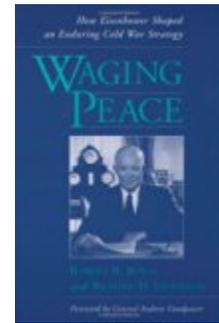




Robert R. Bowie, Richard H. Immerman. *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*. New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1998. x + 317 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-506264-9.

Reviewed by Richard V. Damms (Department of History, Mississippi State University)
Published on H-USA (April, 1999)



Eisenhower's Master Plan

The end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union has brought forth a wave of scholarship seeking to explain how the United States and its allies engineered victory. Here, the authors make the well-reasoned case that Dwight D. Eisenhower deserves a share of the credit for successfully crafting a winning strategy. In their view, Eisenhower devised “the first coherent and sustainable cold war strategy” suitable for the basic conditions that would prevail for the next three decades (p. 3). Although they accept that the Soviet collapse and peaceful resolution of the cold war owed much to the internal problems of the Soviet system and the recognition by Soviet leaders of the need for reform, Eisenhower’s New Look containment strategy nevertheless “provided the indispensable external context for producing that outcome” (p. 258).

Authors Robert Bowie, former director of the Policy Planning Staff in John Foster Dulles’s State Department, and Richard Immerman, a self-confessed Eisenhower revisionist who has written and edited several important works on Eisenhower and Dulles, have pooled their talents to produce the most meticulous study to date of the formulation of Eisenhower’s basic national security policy between 1953 and 1954.[1] Based on thorough research primarily in the Eisenhower and Dulles papers, and drawing on Bowie’s personal recollection of events in the National Security Council (NSC) Planning Board, the authors pay particular attention to the development of NSC 162/2, the first comprehensive statement of the new administration’s cold war strategy.

In the most original section of the book, the authors detail Eisenhower’s and Dulles’s critiques of President Harry S. Truman’s national security policies. Until 1950, they argue, Eisenhower generally endorsed Truman’s containment strategy and collective security policies. Indeed, as Army Chief of Staff, temporary chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and then the first supreme allied commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, Eisenhower had been a minor participant in many of the key national security debates of the day and bore responsibility for implementing Truman’s policies. But the outbreak of the Korean War and the adoption of the alarmist NSC 68, calling for an expanded military establishment, troubled Eisenhower. He became increasingly concerned about the apparent disarray in Truman’s policymaking procedures and the long-term implications of an open-ended containment policy. What was required, he believed, was a coherent strategic concept based on “a realistic examination of threats, objectives and priorities, and an objective appraisal of the means and support required to achieve them” (p. 42). Truman’s team had failed to grasp that “the purpose of America is to defend a way of life rather than merely to defend property, homes, or lives” (p. 45). Based on his own military experience, he had a healthy skepticism of dire intelligence assessments. He had also witnessed firsthand the devastation wrought on the Soviet Union in World War II and believed that Soviet leaders would not deliberately risk a similar conflagration that might jeopardize their regime. If the United States and its allies could carefully husband and exploit their re-

sources, project an air of resolve, and maintain unity behind a long-term containment strategy, the Soviet system would ultimately collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions.

Dulles's critique, meanwhile, derived from his varied diplomatic experiences and his study of philosophy. A veteran of the Versailles peace conference and a student of Henri Bergson, Dulles came to believe that change was inherent in the international system and that enlightened statesmen had to make progressive adjustments and promote global integration in order to preserve peace and security. As the British and French had apparently failed to learn this basic lesson, the onus was now on the United States to champion peaceful change and mobilize the free world against the communist threat. Like Eisenhower, he defined national security broadly to include military strength, economic power, world opinion, and moral force. "Peace," he wrote, "must be waged just as war is waged" (p. 65). In his view, the Truman administration had failed by focusing too narrowly on military power, concentrating on Europe at the expense of Asia and the developing world, and adopting a static containment strategy that preserved the status quo and frustrated the legitimate aspirations of oppressed peoples. Dulles advocated a dynamic policy of liberation, to be achieved primarily through propaganda and psychological warfare means, backed up by a more explicit emphasis on nuclear weapons to deter general war. Such a strategy would throw the Soviets on the defensive and hasten their demise. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower glossed over his fundamental disagreements with the isolationists in his own party by making few references to foreign affairs and allowing Dulles to write the Republican foreign policy platform.

In the second part of the study, the authors analyze Eisenhower's policymaking procedures. "Eisenhower believed that careful and integrated planning, systematic exposure to diverse points of view and the broadest range of available information, methodical review, and effective teamwork and coordination were essential for making policies that best serve the national interest" (p. 256). To that end, he reorganized and reinvigorated the NSC. He established a Planning Board, composed of the chief planning officers in each department or agency, to draft policy statements for NSC discussion and presidential approval and to identify "splits" between agencies requiring resolution. He set up an Operations Coordinating Board to ensure compliance with NSC decisions, and appointed a special assistant for national security affairs to oversee the new bureaucracy. In or-

der to encourage his advisers to take a broader view of national security, Eisenhower required each policy proposal to include a budgetary annex, and frequently invited the budget director and chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors to join the treasury secretary in the NSC's deliberations. Eisenhower, himself, presided over the weekly meetings and promoted freewheeling discussion. The authors make the now familiar argument that Eisenhower devised Operation Solarium (the mid-1953 exercise when administration officials staffed out three alternative strategies of continued containment, nuclear deterrence, and aggressive rollback) to foster consensus among his advisers for his preferred strategy of containment.

The last third of the book details the cold war strategy outlined in NSC 162/2, adopted in October 1953. Eisenhower explicitly rejected NSC 68's designation of 1954 as the "year of maximum danger" and its prescription for coercing the rollback of Soviet power. Rather, he viewed the Soviet threat as a long-term one that would require a free world strategy sustainable by the United States and NATO over the "long haul." The New Look therefore stressed a return to the original containment concept, collective security, and increased reliance on nuclear weapons both to deter a general war and to allow economies in defense spending. It also endorsed a forward defense strategy for NATO, advocated greater European cooperation and integration, and favored measures to promote international trade and economic growth. Dulles achieved his dynamic policy with a commitment to "liberation" by peaceful means, primarily through stepped up psychological warfare efforts against the Sino-Soviet bloc, but both Eisenhower and Dulles ruled out the more aggressive military rollback plans contemplated by the JCS as being unnecessarily provocative and dangerous. Finally, Eisenhower's deep concern about the dangers inherent in the nuclear arms race led him to support limited arms control measures that might reduce the risk of war and ease the economic burden of armaments.

Despite the new emphasis on balancing means and ends, Eisenhower made clear that he would not sacrifice security for solvency. While endorsing the idea of a major redeployment of ground forces from Europe and Asia in principle, he agreed to postpone such moves indefinitely for the sake of maintaining allied cohesion. Similarly, he refused to countenance the massive reductions in foreign aid programs favored by Budget and Treasury officials, arguing that they were a wise long-term investment in national security. Indeed, in the developing

world, NSC 162/2 committed the United States to progressive change in order to short-circuit attempts by the Soviets to capitalize on frustrated nationalist aspirations.

Understandably, given the relatively narrow focus on 1953-54, the authors are overly generous in their assessment of the New Look and its implications. As they occasionally acknowledge, the various provisions enshrined in NSC 162/2 could not always be reconciled in practice. Eisenhower authorized covert operations in Iran and Guatemala to achieve short-range objectives that clearly undermined reformist national aspirations in both countries. These "successful" operations generated false confidence in the efficacy of covert action as a diplomatic tool. Operation AJAX begat Operation PBSUCCESS which begat the Bay of Pigs. Similarly, the same policymaking procedures that the authors praise for airing diverse opinions and generating consensus for presidential decisions actually stymied Eisenhower's arms control initiatives. Strong bureaucratic resistance by the Department of Defense, the JCS, and the Atomic Energy Commission consistently frustrated Eisenhower's halting moves toward even a limited nuclear test ban agreement. Despite Eisenhower's occasionally eloquent ruminations on the arms race and the horrors of nuclear war, moreover, the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile mushroomed to some 18,000 warheads by the end of his presidency. To ascribe this increase, as the authors seem to do, mainly to Truman's expansion of production facilities is disingenuous.

Readers interested in examining the New Look beyond 1954 might benefit >from Saki Dockrill's more comprehensive *Eisenhower's New Look National Security Policy, 1953-1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

These reservations aside, *Waging Peace* provides the most sophisticated discussion of the genesis of Eisenhower's national security policy to date. While the authors' conclusions regarding the ultimate wisdom of Eisenhower's New Look strategy remain open to debate, the book will become required reading for all students of Eisenhower and the national security policymaking process.

Notes:

[1]. See, for example, Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); idem, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); idem, "Confessions of an Eisenhower Revisionist: An Agonizing Reappraisal," *Diplomatic History* 14 (Summer 1990): 319-42; and idem, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-usa>

Citation: Richard V. Damms. Review of Bowie, Robert R.; Immerman, Richard H., *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*. H-USA, H-Net Reviews. April, 1999.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2992>

Copyright © 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.