**The Political Perils of Cold War Foreign Relations: Stevenson’s Democrats and Foreign Policy in the 1956 Presidential Election**

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**Abstract:** This article uses the case of the 1956 presidential election between Adlai Stevenson and Dwight Eisenhower to highlight the ways that an obsession with foreign relations could, in fact, prove problematic to a campaign. Focusing primarily on Stevenson’s advisors, it argues that long-standing problems in the Democrats’ strategy on foreign relations, coupled with the emotional attachments that several key advisors had toward the issue, combined to ensure that the Democrats failed to develop an effective foreign policy platform for the 1956 election (particularly when running against a president who was believed to be so successful in that arena). Ultimately, it argues that the Stevenson campaign’s failure to forge an effective position highlights the problematic relationship between domestic policies and foreign relations.

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11,913 words (exc notes. 14,714 with notes)

**The Political Perils of Cold War Foreign Relations: Stevenson’s Democrats and Foreign Policy in the 1956 Presidential Election[[1]](#endnote-1)\***

In the autumn of 1956, just a few weeks ahead of that year’s presidential election, President Dwight D. Eisenhower met with his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, to discuss the increasingly worrisome international situation. Their major topic of discussion was the unfolding crisis in the Middle East where it seemed increasingly likely that British, French and Israeli attempts to overturn Egypt’s seizure of the Suez Canal would result in war. As the meeting drew to a close, they considered the possible impact that the crisis might have on the forthcoming election and Dulles asked the president whether he was considering making a keynote speech on foreign affairs in order to assert his mastery over this area of policy and highlight the relative inexperience of his opponent, Governor of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower responded that he thought not. “Foreign policy,” he explained, “did not lend itself to the type of campaign speech which seemed to be required during the closing period of the campaign.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

Eisenhower’s stance is a surprise notwithstanding the fact that, originally, the president had hoped to win without having to campaign at all and that Sherman Adams, his Chief of Staff, later recalled that, by the time of the election, “Eisenhower was too deeply concerned with bigger things to pay much attention to votes and campaign speeches.”[[3]](#endnote-3) After all, 1956 was a year of considerable global tumult. Nikita Khrushchev’s stinging criticism of Josef Stalin’s rule in the Soviet Union, the outbreak of the Suez Crisis and its traumatic consequences for Britain and France, the brutal Soviet crackdown in Hungary against an anti-Communist uprising, the beginning of Fidel Castro’s insurgent campaign in Cuba, and the widespread and transnational reverberations of the global race revolution that, in consecutive years, took in Brown v Board of Education, the Bandung Conference, the Montgomery bus boycott, Suez, Ghanaian independence, and the Little Rock standoff—all were illustrative of a world in the midst of a series of momentous upheavals.[[4]](#endnote-4) In the face of all these crises, Eisenhower was supremely confident that his reputation in international matters was sufficiently strong that the voters would be in no doubt as to whether he or Stevenson were best suited to steering the nation through such difficult waters.

Eisenhower’s confidence was born out by the election results. The president secured 57.4 percent of the popular vote compared to just 42 percent for Stevenson, and foreign relations had never really seemed likely to prove significant in influencing the outcome. Though several prominent Democrats—including Stevenson, former president Harry Truman, and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt—lambasted Eisenhower for refusing to back Israel and traditional American allies Britain and France, the electorate more broadly saw the situation in a similar fashion to the president’s running mate, Vice President Richard Nixon, who proclaimed that this was “not the moment to replace the greatest Commander in Chief America has ever had.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

The one-sided nature of the election has, perhaps understandably, led to a lack of historical interest in it even as scholars of American foreign relations have begun to look more closely at the relationship between foreign affairs and domestic politics.[[6]](#endnote-6) Indeed, the events of 1956 are something of an anomaly in this period. In both 1948 and 1952, for example, foreign policy was a key part of the election and impacted significantly upon the result. So, too, in 1960 and 1964, when John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson used their foreign policy platforms as an effective form of political advancement.[[7]](#endnote-7) In this period of the Cold War, America’s standing in the world was a perennial feature of an election cycle. Thus, it wasn’t true that foreign relations had not been prominent in the run-up to the 1956 election; they had just not come to have an appreciable impact on the outcome. More importantly, as British observer Dennis Brogan noted soon afterwards, Adlai Stevenson and his campaign team had failed to define an alternative vision on foreign policy that might serve to sway voters’ minds.[[8]](#endnote-8)

Brogan’s critique of the Stevenson campaign provides a starting point for thinking afresh about the role that foreign relations played in the 1956 election. More precisely, it compels us to think about why it was that Stevenson and the Democrats proved so unable to make any political headway out of foreign affairs at a time of great international tension. The candidate himself was profoundly interested in international matters and the United States’ role in the world. Furthermore, he was surrounded throughout the 1950s by a group of advisors who were highly prominent figures in Democrat foreign policy circles between 1945 and 1965: Chester Bowles, George Kennan, Paul Nitze, George Ball, Arthur Schlesinger Jr, Walt and Eugene Rostow, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Reinhold Niebuhr. All advised Stevenson in 1956 and all, primarily, focused on the issue of foreign relations. That a more effective position could not be developed in spite of so much time and effort being expended on it, then, is highly intriguing. Though initially foreign policy was seen by some (including Schlesinger) as something that the candidate “needed to get out of his system”, Stevenson’s deep interest in this area ensured it remained a highly prominent part of his campaign.[[9]](#endnote-9)

To be sure, Stevenson’s main contributions to the foreign policy debate during 1956—his call for a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons and a recommendation that the American Army by made up solely of volunteers—have been widely discussed.[[10]](#endnote-10) So, too, have the range of other reasons that underpinned his campaign’s inability to resonate with voters and chip away at Eisenhower’s daunting approval ratings.[[11]](#endnote-11) What has been far less well explored, however, are the efforts undertaken by Stevenson’s advisors to develop a coherent foreign policy platform during the campaign. For while they undoubtedly took their lead from Stevenson and his desire to have international affairs feature heavily in the campaign, it is nevertheless telling that a cohort of the party’s leading thinkers on foreign relations during the first two decades of the Cold War were unable to articulate a more effective position.

The present article, therefore, examines the Democrats’ attempts to forge an effective foreign policy position in the period surrounding the 1956 election and, in particular, focuses its attention on Stevenson’s leading foreign policy advisors. In doing so, it makes two interrelated arguments. First, it suggests that it was more than the Cold War consensus that prevented the Democrats from making any substantial headway in this area. Undoubtedly, there was a large degree of concurrence between the Democrats and Republicans over the necessity of adopting a tough foreign policy stance during the first fifteen years of the Cold War. Given the Democrats’ role in shaping the Cold War after 1945, it could hardly be otherwise. The upshot of this, as Fredrik Logevall has explained, is that the Democrats were largely trapped in a recurring cycle: unable to move left for fear of being accused of appeasement, unable to move too far right for fear of being seen as war-mongers, and instead beholden to the “stark and rigid political absolutes” that had come to dominate Cold War policy thinking.[[12]](#endnote-12) Nonetheless, broad bipartisan agreement about the nature of the threat posed by the Soviet Union should not mask the fact that differences of opinion did exist between the two parties during the 1950s. Chester Bowles, in fact, wrote to both President Eisenhower and his brother ahead of the election to outline his view that bipartisanship would be desirable if it was not for the Republicans’ failings.[[13]](#endnote-13)

It is a point that leads on to the article’s second argument: that the problem the Democrats faced was part of a larger malaise that had affected the party’s position on foreign affairs since the mid-1940s. Though they had overseen the nation’s policy throughout World War Two and the formative years of the Cold War, the perpetual climate of fear and anxiety that was becoming such a central part of the nation’s political climate favoured the Republicans. And as the fusion of Cold War politics, hard-line religious rhetoric, and masculine forms of behaviour became more entrenched this pattern hardened still further.[[14]](#endnote-14) The election of Eisenhower in 1952—a figure whose military role during the war had given him a formidable reputation in the realm of foreign affairs—intensified the Democrats’ difficulties on this front. The party had, of course, proven to be an effective force in Congress in this area by practicing the policy of what historian Robert Johnson has called “limited dissent” in the years leading up to 1956.[[15]](#endnote-15) But the nature of their differences with the Republicans—which were in evidence from the 1940s onwards and that would characterise their positions in 1956—did not easily translate into a model suitable for a presidential campaign. The candidate’s desire for foreign policy to be an integral part of his campaign posed profound difficulties for his advisors. Furthermore, as Stevenson’s chief advisors sought to craft a more effective stance in this area they too often resorted to partisan attacks on Eisenhower’s record that dramatically overstated the situation confronting the nation. It is a point typified by a letter sent by Chester Bowles, one of Stevenson’s most important advisors, to Reinhold Niebuhr, the prominent theologian and ardent Stevenson supporter. “We must organize ourselves to bring a really new look to American foreign policy,” Bowles wrote, “which appears to me to be getting in to a dangerous and demoralizing tangle.”[[16]](#endnote-16)

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The remarkably high approval ratings enjoyed by Eisenhower throughout his two terms in office were a major obstacle for the Stevenson campaign ahead of the 1956 election. Recognising that the president was “far more popular than his party” they were compelled to focus their attentions elsewhere when trying to get voters to opt for Stevenson rather than Ike. The president’s approval ratings, in fact, only dipped below sixty percent in the wake of the Sherman Adams scandal and during his last year in office; in the year prior to the election, meanwhile, they were given a significant boost by the favourable public response to the president’s severe health problems.[[17]](#endnote-17) Hence, while disagreements with Eisenhower’s foreign policies may have been many and varied among Stevenson’s advisors—ranging from his approach to the Third World and the issue of decolonisation, to his administration’s emphasis on massive retaliation which they believed to be one-dimensional—they needed to develop these in such a way that placed the emphasis on factors beyond the president. Reinhold Niebuhr confronted this in a piece that he wrote for the *New Leader* magazine. “Even those of us who have no intention of voting the Republican ticket,” he wrote, “are bound to concede that the popularity [of President Eisenhower] is phenomenal in our national history.” Nevertheless, he continued, Eisenhower’s administration had made numerous mistakes in foreign affairs and was proving incapable of adequately dealing with a world in a serious state of flux. “The complacency of the Eisenhower administration in the face of these new dangers,” he continued, “is so popular because it corresponds to the desire for complacency in an anxious nation which cannot quite comprehend the contrast between its domestic security and the insecurity of its position in the world.” The Eisenhower administration’s approach was wrong, in other words, but it was wrong in a way that found great favour among the electorate.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Stevenson, by contrast, was viewed much less enthusiastically—even within his own party. Some Democrats had set out their concerns over Stevenson’s possible candidacy before his nomination in the summer of 1956. Among the most forceful of these was Eugene Rostow, dean of Yale Law School and brother of Walt, who in 1955 questioned whether Stevenson was the man to take on the Republicans. “I am convinced that we cannot break through the wall of glue,” he wrote to Chester Bowles, “until someone stands up and says clearly and firmly that the King is naked. Perhaps Adlai’s personality, and his role in public life, make it impossible for him to say flatly that the real trouble with the administration is stupidity.” Unless the Democrats could find someone to say this forcefully and persuasively, Rostow continued, then public opinion would continue to be “dangerously dominated by the feeling that after all Ike is a fine fellow.”[[19]](#endnote-19) Bowles had his own doubts and confided to a friend in February of 1956 that he might, under the right circumstances, decide to enter the Congressional race in Connecticut rather than back Stevenson in a national campaign as a result of his “growing concern over my friend Adlai” who seemed to be “missing the ball with disturbing regularity.”[[20]](#endnote-20)

Doubts about Stevenson’s candidacy—especially after his heavy defeat against Eisenhower in 1952—were reflected in the Democrats’ nomination process as first Estes Kefauver, and then Averell Harriman, emerged as powerful rivals.[[21]](#endnote-21) Following the Minnesota primary in March, indeed, Kefauver suddenly became the front-runner. Unpopular with key figures within the party, and with their faith in Stevenson diminished, party bosses began looking at alternatives such as Harriman or, even, former president, Harry Truman. These fears were allayed somewhat when Stevenson won in California in June and, once again, became the presumptive nominee. Yet, in spite of this, Stevenson still did not have enough delegates to secure the nomination; over the summer of 1956, Stevenson, Kefauver and Harriman all began to canvass for votes. Kefauver eventually withdrew from the race at the end of July, but by that point Harriman had officially entered the race. With Southern Democrats adamant that they would not support any candidate that did not in some way agree with their views on Civil Rights, and with Truman backing Harriman, the prospects of a clean nomination process at that summer’s convention in Chicago were highly remote.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Eventually, after lengthy discussions over the party’s platform—and, in particular, the stance it would take on Civil Rights—the party’s desire for a show of unity secured the nomination for Stevenson. Harriman, despite Truman’s powerful backing, did not have enough support and conceded at the end of the first ballot with Stevenson some seven-hundred delegate votes ahead.[[23]](#endnote-23) The party’s newfound desire for unity was reflected in the comments of Harry Truman, who had started the week in abrasive mood but who finished it seeking conciliation. As the *New York Times* reported on the evening of August 17, Truman spoke at the convention’s close in an effort to “take back some of the harsh things he had said against Mr. Stevenson this week. Besides saying that Mr. Stevenson was ‘too defeatist to win,’ Mr. Truman in his private conversations has mispronounced the Tennessean's [Kefauver’s] name as if it were spelled ‘Cowfever.’ Tonight he pronounced it correctly.”[[24]](#endnote-24)

The divisive nature of the nomination process had fostered a climate of uncertainty within the party. A large number of Democrats remained unsure as to whether Stevenson had it in him to defeat Eisenhower. More broadly, there was a general lack of clarity over what the election would be fought on. These doubts were apparent in the response to Stevenson’s acceptance speech. “After a few moments,” his advisor Arthur Schlesinger Jr wrote in his journal, “the sense of excitement was trickling away” and “nearly everyone was vastly disappointed.” Schlesinger charted similar responses from other witnesses. One advisor conceded the election there and then; Senator William Fulbright judged it to be the “worst speech” he had heard Stevenson give; another colleague remarked that it was “indistinguishable in intellectual content” from an Eisenhower speech; and Averell Harriman, who obviously had his own axe to grind, was “contemptuous.”[[25]](#endnote-25) Any hopes of a new Stevenson, one who was “grim” and “masterful” had “suddenly disappeared,” Schlesinger wrote, and “in its place appeared the old Stevenson, the literary critic, the man obsessed with words and with portentous generalization.”[[26]](#endnote-26)

George Kennan, who continued to hope that a Democrat victory would result in a personal return to favour, was also struck by the sense of despondency that surrounded Stevenson. He described himself “disgusted” with the convention and with what, appeared to him, to be an abandonment of foreign policy. “The impression I get,” he wrote to Paul Nitze, “is that the only aspects of the Administration’s performance that the Democratic professionals approve and do not intend to criticize are the conduct of foreign affairs and the security program. In these circumstances it seems obvious that the party has no need for anyone like myself at this juncture.”[[27]](#endnote-27) Though typically self-serving and pessimistic, Kennan’s response nevertheless helped to paint a picture of unremitting gloom at the outset of Stevenson’s campaign. He gave further weight to this interpretation in an entry in his diary, penned shortly after he dined with Stevenson while Eisenhower accepted the Republican Party’s nomination. Stevenson, Kennan wrote, “seemed so tired and harassed and worn”, had “so few people to help him” and his “whole equipment for going into this battle was so shabby compared with the vast, slick, well-heeled Eisenhower organization” that there was little hope of success.[[28]](#endnote-28)

While Kennan may have been right about the paucity of the Democratic political machine compared to that of the Republicans, his concerns about foreign policy being absent from Stevenson’s campaign were wide of the mark. Indeed, foreign policy was highly prominent in Stevenson’s acceptance speech and the Democratic Party Platform. Moreover, the Democrats’ statements on foreign affairs around the time of the convention demonstrated the extent to which a series of key elements would shape their arguments. Tellingly, the critiques that the Democrats put forward would focus on style, tone, and the presentation of American foreign relations, often underpinned by a range of personal animosities taking the shape of attacks on individual Republican figures.

The Democrat Party Platform, the first twenty-eight sections of which focused on foreign relations, charged the Eisenhower administration with having “confused timidity with courage, and blindness with enlightenment.” It went on to allege that: “we need a foreign policy which rises above jockeying for partisan position or advantage—yet, not in memory has there been so little bipartisanship in the administration of our policies, so little candor in their presentation to our people, so much pretending that things are better than they are.” United States policy since 1953, the platform continued, had been characterised by “confusion and complacency” and “bluff and bluster.”[[29]](#endnote-29)

Senator John F. Kennedy, who officially nominated Stevenson at the convention, adopted a similar line of attack. The international situation was perilous, Kennedy stated in his remarks, and required “a prompt return to firm, decisive leadership” in order to get beyond what he called the Republicans’ “indecision and hesitation.” “We are hesitant on Suez, silent on colonialism, uncertain on disarmament, and contradictory on the other major issues of the day.”[[30]](#endnote-30) Stevenson, too, put forward a vision that focused more on personal animosity than substance. A Stevenson presidency, he told the convention, would be characterised by “honesty, dignity, convictions, and respect”. “The men who run the Eisenhower Administration evidently believe that the minds of Americans can be manipulated by shows and slogans and the arts of advertising,” Stevenson continued. Eisenhower’s policy, he said, had effectively been one of reassuring the American people that “all is well, that everything is all right, that everyone is prosperous and safe, that no great decisions are required of us, and that even the Presidency of the United States has somehow become an easy job.”[[31]](#endnote-31)

It was an approach that evidenced few fundamental disagreements with Republican policy beyond the way it was pursued, presented and expressed. And, at its most basic level, it could be reduced to a simplistic formula: United States foreign relations was being run by a group of people that the Democrats’ believed were ill-suited, morally and intellectually, to overseeing the nation’s interests. As the campaign took shape, it was an approach that would remain at the heart of the Stevenson team’s foreign policy statements—and, moreover, it was one that would be characterised by animosities and criticisms that had been unfolding in Democrat circles since the mid-1940s.

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Initially, the heart attack suffered by Eisenhower in the autumn of 1955 had been seen as providing a potential opening by the Democrats. If the president was too ill to serve then, surely, they could use this to their advantage. But while concerns about how the president’s ill-health made the nation look were undoubtedly much in evidence, the domestic view was far more sanguine; the public wished Eisenhower a speedy recovery and his popularity remained undimmed.[[32]](#endnote-32) In his acceptance speech, meanwhile, Stevenson noted his unwillingness to use it as a political tool in the campaign. “I don’t propose,” Stevenson announced, “to make political capital out of the President's illness. His ability to personally fulfill the demands of his exacting office is a matter between him and the American people.”[[33]](#endnote-33)

This led them to revert to a tactic that had been utilised regularly since the early 1940s: to focus on an unpopular lieutenant, whose failings could be used to undermine Eisenhower’s standing.[[34]](#endnote-34) While Vice President Richard Nixon was useful in this sense due to his reputation as a political hardliner and underhand operator, his prominence and importance were far less than those of Eisenhower’s secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. Dulles’s unpopularity among leading Democrats was given an extra edge after 1953 by his mistreatment of George Kennan and Chester Bowles. Dulles’s actions toward Bowles and Kennan were, at least in part, driven by the poisonous influence that McCarthyism had on American foreign relations in the 1950s.[[35]](#endnote-35) While this context is undoubtedly important in understanding their dislike of Dulles after 1953, however, the Democrats’ animosity toward him was part of a much longer pattern that had been taking shape since the 1940s.[[36]](#endnote-36)

In 1944, Harold Ickes, Franklin Roosevelt’s pugnacious Secretary of the Interior, wrote a number of critiques of Dulles that sought to undermine his position as chief advisor to Dewey. Dulles, Ickes charged, ought to be disqualified from having any involvement in the nation’s foreign affairs: he “seems to have based his policy on the weakness of democracy, distrust of a pledged word and the need for keeping aggressors satisfied before their most belligerent designs reach the peak of war.” The only way he could possibly have been misunderstood on these points, he went on, is because his pronouncements were “couched in that unwieldy verbiage, characteristic of lawyers, which makes it appear as if they were all trained as space writers.”[[37]](#endnote-37) Another Department of the Interior official highlighted Dulles’s position on Germany and, in particular, his friendship with German financier, Hjalmar Schacht. Dulles, the official noted, referred to Schacht as “the financial genius of the Nazi economy,” as “a friend” while praising “his integrity and honesty” and had, in all likelihood, been used by the wily German, which suggested a naivety when it came to foreign relations.[[38]](#endnote-38) Another memo, untitled but most likely a private campaign thought-piece penned by Ickes, used the sentiments outlined by the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace to accuse Dulles of being pro-Japanese.[[39]](#endnote-39) Other officials, such as State Department official Breckinridge Long, accused Dewey and Dulles of seeking to use wartime efforts to foster future peace for “their own advantage.”[[40]](#endnote-40)

Dulles was again targeted in 1952. Key Democrat strategists, such as Averell Harriman, went to great lengths to unpick Dulles’s foreign policy positions. Harriman’s papers contain a number of memos tackling Dulles’s pronouncements on foreign policy, as well as correspondence from other similarly minded observers that portray Dulles as a vulnerable political target in the forthcoming election.[[41]](#endnote-41) Harriman later made clear that he felt Dulles’s much-publicised, and oft-examined, approach of liberation and roll-back, which was the most eye-catching part of the Republican platform in 1952, was little more than an “ill-advised form of playing domestic politics with international problems.”[[42]](#endnote-42)

George Ball was another figure that targeted Dulles. In one memo he accused him of being a “prime example of the schizophrenia that afflicts intelligent people when they accept conservative Republicanism as a credo...it is only when he has to speak his views that he invariably betrays the dangerous absurdities of Old Guardian.” He would likely prove more of a “liability”, Ball wrote, “if he is used as an example of how bad the best of them [Republicans] are.” Inspired by his belief that Dulles’s role in the Eisenhower campaign was an opportunity for the Democrats, Ball went to great lengths to chart the positions that Dulles had taken on foreign affairs, scribbling notes that examined his positions during the second world war, highlighting those instances in which he had agreed with Harry Truman and Dean Acheson, and even highlighting the fact that Foster’s wife, Janet, had twice contributed to America First—an isolationist organisation—in 1941.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Later, Ball would also highlight what would go on to become a key feature of the attempts in 1956 to undermine the Republicans position on foreign relations: the perceived control that the old-style, isolationist wing of the party continued to exert over its position on international matters. In writing the foreign policy platform for the 1952 election, Ball argued, Dulles sought to “pay lip-service to the irreconcilable views of the Taft-Hoover wing and the Dewey-Eisenhower wing—and perhaps even the MacArthur-McCarthy tail—of the Republican Party.” This, he went on, was “like blending vinegar and oil, but Dulles came up with a remarkable foreign policy dressing for the Republican salad” that did little more than “turn the glaring light of hindsight on the tragic state of the world and blamed it all on the Democrats.”[[44]](#endnote-44)

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There was therefore a pattern of leading Democrat foreign policy thinkers targeting Dulles from well before the 1956 election. And, while these efforts had failed to have any significant impact, Dulles’s ongoing reputation as someone who divided opinion continued to persuade Stevenson’s advisors that it was a tactic worth continuing with. In adopting this stance, though, the Democrats were overlooking two key elements. First, that their reluctance to attack Eisenhower on the issue of foreign policy meant that their approach was highly unlikely to register with the majority of voters. Contesting Dulles’s position and highlighting his shortcomings, irrespective of whether or not their points were well made, never really looked likely to result in significant political gains. Their judgement on this matter was clouded by the second issue: that a number of key Democrats were so fixated on Dulles as a result of his treatment of them and their colleagues that they struggled to see the shortcomings of an approach that focused far too heavily on the secretary of state and the minutiae of foreign policy rather than larger issues that engaged voters. Though their emotional responses to Dulles were largely understandable following his McCarthyist purge of the State Department in the wake of the 1953 election, the consequences it had for their campaign strategy were highly significant.[[45]](#endnote-45)

Chief among these figures were the aforementioned George Kennan and Chester Bowles. Both were furious with Dulles as both believed he had deliberately—and incomprehensibly—overlooked them when appointing high-level State Department officials in 1953. After falling out of favour with Harry Truman, Kennan nevertheless believed that his expertise was such that he would be appointed to a new position under Eisenhower. This position, he told Allen Dulles, who would soon become head of the CIA, should not be “as an adviser without power, just far enough from the administration so that my advice could be ignored without impunity and near enough to it that I would be inhibited from participating in public discussion of any policy questions.” Before long, however, Kennan began to sense that he was not part of the new administration’s plans. “I began to realise,” he wrote in his diary, “that the President and John Foster Dulles were apparently not interested either in discussing with me my future or that of the Moscow position, nor were they interested in my views about the Soviet Union or U.S.-Soviet relations.” Given his experience and expertise, he could not help “but view this as a very serious and disturbing situation.”[[46]](#endnote-46) When Dulles did finally inform Kennan that his services would not be required, the former head of the policy planning staff was far from impressed and a dispute arose as to how this decision would be presented. Dulles wanted Kennan to announce that he had asked to retire; Kennan refused, arguing that felt he was being pushed aside and that Dulles had misled him. Inevitably, this left a sour taste; Kennan believed he had been ostracised by the new administration and treated particularly shabbily by Dulles.[[47]](#endnote-47) Kennan never forgave him for this and bore the grudge until Dulles died in 1959. He only altered his stance and adopted a more charitable view much later, when documents from the 1950s began to be declassified and he came to the realisation that the “Dulles revealed through the archives bears little resemblance to the one Kennan thought he knew.”[[48]](#endnote-48)

Much the same was true of Chester Bowles who, like Kennan, blamed Dulles for ousting him from high-level government service. Previously the Ambassador to India, Bowles soon found himself at odds with the new administration over its stance toward South Asia and, in particular, its decision to side with Pakistan over India in 1954.[[49]](#endnote-49) His offer to continue working on such matters was spurned and he, too, was hurt by the manner of his rejection. The president, he informed one friend, sent him a “pure form letter” that “did not even mention India.”[[50]](#endnote-50) This continued to rankle. “I would have been happy,” Bowles wrote to the president’s brother, Milton, in 1956, “to have been able to play some continuing role in the development of a truly bipartisan foreign policy” but “this opportunity, for whatever reason, was denied, not only to me, but to other Democrats whom the administration could have counted on to serve loyally and, I believe, effectively.” This had led him to conclude, Bowles went on, “that our sole hope of participating in the area of public service to which we are prepared to devote our lives, lies in a Democratic administration” and, as such, he would be doing all he could to effect a change in the November election.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Both Kennan and Bowles, therefore, were motivated to undermine the Eisenhower administration’s approach to foreign affairs by more than political allegiance. Both believed that Dulles embodied the failings of the Republican administration and it was on him that they focused much of their ire. Though Kennan in particular only played a bit-part in advising Stevenson in 1956, the positions set out by he and Bowles nevertheless impacted heavily on the stance adopted by the Democrats during Eisenhower’s first five years in office. Dulles, rather than the president, was often the target. Their emotional positions, moreover, help to further explain why the Democrats pursued such a trenchant approach in an area in which they were struggling to develop a viable alternative.

To be sure, the ire that Kennan and Bowles felt toward Dulles, while undoubtedly heartfelt, did not equate to a viable political position that they could base a campaign on. The Democrats thus needed to find some way of translating their antipathy toward the secretary of state into a tangible political stance. As the party began to look toward sharpening up its foreign policy platform for the 1956 election, then, they began to develop this into a series of critiques focused on highlighting the fact that Eisenhower was under the sway of old-school isolationist elements in Congress and that Dulles, in the way he had conducted American foreign policy, had soured Washington’s international position.

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The 1952 presidential election had been a chastening experience for Stevenson. Heavily defeated by Eisenhower, it was clear that the former General’s reputation in the international arena, particularly his pledge to end the Korean War, had been a significant influence in swaying the electorate.[[52]](#endnote-52) The Democrats’ inability to challenge the Republicans on international matters prompted a great degree of soul-searching within the party. Many of the party’s leading figures continued to see foreign policy as an area in which they could achieve political success, but there was evidently much work to do if they were going to successfully challenge Eisenhower on this front in 1956.

Their first opportunity to start chipping away at Eisenhower and the Republicans’ strength in this area came in the midterm elections of 1954—a campaign that the party used as a testing ground for some of the ideas that they would deploy in the presidential election two years later. The true lesson of the 1954 campaign, however, was that it did more to highlight the Democrats’ weakness in the area of foreign affairs than to pinpoint areas likely to portend greater success.

One obvious area of criticism was the administration’s much-vaunted New Look foreign policy and its seeming reliance on Dulles’s tactic of massive retaliation that he had outlined in early 1954.[[53]](#endnote-53) George Ball, while decrying Dulles’s determination to present the administration’s policies in such partisan terms, suggested in his response to the speech that the wider concern was “the reasoning by which he justifies what purports to be a major reversal of those developments of policy which were so hard won after much trial and error, bitter experience, and arduous thought over a number of years.”[[54]](#endnote-54) Another Stevenson supporter, Charles Murphy, highlighted his concern that Dulles’s presentation effectively posited two alternatives: “(1) To lose the cold war or (2) to start an atomic war.” These two choices seemed “so plain and so terrifying” that he hoped Stevenson would manage to impose some objections. In response, Stevenson offered a more cautious assessment, noting that he was “loathe to move in on this except temperately and suspectly.” A debate on these matters, he suggested, might not be beneficial. Instead, a more pertinent, if unlikely to prove politically decisive, question suggested itself to him: “is the budget being adjusted to enemy capabilities or to what the administration thinks we should spend?”[[55]](#endnote-55)

Chester Bowles, taking his cue from Stevenson’s disinclination to wrestle publicly with Dulles about Massive Retaliation, attempted to set out some of the key arguments that Democratic candidates should make in order to make political headway. This, Bowles conceded, would undoubtedly be tricky, but it was “high time that Democrats attempted to articulate, in some kind of order, the things that they may consistently and legitimately say about foreign policy in the coming campaign.”[[56]](#endnote-56) Already, though, signs were emerging of what would prove to be perennial problems for Stevenson’s Democrats. Rather than focusing on the president—the most visible figure in the party—Bowles recommendations zeroed in on the GOP more broadly, the schisms within it, the relationship between Foster Dulles and the Party old guard, and the style of diplomacy that the new administration was practising.[[57]](#endnote-57) There was little in any of these recommendations that would truly resonate with the electorate; with Eisenhower having ended one war in Korea and avoided another in Indochina it was difficult to see how the Democrats would get any political traction in adopting this approach. Across twenty-seven carefully set out charges against existing policy, indeed, Bowles failed to define anything that would have immediate political benefits for the Democrats.[[58]](#endnote-58)

Still, the Democrats were determined to make foreign policy a key part of their midterm campaign. In September, with the election starting to loom, Bowles sent a further memo to Stevenson and put forth his belief that an effective position on foreign affairs could be politically advantageous. “Apparently many Democratic candidates would be content to forget about it,” Bowles wrote. Nevertheless, he continued, it would be a factor in the election as the Republicans were eager to highlight their success in Korea and to “take credit for the truce in Indochina to which they contributed nothing.” It would thus be a “mistake” to neglect foreign policy, Bowles argued, and the Democrats had a “moral obligation” to “challenge the Republicans for the mistakes which they are making.” Furthermore, he believed that “skilful, responsible handling of the foreign policy issue in the campaign may increase our chances and margin” of victory and, also, “commit” the Democrats to a policy course that would stand them in good stead for the presidential election.[[59]](#endnote-59) In response, Stevenson noted that he broadly concurred with Bowles’ assessment and emphasised that he had been consistently focusing on foreign affairs in his speeches in an effort to “invite attention to the sloganeering, bluff and bluster of the administration and to attempt to keep people interested and concerned.” At the same time, though, he was much less certain as to how this could be achieved in a way that would garner political success.[[60]](#endnote-60)

Bowles, however, remained optimistic. Following a meeting of prominent Democrat experts—including himself, Tom Finletter, Paul Nitze, and Arthur Schlesinger—he sent Stevenson a lengthy memo outlining the importance of a strong foreign policy position in the Congressional elections. Following the election, he reported, it was felt that Stevenson should, in consultation with the Democratic caucus in Congress, make a major foreign policy address. This should set out a “fresh new viewpoint and approach” and should seek to “lay the groundwork as tactfully as you can for a coalition of Democrats and liberal Republicans in cooperation with the president, not only in Congress, but throughout the country.” If done successfully, he wrote, this could “widen the breach in the Republican Party” and “increase the chances of an old fashioned Donnybrook” in 1956, which could in turn “assure your election.”[[61]](#endnote-61)

Ultimately, the Democrats’ efforts to use foreign policy as a tool for electoral success in the 1954 mid-terms amounted to little in terms of votes. Domestic issues were unsurprisingly to the fore—particularly with a series of economic matters reaching a head—and most of the electorate, if they had a view on international matters, continued to have great faith in the president’s conduct of international matters. Some of the media commentary on this, moreover, was particularly sharp in terms of delineating the central point about the place of foreign affairs in electoral campaigning. Chalmers Roberts, writing in the *Washington Post* nine days before the voting took place, argued that the Democrats’ efforts on this front had come to naught. “From all the evidence available,” he wrote, “American foreign policy has not been a major campaign issue...nowhere during this campaign...has there been any real debate on foreign policy.” In a telling explication as to why this was, Roberts went on to suggest that if, as expected, the Democrats won control of one or both houses of Congress it would likely have little impact on foreign policy. “Both parties today accept America’s participation in the world,” he wrote, and “the nature of any foreign policy changes”, even if the Democrats did win, would be “difficult to perceive.”[[62]](#endnote-62) James Reston, writing in the *New York Times*, agreed with Roberts’ assessment. “Despite all the noise on both sides,” he wrote in a column at the end of October, “neither the economy nor the foreign policy nor the efficient conduct of the Government is likely to be changed a great deal.”[[63]](#endnote-63) The *New York Times* editorial board also failed to see any correlation between the election and foreign policy. “If there is one thing clear about this election,” an editorial exclaimed, “it is that it was dominated by domestic issues and that, despite some efforts to make it seem otherwise, foreign policy clearly played only a minor part.”[[64]](#endnote-64)

That sense of similarity between the two parties was captured in an address given by Harry Truman during the campaign. Ordinarily, Truman stated, he would not call for the election of a Democratic Congress to go head-to-head with a Republican president; in 1954, however, he believed this to be urgently needed so as to “save Eisenhower” from his own party’s right wing.[[65]](#endnote-65) Truman’s views were supported by Walter Lippmann, the nation’s foremost columnist, who argued just after the election that Eisenhower had “gone much too far in appeasing the Republican right wing and not nearly far enough in building up the liberal wing of his party.”[[66]](#endnote-66) Moreover, after the Democrats regained control of both houses of Congress, a more cooperative phase between the legislature and the executive did unfold. With Eisenhower eager to avoid partisan politics affecting his relationship with Congress he began to work closely with Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson in order to secure Congressional support for his foreign policy positions.[[67]](#endnote-67)

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Though the Democrats had hit on an effective campaign for securing control of Congress, then, it was clearly apparent that they had made little headway in recapturing any kind of impetus in the field of foreign affairs. Notwithstanding this Stevenson and his advisors remained convinced of two things: that they wanted to make foreign policy a key part of the 1956 campaign, and that they could gain ground on Eisenhower by consistently honing in on what leading Democrat strategists saw as being subtle but important differences in the two parties’ positions. As they did so, the temptation to adopt overwrought partisan positions became commonplace; many arguments against Eisenhower’s administration, indeed, began to significantly overstate the nation’s international position.

Chester Bowles, for one, continued to press the point that foreign policy was as important as Eisenhower’s health problems, which became headline news following the president’s heart attack in 1955. Though “much less dramatic than Eisenhower’s illness” he wrote to Stevenson in September, “but with perhaps equally great political implications for next fall, is what seems to me to be growing evidence that the whole fabric of our security system may be beginning to come apart at the seams.” If this continued, he argued, it could have a “profound effect on our campaign next year.”[[68]](#endnote-68) The Republicans, he added in a further memo, were again likely to campaign as the “party of peace” and it was essential “that we attack this position at an early stage” to make it more difficult “for them to stake out an effective peace claim.”[[69]](#endnote-69)

Bowles also corresponded with his fellow malcontent, George Kennan, over what they saw as the administration’s shortcomings. As Kennan noted, however, it was becoming difficult to assert that Eisenhower’s failings were his alone. “We are facing something like a general collapse in our world position in the coming months,” Kennan wrote to Bowles in October 1955. “I wish I could say that it was all the fault of the Republicans; but honesty compels me to admit that many of the causes of this deplorable situation were laid in the diplomacy of an earlier date. All Foster has done is to make things worse with his early appeasement of the Republican right-wingers, his failure to win the personal confidence of statesmen in Europe, and the general attitude of smug self-congratulation on the part of the Administration, to which he has certainly contributed handsomely.” The situation, Kennan feared, was even worse in the developing world—where, unless the American people were schooled quickly and fulsomely, it would prove beyond the capacity of the nation to resolve its problems. “For these reasons, I think the Democratic Party would do well to insist on a merciless exposure of the weaknesses of our world position, even if this means admitting that mistakes were made in the past by Democratic as well as Republican administrations. It would be better to say: all of us have erred, but we, at least, are endeavouring to face up to our mistakes and learn from them.”[[70]](#endnote-70) Kennan’s proposal, while hardly likely to appeal to a fledgling campaign eager to set out a more positive position, did demonstrate the difficulty facing the Democrats as they sought to tackle Eisenhower. For a long time they had agreed with—and, indeed, helped to create—many of the policies that they were now putatively supposed to be opposing. Great candour, as per Kennan’s suggestion, might be one way to side-step this problem; yet it contained a great risk and would be a difficult case to make to an electorate not overly engaged with international matters.

More hopeful, and pugnacious, suggestions were in evidence elsewhere in Democrat circles. Walt Rostow, prominent academic and leading advocate for a more forceful and engaged approach toward developing the Third World, agreed with some of Kennan’s points while offering a more optimistic recommendation. He argued, in the spring of 1956, that Stevenson should present himself as the more progressive candidate when it came to the developing world as “the administration has demonstrated its inability to cope with the new problems of a revolutionary world.” They had done little beyond continuing with the policy they inherited, he argued, which was fine when they took office, “but history has not stood still.”[[71]](#endnote-71) Rostow, of course, had his own interests in mind here as he was one of the strongest supporters for a more sustained shift in policy toward the global south. Yet he was prescient, too, as the Third World would become a more prominent theme in electoral battles in 1960 as the consensus evident in the mid-1950s started to fracture.

For Stevenson and his advisors, though, the prospect of forging an electorally popular stance on foreign affairs for the 1956 election continued to look slim. As they continued to debate this matter, in fact, they again confronted the problems that had bedevilled their efforts in 1954. In going after the Republicans, Bowles noted in a memo intended to try and establish some firm parameters in 1955, “it would not be wise for us to strike directly at President Eisenhower”; instead, they should “systematically go after the members of his ‘team’. Most of them have no popular support and several are highly vulnerable.”[[72]](#endnote-72) In a further memo in early 1956, which was aimed at establishing a couple of key issues that Stevenson could consistently attack on, the recommended approach in foreign affairs argued that the GOP was “structurally incapable of launching and administering a foreign policy because of its historic deep-seated divisions.” Even if Eisenhower did set out a valid proposal to tackle the problems presently facing the U.S., it went on, it would have to go through Congress and there it would be torn apart by perennial Republican tensions.[[73]](#endnote-73) Two months later, Bowles repeated these arguments and took the line that the administration could not “act in a forthright way without splitting their party.” It was, thus, incumbent upon the Stevenson campaign to ensure that they did not get away with this by pointing out “over and over again why they cannot develop and press a more positive program.”[[74]](#endnote-74) Walt Rostow agreed with this assessment, particularly on the issue of repetition. “Leaving aside health, Nixon, and all that,” he wrote Bowles, “the essence of the job is going to be to make vivid what has happened to our military and foreign policy position and to explain persuasively how it could have happened under Ike, a soldier and internationalist.” The key, he averred, lay in “concreteness and repetition.”[[75]](#endnote-75)

Needless to say, there was a substantial degree of overstatement evident in the arguments being made by Bowles, Rostow and Kennan. The nation’s international position was not on the cusp of collapse; emotional and partisan factors were driving leading Democrats’ thinking. That is not to say that there was no truth in Bowles and Rostow’s suggestions that relentlessly highlighting the nature of Eisenhower’s relation with his wider party might have served to erode some of his political support on international matters. But these were hardly populist or eye-catching positions, and pitching them in such an overstated way was unlikely to prove beneficial. Indeed, when stripped of their partisan hostility, these positions amounted primarily to differences over how foreign policy should be conducted and presented.

Symptomatic of these ongoing difficulties was the continuing reluctance to tackle the president directly. Not only did he remain hugely popular with the American people and could lay claim to having ended the war in Korea; he was also recuperating from two major illnesses inside a year and there was a sense that to hit him hard would be seen as being unreasonable. In terms of foreign policy, Eugene Rostow wrote to Stevenson, the Democrats faced a significant problem. “While Eisenhower and Dulles have done a very poor job,” he explained, “the man in the street thinks they have done well, because the war in Korea is over; we avoided war in Indo-China; and no other visible dramas are taking place. The problem, therefore, is how to bring home the facts without seeming to be a war-monger.” The case needed to be made, he suggested, that the people had been shielded to the reality of how many around the world viewed the United States; in truth, Rostow said, this administration “is well-intentioned, but inadequate, naive, weak, and losing ground very fast.”[[76]](#endnote-76)

Bowles, for his part, continued to reach reflexively for partisan overstatement. After listening to Eisenhower’s acceptance speech, he wondered if “we will not make more progress running not against Ike, but against the forces that now so clearly dominate his acts—the ex-isolationist, ex-preventive-war right wing, which holds Dulles in the palm of its hand and which has demonstrated its capacity to dampen down whatever constructive action the White House may occasionally feel moved to take.” “We could,” he concluded, “put together a brutal, factual case against Martin, Knowland, Bridges, Nixon, McCarthy, as the dominant Republican power which is using Eisenhower as a front, and which will discard him as an empty shell once he has served their purpose.”[[77]](#endnote-77) He even drafted a prospective speech for Stevenson that, in an election year, took this position to a surprising extent. “I believe under normal conditions,” the draft suggested, “Mr Eisenhower and I, as private citizens, would find ourselves in substantial agreement on a wide range of issues.”[[78]](#endnote-78)

Events in the autumn of 1956, however, seemed to offer new possibilities. After a solid start, Bowles told Stevenson in September, the worsening situation over Suez provided a chance to reaffirm the campaign’s foreign policy message. “The Middle East mess,” he wrote, “gives us an opportunity to point out why the administration has failed so dangerously in terms of a current crisis. If we are reduced to discussion of Quemoy-Matsu and Indo-China, our points will be far less well understood.”[[79]](#endnote-79) Nonetheless, problems continued to present themselves. Eugene Rostow repeated his earlier point about the danger of appearing to be war-mongers. “The Ike-Dulles policy,” he wrote to Stevenson, “is worse and weaker than the Baldwin-Chamberlain policy...a weak, vacillating and badly conducted foreign policy is the way to war now, as it was then [in the 1930s].” His suggestion was to caution against war and use this as a way to appeal to the electorate. War, he argued, would surely come if “we continue to allow the balance of power to tip against us” and “if we allow the Middle East to go, Africa to go, the European system to crumble; if we wind up desperately confronting relentless pressure from an increasingly strong, and hostile coalition.” Setting out a viable roadmap for peace, Rostow argued, could be the key to electoral popularity.[[80]](#endnote-80) His brother’s position was also to try and use the developing Suez Crisis to the Democrats’ benefit. An editorial in the *Boston Post*, which was very critical of the administration’s actions in Egypt, could well “play a role,” he suggested, “in getting the Boston vote behind the [Stevenson] ticket.”[[81]](#endnote-81)

Of these suggestions, Eugene Rostow’s peace plan seemed the most likely to have wider appeal. It was far from a complete policy, though, and Stevenson would be hard-pressed to make the case that Ike was inexorably leading America to war given his efforts to end one conflict in Korea and avoid another in Indochina. As the election drew nearer, Walt Rostow put forward perhaps the most confrontational argument—informing Bowles that Stevenson should hit hard on the issue of “Why Ike is a Phoney”—but, in doing so, he merely proposed a more barbed version of Bowles’s earlier portrayal of Eisenhower and Dulles being in thrall to hard-line Republicans in Congress. Moreover, his general position remained largely unaltered from that which he had set out previously. “I think it likely,” he suggested, “that Ike’s last stand will be on the issue of peace, experience, international affairs.” Consequently, he urged the Stevenson campaign to focus in on highlighting Republican failures in dealing with the developing areas, the trouble spots that had emerged since 1953, and to state, with great force, what he believed to be the administration’s greatest flaw: “they do not understand and sympathise with the human aspirations of ordinary people.”[[82]](#endnote-82)

Ultimately, Stevenson’s Democrats failed to develop a position on foreign policy that would allow their candidate to overturn the popular perception that Eisenhower was an effective and successful leader on international matters. Their final recommendations—a combination of scaremongering about the influence of the right-wing of the Republican Party; personal attacks on long-standing targets such as Dulles and Nixon; and a call for more effective policies toward the countries of the global south—offered little that was likely to catch voters’ eyes.

The party’s dilemma was most ably captured by George Kennan. In spite of his support for Stevenson, Kennan played only a minor part in shaping his campaign after the candidate publicly broke with him in August over fears that a more visible role would risk losing the important Polish-American vote due to Kennan’s previous stance on events in Eastern Europe. The rift was fairly short-lived, though, as the two men were soon reconciled. Moreover, Kennan had greater sympathy with Stevenson’s campaign than he normally held for electoral politics. Finding the usual gladiatorial style of presidential politics distasteful, Kennan saw in Stevenson’s candidacy something more cerebral and closer to his own views. While he did not play a major role in the campaign, therefore, his ideas did filter through and the perceptiveness of his assessments of Stevenson’s problems warrant close attention.[[83]](#endnote-83)

As Kennan made clear in a lengthy letter to Stevenson, there was much that the Democrats disagreed with the Eisenhower administration on. But their proposed solutions were not likely to prove very appealing to an electorate only sporadically interested in foreign affairs. Furthermore, any change in policy would have to be preceded by a change in attitude and style—hardly the sort of thing likely to galvanise the voters. Still, Kennan argued, this is how it was. Written and sent in March, some months before Stevenson publicly renounced his support for him, Kennan penned the most complete breakdown of what the Democrats believed was wrong with Republican foreign policy. By doing so, he laid bare the innate difficulty of setting out an alternative position that would have any political appeal. Essentially, he wrote, the problem was one of style rather than substance.

This particular administration may be justly criticised for smugness; for boasting; for talking big and doing little; for acting in such a way as to frighten our friends and reassure our adversaries...it may be criticised for its inability to effect any sort of communication...one could talk about the grievous over-militarisation of thought and statement; about the folly of continuing to portray the differences between Russia and the west...of the failure to realize that the phenomenon of bi-polarity was bound to recede...and to yield place to something like neutralism...one could speak—and at length—of the loss of dignity in the entire American posture...these are deficiencies not apt to be overcome by the Administration itself...for they are the very essence of its personality.

Though each of these was troubling, they were largely matters of concern for professional diplomats rather than the wider public. What, then, would Kennan suggest to that perennial question of “what would you do instead”? His approach, he informed Stevenson, would be to re-enlist foreign service officials not presently being utilised for partisan reasons (presumably including himself); try to restore the dignity of governmental procedures and abandon “the Madison Avenue glamorization of what should be the private processes of government”; call for greater international engagement, and discussion, on matters of great importance; and, finally, he would “certainly not boast. I would try to remember the sound maxim that in diplomacy successes claimed cease to be successes.” If these sorts of presentational and stylistic changes were implemented—and plainly, he suggested, this could not be done by the present administration—then great improvements could be achieved. Then, and only then, could a more substantive reconsideration of the substance of American policies take place. “I would not like to talk publicly” about how to change national security policy, he concluded, “until I knew that the first was really in the bag.” “I don’t know whether all this is any help to you,” he conceded, “but it is the only answer I can give you...don’t forget that you have a host of friends and supporters...who would rather see you right than President.”[[84]](#endnote-84)

Kennan’s appraisal, while far from helpful in political terms, precisely captured the essence of the problem confronting the Stevenson campaign in their attempts to forge a viable foreign policy stance. The minor nature of their differences with the incumbent administration was highly unlikely to prove politically popular. It was a problem writ large in Stevenson’s campaign speeches on foreign affairs, the bulk of which were thoughtful and intriguing, but lacking in accessibility and impetus. In a speech delivered in Washington in April, for example, Stevenson failed to define an effective position that would resonate with voters. Rather than listing all those places where the administration had failed, Stevenson, said he would instead focus on what he called a “more basic and ominous” problem: “in these last three years the United States has come dangerously close to losing, if indeed it has not lost, its leadership in the world—economically, militarily, and worst of all, morally.” It was hardly a call to arms; nor were his recommended solutions likely to capture voters’ imaginations. Echoing Kennan, Stevenson called for a greater focus on how the nation conducted its foreign policy—“smugness, arrogance, talking big are poison” he argued—limitations on the testing of nuclear weapons, and renewed consideration of the mechanisms for providing foreign aid.[[85]](#endnote-85) As the election drew nearer, Stevenson’s position became, if anything, less clear. In an address to an audience in Cincinnati in mid-October, he again highlighted the perennial themes of Eisenhower’s failure to pursue an effective strategy for peace and the view that the president did not have most of his party with him on international matters. Once more, however, his campaign fell short in offering an effective alternative. “How will a Democratic foreign policy differ from the Republican,” Stevenson asked.

Let me say at once that I have no slick formula, no patent medicine, to cure our problems. The difficulties which face American policy makers in all parts of the world are deep-rooted and complex. And this will continue to be so regardless of who wins in November...the ideological revolution of Communism cannot be met by quick and easy solutions. Neither can the political revolution of the oppressed and the newly independent peoples, or the historic revolution of technology throughout the world. I ask your support not because I offer promises of peace and progress, but because I do not. I promise only an unending effort to use our great power wisely in pursuing the goal of peace...we must take the world as we find it and try to work in the direction of peace...I don’t know whether that is the way to win in politics, but it is the only way I want to win.[[86]](#endnote-86)

Intellectually, Stevenson was staying true to his own beliefs. He was also incorporating some of the partisan criticisms suggested by his advisors. Yet, as he himself acknowledged, there was little here that was likely to prove politically compelling and that was suitable for political sloganeering. It was all a very long way from “I will go to Korea”—Ike’s pledge to bring the war there to an end—and Dulles’s allusions to “roll back” and “liberation”. On the eve of the election itself, Stevenson sought to hit a little harder—tackling Eisenhower more directly and impugning his work ethic. Too many major events were taking place, Stevenson argued, while the president was playing golf. In a rare moment of biting prose, Stevenson made his point with great precision: “no one begrudges the President his recreation,” he stated, “but peace is a full-time job.” Again, though, he failed to provide any clear sense of what he would do instead. The moment had undoubtedly gone.[[87]](#endnote-87)

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Though voters claimed that foreign policy was their major concern going into the election, it never came to exert a major influence over the course of the campaign. Eisenhower’s reputation in this field was well established and the majority of voters approved of his handling of the nation’s position toward the wider world. The emergence of major crises in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, moreover, benefited Eisenhower and hurt Stevenson.[[88]](#endnote-88) Stevenson, in truth, was never likely to prove capable of besting the president in this area.

The one area where Stevenson did chart out a position that had greater impact was on the issue of nuclear weapons, where his calls for a nuclear test ban treaty would prove to have sustained importance and establish the initial groundwork that would lead to the signing of an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union in the summer of 1963. In 1956, however, it was not a stance that captured the public attention and, indeed, its time would not come for another few years when the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis altered the nation’s receptiveness to a new message on nuclear policy.[[89]](#endnote-89)

But the inability of Stevenson’s advisors to craft a clear and viable alternative to existing policies is nevertheless important. They were able to enunciate their disagreements—though these, typically, tended to be somewhat arcane—but were much less able to galvanise the voters by setting out a strikingly different alternative. Stevenson’s foreign policy position, in fact, was essentially a mixture of different pieces of advice put forward by his advisors. Kennan’s suggestions—largely presentational and focused largely on matters of diplomatic style—had been coupled with those coming forward from Bowles and the Rostow brothers—which focused primarily on highlighting splits in the GOP, targeting certain individuals, and the problems posed by the developing world. These, finally, had melded with Stevenson’s own views on nuclear weapons. The end result was a policy that was thoughtful and multi-faceted, but which never seemed likely to sway anyone minded to vote for the Republicans.

The emergence of this ineffectual stance on foreign affairs was a product of a longer trajectory that had seen the Democrats struggle to separate themselves from the bipartisan consensus surrounding the policy of containment and the strictures of the Cold War. Yet it was also a product of the influence that a series of advisors—Bowles and the Rostow brothers being the most prominent—had over Stevenson’s campaign. The problematic process of securing the nomination had created a vacuum, one which an unwise focus on foreign policy was allowed to fill by a candidate who was too often uncertain. To move too sharply against Eisenhower would require a renunciation of policies implemented by previous Democratic administrations. None of Stevenson’s advisors advocated any such thing (bar Kennan to a certain extent). Instead, they adopted an approach that emphasised points of difference with respect to style, tone, and appearance, and which honed in on the minutiae of Cold War international relations—all underpinned by an emotive streak of partisan spite. On the eve of the election, moreover, both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* declined to back Stevenson for the presidency: the *Post* noted that they did not see any difference between the two candidates, and the *Times* opined that Eisenhower had proven himself domestically and internationally in ways that Stevenson had proved unable to effectively challenge.[[90]](#endnote-90)

Following the election and Stevenson’s second resounding defeat, the Democrats cited foreign policy as an issue that had cost them. Not because they had failed to craft an effective position; rather, they argued that the public knew too little to accurately gauge the problems confronting the nation. Two days after Eisenhower’s re-election, Stevenson’s team briefed the press and noted that they felt that the climactic events in Egypt and Hungary had dramatically helped the president’s re-election bid. “All you have to do to win elections,” one of his close advisors noted bitterly, “is to make fatal mistakes in foreign policy.”[[91]](#endnote-91) Stevenson himself came out forcefully a day later and expressed his view that “America is faced with a deep peril abroad that the election results have not dispersed.” Too many voters, Stevenson conceded, had gone to the polls in “almost total ignorance of errors of foreign policy” that had “brought about the present crisis.”[[92]](#endnote-92)

For George Kennan the elections results suggested that foreign policy would, for the foreseeable future, be mismanaged. Kennan outlined this view in his diary while reflecting upon the ongoing crisis in Suez. Contributing to a debate on the present situation, Kennan mused, would likely be of no use:

The administration is now in for another four-year term, which has not yet even begun. So long as the present people are entrusted with the conduct of foreign affairs, there will be in Washington neither the understanding requisite to the grasping of any sound advice nor the skill to implement it. Sound ideas can be voiced, but even if they are adopted nominally or in part, they are apt to be destroyed by the clumsiness of those whose function it is to implement them and this discredit may then very well spread to those that voiced them...the people wanted the administration they have got. Should they not be left to experience the full rigor of the consequences of their choice?[[93]](#endnote-93)

Reinhold Niebuhr offered a similar, if less barbed, assessment. “I find it sad,” he wrote in a letter to Stevenson, “that the Eisenhower myth ran to such proportions that it was not possible to penetrate it; and that in the last days of the campaign the failure of the Administration in foreign policy actually brought it votes as we were assured peace...it would be so good if the nation had your counsel.”[[94]](#endnote-94)

The Stevenson campaign’s inability to position their candidate as an independent and urgent voice on matters of foreign policy undoubtedly proved costly in the election itself. At the same time, though, it was hardly surprising given the broader circumstances surrounding his nomination and the long-standing problems that Democrats faced in seeking to craft a viable, and popular, stance on foreign policy after World War Two. Indeed, it is difficult not to look back to McGeorge Bundy’s assessment in an essay prior to the 1952 election, in which he set out his view that the crucial point had come with nomination of two candidates—Eisenhower and Stevenson—who saw the Cold War and the imperatives of US policy in such similar ways. “Differences exist between General Eisenhower and Governor Stevenson and between their parties,” Bundy wrote, “but at least in the first few weeks after the conventions these differences seemed esoteric in comparison with those which might have been expected on the basis of what was being said and done by party leaders on both sides in the Washington of the 82nd Congress.”[[95]](#endnote-95)

The irony here, of course, is that, within just a few months, the wider political climate changed significantly. By 1958 the national mood had shifted; calls for a change in the approach toward the Cold War were becoming more widespread. And it was John Kennedy, the senator from Massachusetts who had given the address to nominate Stevenson in 1956, who would reap the benefits. Allegations of a missile gap between the United States and the Soviets following Moscow’s successful launch of Sputnik in 1957, the emergence of Modernization Theory in social scientific circles and its embracement as a framework that could dramatically improve relations with the Third World, and the sense that a change was needed in order to replace an administration that appeared tired and jaded, all helped to create a climate whereby it was much easier for the Democrats to offer an alternative. The lessons of 1952 and 1956 were undoubtedly important in this. Nevertheless, in their determination not to repeat Stevenson’s mistakes and put distance between themselves and the Republicans, Kennedy’s campaign found themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum—proposing policies and sweeping new ideas that, while electorally popular, would be highly difficult to translate into a workable policy. And while he achieved some success on these issues, it was also true that he was forced to adopt more straightforward positions once the limitations of the presidency became evident.[[96]](#endnote-96)

The case of the 1956 election, and the Democrats’ struggle to craft an effective foreign policy position, highlights the need for scholars to reflect more widely on the relationship between domestic politics and international affairs. In doing so it accords with Thomas Schwartz’s call for studies of the link between politics and foreign policy to become more subtle and nuanced, to dig deeper, and to think more expansively about the causal relationship.[[97]](#endnote-97) Whereas most studies of this link have focused on uncovering episodes where foreign relations were affected by domestic politics—whether the vagaries of elections, domestic economic concerns, or the ongoing struggles over civil and human rights—this article highlights a case where a campaign’s attempt to utilise international matters failed to work. Stevenson’s advisors, in fact, were wrong in their belief that they could craft a position that would bolster their candidate’s chances against President Eisenhower. That they were nevertheless determined to try tells us much about their emotional attachment to the issue and, moreover, the extent to which a form of obsession with the Cold War could cloud political judgement.

1. \* The author would like to thank the British Academy and the University of Nottingham for the funding support for this research, and the editor of D&S and the journal’s anonymous readers for their feedback on previous versions of this article. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Memorandum of Conversation between President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, 21 October 1956, Box 4, White House Memoranda Series, John Foster Dulles Papers [Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas]; ‘The Choice of a Candidate,’ *New York Times* (16 October 1956); William Roger Louis, ‘Dulles, Suez, and the British,’ in Richard Immerman (eds), *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1990), 154-5 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Sherman Adams, *First-Hand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York, 1961), 244 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. On 1956 as a key moment, Simon Hall, *1956, The World in Revolt* (London, 2016); Jason Parker, *Brother’s Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (New York, 2008) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace* (New York, 2012), 704, pages from 680 give background to Suez; David Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956: The President’s Year of Crisis* (New York, 2011); Evan Thomas, *Ike’s Bluff: President Eisenhower’s Secret Battle to Save the World* (New York, 2012), 226-34; Nixon quoted in, Stephen Hess, “Foreign Policy and Presidential Campaigns,” *Foreign Policy*, No 8 (Autumn 1972), 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. On foreign policy and electoral politics more broadly, Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York, 1983); Fredrik Logevall, ‘Politics and Foreign Relations,’ *Journal of American History* Volume 95, No 4 (March 2009), 1074-8; Thomas Schwartz, “‘Winning an election is terribly important, Henry’: Partisan Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 33, No 2 (April 2009), 173-90 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
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8. Dennis Brogan, “Politics and United States Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs* Volume 33, No 2 (April 1957), 165-75 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The quote is taken from, Journal Entry by Arthur Schlesinger Jr, August 17 1956, in Andrew Schlesinger and Stephen Schlesinger (eds), Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Journals 1952-2000* (London, 2007), 43-4 (hereafter referred to as Schlesinger, *Journals*...) [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. For what continues to remain the best accounts of Stevenson’s campaign and the role that foreign policy played in it, John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World: The Life of Adlai Stevenson* (New York, 1977) [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Philip Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven, CT, 1994), 12-40; Lee Sigelman, “Presidential Popularity and Presidential Elections,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 43, No. 4 (Winter 1979), 532-4. For a sharp indictment of Stevenson’s campaign and its inability to stake out positions that would appeal to voters, “Mr Stevenson’s Kickoff,” *Washington Post* (September 15 1956), 16; “They Told Him So,” *Washington Post* (November 11 1956), E4 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Fredrik Logevall, “Bernath Lecture: A Critique of Containment,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 28, No 4 (September 2004), 490-9, quote on 493; George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York, 2008), 600-11; John Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America’s Global Role* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), 229-74; Benjamin Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy, 1949-51* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Letter from Chester Bowles to President Eisenhower, July 24 1956; Letter from Chester Bowles to Milton Eisenhower, May 11 1956, Box 131, MS 628, Part IV, Series I, Chester Bowles Papers, SMLY [Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University] [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of our Time* (New York, 2013); William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York, 2008), 29-63; Andrew Preston *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, 2012), 411-40; Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, 2001); K.A. Cuordileone, ‘“Politics in an Age of Anxiety”: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,’ *Journal of American History*, Volume 87, No 2 (September 2000), 515-45 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York, 2006), 35-68, quote on 67 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Letter from Chester Bowles to Reinhold Niebuhr, October 2 1956, Box 2, Reinhold Niebuhr Papers, LOC [Library of Congress, Washington D.C.] [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. On Eisenhower’s enduring popularity, John Sloan, *Eisenhower and the Management of Prosperity* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1991), 58-9; John Malsberger, *The General and the Politician: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and American Politics* (Lanham, MD, 2014) See: ‘How the Presidents Stack Up,’ *Wall St Journal* <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-presapp0605-31.html> (March 25 2013); ‘Presidential Approval Ratings—Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends’ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx> (March 25 2013) [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. “The Eisenhower Myth,” Article for the *New Leader* by Reinhold Niebuhr, Box 15, Reinhold Niebuhr Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Letter from Eugene Rostow to Chester Bowles, April 12 1955, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Letter from Chester Bowles to Edward Logue, February 21 1956, MS 959, Series III, Edward Logue Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Eisenhower’s nomination had also been imperilled when doubts about his willingness to stand became widespread following his heart attack in the autumn of 1955. Once he confirmed that he would stand, however, his nomination was assured. On this period see, Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*...,679-85; Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (New York, 1962), 152-64; Thomas, *Ike’s Bluff*..., 186-97 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. For information on the Democratic nomination fight before the convention, Charles Thomson & Frances Shattuck, *The 1956 Presidential Campaign* (Washington, D.C., 1960), 30-73 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid, 145-53; Kenneth S. Davis, *The Politics of Honor: A Biography of Adlai E. Stevenson* (New York, 1967), 330-5 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. W.H. Lawrence, “Kefauver Nominated for Vice President,” *New York Times* (August 18 1956) [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Journal Entry by Schlesinger, August 17 1956, in Schlesinger (eds), *Journals*..., 43-4 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Letter from George Kennan to Paul Nitze, September 5 1956, Box 34, Kennan Papers, SMLP [Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University] [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Diary entry by George Kennan, August 23 1956, in Frank Costigliola (eds), *The Kennan Diaries* (New York, 2013), 358-9; John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York, 2011), 516-7 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. 1956 Democratic Party Platform, August 13, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29601> (Sep 9 2016) [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Remarks by Senator John F. Kennedy nominating Adlai Stevenson for the Presidency, August 16 1956, in *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention 1956* (Richmond, VA, 1956), 343-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago by Adlai Stevenson, August 17, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75172> (Sep 9 2016) [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*..., 676-85; Malsberger, *The General and the Politician*..., 73-115. On the international aspects of this see, Bevan Sewell, “John Foster Dulles, Illness, Masculinity, and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1953-1961,” *International History Review*, Volume 39, No 4 (August 2017) [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago by Adlai Stevenson, August 17, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75172> (Sep 9 2016) [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Adams, *First-Hand Report*..., 234-5 [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The U.S. Left since the Second World War* (New York, 2015), 52-5; Robert McMahon, *Dean Acheson and the Creation of an American World Order* (Washington, D.C., 2008), 114-5; Andrea Friedman, ‘The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The Lavender Scare, Gossip, and Cold War Politics,’ *American Quarterly*, Volume 57, No 4 (December 2005), 1105-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. David Jordan, *FDR, Dewey, and the Election of 1944* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), 217-20 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Memorandum by Harold Ickes, August 30 1944, Box 157, Harold Ickes Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Memorandum from W.C. Clark to Michael Straus, September 15 1944, Box 157, Harold Ickes Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Memorandum on Dulles, no author or date, but in Ickes possession presumably in the autumn of 1944, Box 157, Harold Ickes Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Letter from Breckinridge Long to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, October 19 1944, Box 191, Breckinridge Long Papers, LOC. The relevant folder, in fact, is compiled of materials in which State Department officials traced the Dewey-Dulles cooperation and interaction with the Roosevelt administration’s diplomatic efforts in 1944. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. See, for example, Letter from Union Theological Seminary to James Loeb, September 18 1952, Box 350, Harriman Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Transcript of Averell Harriman Oral History Interview for the John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, sent to Harriman on January 25 1967, Box 456, Harriman Papers, LOC. Harriman’s papers, in fact, have numerous examples of memos assessing Dulles’s position on foreign policy matters and these can be found in Box 350, Averell Harriman Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Memorandum by George Ball on Dulles, October 6 1952, Box 160, George Ball Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Notes by Ball on Dulles, undated but presumably Fall of 1952, Box 160, George Ball Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. This view accords with the arguments made by Frank Costigliola and Barbara Keys, among others, about the importance of emotions in shaping actions when it comes to diplomacy. See: Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Shape the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ, 2012); Barbara Keys, ‘Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesman,’ *Diplomatic History*, Volume 35, No 4 (September 2011), 587-609 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Diary Entry by George Kennan, March 13 1953, Kennan Diary, Box 233, George F. Kennan Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Diary Entry by George Kennan, April 6 1953, Box 233, Kennan Diary, Kennan Papers, SMLP; Letter from George Kennan to J. Robert Oppenheimer, March 15 1953, Box 43, J. Robert Oppenheimer Papers, LOC; Gaddis, *An American Life*..., 477-85; John Lukacs, *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (New Haven, 2012), 110-11; David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (New York, 1988), 205; David Milne, ‘The Kennan Diaries,’ in Bevan Sewell and Scott Lucas (eds), *Challenging US Foreign Policy: America and the World in the Long Twentieth Century* (Basingtoke, 2011), 65-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Kennan’s shifting view is charted and explained in Richard Immerman, ‘Conclusion,’ in Richard Immerman (eds), *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 263 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Robert McMahon, *Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York, 1994), 154-89; Richard Dauer, *A North-South Mind in an East-West World: Chester Bowles and the Making of United States Cold War Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT, 2005) [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Bowles’ correspondence is littered with complaints about Eisenhower and Dulles’s approach towards India and Pakistan. See: Letter from Chester Bowles to John Foster Dulles, December 30 1953, Box 130; Letter from Chester Bowles to President Eisenhower, January 20 1954, Box 131; Letter from Chester Bowles to Allen Dulles, December 23 1954, Box 130; Letter from Chester Bowles to Jean Joyce, May 22 1953, Box 141, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Letter from Chester Bowles to Milton Eisenhower, May 25 1956, Box 131, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Julia Azari, *Delivering the People’s Message: The Changing Politics of the Presidential Mandate* (Ithaca, NY, 2014), Ch 3; Steven Casey, *When Soldiers Fall: How Americans have Confronted Combat Losses from World War I to Afghanistan* (New York, 2014), 132-7 [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Campbell Craig, *Destroying the Village: Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War* (New York, 1998), 44-9; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*..., 143-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Memorandum by George Ball on Dulles Massive Retaliation Speech, January 13 1954, Box 163, George Ball Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Letter from Charles Murphy to Adlai Stevenson, January 14 1954; Letter from Adlai Stevenson to Charles Murphy, January 30 1954, Box 163, George Ball Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Memo from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, July 31 1954, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid; Letter from John Sharon to William Blair, October 12 1954, Box 160, Ball Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Letter from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, September 3 1954, Box 157, Bowles Papers SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Letter from Adlai Stevenson to Chester Bowles, September 11 1954, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Telegram from Chester Bowles to George Kennan, September 21 1954, Box 6, Kennan Papers, SMLP; Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, October 1 1954, Bowles Papers, SMLY; for an example of how Stevenson used these issues in his campaign, “Text of Stevenson Reply to President’s Bid for a GOP Congress,” *New York Times* (October 31 1954), 78 [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Chalmers Roberts, “Election Won’t Upset Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post* (October 24 1954), B3; C.Z. Sulzberger, “Foreign Affairs: Eisenhower’s Foreign Policy and the Elections,” *New York Times* (October 27 1954), 28 [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. James Reston, “Washington: It’s Not Nearly as Bad as it Sounds,” *New York Times* (October 31 1954), E8; Robert Albright, “Democrats Blast Primitives Who Try to Dominate Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post* (October 26 1954), 1 [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. “Impact on Foreign Policy,” *New York Times* (November 4 1954), 30 [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Truman quoted in Steve Neal, *Harry and Ike: The Partnership that Remade the Postwar World* (New York, 2001), 295 [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Walter Lippmann, “The President and the Returns,” *Washington Post* (November 5 1954), 21 [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*..., 63-4; Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*..., 647; Sean Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (Albany, NY, 2004), 30-4 [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Letter from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, September 30 1955, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, October 28 1955, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Letter from George Kennan to Chester Bowles, October 16 1955, Box 141, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Memorandum from Walt Rostow to Chester Bowles, May 21 1956, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, November 12 1955, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, February 16 1956, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, April 27 1956, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Memorandum from Walt Rostow to Chester Bowles, August 20 1956, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Letter from Eugene Rostow to Adlai Stevenson, July 24 1956, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Letter from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, August 30 1956, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Draft Speech by Chester Bowles for Adlai Stevenson, August 30 1956, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Memorandum from Chester Bowles to Adlai Stevenson, September 19 1956, Box 157, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Letter from Eugene Rostow to Adlai Stevenson, October 9 1956, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Memorandum from Walt Rostow to Chester Bowles, September 18 1956, Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY; “Futile Suez Schemes,” *Boston Post* (September 18 1956) [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Memorandum from Walt Rostow to Chester Bowles, October 1956; Memorandum from Walt Rostow to Chester Bowles, October 1956 (undated, but sent after the preceding one), Box 154, Bowles Papers, SMLY [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Gaddis, *An American Life*..., 516-7; Anders Stephanson, *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), 226 [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Letter from George Kennan to Adlai Stevenson, March 28 1956, Box 46, Kennan Papers, SMLP [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Speech by Adlai Stevenson to American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 21 1956, in Adlai Stevenson, *The New America* (London, 1957), 17-27 [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Speech by Adlai Stevenson, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 19 1956, in Stevenson, *The New America*..., 27-34; Robert Albright, “Adlai Attack on Foreign Policy called his Highlight Speech,” *Washington Post* (October 21 1956), A2; Harrison Salisbury, “Stevenson Maps Sweeping Attack on Foreign Policy,” *New York Times* (October 21 1956), 1 [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Speech by Adlai Stevenson, Minneapolis, November 5 1956, in Stevenson, *The New America*..., 38-43; James Reston, “Peace—What Is It?”, *New York Times* (October 2 1956), 28 [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Arthur Krock, “Foreign Policy Issues give Campaign a Lift,” *New York Times* (November 4 1956), 193 [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Robert Divine, *Blowing on the Wind: The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954-1960* (New York, 1978) [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. “The Choice before the Voters,” *Washington Post* (October 28 1956), E6; “The Choice of a Candidate,” *New York Times* (October 21 1956), 203 [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Harrison Salisbury, “Stevenson lays Defeat to Crisis,” *New York Times*, (November 8 1956), 1 [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Harrison Salisbury, “Stevenson Plans Crisis Statement,” *New York Times* (November 9 1956), 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Kennan Diary, November 17 1956, Box 233, Kennan Papers, SMLP; for Kennan’s shifting views across 1956, and his assessments of changes in Soviet policy and the Suez crisis, Gaddis, *An American Life*..., 517-20 [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Letter from Reinhold Niebuhr to Adlai Stevenson, December 27 1956, Box 11, Niebuhr Papers, LOC [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. McGeorge Bundy, ‘November 1952: Imperatives of Foreign Policy,’ *Foreign Affairs* (October 1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Meriwether, ‘“Worth a Whole lot of Negro Votes”’..., 762-3; Anders Stephanson, ‘Senator John F. Kennedy: Anti-Imperialism and Utopian Deficit,’ *Journal of American Studies*, Volume 48, No 1 (February 2014), 1-24; Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York, 2013); Campbell Craig, ‘Kennedy’s International Legacy Fifty Years On,’ *International Affairs*, Volume 89, No 6 (November 2013), 1367-78 [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. Schwartz, ‘“Henry,...Winning an Election Today is Terribly Important”...; Logevall, ‘Politics and Foreign Relations...’ [↑](#endnote-ref-97)