

## ABSTRACT

Comparative Military Leadership Styles: Eisenhower, MacArthur, Nimitz

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Defining good leadership is difficult. To help clarify what traits make good leaders, it appears useful to conduct a historical analysis of previous leaders. In the era of World War II, Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and Chester Nimitz stood out as formidable battlefield strategists and apt politicians. One way to understand how each leader ascended to his position and how he led in it is to study how their own motivations and talents, the influence of others on them, and plain luck marked their lives and careers. A comparative analysis of these attributes can help demonstrate how different styles of leadership can be successful and which attributes were most useful in unique circumstances. Taken together, these examinations can inspire the next generation of leaders as they form their own leadership styles while building on the legacy of those before them.

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COMPARATIVE MILITARY LEADERSHIP STYLES:

EISENHOWER, MACARTHUR, NIMITZ

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Dwight D. Eisenhower

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz are three of the most memorable leaders of World War II. Eisenhower rose from a humble childhood in Kansas to become a key military leader and strategist in the European theater. He went on to serve two terms as President of the United States in the early years of the Cold War. He made several crucial decisions that advanced America domestically and in foreign policy. While not generally ranked in the highest tier of American Presidents, he is still respected and retains favorable ratings today.

MacArthur, conversely, was born into a family with a long legacy of military service. His father was widely regarded as a Civil War hero and the army was the family business. History generally looks favorably on his strategy in the Pacific Theater during World War II, but his leadership in Korea ended with his removal from command. Politically, he was a central figure in the occupation of Japan and made one disastrous run for president. His legacy remains as polarizing and controversial as the man was in his day.

Nimitz hailed from a family with German roots in Fredericksburg, Texas. He is not as well-known as Eisenhower, nor as controversial as MacArthur, but instrumental in the Battle of Midway and other Allied naval victories in the Pacific War. Midway is now known as the battle that turned the tide of the Pacific war in favor of the United States and its allies. Nimitz served briefly in a political capacity as the Plebiscite Administrator

for Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir remains a hotly contested region between Pakistan and India. Nimitz has mostly faded from the collective memory of the American public, but he remains a giant in the annals of the United States Navy. An entire class of aircraft carriers has been named in his honor. How did these three men get into their places of power and why do we remember them as great leaders?

Every day new leaders rise up to take the place of previous ones. To continue progressing as a nation, citizens should evaluate their leaders to find what was done well and what could use improvement. As society changes and perspectives evolve, people should reexamine the choices and motivations of past leaders to aid in understanding the past and guiding the future. Learning from the leaders of the past should help leaders of the present and future make better decisions. And, when possible, learning from leaders of the past should help choose better leaders for the future. This thesis will examine how the three men's internal motivations, external factors, and even luck and other imponderables got them to their leadership positions, how these factors influenced the decisions they made, and whether they were effective leaders. It will conclude with a three-way comparison to prove that those factors ultimately determined their success as leaders.

This paper will examine the military and political decisions that these men made within their historical context and evaluate their outcomes. The outcomes of their decisions will be judged based on whether they met the intended objective or solved the problem at hand. They will also be evaluated based on second-order effects. When examining the downstream effects of a leader's decision, this paper will remember two things. First, successful leaders should anticipate as many downstream effects of their

decision as possible. Second, while a good leader should predict and balance these downstream effects, the historian has the benefit of hindsight that leaders did not enjoy in their day. Ultimately, this paper will analyze and compare how Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz succeeded as leaders and where they failed. It will show what made them effective, and in some cases, controversial.

Of the leaders under discussion, Dwight D. Eisenhower is likely best-remembered as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe and as American president from 1953 to 1961. Eisenhower was born in Dennison, Texas, but grew up in Abilene, Kansas. Eisenhower's father struggled to hold down a job, and the family moved several times before settling in Abilene.<sup>1</sup> In his autobiography *At Ease*, Eisenhower never speaks ill of his father, but readers can see that his mother was a very early influence on his motivations and work ethic. He dedicated an entire chapter to her and credited her with teaching him morality and work habits. One key external factor to a leader's success is their mentors. Eisenhower's earliest mentor was his mother. Eisenhower also links his ethics to his humble childhood. He and his brothers had to work and contribute to the family. In *At Ease*, Eisenhower states, "One circumstance that helped our character development: we were needed. I often think today of what an impact could be made if children believed they were contributing to a family's essential survival and happiness"<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower's mother was very religious, and religion played a major part of his home life growing up, but it did not seem to matter much in adulthood.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, Illustrated Edition (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2013), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (Eastern Acorn Press, 1981), 33.

Religion was likely not a major force behind his motivation as he rarely mentioned it in correspondence and only officially joined a church during his presidency.<sup>3</sup>

In his early life, Eisenhower found his earliest mentor in his mother and learns self-motivation by contributing to the family. When considering how Eisenhower fared in the birth lottery, a case could be made that he was a little short on luck due to his poor up-bringing in a small Kansas town. This is particularly true compared to many of his contemporaries such as General George Patton and General Douglas MacArthur.

However, his childhood turned out to be one of his greatest strengths. Eisenhower had a way with people that is often credited to his small-town charisma. Eisenhower charmed many of his earliest mentors who helped him advance in the Army, such as General Fox Conner. His success in networking was due in part to his talent and political acumen, but his generic childhood Midwest hometown turned out to be a lucky spin of Fortuna.

Eisenhower had little hope of higher education outside of the service academies because of his family's lack of funds. His efforts to attend either West Point or Annapolis show how another outside influence and his own motivation took him to the United States Army. Eisenhower maintained a very close friendship and correspondence with Kansas Senator Everett "Swede" Hazlett throughout his life. Eisenhower met Hazlett in high school, and Hazlett turned Eisenhower's attention to the service academies.<sup>4</sup>

Eisenhower also showed his internal motivation in his dedication to attend one of the service academies. Admission required a congressional nomination, and the Eisenhower family had no political connections. Interestingly, biographer Jean Edwards Smith

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, 16.



mentions luck in Eisenhower's eventual acceptance to West Point. Unlike most congressmembers at the time, Kansas's senior senator held an exam to determine who would receive the appointment. Eisenhower was fairly academically adept and scored second among the eight contenders for the appointment. He spent hours studying for the exam with Hazlett.<sup>5</sup> He also wrote in *At Ease* that he would have preferred to attend Annapolis, but was too old and therefore ineligible. However, Smith notes that he actually lied about his age during the appointment process at least twice so that he could qualify for both schools.<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower eventually did receive a senatorial nomination to West Point. In this chapter of his life, Hazlett was a key influence on Eisenhower who helped lead him to his eventual successes as a military and political leader. Eisenhower himself demonstrated his own internal motivation to attend the academy through his intense study and occasional fib. At this point in his life, it is highly unlikely that he saw himself as a future General of the Armies. In fact, in his reminiscences in *At Ease*, he wrote, "But no one was given much time to think— and when I did it was always, "Where else could you get a college education without cost."<sup>7</sup>

Any cadet who persisted through a plebe year of early-twentieth-century West Point hazing must have had a significant amount of internal motivation. Eisenhower himself noted, "I suppose that if any time had been provided to sit down and think for a

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<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 17; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: The Prewar Diaries and Selected Papers, 1905-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 4.

moment, most of the 285 of us would have taken the next train out.”<sup>8</sup> As Eisenhower’s graduating class four years later had 161 new officers, just under half of that entering class did succeed. Eisenhower himself would be the first to admit that he was not the most squared-away cadet at West Point. He claimed he had a lack of motivation in just about everything but sports.<sup>9</sup> This was unfortunate because he was a mediocre athlete at best, though he credited much of his education in leadership to football.<sup>10</sup> Eisenhower was not a punctilious rule-follower. He picked up cigarette smoking and poker, though both were against the rules. He quipped, “Cigarette smoking, if discovered, brought serious penalties. So, I started smoking cigarettes.”<sup>11</sup> Eisenhower was also hopelessly devoid of rhythm for military drill, noting that he often found himself in Awkward Squad.

Despite accumulating quite a few demerits, Eisenhower did eventually graduate in 1915. This was not without a bit of help from his personality, though. Here is the first instance of many where Eisenhower’s likeability benefitted him in Army. Eisenhower seriously injured his knee playing football and was almost medically disqualified from the Army. The medical officer at West Point took a liking to Eisenhower and recommended him for a commission into the infantry. This was after Eisenhower refused the officer’s recommendation to commission as an artillery officer, which the physician

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<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Eisenhower, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 25; Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 16.

himself was.<sup>12</sup> Despite his lukewarm attitude to it at the time, Eisenhower would eventually find his stride in the military. He clearly was not motivated for stars at the time, but his natural affability kept him on track to find that motivation eventually. The West Point class of 1915 eventually became known as “The Class the Stars Fell On” due to the high number of general officers that came out of it.<sup>13</sup> Each one of those officers had his own talents and motivations, but often the luck of having a war coincide with an officer’s military career plays a massive role in what rank they eventually attain. This was certainly the case for Dwight Eisenhower.

Eisenhower’s early military career was spent mostly in garrisons and the closest thing to combat he saw was on the gridiron. His motivation to perform in the military grew and a string of mundane assignments frustrated him. Multiple times in his memoir he stated that he always tried to be the best officer that he could, regardless of the job at hand.<sup>14</sup> He considered himself unlucky in that he never saw combat in World War I. The demobilization effort after World War I gave him great insight that eventually led to one of his greatest accomplishments as Commander-In-Chief. As part of the demobilization effort, Eisenhower was assigned to a unit tasked with taking a convoy of military vehicles across the United States. At the time, automobiles were still very new and America had very few paved roads. Trekking the convoy across so many miles of dirt was incredibly

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<sup>12</sup> Merle Miller, *Ike the Soldier*, First Edition (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1987), 32.

<sup>13</sup> Michael E. Haskew, *West Point 1915: Eisenhower, Bradley, and the Class the Stars Fell On*, 1st Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2014), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 146.

difficult, and Eisenhower noted this in his reports.<sup>15</sup> Eisenhower had great foresight as a political leader, and America's roadways are a great early example of this. Eisenhower first noticed America's need for mass roadways after this assignment, but seeing Germany's autobahn system made it a top priority for his presidency. He wrote in his memoir, "A third of a century later, after seeing the autobahns of modern Germany and knowing the asset those highways were to the Germans, I decided as President, to put an emphasis on this kind of road building."<sup>16</sup> The Interstate highway system was a fantastic accomplishment of the Eisenhower administration that came from his early insight and experience as an army officer.

After returning from his cross-country trek, Eisenhower met one of the most important officers of his early career. General Fox Conner was a critical mentor and asset in the career of Dwight Eisenhower. In his diary, Eisenhower describes Conner as, "[a] wonderful officer and leader with a splendid analytical mind. He is as loyal to subordinates as to superiors, and like Simonds, Moseley and others of our finest is quick to give credit to juniors."<sup>17</sup> Conner turned Eisenhower into a military scholar, helped him escape an often glossed-over potential court martial, and put him in contact with legendary generals of the US Army.<sup>18</sup> Here, one again sees how an outside influence on Eisenhower connects with his own internal motivation to advance his military career. Conner urged Eisenhower to partake in his extensive library of military history and

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<sup>15</sup> Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 166.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, 227.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 62; Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 185.

theory, and Eisenhower obliged.<sup>19</sup> He noted in his memoirs that he read Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* three times. The insight he gained from the Prussian officer's famous military work, among others, was likely a huge aid to him in defeating Germany. Conner also helped Eisenhower escape a court martial for improperly drawing a stipend for his son.<sup>20</sup> The biggest aid Conner provided Eisenhower was getting him choice assignments over the Army's initial taskings. Twice, Conner helped Eisenhower out of assignments he was not pleased with and into better ones. The first time, Conner had Eisenhower sent to the Fort Leavenworth School of Infantry, where Eisenhower ranked first in his class. Then, Conner had Eisenhower transferred to the American Battle Monuments Commission. At that assignment, he worked for the renowned World War I General John J. Pershing.

Eisenhower's time under Pershing went quite well and ended with a commendation. Pershing praised Eisenhower highly in his personal correspondence.<sup>21</sup> Eisenhower was very humble and respectful to ranking officers. He admired Pershing so much that he kept a letter he received from the general as personal keepsake.<sup>22</sup> He worked well with officers who were notoriously difficult to work with, General Douglas MacArthur and General George Patton were chief among them. Even Pershing had a few quirks that Eisenhower disliked. Eisenhower was an early riser, but Pershing was quite the opposite. Eisenhower noted that Pershing often showed up to the office at noon and

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, 62.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 376.

<sup>22</sup> Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, 201.

stayed until midnight. This led to many nights with little sleep for Eisenhower.<sup>23</sup> While he did write about their quirks and his own frustrations, Eisenhower almost never spoke ill of the officers he worked with. This even included General George Mosely, like Patton, a notorious anti-Semite. Eisenhower worked extensively with MacArthur in Washington, D.C., and in Manila. MacArthur was famously ill-tempered and egotistic. Nevertheless, Eisenhower's charm still worked and he left MacArthur with another commendation. Eisenhower described MacArthur in his diary as, "impulsive— able, even brilliant— quick— tenacious of his views and extremely self-confident."<sup>24</sup> Later in the war, Eisenhower also worked with General George Patton. Like MacArthur, Patton was brash and, to quote Smith, "had an incurable case of foot-in-mouth disease"<sup>25</sup> Despite this, Eisenhower admired Patton's tactical aptitude. Eisenhower often utilized his own diplomatic talent and political skill to help Patton out of problems he had talked or slapped himself into.<sup>26</sup> Eisenhower had a gift for working with others. These talents were critical to his leadership in World War II as a General and eventual Supreme Commander.

Eisenhower's best-known accomplishment as Supreme Commander was Operation Overlord, or the D-Day invasion of France on the Western Front of the war. The final decision for this position came down to Eisenhower and General George C. Marshall. Eisenhower was chosen over Marshall because Eisenhower had more field

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<sup>23</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 207.

<sup>24</sup> Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, 201.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 415.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 415.

experience and Marshall was more useful in Washington, D.C. Even frequent critics of Eisenhower such as Lord Alan Brooke were satisfied with Roosevelt's decision.<sup>27</sup>

Eisenhower was primarily a strategic planner of the D-day invasion, and he gave great leeway to the generals under him for tactics. Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose believes this caused Eisenhower's biggest missteps on the Western Front. Ambrose argues that Eisenhower's desire to be well-liked led him to give too much latitude to his subordinates. Because of this, British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery did not take the necessary objectives to capture Antwerp, which may have forced the Germans to surrender much earlier in the war.<sup>28</sup> Eisenhower notes this in his account of the war in Europe, *Crusade in Europe*.<sup>29</sup> The argument that Eisenhower was motivated only or primarily by a desire to be liked is thin. Eisenhower certainly strove for consensus and made efforts to be liked, but his talents as a strategist and tactician were limited.<sup>30</sup> Eisenhower mentions that he disagreed with Montgomery and tried to convince him to capture Antwerp, but there is likely hindsight bias in this writing.<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower's decision to give so much freedom to his generals was due partly to his desire to be liked, but also because of his own limitations as a strategist. Furthermore, Eisenhower typically

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<sup>27</sup> Lord Alan Alanbrooke, *War Diaries, 1939-1945: Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke*, ed. Alex Danchev, New Edition (London: Orion Pub Co, 2002), 491; Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 317.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *The Supreme Commander: The War Years of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (New York: Anchor, 2012), 159.

<sup>29</sup> Dwight David Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, Reprint edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 305.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 291.

<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 305.

gave great latitude to his close followers, and this remained true into his presidency.

While it may have caused a missed opportunity on the Western Front, Eisenhower's skills as a delegator typically served him well.

Following his work in World War II, Eisenhower served as Chief of Staff of the Army before finally retiring from active service. He briefly served as President of Columbia University before entering the political arena. As President, Eisenhower is often remembered favorably, though not as a legend like Lincoln or Washington. Eisenhower made several significant contributions to the country as President. He initiated the creation of the interstate highway system, advanced the space race, and made moderate gains in civil rights. He made some missteps in foreign and military policy, for example the U2 Incident, but handled other issues well. Eisenhower despised nuclear weapons and helped institute their status as last-resort weaponry. Eisenhower also opposed military deficit spending and the military-industrial complex. Eisenhower's opposition to nuclear weapons and huge military spending show remarkable foresight that could benefit our country in the age of the F-35. His refusal to utilize nuclear weapons added to the precedent of their last-resort status. The Presidency was the pinnacle of Eisenhower's leadership journey. Eisenhower was famously skilled at delegation. He was a good political strategist, and he showed the kind of foresight that the United States would do well to embrace today.

Eisenhower was president at a very volatile time in our nation's history with regard to nuclear weapons. He found himself regularly distressed by the situation.<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower always despised nuclear weapons and was opposed to their use in Japan. At

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<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 315.



the Potsdam Conference Eisenhower voiced his fears saying, “I disliked seeing the United States take the lead in introducing into war something as horrible and destructive as this new weapon was described to be.”<sup>33</sup> No one could have predicted the subsequent nuclear arms race of the Cold War, but Eisenhower recognized that dropping a nuclear weapon would have incalculable second-order effects. Eisenhower made “Atoms for Peace” a key part of his presidency at the United Nations. This program promoted the peaceful use of nuclear energy and discouraged nuclear weapons proliferation.

Eisenhower intended to show the UN that “admitting the terrible destructive energy of nuclear energy, might express the point of view of the free world of the constructive capabilities of nuclear energy.”<sup>34</sup> Despite its obvious negative effects, Eisenhower also recognized the great potential for good in nuclear power. The Atoms for Peace policies did have huge rippling effects, including establishing the first nuclear reactor in Iran immediately after overthrowing Mohammed Mossadegh.<sup>35</sup> No one could predict the volatile history of Iran, but the Eisenhower administration should have done a better job anticipating the destabilizing effect that a regime change would have in the Middle East. Overall, Eisenhower handled nuclear weapons very well and anticipated the destruction an arms race would cause. Keeping hindsight bias in mind, more foresight could have been used in Eisenhower’s policy in Iran.

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 450; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, 1st Edition (Place of publication not identified: Doubleday, 1963), 443.

<sup>34</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Memorandum of Meeting- Bermuda Meeting,” December 4, 1953, Eisenhower Presidential Library.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 630.

One of the most salient predictions that Eisenhower made during his presidency was recognizing the danger of the military-industrial complex. In today's way of life, it is hard to imagine the American economy without its intense reliance on defense spending and production. Prior to World War II, America was generally isolationist in its foreign policy. Eisenhower observed America's pivot onto the world stage, and he predicted the transformation the economy could go through to support extensive defense spending. Eisenhower famously warned against this "military industrial complex" in his farewell speech from the presidency.<sup>36</sup> The government did little to heed this warning and went on to spend billions of dollars in a nuclear arms race and hopelessly entangled the American economy with deficit defense spending. Long before his farewell address, he also reminded the world in 1953 that, "[e]very gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone."<sup>37</sup> Despite all the missteps and faults of Eisenhower and his Presidency, he was spot on in predicting our future entanglement in deficit defense spending. This also helps highlight one other aspect of his decision-making. Eisenhower was largely unaffected by political parties. He ran as a Republican, but he was not tied to the party as a politician. Being a retired general with no further interest in politics helped him beat far-right candidates like Barry Goldwater, and it gave him more freedom to institute policies outside of the Republican platform.

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<sup>36</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Address," January 17, 1961, Eisenhower Presidential Library.

<sup>37</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Change for Peace Speech," April 16, 1953, Eisenhower Presidential Library.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was not a perfect leader, but he was effective. In the military, his easygoing likeability usually served him well. His early motivations for a free education outside of Abilene put him on the path to success. With a nudge from Swede Hazlett, Eisenhower found himself at West Point. As his motivations to be a good military officer grew, the senior officers he learned from helped him along in his journey, particularly General Fox Conner. Conner was one of many influences in the life of Eisenhower, but he was one of the most instrumental in his eventual success as an officer. Eisenhower would have likely found himself turned out of the Army on a court martial without the work of Conner. Eisenhower also owed much of his early military scholarship to Conner and his library. Eisenhower's instinctive likability was also instrumental in his early career. He worked well with some of the most difficult generals in American military history. Taken together, his mentors, friends, internal motivation, intrinsic likeability, and the luck of being in the right place at the right moment brought him his position as Supreme Allied Commander and later the Presidency.

In his time as Supreme Allied Commander and as President, Eisenhower is often cited as a skilled consensus builder. He gave wide latitude to generals below him and allowed them to lead with their own skills and talents. As President, his skills as a delegator were legendary. He also possessed a gift for common sense and foresight. He predicted the negative downstream effects of deploying nuclear weapons and he worked to manage their use in his Presidency. He was a military leader who fought for peace. In a final gift of great insight, he warned against entangling the economy with military deficit spending. In a final message of unity, he reminded his countrymen, "Down the long lane of the history yet to be written America knows that this world of ours, ever growing

smaller, must avoid becoming a community of dreadful fear and hate, and be, instead, a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect.”<sup>38</sup> Eisenhower’s legacy of teamwork and common sense will likely outshine his weaknesses and faults, and it shows that great leaders unify rather than divide.

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<sup>38</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Address,” January 17, 1961, Eisenhower Presidential Library.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Douglas MacArthur

While Eisenhower was widely beloved as a leader, General Douglas MacArthur was far more controversial. He had a flamboyant personality and little respect for authority. His military career was spotted with great successes and famous failures. His legacy is likely to remain complicated and controversial. Still, MacArthur's life was marked by personal determination, various outside influences, and some luck.

MacArthur was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, to Arthur MacArthur Jr. and Mary Pinkney "Pinky" MacArthur. MacArthur's grandfather, Arthur MacArthur Sr., was an immigrant from Scotland. He became an American politician and federal judge. Arthur MacArthur, Jr. was a famous Union soldier during the Civil War. He received the Medal of Honor for his actions at the Battle of Missionary Ridge.<sup>39</sup> The Medal of Honor was awarded far more often in the nineteenth and early twentieth century than it is today, but it was still a momentous achievement. Douglas MacArthur grew up with many experiences common to military children. He moved frequently and lived on several military installations. MacArthur wrote about his Scottish heritage and his father's military service in his memoirs.<sup>40</sup> MacArthur's mother, however, exerted the greatest impact on him throughout his early life and adulthood.

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<sup>39</sup> William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880 - 1964*, reprint edition (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 26.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 6.

Mary Pinkney Hardy MacArthur, commonly known as “Pinky,” was deeply involved in her sons’ lives. She can also be credited for MacArthur’s acceptance to West Point in 1899. Joining the military was likely a certainty in Douglas MacArthur’s life trajectory. His older brother attended the Naval Academy. MacArthur recalled struggling in school in his early years.<sup>41</sup> His mother took it upon herself to ensure his academic success. He maintained extremely high marks in secondary school at the West Texas Military Academy in San Antonio.<sup>42</sup> MacArthur had remarkable success in the classroom, but little innate talent for sports. His talents on the playing fields came from hard work and stamina. He finished secondary school at the top of his class after competing with undefeated baseball and football teams. MacArthur’s father and grandfather used their political connections to collect an assortment of prestigious recommendations for him.<sup>43</sup>

Despite his accomplishments and extensive help from his parents, MacArthur was not appointed to WestPoint in 1897. He also failed the physical examination due to his irregular spinal curvature.<sup>44</sup> Despite these hurdles, MacArthur and his parents were determined to attain a position at West Point for him. They moved to Minnesota and restarted the nomination process. MacArthur saw a specialist for his spinal curvature issue. He studied extensively for the entrance exam with a tutor and under the watchful

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<sup>41</sup> Arthur Herman, *Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior* (Random House Publishing Group, 2016), 28.

<sup>42</sup> Herman, 28.

<sup>43</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Manchester, 46.

eye of his mother.<sup>45</sup> In his memoirs he wrote that in studying for the entrance exam, he had “never worked harder in [his] life”<sup>46</sup> The family’s efforts paid off, and their son was appointed to West Point in 1898.<sup>47</sup>

MacArthur’s road to West Point provides critical insight into his early life. His parents loomed large from his early days onward. His father left big shoes for him to fill, and his mother was determined to help him fill them. Douglas MacArthur’s attachment to his mother became notorious in the upper echelons of the military.<sup>48</sup> Her impact on his military career grew when she followed him to New York and lived in the West Point Hotel during MacArthur’s college years.<sup>49</sup>

Life as a West Point plebe at the turn of the century was particularly brutal, even given stringent West Point traditions. MacArthur was in an especially difficult situation because he was the son of a war hero and his mother lived just down the street.<sup>50</sup> He endured one particularly nasty episode of physical hazing that ended with him passed out and convulsing all night. To avoid getting caught, the upperclassmen put blankets in his mouth and under his pounding feet. After that night he won the respect of the upperclassmen for his endurance and refusal to snitch.<sup>51</sup> A classmate of MacArthur’s was

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<sup>45</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 32.

<sup>46</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 18.

<sup>47</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Herman, 38.

not as lucky. After hazing caused the death of a plebe, President William McKinley decided to investigate the incident and general hazing practices at West Point.<sup>52</sup>

MacArthur was asked to testify in a congressional investigation of hazing at West Point. The thought of snitching on the upperclassmen terrified MacArthur.<sup>53</sup> When asked about incidents of hazing, MacArthur described the acts, but he never named any perpetrators. He also refused to say that he had been in “convulsions.” Instead, he described his physical condition as “exaggerated cramps.” He testified, “I have seen it in the newspapers, that I was at one time hazed until I suffered severe convulsions. No such affair took place. I was hazed at the time in question until I was quite tired; I might say more than that.”<sup>54</sup>

MacArthur was not opposed to hazing. He wrote in his memoir, “Conditions in those days were different from today. Much of the discipline of new cadets was left in the hands of the upper classes. Hazing was practiced with a worthy goal, but with methods that were violent and uncontrolled.”<sup>55</sup> MacArthur never mentioned the dead cadet. Furthermore, he refused to consider himself a victim. He also wrote, “I was summoned to appear before the court as a principal witness in a case in which I had been the so-called

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<sup>51</sup> Herman, 42.

<sup>52</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> MacArthur, 26.

<sup>54</sup> Douglas MacArthur, “INVESTIGATION OF HAZING AT U. S. MILITARY ACADEMY.,” Pub. L. No. H.rp.2768, § House Committee to Investigate Hazing at the Military Academy Special, 642 (1901), 916, <https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/congressional/result/congressional/congdocumentview?accountid=7014&groupid=115055&parmId=1758876AE8B#2122>.

<sup>55</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 25.



victim.”<sup>56</sup> MacArthur almost certainly participated in hazing as an upperclassman. In 1901, the *New York Times* reported that he was disciplined for infractions relating to hazing.<sup>57</sup> Hazing was essentially synonymous with West Point in the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, MacArthur’s fortitude in the face of such significant hazing displayed his dedication to the Army. It also demonstrated his perseverance without his mother there to hold him accountable. MacArthur’s parents were significant forces in his early accomplishments, but MacArthur had his own drive and strong will.

MacArthur also defied one of his earliest authorities while at West Point. This trait continued sporadically in his time in the military, and it eventually ended his career in Korea. While MacArthur was still at West Point, he performed exceptionally well. His scores were among the highest in his class. At the time, high-performing seniors did not usually have to take final exams. His instructor for a particular math course insisted that he must take the final exam because he had missed one quiz. MacArthur told the instructor that he simply would not take the exam. When his roommate asked what his plan was, MacArthur said that if he were required to take the exam, he would resign. In the end, the cadet won out against the full-bird colonel. He got word from the instructor the next morning releasing him from the exam requirement.<sup>58</sup> MacArthur’s willingness to throw away his four years of grueling work at West Point was one of the first examples

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<sup>56</sup> MacArthur, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Special to *The New York Times*, “MUTINOUS CADETS TO LEAVE WEST POINT: Five Are Dismissed and Six Others Suspended. Many More of the Second and Third Classes Will Be Punished, Among Them Douglas MacArthur.,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1901.

<sup>58</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*. 70

of his indomitable will. It also showed his willingness to take extraordinary risks. In this instance, his pride paid off. Overall, MacArthur's time at West Point was emblematic of his intelligence, perseverance, and flamboyant pride. He went on to have an illustrious career in the military beginning with an assignment in the Philippines.

MacArthur's first time in the Philippines was brief due to a bout with malaria. During this time, he built important relationships with Filipino leaders like Manuel Quezon.<sup>59</sup> A few years later in Veracruz, Mexico, MacArthur led an expedition that illustrated his ingenuity, bravery, and recklessness. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson sent the United States Army to occupy the Mexican state of Veracruz during the Mexican Revolution. MacArthur went as part of a headquarters unit. He noticed that there was no way to transport materials in the area. The roads were poor, but there were railroad tracks. They had access to railroad cars, but not engines. MacArthur decided to lead a group to scout for abandoned railroad engines. They found what they needed, but a group of armed men attacked them on the way back. MacArthur fired back and nearly missed getting shot. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor by Major General Leonard Wood. The awards board refused the citation because MacArthur failed to properly notify his chain of command about the expedition.<sup>60</sup> In his autobiography, MacArthur reflected, "[i]n deciding to make the reconnaissance, I may have been right or I may have been wrong. War did not materialize and the utility of our exploits would never be known."<sup>61</sup> This expedition was another instance of MacArthur's ingenuity. It also showcased his

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<sup>59</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 83.

<sup>60</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 42.

inclination to take risks. As at his time at West Point, these risks panned out for him. He was promoted to major soon after the Veracruz expedition.<sup>62</sup>

During this time, Europe was engaged in World War I. The United States debated for many years and eventually joined the war effort in 1917. MacArthur was in France by early 1918. While there, he received multiple prestigious citations and two promotions. MacArthur was appointed to the 42nd “Rainbow Division” as their chief of staff. With this position came a promotion to colonel. MacArthur took part in a trench raid, and Major General Georges de Bazelaire awarded him the Croix de Guerre.<sup>63</sup> MacArthur may have been a courageous leader, but he was not one to lead by example. He mandated that his subordinates always carry a gas mask while he did not. This poor decision nearly cost him his eyesight when he was gassed later that year.<sup>64</sup> Despite his hypocrisy, MacArthur remained charismatic and well liked. General de Bazelaire described him as “one of the ablest officers in the United States Army and one of the most popular.”<sup>65</sup> MacArthur continued to receive awards and was eventually promoted to Brigadier General. The timing of WWI was a unique benefit to MacArthur’s career. He had enough experience as an officer to handle upper leadership, but he was young enough to have a lengthy career still ahead. Additionally, he was lucky to have survived the gas attack.

Perhaps not surprisingly, MacArthur went on to become one of the youngest Superintendents of the United States Military Academy in its history in 1919. As a nice

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<sup>62</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*, 76.

<sup>63</sup> Manchester, 88.

<sup>64</sup> Manchester, 89.

<sup>65</sup> Manchester, 88.

perk, MacArthur retained his battlefield promotions to hold this position. At the time, West Point was in serious jeopardy. West Point had shortened its program to a year to pump out new officers to fight in WW I.<sup>66</sup> This destabilized the cadet corps and left MacArthur with a mess to clean up. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peyton March, described it as, “[f]orty years behind the times.”<sup>67</sup> MacArthur skillfully instituted many other improvements to the West Point campus. He revised the cadet honor code and set up a committee to help improve cadet behavior. MacArthur was not against hazing, but he sought to decrease its brutality. His greatest legacy at West Point was likely the improvements to the intramural sports teams. The words he had carved into the gymnasium are still quoted across the military today. They read, “Upon the field of friendly strife/ Are sown the seeds/ That, upon other fields, on other days/ Will bear the fruits of victory.”<sup>68</sup> MacArthur had less success revitalizing the academic curriculum. Prior to WWI, West Point’s curriculum consisted almost entirely of math, physical science, and rote memorization of military history facts. MacArthur attempted to expand the humanities and social science offerings. The leadership at West Point resisted and limited his success in this area.<sup>69</sup> His drastic reforms were not generally appreciated by most of the staff of West Point or the Army. When his time as superintendent ended, he was sent to the Philippines in 1922. MacArthur’s time at West Point showed his ability to lead as an executive. It also showed his support for character and scholarship. MacArthur

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<sup>66</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 158.

<sup>67</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 77.

<sup>68</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 171.

<sup>69</sup> Herman, 170.

was instrumental in bringing West Point into the twentieth century. His reforms can still be seen in military education today.

After his stint as superintendent, MacArthur spent eight years in the Philippines as the commander of the Philippine War Department. He built important relationships with the Filipino people and politicians during this time.<sup>70</sup> After he completed his assignment in the Philippines, he was appointed to be the Army Chief of Staff. His dispersal of the “Bonus Army” protests during this time showed his lack of tact within American politics. The Bonus Army protesters demanded early access to the compensation they were promised in return for their service in WW I.<sup>71</sup> MacArthur initially supported the protestors. He even threatened to arrest hecklers of the protest.<sup>72</sup> When he found out that some of the leaders of the protest had ties to the Communist Party, he sought to squelch them.<sup>73</sup> When the police came to disband the group, MacArthur joined them in the streets. Major Dwight D. Eisenhower, his aide at the time, was fiercely opposed to his actions.<sup>74</sup> MacArthur received a significant amount of bad publicity after that incident.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Herman, 198.

<sup>71</sup> Herman, 214.

<sup>72</sup> The Associated Press, “MacArthur’s Threat of Arrest Silences Heckler of Soldiers,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1932.

<sup>73</sup> From a Staff Correspondent Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “REDS URGE MUTINY IN THE BONUS ARMY: They Call on Veterans to Oust Leaders and Enlist Under Communist Banner. WATERS IN COUNTER-DRIVE 200 Picked Members Dispatched to All Sections to Bring the Strength in Capital to 150,000. REDS URGE MUTINY IN THE BONUS ARMY,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1932.

<sup>74</sup> Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 215.

<sup>75</sup> “Nation-Wide Press Comment on Expulsion of the Veterans from the Capital,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1932.

During his time as Chief of Staff, MacArthur fiercely advocated a well-funded army. He frequently clashed with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and he was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with the President.<sup>76</sup> MacArthur's disregard for the opinions of others exposed his poor public relations skills. He was very skilled with politics behind closed doors in many ways, though. During his time as Chief of Staff, his spars with President Roosevelt often ended in MacArthur getting what he desired.<sup>77</sup> MacArthur's time as Chief of Staff would have been a nice bookend to a long military career, but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would cause him to add another shelf.

After his term as Chief of Staff of the Army, MacArthur served for two more years as Field Marshall of the Philippine Army. He retired in 1937. His retirement only lasted until July 26, 1941. As the tensions of WW II grew in the Pacific, MacArthur was called back to active duty. MacArthur was a critical strategist in the Western Pacific throughout the war. The campaign he is most remembered for was in the Philippines. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, they turned their attentions to the Philippines. MacArthur's forces were ill prepared and reeling as the Japanese closed in. MacArthur was forced to retreat in the Spring of 1942. Before the final surrender in May, MacArthur gave his most famous speech. He vowed to return the Philippines to liberate them from the Japanese.<sup>78</sup> His legacy of this fight was mixed. His subordinates often called him

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<sup>76</sup> Mark Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: The Making of Douglas MacArthur* (Basic Books, 2014), 17.

<sup>77</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 228.

<sup>78</sup> Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, 151.

“Dugout Doug” for leading from the back.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, George C. Marshall felt he deserved a Medal of Honor. After the board had denied him the citation twice before, MacArthur was awarded the Medal of Honor for leadership during the retreat.<sup>80</sup> Utterly defeated in the Philippines, MacArthur turned his attentions to the New Guinea campaign to regain the lost ground.

As American forces took more aggressive objectives in the Pacific, the brass had to work out issues of leadership. The Pacific was mostly a naval and marine theater. Despite this, MacArthur, and the rest of the Army, were not interested in taking orders from the Navy. To compromise, the Joint Chiefs split the theater in two. MacArthur retained control over the Western Pacific. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and the United States Navy took control of the Eastern Pacific.<sup>81</sup> MacArthur spent the next two years fighting through Melanesia to keep his promise to the Filipino people. In 1944, he kept that promise.<sup>82</sup> The fight MacArthur led through the Philippines was critical to ending the war in the Pacific. The war in the Pacific was brutal for civilians. The battle for Manila was no exception. The city was completely destroyed, but MacArthur attempted to minimize civilian casualties. He prohibited artillery fire into civilian areas and left roads open so they could escape.<sup>83</sup> After the Philippines were recaptured, the last objective left to take was mainland Japan. MacArthur proposed key strategies in planning the invasion

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<sup>79</sup> Perry, 131.

<sup>80</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 442.

<sup>81</sup> Herman, 426.

<sup>82</sup> Herman, 501.

<sup>83</sup> Perry, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, 320.

of Japan, known as Operation Downfall. He advocated heavy bombing in combination with a mainland assault.<sup>84</sup> That plan was never utilized because President Truman decided to use atomic weapons to secure Japan's unconditional surrender. Unlike a few other key military leaders, MacArthur learned about the bombing of Hiroshima from the morning newspaper. When Japan capitulated after the bombing of Nagasaki, MacArthur signed the surrender documents on board the USS Missouri. After Japan's surrender, MacArthur also played a central role in rebuilding the islands in peace.

After the war, MacArthur took over the position of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in 1947. In this position, he led his staff in rebuilding Japan. Their most immediate concern was ensuring that Japanese civilians were fed.<sup>85</sup> He also set up a democratic parliamentary system. MacArthur advocated giving women the vote. His upbringing by his formidable mother likely influenced this decision.<sup>86</sup> MacArthur and his team helped demilitarize Japan and build a capitalist society, arguably his greatest political success. It helped set the island on a path to success in the modern world. Japan remains a democratic, industrial powerhouse today despite having many totalitarian neighbors.

MacArthur's work in Japan was successful, but his actions in Korea were far more controversial. MacArthur believed that the United States should focus primarily on the East in its overall defense strategy. President Truman and other prominent politicians

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<sup>84</sup> "Chapter 13: 'DOWNFALL' - The Plan for the Invasion of Japan," accessed December 9, 2020, <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1/ch13htm>.

<sup>85</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 663.

<sup>86</sup> Herman, 664.



and strategists disagreed with this position. The Korean War devolved into a quagmire after North Korea pushed deep into the south. MacArthur helped recapture Seoul and push towards the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. President Truman hoped to end the war in a stalemate to prevent further escalations with China. MacArthur hoped for just the opposite. After several clashes with MacArthur's ego and differing opinions, Truman relieved MacArthur of command in 1951. MacArthur communicated covertly with foreign embassies to support his ambitions of escalating the war.<sup>87</sup> After a long career of pushing the envelope with his superiors, MacArthur finally pushed too far. He became infamous for favoring the use of nuclear weapons on mainland China.<sup>88</sup> Seventy years of nuclear proliferation significantly colors any modern assessment of this opinion. Even with that in mind, MacArthur's ideas remain extreme. No leader from the 1940s and 1950s could have predicted the path the nuclear age would take, but none were as radical as MacArthur's proposals. MacArthur's contemporaries rightly predicted that the fallout of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would exponentially outpace the blast radius of the first two bombs. MacArthur's lack of caution with nuclear weapons was one of his largest missteps as a leader.

Despite what turned out to be a grave mistake, MacArthur remained popular with the American public. He continued to give speeches. He made a run for the presidency at the same time as Dwight D. Eisenhower, but he put little effort into campaigning. The campaign fell flat quickly, and MacArthur finally slipped out of America's main political

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<sup>87</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*, 655.

<sup>88</sup> Manchester, 660.

spotlight.<sup>89</sup> He spent his last decade periodically advising Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson on military strategy.<sup>90</sup>

MacArthur was an aggressive and talented military strategist. He recovered from crippling setbacks in the Philippines and Korea. That aggression was also a vice and ended his military career for good. His parents, particularly his mother, influenced him far more than the average officer. MacArthur was also highly motivated, but it often led to insubordination and disrespect for authority. In many ways, he was lucky not to have his career ended by the West Point professor he defied in 1901. Like many other leaders, this combination of factors ultimately defined his leadership successes and failures. That legacy lives on in the military today.

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<sup>89</sup> Manchester, 686.

<sup>90</sup> Manchester, 704.

## CHAPTER 3

### Chester Nimitz

While Eisenhower and MacArthur were both visible leaders, Chester W. Nimitz did not have the same publicity on the national stage. Nimitz's legacy is strong in the United States military, but most people know little to nothing about him. Nimitz was far more reserved than many of his contemporaries and led a relatively quiet life after retirement from the Navy. He was instrumental in turning the tide of the war in the Pacific theater of World War II at the Battle of Midway. Like Eisenhower and MacArthur, Nimitz also owed his successes in the Navy to personal motivation, outside influences, and a little luck.

Nimitz was born in Fredericksburg, Texas, in 1885. He was the grandson of German immigrants and spoke the language fluently. His sickly father died before Nimitz was born, so he was raised primarily by his mother, Anna, and paternal grandfather, Chester Henry Nimitz. His mother was married again in 1890, interestingly, to her first husband's brother.<sup>91</sup> Nimitz had a closer relationship with his grandfather than his stepfather, but the relationship to his stepfather remained cordial. In his letters to his grandfather, he refers to his stepfather as "father."<sup>92</sup> Chester H. Nimitz joined the

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<sup>91</sup> E. B. Potter, *Nimitz*, 1st Naval Institute Press Pbk edition (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 25–27.

<sup>92</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 002 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive," accessed February 18,

merchant marine after immigrating to the United States. He was a gifted storyteller and frequently shared tales about his life at sea with his grandson. His family ran a hotel in Kerrville, Texas, and he frequently worked odd jobs throughout his later childhood. In the land of cattle and oil barons, Nimitz had fairly humble beginnings. His family was large and stable, but it was less wealthy than its peers.<sup>93</sup> Nimitz was a diligent student from a young age. In a letter to his grandfather at age fourteen, he stated that he would study in the summer to make good grades in school that fall.<sup>94</sup> That hard work paid off when he averaged a ninety-nine at the end of the semester.<sup>95</sup>

Nimitz hoped to continue his education after high school, but his options were limited. Nimitz's family could not afford to pay for a typical university education, so he set his eyes on the US Military Academy at West Point. Obviously, that plan did not succeed for the future admiral. He grew up around several army posts, but was inspired to apply to West Point when he saw some newly minted lieutenants stationed at nearby Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. The small-town kid with a heavy workload in the family

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2021,  
<https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/3/rec/2>.

<sup>93</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 23.

<sup>94</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 005 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive," accessed February 18, 2021,  
<https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/4/rec/5>.

<sup>95</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 010 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive," accessed February 24, 2021,  
<https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/10/rec/10>.

business was fascinated by their bearing and professionalism.<sup>96</sup> He contacted Congressman Jon Slaydon about an appointment to West Point. All the slots to West Point had been filled for the year and due to the high number of army families in the area, Nimitz was unlikely to get an appointment in the future. Instead, Slaydon recommended that he apply to the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Despite his grandfather's love for the sea, Nimitz had never heard of the Academy. Nevertheless, he pursued appointments to both schools and began studying for the examinations. He woke up every morning at three to study for two and a half hours before working at his family's hotel and attending Tivy High School in Kerrville. His stepfather doubted that he could get into the Academy, but gave Nimitz his full support anyway. His small hometown also rallied around him during the application process.<sup>97</sup> Susan Moore, a teacher at Tivy, and John Toland, the principal, tutored him.<sup>98</sup> All the hard work and support paid off and Nimitz matriculated at the Academy in September 1901 at the age of sixteen.

His studious nature was an important asset in the young man's path to the navy. He also had a strong support system in his family and hometown. Despite losing his father, his extended family helped him greatly. His heavy workload at the hotel also contributed to his diligence. With an ambition to learn and succeed, he began his journey to an illustrious military career. Interestingly, Nimitz was one of few cadets who took an

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<sup>96</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 30.

<sup>97</sup> Potter, 36.

<sup>98</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 012 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive," accessed February 19, 2021, <https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/12/rec/12>.

entrance exam for an appointment to the Academy. He noted in a letter to his grandfather that most of his peers were appointed outright.<sup>99</sup> Despite this revelation, Nimitz continued to work hard at the Academy to keep up his high marks. His internal drive as well as the influence of his family and hometown were surely key factors in his military successes.

Nimitz continued to perform well academically at Annapolis. He woke every morning at four-thirty to study and received high marks. His roommate followed his lead and also became a top academic performer. They became so successful that their class requested the roommates to be separated and paired with students struggling academically. This arrangement worked well for the struggling students who benefited from the positive influences.<sup>100</sup> Nimitz did seem to inherit a touch of his biological father's frailty, which manifested itself at Annapolis. In 1901, he caught pneumonia. His grades dropped somewhat while he was sick, but he soon recovered and got back on track. He also suffered from an ear infection, which may have been the cause of his moderate hearing loss. For the rest of his life, Nimitz relied on lip reading to supplement his residual hearing.<sup>101</sup> Nimitz's primary concern with the hearing loss was ensuring that he could still attend the Academy and receive his commission as an officer. As during high school, his letters to his grandfather often focused on his grades and study habits.<sup>102</sup> Nimitz was certainly studious, but he did not spend all his time in the classroom.

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<sup>99</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 018 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive," accessed February 19, 2021, <https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/18/rec/18>.

<sup>100</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 47.

<sup>101</sup> Potter, 52.

In addition to his studies, Nimitz played sports at the Academy. He was on the crew team and played tennis, but he was never a stand-out athlete.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, he participated in two important academy traditions: hazing and breaking the rules. As discussed in the chapter on MacArthur, hazing at military academies became a political issue at the turn of the century after the death of a cadet at West Point. Crack-downs on hazing occurred at Annapolis as well. The practice was far too ingrained to uproot overnight. Nimitz was hazed and did some hazing himself.<sup>104</sup> In fact, at one point, his entire class was suspended after getting caught hazing.<sup>105</sup> Nimitz was generally a squared-away midshipman, but he did bend the rules a few times. Occasionally, he attended parties on the roof of his dorm with beer, which was contraband. At one point, it was his job to make a beer run. As a senior, he had privileges to leave campus and go into Annapolis. One night, he left with a large suitcase to collect the alcohol. While he was out, he ran into a dark-haired individual off campus. The next morning, he saw that same individual in uniform on campus because he was a newly-appointed faculty member. If the officer recognized Nimitz, he did not mention it. Nimitz always believed that he did

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<sup>102</sup> “Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 023 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive,” accessed February 19, 2021, <https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/23/rec/23>.

<sup>103</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 50.

<sup>104</sup> “Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 031 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive,” accessed February 24, 2021, <https://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/digital/collection/p16769coll4/id/31/rec/31>.

<sup>105</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 54.

recognize him and simply ignored the infraction. Later in his career, when he was a commanding officer, he remembered this incident. He stated that because he was shown some leniency, he tried to do the same to first offenders at captain's mast.<sup>106</sup> Nimitz eventually graduated seventh out of one hundred and fourteen in 1905.<sup>107</sup>

Nimitz's time at Annapolis was another demonstration of his self-discipline and internal motivation. He was academically skilled, but worked hard for his top grades. He persevered through illness, hazing, and even partial hearing loss. He broke a few rules, but probably the leniency and forgiveness he learned made him a better officer. Furthermore, Nimitz was a small-town kid in a highly stressful environment away from home for the first time. Through all his struggles, Nimitz displayed great determination to earn his commission. He did so on a high note, but Nimitz made a few mistakes before becoming an accomplished sailor.

One of those mishaps occurred in 1908 when he was an ensign aboard the destroyer *Decatur II*. In a port in French Indochina (modern-day Vietnam) the vessel got stuck in a mudbank because Nimitz had neglected to check the tide charts. He took ownership of that mistake though and slept outside until the tide changed and the ship was freed. He was court-martialed for the incident, but escaped with a letter of reprimand. The incident could have derailed his career. Nimitz had an otherwise clean record and admitted the mistake.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, he was fortunate in that the charts of the

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<sup>106</sup> Potter, 55.

<sup>107</sup> Potter, 56.



area were unclear and would have been difficult to interpret, even if he had looked at them.<sup>109</sup> In the end, he evaded lasting damage to his career. Nimitz's ability to admit mistakes separated him from many other leaders. That attribute may have saved his career in 1908, and it certainly fostered more collaboration at the highest levels of military leadership when Nimitz rose to flag rank.

A few years later, in 1913, Nimitz demonstrated his intellect and innovative skills in his work with diesel engines. Before World War I, he spent time in Germany where local engineers were developing early diesel engines. His German heritage was an asset during this time. He could not speak the language fluently, but understood it well.<sup>110</sup> Gasoline was the most common fuel prior to diesel innovations. Gasoline needed to be compressed and sparked to power an engine whereas diesel combusted under pressure alone. The chemical properties of diesel made it less likely to explode than gasoline. Nimitz recognized these benefits and made himself an expert on the topic, advocating the use of diesel in submarines in particular to increase their safety.<sup>111</sup>

Nimitz also took his expertise in diesel engines to the oiler *Maumee* where he served as executive officer and chief engineer. He designed the diesel fuel engines on the *Maumee* based on what he had learned in Europe. In addition to diesel engines, Nimitz also helped pioneer underway refueling on the *Maumee* during World War I. This

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<sup>108</sup> "Decatur II (Destroyer No. 5)," accessed February 24, 2021, <http://public2.nhhcaws.local/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/d/decat-ii.html>.

<sup>109</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 61.

<sup>110</sup> Potter, 125.

<sup>111</sup> Potter, 62.

technology allowed naval ships to travel farther and thus increased their capabilities. It is still an important practice in the United States Navy today.<sup>112</sup> Nimitz's work with diesel engines and underway refueling demonstrated his talent in innovation and drive to learn. The knowledge that Nimitz gained in the classrooms at Tivy and Annapolis clearly served him well in his early naval career.

In addition to his experience as an engineer, Nimitz had to develop administrative skills to continue advancing in the Navy. He met one of his most important mentors in this area while on the *Maumee*. Captain Samuel S. Robinson helped Nimitz become a competent administrator, and they maintained a life-long friendship.<sup>113</sup> Nimitz soon put those skills to use building a submarine base at Pearl Harbor. He did this with surplus materials from World War I, but surplus has always been a relative term in the military. While materials may have been designated as surplus, commanders were often loath to give them up. Nimitz required great negotiating skills to attain the materials needed for the job. He was ultimately successful, and Pearl Harbor houses naval submarines to this day. Nimitz was also able to balance his family life with his work. During his time at Pearl Harbor, his family lived on the island. His children came down with chicken pox, and he read to them every night until they were well.<sup>114</sup>

His work on the *Maumee* and at Pearl Harbor demonstrated Nimitz's operational leadership skills, but he also worked to improve military education. From 1926 to 1929,

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<sup>112</sup> "Maumee II (Fuel Ship No. 14)," accessed March 1, 2021, <http://public1.nhhcaws.local/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/m/maumee-ii.html>.

<sup>113</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 129.

<sup>114</sup> Potter, 134.

he led one of the first naval reserve officer training corps programs in the country at the University of California in Berkley. Education positions do not typically advance a military career much, but a highly successful program would not be much of a detriment either. Nimitz introduced practices similar to those at the naval academy, such as daily quizzing on topics covered in classes. Eventually, a more standard teaching style prevailed both in ROTC and at the military academies. Nevertheless, Nimitz was instrumental in the early years of the Naval ROTC program. He was a dedicated instructor and connected well with his students.

In the thirties, prior to World War II, Nimitz had several leadership positions on various vessels. A notable example was his stint on the cruiser *Augusta* where he demonstrated superior teaching and delegation skills. As captain of the *Augusta*, Nimitz led a crew with a recent turnover around East Asia.<sup>115</sup> Nimitz was known as a fair disciplinarian and rarely administered harsh punishments or even verbal admonishment. He built a highly competent staff of junior officers with personal rapport and teaching skill. This allowed him to delegate more duties and better manage the greater strategic mission of the ship.<sup>116</sup> Nimitz's ability to manage junior officers was critical to his work as an admiral during World War II. His time on the *Augusta* was an important stepping stone to the peak of his career.

Ten days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Nimitz was promoted to admiral and took command of the Pacific Fleet (CINPAC). Since all of the battleships were sunk or

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<sup>115</sup> "Augusta IV (CL-31)," accessed March 2, 2021, <http://public1.nhhcaws.local/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/a/augusta-iv.html>.

<sup>116</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 157.

damaged in the attack, Nimitz took command atop the deck of the submarine *Grayling*.<sup>117</sup> The attack on Pearl Harbor definitely hobbled the Navy, but it was also a blessing in disguise. The public was preoccupied with the destruction of the Navy's battleships, but shifts in naval warfare were already making them obsolete.<sup>118</sup> With their battleships destroyed, the Navy was forced to turn to their newer aircraft carriers. The development of the aircraft carrier caused one of the most drastic changes in naval strategy and doctrine. With an aircraft carrier, a battle could be carried out without the two forces ever seeing each other. These ships were critical to the American victories at the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in 1942. Nimitz and his Washington counterpart, Admiral Ernest King, used their small fleet of aircraft carriers to weaken Japanese naval aviation and turn the tide of the war in the Pacific.

The Battle of Midway is credited with turning the tide of the war in the Pacific and is considered one of Nimitz's and King's greatest successes. Nimitz led aggressively with a very small fleet of carriers, but the risk paid off as Japanese naval air power was limited by their losses in the Coral Sea and at Midway.<sup>119</sup> Intelligence played a crucial role in this victory. The Japanese hoped to trap the American navy at Midway and gain air superiority over the Pacific. American intelligence officers passed decoded intel off to

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<sup>117</sup> Walter R. Borneman, *The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy, and King--The Five-Star Admirals Who Won the War at Sea*, 1st edition (Little, Brown and Company, 2012), 214.

<sup>118</sup> CHARLES HURD Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, "DEFENSE SHAKE-UP: Kimmel Is Succeeded by Nimitz in Command of the Pacific Fleet GEN. SHORT ALSO GOES Emmons Replaces Him--Tinker Takes Martin's Post in Air Force THREE COMMANDERS IN HAWAII REMOVED," *New York Times*, December 18, 1941.

<sup>119</sup> Borneman, *The Admirals*, 282.

the navy so it could mount a response to the ambush.<sup>120</sup> The tactical heroes at Midway were the aviators. While the Army and Navy fliers together sank four of the Japanese carriers, the Army aviators were the first to return to Hawaii and therefore received most of the accolades.<sup>121</sup> A later article published in the *New York Times* even referred to the victory as a “triumph of American generalship.”<sup>122</sup> The victory at Midway was certainly a feat of admiralship, and it was crucial to the Pacific war effort. A Japanese victory at Midway would have left Pearl Harbor and the entire Pacific Fleet extremely vulnerable. American naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan had predicted the importance of Pearl Harbor in greater naval strategy back in the late nineteenth century.<sup>123</sup> As it turned out, Mahan hypothesized correctly. The strategic location of Pearl Harbor was critical both to America’s entrance into World War II and to a crucial victory seven months later. From Pearl Harbor, Nimitz continued to operate against Japan, along with another formidable foe, General Douglas MacArthur.

MacArthur was called out of retirement to help the war effort in the Pacific, and his ostentatious nature created tensions with the Pacific Fleet leadership. The primary divide was over broad naval strategy. MacArthur proposed moving through Melanesia and the Philippines to reach Japan. Conversely, Nimitz and King preferred to focus on

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<sup>120</sup> “Battle of Midway,” accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1942/midway.html>.

<sup>121</sup> “Soviet and Britain Sign War and Peace Pact; Molotoff and Roosevelt Plan for 2d Front; Army Fliers Blasted Two Fleets Off Midway,” *New York Times*, 1942.

<sup>122</sup> “The Battle of Midway,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1942, sec. AMUSEMENTS-BOOKS BOOKS.

<sup>123</sup> James L. Haley, *Captive Paradise: A History of Hawaii* (St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2014), 296.

Micronesia and move through Tarawa, Guam, and Iwo Jima. Nimitz and King had no interest in turning naval assets over to the army, and they were worried the carriers would be hamstrung by the shallow coral reefs in the South Pacific. MacArthur was not one to take orders, particularly not from the navy. George C. Marshall himself resorted to “cajoling” to make MacArthur bend to his will.<sup>124</sup> Rather than bridge the divide between MacArthur and the Admirals, all parties involved agreed to split the theater into two. MacArthur took the south, and Nimitz took the north and east. All of this, of course, was to the chagrin of Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who would have preferred a more Europe-focused strategy. While MacArthur’s forces encountered heavy combat through New Guinea and the Philippines, Nimitz took the Chuuk Lagoon, the Philippine Sea, and Iwo Jima.<sup>125</sup> When Japan was cornered in 1945, planning the invasion of the mainland was done by MacArthur. Neither MacArthur nor Nimitz could take the credit for securing Japan’s unconditional surrender. That accomplishment was garnered by Robert Oppenheimer and his team of physicists at Los Alamos. Nevertheless, both MacArthur and Nimitz were on board the *USS Missouri* to watch the Japanese surrender and finally end the war.<sup>126</sup>

After the war, Nimitz spent a short stint in Admiral King’s old billet as the Chief of Naval Operations. He oversaw the naval drawdown as it shrank to a sixth of its

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<sup>124</sup> Borneman, *The Admirals*, 282.

<sup>125</sup> Borneman, 287.

<sup>126</sup> US National Archives, *Japanese Sign Final Surrender - 1945*, 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EqRTWMVqMY&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EqRTWMVqMY&feature=emb_title).

wartime size.<sup>127</sup> He also considered how nuclear weapons might affect naval operations in the future. Mirroring his support of diesel engines at the start of his career, Nimitz also supported building the first nuclear-powered submarine. Seventy years later, nuclear energy still powers the class of naval aircraft carriers that bears his name. After retiring from the navy, Nimitz went to work for the UN as plebiscite administrator for Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir was a tense region on the border between Pakistan and India. Nimitz hoped to broker an agreement on formal borders and land rights between the two countries. When it was clear that the negotiations were going nowhere, Nimitz stepped down. This was probably a good idea as India and Pakistan are no closer to an agreement on the issue now than they were in 1953.<sup>128</sup> Following his short stint at the UN, Nimitz mostly lived a quiet life in California near the ROTC unit he had started in the 1920s. He served as regent of the University of California until 1956.

Nimitz was a formidable leader in the United States Navy. He was a driven innovator, a teacher, and a strategist. The influence and support of his family and hometown helped him matriculate at the Naval Academy. His own internal drive and intelligence helped him pioneer new technologies in naval engines, and his mentorship skills helped him successfully lead ships, fleets, and ROTC units. And he was also somewhat lucky in that the Japanese blew up the battleships in their attack on Pearl Harbor, not the aircraft carriers. His legacy in the Navy will remain strong.

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<sup>127</sup> Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “NIMITZ WELCOMES PARIS ‘BICKERING’: Admiral Says ‘Blunt Language’ Means Better Peace and Cites Founding Fathers Cites the Thirteen Colonies Atomic Changes in Doubt,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1946, sec. Amusements.

<sup>128</sup> Potter, *Nimitz*, 452.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Comparative Analysis

Looking at each of these leaders individually paints one picture of how they achieved their successes, but comparing the three reveals additional insights into their leadership. Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz all rose to prominence in the military, interacted with other officers, and planned major military operations. They also engaged in politics to varying degrees and, in retirement, held leadership roles in prestigious universities. This final chapter will investigate how their ambitions, influences, and also luck colored these endeavors.

Each World War II leader came from a different home background and family life. Dwight D. Eisenhower was born to a poor family with some instability. They moved to Abilene, Kansas, when he was very young.<sup>129</sup> In many ways, he was a “self-made” man. With some prompting from his friend Edward “Swede” Hazlett, he applied to West Point. In contrast, Douglas MacArthur was second-generation army and moved frequently as a child. His parents went out of their way to help him matriculate at West Point. They hired a private tutor and sought out extensive treatment for MacArthur’s scoliosis.<sup>130</sup> Like Eisenhower, Chester Nimitz came from a small town, but he was much

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<sup>129</sup> Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 7.

<sup>130</sup> Herman, *Douglas MacArthur*, 13.



closer with his family. Nimitz came from a tight-knit community. They rallied around him to help him gain admission to a service academy.<sup>131</sup>

Of the three, Eisenhower had the most internal motivation to attend a service academy. His mother was deeply religious and committed to non-violence. She opposed Eisenhower's aspirations to attend West Point. Despite his mother's disapproval, Eisenhower tutored himself for the entrance exam. His primary support came from Hazlett. MacArthur was influenced by others in his decision to attend West Point. He had a family legacy to carry on, and his parents were determined to help him. His mother became infamous for her overbearing influence on her son. Finally, Nimitz had a mix of internal motivation and external influence. He came from an area dominated by the military, and his grandfather spun many tales of his time in the merchant marine. Nimitz did not have the private tutor that MacArthur had access to, but he had the support of his family and town. He shared a lot of Eisenhower's internal motivation, but enjoyed a lot more external support.

While their career paths were all different, each man ended up at a military academy to begin his career. Eisenhower matriculated at West Point in 1911. He was an average student and collected a large number of demerits. He also frequently bent the rules, usually by smoking cigarettes and playing poker. He enjoyed playing on the football team at West Point and credited that experience with building his leadership skills. Of the three, Eisenhower was the least stringent rule-follower and had the least impressive academic record. Eisenhower did not fit as well with the rote memorization

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<sup>131</sup> "Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letter 005 - Chester W. Nimitz Personal Letters, 1893-1911 - National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive."

model used in West Point classrooms at the time, but he had a lot practical intelligence that served him well in his career. MacArthur, on the other hand, adhered to the rules and excelled academically, but his mother also lived across the street from the campus. He played a major role in the West Point hazing scandal. After an incident sent him into convulsions, he wound up testifying in front of a congressional inquiry. MacArthur refused to snitch and won the respect of his peers. MacArthur played sports, but was less talented than Eisenhower. Nimitz attended the Naval Academy in Annapolis around the same time that MacArthur attended West Point. He also excelled academically and generally followed the rules. Nimitz was typically a strait-laced cadet, except for an incident drinking beer on the roof of his dorm with some friends.

Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz all performed well in their respective schools, but in different ways. Eisenhower was the best athlete of the group while MacArthur and Nimitz received the highest marks academically. MacArthur was already showing his rebellious nature at West Point when he refused to take an exam he felt he had earned an exemption from. Eisenhower also had a rebellious streak with the rules, but was not as ostentatious with his leadership. Nimitz most directly utilized his formal education later in his career as an engineer, though Eisenhower would use his skills on the gridiron as a football coach as well. Each demonstrated a strong internal ambition. Eisenhower and Nimitz were primarily drawn to the service academies for their free education while MacArthur had a family legacy to carry on at West Point. MacArthur's case was particularly interesting as he was influenced the most by his family into attending West Point. Nevertheless, his own internal motivation became evident in his perseverance through the hazing scandal. Due to the timing of World War II, the classes

from the early twentieth century contained many other high-achieving military officers such as Omar Bradley, George C. Marshall, and Ernest King. Nevertheless, Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz became some of the most memorable officers of the twentieth century.

Both MacArthur and Nimitz made a few missteps early in their careers that were emblematic of their personalities. Nimitz failed to check a tide chart and the destroyer he served on got stuck in the mud. He escaped serious punishment after this incident as he owned up to the mistake and had no other major infractions. In contrast MacArthur took on a daring, but reckless expedition in Veracruz without permission from his commanding officer and nearly got himself shot. The closest thing to punishment he received was not receiving the Medal of Honor he was recommended for. This is an interesting look at the culture of the armed forces in the early twentieth century. While Nimitz was punished for a minor oversight, MacArthur was commended for a rash mission. MacArthur was lucky that he was not shot as the military seemed more concerned with aggression than responsibility. Nimitz went on to build his career on quiet ingenuity while MacArthur became infamous for his daring escapades.

An early example of Nimitz's innovative skills was his advocacy of diesel engines prior to World War I. While he was working in Germany, he recognized the superiority of diesel engines over gasoline powered ones. He advocated their use in the American Navy and oversaw their implementation in the new oiler *Maumee*. He later served as the chief engineer on that same ship during World War I. In that position, he helped pioneer underway refueling. Nimitz's intelligence as an engineer and his eye for innovation were among his most critical assets as a leader. While Nimitz was innovating naval ships,

MacArthur again escaped the major consequences of his recklessness in World War I. He had the most active role in World War I of the three. He was a popular leader despite his usual grandstanding, and he received several commendations for the battles he participated in. He required that all the men under his command carry gas masks, but never carried one himself. When he was gassed, he walked away without major injuries or damage to his sight by sheer luck. Nimitz and MacArthur were two very different leaders, but were effective in their own ways. While Nimitz was a contentious engineer, MacArthur was a daring infantryman. Where Nimitz's innovative skills were central to his success in the Navy, MacArthur's confidence was central to his career. MacArthur was notoriously pretentious, but also confident. That confidence made him hugely popular with his subordinates and later the American public. Ultimately, his self-assurance was the backbone of his career.

Meanwhile, Eisenhower was a young lieutenant when the Great War broke out and just missed any involvement. While he did not fight during World War I, he did demonstrate early examples of his own leadership skill. Like Nimitz, Eisenhower had a talent for innovation. He was stationed with a tank unit during World War I and became a strong advocate for their use. After the war, Eisenhower was tasked with transporting several army vehicles across the country as part of the post-World War I demilitarization effort. During this time, he noticed how poor the American highway system was. Years later, Eisenhower would lead another convoy through the heart of Germany where he was amazed by its national highway system. As president, Eisenhower led the development of the United States interstate system. The interstate was one of Eisenhower's greatest contributions to the United States, and it all began with an army convoy in 1919.

Along with his talent for problem-solving and innovation, Eisenhower also had a talent for interpersonal relationships. Fox Conner took a liking to Eisenhower and helped him study military theory. Conner also helped get him into the General Staff College, where Eisenhower topped his class. Like Nimitz, Eisenhower had an eye for innovation, but his greatest asset was his likeability. Eisenhower was lucky enough to cross paths with the Army's greatest generals of the time. He built good relationships with almost all of them. Those relationships and influences helped drive his career. While MacArthur was successful in spite of his interpersonal relationships, in many ways Eisenhower was successful because of them.

During the interwar years, Nimitz and MacArthur both made important contributions to military education. MacArthur became the Superintendent at West Point where he reformed the curriculum and increased the athletic offerings. Interestingly, MacArthur championed the humanities and social sciences. While MacArthur worked at West Point, Nimitz started the first Naval ROTC program at the University of California at Berkeley. In contrast to MacArthur, Nimitz built his program with many similarities to the military academies, such as daily quizzing. MacArthur helped West Point and, by extension, the other service academies have become true academic institutions rather than centers for hazing and rote memorization. Nimitz's Naval ROTC programs are today a major commissioning source for the United States Navy. Both MacArthur and Nimitz made a huge impact on military education for the next generation of officers.

While MacArthur was notorious for making enemies, Nimitz and Eisenhower usually got along with others. Eisenhower in particular was famously likeable. A striking similarity between Nimitz and Eisenhower was their strong working relationships with

their staff counterparts in Washington, D.C., during World War II. Eisenhower worked well with most people, but he was particularly close to George C. Marshall. Marshall was the Chief of Staff of the Army during World War II.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Nimitz worked closely with Ernest King, the Chief of Naval Operations. Marshall was a brilliant strategist and highly regarded among Army leaders. King was also a skilled strategist, but he was blunt and had a fiery temper. Nimitz withstood King's disagreeable qualities and managed to build a strong working relationship. While both Nimitz and Eisenhower worked well with their superiors, they could not have been more different when it came to working with MacArthur. Eisenhower and MacArthur crossed paths for a time in the 1930s. Eisenhower never publicly spoke ill of MacArthur, though he was difficult to handle. His skills in dealing with MacArthur's erratic behavior were useful later in his career when he had to work with several opinionated subordinates. In contrast, Nimitz worked with MacArthur in the Pacific theater during World War II. Their opinions on broad strategy differed substantially. King's and Nimitz's clash with MacArthur was so strong that the theater was split in two for them to command separately.

Overall, while Nimitz's interpersonal skills were an asset to his career, they were central to Eisenhower's career. Eisenhower recovered from a major career stall and rose through the ranks largely with the help of other generals like Fox Conner, Douglas MacArthur, and George C. Marshall. Nimitz worked well with those around him, but it was not as critical to his success in the Navy. Unlike both Eisenhower and Nimitz,

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<sup>132</sup> Dwight David Eisenhower, Joseph P. Hobbs, and George Catlett Marshall, *Dear General: Eisenhower's Wartime Letters to Marshall* (JHU Press, 1999), 35.

MacArthur rose to prominence despite his lack of interpersonal skills. He was confident and charismatic to his followers, so his career survived many interpersonal missteps.

Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz each became famous for their strategic roles in World War II. Eisenhower helped plan and lead the invasions of North Africa and Normandy. Eisenhower's interpersonal skills were critical to these missions as he worked with a large team of generals, including Bernard Montgomery, Omar Bradley, and George Patton. His likeability was a key reason why he was chosen over Patton to lead the Invasion of Normandy. He also cultivated a strong working relationship with Charles de Gaulle after the war was over. MacArthur led his forces through intense fighting in New Guinea and the Philippines. MacArthur was partly known for leading from the back as "Dugout Doug," but he retained his popularity through confident speeches and the promise to return after his units had been driven out of the Philippines by the Japanese. MacArthur did return and retook the islands near the end of the War. Nimitz was most famous for his victory at the Battle of Midway, which was one of the most important turning points in the Pacific theater. Nimitz had to be creative with the aircraft carriers that survived the attack on Pearl Harbor. The innovative combination of Army and Naval aviation were critical to the war in the Pacific. Each leader utilized his own unique talents to strategize, take objectives, and win the war.

After the war, Eisenhower and Nimitz served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff where they oversaw the reduction of the military to peace-time levels. MacArthur, however, took on an interesting role in the occupation of Japan. He helped rebuild Japan in his position as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Just as George C. Marshall can take much of the credit for rebuilding Europe with the Marshall Plan, MacArthur

deserves a lot of credit for rebuilding Japan. MacArthur recognized the importance of the Emperor in Japanese society and protected him from an international trial. MacArthur was also a strong supporter of democracy and capitalism in the region. He helped establish the infrastructure necessary to build those institutions. MacArthur is often remembered as a monolithically flamboyant generalissimo, but his work in Japan also demonstrates significant political acumen and organizational skill.

After the World War II draw-down, Eisenhower, Nimitz, and MacArthur each took radically different paths. Eisenhower went on to serve two terms as a hugely popular President of the United States. He established the interstate highway system, based on the German model he encountered during the war. He opposed deficit spending, particularly for the military. As in the Army, he was famous for his friendly charm and skill in delegating. His biggest missteps came with foreign policy. He authorized several coups in foreign countries, and caused a stir with the U-2 incident. Nevertheless, he was still an effective leader with a strong legacy. MacArthur went on to command the Army during the Korean War, but his hubris finally got the best of him and he was removed from command by President Truman. He retained enough popularity in the United States to make a run for president in the same year as Eisenhower, but lost in a landslide at the Republican Convention. MacArthur continued to advise presidents until his death. Nimitz led a very quiet life after retiring from the Navy. He became a regent at the University of California and worked at the United Nations for a few years before retiring completely. After the war was over, each leader again demonstrated their significant organizational skills. Eisenhower and MacArthur also showed political ability. Nimitz never had any serious political ambitions beyond his work at the United Nations.



Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz all led in different ways, but they all had unique talents and motivations, outside influences, and luck. Eisenhower had enough charm and interpersonal skill to take him to the White House. MacArthur had the confidence to win back the Philippines during World War II, but his hubris ended his career on a sour note in Korea. Nimitz was a quiet innovator and a foil to the boisterous Admiral King. Eisenhower was motivated by Swede Hazlett to attend West Point and later by Fox Conner to pursue a serious career in the Army. MacArthur's family pushed him to attend West Point, and his mother followed him around until her final days. Nimitz had the support of a close community to help him get into the Naval Academy.

Finally, each man encountered a bit of luck during his career. Eisenhower was fortunate to cross paths with Fox Conner, who saved his career from stalling. MacArthur was lucky not to lose his life in Vera Cruz or his eyesight in France. Nimitz was lucky that the nature of naval warfare was changing drastically in the 1940s, and the navy's most valuable assets were not actually destroyed in the attack on Pearl Harbor. These factors all came together to make Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz the leaders that they were. Learning from their actions can aid in military scholarship and leadership studies. It can also help aspiring leaders learn from the past as they navigate their own lives and careers. As new leaders rise up, the lives of Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Nimitz can provide valuable insight to help cultivate the best possible leaders for tomorrow.

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