

## TO RUN THE WORLD

What would it feel like *To Run the World*? The Soviet rulers spent the Cold War trying desperately to find out. In this panoramic new history of the conflict that defined the postwar era, Sergey Radchenko provides an unprecedented deep dive into the psychology of the Kremlin's decision-making. He reveals how the Soviet struggle with the United States and China reflected an irreconcilable contradiction between its ambitions as a self-proclaimed superpower and the leader of global revolution. This tension drove Soviet policies from Stalin's postwar scramble for territory to Khrushchev's reckless overseas adventurism and nuclear brinkmanship, Brezhnev's jockeying for influence in the third world, and Gorbachev's failed attempts to reinvent Moscow's claims to greatness. Perennial insecurities, delusions of grandeur, and desire for recognition propelled Moscow on a headlong quest for global power, with dire consequences and painful legacies that continue to shape our world.

Sergey Radchenko is the Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor at the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, based at SAIS-Europe, Bologna. He is a historian of the Cold War, and an expert on Russian and Chinese foreign and security policies. Previous publications include *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy* and *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia*.

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The Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power  
Sergey Radchenko  
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“The historiography of the Cold War was once too narrowly focused on two superpowers. More recently, it has become blurred by overemphasis on minor players. Sergey Radchenko’s *To Run the World* brilliantly reconciles the two literatures. Using hitherto unavailable Russian and Chinese sources, he shows that the Cold War was from the outset a ‘three-body problem,’ with the Soviets seeking an unattainable parity with the United States, while China alternately attracted and repelled the other two. American policymakers in the 1960s and 1970s sought ‘détente’ with the Soviets, believing there could be ‘linkage’ to other issues of mutual interest. This was to underestimate the Soviet imperative to retain leadership of revolutionary forces around the world in a bitter competition with Beijing. This is a model of historical writing: scrupulously researched and elegantly presented, *To Run the World* shows how a volatile interplay of ideological, geopolitical, and psychological forces drove the Cold War on its erratic path.”

Niall Ferguson, Milbank Family Senior Fellow, the Hoover Institution, and author of *Kissinger: 1923–1968: The Idealist*

“A tour de force. Based on a plethora of previously unmined Soviet (and Chinese) sources, *To Run the World* is a thought-provoking, comprehensive narrative of the Soviet Union’s place and aspirations in the global Cold War.”

Kristina Spohr, author of *Post Wall, Post Square: Rebuilding the World after 1989*

“If we are entering a new cold war with China, then we should study the lessons from the last Cold War. Radchenko’s *To Run the World* is the place to start. Drawing on new archival material, insightful analysis, and brilliant writing, Radchenko’s book will instantly become the go-to source for understanding Soviet behavior during the Cold War. This book sets such a high standard that I wonder if any more books on this subject will ever be written.”

Michael McFaul, author of *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin’s Russia*

“Sergey Radchenko has produced what can only be described as an invaluable and ‘magisterial’ book – the fitting culmination of a ten-year odyssey to plumb the archival depths for new insight into the bases of the Soviet Union’s power and global ambitions during the Cold War. Radchenko’s incisive analysis, crisp prose, and vivid descriptions make for pleasurable and rewarding reading. His final observations on the USSR’s craving for ‘greatness before history’ and its leaders’ assertions of the ‘right to exceptionalism,’ help explain why Vladimir Putin decided to invade Ukraine and confront the West in 2022. Putin has the same drivers and motivations as his Soviet forebears.”

Fiona Hill, author of *There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century*

“Enthralling and masterful, *To Run the World* is a tour de force of riveting narrative, fascinating new archival research, fresh analysis and acute portraits of global potentates, that reassesses the big questions of the Cold War from Stalin and Mao to Reagan, Deng, Gorbachev, and on to Putin, and illuminates not only the superpowers but also the global players from Vietnam to Cuba and Angola: magisterial world history at its finest.”

Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *The World: A Family History of Humanity*

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THE KREMLIN'S COLD WAR  
BID FOR GLOBAL POWER

**SERGEY RADCHENKO**



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To Odd Arne Westad  
A scholar, a teacher, a friend

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