



The China Threat: Memories, Myths, and Realities in the 1950s

Nancy Bernkopf Tucker

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Nancy Bernkopf Tucker confronts the coldest period of the cold war—the moment in which personality, American political culture, public opinion, and high politics came together to define the Eisenhower Administration's policy toward China. A sophisticated, multidimensional account based on prodigious, cutting edge research, this volume convincingly portrays Eisenhower's private belief that close relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China were inevitable and that careful consideration of the PRC should constitute a critical part of American diplomacy.

Tucker provocatively argues that the Eisenhower Administration's hostile rhetoric and tough actions toward China obscure the president's actual views. Behind the scenes, Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, pursued a more nuanced approach, one better suited to China's specific challenges and the stabilization of the global community. Tucker deftly explores the contradictions between Eisenhower and his advisors' public and private positions. Her most powerful chapter centers on Eisenhower's recognition that rigid trade prohibitions would undermine the global postwar economic recovery and push China into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Ultimately, Tucker finds Eisenhower's strategic thinking on Europe and his fear of toxic, anticommunist domestic politics constrained his leadership, making a fundamental shift in U.S. policy toward China difficult if not impossible. Consequently, the president was unable to engage congress and the public effectively on China, ultimately failing to realize his own high standards as a leader.



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