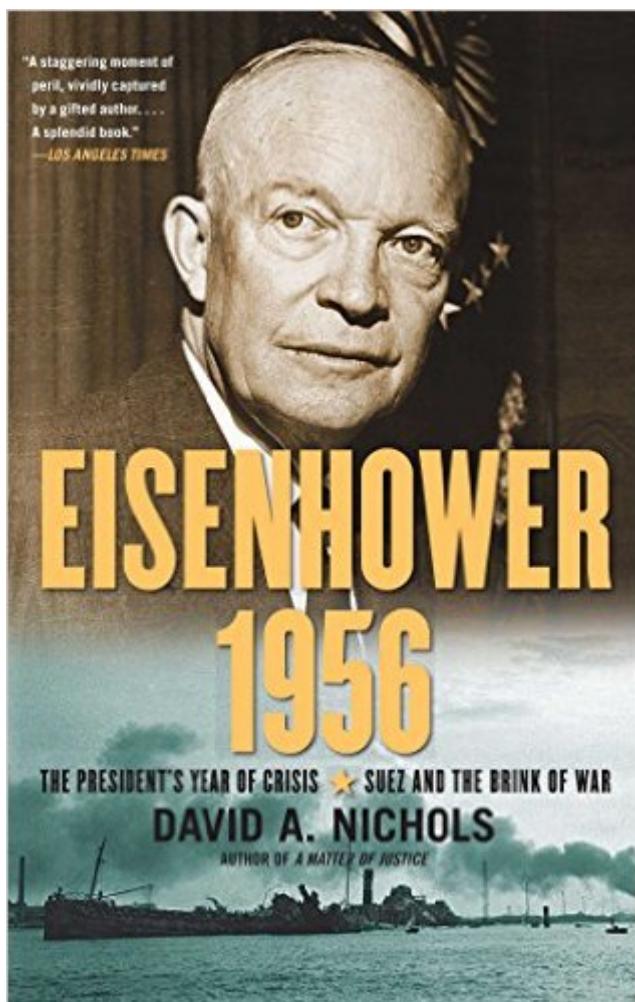


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Eisenhower 1956: The President's Year Of Crisis--Suez And The Brink Of War



Synopsis

A gripping tale of international intrigue, betrayal, and personal drama during the darkest days of the Cold War, *Eisenhower 1956* is the first major book to examine the event in thirty years. Debunking most historians' opinion that the Suez crisis was merely a minor incident linked to the end of colonial rule in Egypt, *Eisenhower 1956* "drawing on hundreds of newly declassified documents" makes clear that it was the most dangerous crisis of Eisenhower's presidency. Eisenhower used economic threats to force his British, French, and Israeli allies to withdraw from Egypt and put U.S. military forces on alert to deter Soviet intervention in the Middle East. Current U.S. policy in the region dates to the Suez crisis, when we replaced Great Britain as the guarantor of stability. Acclaimed Eisenhower expert David Nichols masterfully weaves great personal drama "Eisenhower's two life-threatening illnesses" with simultaneous world crises (America's closest allies invade Egypt while the Soviets invade Hungary) and the final days of the 1956 presidential election campaign into a white-knuckle read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first week of November, 1956: Soviet tanks were crushing the Hungarian uprising. Israel had invaded the Gaza Strip and the Sinai. British and French paratroopers landed to secure the Suez Canal, and the Egyptians were sinking ships to block it, endangering oil flows to Europe. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was hospitalized. It was the week that the U.S. presidential campaign was coming to a frenzied close. This was the crescendo of a year of crisis that had also seen President Eisenhower suffer a heart attack and endure intestinal surgery. The D-Day Commander,

now President, faced an extraordinarily complex array of challenges. The tight focus of historian David Nichols in this book is President Eisenhower's leadership. Drawing on detailed White House and National Security Council minutes, archival records, and scores of diaries, memoirs and oral histories, he well demonstrates Eisenhower's capacity (the ability to receive huge amounts of information under stressful conditions), reliance on planning, and strategic vision. Nichols traces the intense Presidential, political, military, and diplomatic maneuvering during the Suez Crisis, demonstrating Eisenhower's masterful orchestration of all the elements of American power. It included some behind-the-scenes arm twisting directed at France and the United Kingdom; both allies had "double-crossed" the President, hiding their preparations for war. Eisenhower avoided war and set out a new direction for U.S. policy in the Middle East. Nichols lays to rest earlier impressions of Eisenhower as detached, or ill, or intellectually unequal to the Presidency. He discredits old notions that it was the ideological Dulles that drove U.S. foreign policy; rather Dulles needed close guidance by the President.

OK. I know this is a stretch to cajole you into reading a book about a dead president. But hang with me a minute--and let me try. Two-term U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs that "October 20, 1956 was the start of the most crowded and demanding three weeks of my entire presidency." And according to author David Nichols, "During this period, Eisenhower embodied the wisdom of his preachment that 'plans are worthless but planning is everything,' enabling him to 'do the normal thing when everyone else is going nuts.'" There's one big reason you should read this book: crisis management (The Crisis Bucket). Nichols summarizes this stunning account--and Eisenhower himself--on the book's last page with this one-liner, "By any standard, his was a virtuoso presidential performance--an enduring model for effective crisis management." This book is unlike any book I've read. It covers mostly one year, 1956, with the greatest focus on Ike's most demanding three weeks of his presidency. (I study leaders. Ike was a leader, not just a general.) For starters--have you ever had a couple of weeks like this? --Eisenhower couldn't convince Congress to use foreign aid to fund Egypt's proposed Aswan Dam project, so after a soft commitment to Egypt's President Nasser, Ike pulled the plug on the deal. --In response, Egypt's President Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal. --Oops! Western Europe is almost totally dependent on the flow of oil through the canal (with oil reserves of just 15 to 30 days). --Ike's best friends--Britain and France, the nations he rescued in World War II--plotted secretly and devised clever smoke screens to keep the U.S. not just ill-informed but misinformed about their intentions. Read: bald-faced lies!

David Nichols' book on the most significant year during Eisenhower's presidency is a history of one of the most dangerous episodes in the Cold War era. The first part of the book discusses Eisenhower's poor health and the way he coped with all the hardships and challenges he faced. In a letter addressed to Winston Churchill, he regarded the Middle East as "the most important and bothersome of the problems that currently confront our nations... The prosperity and welfare of the entire Western world is inescapably dependent upon Mid East oil and free access thereto" (p.92) Two life-threatening illnesses-his heart attack in September 1955 and his abdominal surgery in June 1956-caused the president to be out of action at some very critical moments during those years. More than two thirds of Western Europe's oil supplies passed through the Suez Canal, which was jointly run by the British and the French. After Eisenhower returned to the White House on July 15, 1956, Dulles, the foreign secretary, had already decided to renege on the offer of aid to the Aswan project, largely because the US Congress refused to support it. This resulted in Nasser's emotional three-hour anti-American speech to a cheering crowd in which he announced his intention to nationalize the Suez Canal Company. Nasser also added that the Canal was built by Egyptians and 120000 of them died building it. "Thus, we shall build the High Dam our own way" (p.131) This was the beginning of the Suez Canal crisis. The British labeled Nasser "a paranoid like Hitler" and they started a deception process aimed at the Americans in order to topple Nasser and regain control of the canal.

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