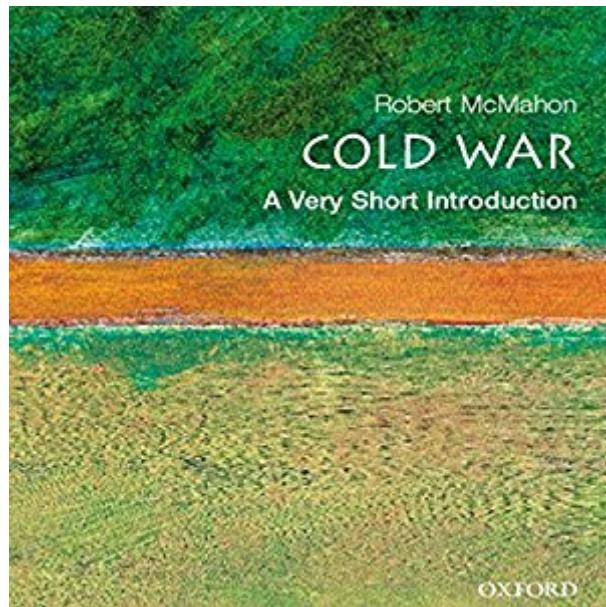


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# The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction



## **Synopsis**

The massive disorder and economic ruin following the Second World War inevitably predetermined the scope and intensity of the Cold War. But why did it last so long? And what impact did it have on the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, and the Third World? Finally, how did it affect the broader history of the second half of the twentieth century--what were the human and financial costs? This Very Short Introduction provides a clear and stimulating interpretive overview of the Cold War, one that will both invite debate and encourage deeper investigation.

**About the Series:** Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Good, but not great. It was interesting to compare this to John Lewis Gaddis' "The Cold War, A History", which is a better book, I think. For instance, the big heroes of the end of the Cold War in Gaddis' book are Reagan, the Pope, and Lech Walesa, with Gorbachev sort of along for the ride. In this book, the hero is Gorbachev, Reagan is Along for the ride, and the Pope and Walesa are not mentioned at all. Gaddis' book has a bit of a right-wing slant, whereas this one has a bit of a left-wing slant, in particular, he tends to portray the Cold War as the-Soviet-Union-was-provoked-by-the-US. This book was very good through the 1970s (the

coverage of colonial wars like Vietnam is particularly good), but then dispensed with the implosion of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union very superficially - almost as if the author ran out of time. Worth reading, but get Gaddis' book too.

This book is among the best of Oxford's VSI series. An authoritative and concise international history of the Cold War, McMahon devotes much attention to the Cold War's domestic as well as international dimensions. He manages to covers the entirety of the Cold War era, highlighting key players, such as Stalin, de Gaulle, and Reagan, but without short-changing any one figure given his space constraints. (That's a major feat!) At the same time, McMahon gives equal attention to the impact of the conflict on the Third World, as well as on the West and on Asia. He also highlights key developments, such as the Berlin Wall and the 'Star Wars' missile defense strategy. Readers of all ages who want to learn about the Cold War should begin here.

Many excellent books have been written about the Cold War, but if you're looking for a short, easy-to-digest summary of what the Cold War was all about and how it affected the course of world events, suitable for readers who have little or no background in history or political science, it's hard to beat this little gem. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to get a quick overview of Cold War history without getting bogged down in the minute details of the subject. It would be perfect for high school and college students, or for anyone who would benefit from taking a simplified "big picture" look at the Cold War as a whole, rather than focusing closely on specific events within the Cold War era. (Personally, both as a student and as an educator, I've always found that it helps to have a simplified "big picture" overview of the subject as a whole before delving into the details. Though, of course, your mileage may vary.) If you want to get a quick "big picture" look at the Cold War, this book will give you exactly what you need. I plan to recommend it to any of my students who need to brush up on their Cold War history, and I may even consider assigning it as supplemental reading the next time I teach a course on foreign policy or international relations.

Robert J McMahon-The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction (OUP, 2003) My last review was of John Prados-How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History, entered under obus7 Promises too much, concluded: "Promises a lot, lets expect much. Does not deliver - still sounds like a few random events with a few decided whistle-blowers." A much shorter opus does it in a bit over half a page, much shorter, but also much clearer. The key sentence is: By the time the Soviet Union

collapsed, the Cold War was already history. So the end dates read: 1989 German reunification, 1990 sovereign re-unified Germany in NATO under four Allied Powers treaty, 1991 Soviet collapse. A lot of action in a short time, but understanding the sequence is vital. obus8 - Robert J McMahon-The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction (OUP, 2003) - 20/9/2012

A great, brief intro to the Cold War. I thought it was easy to follow. Purchased for a college class.

Finding an unbiased and concise perspective on the Cold War is quite difficult to find in literature making McMahon's book quite impressive. Rather than regurgitating common theses, McMahon has an opinion but not a biased one. He directly criticizes both the United States and the USSR for treating the world as pawns in their chess game for hegemonic control and looks at the cost in terms of their real consequences--aka human, political, and economic costs. I highly recommend the book to anyone who needs a crash course in understanding the Cold War but doesn't want the Fox News or Karl Marx version of its history.

This is a valuable contribution to understanding the causes, players, consequences and end of the Cold War. It appeals to the reader who wants to learn about this period in our history but does not want a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, play by play account of a multitude of events. It does, however, give enough information to stimulate one's desire to learn more. I believe this work to be an important contribution as it contains the need-to-know facts required to understand the Cold War. It soundly explains the who, what, when, where, why, how much and how many questions that one needs to understand.

If you love the Cold War as much as I do the. You will love this book. This book goes really in depth about the struggle of power between the USA and the Soviet Union.

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