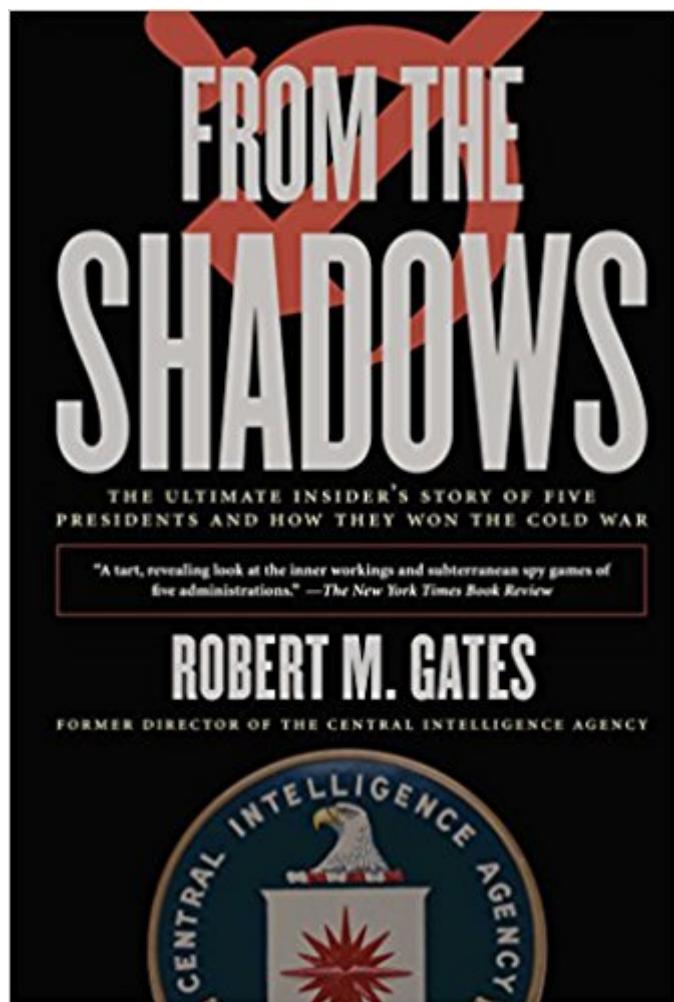


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From The Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story Of Five Presidents And How They Won The Cold War



Synopsis

From a former director of the CIA, and one who served on the White House staffs of four presidents, this is the inside story of America's and the agency's roles in the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Book Information

Paperback: 608 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; annotated edition edition (January 9, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416543368

ISBN-13: 978-1416543367

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (74 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #278,193 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #198 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Russia #527 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Intelligence & Espionage #537 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > Executive Branch

Customer Reviews

Mr Gates' background in writing intelligence analysis is very apparent in his book, which covers the role of intelligence on policy and the figures that carried out the policy, from President Nixon to Bush Sr. Stylistically, ideas are introduced, expanded upon, and brought back together in sum and reflection in efficient essay form, yet in, one senses, what epitomizes intelligence directorate reporting at Langley. As such the recounting can be understandably dry (albeit with ready humor), but these ARE renderings of historical events; when I was patient, I found that his clarity and humility make the work readable and insightful. The DC cocktail crowd no doubt received ample fuel from Mr Gates' (decidedly fair) renderings of George Schultz and William Casey, both of whom Mr Gates spent much time with during the Reagan years. Other character sketches elucidate and emphasize Mr Gates' opinions about other high-ranking individuals in the various administrations, but his everyman-ish voice is an able mediator among the personalities. The retelling of some events where Mr Gates plays up his role or access get a bit tedious; for example, when he and Larry Eagleburger hit the European circuit to sell arms reductions (somewhat to the effect of "we went to London, then Rome, then Bonn, then Amsterdam")-likewise, when Mr Gates would accompany

other advisers and President Bush to Kennebunkport, and almost any private meetings Mr Gates would have with President Bush. Mr Gates' own conservative bent comes through in several places, but most succinctly in his concluding remarks about the Soviet Union's demise. Here Mr Gates writes of a Soviet role in terrorist activity, yet a US role in aiding freedom fighters, which only extends a pervasive double standard in US government foreign policy.

Gates has made a solid contribution to the literature on the cold war. Arguing that US foreign policy had far more continuity and coherence than the political positioning of candidates would seem to make it appear, Gates proves that presidents come and go but the bureaucracy remains forever! The fact that he was a major part of 4 administrations makes it somewhat self-serving for him to make this argument, but nonetheless, it is probably true. Gates provides the reader with major insight into many of the fronts of the cold war, including Latin America, Europe, Afghanistan, and the Middle East, highlighting how intelligence failures in the late 60's resulted in the detente policies of Nixon, but the military buildup by the Reagan administration ultimately bankrupted the Soviet Union. In between Nixon and Reagan, he gives President Carter a great deal of credit for being the first president to challenge the moral authority of the Communist Party to rule. This made him a dangerous enemy in the eyes of the Soviets. According to the author, the year 1983 was the most dangerous year; we nearly came to blows with the Soviet Union over missile placement, Star wars and a host of other issues. The book is a bit long and the rough chronological format results in the author repeating many themes too often, but it contains enough facts and insights about so many seminal events in the cold war that it's ultimately worth the long hours to finish. What Gates does not do is assess the price America paid for victory in the cold war, and ask if it was all worth it. Is the world any safer now than it was then? I'm not sure, but Gates provides us with many fascinating stories about a time when the world was a two superpower place.

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