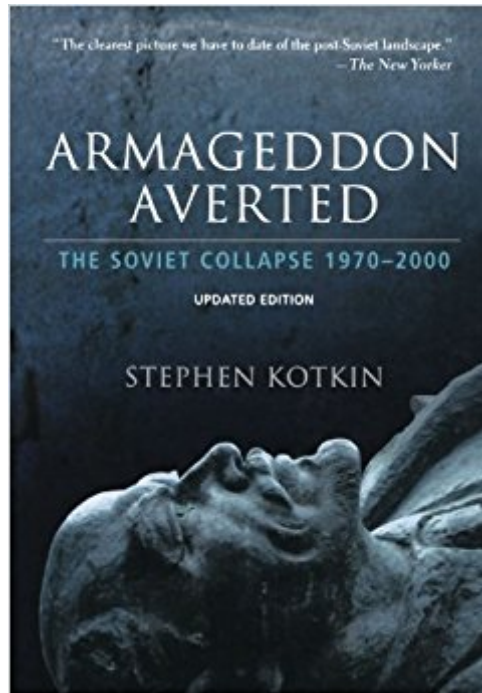




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# Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000



## Synopsis

Featuring extensive revisions to the text as well as a new introduction and epilogue--bringing the book completely up to date on the tumultuous politics of the previous decade and the long-term implications of the Soviet collapse--this compact, original, and engaging book offers the definitive account of one of the great historical events of the last fifty years. Combining historical and geopolitical analysis with an absorbing narrative, Kotkin draws upon extensive research, including memoirs by dozens of insiders and senior figures, to illuminate the factors that led to the demise of Communism and the USSR. The new edition puts the collapse in the context of the global economic and political changes from the 1970s to the present day. Kotkin creates a compelling profile of post Soviet Russia and he reminds us, with chilling immediacy, of what could not have been predicted--that the world's largest police state, with several million troops, a doomsday arsenal, and an appalling record of violence, would liquidate itself with barely a whimper. Throughout the book, Kotkin also paints vivid portraits of key personalities. Using recently released archive materials, for example, he offers a fascinating picture of Gorbachev, describing this virtuoso tactician and resolutely committed reformer as "flabbergasted by the fact that his socialist renewal was leading to the system's liquidation"--and more or less going along with it. At once authoritative and provocative, *Armageddon Averted* illuminates the collapse of the Soviet Union, revealing how "principled restraint and scheming self-interest brought a deadly system to meek dissolution." Acclaim for the First Edition: "The clearest picture we have to date of the post-Soviet landscape."--*The New Yorker* "A triumph of the art of contemporary history. In fewer than 200 pages Kotkin elucidates the implosion of the Soviet empire--the most important and startling series of international events of the past fifty years--and clearly spells out why, thanks almost entirely to the 'principal restraint' of the Soviet leadership, that collapse didn't result in a cataclysmic war, as all experts had long forecasted."--*The Atlantic Monthly* "Concise and persuasive The mystery, for Kotkin, is not so much why the Soviet Union collapsed as why it did so with so little collateral damage." --*The New York Review of Books*

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## Customer Reviews

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Stephen Kotkin is Professor of European and Asian History at Princeton University, where he also directs the Russian-Eurasian Studies Program. He is the author of nine books, including an acclaimed two-volume study of the rise and fall of Soviet socialism: *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* and *Steeltown, USSR: Soviet Society in the Gorbachev Era*.

I found the book extremely interesting, thought provoking and laced with meaningful details. Was wonderful to finally get the background story on why the Soviet Union failed and the various actions leading up to it. I had relatives in East Germany during the Soviet occupation and visited there in 1983. I came to understand firsthand how much the East Germans detested the Soviets and how they were completely "under the thumb" of the Soviets. The East Germans would have revolted had they felt they had any realistic means to do so. This book brought together all of my prior knowledge as well as the aspects that I had never known until I had the opportunity of reading about it.

This is an outstanding title that explains the events leading up to the unexpected and unforeseen collapse of the communist regime. Forged in blood and pain many wondered why the meltdown did

not lead to widespread, unrest turbulence, blood shed or even nuclear holocaust. It also examines how close Russia came to not actually shrugging of the yoke or a broken ideology. Interesting, insightful, and enjoyable read from an excellent and knowledgeable scholar.

The book is good and provides a lot of useful information. However, I was missing more info about economy, more hard facts. Almost completely missing is a description of situation within Soviet Army, the army that was well armed and in possession of nuclear arms, often beyond Russian borders. Army could have caused the Armageddon that did not happen, yet is not covered by the book. Another interesting topic would have been role of secret services - if any. In summary, great insight into politburo activities, but less focus beyond.

A good analysis of the failings of the Soviet Union. The author praises the Soviet leadership in controlling the fall of the nation without bringing serious bloodshed to the rest of the world and the succeeding 15 republics. Gorbachev and his group of reformers did not know the unreliability of this reforming socialism, and as a result did not know that his unwinding the repressive dictatorship unravelled the whole rotten system. This is a great read about how the Soviet Union died a peaceful death. It is a true compliment to the Soviet leaders who let it die without bringing the world down with them.

Stephen Kotkin's "Armageddon Averted" is a good, concise history of the Soviet collapse from 1970-2000. Kotkin has two themes that he repeatedly touches on: 1) that the Soviet system collapsed from within and 2) that the collapse was remarkably peaceful. Kotkin's work is very good, although at only 200 pages, it is a cursory account of the Soviet collapse. Kotkin focuses almost entirely on the Soviet system's inner workings. He describes how the Soviet system was destined to collapse from within and would have collapsed earlier had oil prices not increased in the 1970s, allowing the Soviet Union to continue to finance itself. Only with the coming of the new generation - Gorbachev - did anyone in the Soviet leadership have the courage to realize that the system must be changed. However, when Gorbachev tried to save the Soviet Union by liberalizing part of society, he set loose powers and forces and quickly lost control of the country. It was at this point, Kotkin argues, that the real miracle occurred: while the Soviet Union had used military force to keep Hungary and Czechoslovakia in its sphere, and had an entire security apparatus that had perfected the police state, the Soviet dissolution was almost completely bloodless. The Soviet leadership (or reactionaries in the government) did not crack down on its own citizens, and neither did it lash out at

the rest of the world in either a conventional world designed to foment nationalism nor launch a spiteful nuclear strike. This is a very good book, but it is lacking on details. Kotkin's writes from the perspective of a textbook, making sweeping statements and broad generalizations without much supporting argument. The book also lacks any personal look at the fall of the Soviet Union (other than occasional anecdotes about the leadership), unlike the excellent (but very different) "Lenin's Tomb." Kotkin also completely dismisses any credit to the United States or any other foreign power or policy for the Soviet collapse. Despite these drawbacks, though, this is an excellent book for anyone interested in Soviet/Russian history, modern history, or political science and foreign policy.

Overall - good; the focus is mostly on Gorbachev and his era. I'd like a deeper coverage of economic and military matters, especially in the pre-Gorbachev time. After 1990, the main story is Russia, with others considered unimportant relatively to it (even 45-million Ukraine!).

Kotkin refreshes well-known Cold War History with intellectual insight and concise logic that must be read by scholars and students.

Very good description of the fall of the Soviet Union. Posits that by disconnecting the Communist Party from the Union's republics, the glue that was holding the Soviet Union together was removed.

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