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Robert Legvold. *Return to Cold War.* Malden: Polity Press, 2016. 208 pp. $19.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-5095-0189-2.

Reviewed by James M. Goldgeier

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Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

There are plenty of reasons not to characterize the deplorable state of US-Russia relations as a new Cold War. After all, the Cold War was a global ideological, economic, military, and political struggle for supremacy between the two dominant powers in the international system. Whatever this new conflict is, it is not that Cold War, since Russia is neither the Soviet Union in terms of its global military, political, and economic capabilities to shape world affairs nor is it an ideological power in any meaningful sense. So one can be forgiven for healthy skepticism when seeing the title of Robert Legvold's new book, ***Return to Cold War.*** But Legvold has been one of the most important scholars of the Soviet Union and Russia for many years, and so there is good reason to dive in.

Given the breadth and depth of his understanding, Legvold takes head on the counter-argument that this is not a cold war. He knows all the arguments, but he believes they miss the mark. And while many will bristle at the use of the term "cold war" today, Legvold demonstrates the merit in looking at the relationship through the lens he provides rather than seeing it simply as just another great power rivalry. His book will be terrific for the undergraduate classroom: clear, logical, and purposeful.

As Legvold argues, central to the Cold War was the belief that the "essence of the conflict was in the other side's essence" (p. 28). Each saw the conflict as entirely the other side's fault. He notes that like the early Cold War era, today problems in one area of the relationship are bleeding over into everything else. But perhaps the most important benefit of seeing it as a return to a cold war is that it forces us to look at the quarter-century interregnum and ask ourselves why the two sides are back in such deep conflict with one another. Was it inevitable?

Those who suggest that US actions shattered the dreams that the two countries could become great partners after the Cold War usually cite the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) enlargement across Central and Eastern Europe. The

alliance has grown from sixteen members to twenty-eight and currently awaits member-state ratification of its invitation to Montenegro. Those who blame the United States for the sorry state of affairs with Russia are quick to cite the opposition to enlargement of leading strategists, such as legendary diplomat George F. Kennan. They argue that those with a keen understanding of grand strategy knew enlargement would drive the bear into a corner and lead it to lash out. Meanwhile, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the continuing support for separatists in eastern Ukraine are fodder for those who believe it is all Vladimir Putin's fault. He resented the collapse of the Soviet Union, saw the 1990s as one long decade of humiliation, and decided to push back against the West's conceptions of European and international order by invading a neighboring country and supporting Syrian president Bashar al-Assad militarily.

For Legvold, it takes two to make a cold war, and he argues it is going to take both sides to move us to a different place. But he is under no illusions that change will come anytime soon, and he reminds us of the stages the Cold War went through over its four decades. His hope is that if the two sides recognize the need to work together, they will find a way to do so. He sensibly provides a number of ideas in areas, such as energy, the Arctic, and nuclear weapons, where cooperation should be possible. The need, however, is for a mindset focused on making this return to cold war as short as possible and a recognition that engagement and rebuilding of trust is vital.

It is hard right now to see how the two sides get themselves back on an engagement track. The remilitarization of the divide in Europe is nothing short of a tragedy for those of us who believed in 1989-91 that walls were falling and new possibilities existed. Were we just deluding ourselves? US policymakers believed that if only Russia could be shorn of empire, with independent nations like Ukraine and Georgia choosing democratic futures with Western institutions, Russia would accommodate itself to a new Europe and seek to integrate with it. Meanwhile, many Russians viewed Western enlargement across Europe as a threat to their country's ability to dominate the post-Soviet space, and Putin has been able to stoke nationalist fears to shore up political support.

NATO enlargement, as Legvold notes, accomplished what its proponents and opponents believed it would. As proponents hoped, it provided security to countries historically insecure given their location. As opponents feared, enlargement fed the idea that the West was out to take advantage of Russian weakness by moving its military alliance closer and closer.

We now have a standoff in Europe. Russia invaded Ukraine over fears of "losing" the country to the West (and its invasion has now driven many citizens in Ukraine to want to move in that direction even more). The West responded by imposing sanctions and seeking to isolate Putin globally. A top priority was reassuring the eastern NATO allies through stepped-up sea and air patrols over the Baltic and Black Seas and the introduction of a new rotating rapid deployment force designed to send the message that NATO's commitment to the Baltic countries and Poland is unshakeable. Russia has responded with military exercises and troop movements of its own. It looks like a classic security dilemma, in which the effort of one side to increase its security diminishes the security of the other, which then responds in kind.

Legvold provides a number of examples where cooperation could benefit both sides, but when we look back at the relationship in recent years, it seems instead that a significant challenge has been the lack of substance in the dialogue between these two countries. During the Cold War, and particularly after détente, there was no shortage of issues on the table, starting with arms control. In the 1990s, the United States and Russia created a government-to-government process known

as the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, led by US Vice President Al Gore and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Officials from bureaucracies across the board met to promote cooperative endeavors in a range of areas, from economic relations to nonproliferation to outer space.

These efforts dwindled in the 2000s until Barack Obama promoted a "reset" with Russia in 2009. The two countries negotiated an arms control agreement—New Start—and collaborated with the other major powers to enhance sanctions on Iran to pressure that country into giving up its nuclear weapons program. Significant, but often little recognized, was the US arrangement with Russia to create a corridor into Afghanistan for US personnel and materiel. That agreement gave the United States an alternative to its otherwise sole path through Pakistan to reinforce its mission in Afghanistan. Without it, the likelihood of the mission to kill Osama Bin Laden getting the go-ahead would have dropped dramatically given concerns over the reactions of the Pakistani government.

Legvold argues that Obama canceled his meeting with Putin in 2013 due to a lack of progress in US-Russia relations and the added insult of Russia's granting of asylum to Edward Snowden, but it is also the case that Obama knew the cost of skipping the meeting would be minimal given there was so little on the agenda. The two sides were not working actively on a new arms control agreement nor was there any significant economic cooperation. They would have had little to discuss if they had held the meeting!

Today, it would seem there is a lot to talk about given the events in Ukraine and Syria, but Legvold recognizes how far apart the two countries are in defining common interests. In the 1970s, a common interest that underlay the pursuit of détente was the fear that a crisis involving the two superpowers could escalate to nuclear war. There has been some fear that there might be an accidental incident between the two sides in Eastern Europe or over the skies of Syria, and so there have been efforts to prevent that from happening, but beyond those minimal efforts, officials in both countries, and certainly the two presidents, seem to believe there is little reason for them to engage, even given a common interest in combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Obama has sought to keep the United States out of the Syrian conflict as much as possible and has sought to keep the crisis in Ukraine contained to Ukraine. Putin militarily intervened in Syria in part for the same reasons he intervened in Ukraine: because he could and so that he would maximize his influence. While it would be nice to believe the United States and Russia have a common interest in quelling the violence in Ukraine and Syria, neither has given the impression that it is a top priority. The United States' major goal in Eastern Europe is reassuring NATO allies, and Putin's is controlling Ukraine. The United States' top priority in Syria has been not to get involved in another Middle East conflict; Putin's is to project power and influence.

Legvold sadly notes that the chumminess of Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin has been replaced by scorn exhibited by Obama and Putin toward one another. It is hard to recall a time when the leaders of these two countries disparaged one another in such personal terms. Obama, whose reputation for staying cool is legendary, has let Putin's animus bait him into accusing the Russian leader of running his own country into the ground. Putin has been clear in his disdain for Obama and knows he will outlast this US president (and possibly the next one).

Is there any way for the two sides to get themselves out of this negative cycle of action and reaction? Despite Legvold's sensible suggestions, it is hard to see how that can happen anytime soon. In Europe, the two sides have defined their interests so differently, with the United States seeking across the past four administrations to expand the Western order East, while Russia seeks to undermine that order and sow discord across the conti-

nent. In the Middle East, the United States has been seeking to disengage where it can, whereas Russia has been looking to increase its power and influence across the region.

The relationship between the United States and Russia is the worst it has been since the early 1980s, and the relationship between its leaders may be at its lowest point since Gary Powers's U-2 was shot down over Soviet territory and created a crisis between Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev and US president Dwight Eisenhower. Legvold recognizes that there is a long road back to any sort of quality engagement between the two countries, but a great place to start turning things around is for policymakers on both sides to read this book.