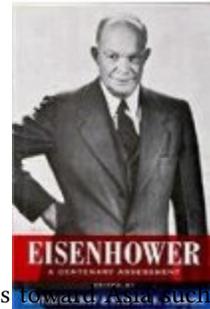


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Günter Bischof, Stephen E. Ambrose, eds. *Eisenhower: A Century Assessment*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995. xx + 281 pp. \$37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-1942-6.

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The year 1990 celebrated the centenary of the birth of General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Eisenhower Center at the University of New Orleans did not miss this great opportunity, and organized a public lecture series on Eisenhower's life and his times. The result has become this volume, which consists of essays presented first in the lectures and later updated for a broader audience.

The scope of this book is very broad, covering major aspects of Eisenhower's life since World War II, when he became a world figure. That said, however, the book's perspective is rather narrow. The first four essays trace Eisenhower's achievements as the Supreme Command during World War II and as the first Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (SACEUR) in the early 1950s before he entered the White House. The second and the third sections examine Eisenhower's presidency by assessing his domestic and foreign policies. While the second part, which includes two essays, discusses Eisenhower's influence on American society, the six essays in the third section look into Eisenhower's foreign and national security policies, closing with an "Epilogue" by Stephen E. Ambrose which summarizes legacies Eisenhower left behind.

However, as the editors themselves admit, this kind of collective volume is "bound to be highly selective" (p. 13). Many important questions concerning domestic policies and foreign policies are missing here. Excluded are: Eisenhower's handling of Senator McCarthy; efforts to end the Korean War; the Suez Crisis; the reaction to the Sputnik and the "missile gap"; nuclear arms control negotiations with the Soviets; covert operations particularly in Iran and Guatemala, and so on. More disappointingly, even though Gordon H. Chang's essay covers U.S. relations with China, this book does not cover many is-

such as Eisenhower's foreign policies as Eisenhower's commitment to Indo-China, economic policies toward Asia, and U.S.-Japan relations including the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. Readers would have been happy to read about the role Eisenhower played in such important issues as these.

The "Introduction" is highly helpful, and possibly the best part of this book. This is because it introduces readers not only to this volume, but also to recent scholarship on Eisenhower, in a succinct, well-organized manner. "Eisenhower Revisionism" of the 1980s dramatically changed scholars' opinions, shifting away from the earlier judgment that "Eisenhower was an ineffective, do-nothing president" (p. 4), to the notion of the "hidden-hand presidency" (Fred Greenstein). This new interpretation describes Eisenhower as a skillful and active president. By the early 1990s, however, scholars of a younger generations began to portrait Eisenhower as a figure somewhere between these two divergent views. The historiography of this "cycle of thesis, antithesis, synthesis" (p. 4) included in the "Introduction," and the "Selected bibliography" at the end of the book are one of the major contributions of this book to the scholarship. To be sure, they should be the starting point for bibliographical information on Eisenhower. The second best place to begin would be, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: A bibliography of His Times and Presidency*, compiled by R. Alton Lee (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991).

In addition, two essays of this book are particularly important—they either fill the research gap in the Eisenhower scholarship or they provide different views on Eisenhower from what earlier studies have indicated. One of them is Thomas M. Sisk's essay, "Forging the Weapon: Eisenhower as NATO's Supreme Allied

Commander, Europe, 1950-1952," which explores Eisenhower's tenure as SACEUR, one of the neglected areas of Eisenhower's life. Sisk concludes that Eisenhower failed to admit that his policies as SACEUR "tended to lead the United States into a long-term commitment to Western Europe," and that he also failed to "realize his goal of an early American [troops] withdrawal from Europe" (p. 83). This essay really helps to understand what we have not yet known of Eisenhower.

The other one is Robert W. Wampler's essay, "Eisenhower, NATO, and Nuclear Weapons: The Strategy and Political Economy of Alliance Security." While Wampler also emphasizes how crucially important Eisenhower was in forging NATO's military policies, he criticizes the Kennedy administration and others who believed that NATO's shift to more reliance on nuclear weapons as "the preferred goal" of the Eisenhower administration. In fact, Wampler writes, "Bit should more accurately be seen as the imperfect best that they could achieve" (p.

190). Largely based on archival materials, some of which have never been available to scholars before, Wampler succeeds to make a strong argument. Wampler's essay is also a good example of what the "postrevisionism" of Eisenhower's scholarship is like.

To my disappointment, some of the essays in this book are not as valuable, partly because they seem to be a little bit too personal accounts of Eisenhower, or partly because they are no more than the summary of findings previously presented at other places. And yet, considering all the essays together as one volume, this book is highly enjoyable and readable, and is a good starting point for those who are not yet familiar with what Eisenhower accomplished.

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