

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIII-10

**Lorenz Lüthi.** *Cold Wars: Asia, The Middle East, Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.  
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 INTRODUCTION BY ANDREW PRESTON, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 

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For a conflict that seemed to have as clear-cut an ending as there could be—the West won as the Soviet Union disintegrated and China embraced market-driven capitalism—the Cold War has surprisingly defied easy categorization. In part, of course, that’s because the most straightforward thing about the Cold War—it’s supposedly neat-and-tidy end in 1989-1991—was not what it seemed. This is one of the many original insights peppered throughout Lorenz Lüthi’s magisterial new book, *Cold Wars*, which not only examines the conflict’s global dimensions in forensic detail but also reconceptualizes many of the key problems in the historiography and ultimately reimagines the fundamental nature of the Cold War itself.

Like all great books, *Cold Wars* makes innumerable key interventions, but sitting underneath them all is an easily comprehensible interpretive foundation: there was not *a* Cold War between Moscow and Washington but *many* Cold Wars, principally in (as the subtitle makes clear) Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, that constantly interacted with the U.S.-USSR rivalry as well as each other. The Americans and the Soviets were key actors, but they did not actually determine much of what happened in the Cold War. Lüthi thus asks us to view people and events in the Cold War ‘horizontally,’ in which different regions of the world engaged with and affected one another, “and not only vertically to the great powers” (3). The Cold War shaped but did not always—or even usually—determine what happened in Asia, the Middle East, and even Europe; in turn, what happened in the rest of the world rebounded to change the dynamics of the superpower rivalry and thus the direction of the Cold War overall. States, economies, and movements beyond the United States and the Soviet Union were autonomous agents that were mostly free of superpower control, and it was this sub-systemic autonomy that actually made the Cold War what it was. “It took Moscow and Washington until the late 1980s to understand this,” Lüthi argues (6). Elsewhere he lays the same charge at the feet of generations of Cold War historians.

The five eminent scholars gathered for this roundtable, all with widely diverse interests and specialties, agree that *Cold Wars* is a towering achievement, at once “an impressively detailed book with an encyclopedic scope” (Frank Gerits) yet also a “fast-moving narrative” that is “groundbreaking in its re-conception of the Cold War on different scales” (Artemy Kalinovsky).<sup>1</sup> Ketian Zhang, a political scientist, pays the ultimate scholarly compliment by saying that the “fascinating and refreshing” *Cold Wars* makes a theoretical contribution to disciplines other than history. Lloyd Gardner is not the only reviewer to be impressed by the book’s size (613 pages of text followed by more than 120 additional pages of notes) as well as its analytical power: “this massive (there is no other word for it) book will become a standard reference volume, a go-to source for generations of historians and serious readers of Cold War literature, who will find there information they need as well as a vast set of source notes for added information on practically all areas of the varied Cold Wars.” Valeria Zanier concludes that *Cold Wars* “is a necessary book” that will be required reading for “anyone interested in learning how the world in which we live was made.”

The reviewers highlight Lüthi’s careful attention to detail in each of his main case studies, ranging from familiar regional powers like India to less-studied actors like the Vatican. In particular, Zanier finds Lüthi’s analysis of how the Arab-Israeli conflict fit into the Cold War (and vice versa) to be “powerful,” while Zhang praises his excavation of “China’s intricate and complicated relations” with the Middle East and Africa. Kalinovsky lauds *Cold Wars* with what struck me as one of the more intriguing metaphors I have come across in a roundtable review: “Lüthi’s book also encourages us to see the Cold War not as a structure which determined other conflicts, but rather, seen from the perspective of Amman, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, or even Paris, as a force that, like the moon, sometimes hovers closer, its gravitational pull clearly observed, and other times hangs in the distance, visible but having little influence on events down below.” Unsurprisingly, several of the reviewers make comparisons between Lüthi’s *Cold Wars* and Odd Arne Westad’s monumental account, *The Global Cold War*, which

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<sup>1</sup> Full disclosure: I myself eagerly join this chorus of praise, with an endorsement on the book’s back cover.

pioneered the general approach Lüthi takes.<sup>2</sup> To Gerits, Lüthi does not offer a corrective to Westad so much as a complement, “a vital, long-awaited missing part of Westad’s *Global Cold War*.” I myself think Lüthi’s book has more in common with another of Westad’s conceptually ambitious syntheses, *The Cold War: A World History*, in their similar pluralistic approaches to the very notion of what the Cold War was and in their parallel chronological reframing efforts that render the usual 1945-1989 timeline inadequate and limiting.<sup>3</sup>

Even a work of this scope will leave a few stones unturned, and the reviewers here have spotted many of them even as they also raise further questions. Zanier and Kalinovsky find Lüthi’s approach conventionally top-down, with too much focus on the familiar roster of diplomats and politicians and not enough attention paid to non-state actors, whose treatment, says Kalinovsky, is “usually perfunctory.” The reviewers also call on Lüthi to give more consideration to other regions and phenomena. Gerits would like to have seen more about France, Gardner laments the absence of Latin America, and Zanier wishes there was more on economics, particularly regarding China and India. And while each reviewer applauds Lüthi’s effort to reconceive the Cold War from the singular to the plural, they also, in myriad, subtle ways, ask what happens to the Cold War’s conceptual viability and intellectual cohesion if virtually anything can be crammed into it. Sometimes the reviewers even disagree amongst themselves: Gerits, for example, thinks Lüthi ascribes too much authoritative power to the Cold War’s ideological currents, whereas by contrast Kalinovsky believes Lüthi mistakenly downplays ideology. I will let Lüthi’s learned reply speak for itself, but I am confident that readers will find this roundtable to be a fascinating episode in the latest round of Cold War reconsiderations.

#### Participants:

**Lorenz M. Lüthi** is a Professor of International Relations History at McGill University. He has published widely on the history of the socialist world, China, Vietnam, Non-Alignment, and Europe.

**Andrew Preston** is Professor of American History and a Fellow of Clare College at Cambridge University. His most recent books are, as author, *American Foreign Relations: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2019); and, as co-editor, *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, with Elizabeth Borgwardt and Christopher McKnight Nichols (Oxford University Press, 2021), and *The Cambridge History of America and the World: Volume 3, 1900–1945*, with Brooke L. Blower (Cambridge University Press, 2021). He is currently writing about the idea of national security in American history.

**Lloyd C. Gardner** is Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers University. A Wisconsin Ph.D., he is the author or editor of more than fifteen books on American foreign policy, including *Safe for Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1984), *Approaching Vietnam* (W.W. Norton, 1988), *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Ivan R. Dee, 1995), and *The War on Leakers* (The New Press, 2016). He has been president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Affairs.

**Frank Gerits** is Assistant Professor in the History of International Relations at Utrecht University, a research fellow at the University of the Free State and an external fellow at Shanghai University. He was a postdoctoral fellow at New York University (2015), a National Research Foundation Innovation Postdoctoral Fellow of the International Studies Group at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa (2016) and a Lecturer in Conflict Studies at the University of Amsterdam (2017). He has published in journals such as *Diplomatic History*, *African History* and *Cold War History*.

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<sup>2</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

Together with Matteo Grilli he has co-edited *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects*, to be published with Palgrave Macmillan.

**Artemy M. Kalinovsky** is Professor of Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Studies at Temple University and the Principal Investigator of the ERC funded project *Building a Better Tomorrow: Development Knowledge and Practice in Central Asia and Beyond*. He is the author of *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018) and *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). He has co-edited a number of volumes on Soviet and Cold War history, including *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Post-Colonial World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), with James Mark and Steffi Marung, and *The End of the Cold War and the Third World* (London: Routledge, 2020), with Sergey Radchenko.

**Valeria Zanier**, Ph.D. (Ca' Foscari) is Lecturer in Contemporary Chinese Studies and Director of the BA and the MA Programme in Chinese Studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. In her research, she combines China's modern economic and business history and Europe-China transnational relations. Dr. Zanier has co-edited *Europe and China in the Cold War. Exchanges beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split* (Brill 2018) with M. Schaufelbuhl and M. Wyss; the Special Issue "Circumventing the Cold War: the parallel diplomacy of economic and cultural exchanges between Western Europe and Socialist China in the 1950s and 1960s" with A. Romano, *Modern Asian Studies* 51:1 (2017). She also contributed in: *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s in Global Perspective*, edited by A. Westad and P. Roberts (Palgrave 2017).

Zanier's first monograph *From the Great Experiment to the Harmonious Society: Thirty Years of Economic Reforms to Build a New China* was published in 2011. Her second monograph – soon to come out with a major publishing house – explores the role of business interest associations in post-WWII Europe-China relations. Currently, she is studying the formation of a Chinese business milieu in the two first decades of reforms (1980s – 1990s).

**Ketian Zhang** is an assistant professor of international security in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. Ketian researches rising powers, coercion, economic statecraft, and maritime disputes, with a regional focus on China and East Asia. Part of Ketian's research on the South China Sea has appeared in *International Security*. Her current book project examines when, why, and how China uses coercion when faced with issues of national security, such as territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas, foreign arms sales to Taiwan, and foreign leaders' reception of the Dalai Lama.

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 REVIEW BY LLOYD GARDNER, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, EMERITUS
 

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As Lorenz Lüthi points out, the British writer George Orwell first used the term ‘Cold War’ in 1945 as a prediction about Russian postwar attitudes toward the British Empire, and the existence of the atomic bomb. In the United States, however, it was popularized in a series of newspaper articles by the most eminent of American journalists, Walter Lippmann. In these articles Lippmann critiqued the new Containment Doctrine authored by George Frost Kennan. The articles were reprinted in a small book that same year under the title, *The Cold War*.<sup>4</sup> Lippmann predicted that ‘Containment’ would tether United States foreign policy to the desires of weak allies, and eventually wreak havoc with anything like a sustainable foreign policy. The book went out of print quickly as American policy elites and a Republican-led Congress joined arms with President Harry S. Truman’s vow to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.”<sup>5</sup>

There was no room in the political world of the ‘Truman Doctrine’ for Cassandras like Lippmann. Until Vietnam. In 1972 after seven years of escalation of troops and bombing, the trial of the Chicago Seven, the hardhat/draft-dodger confrontation, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the domestic front was cracking apart behind the Cold War battlefield lines. Lippmann’s book was re-published with an introduction by a new journalist, Ronald Steel, who wrote, “By showing a path not taken at a moment when it might have been pursued, Walter Lippmann’s analysis not only illuminates the past from which we are only now beginning to emerge, but elucidates the consequences of the failure to learn from it.”<sup>6</sup>

The Cold War was far from over when President Richard Nixon signed off on a 1973 peace agreement. Vietnam was not over. But the idea that the Cold War was simply a ‘High Noon’ face down between two atomic gunslingers no longer persuaded very many. Nixon had just visited China, *Communist China*, of all places. The original menacing arm of the Sino-Soviet bloc behind the domino theory thesis, the spur to the decision to send more than half a million U.S. troops to South Vietnam. Still, Lüthi argues, there was some validity to the domino theory, because Communist Vietnamese leaders especially after the death of Ho Chi Minh, envisioned themselves as the forerunners of an Asian ideological offensive. He argues, “In 1971, Hanoi had concluded that Beijing was marching ‘against the world revolutionary process’ when the PRC pursued rapprochement with US imperialism” (160, 522).

In promoting Vietnam to leadership of the Asian Communist drive for supremacy, Lüthi is in an ironic way also underscoring Lippmann’s critique of Containment as Washington practiced it during the Cold War. There was not *one* Cold War but many, as his title *Cold Wars*, posits; some occurring at the same time, some taking for granted the inevitability of a prolonged military struggle, even if the ‘Great Power’ behind them failed the test of endurance. And in this muddle, there were other aspiring nations and leaders who hoped to profit from the competition between the capitals of the Orwellian empires, Egyptian President Gamal Nasser’s ‘Revolutionary Colonels’ being a prime example.

But this massive (there is no other word for it) book will become a standard reference volume, a go-to source for generations of historians and serious readers of Cold War literature, who will find there information they need as well as a vast set of source notes for added information on practically all areas of the varied Cold Wars -- except Latin America. There is some mention of the Cuban missile crisis, but very little on how that confrontation developed. Interestingly, however, Cuba

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, “Truman Doctrine (1947),” 4 November 2021, *Our Documents* Initiative, [https://www.ourdocuments.gov/print\\_friendly.php?flash=false&page=&doc=81&title=Truman+Doctrine+%281947%29](https://www.ourdocuments.gov/print_friendly.php?flash=false&page=&doc=81&title=Truman+Doctrine+%281947%29).

<sup>6</sup> Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War*, With an Essay by George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” Introduction by Ronald Steel (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), xvii.

intersects with Vietnam in a way that might have been worth pursuing. Lüthi suggests that while the leaders of North Vietnam were on a mission not only to conquer the South, but also to pursue revolutionary ends elsewhere, the United States never really had it in mind to upend the Hanoi regime from 1954 onwards. Perhaps that is so, and perhaps we should discount the efforts of Colonel Edward Lansdale to rattle the North after the 1954 Geneva accords, as just that and no more. Certainly, after the French got out, and the ensuing struggle with would-be warlords in the south, there was not a lot of time to waste while consolidating Saigon's power in the South. One wonders a bit about Hanoi's view.

But we need not spend time over Lansdale's dreams of being Vietnam's liberator, to repeat the success he had achieved in the Philippines over guerilla forces, for he had gained a reputation that impressed President John F. Kennedy, who, after the Bay of Pigs, was willing to listen to plans not merely to rattle Prime Minister Fidel Castro in Cuba, but to take him out via an assassination. Lansdale was a link between clandestine (barely) actions in Vietnam and Cuba. In this case one does not have to wonder about Castro's reactions, for it is a major part of the whole story of the missile crisis. He called upon Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev for protection. And the answer became the closest call in the Cold War.<sup>7</sup>

What makes this all the more intriguing is the notion that the history of the Cold War could ever be told as a series of predetermined events, even as the great powers could not 'contain' the world revolutionary process. There are theories of Kennedy's assassination as the operation of a rogue element in Cuban intelligence, acting in retaliation for the Bay of Pigs and the assassination plots in Operation Mongoose. Surely Castro's intelligence knew about some of the plots at least, and control of any clandestine force is always less than perfect.<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning because it relates to contingency in Cold War history that goes along with Lüthi's multi-dimensional efforts to explain such an incredible variety of events. My own feeling is - as hesitant as one is to ask for more -- that the interactions of Cold War leaders might hinge on perceptions about intentions as much as actions. Coming back to Vietnam and Cuba for a moment, it is clear that both Vietnamese revolutionary Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro sought an 'audience' with American leaders. In the former's case, Ho actually did so at least twice, at Versailles in person in 1919, and in 1945 by letter to President Harry Truman.

Lippmann's primary critique of 'Containment' came in a question. Why did Kennan's Mr. X article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," lead to an unworkable policy for dealing with Russia? "It is, I believe, because Mr. X has neglected even to mention the fact that the Soviet Union is the successor of the Russian Empire and that Stalin is not only the heir of Marx and Lenin but of Peter the Great, and the Czars of all the Russians."<sup>9</sup> Ah, the world revolutionary process. Even if throughout World War II Soviet leader Joseph Stalin made cementing Russia's old frontiers at the expense of promoting the world revolution his primary objective, the world revolutionary process was not going to wait, especially as the roaring cataract of colonial 'liberation' swept all before it.

President Franklin Roosevelt had some understanding of what the end of the war portended, and tried to establish a preemptive 'containment' policy starting by tacitly accepting Russia's determination to hold to the frontiers it had regained from Tsarist times as a result of the August 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. (That move, it should be remembered, had divided the Soviet Union from some 'outside' Communist leaders. Stalin eliminated the putative head of such a rival force, Leon Trotsky, by assassination.) And second, Roosevelt twice invited Stalin into his Big Three tent where the great powers would develop plans to manage the process through 'trusteeships,' Indochina being the lead test case. The first time was in 1942

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<sup>7</sup> Cuba might not have been the closest call; we now learn that the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis brought calls in the U.S. military for atomic attacks on China, if Beijing attacked the island, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/22/us/politics/nuclear-war-risk-1958-us-china.html?smid=em-share>. But here, also, Lüthi fills in the background very nicely. Chairman Mao Zedong viewed starting the crisis in the Straits and the Great Leap Forward as a double challenge to the USSR for its wishy-washy response to American policy in the Middle East crisis in Lebanon, and, ironically, to the United States for not pursuing ambassadorial talks over the past three years (127). This again suggests the very malleable concept - 'Cold War.' Were there no other options along the way?

<sup>8</sup> See Philip Shenon, *A Cruel and Shocking Act: The Secret History of the Kennedy Assassination* (New York: Henry Holt, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Lippmann, *Cold War*, 23.

when he talked with Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov about a second front and briefly outlined his thinking about postwar responsibilities of the Big Three, and then a second time in more concrete form at Teheran in his private talks with Stalin about prohibiting the French from returning to Indochina.

Roosevelt's problem in all this thinking about the postwar era pitted the intense pressure of immediate decisions outweighing attention to long-term (in a relative sense) problems. At Yalta in early 1945, to take the most obvious example, Roosevelt was stymied by objections from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who made it plain that he would not countenance the new international peace-keeping organization putting its meddlesome fingers in the affairs of the British Empire. The Prime Minister had already pushed to insure a future British role in all colonial questions in Southeast Asia. The President already knew Churchill's views before Yalta, of course, and he also knew he could not really in the end push the prime minister to see the colonial 'problem' as he saw it, as a dying system that promised nothing but misery for those who ignored the warning signs. Stalin could only watch for opportunities to swing his way in these divisions between the capitalist powers over colonial questions. After Yalta, Roosevelt backed away from challenging Russian frontiers *and* the future of Eastern Europe by striking out any effort to put teeth into the Declaration on Liberated Europe, and from his plan for an international trusteeship for Indochina.

Whatever remained of Roosevelt's hopes and vague plans for dealing with the postwar crises ended, of course, with his death. The notion of a dramatic change in American foreign policy when Harry Truman arrived at the White House to hear about Roosevelt's death is much exaggerated, but in a day or two he heard something else from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Roosevelt's advisor and soon to be Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes. The United States would soon know if it had a weapon that would not only speed the end of the war with Japan, but prove decisive, as Stimson put it, over a tangled weave of issues. It would not be so decisive, of course, but the atomic bomb moved into the space left between Roosevelt's very personal diplomacy and the fears that the United States would fail for a second time to seize the 'Wilsonian moment' and lead the world safely through the looming dangers of making peace in Europe while dealing with nationalist revolutions in the rest of the world, with Communist infiltration a threat, real or perceived. And in some ways wishing would make it so, to simplify the matter of mobilizing the national will to act. In sum, the bomb encouraged the belief that the United States had technological answers to political problems, and it discouraged the art and practice of diplomacy in favor of Trumanesque plain speaking.<sup>10</sup>

To be clear, the change was not to something called 'Atomic Diplomacy,' nor did the possession of the bomb create the situations in which it was *not* used. Instead, it was a lens through which it was possible to see the consequences of not acting in time to 'contain' revolutionary upheavals from becoming either/or matters. It was about perceptions about what was at stake. The bomb did not create the Cold War. Lüthi's book is a corrective to the notion of a simple great power contest, a point others have made, if not at such length and over so much territory, physical and ideological. An interesting aspect of the American debate over building the hydrogen bomb, for example, was former Secretary of State Dean Acheson's argument during later years among fellow policymakers that Russia's acquisition of the atomic bomb in 1949 had made a powerful argument for the Communist system of industrialization and technological progress that could influence political decisions in the newly emerging areas of the world. That a backward economy in 1917 could move forward so swiftly as to stand on an equal footing with the most developed and powerful nations in nuclear research and weapons thirty years later presented a challenge to what capitalist/democratic systems offered. Or so it seemed before the decline and fall of Communism.

During the time the United States decided to up the stakes with the hydrogen bomb, an American ally in the Middle East -- Iran -- became a central focus in the Cold War. "The Soviet-American clash had imposed itself on the Middle East," Lüthi explains, "particularly in the decade from 1964" (493). While that might be so in terms of conflicts going back to the fall of

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<sup>10</sup> See Merle Miller's very pointed, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Berkley Trade Publishing, 1974), as a purposed contrast to Roosevelt's style, and the changed world in which Truman inherited the problems of the postwar era.

the Ottoman Empire, Iran had been the first crisis in the breakdown of the wartime Big Three alliance, the year before the Truman Doctrine simplified Washington's response to complicated situations in a former British sphere of influence. During the war Great Britain and the Soviet Union had occupied Iran in order to insure the transport of supplies to Russia. As the war came to an end the old competition for oil concessions resumed. Moscow felt aggrieved that its interests were not being considered and claimed that a prior agreement with Teheran permitted it to station forces indefinitely to protect order near Russian oil wells in the Caucasus.<sup>11</sup>

That crisis came to an end when Russian troops withdrew and the young Shah received support from British and American advisers. He chafed however that this support had not included Marshall Plan funds for reconstruction, nor was Iran considered for membership in NATO. These arguments continued until an internal threat arose in the form of a new prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who moved to nationalize Iranian oil. Interestingly, the arguments he and his supporters advanced for this proposed remedy to Iran's economic and social ills were akin to the Shah's complaints about the lack of American foreign aid since World War II. Mossadegh even made a tour of the United States in 1951 to make his case in person not unlike -- one might note -- the overtures Ho Chi Minh had made to President Truman six years earlier. In a letter to the president, he wrote, "if abandoned by the United States Iran will have no choice but to turn to the Soviet Union." Meanwhile, word came from Teheran that the Iranians had signed a trade and barter agreement with the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did Mossadegh pose a threat to Anglo-American oil interests, but he extended his 'good-will' tour to Egypt, where he cheered on demands that Great Britain quit Egypt and withdraw its troops from Suez. At the moment, his influence illustrated the need to stuff all challenges into Cold War cosmology. The rest of the story is well-known; using the Russian/Communist 'threat,' Great Britain and the United States dispatched intelligence operatives to remove Mossadegh and restore the Shah to power. From its inception, in other words, Iran played a central role in the secret history of the Cold War, or better put, Cold War worldview of events around the globe.

Lüthi's concluding comments well describe the dynamics of the Bolshevik challenge, the liberating force of World War II in breaking down the old colonial system, the American move to the center of world affairs, and the problems of 'regional' Cold Wars in developing an understanding of how it all ended and what the legacies of the era are, especially what he calls the pretend triumph of neo-liberalism. Finally, the book is a powerful rebuttal to the briefly popular notion that with the end of the Soviet Union and its fragile grasp over its satellites, the end of history had arrived.

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<sup>11</sup> For this and subsequent comments about Iran, see Lloyd C. Gardner, *Three Kings: The Rise of an American Empire in the Middle East after World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 54, 85-134.

<sup>12</sup> Gardner, *Three Kings*, 106.



## REVIEW BY FRANK GERITS, UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

In 2002 Tony Smith already called upon historians to develop a “pericentric framework for the study of the Cold War.”<sup>13</sup> *Cold Wars* actually does that work. It is an impressively detailed book with an encyclopaedic scope. In 24 chapters Lorenz Lüthi lays out a case for shifting the attention of Cold War historians from the superpower confrontation to the “structural change at the regional and national levels” because small and middle powers significantly shaped the course of the Cold War (611). He disagrees with those who think the Global Cold War is losing steam as an explanatory model for twentieth-century international relations and instead argues that distinct “regional Cold Wars emerged in different world regions at different times” (5).

A lot of exciting research in the past years has explored how superpower alliances fused with pre-existing regional entities and political sentiments that predated the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> Lüthi’s analysis expands this research agenda by focusing on “multiple continents” (1). Odd Arne Westad’s *The Global Cold War* famously argued in 2005 that the “dual process of decolonization and Third World radicalization were not in themselves products of the Cold War, they were influenced by it”.<sup>15</sup> Lüthi builds upon that insight by arguing that this actually means that there were multiple Cold Wars. He wants scholars to move away from the notion of a coherent international system, and calls upon historians to pay more attention to “distinctive regional incarnations” of the Cold War (5). The Cold War was invited into Asia and the Middle East because of local conflicts like the Korean War of 1950-53 and the Suez crisis of 1956-57, important turning points in the monograph.

Unlike Westad’s 2017 *The Cold War: A World History*, which temporally stretched the Cold War by locating the origins of the bipolar struggle in the 1890s, *Cold Wars* maintains the conventional starting point of 1914, but further complicates the Cold War’s geographical reach.<sup>16</sup> Not only did superpower interventions perpetuate the “violent conflict” that would have taken place “anyhow,” as Westad contends, but Lüthi further argues that the Cold War’s regional influence was often more ambiguous.<sup>17</sup> In the Middle East, for instance, it was a “source of intra-Arab conflict” and at the same time the Arab league was the main obstacle to the Cold War’s entrance in the region (67). *Cold Wars* should therefore not be read as an iconoclastic new interpretation, but rather as a vital, long-awaited, missing part of Westad’s *Global Cold War*. Westad established the notion that regional powers could turn the Cold War to their advantage, but did not explore the implications of that diplomatic dynamic.<sup>18</sup> This impressive, interesting, much-needed study fills that gap by bringing

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<sup>13</sup> Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 24:4 (2000): 567-591, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0145-2096.00237>.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Jamie Miller’s book on Apartheid South Africa, “Postcolonial statemen did not only redefine Marxism or Capitalism for ‘their own purposes’”. See: Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 396.

<sup>16</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 398.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

together the best scholarship, sources, and histories on the Cold War and in doing so firmly positions Cold War scholarship at the heart of our understanding of twentieth-century international relations.

However, this regionalising of the struggle between Communism and capitalism means that the Cold War becomes a catch-all label for every international event despite the author's claim to heed the "calls for decentering or adopting new approaches" (7). As a result, *Cold Wars* raises a fundamental question. If pre-existing regional developments were often more important drivers of diplomatic decision-making, can we still talk about manifestations of the Cold War or are the events an expression of different processes such as decolonization or technological change (608)?

The 756 pages develop an argument about agency that claims that "regional actors – middle and small alike [...] possessed agency – i.e., the ability to shape their own future through their own actions" (4). However, many historians of the global Cold War have limited the agency of actors in the Global South to harnessing "the dominant international reality of their age, the Cold War, to maximize potential benefits."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Lüthi's argument allows "different levels of agency" and the "capacity to exert influence abroad" depend on the "degree of the individual tie to the global Cold War" (610). In this analysis, the competition to attain the *Ummah*, the global Muslim community, between different pan-Islamist alternatives only becomes internationally significant in relation to the Cold War. While the "various strands of pan-Islamists did not have their roots in the Cold War itself," it was the "developing Cold War alignment with the West" that started to "change Pakistan's perception of its role in international affairs" (313).

This book's definition of agency – despite the ambition to look beyond the Soviet Union and the U.S. – thus remains reactive and still approaches regional actors as people who engaged the Cold War, rather than actors who were able to make and remake a new international system beyond the Cold War. As I have argued elsewhere, however, anticolonial projects such as pan-Africanism or pan-Arabism offered their own distinct routes to modernity and the representatives of these projects were willing to compete with the Cold War superpowers for dominance.<sup>20</sup> *Cold Wars* problematizes the connection between the Cold War and anticolonial ideologies, but still collapses these ideologies into the Cold War. The absence of Africa and Latin America is telling in this respect: only when regions clearly mattered in hard power terms they are part of the international system. It was "primarily these three regions that generated the structural changes which enabled the superpowers to end the global Cold War in the late 1980s" (7-8). The book underplays the significant ideological influence of Latin America on Cold War modernization schemes with dependency theory in the 1950s and 1960s and localized versions of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Africa is not included in *Cold Wars* despite the proxy wars that took place in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s.

The exclusion of these key areas in the Global South highlights a second argument, about the geography of the international system, that runs through the book. Instead of foregrounding the U.S. empire of liberty and the Soviet empire of equality, as Westad did, Lüthi sees the world dominated by "three great powers," the U.S., the USSR and the United Kingdom, who "clashed over their former enemies Germany and Japan" (13). France is excluded from this international system despite being a World War II victor and becoming nuclear power in 1960 when it tested its first atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert of Algeria. This exclusion is particularly striking because Lüthi argues that "the mere possession of nuclear weapons allowed the United Kingdom to play the continued role of a great power in the global Cold War" until 1963 (67). The deciding factor for conferring "great power states" seems to be territory (102). Unlike France, which still held on to its empire in Africa until 1960, the UK controlled large swaths of land in areas that mattered: the Middle East and Asia.

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<sup>19</sup> Robert J McMahon, "Introduction," in *The Cold War in the Third World*, ed. Robert J McMahon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9; Natasa Miskovic, "Introduction," in Natasa Miskovic, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boskovska, eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi - Bandung - Belgrade* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-18.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Gerits, "'When the Bull Elephants Fight': Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–66)," *International History Review* 37:5 (2015): 951-969.

This focus on territory as the key criterion to award big power status encapsulates an interesting third argument about the role of ideology. Ideological projects that stem from a place outside the Global North are categorized by Lüthi as primarily a response to the Cold War. Specifically, Asian-African internationalism, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Islamism are defined as “alternative world visions,” “provoked” by the “imposition of the Global Cold War” despite an acknowledgement that these had “their roots entirely outside the Bolshevik challenge of 1917” (261). However, in the Global South pan-Africanism or pan-Arabism were ranked beside Communism or capitalism and not understood in solely racial terms, but was viewed as alternative development models which held the potential for altering the course of international relations. Participants in the 1955 Bandung Conference—Asian-African Internationalism’s founding moment—were not simply driven by reversing ‘the globalization of the Cold War’ (263). Archival material suggests that the Bandung delegates also wanted to establish a modernisation project that could outperform colonial development schemes.<sup>21</sup> Diplomats in the Global South did not simply use these fora to shelter themselves from the shrill winds of the Cold War. India did not simply agree to the Indonesian plea to call for a conference because it grew “frustrated by the globalization of the Cold War in the wake of the Korean War” (611). These countries, which were on the cusp of independence or already independent, charted their own course in international affairs and had their own understanding of the international system. There is little room for this in a book where the Cold War remains the alpha and the omega of twentieth century international system, despite its regional focus.

My questions about agency, geography, and ideology demonstrate the thought-provoking quality of this multi-country study and should therefore not obscure Lüthi’s achievement. This herculean attempt to bring together a plethora of stories, insights, and connections drawn from a global repository of sources will be incredibly valuable in research projects and teaching for years to come. As teachers we often struggle to convey how multifaceted the Cold War was. As researchers we often have a hard time coming to grips with the many details of a new project. This book meets those needs by presenting all the different Cold War puzzle pieces side by side. Chapters on Vatican Foreign Policy, exposés on non-alignment, and an analysis of Eurocommunism can all be found in one book.

*Cold Wars* makes clear that there were many unexpected connections between events, people, and regions. Lüthi’s argument that the different details of the Cold War are actually the main event, that the Cold War machine cannot be understood as a system but has to be studied by analyzing its many different gears, has broadened the field of Cold War studies in important ways.

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<sup>21</sup> Frank Gerits, “Bandung as the Call for a Better Development Project: US, British, French and Gold Coast Perceptions of the Afro-Asian Conference (1955),” *Cold War History* 16, no. 3 (2016): 255–72.

## REVIEW BY ARTEMY KALINOVSKY, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Reassessments of the Cold War are like wedding anniversaries or high school reunions: they take place every year, but the really important ones appear around significant dates, usually counting from the Cold War's or the USSR's collapse. One of the more contentious debates in the historiography of the Cold War concerns its definition: was the Cold War primarily a super-power contest, with regional conflicts and interventions to be studied primarily as a result of competition between Moscow and Washington? Or were there regional, even local, developments that were affected by that contest but that also transformed it? The more traditional historiography of the Cold War had little to say about anti-imperialist activists, Communist revolutionaries, or, for that matter, smaller European states. But to understand anti-colonial struggles or anti-systemic movements as part of the Cold War carried its own problems which were both conceptual and methodological: conceptual because they threatened to stretch the meaning of the term 'Cold War' beyond any analytical utility, and methodological because they threatened to impose a Cold War heuristics on actors whose conceptions were entirely different.<sup>22</sup> Despite Odd Arne Westad's *Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* and the many localized and regional studies it helped inspire, there have been few attempts to offer a reinterpretation that functions at multiple scales of time and space.<sup>23</sup>

Lorenz Lüthi's *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, and Europe* is probably the most ambitious effort since Westad's *Global Cold War* to resolve these historiographical issues. Lüthi opens *Cold Wars* by recalling that the narrative structure of the book came to him at a performance of Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*. This made me nervous: my own opera tastes tend toward Verdi or Puccini. But Wagner rewards those with patience and the willingness to make the necessary time commitment; the same could be said of this book. In a detailed but fast-moving narrative that spans some 613 pages (supported by 121 pages of notes) Lüthi examines a series of regional developments and conflicts all of which had pre-Cold War roots but were substantially transformed by the Cold War. These include the anti-colonial struggle and its European echoes, Zionism and the Israel/Palestine conflict, the broader divisions and shifting alliances among Arab regimes, and European integration schemes. Without losing site of the superpowers, Lüthi traces developments and regional politics on their own terms, showing how conflicts, like that between Israel and the Palestinians, which had started for reasons having nothing to do with superpower competition, were forever altered by Soviet and U.S. involvement. The more descriptive chapters are also bookended by pithy and helpful analytical summaries. Finally, Lüthi moves nimbly through the different chronologies of the regions and movements he discusses, showing how these sometimes align with traditional Cold War periodizations and sometimes cut across them. Lüthi's detailed explanation of this framing in his introduction (8) allows him to present quite detailed narratives while zooming out to offer the larger picture and tie an analysis of case studies into his larger argument. One could easily imagine using this book for an upper-level undergraduate course, because the way Lüthi presents the narrative and analysis is fruitful not just for learning about what happened, but for showing students how one goes about studying and debating the past.

<sup>22</sup> See Matthew Connelly, "Taking off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence," *The American Historical Review* 105:3 (2000): 739-769; Jeremi Suri, "The Cold War, Decolonization, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections," *Cold War History*, 6:3, (2006): 353-363. More recent entries into this debate include Federico Romero, "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads," *Cold War History* 14:4 (2014): 685-703; Pierre Grosser, "Looking for the Core of the Cold War, and Finding a mirage?," *Cold War History* 15:2 (2015): 245-252; Jeffrey James Byrne, "Reflecting on the Global Turn in International History or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Being a Historian of Nowhere," *Rivista italiana di storia internazionale* 1:1 (2018): 11-42.

<sup>23</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For overviews of recent efforts to understand 'regional' Cold Wars, see, for example, Nathan J. Citino, "The Middle East and the Cold War," *Cold War History* 19:3 (2019): 441-456; Thomas C. Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pettinà, eds. *Latin America and the Global Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.)

*Cold Wars* is based on substantial new research in multiple archives, but its most important contribution is bridging literature from across a number of specializations and reconceptualizing the interplay between regional and local developments and the superpower competition. No book is definitive, but *Cold Wars* at the very least shows, convincingly, that the Cold War *is* a useful lens to study a range of historical developments in the latter half of the twentieth century, provided one is judicious in teasing out the relationships between local developments and the wider conflict. But Lüthi's book also encourages us to see the Cold War not as a structure which determined other conflicts, but rather, seen from the perspective of Amman, Tel-Aviv, Tokyo, or even Paris, as a force that, like the moon, sometimes hovers closer, its gravitational pull clearly observed, and other times hangs in the distance, visible but having little influence on events down below. But the Cold War could also be summoned – as we see when Egyptians leaders like Gamal Nasser or Anwar Sadat tried to use the superpower competition to advance their own (regional) aims.

While groundbreaking in its re-conception of the Cold War on different scales, the book is a fairly conventional study focusing on state actors. We do learn about non-state actors, including Zionists, Palestinian activists, freedom fighters, and student movements, but their treatment is usually perfunctory: they are brought in for contextualization, not really as actors in their own right. We learn little about what non-state actors meant for the superpowers or for international relations more broadly, or how non-state mobilization was impacted by the Cold War. Considering the book's scope and ambitions, however, focusing on states and formal international organizations was probably a sound choice.

More surprising to me was the relatively short shrift given to ideas and ideology – a big difference from Westad's 2005 book, but also an especially surprising choice given how important ideology was to Lüthi's first monograph, *The Sino-Soviet Split*.<sup>24</sup> In that book, Lüthi put the ideological differences between Chairman Mao Zedong's China and the USSR front and center in explaining how the two allies fell out. It's not that ideology doesn't matter in *Cold Wars*, but rather that Lüthi does not discuss ideological differences between and within camps, or consider how those ideologies inspired, or were adapted by, leaders of movements of their supporters. This is true not just for the book's treatment of Communism or liberal democracy but also for nationalism, non-alignment, political Islam and pan-Islamism. The ideas behind the latter, for example, get a brief introduction on pages 308-309, but from there we are mostly guided through the diplomacy of state leaders and religious figures like the Aga Khan as they tried to establish some sense of unity among Muslim states and head off or co-opt challenges from domestic Islamist organizations. We learn that the Pakistani finance minister, Ghulam Mohammed, called for "interlinking...our economies' on the basis of principles prescribed by Islam, i.e., on a 'middle path between democracy and communism'" (312) but not what he imagined those principles to be or how they might be translated into practical alternatives to socialist or capitalist projects of globalization. If ideology was not important, what explains the appeals of these movements at different points in the twentieth century? The appeal of Zionism to European Jews is clear enough, as are the reasons for resistance to Zionism among Palestinians, but what makes a Palestinian resistance fighter choose a socialist or Islamist organization? How did Maoist Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) members end up part of the Islamic Jihad Movement? (496) What dreams and frustrations made the Afghan school-teacher Nur Mohammad Taraki, who we meet when he had already taken power in 1978 (509-510), a Communist? These questions matter because they are still at the heart of debates about what the Cold War was about, but even more broadly about what motivates actors and shapes international relations over longer periods.

That said, we need to be grateful to the author for this book, which not only provides a new way to think about the Cold War, but also shows us how we can study (and write about) regional developments and global processes, recognizing the agency of different actors while also keeping discrepancies in political, military, and economic power firmly in view.

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<sup>24</sup> Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet split: Cold War in the Communist World*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

REVIEW BY VALERIA ZANIER, KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

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In 2005 Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* illustrated how the ideological struggle between Capitalism and Socialism influenced the social and political transformations far away from the developed world and advocated a shift in the research away from the superpowers.<sup>25</sup> A few years later the *Cambridge History of the Cold War* (CHCW) integrated the suggestions for more global topics and diverse approaches, thus setting the tone for the following decade.<sup>26</sup>

Fifteen years after Westad's pivotal book and ten years after the CHCW, some rebalance has taken place. The Soviet Union and United States have left space to secondary actors while an increasing number of works have embraced a global dimension addressing more classical as well as less obvious actors and phenomena. Europe has benefitted from this trend, attracting coherent scholarship on how the systemic confrontation affected, and blended into, the resultant changes in political economy and society.<sup>27</sup> The Cultural Cold War has emerged as a very prolific field, capable of extending a sort of *rétro* fascination to the films, literature, and cultural exchanges of those times as well as pioneering the exploration of specific regions.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the field of Cold War history has flourished into a variety of outcomes and methodological debates. Some have highlighted the risk of over-generalizing the influence of the superpowers' conflict on local realities, while others have claimed that the enlargement of research fields has blurred the boundaries and diluted the very notion of Cold War as bipolar confrontation.<sup>29</sup> Does the Cold War still offer an appealing lens through which to study the formation of the contemporary world? Or has this framework seemingly aged? Has the concept been crystallized so as to take the shape of a historical period?<sup>30</sup> Is the area expertise enough? Or is there still need to integrate more regional views?

These issues all speak to Lorenz Lüthi's latest project. The ambitious purpose of *Cold Wars* is to problematize the validity of the Cold War framework by focusing on regions. As chronology and narratives in the field have mostly been established, the main point is not to chase new facts, but rather to enable different voices to speak at the unison and offer alternative narratives. Should this cause chaos – as it is predictable – the author would have to arrange things in order and weave all red threads coherently together. With this goal in mind, Lüthi set out to analyze the major events of 1945-1989 in three regions selected because of their relevance in the unfolding of the Cold War: Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

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<sup>25</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Melvyn P. Leffner, Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of The Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> A relevant outcome of these improvements is: Angela Romano and Federico Romero, eds., *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s* (London: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> This sample nicely captures the variety: Jadviga Pieper-Mooney, Fabio Lanza, eds., *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Simo Mikkonen, Giles Scott-Smith and Jari Parkkinen, eds., *Entangled East and West. Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> For a wider presentation of the debate, see: Federico Romero, "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads," *Cold War History* 14:4 (2014) (The Cold War in Retrospect: 25 years after its End): 685-703.

<sup>30</sup> Prasenjit Duara, "The Cold War as a Historical Period: an Interpretive Essay," *Journal of Global History* 6:3 (November 2011): 457-480.

The second goal of the book is to fill the regional gap. In a previous collaborative attempt, Lüthi collected more than a dozen research pieces by several scholars over the same three regions.<sup>31</sup> This time he takes the challenging task all upon himself. Most of the book concerns power struggles and armed conflicts, in the most classical tradition of diplomatic history. In an effort to shed light on the various regional complexities, the book examines which of these conflicts were caused by the Cold War (directly or as proxy) and which in fact had their origins in national struggles or in the de-colonization process. Well-known arguments about the involvement of the two main superpowers are kept to the minimum, meaning that the research determines the significance of the bipolar confrontation or of regional motivations and provides the case-by-case arguments. This research-driven approach should result in more nuanced interpretations and innovative arguments.

It is indeed not an easy task, even if it is a necessary one. There is much untapped potential in the integration of international history and regional/area studies. One of the problematic aspects of this difficult combination is the requirement to master multiple regional/area competencies and language skills. Lüthi has already revealed in other works his ability to use several Western languages in addition to Chinese.

### *The structure of the book*

The book consists of seven parts that are subdivided into a total of twenty-four chapters and framed by an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction provides a conceptual and chronological framework by integrating the origins of the Cold War into European imperialism and presenting its evolution alongside de-colonization and independent struggles in the Third World. Part I is dedicated to reassessing the role of American and Soviet superpowers while concurrently placing Britain as a firm reference point as a World War II winner as well as a relevant actor in de-colonization. British relations with the Arab world are already anticipated in this early section. Part II is dedicated to the Asian region and contains three chapters respectively dedicated to China, Vietnam and India; part III is dedicated to the Middle East. Part IV addresses the non-aligned movements and the national movements; part V tackles the European region encompassing both Western and Eastern countries; part VI devotes particular attention to the German question, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Vatican; and part VII brings to conclusion the regional in-depth analysis by presenting a final account of the conflicts which characterized the three areas. Cross-regional and intra-regional narratives also surface in other sections, making the narrative more dynamic.

### *Asia*

Vietnam is a well-chosen example to monitor de-colonization and independence struggles in Indochina as well as the progress from Western-led wars to the locally originated expansionist urge towards Cambodia. Although the Vietnam War has received a great deal of scholarly attention, the placement of the event in a global context has not.<sup>32</sup> The book's successful narration of the Vietnam War and the search for supremacy over South-East Asia of the 1970s-1980s nicely fit into a longer-term depiction of the Indochinese conflict originating in the partially inconclusive Geneva Conference of 1954. It proves also constructive to present the People's Republic of China (PRC) – Vietnam rapport as a comparative case to other Socialist alliances during the Cold War.

Lüthi contends that India, regardless of its choice to not align, was in fact affected by the Cold War and found itself in juxtaposition or in alliance with either one of the ideological camps on several issues (recurring conflicts with China; the search for the leadership of the non-aligned). India preserved its independence, but was not able to take full advantage of its

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<sup>31</sup> Lorenz M. Lüthi, ed., *The Regional Cold Wars in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East: Crucial Periods and Turning Points* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> For an example of new research: Martin Grossheim, "The East German Stasi' and Vietnam: A Contribution to an Entangled History of the Cold War," *The International History Review* 43:1 (2021): 136-152.

position. The account is well documented and explained, though it could have benefitted from addressing the country's choices in economic development. An interesting suggestion comes from David Engerman's book.<sup>33</sup> Though being the focus of American and Soviet aid competition, Indian leaders were not able to use the superpowers for their benefit, and instead eroded India's power.

The section on China is one of the best achievements of the book. In the past decade Chinese scholars and area experts have progressively lost interest in China's international history during the Mao era because of the difficulty of consulting official sources.<sup>34</sup> This has led on the one hand, to a scarcer presence of China in diplomatic history, and on the other hand, to the flourishing of more creative ways to incorporate the Chinese perspective. Examples of this approach are represented by delving into non-Chinese language sources<sup>35</sup> or by using grassroots sources and focusing on micro-history.<sup>36</sup> Lüthi is but one of the few Western historians who have been made extensive use of the Chinese archives – at least when the situation allowed. Drawing on a vast selection of sources, the author discerningly complements the notion that Maoist ideology is key to understanding China's transformation from the object of Western imperialism into a new diplomatic and military player.<sup>37</sup> The influence of radical thinking in foreign policy is put into perspective, while the strategies of the China-India and China-Vietnam conflicts are examined from a close angle. The case of China's nuclear program offers a sound basis for evaluating the PRC's maturity in international relations already in the 1970s. The book also points at Chinese leadership's mixed feelings about the lull following President Richard Nixon's thaw – an argument that has never been thoroughly discussed in PRC official history.

Finally, when assessing Asia-Europe cross-regional relations, Lüthi advances the argument that the Chinese government had more choice at hand rather than being compelled to strike an alliance with the United States in the 1970s. In particular, the author points to the fascination with the European Community project, even if the book does not delve into it.<sup>38</sup> Overall,

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<sup>33</sup> David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.)

<sup>34</sup> Arunabh Ghosh and Sören Urbansky, "Editorial Introduction – China from Without: Doing PRC History in Foreign Archives," *The PRC History Review* 2:3 (June 2017): 1-26; Charles Kraus, "Researching the History of the People's Republic of China," *Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper Series, No. 79 (April 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2009); Shen Zhihua, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s*, trans. by Neil Silver (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> See Micheal Schoenhals, *Spying for the People: Mao's Secret Agents, 1949-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jeremy Brown, *City Versus Countryside in Mao's China. Negotiating the Divide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). A refreshing approach to Chinese sources is offered in: Covell F. Meyskens, *Mao's Third Front. The Militarization of Cold War China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Key monographs are: Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Zhang Shuguang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949 – 1991* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Learning to One Side: China and its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011); Yang Kuisong, *Revolution in the Intermediate Zone: The Evolution of the Strategies of the Chinese Revolution Against the International Background* (Taiyuan: Shanxi People's Publishing House, 1992); Xia Yafeng, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S. – China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Recent works have uncovered the importance of Chinese relations with both East and West Europe: Martin Albers, *Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969-1982: The European Dimension of China's Great Transition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Angela Romano and Valeria Zanier, eds., Special Issue "Circumventing the Cold War: The Parallel Diplomacy of Economic and Cultural Exchanges between Western Europe and Socialist China in the 1950s and 1960s," *Modern Asian*



the Chinese case is strong and compelling, though there is little integration with the evolution of the global economy in the 1970s-1980s. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's fascination with Deng Xiaoping's de-collectivization in the countryside to welcome privately-led industrial development, though a promising topic, is not expanded here.

### *Europe*

Due to the absence of 'active' conflicts, Europe is the only region in which the political and military focus shares space with economic change. The initial section briefly presents the post-war reconstruction (perhaps too briefly in comparison with the complexity and the number of actors). The author's choice to focus on divided and weakened Germany appears to be somewhat arbitrary at first, though it becomes more convincing in Part VI. Here, the analysis of the triangle composed by the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and Poland as a crucial nexus to observe the rearrangement of long-term enmities bringing to the birth of a new united Europe.

Chapter 22 also suggests that the economic prowess of the West was not necessarily a loaded gun from the beginning, but it actually emerged from a more complex restructuring of the European economy which went through state-led reconstruction, crisis, and eventually the embrace of Neoliberalism in the 1980s. The focus on the Vatican and especially on Pope John Paul II's role in the opening up to Socialist countries in Europe is a very welcome addition which integrates social and cultural motivations to the political and economic rationale of East-West reconciliation.

### *The Middle East*

Part III, which examines the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestine question is powerful. The great added value here is that Lüthi evokes the complex intra-regional and extra-regional relations. In Chapter 10 the narrative passes from the encroachment of the Cold War into the conflict and therefore the involvement of the two superpowers to the analysis of the PRC and North Vietnam. The two Communist countries emerged as an inspiration due to their roles in national liberation conflicts, but here they also are realistically presented as providers of arms and military expertise. In the case of China, the book's argument is extremely complete as it also includes the capacity of weighing pros and cons of the alliance with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Chapter 20 definitely exposes the myopia of the West and of the Soviet Union in thinking that the Middle East conflicts could be cured by using Cold War medicine. In fact, the Islamic world rejected the validity of the bipolar paradigm by siding with opposite forces in several conflicts (519).

In order to cover this vast topic, much synthesis is needed and Lüthi succeeds in providing it. While navigating through myriad events, the book is still engaging for readers in that it captures events and allows them to grasp answers to complex situation which still lingers without a solution. From the perspective of a contemporary European, this part is crucial to understanding not only the growth of Islamic terrorism, but also to grasp at least partially the origins of the huge human migrations that currently cross the Mediterranean Sea from Syria and Afghanistan.

### *Main Importance of the Book*

The novelty of Lüthi's contribution lies in its emphasis on regional blocks and its elevation of them to the role of protagonists in an exhaustive and convincing manner. The decision to devote preferential attention to regional spaces is wise. The book coherently puts the Cold War narrative into perspective, thus making for a balanced complement to national histories and acting as a balm against ethno-centric led interpretations. While the selection of cases convincingly reasserts the initial proposition that not all conflicts were generated by the juxtaposition of the two fronts, the book also

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*Studies* 51:1 (2017); Marina Janick Schaufelbuehl, Marco Wyss, and Valeria Zanier, eds., *Europe and China in the Cold War. Exchanges beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split* (Leiden: Brill 2018).

crucially highlights the synchronicity of several events (for example, the almost contemporary beginning of the war in Afghanistan, the Olympic games in Moscow, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the Iran-Iraq War).

The concluding part of the volume (Part VII) presents a nuanced reassessment of the end of the Cold War, by recalibrating the victory of liberal capitalism.<sup>39</sup> America's easy triumph in the Cold War was in fact possible because the Soviet Union ran out of steam and abandoned the race. The end of the global Cold War is first discussed in the pages dedicated to the Asian region in early-mid 1980s. As a consequence, 1989 clearly emerges as a Eurocentric milestone, thus questioning the validity of this date at the global level. The Asian region bears the responsibility of ending the global Cold War in the mid-1980s while putting the year 1989 into perspective. Indeed, this milestone seems to work only as a Eurocentric date.

Finally, the book deserves great praise for having positioned China firmly into the regional and cross-regional entanglements. China may have been a middle power during the Cold War, but it is turning into a great power under our eyes. It is high time that this fact be acknowledged more widely in scholarly research. In the field of history, there is a need to better integrate original Chinese sources, and to devote more attention to the process of Chinese state-building as well as to Chinese views on economic development and international relations.

#### *Discussion Points*

First, such a hefty number of pages (700) is potentially intimidating. Nevertheless, Lüthi's grip on the Cold War's ideological, geo-political and military struggle is solid and the reading proceeds mostly smoothly. The relevant national and regional narratives have space to emerge and to (figuratively) take the lead though the complex chronology of the Cold War does not always constructively connect the regions.

A second point regards the regional selection since a monograph requests a certain grade of cohesion. While each area is equally the product of serious research, the choice of the several in-depth sections retains a certain arbitrariness. For example, the section reserved to non-aligned movements ably complement the political narrative of the three regions, but it adds many more voices and complexity. It would have been preferable to have this issue intertwined with each regional section.

Closely interrelated with this topic is the question as to whether regional in-depth analysis can be consistently achieved with a non-homogeneous access to sources. While the integration of area studies and international history is masterly achieved in the sections on Germany, Britain, China, India (which rely upon a thorough use of primary sources), the case of Europe involves a plurality of actors, which posits problems. The consultation of British and German archives cannot but present only limited views. Since the European Community coherently emerged from a collaborative project which also involved France, Italy, and Benelux, an integration of documents from the Archives of the European Union and from the other founding members would have provided a more complete contextualization.

The third point concerns methods. Though it is a legitimate choice of the author to present history from the point of view of prime ministers, presidents, and leaders of political movements, it would have been stimulating to reflect on potential alternative methodological choices to interpret regional realities. Integrating non-governmental actors from civil society, business, or the cultural milieu would have strengthened the innovative approach of the book.

These observations do not change the positive judgement on the work. This is a necessary book, one which is solid, well documented and far reaching. It is to be recommended to expert scholars, as well as to students and to everyone interested in learning how the world in which we live was made.

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<sup>39</sup> Odd Arne Westad, "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century," in Melvyn P. Leffner, Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of The Cold War*, 1-19.

REVIEW BY KETIAN ZHANG, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

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Lorenz Lüthi's *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* offers a fascinating and refreshing account of the Cold War. Conventional wisdom focuses on the Cold War in Europe, viewing it through the lens of the Soviet–American rivalry and rendering the rest of the world “generally secondary to the main story of Soviet–American conflict over the continent of Europe” (1). Lüthi, however, argues that “events in several world regions significantly affected structural change, and thus critically shaped the course of the global Cold War itself” (1). For Lüthi, structural changes at the regional and national levels are equally, if not more important, than those of the superpowers. In short, different regions of the world are interconnected with one another, and smaller powers were also crucial in the bipolar rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Lüthi's *Cold Wars* is as interesting as it is illuminating, both from the political science and historical perspectives. As a political scientist focusing on international security, my comments will zoom in on the theoretical and empirical aspects of Lüthi's *Cold Wars*.

First, Lüthi contributes to the burgeoning literature in international relations on the role of smaller states. The conventional literature, especially classical works on structural realism, focuses on great powers.<sup>40</sup> Lüthi, however, argues that smaller states play crucial roles in shaping the course of the Cold War, too. From Lüthi's perspective, the Cold War is not just a bipolar competition between two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States. Rather, Lüthi's account is an alternative history of the Cold War in which smaller powers came to life. In this version of the Cold War, smaller powers had agency and were not merely proxies for the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Lüthi analyzes three forces in detail and demonstrates that there was so much more beyond a Euro-centric historiography of the Cold War. For example, the Asian–African Internationalism “emerged in the late 1940s as an early reaction to the unfolding post-war world, although it focused primarily on overcoming imperialism and colonialism” (263). Non-Alignment was very much alive during the Cold War, “while attempting to stay formally out of it as a third force” (263). Various strands of pan-Islamism “sought alternatives to the Cold War, and even worked to transcend it” (263).

One sub-group of the three forces, the Arab–Asian Bloc in the United Nations, is worth mentioning because of its involvement in the Korean War. The bloc consisted of seven Arab League members (Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen) and six Asian nations (Afghanistan, Burma, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines), serving a mediatory role during negotiations in the Korean War. For instance, Lüthi documents evidence that “[w]hile a Chinese delegation traveled from Beijing to New York via Moscow, Prague, and London over the period of November 15–24, [1950], Security Council member India blocked further decisions on Korea so that the Chinese delegation could receive an unprejudiced hearing” (273). “On December 10–11, [1950], the Arab–Asian bloc met to discuss a ceasefire appeal supposed to prevent even harsher UN actions against non-member PRC” and its proposal for a negotiated end to the Korea War was adopted by the General Assembly, which was opposed by the so-called ‘Soviet bloc’ in the United Nations (274). For domestic political reasons, China did not accept this proposal.<sup>41</sup> But Lüthi's evidence indicates that had China accepted the proposal, the course of the Cold War, and even East Asian security in the post-Cold War world, could have been changed. The fact that the Arab-Asian bloc succeeded in countering the Soviet bloc at the UN alone suggests the power of

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> For more, see Andrew Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

smaller states. Lüthi's historiography is in line with more recent works by political scientists on how smaller powers could manipulate great powers.<sup>42</sup>

Second, Lüthi's *Cold Wars* goes beyond structural realism and emphasizes the importance of domestic politics on international security, especially the domestic politics of smaller powers on the trajectory of the Cold War. For example, Chairman Mao Zedong used the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis to "produce a domestic atmosphere conducive to the launching of his utopian socio-economic development project for China" (127). Mao also planned to use the domestic Great Leap Forward to "assume leadership in the Socialist Camp" (127), which partially contributed to the Sino-Soviet split, which in turn created an opportunity for the United States to balance against the Soviet Union with China.<sup>43</sup> Lüthi's research complements political scientists' work on the domestic politics in China and the United States and how these domestic dynamics shaped key events during the Cold War, including the Korean War.<sup>44</sup>

With regard to empirical contributions, this book, with its impressive historiography, demonstrates the interconnectedness of the world, even in a bipolar international system that was separated by the socialist and capitalist camps. In Lüthi's account, small and great powers alike, as well as different regions of the world, were interconnected. To Lüthi, the historiography of the Cold War should never be focused on one country or one region of the world, be it U.S. Cold War strategy, Soviet grand strategy, and Chinese foreign policy. For example, while the majority of China's international relations or foreign policy during the Cold War focused on U.S.-China relations or Sino-Soviet interactions, Lüthi delves deeply into China's relations with the Middle East, African, East and South Asian countries, demonstrating that Cold War historiography goes beyond great and major powers. China's intricate and complicated relations with Arab countries and Israel is one case in point (125).

Finally, Lüthi emphasizes the importance of being an area specialist. The book is a laudable push against the notion that only generalists, be they historian or political scientists, provide valuable contributions to the field of history and international relations. As Lüthi demonstrates, one cannot understand the entirety of the Cold War without analyzing the domestic politics and foreign policy of smaller powers, most of which fall outside of the knowledge base of generalists focusing on U.S. foreign policy. *Cold Wars* is a perfect example of how one can combine theory and area specialty, both of which are crucial for academic and policy implications.

In short, Lüthi's *Cold Wars* is a highly recommended historiography of the Cold War that has theoretical implications on the power of smaller states and the relevance of domestic politics. Its richness in the use of primary resources on different regions of the world makes it an important read for historians, political scientists, and policymakers alike.

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<sup>42</sup> For instance, Mayumi Fukushima, "Exploitative Friendship: Manipulating Asymmetric Alliance," Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> For the Sino-Soviet split, see Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

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 RESPONSE BY LORENZ M. LÜTHI, MCGILL UNIVERSITY
 

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I am very grateful to Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable, and to Lloyd Gardner, Frank Gerits, Artemy Kalinovsky, Valeria Zanier, and Ketian Zhang for writing such critical but fair reviews. I also appreciate Andrew Preston's thoughtful introduction. I am fortunate that such generous colleagues in the fields of U.S. foreign relations, international security, the Global South, and Soviet and Chinese history engaged with my book in such a constructive manner.

*Cold Wars* has occupied me for fifteen years in terms of research, reading, and writing. As the book reached its final form and then went into production two years ago, I occasionally caught myself wondering how readers would react. As with all scholarly works, my book, too, is merely a snapshot of its author's thinking at the time just before publication. And I freely admit that I have not thought through every single implication of the book during my long work on it. As time progresses since its publication, I also see some loose ends dangling here and there.

I conceived the book as a series of historiographical provocations, designed to spark scholarly reflection and maybe even new debates. I particularly wanted to push the superpowers, which are so dominant in Cold War historiography, into the background and instead focus on medium and smaller powers. Accordingly, I take the critical reviews, which this roundtable generated, as a collective call for future research on multiple issues. I anticipated some of the criticism, but I also marvel at those aspects which other scholars take from my book but which I did not see myself at the time of writing. All of this is such a wonderful testimony to the dynamism and vitality of the field of international relations history, and of course to its bright future.

The reviews—unexpectedly to me—make the case that Cold War history is not on its last leg. For years, I was convinced that this field was exploding like a supernova, rendering it unsurveyable even to its practitioners and ultimately letting it fade into a dark void after a final colorful afterglow. Hence, I planned my book as an extended memorial lecture to Cold War studies, which is why I aimed so strenuously at undermining its long-held paradigmatic position in international relations history of the twentieth century and at subverting its Eurocentric focus and conventional periodization. I take it as an unexpected compliment (or maybe just a refusal to take the bait of my provocations) that most of the reviewers see my book as an overdue corrective to the past superpower focus and Eurocentrism of the field that will help to revitalise Cold War studies.

Even if some of the reviewers prise the geographic and thematic range of *Cold Wars*, I did not intend to write the book as an encyclopedia, since this would have merely meant updating O. Arne Westad's monumental *The Global Cold War*.<sup>45</sup> My book instead is an argument about *structural change* in international affairs and *mutual influences* within world regions and across continental divides, and how both affected the *nature of the global system* over time. This explains why some world regions are not included, and why it appears that I portray some developments in the book merely as responses to the global Cold War. But it also clarifies why I included topics that have attracted little attention in the field of Cold War studies—the role of non-European organizations and movements (the Arab League, Asian-African Internationalism, the Non-Aligned), religions (Catholicism and Islam), and economics (European integration in West and East).

For a while, I toyed with the idea of inserting an additional three-chapter part on Latin America, Cuba, and Africa, which would have required additional years of research in fields with which I am still less familiar. Ultimately, I decided against their inclusion—a choice welcomed by my editor, whose concerns about overall length were always on my mind. These days, one-thousand-page books rarely make it to the printing press. Coming from the field of international relations—as opposed to U.S. foreign policy or Latin American studies—I see the Caribbean, Central and South America as a region standing mostly outside of the global or systematic Cold War. Of course, Cuba and Chile are glaring counter examples, but the vast majority of the region's internal conflicts—including those between the right and the left—are deeply rooted in the

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<sup>45</sup> O. Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

nineteenth century, even to a much greater degree than in the Middle East, which is a region central to my book. And despite Cuba's and China's interference in sub-Saharan Africa after the early 1960s, I decided not to cover this part of the world, mainly because of my interest in mutual influences among different world regions. Given that I was interested in feedback loops, I could not see how developments in Africa interacted in a similar manner with developments in Asia or the Middle East. Of course, there is always a chance for an enlarged second edition including Latin America, Cuba, and Africa. Or maybe a younger colleague will pick up the challenge and write the next global history of the Cold War.

Some reviewers argue that *Cold Wars* portrays virtually all developments—even Pan-Islamism—as mere responses to the global Cold War, and note that the book's analysis focuses mostly on conventional actors, i.e., states. These points parallel criticism raised elsewhere that for a book claiming to emphasize structural change, *Cold Wars* focuses on a surprisingly small cast of mostly male politicians. All history books are massive reductions of the complex past; all authors ultimately choose the order, which they impose on earlier periods to make them legible to the audience. Since I designed the book for both specialist and non-specialist readers, I thought long and hard about organization, narrative, and prose. How would I transform the multidimensionality of my argument into a unidirectional narrative, where each chapter builds on the previous one? How could I avoid confusing the reader with an excess of names or interconnections? Luckily, the narrative constraints of unidirectionality lent themselves to my goal of undermining the Eurocentrism of the past Cold War historiography by starting with Asia and the Middle East, which was one of the book's primary goals. But they also required from me to reduce complexity to keep the reader engaged. This not only meant lowering the number of names that populate the narrative (which makes the book appear as a 'great man' history), but also led to the impression that many of the developments which I try to include as independent narratives may now appear as mere reactions to the global Cold War. My original goal always was at a minimum to portray alternative narratives as equals to the Cold War paradigm.

What do I take from the criticism raised for my own agenda of future research? First, any serious attempt to decenter the historiography of international relations requires the continued exploration of interconnections between different, particularly non-European, world regions—including Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa—outside of the superpower paradigm.<sup>46</sup> Many of the conflicts in the Global South have deep roots in various forms of European and non-European imperialism predating World War I. The Cold War merely exacerbated or prolonged many of them, but it did not cause most. Second, the greater inclusion of non-state actors and their ideologies, be they international movements like the women's and peace movements, regional organizations or associations in the Global South, or sub-state actors and even domestic politics, will help us to clarify structural change across time. And third, this kind of inclusion will help us to rethink periodization. By design, I left the precise meaning of the term 'Cold War' vague in the book, because this allowed me to cast the net of inquiry much wider than previous interpretations have. Questioning periodization needs to go hand in hand with including large-scale, non-Cold War narratives into our understanding of international relations in the twentieth century. The Cold War might not disappear as an explanatory tool in future scholarship, but it may become just one of several equivalent instruments that help us explore the recent past at the global level.

Again, thank you to all the reviewers and to Tom Maddux for the time spent during the pandemic on such a long book.

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<sup>46</sup> Two months after the publication of *Cold Wars*, a book addressing this issue was published: Thomas C. Field Jr., Stella Krepp, Vanni Pettinà, eds., *Latin America and the Global Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).