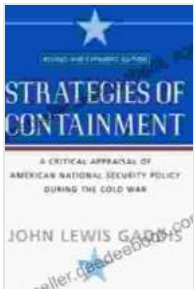


# A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War

The Cold War was a period of intense geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. The conflict, which lasted from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, was largely characterized by mutual suspicion, arms build-ups, and proxy wars. American national security policy during the Cold War was guided by the overarching principles of containment, nuclear deterrence, and détente.



## Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War

by John Lewis Gaddis

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Print length : 502 pages  
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## Containment

Containment was a key plank of American national security policy during the Cold War. The policy was predicated on the belief that the spread of communism could be prevented by encircling the Soviet Union and its satellite states with a ring of anti-communist alliances. The United States

pursued a variety of strategies to achieve containment, including providing economic and military aid to friendly governments, supporting anti-communist insurgencies, and forming collective security arrangements such as NATO.

The policy of containment had a number of notable successes. It helped to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its sphere of influence in Europe, and it contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union itself. However, containment also had its critics. Some argued that it was too confrontational and that it increased the risk of nuclear war. Others argued that it was too expensive and that it diverted resources away from other priorities such as economic development.

## **Nuclear Deterrence**

Nuclear deterrence was another key element of American national security policy during the Cold War. The policy was based on the belief that the threat of nuclear retaliation would deter the Soviet Union from launching a nuclear attack. The United States maintained a large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal, and it developed a strategy of "massive retaliation" that threatened to unleash a devastating nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in the event of a nuclear attack on the United States or its allies.

The policy of nuclear deterrence was largely successful in preventing nuclear war. However, it also had its critics. Some argued that it was too risky and that it increased the likelihood of nuclear war by accident or miscalculation. Others argued that it was too expensive and that it diverted resources away from other priorities such as education and healthcare.

## **Détente**

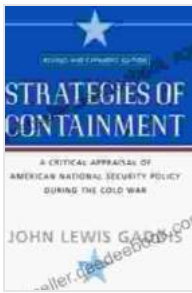
Détente was a period of reduced tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union that began in the late 1960s. The policy was based on the belief that both sides could benefit from a reduction in arms spending and a relaxation of tensions. The United States and the Soviet Union signed a number of arms control agreements during this period, and they also engaged in a number of cooperative initiatives such as the Apollo-Soyuz space mission.

The policy of détente had a number of notable successes. It helped to reduce tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and it contributed to the eventual end of the Cold War. However, détente also had its critics. Some argued that it was too conciliatory and that it gave the Soviet Union too much leeway. Others argued that it was too expensive and that it diverted resources away from other priorities such as defense.

American national security policy during the Cold War was a complex and multifaceted affair. The policy was guided by the overarching principles of containment, nuclear deterrence, and détente. Each of these principles had its own strengths and weaknesses, and each played a role in shaping the course of the Cold War.

The Cold War was a defining moment in American history. The policies that the United States adopted during this period had a profound impact on the course of the conflict and on the world as a whole. It is important to understand these policies in order to understand the Cold War and its legacy.

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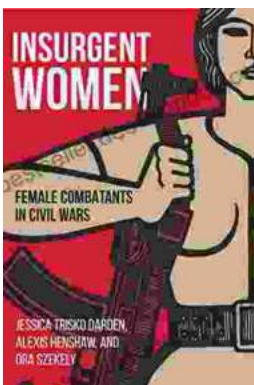
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