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In Focus: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Cold Wars

**The Tennessee World Affairs Council in association with the
Belmont University Center for International Business, and the Nashville Area
Chamber of Commerce**

**Prof. Thomas A. Schwartz
Distinguished Professor of History, Vanderbilt University**

with moderator

**LCDR Patrick Ryan, USN (Ret)
President, Tennessee World Affairs Council**

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Patrick Ryan [00:00:25] Welcome to a special series on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I'm Tennessee World Affairs Council president Pat Ryan. We're pleased you've joined us today. Earlier this year, we presented a series of virtual conversations on the invasion of Ukraine featuring Ambassador John Kornblum. We've been continuing those conversations alongside our partner, the American Council on Germany. I'd like to thank Dr. Steve Sokol at the Council for all they bring to these global awareness programs. Their work to strengthen German-American relations is an important contribution to knowing the world. We're also joined by the World Affairs Council of Harrisburg. Thanks, Dr. Joyce Davis, for supporting the program. We welcome their members and members of the World Affairs Council around the country who are with us today as well. I'd also like to thank our Tennessee partners for this series and all that we do at the Tennessee World Affairs Council, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, Belmont University's Center for International Business and the University of Tennessee Center for Global Engagement.

Our most recent program featured a conversation with former Ukraine Minister of Science and Education Anna Novosad from Kiev, where she is overseeing efforts to rebuild

schools in war damaged areas of Ukraine. Next week, we'll host Ambassador John Kornblum, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Professor Marieta Velikova, director of Belmont's Center for International Business and Tennessee World Affairs Council Vice President, Dr. Breck Walker. Note that the start time for that program is 1 p.m. Central Time. We're also pleased to announce one of our fall programs in the Distinguished Visiting Speaker Series, TNWAC will host Admiral Michael Rogers, retired U.S. Navy four star on November 7th and 8th. He's the most recent director of the National Security Agency, commander of the United States Cyber Command and Chief Central Security Service. We will offer a town hall on the evening of November 7th and a panel discussion on the afternoon of November 8th. You're invited to both of those events, so save those on your calendar to see Admiral Rogers. We invite businesses and other organizations to contact and work for hosting and sponsorship opportunities for the visit.

I'd also like to share with our members and friends that Tennessee World Affairs Council has had a transition on our board. Ambassador Dick Bowers and Professor Jeff Overby, longtime directors have finished their terms. They'll stay active on our advisory board, but we thank them for everything they've done over the years to sustain the council and help produce exceptional programming. We also welcome former Nashville Mayor Carl Dean, a long serving board member to the chair's seat. He'll be a great leader in service of public education at the council. And we thank outgoing chair Jim Shepherd for his leadership and hard work bringing you global affairs awareness programs. One last piece of housekeeping. This World Affairs Council is a public service organized by volunteers and made possible by your financial support. Please become a member and make a donation. The Council is in the midst of a transition from a founder led volunteer organization to a more sustainable model. Your financial support is essential for the continued availability of these high-quality speaker programs and our education outreach to youth. Visit TNWAC.org to give and to become a member. Thank you.

Now onto our program. The Cold War was a period of intense competition and geostrategic struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies in the Western and Eastern blocs following World War II. At times, it threatened to turn hot potential battles between combatants armed with thousands of nuclear weapons, but always featured political, economic, ideological and military confrontation. The post-Cold War era saw the Russian Federation and the United States work together on bilateral and global issues. The spirit of cooperation that has evolved into the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, the extensive support of Kiev by the United States and its allies, the expansion of NATO in reaction to Russian aggression and a disruption in global stability and international norms. Is this a new Cold War or is it something else?

With us today to talk about your father's Cold War and the current situation between Washington and Moscow is distinguished professor of history at Vanderbilt University, Thomas Schwartz. Professor Schwartz is a historian of the foreign relations of the United States with related interests in American politics, the history of international relations, modern European history and biography. His most recent book is *Henry Kissinger and American Power: A Political Biography*. The book has received considerable notice and acclaim, and you should buy a copy. A conversation with Professor Schwartz about the Kissinger book is in our video archive. There is more complete bio for Professor Schwartz on our website landing page for this program and in the program notes when this program has been archived. We have almost 200 registered guests today, so we expect many terrific questions for Professor Schwartz. Please add your questions to the Q&A tab at the bottom of your zoom screen and you can start putting them in there now. Please don't use the chat box for that purpose. Professor Schwartz, thanks for joining us today.

Thomas Schwartz [00:05:41] Well, thank you very much for having me on the program.

Patrick Ryan [00:05:45] I believe you recently taught a class on the Cold War at Vanderbilt University. Most of your students probably reflected on the Cold War, as you and I might have thought about World War II in our generation. Can you start us off by setting the scene as we consider the new relationship with Russia, by talking about the Cold War that consumed almost half of the last century?

Thomas Schwartz [00:06:11] Absolutely. Thank you. Let me start with a very large disclaimer. My professional home is as a historian, which makes me very good at predicting the past, but doesn't really condone with great foresight into gazing into the future. I have found myself actually quite skeptical about some of my historian colleagues who claim to be able to analyze the present and predict the future based on that understanding of the past. I tend to think, and this will be something I would emphasize, that professional historians should take a vow of humility on that matter. Recognizing that in our own studies of the past and in walking around in the shoes of past historical efforts, we recognize that things could have been very different if leaders had chosen differently. And this is something I hope people will keep in mind. Let me take one example here recently, one of my favorite websites, H-Diplo of the H-Diplo Forum, has been featuring a discussion of historian Philip Zelikow, whose book *The Road Less Traveled*, which makes the fascinating case that the United States missed an opportunity to broker a settlement to World War I shortly before it entered the conflict. This has led to some very strong responses, especially from historians who argue that Zelikow overstates the chance for avoiding war. But it led me to think that maybe 100 years from now that we'll be having a discussion about our current situation in the same way.

Now, the question you've asked me is to address, is this a new Cold War? It's one I found myself asked often, especially after my book on Kissinger came out. Kissinger's career and prominence can't be understood outside of the Cold War. He was very much a product of that time. And the fact that he's still alive and making comments about our current international politics, I think connects the era of the Cold War to our own. One recent comment of his worth mentioning here that appeared last week in *The Wall Street Journal*, he said, we are on the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to. Now, Kissinger's bleak pessimism there reminds me that I've given earlier talks about a new Cold War, but they were often connected to our relationship with China, a topic that emerged particularly after the publication of Graham Allison's 2017 book, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap*. This is not to say that people did not recognize the danger of Vladimir Putin's Russia, especially after the 2014 seizure of Crimea and attacks in the eastern Ukraine. But to a certain extent, the tendency of American leaders on a bipartisan basis was to denigrate Russian power. It was Senator John McCain, for example, who called Russia a gas station masquerading as a country, and President Barack Obama, who dismissed Mitt Romney's assertion that Russia was our leading geopolitical foe by saying the 1980s called them they want their foreign policy back. I think this led many analysts to focus more on China's only significant rival to the United States. Now we face both.

And historically, this recalls the first half of the Cold War when the monolithic Sino-Soviet bloc was the enemy. This was the case during some of the most dangerous crisis years of the Cold War, particularly created when China entered the Korean War, the Taiwan Straits crises of the 1950s, the repeated Berlin crises, and finally, the Cuban Missile Crisis. These

were the years the Cold War threatened to become hot, reminding us that the term Cold War originated sometimes linked to Walter Lippmann, the great columnist. As a discussion of the period when the superpowers refrained from using nuclear weapons. In that sense, Cold War defined a state of hostility, but beneath the threshold of some of the most destructive weapons ever developed. Needless to say, there were many levels beneath that threshold, and that's something I'll come back to.

My major point of argument today and what I'd like to put out is that we need a new vocabulary other than Cold War to talk about our current situation between the United States and Russia and by connection between the United States and China as well. I contend the talk of a new Cold War with Russia and China may serve to distort our understanding of the complex relationship with both of these powers as the remains a mix of cooperation and connection. Even as rivalry and confrontation grows a factor, it becomes even more significant when one contemplates the complicated picture for America's allies who are navigating between the adversaries. Talk of a new Cold War also may, as the quote I read from Kissinger, suggest that our goals are more expansive than they really are. Namely, the idea that we might be in this to defeat and collapse these regimes and replace them with democratic governments. As an alternative to a new Cold War, President Biden has tried out the concept of autocracy versus democracy. But that seems to be much as much for American popular consumption as for defining the current international situation.

There's also been talk of great power rivalry, a term which may be factually accurate but lacks the capacity to inspire or adequately define the tensions between the United States and China. So why should we not talk about a new Cold War? Pat alluded to this when I talked about teaching by Cold War course. It's worth saying the Cold War itself is a fading memory to many Americans and no longer has the impact it once did. I recently asked my Vanderbilt research assistant, Molly Katz, to look for materials related to millennials, how millennials looked at the Cold War. And one point she discovered that as of 2022, more than half of our country now has people who were under 12 at the time the Cold War came to an end. For this group, knowledge of the Cold War is mostly secondhand and given the way American history is taught in high schools. Probably nonexistent. An interesting statistic which may reflect the difference generationally comes from an Economist poll after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Even though the majority of Americans supported Ukraine, one of the sharpest divides was the relative support of Ukraine. 56% of those under 30, compared to 92% of those over the age of 65 in support in Ukraine.

Another reason for not using the term of the new Cold War is I think that it conflicts with a proper understanding of the original Cold War and its history of development over a half century. It does seem to seem to be that there's a danger in the term the new Cold War will encourage a great deal of thinking in analogies and a tendency to make facile comparisons between methods and policies adopted during the Cold War without taking into account of the differences between our situations. My late academic advisor, Ernest May, wrote a book called *Lessons of the Past*, in which he documented the tendency during the Cold War of American leaders to look back to World War II for analogies. Unfortunately, this led to the famous Munich analogy, which seduced many American leaders into thinking that all communist advance required an American response. Less the dreaded word a peace come to be charged. This helped the result in the Vietnam War. In many respects, the original an early period of the Cold War should be understood, I think, as strongly connected to the American experience and psyche coming out of World War II.

What I mean by this is that American society had become inured to war and domestic mobilization for war by World War II in a manner that rolled over into the early Cold War. That relative domestic unity of purpose and relative trust in government is an important contrast from the Cold War's early years to both its later postwar Vietnam development, as well as to the domestic situation of today's America. Trust in the government of the United States has not really developed since the 1960s was not restored.

So let me give you an example from a teaching experience of mine. For my diplomatic history course, I often show the first part of the famous Frank Capra documentary, *Why We Fight*, produced to show to American Troops during World War II. In the film, Capra represents the struggle with the Axis as comparable to one of freedom versus slavery. Invoking the American Civil War in comparison to Lincoln and the struggle to end slavery within the United States. The same theme, of course, dominated from the early, earliest moments of the Cold War. Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe and Eastern Germany, the creation of police states, the arrest and disappearance of political opponents, the forced confiscation and nationalization of property, the imposition of communist governments and sham elections. All of this reminded Americans of Hitler's policies across Europe.

In speaking to a group here recently at Vanderbilt who are enjoying what we have called the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship for Educational Leaders in different countries, I came across a famous speech at the Democratic Convention in 1948 in favor of civil rights by then Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey. The one in which he spoke of leaving behind the shadow of states rights for the bright sunshine of human rights. But he also said every citizen in this country, and I quote, has a stake in the emergence of the United States as a leader in the free world. That world is being challenged by the world of slavery. For us to play our part effectively, we must be in a morally sound position. I think that quote in many ways captures the connection between World War II and the early Cold War that dominated American thought. My point here is that Americans that America came to fear its former ally, the Soviet Union, after World War II, had much the same mindset that it had acquired in the campaign against the Axis powers. It feared that the totalitarian ideology of communism, just like fascism and Naziism, would subsume all of Europe and eventually threaten the United States. It was really not that difficult for most Americans to go from Adolph Hitler to Joseph Stalin as the enemy of the free world. Even though Uncle Joe was, he was sometimes called by Churchill and Roosevelt, had been our ally in World War II and had been instrumental in the defeat of Nazi Germany. The powerful ideological component of the Cold War was most in evidence in Germany. That is ironic in that American and Soviet armies met in the former Reich, and Franklin Roosevelt hoped to strengthen the alliance with the Soviet Union through the demilitarization of de-Nazification of Germany.

But that quickly changed, and not solely because of Roosevelt's death. Germany quickly became the center of the Cold War, its divided status, along with its capital of Berlin, symbolic of the Cold War division. I think most Americans of a certain age remember John Kennedy's famous slip up. I am a Berliner. The importance of the Berlin Wall in crystallizing the divisions of the Cold War. Kennedy's call that people around the world wanted to understand the difference between communism and the democracy should come to Berlin. To many Americans, Berlin was the symbol of the Cold War. The collapse of the wall in 1989 marked the end of the conflict. It has been noted in many commemorations that there are more pieces of the Berlin Wall celebrated in the United States than in Germany. Now because the early Cold War was such an existential struggle with both societies seeing their core values at stake, it found both superpowers willing to risk nuclear war to achieve their security and deter their adversary. Now to take it to the

present. Obviously, the conflicts we place now with Russia and China carry with them nuclear danger.

However, it doesn't seem to me that they bear with them this ideological and existential character. Indeed, they seem made of an older period of international relations when disputes settled on issues of territory and resources rather than ideological reasons to return to the World War One, issues that I mentioned at the beginning of talk. The dangers of war in Europe, now connected to Ukraine, seem centered around alliances and territory, with the possibility of escalation connected to the idea of a prolonged and stalemated war which may see Russia miscalculate and escalate the matter, will expand that war. In Asia, the issue of Taiwan is deeply connected to China's understanding of its sovereignty and the narrative its leaders tell about its recent history of humiliation at the hands of the West.

The counter-narrative which we tell ourselves of an island democracy defying a brutal dictatorship is also important, but should not obscure the fact of how intertwined the economies of Taiwan and China are now despite their differences. The great irony in both cases today, and one which raises as many questions as it does answers, is the relative bipartisan unity with which American leaders have approached Ukraine and Taiwan. This is not commented on very often, but outside of some political figures on the extremes of both parties, both Democrats and Republicans have united to support the almost \$8 billion to Ukraine, the admission of Sweden and Finland to NATO and the Pelosi trip to Taiwan. Given our political polarization, such unity is extraordinarily noteworthy. The fly in the ointment, and I'll close with my remarks here and talk more about the questions, is whether the American people and the representatives are willing to shoulder both the costs and potential risks of effectively deterring China and the Pacific and strengthening NATO and Ukraine in Europe, or whether we are seeing the rhetorical use of foreign policy for domestic political purposes. To a certain extent, a principled stance on foreign policy could serve to lessen our own domestic political divides. However, such a stance without real expenditures and commitments could also serve to further domestic division and recrimination. And it seems to me that this is both the challenge and danger we face today.

Patrick Ryan [00:21:09] Tom, thanks for your opening scene setter there. A lot to work through and not least of which is John McCain's gas station and Frank Capra's Why We Fight. On the why we fight, you know, the US public had many years to understand the evolving relationship between the Western bloc and the Soviet Union, and it seems in our current situation that the limited time span that people have with absorbing what's going on in the world before moving on to the next thing. What would you tell people? Is your concern or your satisfied about how Americans are viewing this evolving relationship with Russia? And extend that also to the our Western allies with the ability to stay on task. I mean, you know, the Cold War lasted 25 years or so. And I don't know that anybody here is prepared for a long confrontation with Moscow. And it's critically important to our support of Ukraine that their solidarity. So maybe we need some more Frank Capras to educate.

Thomas Schwartz [00:22:38] Well yes, I do think in a way at least initially Ukraine's leader Zelensky was able to mobilize this by, in effect, the narrative on the Russian invasion of Ukraine is this narrative of a great power, essentially deciding it's going to invade a smaller country and take it over. It's a very simple narrative, and it certainly does - there are more complications if one looked at the history of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine. But I think Putin's tactics simplified the question for many in the West. You might recall, Pat, that President Biden before the war began in a moment, which would be called the gaffe, but was speaking truth in Washington terms, said that if Putin decided on a more

narrow level of simply expanding the control in the eastern Ukraine. It might be hard to mobilize and get support from other countries.

Instead Putin over reached, deciding on a full scale invasion of Ukraine, anticipating that Ukraine would collapse quickly and really creating the narrative of a overwhelming aggression against an innocent country, a country that really did not expect or deserve that type of military force used against it. That served, of course, to change attitudes about Russia in much of the West. It certainly mobilized the United States. I mean, we're talking we're talking an awful lot of support resources going to Ukraine, 8 billion, as I mentioned. But it also changed, at least initially, attitudes in Germany and other parts of Europe as well toward Putin. His anticipation that Europe would side, or at least not side with the United States was proven to be wrong. Now, certainly there has not been worldwide unity against Putin, and Putin has found a number of loopholes. Countries like India, China with, of course, supported him. But the powerful role that his aggression played in mobilizing the West reminds me very much of what Stalin did in the early Cold War when he seized Czechoslovakia, when he encouraged the North Korean invasion of South Korea, when he undertook actions which might have been explained in the Soviet reasoning as defensive, but ultimately served to terrify the West and to convince the West that he was on the march toward world conquest.

We know now that that was there was never a plan for world conquest in the manner in which it was often depicted then. But certainly the actions of Russia have created a sense that this is a regime that cannot be trusted, that it engages in violence against both its own internal political opponents and against countries in its near region. And it has made even Henry Kissinger in that Wall Street Journal article I mentioned, say that he thinks Ukraine now should become a member of NATO, something he opposed, but that is not is necessitated by Russian aggression. So I think in that sense, it did clarify, Putin did certainly clarify the issues for the West in a manner similar to how Stalin had done during the Cold War.

Patrick Ryan [00:25:57] You know, you talk about Stalin and Putin and the nature of leadership. And clearly the ideological dimension is present in the leadership of the Soviet Union. But in terms of the unity of purpose in the Soviet Union, we had generations of leaders who, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that espoused the domination of Eastern Europe and in opposition to Western economies and so forth. So it was a stark contrast there to what we see now is as a one man leadership that has taken the Russian Federation from some level of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the West and this now open opposition with the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. You talk a little bit about the nature of leaders and how we got friends Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, et cetera to now there's one bare chested guy on a horse.

Thomas Schwartz [00:27:08] Yeah, we have - it is different. And this is another reason why analogies to the Cold War can be misleading at times because the Soviet Union did and its leaders did take its ideology seriously, at least many of them did. I mean, there was a certain cynicism later in the as the Soviet Union developed, but many of the leaders of the revolutionary generation, like Stalin, did take it quite seriously, that they represented a movement, a movement that they saw was progressive. And it's what it brought to countries in Eastern Europe was something that was needed and that as it sought to undermine Western countries that this was a part of history's progress. Vladimir Putin is a much simpler matter. We're looking at old fashioned, a one-person autocracy, a powerful state kept in line by a leader who essentially ties the leadership elite to him through corruption and through the misuse of state resources or the corrupt use of state resources.

There was a very good piece in The New York Times today talking about Putin's role, contrasting this idea whether there is within the Soviet or Russian elite now anyone who really would oppose Putin and that simply is the columnist talking about this, the Russian analysts talking about this is, that's not the case. We're not looking at a situation in which there is likely to be any change in the regime. The one hope is in some ways, if Putin's objectives in Ukraine can be frustrated. And by this, I think we could even look at a peace settlement or at least a cease fire in Ukraine. That was essentially the status quo ante, basically pushing Russian forces back to where they started from. That would be enough to, I think, perhaps trigger the sense of failure. And that could ultimately lead possibly to some transformations of the point made by the columnists is that in Russian history, military failure has often led to reform. And he cites the Crimean War in the in the 1850s, the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 and 1905. There's moments when a military failure provoked changes at home, and that might be what we have to hope for, not that we can bring about regime change, but that stopping the aggression and preventing Putin from gaining anything from his attacks on Ukraine could in fact lead to some changes in Russia.

Patrick Ryan [00:29:42] Can you talk a little bit about, put in context, the use of Soviet power within the Warsaw Pact with an Eastern bloc during the Cold War, places like Hungary and the Prague Spring in '68. There was a lot of conversation and never any action by the West to try to forestall that as compared to now with Ukraine. We're all in.

Thomas Schwartz [00:30:13] Well, I think during the Cold War, actually, one of the things that was rather quickly discovered. You might recall that in the election of 19 - or the early elections of the Cold War, one of the criticisms that was made of the containment policy was that it was too passive and that we needed to roll back communist power. But in fact, when revolutions took place in the 1950s, the revolt in East Germany in '53 and Hungary of '56, the United States, the Western powers did not act. That was because of the nuclear danger, the fear that entering into the Soviet sphere of influence, we largely accepted Eastern Europe as under Soviet domination, at least to the point of not would be willing to threaten nuclear war over it.

And that is, of course, one of the one of the issues the West really did accept the idea that the Soviet Union had expanded into Eastern Europe. It did not approve of the governments it installed, but it did not - it was not willing to undertake military force to change that. Ukraine shows something similar in the fact that Americans and other European countries are not sending troops. They're sending equipment to there, trying to help the Ukrainians fight themselves. But there is this sense that because Ukraine is not a NATO member, we cannot physically intervene with American soldiers or other European soldiers under NATO. That said, still, the fact that Ukraine is fighting as effectively as it is in part due to the types of supplies that NATO's is providing it. And that is a helpful, that is a difference. And Putin is continuing to blame the United States for some of Russia's frustrations, but that hasn't involved direct military intervention. And that - and certainly during the Cold War, the Soviets often blame the West for encouraging revolts in Eastern Europe, even when the situation was much more driven by domestic problems.

Patrick Ryan [00:32:17] You know, Tom, you talked about Thucydides's trap with China. And, you know, the idea that a power will try to resist a rising power. Is there a corollary in political science or historical circles that talks about a declining superpower being a threat to other powers as they - as their dominance subsides?

Thomas Schwartz [00:32:49] Well, it doesn't particularly have as eloquent an advocate as Thucydides, but certainly the idea that a power fearing its decline or fearing for its future will act aggressively is certainly there. Some historians make that case for German responsibility for World War I that Germany feared, even though it was hardly declining, but it feared the power of its adversaries and that it feared that it, in that sense, was willing to gamble on its two front war strategy in 1914 in a way that it felt it would not be able to if Russia and France increased their relative power of the Entente allies, increased their relative power.

So certainly we have seen this. And in fact, Hal Brands in the recent piece that the historian and analyst out of Johns Hopkins, in his piece about the danger of war over Taiwan, makes the case that China actually may choose war not because of its growing power, but because of a fear that it's missing an opportunity that its demographic crises and other problems might prevent it from taking action in the future, and so that it needs to act now, and so that this is one of the dangers of the possibility of invasion now. Putin certainly, in a way, has been arguing not Russia's - Russia's decline may have been relatively overstated in the West. The type of criticisms or the type of comments about Russia's weakness may have missed the fact that it still retains significant military power, even if its economy was still as one dimensional as the McCain comment made out in the West, it still has that capacity to act aggressively in its neighborhood and Putin's interest in restoring the Russian empire, namely those parts of Europe or those parts that were really also constituent parts of the Russian empire, the Baltic States, Ukraine, Moldova. Those parts has been clear for quite some time, in fact, even since about 2007. So.

Patrick Ryan [00:35:01] Well, great, great things to consider here. Let me remind our viewers, our participants and our Facebook watchers, we're talking with Professor Thomas Schwartz, distinguished professor of history from Vanderbilt University. He joins us today to talk about the Cold War and what's happening in the U.S., Russian relations today. Tom, I don't want to get too far off track, but we talked about China a little bit. What lessons do you think China is taking or - they're obviously watching very closely what's happening with Ukraine, but they're also of the long view and looking at what the relationship between the Soviet Union and the West was, as they see themselves becoming more pitted against Western interests.

Thomas Schwartz [00:35:50] Well, I think it is interesting that China has and recently President Xi actually talked about the strategic initiative they're undertaking, is making significant efforts in what we might call the global south, particularly Southeast Asia, Africa, South Asia, Latin America. And in that sense, trying to expand the playing field in a sense against the United States by also cementing economic ties with countries. And that sets China as a different adversary for the Soviet Union, in part because of its extensive economic power. And it's, in that sense, a real rival with the United States economically in a way that the Soviet Union never was.

And I think one of the lessons she is recognizing in this is the danger, particularly economically, of the type of sanctions that the United States has imposed on Russia and trying to, in a sense, make China much less vulnerable to those sanctions should it decide to undertake aggression against Taiwan and in a way preemptively trying to develop relations with countries in its region and other places in Africa and Latin America, that will make it far more difficult for the United States to unite internationally with other countries against a possible move against Taiwan. So the Chinese, I think, has taken certain lessons from watching how quickly Russia became isolated, even though, of course, their

own alliance with Russia has helped to keep it from being as isolated as it might have been.

Patrick Ryan [00:37:27] Clearly there are many more interlocking relationships between the United States and China than there ever was with the Soviet Union. Let's invite some more questions here and we'll turn to those in just a second. We have a number of questions already, most talking about the current era and Ukraine and we'll get on those here in just a second. Let me ask one more question Tom. You know, the United States standoff with the Soviet Union was primarily through NATO, and NATO was formed to bring together the bloc of Western countries. And we've seen that it's now expanding in the face of the end of the Cold War. We expanded to some extent, but now we see as a direct result of Russian provocation in Ukraine, Finland and Sweden. Who would have ever thought that they would become members of NATO. So tell us a little bit about what you think about your father's NATO and Joe Biden's NATO?

Thomas Schwartz [00:38:30] Well, this is it is fascinating. Both Finland and Sweden during the Cold War - Finland actually contributed the term to the Cold War, Finlandization, which was the idea of a country having domestic freedom, but largely toeing the Soviet line in foreign policy. Sweden was rigidly neutral in the Cold War as it had been during World War II and stayed that way during the Cold War, quite critical of many American policies, even while it secretly cooperated with NATO to try and defend its territory.

So I think the fact that both countries have explicitly joined NATO shows, again, the degree to which Putin's actions have served to undermine his goals in that sense, very similar again to the way Stalin, in some of his behavior, for example, brought Norway into NATO. Norway would never have joined NATO, I think, had not Stalin been as aggressive and Norway not experienced Nazi invasion and recognized its vulnerability. So in a way NATO has always been strengthened by the enemy it's had. And the actions of the Soviet Union have given new life to NATO.

Unfortunately, I think NATO itself is going to need to now define its purposes more carefully, and also it is going to have to contribute far more to the common defense than many of the key members of NATO have, including, of course, Germany, which it was always said that NATO had three purposes - to keep the Soviet Union out, America in, and Germany down. NATO no longer is designed to contain Germany, but Germany now needs to step up and become a far more active and engaged participant in NATO and Western defense. And that's going to be critical to deterring further Russian action in the east.

Patrick Ryan [00:40:23] We have a couple of questions about how the Ukraine situation started. John McCaslin asked about the expansion of NATO and Russell Goodman asked if internal divisions within the United States had anything to do with showing that Putin's boldness in Ukraine might be more successful than it has been. We talked with Ambassador Kornblum about the expansion of NATO and the Russian claims that we promise never to move further east than we were at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union. And he said categorically in our conversations that there were no such promises made. But this continues to be out there, that it's not Putin's fault, that we've sort of opened the door to.

Thomas Schwartz [00:41:20] No, it is. And it will continue. It is a bit like the historical controversy I mentioned about World War I. But did we miss an opportunity to more effectively engage Russia by expanding NATO to the east? I happen to agree with

Ambassador Kornblum that that was not the real question. The real question ultimately was how best to provide security in Eastern Europe and what the Eastern European countries themselves democratically wanted, which was in this case, a tie to NATO. I think NATO could have arranged a much more, or Russia could have in circumstances arranged a much more congenial relationship with NATO, had it chosen to.

But for, I think, a variety of domestic reasons, Putin wants to use NATO as a way of strengthening his own power domestically, to control his population and to create an external enemy to mobilize against. The other question of whether America's internal weakness also encouraged Putin in recent periods, I would say that that is an open question. I think both the degree of political polarization in the United States, which of course we know the Russians also tampered with in the 2016 election as well as the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan undoubtedly gave Putin a certain degree of reassurance that the United States was not really in the position to act against any strong action. He may have miscalculated there, but I think there was plenty of evidence that seemed to show that the United States was really washing its hands of taking strong military action, but public support wasn't there for it. And that sense, once again, it reminded me a little bit of Stalin's decision to countenance an invasion of Korea in 1950. The United States then was not spending very much on defense. It had withdrawn from South Korea. It had allowed or had not acted as China had fallen. In fact, it was - there were recriminations in the United States about who lost China and Stalin made the calculus that the United States wouldn't do anything about South Korea. He proved to be wrong. In this case, I think Putin's methods in Ukraine also triggered because he undertook such an overwhelming invasion. He triggered a reaction in the United States that he did not expect.

Patrick Ryan [00:43:49] Well, Ambassador John Kornblum is with us today and he asks this of you, Tom. You mentioned the need for a new vocabulary of power. Isn't this one of the major issues, that this is not a Cold War, but what is it? Economic change, threatening the collapse of empire. Even China worries about the outside threat and the openness brought about by digitization. Not to put you on the spot, but the Ambassador who is representing the United States to most of the organizations in Europe, including NATO, would like you to name the name.

Thomas Schwartz [00:44:24] Well, he's a - you know, in all deference to John I respect deeply that. I guess my point here was to be a typical academic and say we need to do something without giving it my own name. After the end of the Cold War, there were a lot of people saying we needed a new national security policy since containment no longer worked. And there were all these people seeking to become the next George Kennan. And I think we probably need someone now. And I think Brands and some of the people at the Johns Hopkins School have been toying with different ways of approaching this, coming up with some ideas about how to characterize policy.

But I will be perfectly honest and say that I feel hopeless in this particular regard of naming. Naming the type of policy needed, I think in this context is still something a bit beyond my own capabilities. I do recognize that one of the things that's really going on and one of the reasons why there is such support for both Ukraine and Taiwan is the very simple view that these are small countries simply want to be left alone and they don't want to be dominated by large powers. They don't want countries taking them over. There must be a relatively simple way to capture that moral imperative allowing countries to define themselves now. Woodrow Wilson said making the world safe for democracy and used the term self-determination that those probably are not ones we can use these days in quite

the same way. But I think that's what we need is something along the lines that would capture a very simple moral imperative of foreign policy, of protecting countries from invasion and aggression, from large powers, dictatorial powers. The Truman Doctrine sought to encapsulate that back in 1947, but quickly got subsumed into this idea of defense against communism. We need something similar to the Truman Doctrine.

Patrick Ryan [00:46:34] Let's talk a little bit about some of the issues that have arisen post invasion of Ukraine there, Americans being held by Moscow. And that's, you know, a relic of the Cold War. We swapped spies at Checkpoint Charlie and you and I talked earlier and your Cold War claims to fame are having been at the Berlin Wall before it became chunks in American museums and having been to the DMZ, where you signed a waiver that you might get shot by the North Koreans, but you were going anyway. Talk a little bit about this tit for tat, taking Americans prisoner in Moscow and then hoping to get release of gunrunners and others who are being held elsewhere lawfully.

Thomas Schwartz [00:47:25] Well, the interesting thing here is that, of course, in the Cold War, the exchanges really did involve around espionage and spying. The Americans seized, even if they were journalists, at least knew something of the risk of covering Russia, even if they were exchanged for Russian spies. What's happening now is product in some ways of the increasing degree with which Americans travel to Russia. Brittney Griner traveled to Russia because she could play basketball there and earn a lot of money. And there were a lot of Americans who have developed economic ties to Russia that were they were nowhere near as extensive as the ties to China, but certainly McDonald's in Moscow, all the other American firms as well were out there. And that presented an opportunity for Russia to grab people and to think about exchanges.

In some ways, though, this reminds me more of what happened in the Middle East with the Iranian hostage crisis and then the ongoing issues in the 1980s over seizure of Americans in the Middle East by terrorist groups to get weapons. And then, of course, leading to the scandal of the Iran-Contra affair. In that sense, I think what we're looking at is, is a defiance of the norms of international relations by countries. We would in the past call rogue countries like Iran, North Korea and others, and Russia has descended into that in its in its current actions in regard to the Americans that's recently seized. And that sense, it has less to do with the Cold War and more perhaps to do with old fashioned piracy, ala the part of the - I'm trying to think of the North African states that seized Americans and the -

Patrick Ryan [00:49:22] Barbary.

Thomas Schwartz [00:49:23] Barbary pirates. Yes, it has more to do with piracy than to Cold War interaction.

Patrick Ryan [00:49:29] Let's talk about the balance of terror, the nuclear threat that was a major feature of the Cold War. And what we see emerging now is really an opaque new Russian policy on the use of nuclear weapons. It's been threatened a couple of times over Ukraine, but it has not been clarified as to whether the threat is a local tactical nuclear weapon employment or a strategic weapons system threat. And, you know, you and I, I don't know if you drove under your table at your desk in school, but I can recall as a younger man being in the North Atlantic on submarines either on ballistic missile submarines looking at targets in the Soviet Union or on attack submarines chasing their ballistic missile submarines in what was really the height of the Cold War tension, the US versus them and the nuclear trigger. Where are we now in the relationship, the nuclear relationship? You know, where the Biden administration came in and renewed START. But

we've seen the intermediate nuclear forces agreement go by the wayside. There's no prospects for new nuclear arms talks. It is a background issue. But in the in the graph of attention and severity of consequences, you know, risk management here, we're in uncharted territory. What do you think?

Thomas Schwartz [00:51:07] We are very uncharted territory. It seems to me that we're not engaged yet in the type of buildup we have in the 1950s where there was just an ongoing sort of adding to the nuclear arsenal there. What refinements are coming now are more in the realm of technology for developing new means of delivery that would be invulnerable. Also we're emphasizing much more now on issues of defense and looking at ways that might stop nuclear attacks.

But nuclear weapons issue between the proliferation with Iran, North Korea having nuclear weapons programs, and that the destabilizing nature of that in the regions, Russia and the United States no longer really talking about nuclear weapons together and China engaging in what seems to be a buildup of its own nuclear force. China always had a fairly minimal nuclear force, now seems to be building up at least. We are in uncharted territory. And I confess that this is both terrifically worrisome, but also very unclear as to where countries are moving in this respect, whether nuclear weapons will become a new means of preventing action taken. I mean, Vladimir Putin, in a sense, has deterred the United States from taking action in Ukraine by, of course, threatening nuclear weapons, or at least this has been - President Biden has said that he's not - one thing that bothers him is he doesn't want to escalate or create a situation where Russia might use nuclear weapons and China, to a certain extent could threaten that if it undertook an invasion of Taiwan. And that would be, of course, I think, a possible corollary of what Putin is doing now in trying to prevent American intervention.

So I think we are in uncharted territory and it's not clear at all. And this is one of the real dangers, I think, coming with the ongoing tensions between the two powers, three powers.

Patrick Ryan [00:53:13] And it's additionally troubling when we see the level of barbarity being employed in Ukraine, the war crimes that are being documented and protested by Ukraine and the Western allies. But we have a point of order from Ambassador Charles Bowers, who knows more about Berlin than I ever might. He says spies were not the, quote, swap at Checkpoint Charlie. Charlie was the easternmost checkpoint that led from the American sector into East Berlin, a.k.a. the Russian sector. The spies were exchanged ... which was a West Berlin, the East Berlin - excuse me, the East Germany border. Thank you, Ambassador Bowers, for correcting my euphemism. I watched too many Tom Hanks movies.

Thomas Schwartz [00:53:58] Yes. Yes.

Patrick Ryan [00:53:59] And Richard Slight asked, Tom, much has been made of not humiliating Russia. Why is that important, thought to be important?

Thomas Schwartz [00:54:10] There is the argument that - and this is an analogy to the Cold War - that one of the big things that you find in the discussions during the Cuban missile crisis is figuring out a way to allow Khrushchev to save face and that this was something President Kennedy was particularly concerned with, that this is, this might be a projection, but the argument being that a desperate leader will undertake desperate actions if they think they will be humiliated and therefore discredited in front of their own people and face retribution. So that - this is the argument. This argument certainly was

part of President Kennedy's argument for his own desire to settle the Cuban missile crisis and avoid military action and give Khrushchev some sense of victory by pledging not to invade Cuba, this type of thing.

And so this has been around as an idea among American leaders in dealing with their Soviet counterparts that you don't want to humiliate your adversary because that will push them into a corner and they'll undertake actions much more desperate. It is controversial to a certain extent because recently the Estonian prime minister spoke at Vanderbilt and she was asked this question about not humiliating Putin. And she really dismissed it immediately by saying, of course, Putin controls the narrative. He controls what the Russian people will hear.

So there should be no question you can't avoid even if you defeat him, he will somehow manage to spin it in the narrative in the Russian media in a way that will avoid that notion of humiliation. So that is the objection to it, but I think American statesmen, perhaps because they are sensitive to how they would be treated if they were humiliated internationally, that voters would vote them out, so to speak, or Congress would impeach. This was something Lyndon Johnson once raised. If he pulled out of Vietnam, would Congress impeach him? And Vietnam fell to communism before the war, before he undertook the commitment. That's something we have often projected on to foreign leaders with different political circumstances. And it may be that we should at least question it a bit.

Patrick Ryan [00:56:28] Sure. Let's get to one more question before we run up to our hour and then I'll ask you for your closing thoughts. But Robert Altschuler asks and taking advantage of your having written Henry Kissinger and American Power, a Political Biography, he'd like you to compare Tony Blinken to Henry Kissinger regarding style, knowledge and competence. I know you've got the Kissinger side of the equation, and I suspect you know enough about Blinken to give us some thoughts on that.

Thomas Schwartz [00:56:59] Well, it's hard - I think it's hard to compare a current Secretary of State who's dealing with a great deal of uncertainty with a Secretary of State whose historical reputation and who enjoyed a particular degree of power and authority that we'll probably never see in a Secretary of State again. Henry Kissinger is really unique in that. And so it's a bit unfair to compare a current Secretary of State who must answer to the president and who has all sorts of other constraints on him to someone who is able to operate almost independently, especially as depicted in my book when he negotiated in the Middle East.

I do think Blinken, to a certain extent is certainly well trained, educated, understands a number of issues. But he is constrained by his relationship to the President and to a President and to a country that's quite divided now. And I think on the whole he has tried to present the United States in the strong positions on Ukraine and on China, but that he is, I think, beholden in a situation in which I think the president is quite cautious and in which the domestic political situation constrains what the United States can do. I don't think - I really don't know that, I don't know Blinken that well or his background that well. But he strikes me as certainly very competent and knowledgeable. But he may - the political circumstances may be particularly difficult for him to navigate.

Patrick Ryan [00:58:39] Okay. What a great conversation we've had. Time to hear your final thoughts on Cold Wars, the big one and the little one. And as we search for a name.

Thomas Schwartz [00:58:52] Well, yes. And I regret that. I regret that I can't be as capable as I should be in John Kornblum's objection is quite well taken. But I do think, I do think we're in a different era of international politics. And we have to avoid simplistic, simplistic analogies to the past where there are - where there are other complications. And so that especially in terms of advocating for policies of either strong actions without a recognition of some of the possible consequences of taking them. I am particularly distressed, as I probably indicated, towards the close of my remarks, to the fact that we seem to be taking very strong commitments and stances in defense of these countries like Taiwan and Ukraine, without necessarily making the necessary expenditures and commitments at home or explaining what these commitments might involve to the American people.

And in that sense, I fear that we will be in a situation where we have overextended ourselves rhetorically toward a defense of countries which will be seen by Russia and China as ultimately empty when they act, that we will not follow through on. What are these very lofty claims that we will defend a country like Taiwan or other countries in Eastern Europe and not really make the preparations necessary to have adequate deterrence of possible Russian or Chinese actions.

Patrick Ryan [01:00:30] Well, we live in interesting and complicated times, and we thank you for helping unravel at least one chunk of what we have to consider as we look at our relationship with Russia going forward. We've been talking with Professor Thomas Schwartz from Vanderbilt University, where he is a distinguished professor of history, focuses on U.S. foreign policy today. We've been talking about the Cold War, but thanks, Professor Schwartz, for being with us today.

Thomas Schwartz [01:00:57] Thank you very much for having me on this program.

Patrick Ryan [01:00:59] And I'm Pat Ryan from Tennessee World Affairs Council. Thank you for joining us again. Please become a member of the World Affairs Council so we can continue these public service broadcasts or make a donation. You can go to TNWAC.org to sign up for future programs in this series. Next week we'll be talking with Ambassador John Kornblum, Professor Marieta Velikova and Dr. Breck Walker. And you can find our other programs and resources on the website. Thanks also to the American Council on Germany, the World Affairs Council of Harrisburg, and the World Affairs Councils of America around the country for being with us today, and our normal, our regular program supporters, the National Area Chamber of Commerce, Belmont University Center for International Business and the University of Tennessee Center for Global Engagement. Thank you all, and thank you for being with us and bringing us some terrific questions today for our guest, Dr. Tom Schwartz. Everyone have a great day and we'll see you next week. Thanks, bye bye.

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