# Words for Equality: Eisenhower, Nixon and the Civil Rights Act of 1964

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At the height of the Cold War, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles once lamented that: "[Segretation is] ruining our foreign policy. The effect of this in Asia and Africa will be worse for us than Hungary was for the Russians" (Adkins & Devermont, 2021).

This candid admission from such a prominent figure in the Eisenhower administration, known for its conservative stand on civil rights, spotlights the complicated relationship between domestic and foreign policy.

Racial segregation ended in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act (United States Congress). After Johnson came Richard Nixon, who in 1968 became the first Republican President to serve after the Civil Rights Act had passed.

In short, I would like to test Dulles' theory on U.S. Foreign Policy. On a larger scale, he makes an argument quite similar to that of Robert Putnam, whose publication *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games* (1988) has shaped the way we think about this interaction. His theory is that foreign policy is influenced by domestic influences, which determine how a country conducts itself on the international stage. This thesis tests the theory that domestic racial policies influence U.S. foreign policy by comparing Dwight D. Eisenhower's and Richard M. Nixon's rhetoric on Africa before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

To find an answer to this question, I will compare statements made by Eisenhower and Nixon regarding foreign policy in Africa, particularly as it pertains to decolonization. This research is of importance because it helps us understand the general interaction between domestic and foreign policy.

Additionally, this paper will also touch on a critical historiographical debate, as represented by historians Mary Dudziak (1988) and Thomas Borstelmann (2003) in this paper. Their opposing views on how the Cold War influenced civil rights policies provide key contextual information for this analysis. Dudziak suggests that the Cold War created a sense of urgency to desegregate, as it damaged the U.S.' moral standing and image. Borstelmann has the

opposite view: he believed that the Cold War deprioritized civil rights legislation by instead maintaining the focus on the Soviet Union. Their discourse is an essential backdrop for this paper, as it frames the investigation into how Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon's foreign policy rhetoric responded to the changed domestic civil rights landscape, examining whether shifts in racial policy under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had tangible effects on their diplomatic engagements in Africa.

As the Civil Rights Act is the beating heart for this study, it is helpful to briefly explain what the Civil Rights Act of 1964 exactly entailed: it is a landmark Bill in U.S. civil rights and labor law and became the nation's standard-bearer for laws of this nature (Department of Labor, n.d.). The Act became law during a very intense period of civil rights activism led by Reverend Martin Luther King. Large-scale protests, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, various sit-in movements and the March on Washington – which birthed the legendary King 'I Have a Dream' speech – highlighted racial injustice in the United States and boosted support for a civil rights bill (Andrews et al., 2015). In its totality, the Act aimed to address the systemic racism that was part of domestic life in the United States and abolished segregationist Jim Crow laws.

The law is divided into seven Titles, of which the first four made the most impact. Title I dealt with Voting Rights and prevented discriminating measures like literacy tests and poll taxes. However, this only applied to federal elections, and more safeguards would be put in place by the supplementary 1965 Voting Rights Act (United States Congress, 1965). Title II ended discrimination in public accommodations, such as hotels, restaurants and theaters; Title III did the same in public facilities such as swimming pools, libraries and parks. Finally, Title IV would put into law that public schools would have to be desegregated, a principle previously established by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (United States Supreme Court, 1954).

The Bill was passed with great difficulty through the United States Congress. Southern Democrats, who controlled the Senate and House Rules Committees, had to be circumvented to guarantee passage of the Bill, and the longest filibuster in U.S. history, which was also put up by Southern Democrats, had to be broken before it could be passed (Risen, 2014).

# Theory of the Case

Foreign policy is a government's strategy for dealing with other nations, involving activities such as diplomacy, trade, and international agreements to protect national interests and foster global cooperation (Smith et al., 2017). Language is an integral part of this process. The words chosen by politicians and diplomats fundamentally shape relationships and can either build or break trust, foster cooperation or sow division (Hill, 2003).

Additionally, foreign policy shapes and influences domestic politics. Leaders use it to justify their decisions and build public support (Siverson, 1998; Fang, 2008). This makes foreign policy especially complex for all leaders to navigate, as an already complicated foreign policy field also needs to be navigated so that domestic audiences approve of the President's actions (Tulis, 2017).

We should consider these papers in conjunction with Putnam's theory of two-level games, as according to Tulis, regardless of whether or not it is the case, it appears that Presidents at least act in such a manner that they are playing two-level games. Accordingly, we will turn to Putnam and two-level games.

## Putnam and two-level games

As previously mentioned, Robert Putnam came up with the idea and coined the phrase, two-level games. Putnam defines these two-level games as follows: '[a]t the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments' (1988).

Putnam's theory matters because it helps us understand how power works and where policy outcomes come from. After Putnam's work, a whole corpus of theory based both directly and indirectly on his work has been worked on. Key among them was Parry (1993), who argues that President Bill Clinton was correct when he said that 'there is no clear division today between what is foreign and what is domestic' as it reflects the increased interdependence of the nations of the world. Some, like Williams (1973), have argued that this is a side-effect of

fast-paced technology like the radio, T.V. and The Internet – and that, therefore, the validity of this argument in this context of the research question would be in doubt. Parry counters this, however, by positing that interdependence has always existed in the form of currency and that these inventions have merely increased them further as well as making them more visible.

Additionally, Kaarbo (2015) suggests that domestic policy should be one of the primary lenses through which to view foreign policy and should be treated on equal grounds with realism, constructivism and liberalism. This claim is further supported by Wittkopf and McCormick (2008), who note that the key determining factor in U.S. foreign policy seems to be 'the political culture' of the United States. Furthermore, Michael Koch (2016) argues that Congress can (and does) use institutional means to further foreign policy goals.

There are those who disagree: Knopf (1993) argues that the interdependence, as stated here by Putnam and others, is not necessarily incorrect but at least overstated. He contends that international factors often independently shape foreign policy decisions, and the influence of domestic politics, though significant, should not be viewed as the primary or even an equal factor in this process. Knopf cautions against conflating the visibility of domestic influences with their actual policy impact, thereby calling for a more balanced consideration of domestic and international determinants in foreign policy analysis.

While Knopf's argument is useful to keep in mind and might help explain the results of this paper if there turns out to be little difference between Eisenhower and Nixon, Knopf has already conceded critical ground by agreeing that two-level games exist at all. This concession is crucial because it suggests that while international factors are significant, they do not wholly overshadow domestic influences. Therefore, even if the direct effects of domestic civil rights policies on U.S. foreign policy rhetoric under Eisenhower and Nixon are subtle or minimal, acknowledging any influence aligns with Dulles' and Putnam's theories.

## Segregation and foreign policy

Many have previously chronicled the perilous relationship between domestic segregation and foreign relations. Borstelmann (2003) details in his book *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* the extent to which the Eisenhower administration faced difficulty with racial segregation. Borstelmann draws a relationship

between the United States' firm anti-Communist policy goals and the upholding of racial segregation, stating that: 'In the Third World and particularly southern Africa, U.S. Cold War policies served primarily to slow down the process of ending white rule over people of color.'

Borstelmann applies this understanding broadly: it was true domestically, but U.S. Cold War policy also upheld racist and colonial rule as set out by the governments of France, Belgium, Portugal and Britain.

Interestingly, others have come to the opposite conclusion. Dudziak (1988), for example, instead ascribed the United States' willingness to desegregate in the 1950s and 1960s because it was 'crucial to the more central U.S. mission of fighting communism.'

Both Dudziak and Borstelmann are noted revisionist historians – revisionist here meaning that they intend to reassess established interpretations of historical events – in the fields of the Cold War and Civil Rights.

Furthermore, based on recent work by Lymar and Ahieieva (2021), we should expect to see a somewhat limited impact. They argue that while the Civil Rights Act and similar legislation were a good starting point for eliminating social injustice, they were only part of a larger trajectory and not a solution to the problem, including in the eyes of foreigners. However, we should take into account that while civil rights groups and foreign officials may not have seen racial issues as 'solved', it is a possibility that the Nixon Administration did, in fact, feel that it was resolved and would, therefore, act in a manner that was in line with that view.

This historiographical debate – while strictly speaking in another discipline – is crucial for this thesis, as it provides a more in-depth understanding of how the Civil Rights Act may have influenced U.S. foreign policy rhetoric. We should note the parallel between Dudziak and Borstelmann and Robert Putnam: while Dudziak and Borstelmann disagree on how the foreign and domestic influence each other, they are both in complete agreement with Putnam that there is a strong connection there.

The (indirect) dialogue between these six scholars showcases the cross-disciplinary nature of this research and how vital a variety of complex debates are for our understanding of this research question.

# Operationalization

## Why Eisenhower and Nixon?

For this research, Eisenhower and Nixon were chosen because they were the two Republican Presidents closest to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Eisenhower entered the office in 1953 and left in 1961, and Nixon became President in 1969 and left in 1974 (White House Historical Association, n.d.). This was done because we are looking for two most similar cases: we want to find two cases that are as similar as possible to investigate one critical potential difference. Eisenhower was the last Republican President to oppose desegregation at home, whereas President Nixon was the first Republican President to support it. This sets up a unique most-similar comparison, especially considering that Nixon served as Eisenhower's Vice President.

While comparing Democrats would also make for an interesting paper, the case would be decidedly more muddled. Democratic Presidents and Presidential nominees had been supportive of desegregation going as far back as Harry Truman in 1948, who desegregated the military (Truman Library Institute, 2023). Therefore, if we were to compare President Kennedy and President Carter, the two Presidents closest to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (but not presiding over it), it would not be surprising to find that both Administrations used rather similar language, as they already held clear pro-desegregation policies.

While comparing a Republican and a Democratic President would also be an option - Kennedy and Nixon, for example – the comparison would not be apt either, as, by 1960, both parties were running on an anti-segregation platform (DNC, 1960; RNC, 1960). This would mean that at least nominally speaking, approaches would most likely be the same. Furthermore, Presidents from opposing political parties are beholden to different political pressures, making their cases far less alike, which in turn makes it more complicated – perhaps impossible – to prove that it was the Civil Rights Act that made the difference and not other factors.

Taking all of this into consideration, comparing Eisenhower and Nixon makes the most sense from both a practical and theoretical point of view.

## Africa as a foreign policy field

Africa is an especially compelling field in which to discuss this topic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the historical legacy of the relationship between the United States and the continent of Africa was, is and will continue to be marked by slavery, which established racial hierarchies and economic disparities that persist to this day. It is not unfair to say that civil rights in the United States and decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s are inherently part of the same movement that seeks to overcome systemic repression, which has come from this shared history.

Both the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations were faced with the challenge of appropriately responding to African independence movements while simultaneously dealing with the Cold War and their domestic audience. By analyzing their rhetoric in this particular field, we can most clearly zoom in on this contrast or similarity.

While Asia also experienced significant decolonization during this time, the historical connection between decolonization in Africa and U.S. civil rights movements is more direct. Therefore, Africa is more logical to focus on to clearly examine the impact of domestic desegregation and foreign policy rhetoric.

## Key themes

While investigating the statements made by Eisenhower and Nixon, three key themes have been designed to provide a holistic overview of their approach. For the purposes of this project, the theme ‘racial equality’ is the most important, but by looking into the ‘promotion of United States’ and ‘peace and justice’, we might find clues that do not directly explicitly present themselves.

‘Promotion of the United States’ is perhaps the least self-explanatory theme of the three, but it is relatively simple: it focuses on the way the President of the United States frames their country: how do they express national pride, which American values do they promote and what are references they make to enhance America’s image globally? Using a discourse analysis to study this has been previously done (Sing, 2010).

This theme matters because a key part of United States foreign policy after the Second World War has been a strong appeal to moral authority, with emphasis on the idea of the United

States being ‘the leader of the free world’ (Lerche, 1966). Therefore, it is useful to examine if and how the Civil Rights Act changed what that moral appeal sounds like; in this particular policy field, decolonization in Africa, it is more likely we will see change than in others.

We are more likely to see change here because decolonization directly engages with issues of racial equality and self-determination, which strongly resemble the underlying aspects of the Civil Rights Act. As African nations gained independence, the United States had to navigate this foreign policy area, making it ideal to observe the impact of domestic civil rights on international rhetoric.

The second theme is ‘peace and justice’. This theme looks at all references to peace, justice, stability and similar sentiments in speeches, in particular as to how they were used to frame and describe foreign policy in Africa. What does peace and justice look like to them, and how do they describe it? By assessing how they discuss these topics, we can gauge if they align or diverge – or do not appear at all - with the principles of the Civil Rights Act. Investigating how U.S. Presidents speak about peace and justice has been a common manner of research in the past (Maney et al., 2009; Karlberg, 2012).

The theme ‘racial equality’ examines direct and indirect references to racial equality, civil rights and related topics and issues. This theme aims to identify how both Presidents addressed – or avoided – these issues in their public statements. By analyzing these points, we can most clearly discern how domestic racial policies influenced the Presidents. This theme is central to understanding whether and how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 indeed did or did not influence these two Republican Presidents and is rooted in previous research (Frymer & Pauley, 2003).

Through these three themes, I can thoroughly examine how language and emphasis have changed between Eisenhower and Nixon. By directly considering more themes than just equal rights, the research will be more comprehensive.

### Presidential statements

'The American Presidency Project' by the U.C. Santa Barabara has digitalized every word uttered in public by American Presidents while in office, as well as every written legislative document they have written or released in their name during that time (2024). While the exact selection criteria will be discussed in the 'Methodology' section, the Presidential statements I have taken into account have entirely come from there. I have selected a random sample to confirm their authenticity and searched for them in the database of the Office of the Historian, an official United States office that 'is responsible, under law, for the preparation and publication of the official documentary history of U.S. foreign policy in the Foreign Relations of the United States series' (Office of the Historian, 2024a). They can be found in either the Eisenhower or the Nixon-Ford page – volumes are divided by Presidential term rather than President - and will find most of the sources in either an 'Africa' or 'Africa and South Asia' volume, depending on the year and President (Office of the Historian 2024b; Office of the Historian 2024c).

## Methodology

### Discourse analysis

This study uses discourse analysis as its methodological approach to effectively explore this theory. Discourse analysis is suited for this for several reasons, but primarily for its ability to reveal linguistic details and shifts embedded in speech. By examining the language Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon used, we can uncover underlying attitudes toward civil rights and racial equality.

Discourse analysis allows me to detect patterns, such as emphasis on certain themes of the avoidance of others and has been a common method in the past for examining Presidents (Tarish, 2019; Nguyen & Sawalmeh, 2020). These subtleties, while not impossible to detect through other means, are far easier to spot and discuss by means of a discourse analysis. By dissecting their speeches and public statements, we can identify how Eisenhower and Nixon crafted their messages and considered both domestic and international audiences.

## Selection criteria

In order to gather a robust amount of data, I have compiled every single occasion President Eisenhower or Nixon discussed African policy, decolonization policy, or a specific decolonizing country. This may be in the form of correspondence with foreign officials, public statements, responses to questions from journalists, or any other occasion where a decolonizing country or decolonization policy is discussed.

It is important to note that brief mentions of a country as part of a list or as a brief aside are not included. Doing this would invariably skew the result towards indifference because these instances do not provide substantive insights or detailed perspectives on the policy or stance regarding decolonization, thus misrepresenting the actual level of engagement or concern.

Geographic location or audience is not taken into consideration as a criteria method. The addressed people in all of these statements vary greatly, from state dinners to a London crowd and from a commemorative service of Confederate General Robert E. Lee to a conversation with a man some believe to be a deity, Haile Selassie (Asserate, 2017). In order to gain a holistic view of what both men said on this topic, all of these moments are of equal importance.

On occasion, The American Presidency Project remarks that certain statements were dated a different day than the one it was released on; for they were pre-written, or perhaps, due to human error. To avoid confusion, the date that the words were released and or spoken is noted in the study.

Remarks that Richard Nixon made during his tenure as Vice-President in the Eisenhower Administration are not included in the dataset. The objective of this research paper is to uncover the difference between the attitudes of Republican Presidents before and after the Civil Rights Act, and Nixon was not President at the time.

# Findings

As previously mentioned, three key themes have been selected to provide a more comprehensive overview of the Presidential statements. For clarity, this section has been divided into three, one for each topic: ‘Promotion of the United States’, ‘peace and justice’, and ‘equal rights’. For each theme, I will start by addressing the Eisenhower Administration and then directly compare it to the Nixon Administration.

## Promotion of the United States

The way Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon framed their country in speeches and public statements reveals a lot about their respective eras and political strategies. Eisenhower often adopted a tone that balanced pride with humility, aiming to foster friendly international relations without appearing overly assertive. While occasionally more emphatic in his promotion of American values and capabilities, Nixon was not significantly more lofty in his rhetoric.

For a complete overview, we will start by reviewing a message Eisenhower wrote to the people of the new nation of Ghana, which illustrates his approach (1957d): “It is gratifying to note the developing ties between Ghana and the United States, many of which reach back into the history of our two countries. We look forward to strengthening these ties and creating new ones. We are proud of the fact that hundreds of your young people, including yourself, have chosen to come to America to study in our schools, to establish friendships, and to return home with useful knowledge and experience.”

While it would be interesting to hear what Eisenhower meant with the history that the two countries have had with each other – or how that comment went over at the time – the rest of the statement seems to be just like you would expect any President to write it. It appears that both Presidents talk about the United States in quite the same way, although perhaps it is Dwight Eisenhower who usually takes the slightly more humble approach, whereas Richard Nixon sometimes has a bolder manner of talking about the United States, as shown here when talking at a charity event for droughts in West-Africa (1973d):

“What this event shows, far more than money, is that the heart of America goes out to those who suffer every place in the world, but particularly to those who suffer in this part of the

world, perhaps the greatest suffering of any people at any time in our time in the world. And it is the heart that really matters far more than the money. America is a rich country, America is a strong country, but when it counts, America has a very big heart, and tonight we all prove it."

Although this might tie into a larger argument about Nixon's willingness to be bold and Eisenhower's tendency to approach foreign policy in a more careful manner, as we will see in the next two sections, it is not convincing that this has anything to do with Civil Rights and might be chalked up to differences in personality or simply the different manner of speaking between the 1950s and the 1970s. Eisenhower used words like 'idealistic', 'great' and 'peaceful' (Eisenhower, 1959e; Eisenhower, 1958f), whereas Nixon instead opted for words such as 'very special', 'a humanitarian zeal', and 'uniquely capable of assisting' (Nixon, 1973b; Nixon, 1971). If one were to examine really carefully, they might say Nixon is slightly more grandiose in his way of describing the United States, but to ascribe any of it to the Civil Rights Act – or any particular event at all – would be a misstep.

This section of the research appears to, at least in part, suggest that there was no substantial difference between Eisenhower and Nixon after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. This finding suggests that the changes in how U.S. presidents promote their country on the international stage may not be as influenced by major domestic policy shifts like the Civil Rights Act as initially considered. Instead, these differences may be more reflective of each President's personal communication style and the specific geopolitical and social context of their respective administrations.

## Peace and Justice

While this dataset is not a frequency analysis (Carlson, 1967), it is worth noting that President Eisenhower discusses the topic of peace and justice far more than any other. It is not only the frequency that is noteworthy but also the passionate tone with which he appears to do it. Take, for example, this excerpt from Eisenhower's speech when he arrived in Tunisia: 'Our country, America, has welcomed warmly this new nation into the family of independent nations. We wish you good luck in all your endeavors. We hope that we, not only working among ourselves--yourselves, ourselves, and the other free nations--may be able to produce peace with justice in this world, but that as we do it, we can find the opportunities and methods by which all people may be able to raise their own standards, to realize more the happiness that

God has meant them to have, and in doing so lead our countries to a nobler, better destiny than ever before they have achieved.'

This statement is very charitable to the Tunisian government and reflects a sincere commitment to promoting peace and justice. However, it is crucial to consider the context that Eisenhower was in at the time: Tunisia had a pro-Western government in place at the time (Hunter, 1986). That may have been an influence on Eisenhower's thorough praise in this particular case. If we were to compare these statements to the ones Eisenhower sent to the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) and the Republic of the Congo, we see a very different image (1960h):

'Dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of the independence of the Malagasy Republic, I extend in my own name and on behalf of the people of the United States most cordial greetings and felicitations to you and your countrymen.

The independence of the Malagasy Republic achieved in friendly cooperation with France is a source of deep satisfaction to the United States. The Government and people of Madagascar and of France in their efforts to achieve social and economic advancement in Madagascar through democratic means have earned the admiration of all free nations.

On this historic occasion, the Government and the people of the United States look forward to close and friendly relations with the Government and people of the Malagasy Republic.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.'

And then the message to President Kasavubu of the Republic of the Congo (Eisenhower, 1960e):

'Dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of the independence of the Republic of the Congo, I extend in my own name and on behalf of the people of the United States most cordial greetings and felicitations to you and the Congolese people.

The independence of the Republic of the Congo is a source of deep satisfaction to the United States, especially since this freedom was achieved in friendly cooperation with Belgium. The attainment of independence by 13.5 million Congolese is one of the most significant events in Africa during this unprecedented year of 1960.

On this historic occasion, the Government and people of the United States look forward to close and friendly relations with the Government and people of the Republic of the Congo.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.'

While reading this, one will likely notice the two papers' incredible likeness. It is hard to gauge insincerity or disinterest on behalf of any person, particularly when it comes to written statements. It is evident that while his messages were cordial, there was a consistent restraint, possibly to avoid any diplomatic faux pas. This suggests that Eisenhower was strategic in his praise, perhaps to maintain a neutral stance in the complex geopolitical landscape of the time, where aligning too closely with one newly independent nation over others could have led to international tensions.

In contrast, Nixon's rhetoric is much more willing to reflect and discuss more specific policy issues, which perhaps reflects a more engaged stance. For example, Nixon remarked (1971a):

"The United States has followed closely and with deep admiration the accomplishments of the Organization of African Unity in promoting peace and progress on that continent. We share your aspirations for the progress and development of Africa and for the dignity and well-being of all African peoples. We look forward to a continuing close relationship between the United States and the countries of your continent."

This statement is essential because it is important to keep in mind that the Organization of African Unity - which is now disbanded and has as its successor a new organization called the African Union - did not yet include critical players like South Africa, Kenya and Angola, and therefore risked upsetting them, a maneuver that does not align with the modus operandi as we have observed it from the Eisenhower Administration thus far. Furthermore, phrases like 'the dignity and well-being of all African peoples' may not sound particularly significant.

However, they do directly acknowledge and respect the rights of the people of Africa, which is rarely, if ever, used by the Eisenhower Administration. This may be a further clue towards the carefulness: even the appearance of discussing civil rights in this context needed to be avoided.

Nixon's remarks during a dinner with African ambassadors further illustrate his broader vision (1970d):

"And we only hope that in our policy toward Africa--these new countries as well as the old ones, that we will be able to help you realize your hope, to extend to the greatest opportunity that is possible the ideas that you have for your future, but, above all, to see that your children realize that they have a chance, a chance for a better world, a more peaceful world, a world of progress, a world of opportunity for them and all of the other children of the world."

Nixon's stance, which can be described as proactive, is rather different than that of his Republican predecessor. His rhetoric emphasized moral imperatives and underscored the strategic necessity of aligning American foreign policy with its professed ideals of peace and justice. Substantial policy goals, including equality for all, human rights and peace, while generic, reflect the fact that Nixon was much more free – and willing – to discuss foreign equality for he needed not balance it with domestic inequality.

By contrast, when Eisenhower is pressed on American values during a press conference (1956b), he mentions quite an exhaustive list of issues, starting with peace and justice, but leaves out the notable omission of equal rights for all. That is the key takeaway from this section: Eisenhower simply did not mention equal rights or discuss them in this context, whereas Nixon did quite frequently.

## Civil Rights

Of all the documented times that Dwight Eisenhower discussed his foreign policy regarding the African continent or was asked about it, there is only a single occasion in which he addressed civil rights in this context, which was after he was asked a question by journalist Charles E. Shutt (Lamb, 2007) about the Sharpeville Massacre, which claimed more than 50 lives of black peaceful protesters (BBC, 1960): "Well, I think that I wouldn't want to say anything more about that than the Secretary of State has already said. Naturally, when we see

things of this kind where people are killed, and there is so much violence, we deplore it. But it is a very touchy thing where I think that there are probably a lot of people within that country of understanding, human understanding, and want to get a better condition brought about. I'd like to see them do it" (1960q).

On careful reading of this statement, this capsulates Eisenhower's tightrope balancing act quite perfectly. Those who favor civil rights might read a small show of support in it – with 'the better condition' being equality for all – but those who are against it might instead be glad to read that the President took such a neutral stance on what is hard to describe in any other manner than racist and racial violence. Regardless, the statement might be best described as careful. Apparently, Eisenhower was exceptionally worried about revealing too much on his stance about civil rights for upsetting a certain domestic group, a stance that was replicated in other domestic issues, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1957 (Mayer, 1989).

Richard Nixon, on the other hand, does not shy away from addressing the issue of civil rights in the slightest. In fact, he addressed apartheid in South Africa (Nixon, 1973f) as follows:

"For more than a decade, leading Americans in all fields have expressed this nation's profound concern over racial injustice in southern Africa, and decried the serious potential of the issue for bringing large scale conflict to this region. As I have repeatedly made clear, I share the conviction that the United States cannot be indifferent to racial policies which violate our national ideals and constitute a direct affront to American citizens. As a nation, we cherish and have worked arduously toward the goal of equality of opportunity for all Americans. It is incumbent on us to support and encourage these concepts abroad, and to do what we can to forestall violence across international frontiers."

President Nixon articulated a clear and uncompromising stance that marks a significant distinction between himself and President Eisenhower. It shows a commitment to align U.S. foreign policy more closely with its domestic values of equality and justice. In fact, Nixon explicitly connects domestic policy achievements to foreign policy objectives here. By doing so, he leverages the domestic moral and legal advancements in civil rights to frame and justify a proactive foreign policy stance. This alignment indicates a strategic shift, positioning the U.S. not just as a bystander but as a proactive advocate for global racial equality.

Nixon's unequivocal statements on racial injustice and his call for a robust international stance on civil rights issues represent a significant pivot from the ambivalence that characterized Eisenhower's era. Nixon's willingness to address these topics so openly not only differentiated his administration's approach to foreign policy but also demonstrated a deliberate alignment of U.S. international rhetoric with its evolving domestic policy landscape.

Based on this section, I do not think it is unfair to say that we see Putnam's two-level games in action here. In his framework, leaders must simultaneously satisfy domestic political demands while negotiating international pressures. By aligning his foreign policy rhetoric with the national civil rights agenda, Nixon adheres to domestic expectations of promoting racial equality and projects these values onto the international stage. This strategic alignment allows him to bolster his position domestically by fulfilling the expectations of a society that is increasingly intolerant of racial discrimination while also positioning the United States as a leader in global civil rights, thus satisfying both levels of the game. Nixon's approach, therefore, illustrates how domestic policy victories can influence and shape international diplomacy, reinforcing Putnam's argument about the interconnectedness of domestic and international arenas in shaping foreign policy.

# Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between domestic racial policies and U.S. foreign policy rhetoric by comparing Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon's speeches and public statements concerning African decolonization. By examining the language used by these two Republican presidents before and after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this research sought to test John Foster Dulles' statement and Robert Putnam's theory that there was a link between domestic racial segregation and foreign policy.

We have done this by investigating three key themes: promotion of the United States, peace and justice and equal rights.

## Key Findings

The section on the Promotion of the United States points toward there not being a link between the Civil Rights Act and a change in rhetoric. Dwight Eisenhower managed to

convey a message of strength with some humility, being a clear yet cautious communicator with foreign officials, such as in his messages to the Ghanan people. While Nixon's rhetoric sometimes appeared more assertive, it did not significantly diverge from Eisenhower's style, suggesting that changes in their rhetoric were more likely due to the differing political and social climates of their times rather than the direct influence of the Civil Rights Act.

On the other hand, the section on Peace and Justice provided us with more straightforward indications. Eisenhower often kept a relatively neutral and timid stance, with carefully crafted messages to maintain friendly relationships with all. Nixon's approach, contrarily, was more direct and engaged with more specific policy issues. His statements often highlighted the dignity, well-being and destiny of African people. It conveys to us that he wanted to show the African peoples that they and the United States were aligned on these issues, such as equality for all and racial justice. Nixon's rhetoric suggested a more proactive stance, likely influenced by the broader impact of the Civil Rights Act and equal rights movements on American political discourse. His willingness to openly discuss these themes marks a very clear shift in how American values were communicated on the international stage.

Finally, the section on equal rights: Eisenhower's reluctance to address civil rights issues directly in his foreign policy rhetoric was evident. His response to the Sharpeville Massacre, for example, was cautious and non-committal, reflecting his broader strategy to avoid alienating domestic or international audiences by taking a clear stance on apartheid. In contrast, Nixon did not shy away from addressing civil rights in his foreign policy rhetoric. His condemnation of apartheid in South Africa demonstrated a clear alignment with the moral and political shifts occurring domestically. Nixon's proactive stance on civil rights in international contexts represented a significant departure from Eisenhower's cautious approach, reflecting societal changes and the growing importance of civil rights in American political discourse.

## Significance of the research

This thesis tests Dulles' theory that domestic racial policies influence U.S. foreign policy by comparing Eisenhower's and Nixon's rhetoric on Africa before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While the evidence did not exclusively point in one direction, mainly as it concerned the key theme of the Promotion of the United States, it did, in large part, prove that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 influenced United States foreign policy in Africa. In doing this, I have

provided insight into the real-life effects of two-level games. This research is significant, as it shows how domestic civil rights policies by means of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have changed U.S. foreign policy, particularly in relation to the continent of Africa. The findings reveal that domestic change can have consequences far beyond the nation's borders.

## Theory review

The findings resonate with Putnam's theory that domestic policies significantly shape international strategies. Influenced by civil rights advancements, Nixon's rhetoric supports Putnam's assertion of the interconnectedness of domestic and international policies.

Therefore, this study directly disagrees with Knopf's argument that domestic policy has a limited impact on the foreign agenda. As Nixon's clear shift in rhetoric once more showed, there was a very clear shift between the two Presidents.

At this time, we will return to the discourse between Dudziak and Borstelmann regarding their interaction between the Cold War and Civil Rights, as we have now considered the evidence. Dudziak's perspective, that the Cold War pushed the United States into further desegregation, is validated by the evidence. If we were to assume that Borstelmann is right, Nixon should have taken a stance that resembles Eisenhower much more closely than was actually the case.

This research tackles political science and historical questions by considering both the questions raised by Putnam and Dudziak and Borstelmann. It blends theory with historical analysis to reveal how domestic changes influence international strategies. An interdisciplinary approach was key for a complete overview of the topic.

## Implications

While the study predominantly focused on historical contexts, the implications of these findings extend into contemporary political and international relations. Today, the United States continues to grapple with numerous domestic issues, from debates over immigration policy to movements for racial justice and police reform. Each of these issues holds the potential to affect the U.S.'s international image and diplomacy like the transformations observed during the Nixon administration post-Civil Rights Act. For instance, how the U.S.

these issues might significantly influence its moral and ethical standing, thereby affecting its ability to lead and engage effectively on the global stage.

## Suggestions for further research

Still, this research has also provided a variety of fruitful avenues for further research. Chief among them would be: why did the first theme, promotion of the United States, provide a different answer for the research question than the other two key themes? There would be many possibilities, but a good approach would be to analyze speeches and public statements for more specific sub-themes or contexts or compare statements made in different international forums versus domestic addresses.

Another interesting research possibility would be to see if this effect persists when investigating different continents, such as Asia and Latin America. That would reveal whether or not this effect is unique to the African continent or whether it was part of a broader communication strategy. Such research would help us gain an understanding of historical foreign policy communication.

## Note on the sources

Two different source lists have been included: one with all of the sources used throughout the thesis and one that includes those considered for the discourse analysis, even if they were not explicitly mentioned anywhere, all of which come from the American Presidency Project. Other citations from the American Presidency Project, such as the 1960 RNC and DNC party platforms, are included in the regular sources list.

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