



*A Military History of the Cold War, 1962–1991* by Jonathan M. House.

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As a sequel to his *Military History of the Cold War 1945–1962*, military historian Jonathan House (US Army Command and General Staff College) has written “an operational-level account of military forces and conflicts [to help] explain the larger developments of the period ..., [including] the relationship of policy and military force” (x). His new volume ranges from the United Nations’ intervention in the Congo in 1960 to the war between Angola and South Africa to El Salvador, as well as the standoff between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In short, it functions as an overview of wars and conflicts during the last thirty years of the Cold War era.

Both military historians and interested lay readers will appreciate the book’s broad sweep, as opposed to a narrow focus on, say, the inner-German border. We learn, for example, that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India asked Pres. John F. Kennedy not only to intervene in the 1962 Indo-Chinese border war, but also to station two B-47 nuclear bomber squadrons in India; that Soviet troops in Afghanistan suffered from epidemics of malaria and typhus; and that Pres. Jimmy Carter speculated that Iranian revolutionaries might seize the American embassy in Tehran.

One of the book’s consistent themes is the prominence of local interests and nationalism in the numerous wars of the target period. House demonstrates that political actors across the globe got involved with superpowers in order to wage wars not as mere proxies, but as people with their own agendas. Indeed, House undercuts the assertion that more than a couple of these wars were proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union. He notes, for instance, that Anwar Sadat, Sukarno, and Suharto were nationalists who did not remain Soviet pawns for long. The war between Angola and Zaire in the late 1970s was a local but externally supplied conflict. When the Belgians intervened in 1978, they were more “concerned with protecting [their] citizens than with controlling the mines” (39). The Soviets and Cubans did not cause civil wars, they intervened in them in order to try to gain influence. The Somalis and the Ethiopians were already fighting each other in 1977, regardless of Soviet wishes or the availability of foreign troops and weapons. External supplies “supercharged local rebellions and wars, making those conflicts more lethal and enduring than they might otherwise have been” (57). Time and again wars with a veneer of Marxist rhetoric were actually spawned by local grievances.

One of the preconceived notions that Soviet and American leaders shared, often with disastrous effect, was the belief that the opposing superpower could control its allies and proxies if it chose to do so. Regardless of the aid they received, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Israel were independent actors who not only followed their own foreign policies but often embarrassed their respective superpower patrons into supporting those policies. (362)

The consequences of these wars were felt more at the local level than in Moscow or Washington.

A single preposition can mislead. Readers expecting a military history of the Cold War will instead encounter a history of wars *during* the Cold War. While it seems there were fewer connections than supposed between these wars and the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union, the book seldom mentions those that did exist. For instance, the United States shared in-

telligence information with the United Kingdom during the Falkland Islands war because of Cold War concerns, but these are not mentioned. The 1965 American intervention in the Dominican Republic is not connected clearly to the Cold War, and while the Shining Path movement in Peru was Marxist, the book does not link it to Soviets, Chinese communists, Cubans, or Containment. In House's account, the two wars between India and Pakistan appear to have been completely disconnected from the Soviet-American rivalry. The book mentions the use of US Army troops during the 1965 Watts riots, for instance, but no connection to the Cold War is made. Regarding the Persian Gulf, the book does not examine Iran's place in the Cold War as an anti-Soviet state the US supported as part of its containment strategy, nor does it mention that President Carter initiated the Rapid Deployment Force as a military capability for protecting the Persian Gulf oil fields and ports from Soviet conquest from the Caucasus. Another lost opportunity is the absence of discussion of the "Victor Alerts"—the nuclear-armed fighter aircraft that sat ready to launch from Germany to Turkey—clearly a component of the military history of the Cold War. The book makes almost no mention of Containment.

Mistakes are few and only concern details of weapons. Iran never purchased F-15 or F-16 fighters (255), M14 and M16 rifles came into service twenty years before the AK-74, not "later" (291). One discussion links the F-14 only with Sparrow and Sidewinder missiles, not its primary munition, the controversial AIM-54 Phoenix (270). It was, in fact, the new "infrared seekers" on AIM-9L missiles that enabled "Israeli pilots to engage an opponent head-to-head" (198).

The argument throughout *A Military History of the Cold War* is balanced and nuanced. House notes that Nixon's mad man tactics accomplished nothing, and that Israeli discussions of using nuclear weapons in 1973 were cursory and put to rest by Golda Meir's cabinet minutes after the proposal. Neither alarmist nor revisionist, House observes that in the decade after 1967 the United States may have been "unwilling and perhaps unable to project military power ... while the Soviets faced challenges within the communist sphere" (249). He points out what should have been more obvious to analysts: "The Warsaw Pact's only military campaign was conducted against one of its own members" (245) when Moscow directed the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia to put down the freedom movement in that country. The Soviets' "Operation Danube" actually revitalized NATO, House notes. It encouraged more West European defense spending and the first REFORGER exercise in 1969.

House's narration of military activities during the Cold War relates more clearly to the Soviet-American rivalry when it addresses more mainstream events, such as the rise and fall of civil defense and the growth of the Soviet navy. He demonstrates that the American military renewal was rooted in concerns about the Soviet military buildup beginning in the Carter administration; Reagan completed what Carter began. The book addresses a plethora of issues during the Second Cold War: SALT II, neutron bombs and intermediate range missiles, the Strategic Defense Initiative, nuclear winter, Able Archer, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and conventional force reduction. One would like more on REFORGER, arms sales, and military exercises in Europe.

Despite its shortcomings, *A Military History of the Cold War, 1962-1991* accomplishes a great deal. It is a salutary, well written, long overdue survey of the neglected military side of the Cold War. (Cold War histories often make no mention whatever of military events.) It introduces readers to events beyond the standard fare of the Vietnam War, the nuclear arms race, the growth of the Soviet navy, etc. A launch point for new scholarship, House's wide field of view reveals opportunities for scholars of the Cold War to research and write on under-examined topics.