

Westad, Odd Arne: *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007. ISBN: 0521853648; 498 S.

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Before even opening the front cover it is clear that Odd Arne Westad has set high ambitions for his book *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. This is because the word „global“ immediately expands the scope of Westad's research to include much more than the traditional Soviet Union-United States, or capitalism-communism dichotomies, which are so often the focus of Cold War histories. Westad, Director of the Cold War Studies Centre at the London School of Economics, instead aims to break the boundaries of classical thought in favor of a more inclusive and extensive survey of worldly events that together shape the Cold War. His research is indeed impressive. In addition to using a varied host of secondary sources and published personal accounts, Westad also incorporates official archived documents from a number of nations including the United States, Soviet Union, Serbia and Montenegro and South Africa.

Westad openly declares in the introduction that his Bancroft Prize winning book „is ... about the creation of today's world“ (p. 1). He sets out to explore U.S. and Soviet involvement in Third World countries, focusing particularly on the effect of intervention on colonial nations (p. 1). It must be mentioned that Westad defines the Third World as „former colonial or semicolonial countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that were subject to European [or American or Russian] economic and political domination“ (p. 3). That being said, the bulk of Westad's work thus deals with the southern hemisphere and Southeast Asia.

The Global Cold War has a very unique structure, due mostly to its wide focus. Since the book does not aim to tackle one issue but rather seeks to explain the way in which today's world was shaped, Westad chooses to divide his book by topic as opposed to chronologically. The first two chapters outline United States' and Soviet ideologies. The-

se chapters lay the foundation on which the rest of the book relies. Westad does a very good job making clear the conceptions and beliefs motivating the two super powers' actions around the globe throughout the Cold War.

In order to define the United States' ideological reasoning for intervention, Westad searches as far back as 1785. His analysis of colonial and 19th century America is cursory, but it does help the reader to understand what Westad means when he says American's believed their values to be „teleological [...] What is America today will be the world tomorrow“ (p. 9). By the time of the Cold War, Westad concludes, American foreign policy of intervention was broad and wide reaching. The United States' ideological stance had become grounded in the belief that wherever communism could exist, democracy and capitalism should exist.

Westad deals similarly in tracing the development of Soviet foreign policy. The vast majority of the second chapter focuses on Russia after the 1917 revolution, but Westad does make sure to explain the how Russia's history as a czarist nation ultimately helped create policy decisions. The chapter shows the progression from Russian imperialist policy to the adoption of Marxist-Leninist ideals and eventually to Stalinism. Ultimately, Westad explains Soviet Cold War foreign policy as a mission to be „part of a world-historical progression toward a given goal“ (p. 72). Westad's full description of Soviet policy draws many parallels—with obvious points of conflict—with U.S. policy, which allows the rest of the book to successfully defend his notion of a „global“ Cold War.

With the superpowers' ideologies adequately explained, the book then shifts to the oft-ignored Third World. Starting after World War I, and accelerating greatly after World War II, the Third World began to awaken from its period of colonial status. Most relevant to *The Global Cold War* were the transformations undertaken by an ideological group of Third World leaders. Westad chronicles the surprising developments at the Bandung conference in 1955 and the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961. These two developments represent the coming-of-age of the Third World, but the momen-

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tum built would not last long. By 1970 nearly all of the leaders convened at Bandung and involved with the NAM in Belgrade, 1961, had fallen from power. The same countries that had preached peaceful coexistence and mutual respect at Bandung were to wage war against one another in India. Shortly afterwards, though not explicitly related, the Middle East was to become embroiled in conflict as well. It is at this point, Westad argues, that Soviet and U.S. interventionist actions were taken to a new level, causing disruptions throughout the entire Third World.

For the next five chapters, Westad discusses incidents of U.S. and Soviet intervention all across the globe, also noting China's role in world events. Though he does not go into great detail about China's Cold War policy, Westad does explain the unique relationship between China and the superpowers. China was often at odds with the United States, but Westad is also careful to demonstrate the ways in which Beijing and Moscow struggled for influence over domestic and global communist policy. He also, not surprisingly, covers Cuba, Vietnam, Iran, and the likes, and even devotes a number of pages to some of the smaller, oft-overlooked conflicts. While many people know about Algeria's struggle for liberation, those same people may not know the story of Nicaragua or Somalia and how superpower intervention affected such countries' development. In addressing each of these cases, with the use of many historical records and archived documents, Westad presents a largely unbiased history of how the country at hand progressed in its struggle for liberation and modernization. Perhaps the best example of this is Westad's account of Angola in the 1970s.

In January of 1975, Portugal and the Angolan liberation movements signed the Alvor Agreement, stipulating complete Portuguese withdrawal by November. However, well before this agreement was signed, the United States, Soviet Union and China had all begun jockeying for position in Angola. The Soviet Union was backing the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and its leader Antonio Agostinho Neto; the United States and China were both lending their support to the National Front for the Liberation of Angola,

led by Holden Roberto, but for very different reasons. What Westad succeeds in illuminating, though, is that the subsequent Angolan civil war was truly dictated by the intervention of the USSR, U.S. and China, all three of whom were involved for self-serving purposes.

The United States was seeking to reestablish its international prowess after failing in Vietnam, the Soviet Union wanted to repair the floundering socialist cell in Angola, and China wanted to curtail Soviet growth so as to reduce Moscow's leverage over Beijing. In the process of creating this „civil“ war, the superpowers drew Cuba, Congo, Zaire, North Korea, Romania and South Africa into the fracas, elevating one nation's struggle for liberation into a global affair. The account turns almost comical as Westad reveals foreign nations' concerns: Moscow had to be careful in its dealings so as not to break détente; at the same time, Moscow could not explain this to Cuba because Cuba already took issue with détente; the United States' public had turned against supporting foreign intervention, causing the Senate to withhold funding despite expressed support; South Africa had to pull out of Angola due to lack of U.S. monies; and by „the spring of 1976 the Soviet leaders felt [...] that they had won the Angolan war“ (p. 237). Not only does such a retelling of the events surrounding the Angolan civil war provide factual information, but it also affords the reader with a unique view as to how the Cold War played out on a global level.

Westad replicates this sort of account in his analyses of other Third World nations, thus exposing superpower intervention as a strong force of change. Chapter after chapter, case after case, Westad further convinces the reader that indeed the Cold War extended far beyond the borders of the United States and Soviet Union. The Angolan civil war may have been the most poignant example, but certainly the cold warriors had similar effects all throughout the Third World, as explained in the bulk of Westad's book.

In the final chapter of the book, Westad ties together many of the loose ends of previous chapters in a beautifully written conclusion. His commentary is thoughtful, and—more importantly—thought provoking. He defini-

tely toes the line with his loosely disguised criticisms of America, especially with regard to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. However, even while criticizing the results of the United States' history of interventionism, Westad strikes a balance by attesting to the good intentions with which such policies were carried out.

In the concluding chapter, Westad talks about how terrorist attacks and terrorist cells' struggle to gain authority seems to be a natural resultant of the Cold War. In this sense, it seems as though he believes the effects of the Cold War are still felt throughout the world today. Westad's quintessential point is that the Cold War was not primarily about the two superpowers, but rather it had to do with the „political and social development in the Third World“ (p. 396). That being said, Westad recognizes 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the end of the Cold War. Yet it is hard to read his works without feeling somewhat convinced that Westad believes the world is still in a cold war, if not the Cold War.

His ultimate conclusion is „that unilateral military intervention does not work to anyone's advantage, while open borders, cultural interactions, and fair economic exchange benefit all“ (p. 406). While the world may be a long ways away from instituting fair trade and respectful cultural relations between races and nations, Westad firmly backs up the first half of his conclusion: the superpowers' military interventions during the Cold War truly played to no nation's benefit.

The Global Cold War is certainly an eye-opening book. It systematically deconstructs many preconceived notions readers might have about the Cold War, and replaces them with a more worldly understanding of modern history. However, the book can at times be a quite difficult read due to Westad's geographical separation of events. In his separate analyses of intervention in different areas of the world, Westad often leaves the reader with an incomplete frame of reference. For those readers who are not Cold War historians, the book sometimes reads like a puzzle, where each chapter is an entity in and of itself, but cannot be understood to its fullest meaning until the completion of the entire book. The book in its entirety contains all of the ne-

cessary information for an educated reader to understand Westad's thesis, but the sequencing of that information sometimes makes it difficult to comprehend.

To his credit, though, Westad partially overcomes this problem with his strong conclusion. The concluding chapter welds together the previous ten chapters, allowing the reader to appreciate the book's general focus, even if some specifics remain muddled. Still, I would not personally recommend this book to readers who do not already have a solid understanding of the Cold War and at least a general knowledge of world history of the past 50 years. Other than the first two chapters and the final chapter, *The Global Cold War* reads much like a textbook. While this is a positive attribute in the sense that Westad is able to be phenomenally educational in his writing, the complex topic of his book makes it appropriate only for the educated reader.

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