



The Cold War: A History

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"The history of the Cold War has been the history of the world since 1954." So begins this wide-ranging narrative by award-winning political commentator Martin Walker, which is the first major study of the Cold War. Now that it is over, it is crucial to our future to understand how the Cold War has shaped us and, especially, to recognize it as the economic and political dynamic that determined the structure of today's global economy.

From the origins of the Marshall Plan, which revived Europe after World War II, and the strategic decision to rebuild a defeated Japan into a bulwark against China to the collapse of the Berlin Wall, this authoritative work reveals how the West was built into an economic alliance that overpowered the Soviet economy while also unleashing global economic forces that today challenge the traditional nation-state.

The Cold War was more of a global conflict than was either of this century's two major wars; far more than a confrontation between states or even empires, it was, as Martin Walker puts it, "a total war between economic and social systems, an industrial test to destruction."

Walker reminds us how easy it is to forget that there were many occasions for the late 1940s on when victory seemed far from assured, and that lent a particular urgency to the efforts of postwar Western leaders. The West continued to be alarmed by the prospect of defeat right up to the Soviet empire's last breath. At the end of the 1940s the fear was generated by communist expansion into Eastern Europe and China; in the 1960s by the prospect of defeat in Vietnam. In the 1970s the failure of détente and the West's economic crisis brought a new generation of dedicated anti-Communists to prominence. For more than forty years, as this detailed analysis makes clear, the outcome of the Cold War was in doubt.

We also come to understand how the arms race caused new alignments and shifts in domestic power. As the United States became the national security state, California, which had a population of five million at the start of the Cold War, grew to thirty million and, by the 1980s provided one in every ten members of Congress and two presidents.

Using newly opened Kremlin archives and his own experiences in the field, Martin Walker has written a brilliant analysis of the conflict that has shaped the contemporary world.

The Cold War: A History Details

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Author : Martin Walker

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Zoe Elizabeth says

This book is so chopped-full of information that it's almost hard to read. However, it is a nice middle ground account of the Cold War.

Ironman Ninetytwo says

A thoughtful assessment of some of the undercurrents of the cold war (largely economic, unsurprising since the writer is an economist). Because neither side trusted the other, many opportunities for de-escalation were lost. The book is very evenhanded in pointing out how both sides contributed to this conflict.

Nikky says

Written in 1995, *The Cold War* provides a good overhead view of the general political causes of the Cold War before outlining the political, economic, and military progression of the two great foes. Only 360 pages, it's a brief journey through 50 tumultuous and tense years, but works well to introduce and weave together various threads of the conflict into some sort of cohesive narrative.

Max says

This book is my cup of tea. It has vivid description of all the major events during the Cold War and provides a fairly balanced perspective. Not only does it deal with the political events of the war spanned over four decades, but also it encompasses the economic scenarios of the period. Along with unveiling why America had to make an about-face on its policy to disarm west Germany and Japan, this book explains how the Vietnam war fueled Japan's economic boom.

Even though there were times when the details bogged me down, at other times the unfolding of byzantine political plots had me enthralled. The chapter on the Cuban missile crisis, which I knew exactly how it ended (without a nuclear war), still managed to have my breath held until the very end.

All in all, this is a great book for anyone with an interest in contemporary history or the Cold War.

Nick Pappas says

Some might call this revisionist history, but I enjoyed it for the way it reframed the Cold War and challenged the conventional narrative

Hugh Evans says

Total cold war in one book. Fantastic, direct, powerful.

Christopher says

Well, this was another pretty good history book for me. It was a condensed review of the Cold War covering not only military but political, economic and social events that had some sort of impact either on the the Cold War or because of it. I only have two issues with the book in that I think the author rushed it in order to be one of the first books out on the Cold War and that at the end he has a rather scathing review of the Reagan-Thatcher era and capitalism which I think was a little over the top. Otherwise a pretty good book for anyone interested in the Cold War but don't want to be weighed down reading some of the other, more in-depth books on the subject.

Eilidh says

I found Walker's book excellent, enjoyable and an extremely useful tool in my studies of the Cold War. Walker has successfully achieved a book that has the ability to bring the history to a readable level, that is accessible to everyone - anyone could pick the book up and learn about what happened.

It isn't the most analytical commentary, but rather simply explains the "what happened" instead of "why it happened", although Walker did attempt at various points to explain some whys. It is definitely a brief and concise outline of the historical event, which I found to be on the whole as objective as it could be.

So if you're solely interested in learning what the Cold War was about, Walker's The Cold War is by far one of the most easiest and simplified versions available to readers, that will be enough of an introduction to the subject area. Thoroughly recommend it!

Patrick says

Wonderful, fascinating, and educational read for anyone interested in recent history and the Cold War. I knew the broad outlines of much of this, but learned copious amounts of details and some large stuff I didn't know either. Got my Russian leaders straightened out in my head in time and personality/accomplishments. The perspective is very fair. The author points out when the Soviet Union and the US were tunnel-visioned and accomplished the opposite of what they intended through their policy, but there does not appear to be an agenda beyond explaining the causes, events, and tensions of the Cold War. The Soviets had some understandable fears despite their tyrannical regime, and the US made mistakes too. Too much support for tyrants who didn't happen to be aligned with the Soviet Union.

It is cool when the author, who was a reporter, quotes leaders or events in the eighties, and the footnote explains the author was there having private conversations with these famous people or at big events.

I now know why tensions were ratcheted up again in the early-mid-eighties when I remember nuclear bomb drills in school. This will educate you so much. I think my Goodreads friends could actually enjoy this one since we lived through the last decade of this.

Peter Tutak says

A comprehensive overview of the geo-political and economic landscape that evolved between the US and Soviet Union in the aftermath of WWII, resulting in the world as we (on both sides) knew it, as children and adults back then. The book covers the period from the 1945 Yalta Conference, to the perestroika policy of Mikhail Gorbachev, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Enough detail to make it more than a cursory read, and keep the interest of the history buff, or those, like me, who want to delve into 'just why' the world was as it was during my formative years as a child in the 1950s and 1960s. It could serve as a text book for a junior college semester course on the period. Written in a 'matter-of-fact', but not overtly dry manner, the author illuminates each side as antagonistic with respect to the other, and makes it a point to also discuss the impact contributed by continental European politics of the era, especially as the economic growth and power of Europe became a critical factor in US-Soviet economic policies toward each other. An enjoyable and informative read. I didn't 'tear through it', but it held my interest from cover to cover.

Dave Hunt says

Martin Walker wrote a very comprehensive look at the Cold War with his book *The Cold War: A History*. Even though his book was published in 1993 I can't think of a more important time as now to read his book. Mistakes and missed opportunities were done by both sides of the conflict which now leads us to current events we are seeing now across the geopolitical spectrum.
I highly recommended Mr. Walker's book.

Grindy Stone says

Decent overview of the Cold War, hitting all the highlights (though Nixon's relation making with China is barely mentioned). There are lots of surveys of the Cold War out there, and there isn't much here to distinguish it from the other works.

Dennis Martin says

Very interesting overview of the Cold War. I did not know much about the Cold War, because I wasn't old enough to experience it, and it doesn't get as much history coverage as the "real" wars. This was a great book from that perspective, as it briefly summarizes the different events from beginning to end. One negative being that sometimes I was very interested in certain events such as the end of the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis and the descriptions are brief. The other negative is that this was published in 94 and it doesn't go into the economic decline of Russia in the post Soviet era, but leaves the reader on a "what will happen"

ending that is somewhat irrelevant 20 years later.

Danny says

THIS BOOK WAS PRETTY GOOD AND GAVE ME LIKE 7 BONERS.

Dawn Wells says

Very informative all points of current history covered. Each decade of time represented with lots of views, outlooks and insights. So well written and documented you remember things forgotten, learn information new to you, and see the differences today.
