

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT*Eisenhower's
New Look*

"The Ike Age Revisited" by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in *Reviews in American History* (Mar. 1983), Johns Hopkins, 34th and Charles, Baltimore, Md. 21218.

Dwight D. Eisenhower's long-denigrated Presidency (1953–61) is suddenly rising in scholars' esteem.

As Schlesinger, a City University of New York historian, notes, "the successive faults of Eisenhower's successors—activism, excess, crookedness, mediocrity, blah—have given his virtues new value." And the diaries and official papers from Eisenhower's White House years, only recently opened to researchers, confirm that Ike was not nearly as passive nor as dimwitted as he has been painted. But Schlesinger cautions against going overboard in revising the history of the "Ike Age."

From liberal academics, Eisenhower now gets high marks for warning Americans against the "military-industrial complex" and for ending the Korean War. Yet, Schlesinger argues, Eisenhower was a committed Cold Warrior who charged that Harry Truman's post-1945 troop reductions "invited the Communist attack in Korea." Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev wrote in his 1974 memoirs that President Kennedy, often criticized in America today for his crusading rhetoric, "understood better than Eisenhower that an improvement in relations was the only rational course."

Eisenhower kept a "tight leash" on the Pentagon, Schlesinger says, but also stressed nuclear retaliation against Communist aggression. Indeed, Eisenhower threatened more often than any other U.S. President to use nuclear weapons, he contends. As Ike remarked in 1955: "I



Before a 1955 press conference, anticipating a tough question, Eisenhower told an aide: "If that . . . comes up, I'll just confuse them." Some historians believe many of Ike's garbled answers were purposeful.

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see no reason why [nuclear weapons] shouldn't be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else."

Moreover, Schlesinger adds, Eisenhower authorized a host of Central Intelligence Agency covert operations—backing coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) and organizing the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Castro's Cuba—that ultimately damaged U.S. interests.

As to the revisionists' claims that Eisenhower harbored a grand strategy that he shrewdly camouflaged with misleading or incomprehensible statements, Schlesinger has his doubts. The memoirs of those who served under him suggest that the President was "a man of force, dignity, and restraint who did not always understand and control what was going on . . . and was capable of misjudgment and error." That, contends Schlesinger, will probably prove to be the most accurate assessment of Eisenhower.

Government Gets Down to Business

"Public Management in the 1980s and Beyond" by Fred A. Kramer, in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Mar. 1983), Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

Why can't government, goes the old-complaint, be run more like a business? Increasingly, says Kramer, a political scientist at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, it is.

During the past decade, Washington, along with state and local governments, finally took note of the need for more professional management in the public sector. High-level state and federal bureaucrats were sent to management training seminars; Congress created a 6,000-man Senior Executive Service of federal managers in 1978. Since the early 1970s, university programs in public policy have proliferated nationwide. [Today, they number 220.]

Coping with federal budget cutbacks has fostered greater prudence. Washington has learned to try local pilot projects—such as the 1970–78 tests of the effects of providing a guaranteed minimum annual income—before launching full-scale social programs. It has even managed to close down some unneeded federal agencies, notably the Community Services Administration in 1981.

Measuring efficiency in the public sector remains difficult. How can the U.S. Department of Justice's success in defending freedom of speech be assessed? But results in many services—sanitation, health care, education—can be gauged, especially if managers are careful to use more than one measure. And with the adoption of uniform standards for governmental accounting procedures in 1979, the way is cleared for budgeting techniques similar to those used in the corporate world.

Competition is also finding its way into government, chiefly through "contracting out" (or threatening to do so) such functions as data processing, garbage collection, or even education to the private sector,