Eisenhower on Leadership

Ike's Enduring Lessons in Total Victory Management

Alan Axelrod

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Foreword

Peter Georgescu

Intelligence can be defined as the ability to observe seemingly nonexistent patterns. Alan Axelrod has reviewed Dwight David Eisenhower's extraordinarily brilliant deeds in preparation and action on the battlefield and deftly relates them to the business arena.

In a fascinating way, Eisenhower was a "manager" ahead of his time. His strength and style were also extraordinarily well suited for the twenty-first century. In tomorrow's world, businesses will encounter tremendous challenges. The twenty-first century will be defined by global competition and excess supply. The net result will be an explosive increase in the number of enterprises attempting to chase fewer consumers with predominantly commodity products. As a consequence, business will face ferocious price competition and an increasing casualty rate among companies big and small.

In this unforgiving economic environment, Eisenhower's core strengths shine. Clearly and rigorously articulated strategies will become imperative. And every enterprise employee must become a creative contributor, engaged in serving customers and consumers. All egos must be fed yet kept under control, and personal agendas must be sublimated to the common good of the enterprise. This is where Alan Axelrod's *Eisenhower on Leadership* takes on powerful meaning and relevance. The greatest military invasion in human history required all the twenty-first-century business skills. Unambiguous strategies, flexibility combined with decisive action, fanatical commitment to objectives, and ego management

(of Patton and Montgomery, for example)—these qualities and skills, among so many others, make Eisenhower a towering leader in our own times. It is no accident that Ike, for all his position and power, had a low-profile persona. He understood the power of "we" and willingly and capably subjugated the "I" word. In page after page of this book, we see alluring results unfold. It is a masterful tale of competence and wisdom told against the backdrop of the most brilliant and fascinating war history of modern times.

Fate enabled me to appreciate a seldom publicized side of Ike Eisenhower—that of the compassionate human being. I was one of two brothers separated from their parents by the capricious events of the post–World War II era. In 1947, my father and mother, two Rumanian nationals, came to the United States to visit my father's headquarters offices in New York City. My dad ran the Ploesti oil fields for ESSO International, and had just come out of being imprisoned by the Nazis as an Allied sympathizer in Rumania during the war. While in New York, the Iron Curtain fell. The Communists, with Soviet support, took over Rumania. Instantly my father was labeled a capitalist and an imperialist, and sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment. Obviously, my parents had to remain in the United States. Back in Rumania, my grandfather, an eighty-year-old elder statesman, was arrested and eventually killed in one of the Communist gulags. My brother and I were incarcerated and placed in a hard labor camp. We worked ten-hour days, six days a week, no schooling. I was nine years old when this ugly chapter started.

Then a miracle happened. The Communists went to see my father in New York, demanding that he spy for the Soviets in return for keeping us alive. After a tortuous day and night, with help from the FBI, my parents refused and went public with the story. A scandal of global proportions exploded. My father had by now become an American citizen, and the Soviet blackmail attempt turned into a political cause célèbre. With the help of Congresswoman Francis Payne Bolton, Ike Eisenhower personally

intervened in the case. The story I heard later suggested that President Eisenhower had agreed to trade a couple of Russian spies for my older brother and me, by then a fifteen-year-old.

Indeed, Ike Eisenhower's lessons in leadership took on a very special meaning in my life.

INTRODUCTION

The Soldier as CEO

Dwight David Eisenhower never led a single soldier into battle. Before World War II, he had never even heard a shot fired in anger. His only "combat wound" was the bad knee, weakened by a West Point football injury, that he twisted helping push a jeep out of the Normandy mud. Yet it was Ike Eisenhower who, as supreme Allied commander in Europe, was responsible for leading the greatest military enterprise in history. Millions of American, British and Commonwealth, Free French, and other soldiers, sailors, and airmen looked to him and answered to him in a struggle for nothing less than the salvation of the world.

Eisenhower was a desk soldier, but he always tried to move his desk as close to the action as he could. Although he was an accomplished strategist, having been educated at the Command and General Staff School and the Army War College, the strategies by which the Allies fought World War II were primarily the work of others. It was others, too, who had the job of executing the strategies, others who actually led the troops into battle. Nevertheless, most of the commanders and politicians who made the history of the war as well as the journalists and scholars who subsequently wrote it agreed: Eisenhower was at the heart of victory.

It was, in a favorite Allied phrase, *total victory*. It could be justly said that Eisenhower led that total victory, but it would be even more accurate to say that he *managed* it. For Ike Eisenhower was a new kind of military leader uniquely suited to war on an unprecedented scale, a scale that dwarfed even the "Great War" of 1914–1918. His task was not to lead men into battle but to lead those who

led men into battle. As supreme Allied commander, he was the commander of the commanders. Yet nobody knew better than Eisenhower that although he had greater responsibility than any other Allied military leader, he had less absolute authority than any other high-level commander. Whereas any three-star general could order the two-star below him to do this or that, four-star (and, later, five-star) Eisenhower's "subordinates" were the top commanders of the U.S., British (and Commonwealth), and Free French armies. They answered, first and foremost, to their own political leaders as well as to their own military judgment. By consensus of the Allied heads of state, they agreed to be led by Eisenhower, yet he was ultimately answerable to them as well as to all the political leaders to whom they answered. The authority and the weight of the big decisions finally rested on Eisenhower, but those decisions could be arrived at only through a process of compromise and consensus. Although Eisenhower's leadership authority derived from the very highest international levels of government, it had no formal legal basis, and ultimately it was sustained by nothing more or less than the ongoing consent of those he led.

If Ike Eisenhower's situation was unique for a military man, it was—and remains—common enough for leaders in the civilian sphere. His position was analogous to that of a CEO or, indeed, any high-level manager in a large and complex enterprise. It was a position complexly compounded of awesome authority and what can best be described as equally awesome subordination of authority. Both a leader and a servant, he was a servant leader, expected to act as master while answering to many masters. He was, in short, a manager, in the most modern sense of the word, charged with leading, coordinating, prioritizing, judging, and cajoling others toward the common goal of total victory.

That term, *total victory,* also has a significantly modern connotation. Beginning about a quarter century after the end of World War II, Total Quality Management (TQM) became both the mantra and the Holy Grail for a growing number of managers at all levels. Although highly technical tomes have been devoted to TQM, it can

be described in a nutshell as a set of systems and policies for doing the right thing, on time, all the time, in an effort to achieve both continual improvement and consistent customer satisfaction. General Eisenhower never heard of TQM, of course, but he did develop a unique approach to the unprecedented command responsibility that had been assigned to him. The purpose of his approach was to ensure that as commander of commanders—effectively the CEO of the European campaign—he and his vast command would do the right thing, on time, all the time. Ike would probably have called this nothing more or less than his "duty" or, even more simply, his "job." We might call it Total Victory Management, and it is what makes the supreme Allied commander so enduring and compelling an example of leadership for managers today.

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But what qualified this U.S. Army officer above all others for the job? A fair question—it was surely on the minds if not the lips of the 366 officers senior to Ike Eisenhower when General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, jumped him over them and into the top command slot.

In contrast to, say, George S. Patton Jr. or Douglas MacArthur, Eisenhower did not possess a distinguished military pedigree. There was nothing in his heritage that "destined" him either to a military career or military greatness. He was born on October 14, 1890, in the little town of Denison, Texas, the third of seven sons of David Jacob and Ida Elizabeth (Stover) Eisenhower. David Jacob tried to make a go of a hardware business in Denison, but, stubborn and restless, he gave up and found instead a menial and dirty job as an "engine wiper" for the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway at the rate of $10 a week.

Before Dwight David was a year old, the family left Denison to return to Abilene, Kansas, where they had roots in a Mennonite colony. Here David Jacob installed his wife and children in a tiny rented house near the Union Pacific tracks and found work in a creamery.

The Eisenhower boys became intimate with poverty as well as the austere Mennonite faith, but Dwight David—whom high school classmates nicknamed "Little Ike" to distinguish him from his brother Edgar, dubbed "Big Ike"—earned a reputation as a fine athlete and an indifferent student with a sunny smile and usually happy-go-lucky demeanor that concealed a quick temper liable to come over him, from time to time, like a storm. His apparent lack of interest in his studies also belied an able mind and an extraordinary memory, which eagerly devoured facts and figures as well as ideas.

After graduating from Abilene High School in 1909, Ike went to work for nearly two years at various odd jobs, including a full-time position at his father's employer, the Belle Springs Creamery, to support his brother Edgar's studies at the University of Michigan. Bored with dead-end labor in Kansas, Ike was enthralled by stories about the U.S. Naval Academy his friend and former high school classmate, Everett Edward "Swede" Hazlett Jr., now an Annapolis midshipman, told him. Ike wrote to his congressman and his senator, asking for a nomination to either Annapolis or West Point, and, after taking examinations for both academies, he secured a nomination to West Point from Senator Joseph L. Bristow. Against the wishes of his mother, who held dear the pacifist philosophy of the Mennonite faith, he enrolled in 1911 as a member of the Class of 1915, which would prove to be one of the most remarkable in the history of the institution, producing 59 generals out of 164 graduates.

In that class, Ike Eisenhower was no standout. Although he made a splash as a football player, he tore up his knee in his second year and not only had to quit playing but even faced the possibility of a disability dismissal from the academy. Fortunately, that did not come to pass, and Ike graduated just above the academic middle of the class, at 61st, and very near the bottom in discipline, at 125th out of 164.

As a brand-new second lieutenant, he was posted to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. There he met Mamie Geneva Doud, daughter of a wealthy Denver meat packer, who wintered with his family in an exclusive San Antonio neighborhood. Ike and

Mamie married in 1916 after a quick courtship and would have two sons: Doud Dwight, known as Ikky, who was born in 1917 and succumbed to scarlet fever just four years later, and John Sheldon Doud, born in 1922.

Like other young army officers of the era, Ike longed for a war. Advancement in the peacetime American military proceeded at a glacial pace, and only by distinguishing himself in action could a second lieutenant hope to rise through the ranks. In 1916–1917, President Woodrow Wilson ordered a large-scale "punitive expedition" against the Mexican revolutionary and social bandit Pancho Villa, whose small army had raided a New Mexico border town. Ike hoped to get in on that assignment, but was passed over, and when the United States entered World War I in April 1917, he was not sent to France, as he wanted to be, but was assigned instead to a series of Stateside training missions, including one at a tank training center. In all of these duties, he received high marks from superiors and was promoted to captain, despite his lack of combat experience. At Camp Colt, adjacent to the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania, he created on a shoestring a highly effective tank training program, an achievement for which he received the Distinguished Service Medal, the highest noncombat award the army could give. But by the time he was in line for duty overseas, the war had ended.

In 1919, after the armistice, Ike reported to Camp Meade, Maryland, as a tank officer. Here he became a close friend of another apostle of the still-emerging armored branch, George S. Patton Jr. Although Patton had fought in France and returned a decorated hero, he did not look down on Ike Eisenhower as a peacetime officer, but regarded him as a kindred spirit who shared his passion for the future of armored warfare. The pair spent long nights discussing everything from the evolving role of the tank and the nitty-gritty of mobile warfare to the mysterious nature of war and warriors. These discussions and the strong friendship with so dashing an officer as Patton had a profound influence on Eisenhower, as did his involvement in an epic public relations venture

known as the 1919 transcontinental convoy. During an era when very few roads, let alone highways, existed in the United States, the army decided to stage a demonstration of long-distance overland military transport. On July 7, 1919, eighty-one assorted military vehicles embarked from Washington, D.C., on a 3,251-mile trek to San Francisco. Ike volunteered to serve with the expedition, which arrived in the City by the Bay sixty-two days after it had left the nation's capital. Completed just five days behind schedule, the expedition was counted a spectacular success. The experience impressed Eisenhower with the enormous potential of mechanized warfare, and it also impressed upon him the nation's great need for decent roads. It is no accident that thirty-seven years later, as president of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower would sign into law the Interstate Highways Act of 1956, authorizing construction of the modern interstate highway system.

As influential as Patton was in the development of Eisenhower as an officer, it was a far less famous man, Brigadier (later Major) General Fox Conner, who served as Ike's most important mentor. Conner was Ike's commanding officer when he served in the Panama Canal Zone from 1922 to 1924. Conner instilled in Eisenhower what West Point, despite formal course work, could not: a love of military and general history. This awakened passion prepared in Ike the commanding perspective from which he viewed and interpreted the unfolding events of World War II. Thanks to the education Conner began, he was better able to appreciate, when the time came, the wants, needs, and points of view of the British and French allies as well as those of the German and Italian enemies.

Conner also had the ear of army high command and, greatly impressed with Ike Eisenhower, he successfully lobbied for his enrollment in the army's Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas—the stepping-stone for officers earmarked for senior-level staff duty. Ike's good friend Patton lent him the voluminous notebooks he had compiled when he had been a student at the school, and Patton confided to his diary that it was

his notes that propelled Eisenhower, now a major, to the head of his class: first of 275 graduates in 1926.

From the Command and General Staff School Eisenhower went on to the even more prestigious Army War College. Whereas the Fort Leavenworth school trained officers to serve on the staffs of commanding generals, the War College groomed future generals, imparting the art of war at its most advanced and comprehensive level, including how armies are organized, mobilized, supplied, and used in combat. Eisenhower graduated in June 1928 and left for France to serve on the American Battle Monuments Commission. This assignment gave him two opportunities: one was to serve on the staff of the army's most senior commander, John J. Pershing, who had led the American Expeditionary Force in the Great War, and the other was to tour all the battlefields of western Europe and write a guidebook to these places. He concentrated on the sectors in which American troops had fought, but his travels encompassed the entire Western Front. These explorations and the authorial task that accompanied them gave Eisenhower an intimate familiarity with territory and terrain that would, within a matter of years, become a great battlefield yet again—*his* battlefield.

In 1929, Eisenhower returned to the United States and served in the War Department as assistant executive officer to Brigadier General George Van Horn Moseley, principal adviser to the secretary of war. He was also tapped at this time by General Pershing to edit his wartime memoirs, a task that proved largely thankless, except that it introduced him to Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall, Pershing's aide-de-camp and one of the army's rapidly rising stars.

In 1933, Ike Eisenhower came into the orbit of yet another key officer when he was appointed principal aide to Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Army chief of staff. From the perspective of an outsider, it was a plum job for a rising young officer, but MacArthur was notoriously difficult. A mercurial autocrat, he kept conspicuously unmilitary hours (rising late, taking long lunches, and retiring even later) and heaped mountains of work on his aides, especially Eisenhower. Ike

became indispensable to MacArthur, whom he accompanied to the Philippines in 1935 to assist in the organization of the commonwealth's army. His years with MacArthur were among the most arduous and frustrating of his military career; they also kept him glued to a staff assignment when what he most wanted was to command troops in the field. Staff officers are among the most powerful people in the army, but they rarely reach the highest levels of distinction; serving "in the rear with the gear," they don't get combat medals. Nevertheless, Ike learned extraordinarily valuable lessons under MacArthur in the Philippines. He learned about the nature of power from one of the world's most powerful military figures while simultaneously gaining hard, practical experience in working successfully with a monumentally difficult, ego-driven personality. He also learned firsthand how to build an army from scratch and with the most meager of resources.

MacArthur was loath to release Lieutenant Colonel Eisenhower, who had become his strong right hand, and Manuel Quezon, president of the Philippines, felt very much the same way. But by the autumn of 1938, it became clear to Eisenhower that the attempt of the western European democracies to "appease" Adolf Hitler would ensure rather than prevent war, and to Quezon's pleas that he remain in the Philippines, Eisenhower replied, "I'm a soldier. I'm going home. We're going to go to war and I'm going to be in it." Ike asked to be relieved of duties in Manila effective as of August 1939. Quezon tried to buy him off with a handsome salary from the Philippine treasury. "Mr. President," Ike replied, "no amount of money can make me change my mind." On the day before he left, Eisenhower was guest of honor at a luncheon given by Manuel Quezon, who presented him with the distinguished Service Star of the Philippines in recognition of his "exceptional talents . . . his breadth of understanding [and] his zeal and magnetic leadership."

By the time Eisenhower returned to the United States, World War II had begun in Europe with Hitler's September 1939 invasion of Poland. Ike was thrilled to be appointed both regimental executive officer and commander of the First Battalion, Fifteenth Infantry,

Third Division, at Fort Lewis, Washington, in January 1940. He was training recruits and commanding troops—in the field—at last.

In March 1941, Ike was promoted to full colonel and in June was transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as chief of staff of the Third Army. In this capacity, promoted yet again, to the rank of temporary brigadier general, he served as one of the principal planners of the Louisiana Maneuvers, which took place in September 1941. The most ambitious war games the U.S. Army had—or has—ever staged, they involved more than half a million troops, and Eisenhower's key role in them drew the attention of army chief of staff Marshall. When the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor propelled the United States into World War II on December 7, 1941, General Marshall summoned Eisenhower to Washington, D.C. There Marshall quickly summed up the catastrophic situation in the Pacific—the fleet at Pearl Harbor smashed, Wake Island under heavy attack, Guam fallen, the possessions of Britain and the Netherlands fallen or falling, and the Philippines under attack and about to be invaded. This summary concluded, he posed one question: "What should be our general course of action?"

It was, Ike realized, a question that defied practical answer. But after asking for a few hours to formulate a reply, he returned to Marshall's office to lay out what he believed was the only immediately viable course: do everything militarily possible, no matter how little, by establishing a base of operations in Australia. In his postwar memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, Ike recalled his rationale: "The people of China, of the Philippines, of the Dutch East Indies will be watching us. They may excuse failure but they will not excuse abandonment." Marshall agreed, and he recognized in Eisenhower an officer who was willing and able to provide realistic solutions even to apparently hopeless situations—hard answers rather than evasive excuses or alibis. Marshall named Eisenhower assistant chief of the Army Operations Division, a post in which he served through half of June 1942, having been jumped in rank, as of March 1942, to major general.

Marshall assigned Eisenhower to prepare strategy for an Allied invasion of Europe, a plan that would, however, be put on hold as

the Americans yielded to British prime minister Winston Churchill's proposal to fight Germany and Italy first in North Africa, then step off from there to assault Europe by way of what Churchill called its "soft underbelly," mainland Italy and the Mediterranean coast via Sicily. That Ike's plan was temporarily shelved did not mean he was sidelined. Quite the contrary. In May, Ike was sent to London to study issues related to joint defense. On June 15, 1942, General Marshall chose him over 366 more senior officers to be commander of all U.S. troops in the European theater of operations (which included North Africa), and the following month came promotion to temporary lieutenant general.

On the eve of America's entry into World War II, Eisenhower had been so obscure an officer that he was widely misidentified in press reports of the Louisiana war games as "Lt. Col. D. D. Ersenbeing." Now, less than a year later, he was America's top commander in North Africa and Europe. As chief of staff, George C. Marshall was solely responsible for choosing a top theater commander, and what he saw in Ike Eisenhower was a unique combination of an aptitude for strategy and strategic planning, a talent for logistics and organization, and an extraordinary ability to work with others—to get along with them, to persuade them, to mediate among them, to direct them, to encourage them, and to correct them. And there was more. Ike was no small-talker or glad-hander. He was all business. Yet he possessed an infectious smile that seemed to broadcast a combination of humility, friendliness, and unassailable optimism, no matter the odds against his side. Did this reflect his true personality? Some who believed they knew him well said it most certainly did, but others, who probably knew him even better, said that Dwight D. Eisenhower was actually a difficult man with a hair-trigger temper, a man who often doubted himself, yet a man who had somehow learned to set these traits and doubts aside, to submerge them in the appearance of sunny geniality and self-confident optimism. Ultimately, the issue of whether Eisenhower the commander, the manager, and the leader was the same as Eisenhower the man matters very little. All that really matters is that he brought to bear

in his command decisions and leadership style all the elements Marshall saw and recognized as indispensable in an officer given ultimate responsibility for the direction of a mission as complex as it was desperate.

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On November 8, 1942, Eisenhower commanded the commencement of Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa, which was successfully completed in May 1943, despite some serious errors and setbacks, for which Eisenhower willingly assumed responsibility. During the North African campaign, Ike made the difficult and controversial decision to work with the Vichy French admiral Jean-François Darlan rather than treat him as an enemy. Although the decision brought a storm of protest from some Allied officials, it received the full support of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and doubtless saved Allied lives.

Having been promoted to temporary four-star general in February 1943, Eisenhower next commanded the amphibious assault on Sicily (July 1943), followed by the invasion of the Italian mainland (September 1943). The fighting in Italy would prove heartbreakingly costly and would not end until very near the end of the war in Europe; however, on December 24, 1943, Ike had to leave others to direct the Italian campaign, as he was appointed supreme commander of Allied expeditionary forces and placed in command of Operation Overlord, the invasion of Europe via the English Channel. In January, he arrived in London to finalize plans for what the world would come to call D-Day, the largest, most dangerous, and most consequential invasion in the history of warfare.

A significant portion of this book is devoted to the many leadership decisions Ike had to make during this dauntingly complex operation, beginning with the calculated risk of launching the invasion on June 6, 1944, to take advantage of a very narrow window of acceptable weather during a period of unanticipated storms. At stake were the lives of more than 156,000 troops in the initial assault and,

indeed, the very outcome of a war between the forces of democratic civilization and Nazi totalitarianism.

The success of the Normandy landings was only the beginning of what Ike himself called (in the title of his postwar memoir) the "crusade in Europe." All decisions relating to the day-to-day conduct of the campaign as well as its overall objectives either required his judgment or rested entirely with him. He had to confront not only the Allies' common enemy, Germany, but, often, elements within the Allied forces—political leaders as well as generals—whose national or personal goals differed sufficiently to create perpetual friction if not outright ruptures. The alliance that defeated the forces of Adolf Hitler was the most complex and difficult in history. While others determined political and diplomatic policy, it was Ike's responsibility to implement policy in ways that furthered rather than hindered the war effort. He had to harmonize conflicting ideologies as well as conflicting personalities. He also had to reconcile his own constitutional and personal allegiance to the United States with the requirements of the international alliance. It was a staggeringly difficult task of leadership and management.

Militarily, once the invasion beachheads had been firmly secured and the principal Allied forces had broken through the treacherous *bocage*, or hedgerow country, of Normandy, the invasion of Europe proceeded with remarkable speed. By the end of 1944, Ike faced a new problem. He called it "victory fever," a sense of invulnerability born of success, which readily led to complacence. It was victory fever that contributed to American vulnerability in the Ardennes when the Germans, supposedly beaten, launched a devastating counterattack, dubbed the Battle of the Bulge, in December. Ike's steadiness and rapid response during this crisis converted a potential Allied catastrophe into the beginning of the culminating phase of Allied total victory.

After winning the Battle of the Bulge, the Allies crossed the Rhine on March 7, 1945. Advances on all fronts resulted at last in the surrender of Germany on May 7–8, 1945, bringing the war in Europe to an end. Ike was hailed as a hero, although he also faced

fierce and bitter criticism for what was only partly his decision: to allow the Soviet Red Army to capture Berlin. The political aspect of this decision was the responsibility of the Allied heads of state (who had promised Berlin to the Soviets at the Yalta conference of February 1945), but, militarily, Ike agreed: Berlin was best left to the Russians, who were closer, who had more troops, and, even more important, who were willing to lose large numbers of men in order to capture the Nazi capital. Ike's objective was never to take territory or take cities. (It was the politicians who had ordered him to liberate Paris on August 25, 1944—he wanted to pass it by.) His objective was simply to destroy the enemy army. Like Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War, Eisenhower reasoned that it is only by killing the soldiers opposing you that you win the war. And that had little to do with capturing land or liberating towns.

By the end of 1944, Ike Eisenhower had been promoted to General of the Army, the rarely bestowed five-star rank, and in June 1945, he returned to the United States on a visit. Whatever many might have felt about Berlin, all that was demonstrated during his homecoming was the boundless gratitude of a nation. Ike was universally greeted as a hero. He announced his intention to retire from the army, but delayed retirement when, in November 1945, President Harry S. Truman named him to replace General Marshall as army chief of staff.

In February 1948, Ike did step down from active service and began work on his masterful memoir, *Crusade in Europe*. He accepted appointment as president of Columbia University, then, in December, began a three-month stint as military consultant to the nation's first secretary of defense, James Forrestal. Beginning in 1949, he served informally as chairman of the newly created Joint Chiefs of Staff, and after the Korean War began, Ike accepted, at the request of President Truman on December 18, 1950, the position of supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). For the next fifteen months, until he stepped down in June 1952 to begin his campaign as Republican candidate for president of the United States, General Eisenhower used his hard-won

skills as a military leader and manager to forge an effective and united military organization consisting of the United States and the nations of western Europe. Throughout the long Cold War, NATO served as a defense and deterrent against Soviet aggression.

Dwight David Eisenhower was elected president on November 4, 1952, and served two terms, leading a prosperous nation that had become one of the world's two great—and mortally opposed—superpowers. After completion of his second term in January 1961, Congress ceremoniously reinstated the five-star rank he had resigned when he assumed the presidency. On March 28, 1969, the former supreme Allied commander and chief executive died at Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D.C., and was buried with full military honors in Abilene, Kansas.

A Note on Sources

The major sources for Dwight D. Eisenhower's leadership insights quoted in this book are his postwar memoir, *Crusade in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997; originally published 1948), and his voluminous wartime correspondence, diary entries, memoranda, orders, and other papers, which are collected and reproduced in a five-volume series—Alfred D. Chandler Jr. (ed.), *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970). Quotations from other sources are cited where they occur in the text.

1

TIME OF TRIAL

Ike and America Enter the War

Although the United States was still at peace, World War II was under way in Europe when Eisenhower returned to the United States after long service as Douglas MacArthur's right-hand man in the Philippines. In January 1940, he was appointed both regimental executive officer and commander of the First Battalion, Fifteenth Infantry, Third Division, at Fort Lewis, Washington. In March 1941, he was promoted to full colonel and in June transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as chief of staff of the Third Army. Promoted yet again, to the rank of temporary brigadier general, he became one of the chief planners of the Louisiana Maneuvers, which took place in September 1941. Ike's role in this vast and crucial exercise drew the attention of George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, and when Pearl Harbor thrust the nation into the war on December 7, 1941, Marshall summoned Ike to the War Department in Washington, D.C., and named him assistant chief of the Army War Plans Division, a post in which he served midway through June 1942, having been jumped in rank, as of March 1942, to major general.

Ike's work in the War Department during the dismal, desperate, and chaotic early months of America's involvement in the war consisted of formulating strategies for national military survival as well as for an eventual counteroffensive intended to convert defeat into victory. Assigned to prepare plans for an Allied invasion of Europe, he then had to switch to planning for the invasion of North Africa instead, because President Roosevelt agreed with Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, that the best way to approach

a counteroffensive in Europe was via the Mediterranean, starting with the conquest of North Africa.

In May 1942, Marshall sent Ike to London to work on strategy and policy for joint defense, and on June 15, 1942, Marshall jumped him over 366 more senior officers to become commander of all U.S. troops in the European theater of operations (which included North Africa). After promotion to temporary lieutenant general in July 1942, Eisenhower was named to command Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa.

Launched on November 8, 1942, Operation Torch was the first major Allied offensive of the war. Eisenhower remarked that his job, leading a diverse and often disputatious Anglo-American high command, was like "trying to arrange the blankets smoothly over several prima donnas in the same bed."

From these first, monumentally difficult phases of his World War II career emerged a leadership philosophy that is reflected in passages of Eisenhower's extraordinary postwar memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, and found within the mountains of secret cables, dispatches, official memoranda, diary notations, and personal letters he wrote from the beginning of 1940 to November 1942.

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Lesson 1

Compromise and Management

For those on staff work the days became ceaseless rounds of planning, directing, inspecting; compromising what had been commanded with what could be done.

—*Crusade in Europe*

The U.S. Army entered its first two offshore wars wholly unprepared. In 1898, it fought the Spanish-American War with a tiny regular army force, supplemented by militia and volunteers, and

although valiant in combat, the army fell all over itself in the clumsily improvised process of shipping out to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In April 1917, the United States entered World War I with a professional full-time army of just 133,000 officers and men, vastly smaller than all but the smallest armies of the smallest nations involved in the war. It is a myth that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, caught the United States similarly unprepared. Ever since Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, President Roosevelt had begun preparing the nation for war, first by gearing up production of materiel and increasing military budgets, then, on September 16, 1940, by signing the Selective Service Act, the first peacetime military draft in American history.

In January 1940, Ike returned to the United States from a long assignment in the Philippines on the staff of Douglas MacArthur. He was tasked with training and commanding troops at Fort Lewis, Washington. The draft had not yet commenced, and neither had the buildup of equipment and weapons. Ike, like other field-grade officers at this point in time, was faced with what seemed the certainty of war and the job of preparing a woefully inadequate number of underequipped troops to fight it. This was hardly a comfortable position, but, as it turned out, it provided extraordinarily valuable experience in executing the key leadership and management task of "compromising what had been commanded with what could be done."

Even at the height of the campaign in Europe, as the Allies advanced into Germany and Eisenhower commanded millions, he would find that this cardinal rule still applied. For in war, there are never enough men, never enough equipment or supplies, and what can actually be done has always to be compromised with what is commanded.

What is true of war is true as well of every complex, high-stakes enterprise. There is always the necessity of compromise. That is the very essence and art of management: a balancing of expectations and desires against resources and results. Economists call it working

within the principle of scarcity. Military leaders, if they're as good as Eisenhower was, call it reality, and they are grateful for having been trained to deal with it.

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Lesson 2

Create Satisfaction

I determined that my answer should be short, emphatic, and based on reasoning in which I honestly believed.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Just days after Pearl Harbor, General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, summoned Ike Eisenhower to the War Department in Washington. After briefing Ike for twenty minutes on the disasters of the Pacific theater, describing what seemed at the moment a situation overwhelming in its hopelessness, Marshall stopped, then asked Eisenhower a single question: "What should be our general line of action?"

Struggling to maintain a poker face, Ike replied, "Give me a few hours."

"All right," Marshall said and, with that, dismissed Eisenhower.

Ike took the problem back to the desk that had been assigned him in the War Department's Operations Division. His first thought was, "[I]f I were to be of any service to General Marshall in the War Department, I would have to earn his confidence." This meant, he reasoned, that "the logic of this, my first answer, would have to be unimpeachable, and the answer would have to be prompt." With that, a "curious echo from long ago came to my aid."

Ike recalled something his beloved mentor, Major General Fox Conner, had said to him shortly after World War I. It was that another war was inevitable and, when the United States got into that war, it would do so with allies. "Systems of single command will have to be worked out," Conner had said to Eisenhower. "We must

insist on individual and single responsibility—leaders will have to learn how to overcome nationalistic considerations in the conduct of campaigns. One man who can do it is Marshall—he is close to being a genius."

The memory of this discussion prompted Ike to conclude that whatever answer he gave to Marshall "should be short, emphatic, and based on reasoning in which I honestly believed." Why? "No oratory, plausible argument, or glittering generality would impress anyone entitled to be labeled genius by Fox Conner."

Before even tackling the daunting problem Marshall had posed, Ike thought about the true significance of the question—that it was as much Marshall's way of testing him as it was a question about the conduct of the war—and he thought about what kind of answer would satisfy Marshall—what product would satisfy this particular customer. He summoned up the most important fact he knew about Marshall: that a man Eisenhower deeply admired regarded Marshall as very nearly a genius. To pass the test Marshall had posed, Ike would have to earn the chief's confidence. Because Marshall was a genius (or very nearly so), Ike would have to earn his confidence with a short and thoroughly reasoned answer.

What he came up with was a plan to do whatever was possible, little as that might at the moment be, lest the endangered Allies in the theater give up hope and write off not only themselves but also the U.S. military: "They may excuse failure but they will not excuse abandonment."

"I agree with you," Marshall said when Eisenhower presented his report to him. "Do your best to save them."

George Marshall was famous for his laconic manner. A man of very few words, he was not given to praise. But in this exchange—a question posing the impossible and eliciting a brief, impeccably reasoned answer proposing the possible—was born the confidence that would soon move Marshall to appoint Eisenhower supreme commander of U.S. forces in North Africa and Europe and, later, motivate his nomination of Ike as commander of the Normandy invasion and supreme commander of all Allied forces in Europe.

The right answer is the one that satisfies all the needs of the person who asks the question.

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Lesson 3

The Sins of Leadership (According to General Marshall)

[H]e . . . gave clear indication of the types of men who in his opinion were unsuited for high position.

—*Crusade in Europe*

During his time in the War Department, Ike worked directly for George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, and he dedicated himself to learning all he could from Marshall, paying particular attention to what his boss considered the cardinal sins of poor leaders.

Marshall could not tolerate "any effort to 'pass the buck,' especially to him." Ike often heard him say that he could get "a thousand men to do detailed work but too many were useless in responsible posts because they left to him the necessity of making every decision."

Although Marshall wanted "his principal assistants [to] think and act on their own conclusions within their own spheres of responsibility," he had "nothing but scorn" for the micromanager. If you "worked yourself to tatters on minor details," you could have "no ability to handle the more vital issues."

Marshall could not abide the "truculent personality—the man who confused firmness and strength with bad manners and deliberate discourtesy."

Marshall avoided those with "too great a love of the limelight."

He was "irritated" by those "who were too stupid to see that leadership in conference, even with subordinates, is as important as on the battlefield."