



The Cold War: A World History by Odd Arne Westad.

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This sprawling history of the Cold War reflects a recent turn to the writing of global histories. The author, historian Odd Arne Westad (Harvard Univ.), detects foreshadowings of the Cold War in the rapid transformations of the nineteenth century and, in an attenuated form, in World War I. The war's major ideological protagonists were V.I. Lenin, who led the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and President Woodrow Wilson, who led the United States into the war in order to ensure a safer and more democratic world. In that fashion, the way was prepared for the appearance of two post-World War II superpowers that would strive to fulfill their divergent visions of an ideal world order. To glean fresh insights into events that many of his readers will have lived through, the author has mined new primary sources from Russia, Soviet-bloc countries, Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, among others.¹

Throughout the book, Westad observes that Soviet and American ambitions influenced such major trends as the decolonization of the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese empires. Tensions between the two superpowers were harrowingly apparent in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and less conspicuously in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, when US and Soviet leaders put their countries on nuclear alerts.

Westad's expertise in the People's Republic of China (PRC) is on full display in his discussions of that country's relations with both the Soviet Union and the United States. Few nonspecialists are aware that the Soviets gave the PRC even more financial support than the Americans provided Europe under the Marshall Plan. Yet, Soviet generosity did not buy the gratitude and comity the Americans received for resurrecting western European economies. For the goals of Chinese leaders included an alliance with the USSR's primary enemy. President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 pleased Chairman Mao, but disappointed his friends in Moscow.

The author also provides a compelling account of the purposes and ultimate failure of the non-aligned movement. The Bandung (Indonesia) conference of 1955 brought together the Third World's most progressive nationalist leaders, including Josip Tito, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sukarno, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Zhou Enlai, who was somewhat sidelined because of the PRC's ties with the Soviet Union. But, in fact, conservative, American-oriented countries—Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Japan—were involved in all the deliberations. Unsurprisingly, the movement foundered even though its architect, Prime Minister Nehru, maintained a strictly neutral posture despite strong pressure from the Americans.

Westad presents a discerning review of the foreign policies of President Dwight Eisenhower. Ike's famous farewell address (17 Jan. 1961) warned of the increasing power of the military-industrial complex; he also sided with Egyptian nationalists following the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt. But the author reminds us that Eisenhower's national security policies greatly increased the power and profits of war industries. Recognizing that the armed forces of the United States and its NATO allies

1. Lists of primary source abbreviations and consulted archives would have been most welcome.

could not match those of the Soviet Union, Ike expanded America's nuclear arsenal to over sixty thousand warheads by 1960. (The number had been 470 in 1950.)

The author entitles his chapter on the 1960s and 70s "The Age of Brezhnev," acknowledging that many of his readers will wonder "why Brezhnev?" and not Johnson, Nixon, or Kissinger. The discussion that follows shows he made the right choice. For Leonid Brezhnev's time as General Secretary of the Communist Party (1964–82) proved him to be a committed communist and no reformer, like Mikhail Gorbachev, the last General Secretary (1985–91). He was in many ways extremely bourgeois, fond of the good life, including fine clothes, excellent wines, and spirited political discussions with colleagues. More to the point, unlike any previous Soviet leader, his genuine and deep sense of the terrible toll that World War II had exacted on the Russian people led him to categorically forswear warfare. He once told President Gerald Ford "I do not want to inflict that on my people again.... [In war] everyone loses" (366).

Westad omits a crucial incident that illustrated Brezhnev's political savvy in averting a larger conflict with the Americans over the Egyptian-Syrian war with Israel in 1973. The Israeli army, having repulsed Egyptian-Syrian military advances, crossed the Suez Canal and threatened the Egyptian Third Army in Sinai. The Americans, preoccupied with the Watergate crisis and fearing the Soviets would take advantage of Washington's political paralysis, issued a heightened nuclear alert—DEFCON 3²—used previously only during the Cuban missile crisis. Some hawks in the Soviet leadership argued in favor of sending troops to bolster the Syrian army against a possible Israeli march on Damascus and to intimidate both the Israelis and the Americans. Brezhnev listened in silence to a long, heated debate on the proposal and then correctly observed that, if the Soviets did nothing, the crisis would resolve itself, with no harm to the USSR.

The book's short (13-page) but critically important final chapter, "The World the Cold War Made," flows from Westad's main argument: the Cold War might have been averted or mitigated had the United States grasped the scale of the suffering endured by the people of the Soviet Union during World War II. But the conflicting postwar ideological impulses of the two countries obscured the staggering loss of life and property and the utter exhaustion of the Soviet people and economy.

The chapter also adumbrates developments since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The seemingly monumental American victory in the Cold War led prominent political philosopher Francis Fukuyama to assert³ that the fall of the USSR had ushered in the last stage of humankind's historical evolution: the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism. That vision never came to be, in part because the United States and its allies did not integrate Russia into European security and trade arrangements immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union. Instead, the European Union and the NATO alliance were extended into former Soviet-bloc countries right up to the very borders of Russia. This made the rise of Vladimir Putin inevitable; for Russia, despite its social and economic decline, remains territorially the world's largest country, a country blessed with an enormously talented population. I would argue that the present-day upsurge of virulent right-wing populism in the United States and elsewhere is another symptom of the missed opportunities the author identifies.

We must be grateful to Odd Arne Westad for his exhaustive, painstakingly researched, clearly written new account of the Cold War. Even students with narrower interests in that protracted, complicated struggle can benefit by reading the book's introduction and conclusion to get a sense of its argumentation and then exploring select chapters of particular concern.

2. Viz., "DEFense readiness CONdition 3" (on a scale of five).

3. In his *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992; rpt. NY: Free Pr, 2006).