



The Awesome Power: Harry S. Truman as Commander in Chief

Richard F. Haynes

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Since World War II the importance of the military command function of the American presidency has increased dramatically. U.S. chief executives have emerged virtually unchecked as wielders of enormous military power.

The Awesome Power, the first comprehensive study of Harry S. Truman as commander in chief, is an important and highly relevant book, especially in view of the growing concern over the president's ability to wage war without the consent of either the Congress or the American people. A selective chronicle of the events in which Truman's decisions were of historic significance, the book analyzes his decision-making process in terms of the information available to him, the existing pressures, and the relationship of his decisions to his own well-defined concepts of how a commander in chief should function.

The author gives a detailed account of the events and circumstances leading up to Truman's most significant decision -- to use the atomic bomb against Japan. He also examines Truman's decisions on postwar civilian control of atomic energy, his intervention in Korea, his leadership in the Cold War, and his conflict with General Douglas MacArthur, whose opposition to the president's limited-war policies endangered the very basis of the civil-military relationship.

Based in part on research in classified documents previously untapped by nongovernmental researchers, The Awesome Power is a thorough treatment of a subject of great contemporary significance, with one of the most fascinating characters in American political history as its central figure.

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