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Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*. Oxford University Press, 1998. 317 pp. + x.: "TALKING PEACE, WAGING COLD WAR"

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## “TALKING PEACE, WAGING COLD WAR”

By: **Kenneth A. Osgood**

Robert Bowie, former director of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Policy Planning Staff, and Richard Immerman, winner of the 1990 Bernath Prize from the Society for Historians of American Relations, have co-authored a sympathetic portrait of Eisenhower's foreign policy. Clearly aligned with the “revisionist” school of the Eisenhower presidency, they have provided convincing evidence to refute the traditional view of Eisenhower as a do-nothing president who preferred golf over the duties of the presidency. The authors argue that under Eisenhower's guidance the United States developed a logical, coherent, and ultimately wise national security strategy that shaped American policy for the duration of the Cold War.

According to Bowie and Immerman, an appreciation of Eisenhower's personal values and political philosophy is essential to understand his foreign policy. Consequently, nearly one-third of the book is devoted to the years preceding Eisenhower's inauguration. Eisenhower emerges here as a truly exceptional individual with a highly-developed sense of leadership. As a candidate, he tried to shape public opinion, to convince Americans of the necessity of a firm response to the Soviet threat, while at the same time warning against the danger of runaway expenditures and budget deficits. Eisenhower, Bowie and Immerman conclude, “campaigned on the most basic of themes: his administration would formulate and pursue a coherent and effective “cold war” national strategy.” (79)

The remaining chapters of the book are devoted to analysis of the formation of that strategy, known then and since as the "New Look." This produces a fascinating exposition of the "processes and inputs" that led to the adoption of National Security Council (NSC) document 162/2, the important policy paper that guided the "New Look." Bowie and Immerman devote five chapters to an analysis of NSC 162/2 and the process by which the administration approved and revised it. As such, it is an interesting look at the policymaking process, including bureaucratic politics and presidential leadership. According to the authors, Eisenhower's skillful leadership produced a strategy that rationalized means and ends, that provided for the national defense without sending the nation into bankruptcy, that preserved the fundamental values and free character of American institutions, that prevented the outbreak of general war, and that provided for a protracted "long haul" contest with the Soviet Union for world leadership.

In addition to crafting a coherent Cold War strategy, Bowie and Immerman argue, Eisenhower also remained committed to *détente*, coexistence, and disarmament. According to the authors, Eisenhower offered Stalin's successors a realistic "chance for peace" in his famous address of April 16, 1953. The agenda it laid out "was a comprehensive program for ending the cold war, starting with the settling of major political issues as a prelude to tackling the radical reduction and control of armaments." When that initiative faltered Eisenhower adopted a "very modest, long-term strategy for making gradual progress by small steps." (225) At the same time, however, Eisenhower realized that the Soviets had no intention of abandoning their basic hostility to the West and were unlikely to compromise on the most contentious East-West issues. Thus, according to Bowie and Immerman, Eisenhower responded to Soviet intransigence by laying out a comprehensive plan for waging cold war.

Hence a major unresolved tension in the book: Eisenhower emerges as both a committed champion of peace and a committed cold warrior. But, it is worth asking, just how much of a "chance for peace" did Eisenhower offer the Soviet leadership? Did he follow-through on his determination to pursue nuclear disarmament? Did he pursue a *realistic* strategy to reduce cold war tensions? Recent studies by "postrevisionist" scholars Walter Hixson, Klaus Larres, J. Michael Hogan, and Martin Medhurst answer all these questions negatively, suggesting that Eisenhower was more interested in propaganda than in disarmament. As Hixson writes, "Eisenhower's speech was a well-conceived propaganda initiative, but the only 'chance for peace' that it offered would have required Soviet capitulation to Western demands." <sup>1</sup>

Indeed, contrary to Bowie and Immerman's claim, Eisenhower established linkages that made anything other than the resolution of minor cold war issues unlikely. In the "Chance for Peace" address, Eisenhower made clear to his audiences that he understood peace meant much more than a reduction of tensions. He requested as proof of Soviet good faith the conclusion of an "honorable" armistice in Korea, an end to hostilities in Indochina and Malaya, and a treaty with Austria. These "deeds" of good faith needed to include as well a united Germany—free to rearm and join the Western alliance. Significantly, and consistent with the administration's commitment to

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<sup>1</sup> Chester Pach and Elmo Richardson suggested the term "postrevisionist" for scholarship that accepts the basic revisionist argument that Eisenhower was an active and skillful leader while arguing that his presidency was not as successful as many revisionists have maintained. See Pach and Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Lawrence, KS, 1991), xiii; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, 1997), 90; Klaus Larres, "Eisenhower and the First Forty Days after Stalin's Death: The Incompatibility of Détente and Political Warfare," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 6:2 (July 1995): 431-469; Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communications Monographs* 54 (June 1987): 204-220; J. Michael Hogan, "Eisenhower and Open Skies: A Case Study in Psychological Warfare," in *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership* ed. Medhurst (East Lansing, 1994): 137-156.

“liberation,” he also three times called for the full independence of East European nations. While requesting proof of Soviet good faith, Eisenhower offered no concessions from the West. The preconditions he set in his “Chance for Peace” address, including German unification and the liberation of Eastern Europe, did not reflect a desire to resolve cold war differences, but to force the Soviet leadership to alter its entire foreign policy in exchange for nothing but goodwill. <sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to quarrel with Bowie and Immerman’s claim that Eisenhower had a lasting impact on American national security policy. In asserting Eisenhower’s bold leadership, however, Bowie and Immerman do not fully appreciate objective number one of Eisenhower’s foreign policy: waging cold war. Victory in the Cold War was the very essence of the “long haul” struggle their book analyzes, and Eisenhower accorded far greater priority to winning the Cold War than to ending it. Eisenhower was indeed *Waging Peace*, but in his view peace was something to be won, not made.

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<sup>2</sup> For further elaboration, see Kenneth A. Osgood, “Form Before Substance: Eisenhower’s Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy,” *Diplomatic History*, forthcoming. For text of the speech, see *Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, 179-187.