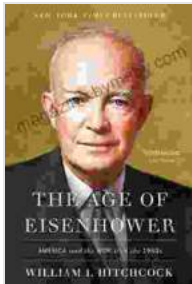


# The Age of Eisenhower: America's Postwar Odyssey (Reviewed)



## The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s by William I Hitchcock

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 49638 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 673 pages  
X-Ray : Enabled

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In his sweeping and insightful new book, historian Kevin Kruse offers a fresh and nuanced assessment of one of the most consequential presidencies in American history. "The Age of Eisenhower: America's Postwar Odyssey" paints a vivid portrait of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the five-star general who emerged from World War II as a national icon and served as the nation's 34th president from 1953 to 1961.

Kruse's book is a masterful synthesis of political, economic, and social history. He places Eisenhower's presidency within the context of the transformative postwar era, a time of both unprecedented prosperity and profound social and cultural change. Kruse argues that Eisenhower was a pivotal figure in navigating the nation through these challenges and shaping the course of American history.

### **Eisenhower's Legacy: Conservatism, Liberalism, and the "Modern Republicanism"**

One of the most striking aspects of Eisenhower's presidency was his ability to bridge the ideological divide between conservatives and liberals. Kruse demonstrates how Eisenhower inherited a nation deeply divided by the Cold War and the legacy of the New Deal. Eisenhower's "modern Republicanism," as Kruse calls it, sought to find a middle ground between the two sides, promoting economic growth and national security while also addressing social issues such as education and healthcare.

Kruse argues that Eisenhower's legacy is a complex and multifaceted one. He was a conservative on economic issues, but he also supported social programs such as Social Security and Medicare. He was a strong anti-communist, but he also pursued a policy of détente with the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's presidency was a time of both progress and stagnation, a period of consensus and conflict.

### **The Cold War and National Security**

The Cold War cast a long shadow over Eisenhower's presidency. Kruse examines Eisenhower's foreign policy in detail, arguing that he pursued a strategy of "massive retaliation" to deter Soviet aggression while also

seeking to limit the spread of communism through diplomacy and covert action.

Kruse also discusses Eisenhower's role in the development of the military-industrial complex. Eisenhower warned against the dangers of excessive military spending and the influence of the "military-industrial establishment" in his farewell address. However, Kruse argues that Eisenhower's own policies contributed to the growth of this complex, which would have a profound impact on American society and politics in the decades to come.

### **Domestic Policy: Economic Growth and Social Change**

In addition to foreign affairs, Kruse also examines Eisenhower's domestic policy in depth. He argues that Eisenhower's economic policies, which emphasized fiscal prudence and free market principles, laid the foundation for the postwar economic boom. Kruse also discusses Eisenhower's efforts to address social issues such as civil rights and education, arguing that he was more progressive than is often assumed.

### **Civil Rights**

One of the most controversial aspects of Eisenhower's presidency was his handling of the civil rights movement. Kruse argues that while Eisenhower was personally sympathetic to the cause of racial equality, he was constrained by political realities. Eisenhower took some steps to advance civil rights, such as sending federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the desegregation of Central High School. However, he was also reluctant to push too hard on the issue, fearing that it would alienate white voters in the South.

### **Education**

Eisenhower was a strong supporter of education, and he signed into law the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. The NDEA provided federal funding for math, science, and foreign language education in response to the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik. Kruse argues that the NDEA had a profound impact on American education, helping to improve the quality of instruction and increase access to higher education for millions of Americans.

### **Eisenhower's Impact and Historical Legacy**

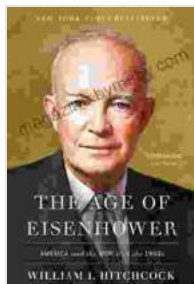
In the final chapter of his book, Kruse assesses Eisenhower's impact and historical legacy. He argues that Eisenhower was a pivotal figure in American history, a leader who helped to navigate the nation through a transformative era. Eisenhower's presidency was a period of both progress and stagnation, but it also laid the foundation for many of the social, economic, and political changes that would shape the second half of the 20th century.

Kruse concludes by arguing that Eisenhower's legacy is still relevant today. He suggests that Eisenhower's "modern Republicanism" offers a model for how to bridge the ideological divide between conservatives and liberals in the 21st century.

"The Age of Eisenhower: America's Postwar Odyssey" is a major contribution to the literature on American history. Kevin Kruse has written a comprehensive and insightful account of Eisenhower's presidency, placing it within the context of the transformative postwar era. Kruse's book offers a fresh and nuanced assessment of Eisenhower's legacy, arguing that he was a pivotal figure in American history.

Whether you are a scholar of American history or simply interested in learning more about one of the most consequential presidencies in the nation's history, "The Age of Eisenhower" is a must-read. Kruse's lucid prose and engaging narrative will captivate you from beginning to end.

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