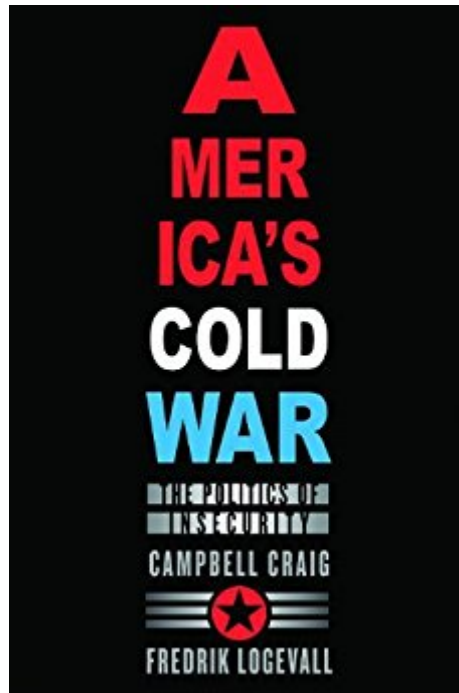




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America's Cold War



Synopsis

In a brilliant new interpretation, Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall reexamine the successes and failures of America's Cold War. The United States dealt effectively with the threats of Soviet predominance in Europe and of nuclear war in the early years of the conflict. But by engineering this policy, American leaders successfully paved the way for domestic actors and institutions with a vested interest in the struggle's continuation. Long after the USSR had been effectively contained, Washington continued to wage a virulent Cold War that entailed a massive arms buildup, wars in Korea and Vietnam, the support of repressive regimes and counterinsurgencies, and a pronounced militarization of American political culture.

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Customer Reviews

Written by two experts on Cold War history, this very readable volume is a nice overview of America's role in the Cold War. Contrary to what some other reviewers claim, this is not a radical new interpretation of the Cold War and largely reflects what appears to be a broad consensus among scholars of the Cold War. Logevall and Campbell, not surprisingly, do emphasize some

features and interpretations of specific events and trends, but I don't think there is anything in this book which constitutes a fundamental effort at revision. This is not an overview history of the Cold War but focuses on American actions, American motivations, and the American experience of the Cold War. The authors adopt an "intermestic" view of the Cold War, specifically examining the many linkages and interactions between American international policy and domestic politics. In common with quite a few other scholars, they see the dynamics of American politics, often only loosely linked to international realities, as a major feature of the Cold War and in particular, as a major determinant of US policies. Logevall and Campbell present the Cold War not as an inevitable conflict between 2 powers competing for world domination. With WWII, the USA was faced with the reality that it no longer benefited from "free security" due to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. As the USA emerged from WWII, it was clearly the most powerful nation and American policy makers set out to develop an international system that would protect American security and based on a preponderance of American power. Stalin's deeply wounded Soviet Union, in contrast, is presented as a relatively conservative and defensive state, aiming to preserve its autarchy and security but not fundamentally aggressive.

In the last months there were published a number of very good books on the Cold War. This book, however, is unique, because of its excellent analysis of the ideological conflict which spanned the latter half of the twentieth century. Briefly stated, the authors' thesis is runs like this: the Cold War could have come to an end in the late fifties or in 1963, after the Cuban Missile Crisis ended. But there were other factors which unnecessarily prolonged the conflict and the Americans were responsible for this. The story starts with Charles Beard's advice that, since America is a superpower separated from Europe, there "is no need for its militarization". Reality was different and the era of Woodrow Wilson proved that if the USA did not become actively involved in worldly affairs, it would become isolated in light of the rising dictatorships in Europe and elsewhere. After the end of WW2, the Cold War started because of many and various reasons. The arms race gained momentum especially after the dropping of the two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities. It was only a matter of time and good intelligence gained from Russian spies for the Russians to get an atomic bomb of their own. President Truman, who is described by the authors as seeing the world in terms of black and white, preferred to take a tough hand against the Russians. The McCarthy years only inflated this atmosphere. The famous NSC-68 paper, drawn by Paul Nitze, advocated an aggressive approach towards the Reds. But how to do this? How can you intimidate your enemy? By building a massive and expensive arsenal which was to be achieved by a military-industrial

complex. Thus, the military budget shot up from \$14 billion in 1949 to \$ 53 billion in 1953 (See page.

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