



Summary Article: **Eisenhower, Dwight David**

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(īˈzənhouˈɔʊ), 1890–1969, American general and 34th President of the United States, b. Denison, Tex.; his nickname was “Ike.”

### Early Career

When he was two years old, his family moved to Abilene, Kans., where he was reared. He entered (1911) West Point and graduated in 1915. In 1916 he married Mamie Geneva Doud. In World War I, Eisenhower was commanding officer at Camp Colt, Gettysburg, Pa., a training camp for the new U.S. Army tank corps.

After the war he was stationed (1922–24) in the Panama Canal Zone, was a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission, and was assistant executive (1929–33) in the office of the Assistant Secretary of War. From 1935 to 1940 he was in the Philippines, where he served as an aide to Douglas MacArthur.

### General during World War II

Eisenhower's impressive performance in the 1941 army maneuvers led to his assignment in Washington, D.C. as chief of operations (1942) and preceded his meteoric rise to the top as Allied military commander of World War II. In June, 1942, General Eisenhower was named U.S. commander of the European theater of operations. He commanded U.S. forces in the North African landings (Nov., 1942) and in Feb., 1943, became chief of all Allied forces in North Africa. After successfully directing the invasions of Sicily (July, 1943) and Italy (Sept.), he was called (Dec.) to England to be supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force. He was largely responsible for the cooperation between the British, American, and other forces and for the integration of land, sea, and air forces in the great battle for the European continent. His own account of the Allied defeat of Germany was published in book form as *Crusade in Europe* (1948).

In Dec., 1944, he was made general of the army (five-star general), and in 1945 he commanded the U.S. occupation forces in Germany. In Nov., 1945, he became chief of staff of the U.S. Army and advocated the unification of the U.S. armed forces and universal military training. He resigned (Feb., 1948) as chief of staff to become (June) president of Columbia Univ.

### Presidency

Eisenhower was sought as a nominee for presidency of the United States in 1948 but rejected the offers made him. In Dec., 1950, he obtained a leave of absence as president of Columbia to become Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR). After he negotiated basic commitments from member countries to build up the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, he retired from active duty (1952) with the army to campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. With the support of Republican liberals and internationalists, he defeated his chief rival, Senator Robert A. Taft, for the nomination. His popularity as a World War II hero, and his promise to end the Korean War brought Eisenhower an easy victory over his Democratic opponent, Adlai E. Stevenson, and he took office on Jan. 20, 1953.

### First Term

Eisenhower soon fulfilled his campaign pledge when an armistice was signed (July, 1953) in Korea after he threatened to use nuclear weapons. Eisenhower and his secretary of state John Foster Dulles continued the Truman administration policy of containing Communism and of financing the French attempt to maintain control of Indochina. Defense treaties were signed with South Korea (1953) and Taiwan (1954), and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was formed in 1954 to halt Communist expansion in Asia. After the French lost the battle of Dienbienphu and withdrew from Indochina, Eisenhower sent military aid to South Vietnam. He also tried, after the death of Soviet leader Josef Stalin in 1953, to ease cold war tensions. His “atoms for peace” plan and his statements at the Geneva summit conference in July, 1955, were widely heralded.

At home, Eisenhower's record was less distinguished. He failed to oppose publicly Joseph McCarthy, but he succeeded in outmaneuvering the demagogic senator. The predominance of business executives in his cabinet lent a conservative tone to his administration, and his concern for a balanced budget at a time when defense expenditures were rising rapidly, as well as his commitment to limiting the role of the government in the economy, led Eisenhower to reject expanding the social welfare programs begun by his Democratic predecessors. Despite an attack of coronary thrombosis in Sept., 1955, he was reelected over Adlai Stevenson in 1956 by an even wider margin than in 1952.

### ***Second Term***

During his second term, desegregation became one of the primary issues on the national agenda. Although personally unenthusiastic about desegregation, he sent federal troops to Little Rock, Ark. to enforce a court-ordered school desegregation decision (Sept., 1957). His administration supported the civil-rights legislation that passed Congress (1957, 1960); and he prohibited discriminatory practices in the District of Columbia and in federal facilities such as navy yards and hospitals.

International tensions increased during his second term. In 1957 he promulgated the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine, in which he proposed to send military and economic aid to any Middle Eastern nation requesting it in order to bolster that region against Communist aggression. Pursuant to that doctrine, he sent U.S. Marines to Lebanon in July, 1958. Eisenhower hosted Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev during the latter's visit to the United States in 1959. When they met at the Paris summit conference in the following year, the tone was less friendly; Khrushchev denounced Eisenhower for permitting high-altitude espionage flights over the Soviet Union and walked out of the summit. Fidel Castro's Communist regime in Cuba exacerbated cold war tensions, and In 1961, Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with Cuba and authorized preparations for an invasion (see Bay of Pigs Invasion).

### **Later Years**

In his farewell address as president, Eisenhower warned against the influence of the growing “military-industrial complex.” After leaving the White House, he remained generally aloof from politics, although he did occasionally comment on national issues and campaign for Republican candidates. In 1962 the Eisenhower presidential library was dedicated at Abilene, Kans.

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