about defense and non-defense expenditures was particularly pronounced given what Korea came to symbolize about the long-term need for military strength. While the immediate concern was for a successful mobilization effort for the Korean War, a more daunting task was to effectively build the economic strength needed for the Cold War.

Economic Strength, “the Guns and Butter Approach,” and LBJ’s Preparedness

Subcommittee

This shifting politics in the vision of ‘national strength’ is captured perfectly by the debate over the guns-and-butter approach of Truman’s rearmament program. The most important assumption made by those in the administration was that the extent of the defense mobilization period was uncertain and, therefore, the government should manage

²⁴⁹ Memorandum from J.L. Fisher to CEA members, September 29, 1952, folder “Development and Welfare Programs, 1952,” Council of Economic Advisers: Subject File, Leon Keyserling Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers. See also, Draft language from the 1952 State of the Union: “Freedom’s effort, over the long pull, is a total effort. It includes military strength, but not merely military. Therefore, non-defense essentials cannot be regarded as postponable or expendable. Neither is it a matter of ‘balance’ between the defense and non-defense efforts. We must give priority to basic essentials in all areas, both defense and non-defense; and we must sternly eliminate the non-essentials in all areas. The hope of a just and lasting peace rests on doing both the defense and non-defense jobs well.” Found in, folder “1952: State of the Union Message [2 of 3],” Presidential Addresses, Letters, and Messages File, Historical File, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers.

to provide enough defense materials (guns) without disrupting the civilian economy (butter). For instance, CEA Chairman Leon Keyserling, writing in *Opportunity* magazine, explained how the current mobilization period differed from that of World War II and what implications this had for the political economy of wartime. For starters, the prior war had been “an all-out war” and in such “a short race, you have to reach your maximum strength very quickly.” Previously, this strength had been attained by “drawing down” our industrial strength and civilian strength, which had a potential “weakening [effect] in the long run.” But our current mobilization effort was different. The nation was “not in a short spurt... [but] a long, hard pull.” Keyserling went on to note what this “long-pull” meant for the nation’s economic policy and our various forms of strength. Given the “indefinite nature” of defense mobilization, we should be “very much more careful of the balance among our industrial strength and our military strength and our civilian strength” than we were at the onset of World War II.²⁵⁰

However, the administration’s guns-and-butter approach came to be criticized by the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Preparedness and its Chairman, Lyndon B. Johnson (D-TX), who would be on the other end of such criticism as President himself fifteen years later. Tasked with investigating the rearmament program, the committee pointed to a “lack of sense of urgency” among the chief planners of the defense program, implicitly referring to President Truman and Charles Wilson, Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization. As stated in a committee report filed in March of 1952, to date, the mobilization efforts had supplied “a small number of guns and a great amount of butter,

²⁵⁰ Keyserling article written for *Opportunity* magazine, February 1951, folder “Why We Can have Butter and Guns, a Special Statement...February 1951,” Leon Keyserling Papers, Personal Papers and Organizational Records, Truman Papers.

with a considerable number of lollipops thrown in.”²⁵¹ This general line of criticism particularly irked President Truman, who had led his own investigation of the defense process during World War II, for which he was widely respected and was a significant factor for why he was originally chosen to be Roosevelt’s vice presidential nominee.²⁵²

In response to Johnson and the committee, Keyserling and the Council of Economic Advisers sided with ODM and the administration’s approach. They reiterated the administration’s emphasis on the long-pull, arguing that “In a race which promises to be more a marathon than a sprint, good diets, health shelter education recreation and the good morale that depends upon all of these, are essential for endurance in our national security effort...Striking a balance between our needs in these respects and for primary defense is a vital problem.”²⁵³

To efficiently strike that balance, Truman proposed increasing taxes to help pay for the defense effort without having to unnecessarily cut into domestic programs that were vital to the defense effort, thus protecting butter. However, congressional conservatives successfully fought to limit the scope of the taxes, thereby using a reduction in non-defense expenditures in order to pay for defense.²⁵⁴

As the Republican presidential nominee in 1952, General Eisenhower attacked Truman’s guns-and-butter approach in an effort to paint the Democrats and their nominee, Adlai Stevenson, with the same wide tax-increasing brush. Speaking to

²⁵¹ “Lollipops Called Defense Stickers,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1952.

²⁵² Truman, *Memoirs, Volume Two*, 46.

²⁵³ W. H. Lawrence, “Truman Asks Rise of 5 Billion for ’52 in New Revenues,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1952.

²⁵⁴ See Hogan, *Cross of Iron*.

supporters in Los Angeles, Candidate Eisenhower argued that “our security and progress in well-being have only one source; a strong economy that is growing daily in strength.” To further unleash that strength, the government needed to “take the hobbles off American enterprise...[and] the blinders off American vision.”²⁵⁵

Truman fired back at the General while making a campaign pitch for Stevenson by portraying Eisenhower and the Republicans as making “political capital” with a “deceitful implication” about the usefulness of the administration’s tax program. As he saw it, Eisenhower was trying “to win votes by asserting that the standard of living in this country” had stagnated due to the defense taxes, but as Truman noted, Eisenhower himself “was a strong supporter of the defense program.” Such claims, flew in the face of the reality that, “By common consent, including the consent of both parties in the Congress,” the government had “given up some of our ‘butter’ for ‘guns’” during the present emergency.²⁵⁶

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how President Truman and his administration rearticulated their vision that the earlier domestic objectives of the Fair Deal should not be abandoned because the nation once again faced war. Rather, building from the belief that our nation drew great strength from the health and welfare of our people, they asserted a wartime commitment to build strength at home. This manifested itself through a renewed push for developing the president’s health program and striking a balance

²⁵⁵ “Text of Eisenhower’s Address in Los Angeles on Nation’s Economic Future, *New York Times*, October 10, 1952.

²⁵⁶ “Text of Truman Attack on Eisenhower for ‘Betrayal’ of His Principles,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1952.

between the need for national defense and the need for domestic spending. Throughout the war, however, this vision of national strength was continually challenged by a conservative bloc in Congress and was significantly constrained by the necessity of building up our military and economic strength.

While very little of the Fair Deal agenda was achieved during the war, Truman's linkage of social welfare and health as vital to the strength of the nation was incredibly important for future political developments. Many scholars have noted the significance of Truman's administration in the maintenance of the New Deal. What is often overlooked though is how the Korean War, rather than sinking the liberal agenda, provided a space in which Truman could reimagine the cause of liberalism. Invoking the experience of World War II, and the shared mission of Roosevelt, Truman and others understood the importance of social progress to both the defense mobilization effort and the reconversion back to peacetime.

What is more, some of the most critical domestic policies advocated by the Truman administration came to fruition less than twenty years later as part of the Great Society and the War on Poverty, from Medicare, Medicaid, and federal aid for education. After all, in his budget message for fiscal year 1953, Truman hoped that one day we would "cast off the heavy burden of armaments and devote our full energies to fighting the only war in which all mankind can be victorious--the war against poverty, disease, and human misery."²⁵⁷

Truman's metaphor of a "war against poverty" speaks to another political development from this era: the emerging institutionalization of presidential invocations of

²⁵⁷ Harry S. Truman, Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1953, January 21, 1952, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14172>.

nationalism, war, and strength. As I have shown in chapter 1, previous presidents have articulated such visions, yet Truman was the first to govern in the shadow of the warfare state. The institutions of national security and the worrisome international context provided a very real conviction to such discourse. This development did not go unnoticed at the time. In reading over a draft of Truman's 1952 State of the Union, Harold Enarson, one of the President's advisers, criticized the speech's constant use of "strength." While the term only appeared 13 times, Enarson complained that invoking it "30 or 40" times was problematic, and potentially counterproductive. He found

such repetition tiresome but probably that's because I have grave doubts about the policy of 'strength.' The American people are, willy nilly, seeing 'strength' as A-bombs, Napalm, tanks and guns. I don't see how a Christian nation can continue to place reliance in its strength – in physical power—and retain its integrity or even its supremacy. If we live by power, we shall die by power.²⁵⁸

While Enarson was specifically criticizing the nation's vision of military strength, his point suggests that the line was becoming indistinguishable to the American public. As Michael Hogan has argued, the increasing concern with this conception of strength allowed congressional conservatives to carry out an "assault on New Deal social programs and on the notion that such programs were actually essential, not only to the country's democratic mission but also to its long-term military strength."²⁵⁹ As I show in the following chapter, President Eisenhower would utilize a vision of national strength that emphasized military and economic strength to pursue his agenda of reigning in the budget and promoting national security.

²⁵⁸ Enarson memorandum to Neustadt, December 20, 1951, folder "1952: State of the Union Message [2 of 3]," Presidential Addresses, Letters, and Messages File, Historical File, President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers.

²⁵⁹ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 365.

CHAPTER V
SECURITY, ECONOMY, AND STRENGTH:
EISENHOWER, THE COLD WAR, AND NEW DEAL LIBERALISM

In the 1956 presidential election, President Dwight Eisenhower faced off once more against Adlai Stevenson, just as he had in 1952. But unlike the prior campaign the specter of the Korean War was a non-factor. Instead, what took its place was the question of which candidate could best maintain peace while also exhibiting the leadership qualities needed to confront the potential challenges that lay ahead in the Cold War. Studies of Eisenhower's rhetoric during the 1956 campaign show that the President continually refuted claims -- made by Stevenson and the opposition -- about his commitment to peace. Turning the tables, Eisenhower emphasized Governor Stevenson's own lack of the "wisdom and strength" required of a Commander-in-Chief. In this manner, Eisenhower repeatedly implied "that anyone who would undermine national strength was not wise enough to lead the country."²⁶⁰

Four years later, on the morning after his Farewell Address -- most notable for its warning of the "military-industrial complex" -- Eisenhower spoke at length about the importance of strength as it related to his vision of the nation. Asked at his final news conference to "sum up for us your idea of what kind of United States you would like your grandchildren to live in," Eisenhower expected that they, and all Americans, would be living

²⁶⁰ Martin J. Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 57.

in a peaceful world...enjoying all of the privileges and carrying forward all the responsibilities envisioned for the good citizen of the United States, and this means among other things the effort always to raise the standards of our people in their spiritual,...intellectual,...[and] economic strength. That's what I would like to see them have.²⁶¹

As Eisenhower recalled in his memoirs, the answer he gave to journalists that morning “summed up all [he'd] been trying to do for eight years” as President of the United States.²⁶²

Upon taking office, Eisenhower inherited the Korean War, the Truman defense budget, and a Cold War consensus that stressed the criticalness of ensuring a stout national security and defense program.²⁶³ Furthermore, his own programmatic agenda reflected an ambitious commitment to international affairs. As a five-star general and former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, Eisenhower was most comfortable in his leadership position atop the warfare state. As summed up by one of his former advisors, it was in the area of foreign policy that the President “knew exactly what he believed and where he was going. In the domestic arena, however, he was admittedly inexperienced.”²⁶⁴ However, according to political scientist Fred Greenstein, Eisenhower

²⁶¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two: Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 616-7. It should be noted that this is the specific excerpt of this answer that Eisenhower choose to provide in his memoirs.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus*; Alan Wolfe, *The Rise and Fall of the 'Soviet Threat: Domestic Sources of the Cold War Consensus* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1979); for a critical perspective of how “consensual” the Cold War consensus was, see Jonathan Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial: The Cold War and American Politics in the Truman Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

²⁶⁴ Arthur Larson, *Eisenhower: The President Nobody Knew* (New York: Scribner, 1968), p. 27.

strategically shunned the public and domestic face of the office, utilizing instead a “hidden-hand” style of leadership that made him appear apolitical.²⁶⁵

In contrast to his objectives in defense and foreign policy, Eisenhower had a much less ambitious domestic agenda. Elected as a moderate Republican, he advocated a philosophy of governing that sought moderation and balance which has come to be known as “the middle way.”²⁶⁶ The President found such a position useful at times, having come to office amid the height of the New Deal Democratic political order.²⁶⁷ In all but the first two years of his presidency, he faced a Democratically-led Congress that, while not entirely cohesive in its stance on New Deal liberalism, to be sure, had prominent leaders who were more or less intent on entrenching the social welfare policies of the 1930s and 1940s.²⁶⁸

For President Eisenhower, there was an obvious interconnection between the politics of national security and domestic policy; yet, this linkage served to advance the former general’s primacy of foreign affairs and defense policy on the national agenda. It should not be at all surprising that Eisenhower’s top priority would be in the realm of national security and defense. While much has been written on the foreign and defense

²⁶⁵ See, Fred I. Greenstein, *Hidden Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). Greenstein provides a detailed perspective on the strategies employed by Eisenhower to appear apolitical.

²⁶⁶ Steven Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism: Pursuing the Middle Way*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 5. Eisenhower used this phrase himself in an October 1952 campaign address, remarking that “government should proceed along the middle way” when choosing between the extremes of political liberalism and conservatism.

²⁶⁷ On the notion of a ‘New Deal Order’ see, Gerstle Fraser, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*; Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order*.

²⁶⁸ Katznelson et al., “Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950.”

policies of the first Cold War Republican,²⁶⁹ there is little that appreciates how Eisenhower's disposition towards, and concern for, such issues shaped his domestic political and policy leadership. Moreover, scholars fail to explain how he strove to navigate their often intersecting political commitments.

As I argue in this chapter, Eisenhower articulated a vision of national strength that fused his ideological and programmatic objectives in both foreign and domestic policy, just as FDR and Truman had done during their presidencies. Eisenhower's dedication to providing and ensuring strength was more than a simple rhetorical ploy meant to stir up patriotic passions about American greatness. As evidence, the chapter begins by detailing the various ideological commitments that made up this vision: none more significant than the administration's perspective on the stakes of the Cold War and the need to ensure the nation's security. I then explain how this vision was realized in the budgetary program and policy agenda pursued in the first few years of Eisenhower's presidency. The chapter then turns to a significant moment for the Eisenhower administration and its agenda: the launch of the Sputnik satellites. In the wake of the Sputnik crisis of 1957-1958, a legislative breakthrough in the field of federal aid for education demonstrates the reach of national strength as a shared political vision. Unfortunately for the President, the Sputnik crisis also exposed the limits of this vision, particularly Eisenhower's soundness in linking the concepts of economy and security. What emerged was a sharp turn towards partisanship and the success of rival Democrats in exploiting the politics of national

²⁶⁹ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

strength, as highlighted in the budget battles of the late 1950s and the 1960 presidential election.

Eisenhower's Vision of National Strength: The Cold War Linkage of Economy, Security, and the National Interest

In this section of the chapter, I briefly describe the themes which encompassed President Eisenhower's vision of national strength. First, was a prevailing view that the politics of the Cold War framed domestic policy. Second, this vision of the Cold War required economic strength and security founded on a sound budget and economy. Third, the achievement of strength through security and economy should be a bi-partisan endeavor and certain governmental actions were necessary to promote the national interest.

Time and again, Eisenhower was known to contemplate how best to square his Cold War defense and foreign policy commitments with a programmatic domestic agenda that emphasized the need for balance and moderation of federal responsibility and spending. For instance, early in his first administration the president sat down for an interview with journalist Merriman Smith and was questioned about the current trajectory of his administration's program. As reported by his secretary, Eisenhower emphasized "that the great problem of the day [will be] foreign. Here it is a thing which I have lived, I have spent many of my years abroad. I believe we have got to do certain things...Everything you do at home is colored by the foreign picture." The President continued,

[n]ow at home your great object is to be stronger in every way in order to carry out that work abroad in confidence, so that people will follow along.

So all of your work, on farm program, on labor and management, and all of the rest of the things you do, is to keep as good a (balance?) as you can, into the normal economic life of this nation.²⁷⁰

Eisenhower would relay a similar outlook almost a year later while discussing his “philosophy” and “platform” with a group of advertising executives who sought to “brand” Eisenhower’s politics. Eisenhower reiterated that foreign policy framed his program. As found in a memorandum of his meeting with the ad men, the President noted that one reason he “talked so much about the foreign situation” was because “every foreign problem colors every domestic situation.”²⁷¹

Quite obviously the “foreign problem” of the day which “colored” Eisenhower’s approach to domestic policy and politics was the Cold War and the United States’ perceived strength relative to the Soviet Union. Central to this concern over strength was the prevailing view, established during the Truman administration, and held by elites and the public alike, that the Cold War was a long, drawn out battle between two military and economic powers. In this way, the Eisenhower administration’s perspective on national security and defense policy was to be calculated in years, not months. This meant establishing a defense and security program that, as Eisenhower put it “can be carried steadily, consistently, and progressively.” Reiterating this view during a cabinet meeting,

²⁷⁰ Eisenhower interview with Merriman Smith, November, 23, 1954, folder “November 1954 (1),” DDE Diary series, Eisenhower Papers. Eisenhower’s secretary recorded the President’s conversation with Smith and included the question mark in her document.

²⁷¹ Memorandum of Appointment, September 2, 1955, folder “September 1955 (6),” Ann Whitman Diary Series, Eisenhower Papers.

Eisenhower once declared that “We’re not in a moment of danger, we’re in an Age of Danger.”²⁷²

In the ‘Afterthoughts’ section of his memoirs, Eisenhower went on at great length about his “observations” on the all-encompassing nature of the Cold War. As he and his administration understood, Communists were prone to think

in terms of decades and generations, rather than merely in months or years. They hope that over the long term, selfishness, fear, or complacency will cause us to fail to sustain essential internal balance...thus bringing about a *deterioration of the strength and resolute leadership* which now faces them. If this should occur, the consequences for us would be disastrous. We, therefore, must likewise think in terms of decades and generations. Long-sustained military power, economic health, moral and intellectual vitality, dependable Free World cooperation, eternal vigilance, and informed and resolute leadership – these are the ingredients of ultimate success (emphasis added).²⁷³

The “selfishness, fear [and] complacency” that Eisenhower worried would bring about “a deterioration of [our] strength and resolute leadership” concerned, first and foremost, the economic health of the federal budget.²⁷⁴

The health of the federal budget preoccupied the political commitments of President Eisenhower. As he once noted to Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey, Eisenhower felt that “nothing [was] more necessary in our domestic affairs than to examine, each day, our economy, as well as our government receipts and expenditures,

²⁷² Minutes from meeting with legislative leaders, May 19, 1953, folder “L-3 (4) [May 19, 1953],” Legislative Meetings Series, Papers of the White House Office, Office of Staff Secretary, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁷³ Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 629.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

and to act prudently.”²⁷⁵ At the heart of his cautious approach to the budget was the fear that profligate spending was a danger to the economy and could severely weaken the strength of our economic warfare being waged against the Soviet Union. Early in his administration, Eisenhower summed up this relationship between national security and the economy when he warned fellow Republicans that there was a “dual threat facing the United States: the external threat of Communism and the internal threat of a weakened economy.”²⁷⁶ Or, as he was known to pronounce loudly and often, “There is no defense for any country that busts its own economy.”²⁷⁷

Reflecting on this “delicately balanced and complex problem” in his memoirs, Eisenhower wrote that “the security of a nation depends upon a *balanced strength* comprised of morale, economic productivity, and military power (emphasis added).” While there is always a need for “an adequate defense” we must be vigilant that “every arms dollar we spend above adequacy has a long-term weakening effect upon the nation and its security.”²⁷⁸

While a commitment to economic strength may have been central to the Eisenhower administration’s construction of national security, the tenets of Cold War ideology often led to a more encompassing perspective on security and strength that went beyond traditional views of defense and military policy.

²⁷⁵ Found in, Iwan W. Morgan, *Eisenhower versus “the Spenders:” The Eisenhower Administration, the Democrats, and the Budget, 1953-60* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 1.

²⁷⁶ Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting, April 30, 1953, folder “1953 (4) [April-May],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁷⁷ Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting, March 26, 1957, folder “1957 (2) [March-April],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁷⁸ Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 622.

In addition to the indefinite length of the Cold War, the administration's thinking was framed by the perception that the eventual victor would hold more than just a military advantage. While military expenditures obviously reflected a traditional defense posture, Eisenhower felt "there [was] great importance attached to the economic and spiritual values in the totality of our posture rather than merely to defense."²⁷⁹

Often, achieving a total posture meant advancing certain initiatives that were in the national interest. This is illuminated well in a letter Eisenhower sent to GOP House Leader Charles Halleck after a meeting of legislative leaders. In his view, the President felt "[we] must by all means quickly show our readiness to cooperate in every decent way, and particularly in those areas where bipartisan action is vital to the national interest."²⁸⁰ To fully appreciate the extent to which Eisenhower was committed to ensuring strength and promoting the national interest, we can turn to the budgetary and programmatic objectives he sought. The following sections of the chapter explore critical moments and dynamics which are evidence of the president's attempts to realize his vision of national strength.

"The Patriot Today Is the Fellow Who Can Do the Job with Less Money:"

Budgeting for the Cold War and the Quest for Economic Strength, 1953-1957

As FDR and Truman before him, Eisenhower was faced with the challenge of weighing defense spending with spending on domestic initiatives. But unlike FDR and Truman, Eisenhower's fiscal conservatism heavily influenced his perspective on the

²⁷⁹ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, December 3, 1957, folder "1957 (5) [December]," Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁸⁰ Eisenhower letter to Halleck, December 21, 1953, folder "1953 (6) [August-December]," Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

linkage between national security and budgetary policy which led him to consistently prioritize guns over butter. So, where Truman saw social spending and defense spending as interrelated, Eisenhower saw too much of either as weakening our national strength, and, ultimately, a threat to our national security. It was in the nation's interest, and the patriotic thing to do, to focus on defense spending at the expense of social spending.

Economic Warfare, the Truman Budget, and Congressional Conservatives

In the fall of 1954, Roland Hughes, Director of the Bureau of the Budget, sent President Eisenhower a memo with some general thoughts on the administration's economic outlook vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In his view, Hughes felt that

[i]f we accept the hypothesis that general war is not imminent our basic problem is one of avoiding precipitous actions which, while strengthening us temporarily, so over extend us as seriously to weaken our long-term strength. Our objectives, as you have stated so clearly in your speeches, must be to maintain a continuing *posture of strength* both militarily and economically, with concomitant moral and spiritual stamina. We may, of course, expect irritations and provocations in many forms which will try us to the utmost while we are maintaining such strength (emphasis added).

The immediate "irritations and provocations" that tried the Eisenhower administration's maintenance of national economic strength in its early years were first and foremost centered around the inheritance of the Korean War and Truman's enlarged defense budget. In his final year, President Truman had submitted a \$79 billion federal budget for the fiscal year 1954, which included a projected \$10 billion deficit. Finding himself in this budgetary straitjacket upon taking office, Eisenhower made clear his desire to roll-back the defense budget in his first State of the Union address to Congress. Given his views on the necessity of economic warfare towards victory in the Cold War the President warned that "[to] amass military power without regard to our economic

capacity would be to defend ourselves against one kind of disaster by inviting another.”²⁸¹

The political challenge that Eisenhower faced regarding the inheritance of Truman’s 1954 fiscal year budget is perfectly evidenced by a heated exchange between the President, Treasury Secretary Humphrey, and ‘Mr. Conservative,’ Senator Robert H. Taft (R-OH). During his presentation about the state of the U.S. economy, Humphrey opined that not much could be done in the following months given the administration’s “inheritance” of its predecessor’s budget. As he put it to the present group of Republican leaders, the current budget amounted to “a tremendous machine all geared up” and it would be quite the challenge to halt its momentum.²⁸² Going on, however, the Secretary noted to those in the room responsible for negotiating the budget that they “cannot act fast on cuts which involve national security... [but they can] move fast on cutting out domestic programs with no fear of endangering national security.”²⁸³

For his part, Senator Taft was none too happy with the lack of movement on decreasing military spending and the political hit that the Republicans could take for such resistance. As reported by Eisenhower’s legislative aid, Taft argued that the “[n]et result as far as public is concerned is that we haven’t moved an inch from the Truman program

²⁸¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, January 7, 1954, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10096>.

²⁸² Arthur Minnich Handwritten Notes of Legislative Leadership Meeting, April 30, 1953, folder “L-3 (2) [April 30, 1953],” Legislative Meetings Series, Papers of the White House Office, Office of Staff Secretary, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁸³ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, April 30, 1953, folder “1953 (4) [April-May],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

– Democrats will exploit it.”²⁸⁴ Congressmen Taber, Bridges, and Budget Director Dodge agreed that it would be “good politics” to “operate against the Truman budget” by drastically reducing spending. Quick to respond, President Eisenhower noted “that national security must be the fundamental concern, and that no one should let the budget-cutting principle override national security.”²⁸⁵ In the end, the administration reduced Truman’s fiscal year 1954 budget by \$5 billion and reduced national security appropriations by \$5.2 billion (see Chart 5.1).

While Eisenhower faced scrutiny from some conservative politicians who hoped to see the defense budget slashed, he simultaneously confronted calls from other lawmakers and some in the military who demanded an increase to the amount of defense spending. Eisenhower could be terribly blunt in his view of the hypocrisy of such critics and their demands for a larger defense budget, as evidenced during a discussion with Republican legislative leaders early in his first term. When it came time to shift the meeting’s agenda to the topic of defense spending, “[t]he President commented, regarding Congressional proponents of heavy defense spending that he would tolerate these men if they were willing and courageous enough to cut domestic programs in order to pay for the larger defense they wanted.”²⁸⁶ Striking a similar note a few years later, Eisenhower argued that he wanted “to see the Defense Department cut down to [a] spartan basis. But he admitted that people he had known all his life were asking for more

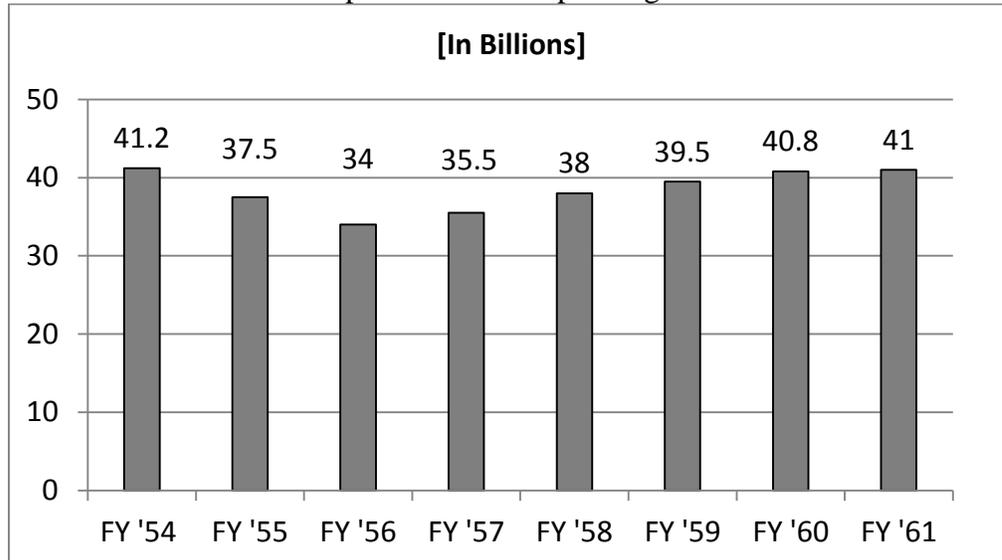
²⁸⁴ Ibid. See also Congressman Dewey Short’s comments regarding security and domestic political ramifications of cuts: “We’ve taken over a hussy who has spent all her husband’s money and run up a lot of bills at Garfinkel’s and Woody’s.”

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, May 25, 1953, folder “1953 (4) [April-May],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

and more.” Concluding his remarks, the President wanted it known that as far as he was concerned “the patriot today is the fellow who can do the job with less money.”²⁸⁷

Chart 5.1. Eisenhower Proposed Defense Spending



The Defense Program, Economic Strength, and Increased Spending

In a December 1956 legislative meeting Eisenhower had to justify why the defense budget was higher than in had been in 1953. The President noted that, while some policy-makers felt that the defense budget could get down to \$34 billion, the agreed upon amount of \$38 billion (\$2.5 billion of which was for foreign aid via the Mutual Security program) reflected the increasing cost to technology. He had actually recommended \$39.5 billion but Congress had cut \$1.5 billion out. Regardless, Eisenhower “felt that this higher level should certainly suffice, and that it must be remembered that national security depends upon basic economic strength as well as guns,

²⁸⁷ Minutes from meeting held in the Oval Office, March 29, 1956, folder “Mar. ’56 DIARY – acw (1),” Ann Whitman Diary Series, Eisenhower Papers.

tanks, and planes, despite contrary assertions by demagogues,” concluding that “the nation could choke itself to death with military force as well as protect itself.”²⁸⁸

At a bipartisan meeting of congressional leaders in January of 1957, the President remarked that “we as a government must not be competing for any more of the dollars than is absolutely necessary.” While there were those on both sides of the aisle and within his own administration who demanded more spending, he felt that the legislative leaders could all agree “in recognizing the importance to America of economic, spiritual, and moral strength as well as military strength, and that [the proposed budget] is as good a point of compromise as is possible in this free Nation.”²⁸⁹

While Eisenhower could calm fellow Republicans and administration officials behind closed doors, it was another thing to convey this message to the American people. At a press conference on the fiscal 1958 budget, Director George Humphrey called for cuts in the budget the day it was sent to Congress. While considered a slip of the lips, Humphrey’s remark that the country could face “a depression that will curl your hair” became fodder for Old Guard Republicans bent on slashing domestic programs. In a televised address on May 14th, the President argued that “the yardstick of national interest” was most important. “No great reductions [in the budget were] possible... unless Congress eliminates or curtails existing Federal programs, or unless all of us demand less service from the government, or unless we are willing to gamble with the safety of our

²⁸⁸ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, December 31, 1956, folder “1956 (5) [December],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁸⁹ Concluding Remarks of the President at the Bipartisan Meeting, January 1, 1957, folder “1957 (1) [January-February],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

country.” Sacrifice “of our sons, our families, our homes and our cities to our own shortsightedness.”²⁹⁰

Painted as a New Dealer, Eisenhower rebuked the criticism by arguing that the necessity of budgeting for social programs had “now become accepted in our civilization as normal, that is the provision of social security, unemployment insurance, health research by the Government, assistance where States and individuals are unable to do things for themselves.”²⁹¹

The “Middle-Way” Philosophy, New Deal Liberalism, and the National Interest

As mentioned above, Eisenhower came to office with a relatively modest domestic agenda. Interestingly, as a fiscal conservative and general opponent of the “socialistic” measures of the 1930s and 1940s, Eisenhower governed over the entrenchment, rather than the retrenchment, of the New Deal. In part, this reflected the domestic political environment of divided government in which Eisenhower had to govern. But, in another sense, it reflected his “Middle-Way” philosophy and his vision of national strength. In an often cited quote, Eisenhower once wrote his brother, Milton, that “[s]hould any political party attempt to abolish social security and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history.”²⁹² Additionally, Eisenhower was known to shrug off criticism as a New Dealer, noting on

²⁹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Cost of Their Government, May 14, 1957, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11036>.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Found in, Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism*, 26.

one occasion that “the Administration had already done a lot of things for which it was being called ‘New Dealish,’ despite the fact those things were justified...”²⁹³

In general, however, President Eisenhower adhered to Lincoln’s definition of the role of government: “The legitimate object of Government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot so well do for themselves – in their separate and individual capacities.”²⁹⁴

Given the ideological perspective of the Cold War as an all-encompassing war, Eisenhower was prone to seeing governmental action in some policy areas as necessary for the national interest. More specifically, it was in areas linked to defense and security policy that Eisenhower saw the federal government playing a role. In this manner, his preoccupation with national security and a commitment to national strength was often an area of refuge under such domestic political conditions. Historian H.W. Brands has referred to the particular aspect of Eisenhower’s philosophy in terms of “liberalism-as-national security.”²⁹⁵

Take for instance, the Interstate and Defense Highway System created by an act of Congress in 1956. Recounting this behemoth undertaking by the federal government, Eisenhower reflected on the fact that “motorists by the millions would read a primary purpose in the signs that sprout up alongside the pavement:

²⁹³ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, June 21, 1955, folder “1955 (3) [May-June],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁹⁴ According to his speechwriter, Arthur Larson, this “quotation immediately rang a bell with President Eisenhower, [and this] ‘Lincoln formula’ began to turn up with conspicuous regularity in presidential utterances.” Larson, *Eisenhower*, 134.

²⁹⁵ H.W. Brands, *The Strange Death of American Liberalism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 76. See also, Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

‘In the event of an enemy attack...’²⁹⁶ As reported in the unofficial minutes of a meeting with GOP legislative leaders in June 1955, Eisenhower was quite “discouraged... that such vital bills as those for highways and schools were turned into such political footballs.” The President had “hoped for a little more patriotism and public spirit on necessities.”²⁹⁷ Better yet, echoing President Truman’s linkage of public health and national defense, Eisenhower advocated for new federal health programs in 1955 arguing that “we as a people are guilty not only of neglect of human suffering but also of wasting our national strength.”²⁹⁸

As Mary Dudziak contends, civil rights were another area where the national interest was at stake in the eyes of the President. While Eisenhower’s overall record on civil rights is questionable, he did act, in the name of national security, to give support to civil rights in areas directly under federal control and when it was appropriate for the executive to enforce rulings of the federal courts.²⁹⁹ Consider his radio address on the situation in Little Rock, Arkansas.

At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that Communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, *it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety, of our nation and the world.* Our enemies are gloating over this incident and using it everywhere to misrepresent our whole nation. We are portrayed as a violator of those

²⁹⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume One: Mandate for Change* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 549.

²⁹⁷ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, June 21, 1955, folder “1955 (3) [May-June],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

²⁹⁸ Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 213.

²⁹⁹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*

standards of conduct which the peoples of the world united to proclaim in the Charter of the United Nations (emphasis added).³⁰⁰

Alongside viewing such issues as related to the nation's strength and security, President Eisenhower felt that bipartisan cooperation was necessary for their support. He often stressed "the need for bipartisanship in matters of foreign affairs and national security" during meetings with legislative leaders from both sides of the aisle.³⁰¹ Therefore, in the light of defense and security, he could try to mobilize political support for domestic issues that otherwise would be viewed as partisan objectives. After meeting with a group of legislative leaders across both parties, the President expressed that while they may treat each other as "legitimate political targets at times" there were certain subjects that they must come together for is we are "to do something for the country."³⁰² Outside of federal aid to education, which I describe in a later section, his vision of national strength and the linkage of domestic policy, security, and the national interest would begin to quickly crumble in the face of a Soviet technological feat.

³⁰⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Little Rock, September 24, 1957, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10909>.

³⁰¹ Notes from Bipartisan Legislative Leaders Meeting, December 13, 1955, folder "1955 (5) [December, 1955]," Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁰² Minutes from meeting with bi-partisan legislative leaders, January 5, 1954, folder "L-9 (1) [January 5, 1954]," Legislative Meetings Series, Papers of the White House Office, Office of Staff Secretary, Eisenhower Papers.

Sputnik, Security, and Presidential Agenda-Setting

In October of 1957, the USSR successfully launched the first satellite into space, thus beginning the age of Sputnik. While concerns of national security and defense had always held priority on President Eisenhower's agenda, the launch of Sputnik became a significant focusing event for the administration (and also the nation, thanks in large part to the media). One of the President's fellow Republicans called the satellite "the most serious challenge to us since the end of World War II."³⁰³ Eisenhower's presidential opponent in both 1952 and 1956, Adlai Stevenson, saw Sputnik as a development worth taking seriously, arguing that there was "nothing wrong in acknowledging Russia's accomplishment. But I see a great deal wrong with kidding ourselves. Not just our pride but our security is at stake."³⁰⁴ As evidenced by Stevenson's argument, the launch of Sputnik, and the subsequent launch of Sputnik II, thrust an even larger spotlight on the Eisenhower administration's defense program and its perceived success in promoting national security. What is more, the conceptualization and discursive boundaries of the President's vision of national strength were more readily contestable by administration opponents. Sensing this potential challenge, Eisenhower, his staff, and administration officials sought to reiterate their commitment to national security.

Speaking at the National Fund for Medical Education in New York, only days after Sputnik's launch, Eisenhower recognized the need for his administration to address the potential debate over the level and manner of our nation's security. In addition, he foresaw the need to protect against any weakening of our national strength which was

³⁰³ Yanek Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower's Sputnik Moment: The Race for Space and World Prestige* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 24-5.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

threatened by Sputnik and an ongoing recession. As he put it to the audience that night, in an effort to help Americans banish their “morbid pessimism” about the economic and defense situation the President announced a planned set of speeches that would “set out in proper perspective the truth and facts of these matters”; the ‘matters’ to which Eisenhower referred were “the methods of raising the level of our achievement in science, the character and power of our defense and economy, and our responsibilities abroad.”³⁰⁵ Such matters were “very much in [his] mind and heart.” Continuing, he stressed his administration’s commitment to

[t]he continuing endeavor and progress of our people in fields of scientific achievement and methods of attaining even greater achievement; our responsibilities and our opportunities abroad; the strength and great capacity of our domestic economy; the character and power of our defense program, and the right of our people to confidence in these strengths.”³⁰⁶

Immediately thereafter Eisenhower’s staff began preparations for what would come to be called the ‘Science and Security’ speech. Throughout the administration, members gave their two cents on how the President should respond. The launch of Sputnik primarily symbolized the Soviets’ lead in the Space Race and their broader developments in science and technology. Expanding upon this image of the conflict, the Director of the National Science Foundation, Alan Waterman, urged the president to “lay emphasis [to the American people] upon the fact that this is more than a military conflict.” As such, Waterman felt that “whether a gun is fired or not” the USSR was “out to capture the world by preeminence in science and technology... by the economic strength which this policy will produce.” It was imperative that Americans appreciate that

³⁰⁵ Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 215-6.

³⁰⁶ Homer Bigart, “Eisenhower Plans Talks to Nation on Urgent Issues,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1957.

“[t]his is a cold war in which we may be frozen out unless we show the determination, of which an aroused free people are capable.”³⁰⁷

The initial outlines and drafts of the speech, written by Arthur Larson, Eisenhower’s chief speechwriter at the time, challenged the administration to answer Americans’ question regarding “Where do we stand on security.” To address this question, Larson laid out a list of primary points and issues. To begin, the purpose of the address was to “to get American posture calm, confident, and worthy of our real strength and position [vis-à-vis the Soviet Union].” Because of this, the administration needed to make it known that our nation’s “concern is ten years from now” and that the lesson to be learned from the Sputnik crisis is the necessity of having a “complete new look at the relation between science, government, education, spending policies, and security.”

Larson also stressed in his outline that national security could only be achieved through “collective strength.” In achieving this new conception of the politics of security, harsh truths should be spoken and political challenges confronted. As he noted in his “Conclusion” to the speech, “Let’s set ourselves the tasks that need to be done, and show what a unified Free World can do. This will involve self-denial and hard work. Just as you can’t have both guns and butter, you can’t have both missiles and marmalade.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Waterman comments on speech, November 12, 1957, folder “President’s Speeches: Science & Security Background Material Used for Nov. 7 and Nov. 13, 1957,” Larson Working Papers, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁰⁸ Emphasis in the original. Larson initial draft of Science and Security speech, undated, folder “President’s Speeches: Science in National Security – Drafts Nov. 7, 1957,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers. See also, Larson draft from November 8, 1957, folder “President’s Speeches: Our Future Security – Oklahoma – Nov. 13, 1957 - Drafts,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers. “Purpose: To prepare the American public for the stiff costs and sacrifices needed to do the defense job that must be done if the Nation is to survive.”

While Eisenhower chose not to make the missiles-marmalade reference in his address on November 7th, he did argue that “in spite of both the present over-all strength” of our defense “we could fall behind--unless we now face up to certain pressing requirements and set out to meet them at once.” Such requirements meant “selectivity in national expenditures of all kinds. We cannot, on an unlimited scale, have both what we must have and what we would like to have.” The president concluded his speech from the White House by noting that, while he stressed “the influence of science on defense,” we should not overlook that there is “more to science than its function in strengthening our defense.” More importantly, there is “much more to our defense than the part played by science.” This included “the spiritual powers of a nation--its underlying religious faith, its self-reliance, its capacity for intelligent sacrifice--these are the most important stones in any defense structure.”³⁰⁹

The months following this speech, Eisenhower continually gave expression to this view of national strength. For instance, during an address to the National Food Conference in February 1958, he stitched together his administration’s economic, foreign and agricultural policies into one theme of ‘security.’ The President confided to the audience that “we have nothing to fear...[and] no reason for failing to go about our daily lives, doing our work as citizens, and by that much – by the individual efforts of each of us – to make this country still more strong, still more secure.” Eisenhower then pivoted in the speech and was more explicit about the value of national strength and security and its role in the long pull of the Cold War. As he saw it,

³⁰⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Radio and Television Address to the American People on Science in National Security, November 7, 1957, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10946>.

“[o]ur security does not lie, of course, in armaments alone. Indeed, armaments are nothing but a shield behind which we may work for those things that bring about permanent security – which means permanent peace... But with all the cost we must be sure there is not one unnecessary dollar. We must be concerned with what we are doing to our economy when such useless expenditures come about.”³¹⁰

The post-Sputnik crisis illuminated more than ever Eisenhower’s vision of national strength and his linkage of economy and national security. More than anything, however, Sputnik altered the political landscape upon which the Eisenhower administration’s commitment to national strength was founded. While a major bi-partisan milestone would soon be reached in the area of federal aid to education, the increasing drive to make the concept of national strength a partisan issue was set in motion under the shadow of Sputnik.

“Foundation for National Strength”: Sputnik and the Politics of Federal Aid to Education

Traditionally, many Americans felt the federal government had no legitimate role to play in funding education, with opposition usually forming around issues of racial integration and threats to local control.³¹¹ Given this sentiment, which President Eisenhower himself ascribed to, federal aid to education was by no means a priority on his programmatic agenda.³¹² But he had a great appreciation for the value of education in

³¹⁰ Remarks by the President at the National Food Conference, February 24, 1958, folder “President’s Speeches: National Food Conference—Feb. 24, 1958,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³¹¹ Gareth Davies, “Education Policy from the New Deal to the Great Society,” in *Conservatism in American Political Development*, eds., Brian J. Glenn and Steven M. Teles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³¹² Barbara Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson years* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1968); Wayne J. Urban, *More than*

general. For example, while serving as a member of the Educational Policies Commission in 1949, Eisenhower, then President of Columbia University, contended in a promotional pamphlet that “our system of universal education provides a means of developing individual capacities. It strengthens the stamina and value of the individual citizen. It possesses a far greater potential for future development of America’s strength than has yet been realized.”³¹³ While liberals had been pushing for federal aid to education for some time, the launch of Sputnik created a window of opportunity in which the President could forego his previous opposition to the policy by invoking his vision of national strength, thus providing his administration cover in supporting a traditionally partisan issue.

Sputnik, Security, and Education

President Eisenhower and his staff seized upon the ‘Sputnik moment’ to go before the country and announce a new concerted effort to promote scientific and technological advancement. As mentioned above, his nationally televised address, “Science in National Security,” the president recognized the “real military significance” of satellite technology and the steps taken by the Soviet Union to achieve the required training necessary. Given this state of affairs, Eisenhower claimed that “one of our greatest, and most glaring,

Science and Sputnik: the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

³¹³ Pamphlet from the Educational Policies Commission, “The Contemporary Challenge to American Education,” 1958, folder “Education (2),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

deficiencies is the failure of us in this country to give high enough priority to scientific education and to the place of science in our national life.”³¹⁴

In preparing the speech, Eisenhower worked closely with Arthur Larson to ensure that education would be a point of emphasis. At one point, the President drafted a memo that quoted Lincoln’s view that the subject of education was “the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in.”³¹⁵ Inserting his own particular thoughts on the subject, Eisenhower wrote that

in today’s complex and challenging world, we need stronger and bigger schools in which to train our children to accept their magnificent opportunities and grave responsibilities – opportunities for life even richer than ours, *responsibilities for the defense of their homeland and strengthening of the free world* (emphasis added).³¹⁶

For his part, Larson paid close attention to the particular section of the speech relating to education. Under the heading “Mistakes we have made,” he noted that, as a whole, the United States and its citizens continually “neglected education and its status in our culture.” It was not, unfortunately, “indicative of a large body of public opinion in this country” to hear “the disgraceful phrase, ‘Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach.’”³¹⁷ Larson went on to list several points on education that he felt should be stressed. Of the “Things we need to do,” the most important was to “rethink” how our culture viewed “scientific endeavors and the pursuit of learning generally.” In this

³¹⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Radio and Television Address to the American People on Science in National Security, November 7, 1957.

³¹⁵ Eisenhower letter written on White House stationary, folder “Education (1),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Larson early draft of Science and Security Speech, folder “President’s Speeches: Science & Security Background Material Used for Nov. 7 and Nov. 13, 1957,” Larson Working Papers, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

manner, we must recognize the “teacher, the scholar, and the creative scientist ... as national resources of the highest order.”³¹⁸

Upon reading an early draft of the President’s ‘Science and Security’ speech, NSF Director Waterman impressed upon Larson of the potential usefulness “in discussing our education and basic research needs and the importance of creating in this country an atmosphere in which intellectual and scientific activity can flourish.” Waterman believed that Sputnik had opened the nation’s eyes from a collective “blindness to some essential problems” and that we should alter “our national attitude toward education.”³¹⁹

Education as a Weapon in the Cold War

At the time, the relationship between war, defense, and education had a long history in the United States, ranging from the Morrill Land Grant Act during the Civil War to the recently passed GI Bill during World War II. In some cases, the relationship was direct. Congressman Lister Hill (D-AL), one of the strongest proponents of aid to education, pointed out in 1946 that America’s strength and experience in the Second World War was limited to the extent that two million draftees were rejected “because of educational deficiencies...which for the most part could have been prevented through an adequately supported public school program.”³²⁰

As the notion of war changed, so too did its presumed relationship with education. During a 1955-56 Congressional debate over scientific-manpower one witness who had

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Waterman comments on speech, November 12, 1957.

³²⁰ Found in, Davies, “Education Policy from the New Deal to the Great Society.”

recently returned from the Soviet Union testified that he was “convinced that Russia’s classrooms and libraries, her laboratories and teaching methods, may threaten us more than her hydrogen bombs or guided missiles to deliver them.”³²¹ In an address to the National Education Association just months before Sputnik, Eisenhower himself made the link, suggesting that, “our schools are strongpoints in our National Defense...more important than Nike batteries, more necessary than our radar warning nets, and more powerful even than the energy of the atom.”³²²

But the reality of the Sputnik launch brought new context to such linkages. Congressman Clifford Case (R-NJ) from New Jersey, another ardent supporter of education noted in a speech that “[t]he shadow of Sputniks 1 and 2 hangs over the United States as Congress prepares to begin a new session.” Although the satellites posed a great challenge, if “[p]roperly examined and acted on, it should energize at least... a forthright attack on the growing inadequacies of our educational system.” Case was concerned however that the nation would “neglect to take the steps necessary to strengthen our educational system from top to bottom. A building is no stronger than its foundation.” The problem in education was “indeed a national problem and as much a part of our defense program as rockets and missiles. Unless we harness the educated intelligence of our young people, we will be wasting our greatest resource.” Case wondered aloud how the ramifications of inaction for our future. “It will not do to have the historians of a decade or two from now – if there are any – why even, from the narrow standpoint of its

³²¹ Found in, Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War*, 26.

³²² *Ibid*, 27.

defense, didn't the United States put the same effort into education as it put into military hardware."³²³

In a similar vein, yet offered in a more private setting, Senator William Fulbright intimated during a bi-partisan legislative meeting on defense policy that the "country needed to take a more serious view of developments [such as Sputnik], to stop thinking that there was any safety in having more automobiles than do the Russians...[there is] a weakness in our school system and lack of incentive for young Americans to do their best."³²⁴ The president himself "thought all high school students should concentrate on mathematics, one foreign language and English...[suggesting to HEW Secretary Folsom] 'you have got to get the American people to understand that a football player is no more important than a person who does well in mathematics, or a good well balanced student.'"³²⁵ More directly, one of Eisenhower's speechwriters bookmarked in his speech materials a Newsfront article titled "Students are New Soviet Weapon."³²⁶

The National Defense Education Act and Promoting Federal Aid

Federal aid to education was now firmly on the national agenda. The administration's forward march on education began that winter. Speaking at the annual meeting of the "Engineering and Scientific Education Conference," Secretary Folsom

³²³ Text of statement released by Senator Case, December 15, 1957, folder "State of the Union Message (Working Papers)," Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³²⁴ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, December 3, 1957, folder "1957 (5) [December]," Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³²⁵ Whitman diary entry, December 30, 1957, folder "ACW Diary Dec 1957," Ann Whitman Diary Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³²⁶ Note referencing NEWSFRONT article, March 1958, folder "Education (2)," Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

noted that the organization had chosen as its conference topic “a subject...which may involve no less than the survival of freedom.”³²⁷ As Folsom argued, the conference’s theme, “Foundation for National Strength,” was “really part of a shorter but broader theme: ‘Education – Foundation for National Strength.’”³²⁸ Folsom went on to ask a rhetorical question about why we should emphasize the link between education, strength, and the Cold War.

[The] rigorous Soviet educational system gives great emphasis to those subjects which contribute directly to military power and to Soviet aims in the cold war – especially science, mathematics, engineering, and foreign languages... We would be foolish, therefore, to ignore any threat to our freedom posed by the ominous fact that Russians seem to be putting more emphasis on their education, for their purposes, than Americans are putting on our education for our purposes (underlining in original).³²⁹

For his part, Eisenhower articulated his vision of national strength to fellow Republicans during a speech to a GOP dinner in January of 1958. Discussing the importance of education to security, Eisenhower wanted it understood that

we must be just as quick to respond to the less obvious demands of security and peace. Thus we know the need of improving educational and research facilities; strengthening mutual.... Now possibly armed strength alone might in a crisis defeat an attack, or even win a campaign. But it takes also – aside from military might – brains and understanding as well,

³²⁷ Folsom address before Conference of Engineering and Scientific Education, November 2, 1957, folder “Education (2),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers. Folsom uses similar theme at the annual meeting of the AFL-CIO. “Today, perhaps more than ever before, education is truly one of the keys to national survival...” Folsom address before Second Constitutional Convention of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, December 5, 1957, folder “Education (2),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

to remain secure permanently and to win the long struggle for a just peace.³³⁰

While promoting the need for federal aid, the Eisenhower administration and members of Congress began formulating their respective education programs. On November 15th Secretary Folsom outlined a seven point plan to administration officials that emphasized a shift away from aid for construction toward more direct funding. Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks “thought that any scholarships should be limited to fields designated as essential to our national security,” which the President agreed to on subsequent occasions. Folsom countered that this “would arouse protests from supporters of general education.” But as the minutes from a December 4th legislative meeting on the topic point out, Eisenhower “favored restricting scholarships to the fields in which there was a national defense requirement...[and] stressed repeatedly the national security aspect of this requirement.”³³¹

What emerged was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The Eisenhower administration combined its legislation with the House bill drafted by Congressmen Hill and Carl Elliot (D-AL). The \$1.6 billion dollar bill set up a four year period of scholarships for mathematics and science. In his address on the legislation, Eisenhower told the American public that it was vital “[b]ecause of the national security interest in the quality and scope of our education system in the years immediately ahead.” Making the defense linkage explicit, he pointed out that “[o]ur immediate national

³³⁰ Text of remarks by the President delivered at the United Republican Dinner in Chicago, January 20, 1958, folder “President’s Speeches: Jan. 20, 1958 Republican Dinner Speech,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³³¹ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, December 4, 1957, folder “1957 (5) [December],” Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

security aims – to continue to strengthen our armed forces and improve the weapons at their command – can be furthered only by the efforts of individuals whose training is already far advanced.”³³²

Political Scientist James L. Sundquist argues that the NDEA was monumental “not so much because of the specific provisions...but because of the psychological breakthroughs it embodied.”³³³ In no small way did the linkage of education and national defense help overcome traditional obstacles of race, religion, and localism. As a Congressional clerk to Lister Hill’s committee recalled, such a link not only helped “steer between the Scylla of race and the Charybdis of religion” but was done purposely so no one would think twice about voting against defense and education.³³⁴ Or, as Eisenhower admitted early on to Secretary Folsom, “anything you could hook on the defense situation would get by.”³³⁵

The Decoupling of Economy and Security: Post-Sputnik Budgetary Battles and the Partisan Politics of National Strength, 1958-1960

While the launch of Sputnik may have rallied both sides of the aisle together around federal aid to education, the larger question about government spending became a distinct partisan issue. In this new, heightened political context, Eisenhower’s opponents would criticize the modesty of his administration’s agenda and, more specifically, the

³³² Text of Eisenhower’s Special Message to Congress on Education, January 27, 1958, folder “Education (2),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³³³ Sundquist, *Politics and Policy*, 179.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 175-6.

³³⁵ Whitman diary entry, December 30, 1957.

limited expenditures devoted toward domestic spending. As illuminated above, Eisenhower's concern over national security deeply shaped his view on budgetary policy. Viewing defense policy as a bipartisan effort and as an economic addendum, he had to fight off conservative calls for a tax cut and liberal calls for increased spending. During and after the Sputnik crisis, however, Eisenhower's position in national security was criticized and liberals used partisan attacks on his record in defense spending. For Eisenhower, it was not a matter of spending too little domestically, but rather in comparison to defense and security spending. As he had done throughout his tenure, the President, now more than ever, stressed the need for bi-partisanship on matters of defense and security and warned of the dangers of "reckless and inexcusable demagoguery" over calls for increased spending.³³⁶

Sputnik, the Gaither Report, and Recession

In a January 1958 legislative meeting regarding the U.S. defenses vs. the Soviet Union, the legislative leaders present "urged the President to make a strong personal-type statement that would inspire the trust and confidence of the American people. The President replied that actually he had been trying to play down the situation, but perhaps he had been guilty of understatement in regard to the strength of the Nation's defenses despite Sputnik."³³⁷ Eisenhower, for his part, was "not impressed by the Soviet Fear" that others saw in the achievements of Sputnik.³³⁸

³³⁶ Minutes from undated Cabinet Meeting, 1958, Cabinet Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³³⁷ Supplementary Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, January 7, 1958, folder "1958 (1) [January-February]," Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³³⁸ Robert A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), vii.

Not long after the launch, the President reassured his Cabinet that, “despite all the talk of satellites and guided missiles, the United States with its planes still retained the power of destroying Russia. [There was] a need, however, for convincing the world – presently scared by Russia – that the United States is doing what it should.” If push came to shove, this may mean “that the country would just have to do a little less ‘buttering’ and more ‘gunning’ . . . ”³³⁹

As conveyed during this cabinet meeting, Sputnik reignited the post-Korean War debate, from the President’s first term, regarding the balance between defense and non-essential, domestic spending. In the president’s view, “very important” issues such as civil defense would move ahead but “the Cabinet as a corporate body had to decide firmly which programs were necessary and merited expenditures and which did not.” As Eisenhower stressed repeatedly, “it [was] no longer a possibility of butter and guns, rather . . . one of butter or guns (emphasis in original document).”³⁴⁰ Even Marion Folsom, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, understood that the necessity for “security planning” required “sacrifice by the American people.” Across the administration there was consensus about the need to “concentrate on essentials rather than non-essentials.”³⁴¹

³³⁹ Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, October 18th, 1957, folder “Cabinet Meeting of October 18, 1957,” Cabinet Series, Eisenhower Papers. This was a prevalent metaphor. In reaction to Sputnik, Arthur Larson, the president’s speechwriter, perfectly summed up the administration’s ongoing challenge of maintaining national strength in a memo to the President. In preparation for Eisenhower’s upcoming *Science and Security* speech, Larson noted that the “biggest . . . problem is to get Americans to understand issues and what we are doing. [We] can’t have guns and butter (underlining in original).” Larson initial draft of Science and Security speech, undated, folder “President’s Speeches: Science in National Security – Drafts Nov. 7, 1957,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, January 3rd, 1958, folder “Cabinet Meeting of January 3, 1958,” Cabinet Series, Eisenhower Papers.

If the crisis over Sputnik weren't enough, the Eisenhower administration also faced a recession and a politically damaging report about the state of America's defenses. The release of the Gaither Report warned of the inadequacies of the United States' defense program and called for a \$10 billion increase for defense spending and an additional \$5 billion for fallout shelters. Democrats jumped on the report, most notably Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson (D-TX).

As he had in the past, Eisenhower responded by linking economy and security. Recalling this debate, the President writes in his memoirs that proponents of increased defense spending were asking for "astronomical amounts." But "[a]gain and again I reiterated my philosophy on the defense budget: Excessive spending helps cause deficits, which cause inflation, which in turn cuts the amount of equipment and manpower the defense dollar can buy. The process is circular and self-defeating."³⁴²

For the fiscal year of 1959, the Eisenhower administration would propose a balanced budget. In preparation for any proposed backlash to the budget, Eisenhower and his cabinet discussed how best to broach the subject in the 1958 State of the Union. Arthur Larson's initial draft of the speech suggested stating that in order "to provide for this extra effort for security, we must apply stern tests of priority to other expenditures." Reiterating the theme of Eisenhower's approach to the budget and national security,

³⁴² Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 217. Also, A year prior (to the Gaither Report), Eisenhower told his friend Swede Hazlett that too much devotion to defense spending was dangerous and that there were "social consequences" of the garrison state. "American strength is a combination of its economic, moral and military force... Let us not forget... that the Armed Services are to defend a 'way of life,' not merely land, property or lives." Found in, Chester J. Pach and Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 174.

“[t]hese cutbacks and savings are essential for the elementary reason that a sound and sustained defense must rest on a sound economy.”³⁴³

Eisenhower himself spoke to a meeting of the Republican National Committee in January of 1958 and reiterated his budgetary position. What is more, he touched upon the emerging partisan rancor over the level and amount of his administration’s defense program and budget. As he told his fellow Republicans:

The sudden urge on the part of some, congregated in good measure in the political opposition, to pour billions more into our defense activities, as if the Soviet military menace had only now been discovered, is worse than unwarranted. That course is a return to government by cringe, crisis and crash. It weakens and distorts rather than helps essential security programs. It sows seeds of economic trouble that can badger our people for years ahead. Nor need I remind this audience that many now leading this onslaught for more, more, and yet more for defense were, only a few months ago, bent on slicing the defense budget I had submitted to Congress. So this I most earnestly urge you, my fellow Republicans, that all of us as Americans, be realistic about our defense needs. The future is not baneful. Let’s get sensibly on with the jobs to be done.³⁴⁴

Addressing a GOP dinner in January 1958, Eisenhower reiterated that the nation’s “first objective – security and a just peace – is not a partisan or political matter at all. Americans must never and will never let the issue of security and peace become a pawn in anyone’s political chess game.” In crafting the speech with Larson, a memo was sent stating that any antagonistic language had been removed.³⁴⁵ The draft language Larson

³⁴³ Larson draft of 1958 State of the Union, January 5, 1958, folder “President’s Speeches: State of the Union Message, 1958 (comments on Drafts by Cabinet and others) (2),” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁴⁴ Text of speech before RNC, January 31, 1958, folder “President’s Speeches: Jan. 31, 1958, Remarks to Republican National Committee,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁴⁵ Larson memorandum to Eisenhower, January 15, 1958, folder “President’s Speeches: Jan. 20, 1958 Republican Dinner Speech,” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

used: “The first thing we stand for is unselfish and patriotic bi-partisanship on all matters touching our defense and international affairs! I have always been proud of the bi-partisan support that Republicans have given to Democratic administrations in time of international tension.....”³⁴⁶ Similarly, in preparation for a speech to the Republican National Committee in May 1958, Larson sent a memo to the President and Sherman Adams that touched upon an earlier conversation regarding the need to strike a non-partisan tone. For his part, Larson let his superiors know that he had “tried to meet the problem [that was] raised with regard to the May 6 talk. As the draft now stands, I do not believe it could be criticized on the ground of injecting partisanship into the defense issue.”³⁴⁷

The President’s warning was a sign of times to come. Senator, and future presidential hopeful, John F. Kennedy gave a speech on the Senate floor in the fall of 1958 that summed up the Democratic opposition to the Eisenhower administration’s spending levels: “we have extended our commitments around the world, without regard to the sufficiency of our military posture to fulfill those commitments.” He argued that the blame lay with Eisenhower’s “willingness to place fiscal security ahead of national security.”³⁴⁸

The Battle of the Budget and the Liberals’ Co-opting of ‘National Strength’

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Larson memorandum to Eisenhower, May 3, 1958, folder “President’s Speech: Republican Dinner—May 6, 1958, Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁴⁸ Found in, Morgan, *Eisenhower versus “the Spenders,”* 35.

It was the Democrats, particularly those with presidential ambitions in 1960, who increased the partisan attacks on national security spending. Senator Johnson, for instance, was “deeply concerned and somewhat disappointed to observe that in the field of military preparations they [the administration] are programming as if we were living in a static world rather than an exploding, expanding and developing world.”³⁴⁹ Senator John F. Kennedy (D-MA) described the Eisenhower era as “an era of illusion,” citing the failure “to build positions of long-term strength...”³⁵⁰ The positions of these two future presidents represented the broader thought that too little money was being spent by the administration. As Eisenhower recounted in his memoirs, this “upward spiraling [political] influence” toward increasing expenditures was based on “the conviction held by so many politicians that more rather than less federal participation in education, health preservation, and housing was mandatory. Increased federal spending, they argued, was ‘good for the country.’”³⁵¹ Yet, given his view of the relationship between national security and domestic affairs, Eisenhower continually pushed back on such critiques.

Clearly the opposition’s argument needed to be rebutted so Eisenhower made a concerted effort to combat. According to a memo on the administration’s preparations for the 1959 State of the Union from Eisenhower’s secretary, Ann Whitman, “[the President] has decided that he wants first in the Message a discussion of the whole problem of security and defense. He wants to talk about the cost of all our security programs... He

³⁴⁹ Found in, Peter J. Roman, *Eisenhower and the Missile Gap* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 129.

³⁵⁰ Richard A. Aliano, *American Defense Policy from Eisenhower to Kennedy: The Politics of Changing Military Requirements, 1957-1961* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), 230.

³⁵¹ Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 218.

wants to say ‘This is what we are doing for security; these costs must be borne; they are absolutely essential to our defense and security programs.’”³⁵² He also wanted a “heighten emphasis” on budget and national security requirements. To make this point explicitly, we should tell the American public that “we are whittling every possible expenditure that is not a necessary one in other fields.”³⁵³ During this meeting, Senator Leverett Saltonstall (R-MA) urged the President to treat the problem of national security first in order of budgetary priority, to which Eisenhower “responded vigorously that there could be no national security without a healthy economy except at the price of a garrison state.”³⁵⁴

Later in the month, the administration presented a balanced budget of \$77 billion, with \$40.9 billion for national security and a spending increase of \$2 billion. In promoting the budget to fellow Republicans, Eisenhower warned that they should be aware of any bills coming from the Democratic Congress and “stressed that every possible sort of foolish proposal would be advanced in the name of national security and

³⁵² Memorandum from Whitman, December 17, 1958, folder “State of the Union (Background Material),” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Notes from Legislative Leadership Meeting, December 18, 1958, folder “Staff Notes – Dec. 1958 (1),” DDE Diary Series, Eisenhower Papers. In addition, see notes from a Cabinet meeting discussion regarding the 1959 State of the Union message. Eisenhower suggests referring to the wage-price spiral issue as “The Causes of Continually Increasing Prices and Their Effect Upon the American Position in the World.” He went on to state: “All this defense hardware on which we are spending so much money is just negative stuff adding nothing to the earning capability of the country, so to speak. All this defense equipment is like ‘silent policeman standing around our house’; we need them, but think of the constructive domestic programs which could be undertaken with that same money... We must put real emphasis on this in SOTU.” Selected Notes from the Cabinet Discussion of December 12, 1958, December 12, 1958, folder “State of the Union (Background Material),” Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

of the poor fellow.” The President “continued to think that thrift was not a bad word.”³⁵⁵

The Bureau of the Budget expressed a similar view in a memo on the 1959 State of the Union. In it, the bureau reiterated that

[w]e must all recognize that our national security in the long run may depend more upon our ability to maintain a free, stable, and growing economy than it does upon the size of our military forces at any given time. If we lose our strength at home we could lose our freedom just as surely as if we lost it in a military struggle.”³⁵⁶

Additionally, the administration tried to deflect oppositional arguments about the level of spending. As the Bureau of the Budget also noted, “[e]ven before anyone knew the details of the budget, it was being attacked for endangering our national security or ignoring our domestic welfare.”³⁵⁷

For liberals, national strength could only be met by increasing spending on public programs and policies that more completely fortified the nation. Their post-sputnik refrain was that an increase to the federal budget would only further bolster national strength. As Morgan puts it, “Higher defense spending was vital but more money was also needed for public services, welfare programs and the public plant, all of which were

³⁵⁵ Notes on Legislative Meeting, January 1, 1959, folder “1959 (1) [January]. Legislative Meetings Series, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁵⁶ Suggested language to use when discussing the federal budget, “1960 Budget—Provides Adequately for Important Programs,” January 1959, folder “Bureau of the Budget (3),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Similarly, see speech by Budget Director Maurice Stans. “Today, you are being told by some that it isn’t nearly enough. I will tell you that defense needs were taken care of in the budget before anything else. The President put the whole of his experience and knowledge into the preparation of the defense side of the budget, and he is well satisfied as Commander-in-Chief that he has what he needs for the country’s protection. The last thing he wants is to fall into the trap of raising and lowering our defense budget in response to every change in the temperature of the cold war. A strong U.S. defense, and a massive retaliatory power, coupled with the military strength of our allies in the free world, constitute an effective and sobering deterrent to potential trouble-makers on the other side of the globe.” Stans address before the North Carolina Citizens Association, “The Meaning of the ‘Battle of the Budget,’” March 25, 1959, folder “Bureau of the Budget (3),” Moos Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

essential for the expansion of American's productive capacity in the face of the new Soviet economic challenge." One prominent liberal sums up this position perfectly. Yale economist and, future Kennedy CEA member James Tobin asserted that "Sputnik will be well worth the blow it dealt our national pride if it frees national policy from the shackles of fiscal orthodoxy."³⁵⁸

The Missile Gap, the 1960 Election, and the Foreshadowing of the War on Poverty

The increasing partisan dispute over defense expenditures laid the foundation for Kennedy's claims of a missile gap during the 1960 presidential campaign.³⁵⁹ After all, it was liberals such as Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC) who led the attack on Eisenhower's defense program.³⁶⁰ During the Sputnik-Gaither crisis, the DAC sought an extra \$3-4 billion for the 1959 defense budget. As one historian points out, such liberal groups and organizations "were particularly adamant that Eisenhower's efforts to trim the defense budget had seriously weakened America's strength."³⁶¹

But more than that, the Democrats' co-opting of national strength and the defense issue further solidified defense policy as a partisan issue. The 1960 campaign is a case in point. As Eisenhower's replacement, Richard Nixon, along Nelson Rockefeller, wrote the defense plank for the 1960 Republican National Convention's platform. Moving away

³⁵⁸ Morgan, *Eisenhower versus "the Spenders,"* 40.

³⁵⁹ See, Roman, *Eisenhower and the Missile Gap.*

³⁶⁰ As early as May 1953, VP Nixon notes in meeting of legislative leaders that LBJ and Symington have "already taken the line on endangering security." Minutes from Legislative Meeting, May 12, 1953, folder "L-3 (3) [May 12, 1953]," Legislative Meetings Series, Papers of the White House Office, Office of Staff Secretary, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁶¹ Morgan, *Eisenhower versus "the Spenders,"* 36.

from Eisenhower's economy-security nexus, the new GOP nominees stressed in the platform that "the United States can afford and must provide the increased expenditures to implement fully this necessary program for strengthening our defense posture. There must be no price ceiling on America's security." For their part, Eisenhower and Jim Hagerty, his former Press Secretary, found the wording "astonishing." It was particularly disheartening as it was written by two Eisenhower administration officials "who had never voiced any doubt...of the adequacy of America's defenses."³⁶²

Campaigning in 1960, Eisenhower told an audience of his concerns that "some statements in this campaign have had world-wide circulation and have cruelly distorted the image of America." Kennedy and his supporters were presumably invoking images of the nation's low prestige and military weakness, which Eisenhower called out as "an exercise in calculated confusion." He challenged the opposition to stop "wringing [their] hands" and explain to the American public "how they would pay for the many billions of additional federal spending pledged by their platform of glittering promises." The former President believed they "could not pay for them with high hopes alone." While the country must move forward, he saw "no sense in America galloping in reverse to what has been called a New Frontier."³⁶³ While Eisenhower decried the charges of the missile gap and insufficient spending as "useful pieces[s] of demagoguery" he failed to appreciate how his own vision of national strength created the conditions for such a turn of events.³⁶⁴ As Iwan Morgan notes, "[a]fter eight years the Democrats had finally

³⁶² Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Volume Two*, 595.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, 601.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 390.

discovered a politically effective response to Eisenhower's claim that budgetary restraint was essential for the nation's interests."³⁶⁵ Armed with the notion that a larger federal budget was good for the country,

the Democrats could promise social and economic justice to low-income Americans, greater material abundance to the expanding middle class, the replenishment of public services and a build-up of military power to strengthen the nation's security and combat communism in the underdeveloped world."

President Lyndon Johnson's 'War on Poverty' was still several years out from being declared, but the discursive elements and themes had been developing for a decade, if not longer. For instance, during the Eisenhower administration's re-construction of 'security' and 'strength' after Sputnik, Don Paarlberg, Special Assistant to the President for Economic Affairs, suggested promoting a 'unifying theme' to rally the nation. The theme he chose was "Using Our Strength for the Common Good." In a memo to Arthur Larson, who at the time was working on Eisenhower's 'Science and Security' speech, Paarlberg wrote that the nation was "coming out of the recession with surging strength... We will use our strength – For military preparedness, For the successful waging of peace, For advancing the cause of freedom. *For an assault on poverty* (emphasis added)."³⁶⁶ Eisenhower himself once urged that disarmament would free up resources for "a new kind of war... upon the brute forces of poverty and need."³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Morgan, *Eisenhower versus "the Spenders,"* 48.

³⁶⁶ Paarlberg memorandum to Moos, November 14, 1958, folder "State of the Union (Background Material)," Larson Reference Materials, Arthur Larson and Malcom C. Moos Records, Eisenhower Papers.

³⁶⁷ See related comments: "We are now scratching around to get money for such things as school construction...road building [and] all sorts of things..." And: "I see no reason why the sums which now are going into these sterile, negative mechanisms that we call war munitions shouldn't go into something positive." Found in, Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 567.

Conclusion

Eisenhower famously declared in the 1952 presidential campaign that he would “go to Korea” as a way of taking ownership of an issue that had dominated the agenda over the past few years and had sagged Americans’ optimism. He kept good on his promise and the war’s stalemate set in, allowing him to turn his broader attention to the massive military budget he had inherited and the international tensions of the Cold War. As the former General much preferred to deal in foreign and defense affairs, he came to office with a moderate domestic agenda that primarily concerned reigning in the budget and finding a “middle way” between liberalism and conservatism that advocated policies and programs vital to the national interest. Believing that the Cold War “colored” all domestic politics and policy, Eisenhower articulated a vision of national strength that fused the commitments of both the warfare state and the welfare state.

In this manner, the President actively pursued or tacitly endorsed domestic legislation that he felt strengthened the nation. For example, during the first few years of his administration the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was granted cabinet level status and the Social Security Act was amended to cover self-employed individuals and agricultural and domestic workers. And in other areas such as civil rights and transportation, Eisenhower framed his actions as vital to the national interest. Nowhere was this more direct than with the National Defense Education Act. Spurred on by the nation’s reaction to Sputnik, Eisenhower’s commitment to federal funding for education took on a bi-partisan theme, allowing him to support Democratic congressional efforts.

The effect of this legislation would be to set the foundation for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed during the Johnson presidency.

The clearest attempts to realize President Eisenhower's vision of national strength came in his work on the federal budget. It was in this area where the similarities between Truman and Eisenhower are most striking in terms of their presidential visions and the linkage of security and economy. Both inherited military budgets that seriously limited their degrees of freedom in other policy areas. In addition, Eisenhower, like Truman, had to contend with military interests set on defending defense spending and congressional conservatives who wanted significant rollback in such spending. The President, believing that there were spending limits that were both too high and too low, tried to achieve a balanced strength that could be held for the long pull of the Cold War. While not as vocal about the linkage as Truman, Eisenhower himself felt that the large amount of money set for defense too often sapped needed resources in other areas vital to national strength. His speech titled "Chance for Peace," given upon the death of Joseph Stalin, is a case in point. "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."³⁶⁸ This speech reflected his belief that economy in the budget was essential to security and, thus, national strength.

³⁶⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address "The Chance for Peace" Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16, 1953, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9819>.

However, the increased partisanship that emerged after the launch of Sputnik challenged Eisenhower's assertion of the linkage between economy and security. For years, the President had continually maintained that strength was paramount, but to achieve such strength would require limiting total federal spending, both defense and domestic. Seizing upon the symbolism of Sputnik, rival Democrats were able to exploit and invert Eisenhower's argument by suggesting that the best way to attain strength was by increasing the federal budget. While their attacks on the Eisenhower administration were focused on defense spending, their broader claim was that domestic spending needed to increase as well. From the launch of Sputnik until the end of his term, Eisenhower would find his attempts at balance unsuccessful and, in his Farewell Address, speak directly to the dangers of the military industrial complex.

For their part, Democrats had successfully de-coupled the President's linkage of budget economy and national security and, in the process, were able to assert themselves as the party most capable of promoting and protecting national strength. Unfortunately, in due time, this vision would become terribly fraught with the association of Vietnam and the War on Poverty of the 1960s. Out of the wake of this crisis of vision, a Republican resurgence would emerge.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the prevailing analytical tendency in studies of the presidency to isolate the politics of foreign and domestic policy, this dissertation has argued that the intersection of warfare and welfare commitments – the politics of guns and butter – is a defining characteristic of modern presidential leadership and policy-making. In this study, I have sought to understand how presidents interpret and articulate this warfare-welfare nexus and, moreover, the ways in which the resultant politics of this dilemma have shaped the institution of the presidency. Through careful archival work and close reading of historical texts, I have shown that, in navigating these dual commitments, presidents discursively, politically, and programmatically link the politics of national defense and social welfare. In particular, I have argued that one of the main developments to emerge from the dynamic of presidents and the politics of linkage is the articulation of visions of national strength. My purpose in this concluding chapter is to revisit the central claims of this dissertation and to introduce questions and inquiries that suggest potential avenues for future research.

Linkage, Institutionalization, and a New Look at the Modern Presidency

One of the fundamental debates in the subfield of presidential studies is the theory of the rise of the modern presidency.³⁶⁹ At the heart of this perspective is a claim that there is a qualitative difference in both the leadership challenges faced and institutional

³⁶⁹ See, Neustadt, *Presidential Power*. For a contrasting viewpoint, see David K. Nichols, *The Myth of the Modern Presidency* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

actions deployed by presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt. The thesis of this dissertation – that the politics of guns and butter have been institutionalized in the leadership approaches of post-war presidents – offers another look at the concept of the modern presidency. To more fully appreciate this claim, this section reviews how the dynamic between presidents and the warfare-welfare nexus developed from Theodore Roosevelt to Dwight D. Eisenhower. More specifically, I explain how warfare and international crises have thrust presidents more deeply into the articulation and strategic use of the politics of linkage in pursuing domestic policies and programs.

An essential aspect of TR's vision for the American nation and for the role of the presidency was the linkage between domestic and foreign affairs. In both manner and action, he strove for vigor and greatness, yet was never afforded the historical opportunity that he hoped would bring about the realization of this vision. While he would bemoan the lack of a war or crisis through which he hoped to assert his own strength and that of the presidency, Roosevelt laid the early foundation for the eventual practices of linkage that would emerge in the institution by mid-century.

With the onset of World War I, and Woodrow Wilson's management of wartime mobilization, we see an early glimpse at the institutional linkages between guns and butter. As noted, Wilson's ambitious domestic reform was cut short by the challenges of mobilizing for the war, however, certain actions he took in trying to balance the two objectives would provide institutional memory for FDR's presidency years later. This is most pronounced in the structure of economic mobilization used by both presidents. Similarly, Wilson discursively linked his domestic reform efforts with demands of

defense preparedness and national purpose in his 1915 State of the Union; a theme which Roosevelt would craft into his own vision of national strength.

Roosevelt's leadership in response to the Great Depression and World War II represents a turning point for the politics of linkage, establishing a set of practices in the presidency which subsequent executives would come to utilize in their own way. The particular challenge which FDR confronted was the commitment to projecting a sound program of national preparedness, and eventually war mobilization, while simultaneously promoting his domestic reform agenda of the New Deal. In grappling with the emergence of this warfare-welfare dilemma, Roosevelt strategized a vision of national strength which linked reform and defense, articulating both as vital to the strength of the nation. While his death would thrust Harry S. Truman into one of the most daunting political situations any president has had to endure, Roosevelt's articulation of the linkage of reform-as-national-preparedness set the institutional stage from which his successor would take on these challenges.

Truman, thus, was faced with consolidating the New Deal and successfully reconverting the nation from wartime, and, in short-time, would have to navigate the emerging politics of the Cold War. Building from the practices put in place by FDR in linking warfare and welfare commitments, Truman advocated that the nation's domestic programs comprised a form of "internal strength" and were the foundation of the country's strength abroad. As I have shown in chapters 3 and 4, this vision of national strength and the politics of linkage became institutionalized in the presidency during Truman's administration. This is evidenced by the way themes and ideas of national strength were disseminated among Truman's staff members and administration officials.

Moreover, the linkage between warfare and welfare commitments can be seen in particular legislative policies, budgetary requests, and administrative programs of the time. While this linkage was prevalent in the immediate post-war years, the emergence of the Korean War on the national agenda led the President and some in his administration to re-imagine the necessity of internal strength as a way of building strength at home.

Further proof of this institutionalization, is found in chapter 5 and the analysis of the Eisenhower presidency. By the time Eisenhower came to office, the politics of linkage are fully expressed in the need to address both defense and domestic spending in the federal budget. In addition, as with Truman and his speechwriters and staffers, the discourse of the Eisenhower White House was immersed in a vision of national strength. With launch of the Soviet's launch of the Sputnik satellites, Eisenhower and his administration were forced to rethink their previous linkage of the politics of warfare and welfare. This latter development leads to interesting questions about the nature of the relationship between this particular vision, the politics of linkage, and presidential leadership.

Unpacking the Politics of Linkage: Comparison and Processes

In light of this dissertation's evidence that presidents practice the politics of linkage, there are two potential avenues of investigation through which this study can further develop. First, we may ask *how* to compare presidents according to the form and content of the linkage politics they practice. Second, we may address *what* the specific processes are through which individual presidents construct the politics of linkage. This section briefly unpacks these concepts by turning to examples from my research.

I begin with a brief comparison. First, domestic reform-minded presidents such as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman, all who were faced with periods of war mobilization, practiced what we may term “re-articulation linkage.” That is, with the onset of war and the demands of national preparedness, each of these presidents re-articulated their previous domestic objectives as vital to the defense effort. Contrary to the traditional narrative of the “end of reform,” each president, to varying degrees, attempted to keep social welfare and reform issues on the national agenda so as to be prepared for the politics of reconversion. In doing so, they laid the discursive, political, and institutional landscape upon which their successors governed.

Alternatively, presidents such as Eisenhower, and Theodore Roosevelt to a degree, who were more interested in national defense and security, may practice a form of linkage which relegates domestic policy to a subset of American military and defensive strength. In this manner, the politics of butter may be subordinated to the politics of guns by linking the two as trade-offs. In practicing this form of linkage, these presidents viewed domestic policy as an area of refuge through which to view their broader actions on the international stage.

Second, in beginning to address the processes at work with the politics of linkage, we can situate presidential action contextually. That is, we can better understand the limits and opportunities of navigating and linking the politics of guns and butter by analyzing presidents through a framework which considers the partisan and institutional environment, international contingencies, and the president’s ideological vision. Consider two examples for instance: the early linkage politics of Truman and Eisenhower and their re-imaginings after Korea and Sputnik, respectively.

In both cases, these presidents articulated a vision and practiced a political linkage which they hoped would help them navigate their governing environment. In Truman's case, he argued that the interconnection between defense preparedness and social welfare helped ensure strength at home; strength that was vitally important. In response, Republicans accepted the need for strength but challenged Truman's assertion that the country could have both guns and butter. With Eisenhower, we see a similar pattern emerge. His initial vision of an economy-security nexus allowed him to push back against both military and domestic spending in first few years of his administration. Yet, in the wake of Sputnik, Democrats vigorously asserted that his economy drive was weakening national strength and that we should increase both warfare and welfare expenditures.

This particular example speaks to the heightened effect that the Cold War had on the utility of the politics of linkage. To more fully consider this insight, I briefly discuss the presidency of Ronald Reagan and explain the emergence of another pattern of the linkage of warfare and welfare.

“Peace through Strength”: Reagan's Reassertion of National Strength and the End of the Cold War

Writing just one day after the first inauguration of Ronald Reagan, journalist Hedrick Smith depicted the sense of renewal that the new President brought to the country: “[T]he well-springs of national confidence had nearly run dry and the yearning for America to regain control of its destiny [was] palpable across the land. A decade ago, the seemingly endless agony of the Vietnam War *sapped the nation's strength* and morale and left the stinging sensation that something had gone profoundly wrong

(emphasis added).³⁷⁰ The sentiment that Smith captured, one shared by many Americans, was exactly what Reagan believed to be true. Coinciding with the fall of the Soviet Union, Reagan's reassertion of national strength illustrates perfectly the suitability and culmination of this presidential vision as it developed over the course of the Cold War.

In taking office in 1980, the new President articulated a vision of strength and greatness that sought to capitalize on the perceived weakness of liberals, and the Democratic Party, more broadly. With the collapse of the Great Society and the failed war in Vietnam, it was Democrats who soon found themselves losing grip of "strength" as a political vision. Of course, this was due in part to an internal splintering of their party, with the liberal, anti-war wing pushing through decentralized party reforms. For instance, in the 1972 Democratic platform, part of the defense plank stated that "Too much that is now spent on defense not only adds nothing to our strength but makes us less secure by stimulating other countries to respond."³⁷¹ More specifically, however, the Party's perceived "weakness" stemmed from what has been referred to as the "Vietnam Syndrome."³⁷² To critics, this apparent affliction was the result of domestic backlash against the Vietnam War and the general downtrend in public support for vigorous military action and defense spending that emerged after the end of the conflict. While

³⁷⁰ Hedrick Smith, "Reformer who would reverse the New Deal's legacy," *New York Times*, January 21, 1981.

³⁷¹ In addition, see President Jimmy Carter's first inaugural "our nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home" "maintain strength so sufficient that it need not be proven in combat – a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideas." Found in, Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 337-350.

³⁷² Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: The Politics of Defense in the Reagan Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 21.

Republicans initially hoped to exploit this alleged weakness, President Nixon's own controversies surrounding Watergate and "the Imperial presidency" foreshortened such a success, and led to a feeling of national malaise embodied in the "imperiled" presidencies of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter.³⁷³ In the end, it would fall to Ronald Reagan to reassert the GOP's position as the party most capable of promoting national strength.

Throughout his presidency, Reagan articulated what one of his former speechwriters has described as a "vision for American renewal," composed of four main themes: individual freedom, individual responsibility, common sense, and common decency. In addition, according to Reagan's chief strategist and pollster, Richard B. Wirthlin, this vision was premised on the commitment to "restore America's confidence in itself."³⁷⁴ All of these various themes can be seen in both Reagan's presidential and pre-presidential years. A former supporter of the New Deal, Reagan's conversion to conservatism was a product of his experience living in the upper tax-bracket of the Hollywood elite and his staunch anti-communism. He would come to hone his vision of America while travelling on the lecture circuit. Most famously, giving "The Speech" in support of Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, in which he spoke of the nation's "rendezvous with destiny."³⁷⁵ Throughout his hundreds of talks, columns, and broadcasts, Reagan demonstrated a clear belief in the Cold War as a defining struggle

³⁷³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

³⁷⁴ Wynton C. Hall, "The Great Composer: A Behind the Scenes Look at Ronald Reagan's Rhetorical Symphony," in *The Reagan Presidency: Assessing the Man and His Legacy*, eds. Paul Kengor and Peter Schweizer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 172.

³⁷⁵ Ronald Reagan, A Time for Choosing, October 27, 1964, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/timechoosing.html>.

against the evils of Soviet ideology. It was through this lens that he asserted the call for liberty.

For Reagan, the need for strength was two-fold. First, he fervently believed that the United States had weakened itself over time; specifically, due to the “Vietnam Syndrome” and the largesse of the federal government. It was in relation to this latter point that his vision spoke indirectly, and sometimes directly, to the politics of the welfare state. According to historian Gareth Davies, the President felt that the welfare state had “damaged the nation as a whole, undermining those virtues that made America unique.”³⁷⁶ Or, as Reagan himself put it in “The Speech,” “Those who would trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state have told us they have a utopian solution of peace without victory. They call their policy ‘accommodation.’”³⁷⁷ Even at this early stage in his political career, he asserted a linkage between the Cold War and the nation’s domestic and foreign policies.

Second, President Reagan’s commitment to projecting national strength stemmed from a political and strategic calculation regarding the state of the Soviets’ defensive prowess vis-à-vis the United States. This view is exemplified in an often-stated remark of Reagan’s: “In military strength we are already second to one; namely, the Soviet Union.”³⁷⁸ Consequently, as he saw it, this supposed gap in military power left the United States in a vulnerable situation, particularly as it related to the country’s position in

³⁷⁶ Gareth Davies, “The Welfare State,” in *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and its Legacies*, eds. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 209.

³⁷⁷ Reagan, *A Time for Choosing*, October 27, 1964.

³⁷⁸ Wirls, *Buildup*, 32.

potential arms-reduction negotiations with the Russians. To address such a weakness, the President advocated for achieving “peace through strength.” As political scientist Elizabeth Spalding notes, Reagan hoped to pressure the Soviets “through the application of the political, economic, and military strength of the United States.”³⁷⁹

In attempting to realize this vision of national strength, the President pursued a programmatic agenda in his first few months in office consisting of the largest peacetime military buildup in history, a massive tax cut, and a reduction of a whopping \$35 billion in domestic spending in one fiscal year alone. While the military component of this triad was obviously critical to the nation’s strength, Reagan felt that his economic policy of tax cuts and reduced domestic spending was the “most immediate priority” because “without a recovery, we couldn’t afford to do the things necessary to make the country strong again”³⁸⁰

While this “Reagan Revolution” may have achieved some early programmatic success, for the most part, however, it was stymied by a Democratic-controlled Congress and failed to be fully implemented. Yet, the President’s broader vision that this revolution was based on had a more lasting legacy for the politics of guns vs. butter. First, Reagan’s articulation and affirmation of national strength forged new political commitments in the Republican Party, helping to establish the link between conservatives and their support for a stout defense policy. Second, with the cost of the defense build-up and the tax cuts achieved by his administration, Reagan ushered in an era of heightened concern over the

³⁷⁹ Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, “The Origins and Meaning of Reagan’s Cold War,” in *The Reagan Presidency: Assessing the Man and His Legacy*, eds. Paul Kengor and Peter Schweizer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 51.

³⁸⁰ Andrew E. Busch, “Ronald Reagan and Economic Policy,” in *The Reagan Presidency: Assessing the Man and His Legacy*, eds. Paul Kengor and Peter Schweizer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 34.

federal deficit. This had the immediate effect of stifling efforts by liberals and supporters of domestic spending, more broadly, who hoped to bring about increased social investment by re-directing any potential savings from discontinued defense expenditures (the peace dividend) that would emerge with the end of the Cold War.³⁸¹ However, given the state of the deficit, such claims for renewed federal spending were stridently challenged by conservatives and defense hawks, a trend which has only intensified over time.

Ultimately, Reagan's assertion of national strength, and the actions taken in trying to achieve this vision in practice, can only be understood in the context of the Cold War. That is, with the fall of the Soviet Union, and more importantly, the collapse of Soviet ideology as a rival outlook, the Reagan presidency marks the height of national strength as a political vision. While post-Cold War presidents have undoubtedly articulated similar appeals to national purpose, without communism and the ideological struggle posed by the Soviets, the linkage of domestic and foreign policy visions are not as pronounced as they have been in the past.

³⁸¹ Daniel Wirls, *Irrational Security: The Politics of Defense from Reagan to Obama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

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