



The Cold War and Third World revolution

Robert P. Hager

Instructional Television, Los Angeles Mission College, Sylmar, CA, 91342, United States



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ABSTRACT

Much of the Cold War took place in the Third World. The three works authored by Gregg A. Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War*; Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order*; and Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, are reviewed here and they provide historical details. A consistent theme that emerges is the importance of ideological factors in driving the events are discussed. It is also clear that the Third World states were not passive objects of pressure from great powers but had agendas of their own. These books provide useful material for theorists of international relations and policy makers.

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1. Introduction

The three works reviewed here provide considerable insight into the Cold War in the Third World. A few comments about this topic are in order here. For one thing, the Cold War in general, and as Best (2012) and Hager (2016) note, especially in Asia, arguably began before the Second World War with the activities of the Communist International (Comintern). Although Gaddis (1987) dedicated a collection of essays to arguing that the Cold War was a period of “Long Peace” since there had been no cataclysmic conflict between the major powers, others, such as Westad (2005), have pointed out that the Cold War was often hot and bloody in the Third World. Since then, there have also been a number of works that have provided a fine discussion of this period in specific regions such as Brands’ (2010) discussion of Latin America. Nevertheless, misconceptions about aspects of the Cold War often persist. One needs to go no further than succeeding editions of a text by Hook and Spanier (2016) that is often assigned in university-level classes on post-World War II U.S. foreign policy. The tension between the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong is portrayed as simply the result of irrational American domestic politics. Indeed, somehow the Sino-Soviet split and the possibility of a beneficial Sino-American relationship were baked into the cake if American policy makers would just let it happen. As far as the Third World countries were concerned, the authors claimed (p. 73) that: “In the bipolar context of the Cold War, the developing countries did not represent independent centers of power but rather represented objects of competition for the two superpowers.” They were simply caught in the “crossfire” of a bipolar Cold War according to this view.

It is curious that such interpretations of the source of Sino-American tensions and the view of the Third World countries as simply passive objects in the Cold War continue to be presented in texts. Chen’s (1994, 2001) works on the PRC’s role in the Cold War have shown that it was a myth that there was any serious chance that Mao’s China was going to become any partner for the United States against the Soviet Union before the early 1970s. The idea that the Third World countries were simply

E-mail address: rhager@ucla.edu.

“objects of competition” and simply caught in the “crossfire” has also been demonstrated to be inaccurate. For example, in the 1980's, there were a number of works such as [Shearman \(1987\)](#) arguing the “autonomous” nature of Cuban foreign policy despite the dependence of Havana for aid from Moscow.

The works reviewed here add to historical knowledge by reminding the readers that the Cold War was not just a bipolar struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the Third World, it involved the People's Republic of China (PRC), first as an ally of Moscow and later as its bitter foe, and also that smaller states pursued Cold War agendas of their own.

2. Two revolutions, two different approaches to the Third World

[Brazinsky \(2017\)](#), an associate professor of history and international affairs at George Washington University, examines the Sino-American rivalry in the Third World, which he sees as driven by a dispute over status. The PRC was trying to avenge China's humiliation at the hands of other powers and seeking its rightful place as a great power; Washington, seeing Beijing as a major rival in the Third World, sought to block this. By the early 1960s, however, China's policies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be aimed as much at Moscow as they were at Washington. [Friedman \(2015\)](#), an associate professor of business administration at Harvard Business School, explains this by examining the fundamental differences between the Russian and Chinese revolutions, though they both proclaimed adherence to Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) originally was a member of the Moscow-directed Communist International. Friedman (p.8) sees the ideological differences in large part arising from the diverse origins of the two revolutions. “The Russian Revolution, directed as it was at the leveling of inequalities and the building of socialism within Russia more than the defeat of foreign enemies, was fundamentally anti-capitalist.” The Chinese Revolution's priority was liberation from the injustices of imperialism. The Russian version of Marxism-Leninism saw imperialism as an enemy and the Chinese version was anticapitalist, but there was a difference in emphasis between the two. Although, the two revolutionary agendas were not necessarily in conflict, out of this difference would emerge the ideological basis for Sino-Soviet competition for global leadership of the Left.

Jeffrey James [Byrnes \(2016\)](#), an associate professor of history at the University of British Columbia, looks at Algeria's struggle for independence and the early years of its post-independence foreign policy until the coup that overthrew the country's first president, Ahmed Ben Bella, in 1965. The title of the work comes from a quote of Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), as the communist movement for the independence of Portuguese Guinea was called; he approvingly described Algiers as the “Mecca of Revolution.” Algeria was the object of American, Soviet, and Chinese attention during the Cold War. However, it pursued an agenda of its own that actively sought to use the East-West conflict. It came to see itself as an actor in the Cold War; it was not a pawn or a passive bystander. Regarding China, Brazinsky traces Mao's hostility to the United States to his disappointment with American President Woodrow Wilson. Like many Chinese activists, he was hoping that Wilson's rhetoric about self-determination would lead to an end to China's humiliation by the great powers. Instead, the Treaty of Versailles awarded the former German concessions in China to Japan in 1919. According to [Brazinsky \(2017, p. 16\)](#), “Mao's disillusionment with Wilson ... led him to more greatly admire the revolution that had been completed two years earlier in Russia with its more radical opposition to colonialism.” After the Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921, its members saw themselves as part of a global movement. China would regain its central role in world politics by serving as a beacon for other countries fighting imperialism. Although the CCP collaborated to some extent with the United States in order to oppose Japan during World War II, by 1945 it came to see Washington as a major obstacle to its final victory. Mao, according to Brazinsky, saw a global dimension to his struggle; communist victory in China would—if one may borrow the term—have a domino effect that would lead to revolutionary victory elsewhere. Soviet dictator Josef Stalin was quite happy to encourage Mao in his ambitions to promote Asian revolution.

After its establishment on October 1, 1949, the PRC saw itself as a model and inspiration for Asian revolution. Mao's decision to enter into the Korean War was not just as a defensive reaction to the entry of American-led United Nations (UN) forces into North Korea; it was also a chance for China to regain its lost status in the world by playing a leading role in the world revolutionary process and enhance the prestige of its military. This effort can be said to be somewhat successful.¹ The CCP leadership also saw Indochina as a kindred revolution that it was obligated to help; China provided weapons and advisers for the Vietnam People's Army as early as April 1950. Chinese political advisers were dispatched to help cadres of the Vietnam Workers Party in governing the portions of Vietnam under communist control. Therefore, contrary to [Hook and Spanier \(2016\)](#), Washington's efforts to contain China were not some gratuitous action caused by American domestic politics; they were in response to a revolutionary state that saw its ambitions served by aiding anti-Western movements throughout the developing world. Accordingly, U.S. officials saw American security interests served by frustrating the PRC's attempt to achieve the status that it sought. The United States withheld diplomatic recognition from the PRC. It renewed support for Chinese Nationalists (Guomindang) on Taiwan. Washington tried to block the PRC from participating in international conferences and tried to discourage noncommunist Asian and African states from pursuing economic and diplomatic relations with PRC. After the death of Stalin in 1953, the communist countries began wooing noncommunist Asian and Middle Eastern states that had been scorned in the 1947–53 period as dependencies of Western imperialism. Brazinsky gives the reader a detailed account of the PRC diplomatic and cultural offensive, which enabled it to come out of the isolation into which its

¹ [Fehrenbach \(1991\)](#) notes that some Nationalist Chinese officers on Taiwan who had fought the CCP much of their adult lives felt emotions “almost like a certain exaltation,” as one of them later put it, that a Western army had been stopped by Chinese in 1951.

earlier militancy had placed it. Nevertheless, tensions were developing in the Sino-Soviet alliance that would come out into the open by 1961. [Chen \(2001\)](#) argues convincingly that much of the split was based on ideological differences; the late 1950s were a time when, according to “realist” logic, relations between the Soviet Union and China should have been harmonious. Under the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviets had given up many of the special privileges Stalin had extracted from the PRC in Manchuria and Xinjiang. Soviet economic aid to China had increased. Soviet and Chinese economic and security interests were complementary. In no small part, the chasm between the two communist giants would emerge over Beijing’s perception that Moscow was too willing to pursue “peaceful coexistence” with the West at the expense of the struggle against “imperialism.”

[Friedman \(2015\)](#) notes that even during this time of continued Sino-Soviet alliance different approaches to the developing countries emerged; they reflected different revolutionary experiences and, as a result, different priorities. The Soviet approach had several aspects. It reflected an emphasis on building “socialism.” Accordingly, Moscow would fund large-scale state-owned economic projects like the Aswan High Dam in Egypt and the Bhilai metallurgical plant in India. The USSR also stressed “peaceful coexistence;” this was in accordance with the line enunciated by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956. The idea was that war with the capitalist world was no longer inevitable due to the might of the “socialist camp” and that the money saved by reduced expenditure on arms would enable it to triumph over the West through “peaceful competition.” The Chinese approach to the developing countries was different. Being more skeptical of any possibility of a transition to “socialism” in the near future, they tended to stress developing agriculture rather than heavy industry. What became the major source of Sino-Soviet discord, however, was foreign policy. Beijing was focused on forging the largest possible “anti-imperialist” alliance. More and more the PRC would come to see “peaceful coexistence” as an excuse for Moscow putting its own selfish interests ahead of the revolutionary struggle. Beijing would bristle at the Soviets for their unwillingness to support China in its border dispute with India. The Chinese would also be more open in their support for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) against France.

3. Revolution in Algeria

[Byrne \(2016\)](#) analyzes the foreign policy evolution of the FLN, which would fight the bloodiest of Africa’s “wars of national liberation” from 1954–62 and then rule independent Algeria. When the FLN began its armed struggle on November 1, 1954, its strategy for gaining power rested on the dual roles of Wilsonian liberal internationalism and the use of Leninist tactics of armed struggle. The Wilsonian approach was used by the FLN diplomats who tried to mobilize support for Algerian independence in such international forums as the UN and at the 1955 Summit of Afro-Asian Heads of State at Bandung, Indonesia. At the same time, FLN cadres actually fighting inside Algeria based their tactics and organizational principles on the writings of V.I. Lenin, Mao Zedong, and Ho Chi Minh. The earlier period of 1954–58 was when the FLN had hopes that it could use the UN and American anti-colonialism to pry the French loose from Algeria. In 1957, the Front used terrorism and general strikes in the Battle of Algiers in its attempt to gain international attention and to bring pressure on France. In the end, the campaign resulted in bloody failure. The diplomatic route was not yielding the hoped for results either. Although the Eisenhower administration was concerned that French unwillingness to come to terms with nationalism was damaging to the West, it was constrained by importance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of the relationship with France. [Wall \(2001\)](#) and [Connelly \(2002\)](#) show that Washington was behaving in a manner consistent with what [Hager and Lake’s \(2000\)](#) theory of “competitive decolonization” would predict; it wished to see the end of French colonialism in North Africa, but broader concerns for American national security meant that it would not push Paris so hard as to disrupt NATO. Therefore, U.S. pressure on the French would never be enough to force them to grant Algerian independence. Byrne sees 1958–59 as the decisive period in both the foreign policy orientation and the domestic evolution of the Algerian revolution. This was in response to a number of developments in 1957 and early 1958 that left the FLN in an increasingly serious position. One was the defeat in the Battle of Algiers. It had become difficult for the Front’s Army of National Liberation (ALN) to move men and supplies into Algeria itself due to French border interdiction efforts. American pressure on France to negotiate with the FLN was not happening. Finally, the return of Charles De Gaulle to power in May 1958 initially brought about a French government even more determined to successfully prosecute the war.

[Byrne \(2016\)](#) argues that this precarious situation led to the FLN’s decision to “join the Cold War;” the Front would now deliberately manipulate superpower rivalry to help it to obtain victory. The adoption of this strategy would be, in part, the result of the circumstances. To a large extent, the new strategy would result from the more radical ideological orientation of the FLN. The new foreign policy brought rewards. Diplomatically, the FLN benefitted; after declaring an independent Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) in December 1958, Indonesia, 12 Arab states, the PRC, North Vietnam, and North Korea extended diplomatic recognitions. The Sino-Soviet rift impacted Algerian developments; since both communist giants were competing for the mantle of leading “anti-imperialism,” the FLN could use the rivalry to compete for assistance from both. Furthermore, the GPRA’s implicit threat of turning increasingly to the communist countries to get aid gave it a lever to pry more support from the West, especially the United States.

The new approach brought major military benefits for the ALN in terms of equipment, training, and advice. Arms shipments arrived from communist countries: the Soviet Union, China, and Czechoslovakia. Delegations of the Army of National Liberation would visit China and North Vietnam in April 1959 and attend seminars on guerrilla strategy from their role models. The ALN officers were especially receptive to Vietnamese advice on the need to mobilize the peasants into the struggle. They were also interested in Vietnamese counsel on the need to neutralize any Algerian political alternative to the

FLN; this was a time when the De Gaulle government was trying to win Muslim political support away from the Front. Inside Algeria, the new strategy contributed to the internal radicalization of the country. Earlier, the FLN had generally avoided clearly enunciating an ideology; the focus had been on drawing in as broad a base of the Algerian Muslim population as possible. After early 1958, however, the Front became radicalized; it was now linking the struggle for independence to a “socialist” economic and social transformation of the country. The FLN’s domestic program now laid great emphasis on mobilizing the peasantry. Refugees from French military operations who fled to FLN camps in Morocco and Tunisia would be recruited into an ALN increasingly uniformed and armed by communist countries. The new recruits would often be indoctrinated by political commissars who were following communist role models. Domestic developments in post-independence Algeria under Ben Bella reflected his view that it was a “pilot state” on the road to a socialist utopia. Even though the Communist Party of Algeria (PCA) was officially banned,² its members often occupied positions in Ben Bella’s government; the president himself often seemed increasingly sympathetic to the PCA. As Friedman (2015, p. 157) notes, Algeria was to be the model for “socialist” states elsewhere. Soviet aid was granted to newly independent Algeria with enthusiasm since, as one Soviet academic observer put it, “**socialist revolution ... has already begun**” (bold in original). China also granted aid. The Sino-Soviet split was important here; Khrushchev admitted in 1964 to the Algerian ambassador to Moscow that Algeria to be key in winning the ideological contest with Beijing.

Ben Bella’s foreign policy reflected what he called “the Third World project.” Algeria was to lead the rest of the Third World. The revolutionary agenda of Ben Bella’s foreign policy was marked by “globalism,” as Byrne (2015, pp.172–175) describes it. Ben Bella saw Algeria as a moral leader in the world. Accordingly, it was obligated to take risks in supporting liberation movements around the world. This was “globalism” in the sense that the Third World as envisioned by Ben Bella was not limited to specific cultures or geographic locations; it could embrace Latin America or even such a European country as Yugoslavia. While the war against France was still on, the FLN and the regime of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro developed a warm affinity for each other as fellow revolutionaries. Ben Bella was personally close to Che Guevara, the Argentine communist who was then a key figure in the Castro regime. Regarding Latin America, Algiers saw events through a “Cuban prism” as Byrnes (2015, p. 252) puts it. Ben Bella’s globalism manifested itself especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, it was much more active there than in the Muslim Arab states geographically and culturally close to Algeria. This globalist orientation does much to explain Algeria’s efforts to “export revolution.” This began even before Algerian independence had been won. As early as 1960, the FLN was using its camps in Morocco, Tunisia, and Mali for training recruits from a number of African countries. It also provided weapons and money to some of these groups. In addition to supporting groups from such colonial territories as the Belgian Congo, the Algerians supported rebels against regimes in already independent states like Niger and Cameroon.

Probably the most prominent example of Algerian support for African revolution was in Congo-Leopoldville (the former Belgian Congo) in 1964 when Ben Bella openly supported the rebel Council of National Liberation (CNL or Simbas, as the rebels were often called) against the regime of Moïse Tshombe. The Algerian president made no secret of his support for the CNL. The Simbas received training and arms from Algeria. As Friedman notes, when the USSR began to publicly back the rebellion against Leopoldville and to supply it with arms, it was doing what Algeria (and also Egypt) were already doing. Ben Bella’s friendship with Castro and Guevara meant that his globalist agenda would extend to Latin America. Algeria wound up supporting guerrillas in Venezuela and Argentina, countries that had no apparent historical or cultural bond to Algeria; their only connection to the latter was that their governments had drawn the ire of Ben Bella’s friend Castro. The Algerian agenda reflected a deep ideological commitment. Some in the West have argued that any problems that revolutionary states had with status quo powers reflected the latter’s inability to “accept the revolution” and that the former merely wished to take constructive measures to benefit their peoples.³ Ben Bella’s regime hardly comported to this image. It involved itself in regions of the world rather remote from Algeria. By 1965, it had alienated itself from a number of Western states, especially the United States, which had been an important economic aid donor. It had also polarized Africa with its policies; a number of moderate African states were opposed to its interventionism. Algiers willingly sacrificed its interest in state-to-state relations with Western and other countries on the altar of the “Third World solidarity.” In other ways as well, Algeria was hardly a passive object caught in a Cold War crossfire. Admittedly, it had become increasingly dependent on Soviet arms and training for its security as a result of its 1963 border conflict with Morocco. However, Algiers opposed Moscow’s efforts to achieve détente with Washington; like other radical states, Algeria feared a superpower deal at the expense of the Third World. This led to a closer relationship between Algiers and Beijing in supporting revolutionary groups in Southern Africa. Algeria viewed the Sino-Soviet tensions of the mid-1960s with dismay; it weakened the front against “imperialism.” The fissures within the communist world posed problems for Algiers. However, the FLN won ideological endorsement from the Soviet Union, China, and Yugoslavia at virtually the same time. As in other African countries, the ruling elite drew in outside powers into the continent’s conflicts. Byrnes well illustrates that although Algeria was not a communist country its radical domestic and foreign policies of the 1960s cannot be understood without reference to the Cold War and the antagonisms within the world communist movement.

² During the war with the French, PCA members were accepted into the FLN, but they were supposed to break with any other party.

³ The fallacies of this type of analysis are discussed in Hager (2018).

4. Moscow's hollow victory

In the end, Moscow would be winning the contest with Beijing for leadership of the revolutionary Left by the early 1970s. Partly this was due to the conscious effort by the Soviets to compete for China's Third World constituency. This was made up of the more radical Third World countries and "national liberation movements." During the Vietnam War, Moscow would become Hanoi's chief backer and would begin the process of winning the Vietnamese communists from their previous close relationship with the Chinese by the late 1960s.⁴

Elsewhere in the Third World in the 1970s, Moscow would place its hopes on "socialist orientation." During the 1960', the Soviets had seen a number of friendly regimes in countries like Mali and Ghana be overthrown or, in places such as Egypt, switch alignment to the West. The new emphasis would be less on trying to establish a "socialist" economic system and more focused on political control. Features such as a vanguard party were to ensure a revolutionary leadership against internal enemies. Earlier works, such as [Alexiev's \(1983\)](#), have discussed much of the details of the switch to supporting "socialist orientation." Additionally, [Friedman \(2015\)](#) argues, there was another motive besides ensuring the survival of friendly regimes; the Soviets were hoping that increased political control would enable them to keep their allies from getting into conflicts like Egypt's disastrous war with Israel in 1967. Another reason for the Soviet ability to win leadership of the revolutionary process was a number of developments in China's foreign policy. Beijing would suffer a number of failures. Despite a number of impressive diplomatic gains in the early 1960s, 1965 would be a year of largely unmitigated disaster. The overthrow of Ben Bella in June of that year led to the cancellation of the planned Second Summit of Afro-Asian Heads of State in Algiers. The PRC was hoping to make diplomatic gains comparable to those that it had made at Bandung in 1955. Events in Indonesia would be a major defeat for the CCP's attempt to lead "anti-imperialism." Under Sukarno, Indonesia had aligned itself with China's militant agenda and had alienated itself from both the United States and the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) was the largest nonruling communist party in the world. Although the details of events are still unclear, the political infighting of 1965–66 would lead to the removal of Sukarno from power by the army and the bloody suppression of the PKI. The PRC would go through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) from 1966–69. Its approach to dealing with other states would be so dogmatic as to alienate erstwhile allies like the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Support for Maoist insurgencies in Southeast Asia alienated China from its neighbors. The purge of the government and the CCP was such that China could hardly conduct a coherent foreign policy. China's emergence from isolation occurred in the context of an increased Soviet military threat and a United States interested in engaging the PRC as a potential partner against the USSR. [Brazinsky](#) notes that the rapprochement with the United States was facilitated by the fact that the new American policy was not based on any perceived necessity to deny the PRC's desire for recognition of status as a great power. He argues that this shift owed a lot to U.S. President Richard M. Nixon's perception of the need to bring China out of isolation and to reach some accommodation with it.⁵ The PRC would drop its role as revolutionary state. By the time when Mao died in 1976, the new leadership under the purged and rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping was already abandoning any attempt to lead the Third World radicalism. The victory over the Chinese for the position of leadership of the revolutionary Left in the Third World would be hollow for Soviets. One theme of [Friedman's \(2015\)](#) later chapters is how the USSR faced a dilemma between being the leader of "anti-imperialism" and détente with the West. Part of the price for being the former was to sacrifice relations with the latter. Moscow's big reward was to obtain a string of impoverished and unstable Third World clients. Unfortunately, [Friedman](#) does not take his analysis a bit further into the 1980s when the USSR would find itself embroiled in regional conflicts on several different continents from Central America to Southern Africa to Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, his point that assuming the burden of leading the "anti-imperialist" struggle was steep for Moscow comes through quite clearly.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, one might offer some criticisms of the works reviewed here. One can find in these works historical matters not clarified. [Brazinsky](#) and [Friedman](#) portray a CCP motivated by anti-imperialism. To a large extent, their argument is convincing. However, this leaves unanswered the question of why Mao was willing to sign what was, as [Gaddis \(1997, 290\)](#) terms it, an "unequal treaty" with Stalin in 1950. About other matters, one might note that other scholars have provided differing assessments on some points. For example, [Brazinsky](#) argues that Mao sought to free the Chinese Communist Party from the Comintern and Stalin. Others, such as [Sheng \(1997\)](#), have argued that Mao essentially followed policy laid down by the Comintern and, after that organization was officially dissolved in 1943, by Stalin personally. [Friedman](#) tends to minimize the impact of the Communist International on the colonial world. Studies of the Comintern's impact on Vietnam like [Khanh \(1986\)](#) would lead one to dispute this generalization. Overall, however, these differing interpretations do not undermine the major arguments of the authors of the works reviewed here. The positive aspects of these works make any criticisms seem rather minor. One is they add considerably to the amount of historical detail about certain aspects of the Cold War. They indicate some issues for further inquiry in international relations theory. Finally, they offer lessons for policy makers in status quo powers.

⁴ Others, such as [Morris \(1999\)](#) have also dated the beginning of Hanoi's shift to alignment in the Sino-Soviet dispute to the late 1960s.

⁵ Nixon began arguing for some form of accommodation with the PRC as early as during the December 1953 meeting of the National Security Council when he was still vice-president.

The key historical point that these works illustrate is how much the Cold War was “geoideological” to borrow the phrase coined by [Gould-Davies \(1999\)](#); it was about what political, social, and economic structures peoples would live under, as much as it was about boundaries and military build-ups. For example, although the Khrushchev-era Soviet optimism that developing countries would be converted to “socialism” now looks almost comic, it is less so when one reads Friedman’s account of Sekou Toure, the first President of Guinea, privately boasting that he was converting Guinea into an Eastern European-style “People’s Democracy.” Throughout the Cold War, there emerged the issue of the often-tense relations between status quo powers⁶ and revolutionary states. Historians of the “Cold War revisionist” school generally blamed Western powers, especially the United States, for these tensions. According to some, like [LaFeber \(1993, 2008\)](#), if revolutionary states aligned with the Soviet Union, it was largely because they had been pushed into it by American actions. However, [MacFarlane’s \(1985\)](#) study of the “internationalism” of the Third World radicals indicated that many of them found more in common with Soviet views of “national liberation” with its commitment to “socialism” and hostility to political pluralism than with American visions of liberal democracy and free market economics. Byrne illustrates how much this was the case with the Algerian FLN. The books reviewed here leave the reader with the clear impression that the ideological tropes of revolutionary states from the USSR to the PRC of Mao to the Algeria of Ben Bella were quite seriously taken by those who uttered them.

Therefore, these works bear on a key theoretical issue in the study of international relations: the importance of ideology in determining actual policies pursued by states. Scholars have disagreed on the impact of ideology on such matters as alliance formation and the causes of the Cold War. “Structural realism” as enunciated by [Waltz \(1979\)](#) argues that a lot of what drives world politics is “polarity,” the number of great powers in the system. Accordingly, the Cold War was caused largely by bipolarity; there were two “poles” of power, the United States and the Soviet Union, after World War II. [Walt’s \(1987\)](#) study of alliance-formation concluded that ideology was not an important factor. Others would find ideology much more important in determining the behavior of states. For example, [Haas \(2012\)](#) makes a case for the importance of ideology in determining the alliance choices. The empirical track record regarding the alliance choices of the revolutionary states discussed in the works reviewed here supports Haas. His work also introduced the concept of “ideological polarity,” which he defines as “the number of prominent ideological groups in any particular system” (italics are in the original). This concept is useful in understanding the Third World’s Cold War. By the early 1960’s, the ideological struggle was not just between Western-style liberal democracy and orthodox Marxism-Leninism; the ideological poles included Maoism and various Third Worldisms. This ideological multipolarity seems to have driven the events described in these works even more than the continuing bipolar structure of power between the United States and the USSR.⁷ There are some lessons for policy-makers in status quo powers. Revolutionary states are likely to pose problems. One issue is what is often referred to as attempts to “export revolution.” [Halliday \(1999\)](#) argued that the effort to promote revolution in other states was often a serious commitment by revolutionary regimes. As [Hager \(2016\)](#) notes in his discussion of works dealing with the early years of Soviet relations with the West, this was the primary dispute between Moscow and the West. This often took the form of support for insurgencies. [Hager and Snyder \(2015\)](#) have documented how Sandinista Nicaragua’s refusal to decisively end its support for the insurgency in El Salvador was what led to its confrontation with Washington. [Brazinsky](#) provides a number of examples of Chinese support for insurgencies in Southeast Asia and Africa.

There is also the issue of the propaganda that revolutionary states engage in. [Brazinsky](#) notes that the PRC’s campaign against the United States was real. [Cooley \(1965, p. 193\)](#), a seasoned American journalist, noted in the 1960’s, “All over Africa [Beijing] is engaged in a propaganda effort on the African continent that is probably unprecedented anywhere, unless perhaps by the Soviet propaganda in Eastern Europe after the Second World War.”

At the same time, status quo states would be wise to avoid heavy-handed responses that are counterproductive. [Brazinsky’s \(2017\)](#) analysis shows that some American efforts to contain the PRC were exactly such. Many Afro-Asian states resented efforts to block diplomatic contacts between them and China. Sometimes in dealing with revolutionary states it might be prudent to follow the advice of [Gaddis \(1981\)](#) and let an adversary contain itself. [Brazinsky \(2017\)](#) provides several examples of how the PRC often undermined its own agenda. Communist China, had managed to sell itself to some Third World audiences in the 1950’s as a model of a country overcoming the legacies of great power imperialism and backwardness. However, the appeal of its domestic policies was undermined by the impact of its repression of the Buddhists in Tibet and the Muslims in Xinjiang. Periods of radicalization in PRC foreign policy often undid the gains made during times of tactical moderation. Sometimes radicalism abroad was linked to domestic Chinese events such as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution would lead to an upturn in Chinese support for insurgencies, even in Burma, which had previously enjoyed good relations with the PRC. This conduct accomplished little except to isolate the Chinese by the time of the border clashes with the Soviets in 1969. Beijing often managed to contain itself. In summation, these well-written works

⁶ This article is using the definition of the status quo power provided by [Morgenthau \(1985, 53\)](#): “[T]he status quo [power is the state] that aims at the maintenance of the distribution of power which exists at a particular moment in history.” The victorious Allied powers after the end of World War I would be examples of such powers.

⁷ States’ involvement in supporting insurgencies happened throughout the Cold War. The ideological commitments of revolutionary states appear to be at least part of the explanation. Byrne notes the passion of the Ben Bella regime in Algeria for supporting revolutionary movements far away from Algeria and with no historical or religious connection to that country. The explanation was Algerian “Third World solidarity.” [Hager \(1995\)](#) discusses how a number of states with no visible historical connection to El Salvador or any apparent “national interest” in that country wound up supporting the Salvadoran rebels in the 1980s. The connecting thread apparently was Marxist-Leninist ideology. In short, ideology explains involvement of states in supporting insurgency.

based on archival research are valuable additions to scholarship on the Cold War in the Third World. They are useful to those with a historical interest in this topic, suggestive of further lines of inquiry to international relations theorists, and a source of insight for policy-makers.

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