



Richard V. Damms. *The Eisenhower Presidency, 1953-1961.* Harlow: Longman, 2002.
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A Worthy Introduction to the Eisenhower Presidency

In this concise, informative volume, Richard V. Damms introduces the major events and issues of the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower. The work appears best suited for a mid- to upper-level undergraduate class devoted to the Cold War, the 1950s, presidential politics, or other appropriate topics.

Damms begins by introducing his readers to the evolution of historical scholarship on the Eisenhower presidency and by providing a brief synopsis of Eisenhower's pre-presidential career. The author organizes the core of the book into four chapters that divide the first and second terms of the Eisenhower presidency. Each presidential term is subsequently divided into separate chapters on domestic and foreign policy. A brief assessment of the Eisenhower presidency concludes the narrative.

A major strength of the work is the clarity of the prose. Clear and succinct writing allows Damms to incorporate a considerable amount of information and ideas into just 111 pages of text. The tone of the work is balanced, but not at the expense of scholarly analysis and criticism. Hence, Damms does not hesitate to declare Eisenhower to be "missing in action" (p. 108) on civil

rights issues, nor does he fail to question the effectiveness of various aspects of the administration's foreign policy, ranging from a failed 1957 attempt to overthrow a nationalist Syrian government to the "comedy of errors" (p. 98) that followed the downing of Gary Powers's U-2 spy plane in 1960. On the other hand, Damms often tempers his critique by demonstrating the difficulties that U.S. officials faced in their efforts to address complex problems such as containing the Soviet Union, reducing defense spending, and contending with rising nationalism in the developing world.

The author faces a daunting task in his effort to synthesize the formidable (and growing) body of scholarship on the Eisenhower presidency. Historians of the thirty-fourth president will quickly recognize several major contributors to the field as they read the text. Damms overview of Eisenhower's political philosophy, for example, relies heavily upon Robert Griffith's excellent 1982 article, while his discussion of Eisenhower's Latin American policies draws from leading scholars such as Stephen Rabe and Thomas G. Paterson. Area specialists, of course, are likely to either bemoan the omission of a particu-

lar work or quibble with a minor interpretive point, but Damms generally does a commendable job incorporating the most significant works and interpretations into his overview.

The various appendages make the work well suited to an undergraduate audience. Two glossaries, categorized separately by terminology and individuals, provide quick and accessible reference for students unfamiliar with important institutions such as SEATO, key administration officials, and significant international figures such as Lebanese President Camille Chamoun and Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq. A chronology of Eisenhower's life and a brief series of maps should also help novice scholars contextualize important events and places discussed in the text.

The book also includes eighteen primary source documents highlighting important episodes during Eisenhower's tenure in office. Although some of these sources highlight significant domestic issues, such as McCarthyism and civil rights, a majority of the documents re-

late to defense and foreign policy issues. They include John Foster Dulles's articulation of "massive retaliation" in 1954, the 1957 announcement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, Nikita Khrushchev discussing the 1958 Berlin Crisis, and Eisenhower's farewell address, warning Americans of the dangers of the "military-industrial complex." Since Damms provides numerous citations (in MLA format) to the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, he essentially broadens the list of primary sources. Conceivably, any scholar with access to the *FRUS* volumes could pair the text and original sources by having students look up the cited material and evaluate the text interpretations in the light of primary evidence. The book thus has great potential as a springboard for research essays, class discussion, and other projects.

In sum, this work should be a valuable asset to scholars teaching courses devoted to the Eisenhower years, particularly if the instructor is imaginative enough to put the documents, maps, and citations to the best possible use. It is highly recommended.

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