

From the *Slavic Review* Editorial Board:

Slavic Review publishes signed letters to the editor by individuals with educational or research merit. Where the letter concerns a publication in *Slavic Review*, the author of the publication will be offered an opportunity to respond. Space limitations dictate that comment regarding a book review should be restricted to one paragraph of no more than 250 words; comment on an article or forum should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. When we receive many letters on a topic, some letters will be published on the *Slavic Review* website with opportunities for further discussion. Letters may be submitted by e-mail, but a signed copy on official letterhead or with a complete return address must follow. The editor reserves the right to refuse to print, or to publish with cuts, letters that contain personal abuse or otherwise fail to meet the standards of debate expected in a scholarly journal.

To the Editor:

Recently, my book, *Strategic Cooperation: Overcoming the Barriers of Global Anarchy*, was reviewed by Dr. Mette Skak (vol. 73, no. 3). Different people read books and understand them in different ways, yet it is extremely important for our field to have scholars that donate their time and energy to critiquing work, as that helps build the discipline and advances scholarship. I appreciate Dr. Skak's effort to critique my book. The most important dispute between me and Dr. Skak lies in the methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative analysis. Despite the fact that this book uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis, it is nevertheless interesting to see the divide that I (and many others in the discipline) have sought to bridge. In the case of my book, I argue that every bilateral relationship has its nuances. Qualitative analysis is important and is used to show the differences in these relationships. Yet, there are many features of individual relationships that pertain to all cases. This ability to generalize is the backbone of good social science research. Power asymmetry and mistrust are ever present in the former Soviet Union, which is what I analyze in this book. Thus, it is important to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to truly understand cooperation given these factors. We cannot limit ourselves to one or the other, as our understanding is then incomplete. Our own methodological biases should not interfere with the goal of advancing our understanding of complex interactions between states.

MICHAEL O. SLOBODCHIKOFF
Troy University

Dr. Skak responds:

Dr. Slobodchikoff cites a methodological divide as the reason why I am skeptical about the insights offered in his monograph on international cooperation in the post-Soviet sphere. His approach of treaty nestedness does have its followers, but I do not feel convinced that this slightly atheoretical and yet liberal-legalist methodology is a fruitful way to expose the inherent drama of the mostly clashing security and economic interests characterizing Russia's relationship to its post-Soviet neighbors. A work along the lines of, say, regional security complex theory, geo-economics, or even offensive realism would probably lead to more powerful conclusions. Given that, I tried to be fair to the author by citing some of the obvious merits in his work.

METTE SKAK
University of Aarhus, Denmark

Slavic Review 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015)