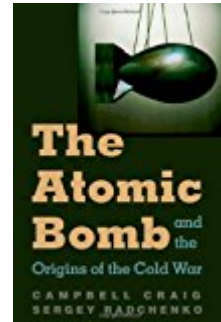


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Campbell Craig, Sergey Radchenko. *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. xxv + 201 pp. \$27.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-11028-9.



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As the governments of North Korea and Iran continue to press forward with the development of nuclear weapons, the world again finds itself confronting the ramifications of nuclear arms proliferation. Campbell Craig, professor of international politics at Aberystwyth University, and Sergey Radchenko, a lecturer in the history of American-Asian relations for the University of Nottingham's China campus, reexamine the first time when nuclear weapons and international diplomacy crossed paths in *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War*. Solidly written, concise, and well organized, the book incorporates a wealth of recent Western and Russian secondary sources to provide a new dimension to the dawn of the nuclear age and the first attempts to halt proliferation.

The authors argue for a more active role for the atomic bomb in reexamining the immediate postwar world and the eventual break between the United States and Soviet Union. Instead of deeming the bomb as an object of statecraft, Craig and Radchenko study the possible implications of nuclear war on the attitudes of American and Soviet leaders. Notably, they examine the thinking of the competing world leaders independently while incorporating the element of espionage as an informal channel of communication, which ultimately undermined any

possibility of international control of atomic energy. This methodology enables the authors to shift Cold War origin historiography away from the simplified tit-for-tat assignment of blame and instead reach a conclusion that neither nation, particularly the Soviet Union, had interest in genuine international control. In a nod to revisionist interpretations, the authors argue that the United States bore responsibility for initiating the Cold War through an interest in developing "a new world order shaped by Wilsonian principles" (p. 3). The atomic bomb exacerbated preexisting tensions between superpowers and accelerated the movement to open confrontation.

Competing postwar visions from leadership brought the two nations to loggerheads. President Franklin D. Roosevelt desired a postwar world with an international organization and a liberal world economy friendly to American systems and an ability to halt aggression, unlike the impotent League of Nations. His vision inherently clashed with the Soviet system. To try and gain Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's support, Roosevelt, argue the scholars, attempted to use the bomb as a stick to intimidate the Soviets into agreeing to self-determination in Eastern Europe, with the potential carrot being the creation of a postwar international order. Espionage quickly undermined Roosevelt's atomic diplomacy. Af-

ter much persistence by Great Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, the United States agreed to atomic collaboration with the British, while ignoring the Soviet Union. Soviet espionage of the Manhattan Project, however, kept Stalin informed and provided scientific intelligence to accelerate work on his own atomic bomb.

American atomic policy with the Soviets did not change with the succession of Harry S. Truman to the presidency. A foreign policy dilettante, Truman entered office unprepared for the upcoming Potsdam Conference and atomic issues. Use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the dynamic between superpowers and, as Craig and Radchenko contend, symbolized the last American strike of World War II and the first of the Cold War. Use of the bomb on Hiroshima occurred in order to save American lives and accelerate the end of the war, irrespective of the Soviet Union's actions. The swift use of a second bomb on Nagasaki and acceptance of a conditional Japanese surrender, the authors argue, signified Truman's desire to pursue the possibility of a Japanese surrender without Soviet involvement, thus precluding a joint occupation of Japan.

Stalin maintained his composure in the wake of the atomic bomb and his overall policy with the West remained essentially the same. He concluded that the bombs were survivable and in the short term downplayed their significance while recognizing the long-term threat of bigger American weapons and propensity to use them. Understanding how Americans would attempt to leverage Soviet concessions through the atomic monopoly, Stalin hardened his foreign policy and negotiating stance.[1]

For the final two chapters, Craig and Radchenko detail the blowback from Hiroshima as played out in the negotiation effort for international control of atomic weapons. Stalin increased the effort to create a Soviet bomb and leaned heavily on espionage to accelerate its timetable. Truman, tacitly supportive of international control, faced a volatile political landscape when news broke in February 1946 of a massive Soviet espionage effort that penetrated deep into the Manhattan Project. The revelations of espionage, argue the authors, "proved decisive in convincing Truman both that the Soviet Union was never going to accept American preeminence and that international atomic control would be politically impossible" (p. 113).

With Truman unable to commit to sharing atomic secrets in the face of domestic political suicide, Roosevelt's wartime visions faded away. United Nations Atomic En-

ergy Commission talks throughout 1946 witnessed the Americans propose plans guaranteed to receive swift Soviet rejection. The talks ultimately became a platform for the superpowers to air grievances, with Americans blaming Soviets for failing to accept international control and the latter accusing the former of atomic blackmail.

Both Roosevelt and Truman, attuned to the domestic politics of the 1930s, entered unfamiliar international diplomacy as the war progressed and failed to comprehend the survivalist policies of Stalin. Craig and Radchenko conclude that since the bomb's vast and decisive destructive powers could threaten any postwar international body, this necessitated international control, but at the sacrifice of national sovereignty. With trust and complete effectiveness required for absolute international control, the slightest evasion or secrecy by a lone nation could shake the foundations of any international atomic control effort. Since neither nation would surrender their atomic sovereignty to an international agency, the Cold War's inevitability was thus assured.

The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War is an effective book worth a read by amateurs or scholars well versed in its titular topics. Paired with J. Samuel Walker's *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs against Japan* (1997), this book provides ample material for classroom discussions at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Although a general lack of primary material does not diminish the work's overall scholarly merits, it does undermine some of the core arguments. After analysis of the espionage dimension, the authors admit that gaps in documentary records make "it impossible to demonstrate conclusively the effect of espionage on Truman and his policies on international atomic control" (p. 133). This is but one place where primary archival sources would have helped greatly. Nonetheless, the admission of these gaps hopefully will inspire others to challenge or support the arguments and advance the historiography. Additional development of the intellectual and political mind-sets of Roosevelt, Truman, and Stalin would be useful to nuance some of the speculative and counterfactual discussions of various decisions. Furthermore, inclusion of a bibliography of all sources would be welcomed, particularly in consideration of the succinct endnotes.

With a chronology spanning roughly from 1943 to 1947, the reader is placed at the beginning of the long and winding path of Cold War confrontation. A continuation of the topic to the start of the Korean War using Craig and Radchenko's methodology would be viable for

a study of the American and Soviet nuclear preparedness efforts—or lack thereof—and potentially strengthen their conclusions about the area of international control of atomic energy. What the scholars may find is that Truman tended to neglect nuclear preparedness issues so long as he maintained the atomic monopoly, while Stalin pressed forward with his own nuclear program. When the two leaders engaged in the proxy war in Korea, only then did civil defense programs in the United States receive serious attention.

Note

[1]. Craig and Radchenko acknowledge a middle ground between the arguments over the impact of the atomic bombings on Stalin's thinking. Specifically, see Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); and David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

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