

Ambassador William C. Battle Symposium

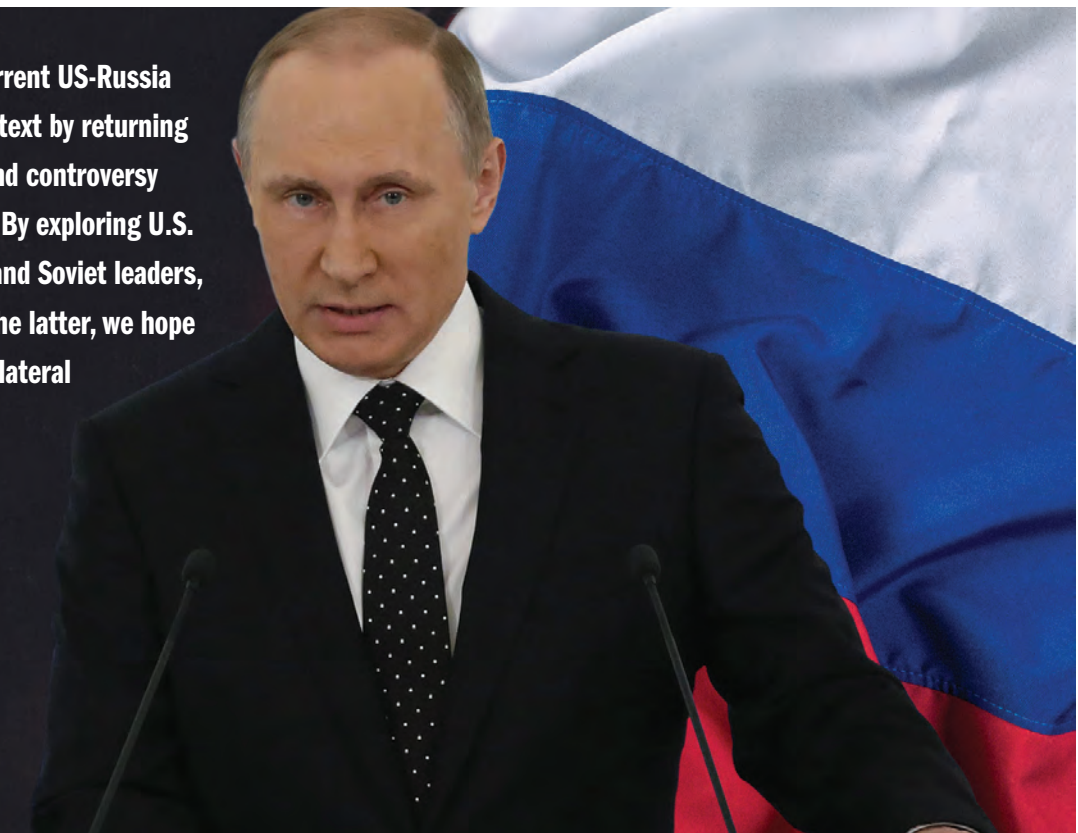
**U.S. PRESIDENTS
CONFRONT
THE RUSSIANS
A CENTURY OF CHALLENGE, 1917-2017**



NOVEMBER 8-10, 2017



Since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the United States and Russia have been geopolitical and ideological rivals. In aftermath of the First World War, the Bolshevik challenge to American ideals of democratic capitalism set the tone for the rest of the century. Despite a period of partnership during the great war against Hitler, the USA and the USSR viewed one another with deep suspicion and eventually came to see the other as an existential threat. Even with the collapse of the Cold War order, America and Russia could not develop a stable, mutually beneficial relationship, and since the advent of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000, the relationship has reached a level of mutual enmity not seen since the depths of the Cold War.



This conference aims to place the current US-Russia relationship into broad historical context by returning to key historical moments of crisis and controversy as well as restraint and compromise. By exploring U.S. presidents and their ties to Russian and Soviet leaders, and by analyzing the perceptions of the latter, we hope to illuminate the real nature of the bilateral relationship: the underlying forces, ideological, geopolitical, strategic, historic—that have placed the United States and Russia at cross-purposes for the past century.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

3:30–5:00 p.m.

“THE CRISIS OF U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS: HOW DID WE GET HERE AND HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD?”

Strobe Talbott, Brookings Institution
Odd Arne Westad, Harvard Kennedy School of Government
Vladislav Zubok, London School of Economics

Opening Remarks by Miller Center Director *Bill Antholis*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

8:30–10:30 a.m.

PANEL 1: “IDEOLOGY AND GEOPOLITICS FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE COLD WAR, 1917 TO 1945”

Chair: *Nicole Hemmer*, Miller Center

WILSON/Lenin: “THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF US-RUSSIAN RIVALRY”

This conversation will discuss the following broad questions among others: What was the nature of Lenin’s challenge to Wilson? And how did Wilson respond? Were the two nations always destined to clash, or was there ever an opportunity for mutual understanding? How did the Wilson-Lenin relationship set the stage for all that came later?

Odd Arne Westad, Harvard Kennedy School of Government
Erez Manela, Harvard University

FDR/STALIN/TRUMAN: “FROM ALLIES TO ADVERSARIES”

This conversation will examine the sources of Stalin and Roosevelt’s cautious partnership during World War II, and its rapid souring in the final months of the war. Was there an opportunity to preserve the alliance into the postwar or was it always doomed? How much did large structural forces drive the two nations into conflict and how much was contingent on personalities, politics, and emotions—especially the rise of Harry Truman to the presidency?

Frank Costigliola, University of Connecticut
Serhii Plokhii, Harvard University

10:30 – 11:00 a.m.

BREAK

11:00 a.m. –1:00 p.m.

PANEL 2: “AVERTING ARMAGEDDON: FROM JFK TO NIXON”

Chair: *Barbara Perry*, Miller Center

JFK/KHRUSHCHEV: “BRINKMANSHIP AND RESTRAINT”

This session will return to the most dangerous moment of the Cold War – the Cuban Missile Crisis – and explore the reasons behind the risk-taking practices by both sides with respect to Cuba, and also delve into the reasons that a terrible nuclear crisis was finally averted. In a time of intense ideological conflict and nuclear rivalry, statesmanship managed to avert a terrible disaster—but only just. Are there lessons here for today?

Marc Selterstone, Miller Center
Tim Naftali, New York University

BREZHNEV/NIXON: “DÉTENTE AND COMPETITION”

Even amid the terrible conflict in Southeast Asia, Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev managed to keep U.S.-Soviet relations stable and on track toward a genuine improvement. Did the two leaders manage to push ideology to the side and pursue common interests and realpolitik? Or does this period reveal the enduring power of ideology and geopolitics in a world of anarchy?

Vlad Zubok, London School of Economics
Jeremi Suri, University of Texas at Austin

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

PANEL 3: “THE END OF THE COLD WAR: AN ELUSIVE VICTORY”

Chair: *Philip Zelikow*, Miller Center

REAGAN AND BUSH/GORBACHEV, 1981-1991: “THE END OF HISTORY?”

The swift collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989 and the subsequent unification of Germany presented the West with a stunning victory in the Cold War. How did American leaders understand what had happened, and what forces did they think explained these events? Similarly, what ideas, strategies, and political impulses drove Gorbachev in these months? In the end, how much weight should historians place upon individual men and leaders versus longer term structural factors in explaining the end of the Cold War? And what does this imply for the future of U.S.-Russian relations?

James Wilson, US State Department
Bill Taubman, Amherst College
Bob Zoellick, AllianceBernstein

BUSH/CLINTON/YELTSIN: “LOSING RUSSIA?”

The decade after the end of the Cold War was a complex and fluid time in international relations. What ideas and goals drove U.S. policy? What explains the gradual souring of the relationship after a period of U.S.-Russian rapprochement? Did America “lose” Russia? If errors were made, can they be overcome?

Strobe Talbott, Brookings Institution
Svetlana Savranskaya, George Washington University

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

PANEL 4: THE PUTIN CHALLENGE

Chair: *Eric Edelman*, Miller Center

BUSH ‘43/PUTIN/OBAMA

Few would disagree: in the twenty-first century, U.S.-Russia relations have remained difficult and even bitter. What explains this spiral of hostility and mistrust? Are the sources of the rivalry a century old, or are there new factors having to do with the consequences of globalization and the shifts in world politics that are pushing the United States and Russia apart?

Derek Chollet, German Marshall Fund of the United States
Allen Lynch, University of Virginia
Hal Brands, Johns Hopkins University
Eugene Rumer, National Defense University

11:00 – 12:30 p.m.

CONCLUDING ROUNDTABLE

PARTICIPANTS BIOS

Hal Brands is Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Derek Chollet is the executive vice president and senior advisor for security and defense policy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Frank Costigliola is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor at the University of Connecticut, where he teaches US Foreign Relations.

Eric Edelman is a former US ambassador and senior fellow and Compton Visiting Professor in World Politics at the Miller Center.

Nicole Hemmer is an assistant professor in presidential studies at the Miller Center. She is the author of *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*.

William Hitchcock is the Randolph P. Compton Professor of History at the University of Virginia, where he focuses on the international, diplomatic, and military history of the twentieth century.

Mel Leffler is the Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. Professor of History at the University of Virginia, with an expertise in the Cold War, arms control, Communism, and national security.

Allen Lynch is a professor of politics at the University of Virginia. His research interests are Russian foreign policy and Russian politics.

Erez Manela is a professor of history at Harvard University, teaching international history and the history of the US in the world.

Tim Naftali is a clinical associate professor of history and public service at New York University and co-director of the Center for the United States and the Cold War.

Barbara Perry is the White Burkett Miller Center Professor of Ethics and Institutions and director of presidential studies at the Miller Center.

Serhii Plokhii is the Mykhailo S. Hrushevs'kyi Professor of Ukrainian History and the director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University.

Eugene Rumer is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC.

Svetlana Savranskaya is a research fellow at The George Washington University's National Security Archive where she directs its cooperative projects with Russian archives and institutes.

Marc Selverstone is an associate professor in presidential studies at the Miller Center and chair of the Presidential Recordings Program.

Jeremi Suri is the Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. He is a professor in the department of history and the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

Strobe Talbott is the president of the Brookings Institution. Talbott previously served as ambassador-at-large and special adviser to the secretary of state for the new independent states of the former Soviet Union, then as deputy secretary of state from 1994–2001.

William Taubman is the Bertrand Snell Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Amherst College, specializing in the Cold War.

Odd Arne Westad is a Norwegian historian and the S.T. Lee Professor of US-Asia Relations at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

James Graham Wilson is a historian at the US State Department, specializing in the Cold War and Diplomatic History.

Philip Zelikow is the White Burkett Miller Professor of History at the University of Virginia.

Robert Zoellick is a former deputy secretary of state and president of the World Bank.

Vladislav Zubok is a professor of international history at the London School of Economics, where he specializes in the Cold War and Soviet-Russian history.

