

A Roundtable on Gregg A. Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War*

*James I. Matray, Meredith Oyen, Jeffrey Crean, Pierre Asselin, Mitchell Lerner,
and Gregg Brazinsky*

Introduction to Roundtable on Gregg A. Brazinsky. *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War*

James I. Matray

In 1980, Warren I. Cohen published the second edition of his *America's Response to China: An Interpretive History of Sino-American Relations*. In it, he labels the period from 1950 to March 1979, when the United States formally recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC), as "The Great Aberration." "Central to American desires in Asia in the half century that followed [John] Hay's Open Door notes," Cohen argues, "was the existence of a strong, independent China." But with China's intervention in the Korean War, the Truman administration "committed the United States to a policy of containing Communism in Asia" that "became increasingly anti-Chinese, an unprecedented campaign of opposition to the development of a strong, modern China."¹ While not addressing whether it was an aberration, Gregg Brazinsky's new book, *Winning the Third World*, does describe in detail the intense rivalry between the United States and the PRC during these same years. Given the continuing friction between the two nations early in the twenty-first century, perhaps Sino-American competition in fact became the new normal in 1950.

Brazinsky examines in detail the competition between the United States and the PRC to win the hearts and minds of government leaders and the citizenry in the nations of South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa between 1950 and 1979. He presents a great deal of new information and insightful analysis. His main thesis holds that "status was the most important driving force behind this struggle" (1). For Chinese leaders, enhancing the PRC's status was "a means of ending China's history of humiliation and regaining the honor and glory that had been stolen from it" (6). For their part, American leaders consistently acted to "prevent Beijing from attaining the status it craved" because they feared "that if China succeeded it would threaten their ambitions to integrate newly independent countries into a U.S.-led international order."

By bringing Sino-American competition into focus, the author delivers on his promise to contribute "a more complex and multifaceted understanding to the Cold War" (3). He also documents how little progress the rivals made toward achieving their objectives. In fact, the Sino-American rivalry only inflicted additional hardship on target nations and, in the end, showed how "it is easier to

seek status than to attain it" (8).

That all eight photographs in *Winning the Third World* display PRC officials or Chinese citizens meeting foreign leaders shows in a graphical way how China occupies center stage in this study. Throughout the book's ten chapters, Brazinsky's focus is on Beijing's efforts to use diplomacy, economic aid and advice, and revolutionary rhetoric to persuade the leaders and people of underdeveloped nations to align with the PRC in the Cold War. In the conclusion, he succinctly summarizes "three clear themes" that emerge from the book. First, "Communist China could effectively sell itself and its revolution to Asians and Africans because it had succeeded in creating a powerful new state that could mobilize its vast population." Second, "China's actions often did more to damage its prestige than did those of its rivals." Finally, the unpredictability of rapidly changing events in Africa and Asia, all of which were "beyond the PRC's control," meant that "the politics of the Third World frustrated the PRC just as much [as] they did its rivals." Brazinsky also presents abundant evidence of how Sino-American competition has continued into the twenty-first century.

Winning the Third World has received reviews ranging from good to almost excellent from the participants in this roundtable. Writing for the group, Pierre Asselin declares that the book presents "a superb exploration of the rivalry between Beijing and Washington that unfolded within the context of the Cold War." Even more complimentary, Meredith Oyen praises the study as a "beautifully written addition to the literature on the Cold War in Asia" that "will stand for some time as the best window we have into the world of Chinese foreign policymaking in Africa and Asia under Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai." Both these reviewers strongly recommend adopting the book for use in undergraduate and graduate seminars. Oyen makes it hard to ignore this advice when she lauds Brazinsky for providing an "example of how to write clear and cogent historical arguments without devolving into esoteric 'academese.'" The jargon-free text offers clear introductions and conclusions to chapters and straightforward analyses of major events." All the reviewers agree that in addition to being very well written, the book is solidly structured and offers thoughtful analysis.

Mitchell Lerner's commentary is the most thorough, briefly summarizing and then elaborating on most of the main issues and events that receive coverage in what he labels a "brilliant" study. "*Winning the Third World*," he writes admiringly, "is a landmark work of international history, one that contributes not only to our understanding of Sino-American relations during the Cold War but also to

the literature on soft power diplomacy overall.”

While Jeffrey Crean does not use the term “soft power,” he also notes, as does Oyen, how the book “differs from its predecessors by apportioning its thematic emphasis across the full panoply of foreign policy tools, be they military, diplomatic, economic, or cultural.” But Crean criticizes Brazinsky for not applying the same thematic approach to U.S. policy during the Kennedy administration, arguing that neither Kennedy nor his advisers ever “made a serious effort to connect means and ends in a manner which would even approximate a proper grand strategy.” He also faults Brazinsky for ignoring Latin America in his discussion of Sino-American competition in the Third World. Similarly, Lerner and Oyen are disappointed that the author chose not to cover Korea after 1953 and did not deal with the Republic of China at all.

All the reviewers commend Brazinsky for his exhaustive research, several singling out his use of sources at the now-closed PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs archive. Crean, however, argues that “a laser-like focus” on these particular documents prevents him “from citing those of Mao’s speeches and writings during the 1950s and 1960s in which he justifies his foreign policy to party members and the Chinese people.” Lerner agrees, asserting that “the book’s focus on international status as the driving force for Chinese actions sometimes comes at the expense of domestic factors,” pointing specifically to China’s decision to intervene militarily in the Korean War. Indirectly providing another example, he writes that “Brazinsky overstates the extent to which the decisions made at Versailles steered Mao towards the communist ranks,” when “his intellectual development” and “political opportunism” were more influential factors.

Asselin discusses Brazinsky’s treatment of Vietnam at length, applauding him for doing a “commendable job describing the rationale for Beijing’s involvement in the Vietnam War,” with the qualification that he “accords too much importance to the NLF as an independent actor.” More important, Asselin identifies another motive behind the PRC’s strategy in the Third World (apart from its contest with the United States). “Brazinsky fails,” he contends, “to take into fuller account the Sino-Soviet dispute and its impact on . . . China’s push into the Third World, [which] had . . . as much to do with asserting itself as the ‘real’ vanguard of the international communist movement as it did with other considerations.” Similarly, Oyen sees Brazinsky’s description of U.S. behavior as overly simplistic, disapproving of how “the actions and policy choices of the United States emerge almost exclusively as a response to the Chinese challenge.” She attributes this failing to Brazinsky’s overreliance on Chinese sources, which persists until the last chapter, where he rightly credits President Richard M. Nixon with initiating the rapprochement with the PRC.

Many readers will share the concerns about Brazinsky’s main thesis that two of the reviewers raise. Did a desire for status fuel the postwar Sino-American competition in the Third World? Lerner believes the word “status” has a “somewhat elastic meaning” for Brazinsky; he “defines his term so broadly,” Lerner writes, “that everything can fit into the framework of status-seeking.” Asselin also challenges the author’s identification of status as the prime motivator, perceptively asking whether status was “actually the ‘primary objective,’ or was it merely a means to narrower pragmatic ends?” If it was true, for example, that security was an important PRC goal, he wonders why the Chinese would compete aggressively with the Americans for status while feuding with the Soviets, when doing so made “China’s national security even more precarious.” However, Lerner and Asselin emphasize that imprecision on this important point does not diminish the enormous value of this study. Oyen and Crean join them in praising Brazinsky for demonstrating the central role that

China played in postwar world affairs and adding a new dimension to the existing understanding of the global Cold War.

Brazinsky, in his response, expresses his satisfaction with “the reviews as being for the most part, positive.” Before dealing with specifics, he judiciously explains that “the problem that I have with the points raised by these critiques is not so much that I disagree with them but that incorporating them would have forced me to make different choices about how the book was organized and written, ultimately weakening its focus.” Brazinsky then emphasizes that because his main purpose was to examine how the PRC and the United States sought to “win” support in the Third World, “domestic politics (in both China and the United States) did not receive as much attention.” But more to the point, reaching internationalist goals was more important to Beijing in its dealings with Afro-Asian nations, and weakening the PRC internally was not a priority for the United States. “I made choices about what to include and exclude,” Brazinsky explains, “so that the book could highlight an important dimension of the Cold War that has not been given enough attention by other scholars despite its obvious relevance to the present.”

Brazinsky insists that he does address the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on PRC policy, but he admits that he minimizes coverage of it, especially in Vietnam, in order to maximize his treatment of Sino-American rivalry, “which has been mostly ignored by other scholars.” As for the NLF, rather than overstating its importance, his “handling of it” merely reflects “the importance accorded to it by Beijing and Washington.” He does not respond directly to Oyen’s criticism about his portrayal of U.S. policy as being consistently reactive to China’s behavior. However, he minces no words in registering his surprise that Crean, “the promising young scholar of the group . . . seems to want to bring the field back to a more U.S.-centric perspective.”

Finally, Brazinsky acknowledges that it is difficult to define “status precisely.” But he asserts that “even if Beijing and Washington were in fact pursuing status as a means to achieve other goals, the actual competition between them was focused primarily on status itself.” In concluding, Brazinsky labels his book “a starting point” for scholars wishing to establish “the full scope and many facets of Chinese influence” in the Cold War era.” As he mentions, he had made this same point in the introduction to *Winning the Third World*, where he expressed the hope that future historians “researching in Indonesian, Swahili, Laotian, and other languages might one day shed light on other dimensions” and “the full impact of the foreign policy of Beijing and Washington in the region” (12). Here, in his response, Brazinsky calls on scholars to explore as well the worthy issues that the reviewers have raised in their commentaries.

Note:

1. Warren I. Cohen, *America’s Response to China: An Interpretive History of Sino-American Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1980), 220–21.

Review of Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War*

Meredith Oyen

Gregg Brazinsky’s *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War* is an impressively researched and beautifully written addition to the literature on the Cold War in Asia. Because the volume makes such extensive use of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, which has severely curtailed access to its collections since 2013, Brazinsky’s work will stand for some time as the best window we have

into the world of Chinese foreign policymaking in Africa and Asia under Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai.

Brazinsky's central argument is that "status was the most important driving force" in the Cold War-era rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) (1). Other common concerns, like increasing prestige or maintaining legitimacy, fall under the status umbrella. Over the course of the book, he explores the ways in which China sought status and the United States sought to deny it. In the process, he highlights the ways in which China used its own colonial past to reach out convincingly to emerging nations in Africa and Asia, and he examines the instances in which the PRC's policies created blowback that undermined its quest for prestige. He also recognizes the unpredictability inherent in the international system, where unanticipated and rapid changes can overthrow the finest diplomatic efforts.

In ten chapters plus an introduction and conclusion, *Winning the Third World* surveys Chinese foreign policy initiatives in Africa and Asia from the 1940s to the 1970s and the efforts made by the United States to counter them. The first three chapters deal with fairly well-known material, including the rise of the Chinese Communist Party and its revolutionary drive to power, the difficulties involved in supporting early Asian communist struggles in Korea and Indochina and challenging the United States' support of Taiwan, and the PRC's early emergence onto the world stage as a diplomatic power in important meetings at Geneva and Bandung. Though scholars well acquainted with these events and with some of the most recent work on them that also benefited from the all-too-brief window of opportunity to do research at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive will likely not find anything too unexpected in these chapters, they are useful for introducing the uninitiated reader to important context and for establishing the core arguments of the book.

Starting in the fourth chapter, the benefits of those hard-to-access archival sources really become clear, as Brazinsky takes his readers on a tour through Chinese outreach efforts in the "Third World," a term that in this case refers primarily to South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The contents and coverage of the book are clearly dictated by the availability of Chinese Foreign Ministry sources, and this leads to a sort of "impact-response" model in reverse. As historian Paul Cohen famously formulated it in *Discovering History in China*, a generation of American historians of China tended to interpret all Chinese actions as taking place in response to the challenge of the West. *Winning the Third World* seems to follow this pattern in reverse: the actions and policy choices of the United States emerge almost exclusively as a response to the Chinese challenge. This remains more or less the pattern until the final chapter, centered on President Richard Nixon's effort at achieving rapprochement with China. Not coincidentally, this chapter is also the only one that relies most heavily on U.S. sources, as the Foreign Ministry Archive never, even in the heyday of its openness, released documents from the period after 1965.

The body of the book takes readers on a tour through Chinese efforts to seek influence, recognition, and increased international status across two continents. It includes discussions of such disparate diplomatic tools as propaganda, state visits, economic aid, and military support for leftist insurgencies. Though the scope of the book is impressively expansive, Brazinsky effectively balances fascinating thematic discussions of different types of diplomatic overtures and necessary coverage of major events such as the Sino-Indian War and the Indonesian coup. The most well-known and well-studied events, such as the Vietnam War, receive coverage, but some of the most interesting parts of the book deal with Beijing's lesser-known attempts to make inroads into Africa, such

as its participation in insurgent efforts in Zanzibar and the Congo.

Though *Winning the Third World* already has an impressive source base, one wonders what it would look like with the addition of the Republic of China's concurrent efforts to seek status in many of the same locations during the same era. PRC efforts to win international support, prestige, and legitimacy entailed in many cases winning recognition away from the ROC, and the American responses to PRC engagement in the world can often be tied to those of the government on Taiwan. After the first few chapters, the ROC falls out of the book (even in the short discussion of propaganda directed at the diasporic Chinese, where ROC efforts were extensive). The decision to leave the ROC out—a move likely also driven by sources, as Brazinsky did not consult Taipei's own Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive—can no doubt be defended as extending the scope of an already expansive book beyond the breaking point. However, I hope that the next wave of research conducted in the era of less accessible mainland sources will amend this work by including that perspective.

Beyond the wide coverage, thoughtful analysis, and unique access to what are currently inaccessible sources, *Winning the Third World* is extremely well constructed. It could quite legitimately serve as a classroom example of how to write clear and cogent historical arguments without devolving into esoteric academes. The jargon-free text offers clear introductions and conclusions to chapters and straightforward analyses of major events. As a result, Brazinsky's work is a useful contribution not only to the shelves of Cold War historians, but to undergraduate and graduate seminars as well.

Review of Gregg A. Brazinsky's *Winning the Third World*

Jeffrey Crean

When John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency, Americans had been in the throes of a red scare for well over a decade. But in 1961, matters grew worse. An article that March in *Reader's Digest* attempted to raise the alarm about Chinese communist subversion not half a world away in Laos or South Vietnam, but in America's own backyard. According to the most widely circulated periodical in the United States at that time, the Chinese had "preempted the subversion lead in Latin America from their Russian partners." Latin America, with its predominately rural population and weak, corrupt, and unpopular central governments, bore "striking similarities to the China" the communists conquered in 1949. No doubt with Cuba's recent fate in mind, the article concluded with the call to arms "it is very late, and we must hurry."¹

In *Winning the Third World*, Gregg Brazinsky mentions Latin America only briefly, when he notes the paltry resources the Chinese communists devoted to supporting the spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere. His work focuses on Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa, where the Chinese sent the vast majority of their money, advisors, and guns. Nonetheless, the very fact that Americans worried about Maoists in Peru and Venezuela in 1961 illustrates the strain of anti-Chinese hysteria which pervaded U.S. foreign policy circles, particularly in the early and mid-1960s.

Brazinsky's analytically sharp monograph makes clear, with its enviable trove of research material, makes it clear that during the height of Sino-American competition, from the late 1950s through the late 1960s, both sides were losers. Both saw their prestige weakened in various parts of Asia and Africa, usually in direct proportion to resources expended. The author argues that for both sides "status" was the primary motivator of this competition. While Mao's regime sought to increase its prestige in its own

neighborhood in particular and in the emerging Third World in general in order to buttress the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy to rule at home, various U.S. presidents and policy actors sought to diminish their communist rivals and deny them international respectability.

In the end, neither side won many lasting friends among post-colonial leaders or influenced foreign peoples in the developing world. Each eventually realized, at least partially, the self-destructive nature of their competition and decided upon cautious rapprochement and fitful collaboration as superior options.

This book is the latest to analyze Cold War competition in the Third World, following on the heels of Jeremy Friedman's 2015 *Shadow Cold War*, which provided the definitive take on Sino-Soviet competition. Both Friedman and Brazinsky agree with Odd Arne Westad's pathbreaking 2007 saga of U.S.-Soviet rivalry *The Cold War in the Third World*, which argues that these proxy battles left little in their wake besides piles of corpses, misguided White Elephant development projects, and human misery. The ironically titled *Winning the Third World* completes the triangle, adding to our understanding of the motivating factors behind Chinese and U.S. foreign policies as well as the effects of such policies on the ground from the Gulf of Guinea to the Strait of Malacca.

This book differs from its predecessors by apportioning its thematic emphasis across the full panoply of foreign policy tools, be they military, diplomatic, economic, or cultural. On the face of it, this competition should have been no competition at all. Yet the Chinese – at least at first – adroitly compensated for what they lacked in gold, guns, and butter with a potent advertising pitch emphasizing post-colonial self-reliance and non-white solidarity that resonated among the vast swathes of humanity who had spent the better part of the previous century on the wrong side of the imperial color line. Yankee arrogance and heavy-handedness provided an opening the Chinese could exploit with finesse and self-control. Of course, these were rarely Mao Zedong's strong suits.

As so often was the case for all powers during the Cold War, increasing effort brought declining – and eventually negative – marginal returns. Popular Chinese efforts at what Brazinsky calls “nation building” inevitably gave way to a penchant for supporting “revolutionary evangelism.” In country after country, initially sympathetic leaders realized Zhou Enlai's velvet glove could not soften the blow of Mao's iron fist. Support for “Wars of National Liberation” undercut the pomp of diplomatic visits and the occasionally appealing propaganda of films and literature.

China achieved its greatest successes when it had no choice but to set its sights low, as with economic development. Chinese aid advisers put their U.S. counterparts to shame by living amongst the African people, sharing their hardships, and pragmatically providing quick and tangible economic benefits. Yet lack of resources, while preventing destructive overreach, limited the positive scope of these programs to a few localities.

The American side of the story is exceedingly strong in details but somewhat lacking in its overarching themes. Denying the Chinese Communists international status was undoubtedly the centerpiece of Dwight Eisenhower's policy, as enacted with such flamboyant heavy-handedness by his generally undiplomatic Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Thus, Brazinsky is on firm if well-trodden ground at the start. His recounting of Richard Nixon's piece-by-piece reversal of the policies enacted by the man he served as vice president is both sweeping and spare. Nixon turned Dulles on his head. He realized status need not be a zero-sum game, and that the U.S. could actually benefit by showing respect to rivals and adversaries.

The origin of this Nixonian insight is beyond the scope of the monograph, yet it perhaps had roots in the man's

own longstanding insecurities, a lifetime of slights real and perceived and a subsequent personal yearning for respect and adulation. Well before he changed his mind on China, Nixon was one of the few U.S. foreign policy thinkers who called for treating the obstreperous French President Charles de Gaulle with respect. He argued that the best way to prevent the proud former leader of the Free French from being such a thorn in America's side was to accord him the symbolic grandeur he craved. One thus has no choice but to agree with the author that notions of status were paramount to the China policy of Republican presidents during the early Cold War.

However, Brazinsky fails to prove the same about Democratic presidents, particularly John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. In my opinion, he cannot, because – in China as in so many other foreign policy areas – Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the presidents he served lacked a coherent grand strategy. Along with McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, and Walt Rostow, Kennedy, Johnson, and Rusk had goals, impulses, and beliefs, but never made a serious effort to connect means and ends in a manner which would even approximate a proper grand strategy.

Kennedy may have favored a brand of grandiosely idealistic foreign policy rhetoric which was anathema to Johnson, who devoted his visionary idealism solely to the domestic realm, but both adopted a muddle-through approach to containment. They careened from crisis to crisis and issue to issue, trying to suffer as little foreign and domestic embarrassment as possible, holding the line against communist expansion both real and perceived while avoiding Armageddon. This accidental pragmatism leaned on brushfire wars of counterinsurgency as opposed to nuclear brinkmanship, but that is a matter of tactics, not strategy.

The China policy of Kennedy and Johnson typified this purposeless drift. They maintained Eisenhower's containment and isolation while abandoning the underlying assumption that this approach would at most cause regime collapse and at the very least prevent a communist China from achieving great power status. Certain officials toyed with eliminating the counterproductive travel and trade bans. Yet, in keeping with their accidental pragmatism, they did so because such policies no longer made practical sense. They were not part of a larger strategy of wide-ranging outreach. Caught between the monolithic assumptions of Eisenhower and the trilateralist actions of Nixon, the most they could do was change the optics. In moves that were typical of their focus on the purely tactical level, both Kennedy and Johnson took steps to place the onus for the lack of a positive U.S.-China relationship firmly on Chinese shoulders.

The word “onus” appeared again and again in the writings of erstwhile reformers like Robert Komer, Chester Bowles, and James Thomson, moderate fence sitters such as Bundy, Rostow, and Alfred Jenkins, and was even eventually adopted by the hardliner Rusk, whose impulse on China was to be Dulles with a human face. This exercise in blame-shifting was not consonant with a concern for denying the Chinese communists status. From Kennedy's announcement in a 1963 press conference that the United States was “not wedded to a policy of hostility” toward “Red China” to Johnson's July 1966 speech making clear the U.S. was prepared to reach out to China if and when the Chinese were ready and willing, the overriding goal was letting the world know who was at fault.

One might say that this tactic subtly undermined Chinese status and was a pursuit of Eisenhower's goals through different means. But Brazinsky does not make this argument. Nor does he note this change in tactics which differentiated the U.S. China policy of the 1960s from that of the 1950s, such that there was a U.S. China policy in the 1960s beyond merely avoiding a repeat of the Truman-era

calamities which simultaneously scarred and scared a then-up-and-coming Dean Rusk.

On the Chinese side, Brazinsky is on far firmer footing, and I do not disagree that status had primacy in Mao's grand strategy. But by neglecting to look at how the chairman used his foreign policy for domestic purposes, the author fails to take this argument far enough by neglecting to look at how the Chairman used his foreign policy for domestic purposes. The inextricable connection between Mao's foreign and domestic policies was recognized in real time by analysts at the National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency, confirmed by Chen Jian's early scholarship in the 1990s, and later on extended to the Sino-Soviet split by Lorenz Luthi. Brazinsky cites convincing evidence that Mao believed at least as far back as his time in Yanan in the early 1940s that the success of communist revolution in China was dependent upon the extension of that revolution to China's neighbors and, beyond that, upon China's involvement in ending imperialism in the "Intermediate Zone."

However, a laser-like focus on his great finds in the Foreign Ministry Archives prevents the author from citing those of Mao's speeches and writings during the 1950s and 1960s in which he justifies his foreign policy to party members and the Chinese people. Simply put, the reader is left to intuit that Mao's search of status abroad bolstered his legitimacy at home. This oversight could have been easily rectified, and is similar to Friedman's neglect of domestic factors in *Shadow Cold War*. International and transnational approaches need not be antithetical to considerations of the domestic-foreign policy nexus.

In terms of the specific subject matter, this is a story of failure. Neither China nor the United States won the Third World. Yet in grand strategic terms, it is a tale of success through failure. Today, the United States and the People's Republic of China are the world's sole great powers. The Soviet Union is no more, with its Russian successor state reduced to a malicious geopolitical version of a Puck who pretends he is a Prospero. China's loss of nearly all previous foreign policy gains during its *annus horribilus* of 1965 contributed to the domestic calamity of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which in turn led to Mao's and Zhou's outreach to Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who wanted to extricate themselves from a war in Vietnam that was motivated in large part by a desire to check the power of communist China. This gave the Chinese geopolitical breathing space at the moment their regime needed it most. The Chinese communists did the right thing after exhausting all other possible options, at least if their efforts are evaluated in terms of preserving their grip on power and maximizing China's global impact.

Brazinsky begins and ends this book by connecting his story to the current post-Cold War competition between the Chinese and the Americans. As during the Cold War, their rivalry is largely economic in Africa and is often dominated by military concerns in Asia. In fact, current Chinese leader Xi Jinping noted China's past aid to Africa in his first visit to that continent, establishing the contemporary relevance of the now-distant events of this book. Its detailing of past U.S. overreactions should be well heeded today.

Great powers often believe that they are like great white sharks: inaction will kill them. In fact, the opposite is more often the case. The works of Westad, Friedman, and Brazinsky, among other authors, portray the Cold War as a saga not unlike the legendary 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in that tragic Cold War battleground of Zaire. Like Foreman, the Soviet Union was a fearsome and terrifying bruiser of a heavyweight that eventually punched itself to exhaustion. The eighth round in Kinshasa was a metaphorical preview of 1989. It was a shock that everyone should have seen coming. The only difference was that the United States simply had to

stay on its feet to win, and never landed an actual knockout blow against an adversary staggered by its own aggressive nature. U.S. foreign policy decision makers would do well to consider such a lesson so as to avoid repeating the wasted efforts detailed in this outstanding book.

Note:

1. Lester Velie, "Chinese Red Star Over Latin America," *Reader's Digest*, March 1961, 97-102.

Review of Gregg Brazinsky's *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War*

Pierre Asselin

Gregg Brazinsky's *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War* is a superb exploration of the rivalry between Beijing and Washington that unfolded within the context of the Cold War—and in fact went a long way toward exacerbating and sustaining it. Starting in the 1950s, the Third World became the primary area of contestation among Cold War rivals. Although it had been created only recently, the People's Republic of China (PRC) assumed an extremely important role in the international system that emerged from the ashes of World War II. That role was especially consequential in the colonial and postcolonial world, namely the rest of Asia and Africa. China left an indelible mark on the Third World during the Cold War. How and why that came about is the central theme in Brazinsky's book.

Beijing's decision to insinuate itself aggressively into the competition for the Third World during the Cold War was not prompted by security, economic, or ideological factors, Brazinsky claims. It was instead the product of an ardent desire to reassert China's status as a great power and by extension to overcome and erase the national humiliation endured since the Opium Wars of the nineteenth century. In thus accounting for China's behavior in the Third World after 1949, Brazinsky effectively builds on the work of Chen Jian, which maintains that ideological considerations largely shaped the PRC's foreign policy during the Mao years. But whereas Chen considers the quest for status to have been but "a function of Mao's revolutionary nationalist ideology" (6), Brazinsky argues that it was actually central to the worldview and strategic thinking of Beijing leaders.

As part of the effort to reclaim its greatness, China also endeavored to serve as a revolutionary inspiration and model for embattled Third World nations. From 1949 onward, assisting other revolutionaries became China's "internationalist duty" (47). China, its leaders thought, had a "special role" (5) to play in supporting national liberation and other "progressive" movements in the Afro-Asian world. It was particularly important to assume that burden in Asia, where China could thus "credibly claim leadership of a wider Asian revolution" (47).

Chinese agency in the Cold War is clearly and convincingly shown throughout Brazinsky's book. Whether intentionally or not, the narrative strongly suggests that Beijing carried the tempo in the Third World and that Washington was more often than not reacting to circumstances set in motion there by the Chinese. The book thus offers a very important lesson about the Cold War: namely that the "superpowers," i.e., the United States and the Soviet Union, did not always control events. Preponderant as both their "hard" and "soft" power may have been, other states exercised tremendous leverage over international relations in the post-World War II period. The influence exerted by China was particularly meaningful, serving as it did to condition politics in the Third World to an immeasurable degree.

Arguably, the greatest strength of Brazinsky's book is that it effectively underscores the centrality of China in the global Cold War. Many in the West, including academics, consider the Cold War a competition between two main rivals, the United States and the Soviet Union. The reality is that China may well have played a more important role than either of the superpowers in sustaining that competition. After all, the Soviet Union committed itself to "peaceful coexistence" with the Americans and the capitalist camp generally as early as 1956. Despite occasional, brief spikes in tensions between Moscow and Washington resulting from such events as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the two countries maintained a relatively healthy relationship well into the 1970s.

Throughout the 1960s and for much of the '70s, it was China that kept the momentum of the Cold War going. The radicalization of its domestic and foreign policy that started in the late 1950s contributed to that momentum to no insignificant degree, particularly in the Third World. As Brazinsky's book aptly demonstrates, China's adventurism elsewhere in Asia, including in the Middle East and in Africa, sounded alarm bells in Washington and prompted the continued mobilization of massive human and material resources to fight the Cold War. That, in turn, produced attendant bloody—or bloodier—crises across the Third World.

Nowhere was this more evident than on the Indochinese Peninsula. It was China that encouraged Hanoi to renew "big war" in 1964, with a view to bringing about Vietnamese reunification by force. Since the end of the war with France in 1954, Moscow had been urging North Vietnam's communist leaders to exercise caution in the South to avoid provoking a forceful American response and engulfing the country in another major war. The prospect of another "Caribbean crisis" in Southeast Asia was just too much for Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to bear. Over the latter's protestations, Hanoi, firmly under the control of Secretary Le Duan and other hardliners by early 1964, proceeded to dramatically escalate the insurgency begrudgingly sanctioned by Le Duan's predecessor, Ho Chi Minh, in 1959.

In the days after the so-called Tonkin Gulf incident of August 1964, Hanoi's hawkish leadership made the fateful decision to deploy the first combat units of the North's regular armed forces, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), to the South. They were enthusiastically supported in that by Beijing. While Le Duan's regime jealously guarded its autonomy in decision making, there is no question that increased military assistance and offers of troop support from China's own People's Liberation Army (PLA) spurred the decision to authorize the dispatch of northern forces to participate in mass combat operations in the South. Hanoi made that decision knowing full well that the failure of its forces to achieve an expeditious victory over the armies of the "puppet" regime in Saigon would inevitably result in massive American intervention, including, Hanoi policymakers were convinced, an invasion of the North.

American intervention did not translate into an invasion of the North, but it did bring on a campaign of sustained bombing that targeted military, industrial, and other installations above the seventeenth parallel. It also produced Americanization and dramatic escalation of the war below that line. Through all this, Beijing remained steadfastly committed to its Vietnamese allies, as Brazinsky explains. That commitment, occurring as it did in the context of the Sino-Soviet dispute, significantly increased the pressure in Moscow to respond in kind and prove its mettle as leader of the socialist camp. In fact, that may well have been Moscow's primary motivation in deciding to render assistance to Hanoi.

The Soviets eventually provided Hanoi with the means to defend the North against American air raids. They did not, however, consent to supply the North and its surrogates

in the South (the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam [NLF], also known as the Viet Cong) with the small arms and other hardware needed to fight U.S. troops and their allies. That was the purview of other socialist camp allies—Beijing in particular. In hindsight, had it not been for China's eagerness to support Le Duan's project to reunify Vietnam by force starting in 1964, one of the most consequential Cold War conflagrations may never have happened in the first place. At a minimum, its outcome would have been very different. China's role in Vietnam changed everything. And Vietnam, in turn, changed everything in the Cold War.

While Brazinsky does a commendable job of describing the rationale for Beijing's involvement in the Vietnam War, he accords too much importance to the NLF as an independent actor. The Front, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, answered to Hanoi, and was never an autonomous actor, especially when it came to its foreign relations and interactions with supporters such as the PRC. More fundamentally, there is some confusion as to the nature of Beijing's larger aim in aggressively engaging the Third World generally.

Brazinsky stresses repeatedly that status was the primary motive force in China's policy *vis-à-vis* the Third World during the Cold War. He writes that "in general, I view status as the larger objective sought by the PRC and gaining prestige, legitimacy and other attributes as important subcomponents of this goal" (5). But then he also notes that "in contending that Sino-American competition was driven by status," he does not mean to argue that "such other considerations as security and economic interests were irrelevant." Instead, he adds, China, much like Washington, actually "viewed status in the Third World as critical precisely because it could facilitate the achievement of other more tangible objectives" (8).

Was status actually the "primary objective," or was it merely a means to narrower pragmatic ends? What specific economic interests mattered to Beijing? And if security was an end, then why aggressively compete with Washington in the Third World even as the Sino-Soviet dispute kept getting worse? Did that not make China's national security even more precarious? These matters do not take away from what is otherwise a very persuasive account, but they should have been qualified with greater precision.

Lastly, Brazinsky fails, in my opinion, to take into fuller account the Sino-Soviet dispute and its impact on the formulation of Chinese foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the Third World in the 1960s and '70s. He recognizes that Beijing was deeply troubled by Soviet "revisionism," so much so that it was soon openly "lambasting the Soviet Union as an enemy of revolutionary forces in Asia and Africa" (182). But I do not think he goes far enough in relating the implications of their dispute for the Cold War generally and in the Third World specifically. As Beijing competed with Washington in the rest of Asia and Africa, it did the same with the Soviets. Starting in the early 1960s, deteriorating relations with Moscow figured increasingly prominently in the strategic calculations of Mao and other Chinese leaders.

Thus, China's push into the Third World and its struggle for influence there had, I believe, as much to do with asserting itself as the "real" vanguard of the international communist movement as it did with other considerations, including reclaiming its status as a world power at the expense of the United States. In fact, in the eyes of Chinese policymakers at the time, the quest for status may have had less to do with erasing past humiliation than it did with demonstrating the superiority of Chinese revolutionary prescriptions over Soviet ones. In retrospect, the ever-widening rift between Beijing and Moscow conditioned the Cold War in the Third World as much as, if not even more than, the Sino-American and Soviet-American competitions there.

To be sure, “Sino-American competition had an unquestionable impact on many guerrilla struggles” (32), but so, too, did the Sino-Soviet dispute. Brazinsky is absolutely correct in asserting that during the 1960s and 1970s South Vietnam became a “critical test case” for Beijing’s and Washington’s “starkly different visions for the future of Southeast Asia” (238). As Brazinsky points out, ensuring the triumph of wars of national liberation would “attest to the validity of Maoist doctrines, establish the PRC as a model for oppressed peoples waging wars of national liberation, and cement China’s status as the world’s leading revolutionary force” (231).

At the same time, however, South Vietnam became a critical test for the contrasting positions Beijing and Moscow adopted on resolving East-West/North-South conflict. For Mao, the war in South Vietnam became a laboratory of sorts to demonstrate the suitability and merits of militancy and revolutionary violence, of armed struggle. And that stood in stark contrast with the Soviet position, which called for the resolution of differences between Hanoi and the NLF, on the one hand, and the regime in Saigon and the United States, on the other, through negotiations. Until the disastrous Tet and “mini-Tet” campaigns of the first half of 1968, those were the metaphorical battle lines that Beijing and Moscow had drawn for themselves in Indochina.

Truth be told, much of my criticism of Brazinsky’s book is unfair, narrowly focused as it is on the one issue I am most familiar and comfortable with, that is, the Vietnam War. His is a remarkably insightful study of a critically important yet oft-ignored dimension of the global Cold War. The book in fact epitomizes the academic study of the Cold War at its best. The scope, like the source material, is wide-ranging, the organization is sound, and the writing is lucid.

Winning the Third World is required reading in a graduate seminar on the United States and the global Cold War that I am currently (Fall 2017) teaching at San Diego State. It has proven absolutely invaluable in helping students understand the nature of the post-1945 international system, as well as the critical role played by China and other “lesser” actors in perpetuating and conditioning that system. I do not believe I am deluding myself when I say that my students have also thoroughly and genuinely enjoyed reading it. We have much to learn from the troubled history of Sino-American relations, and Brazinsky’s account does justice to the importance of that history.

Note:

1. Lester Velie, “Chinese Red Star Over Latin America,” *Reader’s Digest*, March 1961, 97-102.

“Not Winning the Third World”: A Review of Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World*

Mitchell Lerner

In 1961, Guinean President Sékou Touré expelled the Soviet ambassador from his newly independent nation, charging Moscow with plotting to overthrow his government. “Guinea will never surrender to puppets,” Touré raged publicly. “The only course before them is a bloodbath.”¹ Quickly, officials in Washington and Beijing scrambled to fill the void, hoping to spread their nations’ influence within this emerging Cold War battleground. The Kennedy administration generally relied on private firms that, backed by government guarantees on their investments, sought to develop Guinea’s economic resources and productive capacities as a way to lure the country into the American orbit. American companies worked to develop the nation’s mines, increase farm

production, and encourage trade with the outside world. Mao Zedong adopted a different tactic. Unable to match American financial resources, Chinese officials emphasized a more direct and hands-on approach that was focused on generating more immediate and obvious practical results at the expense of long-term investment. They also stressed the importance of recognizing indigenous values and traditions rather than trying to push Guinea in a new direction, and which required Chinese representatives to live and work alongside the local population to reinforce the sense of solidarity and understanding between the two peoples.

The Chinese approach, as Gregg Brazinsky’s brilliant new book on Sino-American competition in the Third World demonstrates, was more successful. Guinean leaders had little patience for Washington’s long-term approach, and they resented the distance maintained by many American officials. By late 1966, Touré announced that the United States was “welcome to reduce aid,” and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow soon advised all American citizens, including Peace Corps and Agency for International Development personnel, to leave the country (281). But Beijing’s victory proved ephemeral. Guinea’s economy, for reasons that were primarily internal, remained stagnant. Chinese aid was welcomed, but any attempt to exert political influence was met warily by local officials. And the surrounding region was beset by political instability and rivalry that not only undermined the Chinese efforts in Guinea but also prevented its few successes from spreading beyond Guinean borders. In the end, the Sino-American fight over Guinea may have been more fruitful for the Chinese than the Americans, but neither side emerged with what it really sought. “The sad irony,” concludes Brazinsky, “was that the United States and China both had much to offer the Third World, but their rivalry ultimately prevented them from delivering on their promises” (354).

Guinea, as *Winning the Third World* chronicles, was hardly an uncommon story. The book follows the struggle for influence between the two great powers throughout much of the twentieth century and finds more failure for both sides than it does success. But Brazinsky does more than simply trace these outreach efforts. He argues that this competition was less about military or economic gain or even about expanding the two nations’ disparate ideological systems and more about status. Brazinsky depicts Chinese policy as being rooted in two related factors that drove the nation towards the pursuit of greater international standing. The first factor was China’s deep resentment of the humiliations inflicted by the Great Powers on China earlier in the century, which laid the groundwork for the Communist Party’s nationalist appeal at home. Increasing influence and standing in the Third World soon became a central part of this appeal and a defining component of the early years of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership. The second factor was Mao Zedong himself, whose role in the development of Chinese foreign policy was shaped by his desire to enhance his image as a great theoretician and revolutionary. That image was tied to increasing China’s standing in the world and improving his own political standing at home. As a result, Beijing, especially in the decades immediately after the Korean War, sought to hold up its own revolutionary path as a model to those struggling to break the shackles of Western imperialism, and committed itself to a multifaceted effort to use economic, cultural, and diplomatic soft power to win the hearts and minds of the Third World. Alarmed by this growing Chinese effort, American officials in turn tried to meet these challenges with their own outreach campaigns, ones intended to win over converts in Asia and Africa while excluding the Chinese at the same time, although the American approaches were clearly more defensive and

reactive than those of its rival.

In its examination of this Sino-American competition, *Winning the Third World* leaves no stone unturned, taking readers across multiple twentieth-century soft power battlefields, with a focus on Asia and Africa. Brazinsky starts his story with the Chinese May Fourth Movement in 1919, positing that even at the outset, Chinese nationalists saw themselves as part of a community of exploited nations—nations that not only shared certain anti-Western values but also might become junior partners in a Chinese-led alliance. Although American leaders rarely took the CCP threat seriously in the early years, the dramatic growth of the party in the late 1930s and its emerging commitment to spread “Mao Zedong Thought” as an alternative model for developing states to emulate soon attracted American hostility, which was rooted in the fear that Mao would spread his ideological influence to other colonial nations. The Chinese entry into the Korean War—which Brazinsky attributes largely to Mao’s desire to impress and hence win over other nations that might adopt the revolutionary line—convinced American policymakers of the need to take the threat of an expansionist China seriously and sparked the first steps of the conflict between the two over Chinese status on the international stage. The post-Korean War embargo on China, we learn, was thus supported by American policymakers less because it was effective and more because its resonance as a form of moral censure might lessen Beijing’s standing with the international community (69). The Bandung Conference in 1955 cemented the Sino-American rivalry, as American officials were taken aback by Mao and Zhou Enlai’s success in presenting China as a moderate and pragmatic alternative to the Western system. Over the next two decades, the two nations fought a quiet war to enhance their standing with emerging Afro-Asian nations.

The rest of the book focuses on the Cold War years and the many soft power battles that emerged. Although the specifics varied by country and region, the overarching picture is one of American money and industrial development efforts competing against Chinese manpower and rhetorical solidarity, supplemented on both sides by cultural and propaganda efforts. These were fights for influence that the United States usually lost, although its losses didn’t necessarily translate into Chinese wins. The book is full of wonderful stories that trace the competition across the globe. Among them are tales of American officials meddling in Laotian politics as revenge for Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma’s visit to China in 1956; surprisingly successful Chinese cultural diplomacy efforts that included films, music, circus performers, and even Zhou Enlai’s attempts at traditional dance in Mali; battles waged for loyalty in Pakistan, Cambodia, and Indonesia that indirectly led to the Games of the New Emerging Forces in 1963, a mid-level sporting competition for Third World athletes that the United States tried to undermine; the fierce economic development competition waged in Africa, where, rather than admit their mistakes, American officials often pointed to indigenous shortcomings and racial inadequacies as the cause of their own failures. Although he is critical of American failures, Brazinsky highlights Chinese shortcomings as well and, furthermore, points to the many indigenous and transnational factors that were beyond the control of either side. In the end, he concludes, neither country really won the Third World. The story of their struggle to try to do so, he notes, “demonstrated that it is far easier to seek status than to attain it” (8).

In the end, *Winning the Third World* is a landmark work of international history, one that contributes not only to our understanding of Sino-American relations during the Cold War but also to the literature on soft power diplomacy overall. Its breadth is enormous, and the research, in both

American and Chinese sources, is equally impressive. There are, of course, a few small issues with which one might quibble. I think Brazinsky overstates the extent to which the decisions made at Versailles steered Mao towards the communist ranks (16). The chairman’s disillusionment with the results of the conference was certainly significant, as Brazinsky shows, but his intellectual development seems to me to have been pushing him in that direction anyway, as was his own political opportunism.² I also think that the book’s focus on international status as the driving force for Chinese actions sometimes comes at the expense of domestic factors. China’s intervention into the Korean War, for example, is presented as the result of Chinese desires to boost their prestige in the region (47–8), without much discussion of the domestic political environment in which the decision was made, an environment that reflected growing doubts about CCP strength and legitimacy.³ Mao’s target audience, I would argue, thus seemed to be as much domestic as it was foreign, and that is an audience that Brazinsky largely overlooks here.

I am also surprised by the lack of coverage of Korea after 1953. If the Korean War, as Brazinsky shows, was seen by Chinese policymakers as a critical event in their campaign to establish China as a leading voice of anticolonial revolution, one would expect more coverage of the relationship after the war, particularly in the immediate postwar period when North Korea was struggling to rebuild, and during the periods when China and the USSR were competing for influence. I also admit to being a bit confused by Brazinsky’s claim that “Beijing and Washington both . . . sacrificed far more blood and treasure in Korea [than Vietnam]” (58). Since the United States clearly lost more of both in Vietnam, I presume he means collectively, but it is still a confusing phraseology. These are admittedly very minor quibbles, however, and they do nothing to distract from the overall accomplishment of *Winning the Third World*.

The only larger concern I have reflects an issue that I think is inherent in the larger framework of the book: the somewhat elastic meaning of the term “status.” China’s quest for status is the organizing construct around which the book is wrapped, and yet by the author’s own admission it is “a somewhat slippery concept . . . not easily measured or quantified” (4). Traditional notions of status seeking, as classically defined by such thinkers as Weber and Thorstein Veblen, fail to explain China’s vision, since those notions assume that the status seeker desires acceptance and respect within an established order, while China instead sought status as the leader of a revolutionary vanguard committed to tearing down the existing structure. In Brazinsky’s portrayal, China’s quest thus emerges as a sort of inherent contradiction, a nation railing against top-down hierarchy while trying to establish itself atop a new order (which the author rather brilliantly describes as an effort to create an “anti-hierarchical hierarchy”) (5). But while I agree that “status” was a central component of Chinese foreign policy, I am still not sure what it is or how we measure it. Increased economic partnerships sent Chinese goods abroad and no doubt enhanced China’s standing overseas, but they also promoted economic gain at home and helped solidify the regime’s political standing. In those cases, was status the endgame, or was it a steppingstone towards more tangible consequences related to military, economic, or political results? And I fear that the author defines his term so broadly that everything can fit into the framework of status seeking. We learn, for example, that China’s efforts to receive foreign dignitaries were consciously planned in ways that would enhance the nation’s status, but I admit that I didn’t find the cheering crowds, lavish receptions, and ornate tours for distinguished guests that the book describes to be particularly different from the standard diplomatic protocol of almost every other nation. When

Italian Premier Fanfani visited the United States in 1963, for example, he was met by adoring crowds; feted at White House receptions; escorted by an honor guard of soldiers, sailors, marines; and, in Chicago, entertained by the 5th Army Band. I suppose one could argue that this fanfare was indeed an effort to enhance America's status with Italy, but surely it was not about seeking to increase America's standing on the international stage. Instead, it was about shoring up diplomatic alliances for strategic purposes and greasing the wheels of trade and investment. If everyone seeks status in the international arena, and if status is often just a means towards obtaining more tangible results in more practical arenas, and if status can be sought in even the most mundane tasks, how useful is it really as an explanatory construct?

None of these issues, however, should detract from what is a tremendous book overall. Thoughtful, well written, sophisticated, and truly international, *Winning the Third World* stands not only as the definitive work on this aspect of Sino-American relations and a wonderful examination of the superpower struggle for Third World loyalties, but as one of the best books about American-East Asian relations in recent years.

Notes:

1. Quoted in *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 28, 1961, 10.
2. See, for example, Alexander Pantsov, *Mao: The Real Story* (New York, 2013), chap. 5; and Jon Halliday and Jung Chang, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York, 2005), chap. 2.
3. On this point, see especially Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), chap. 4.

Response to Reviewers

Gregg Brazinsky

I would like to thank Andrew Johns for organizing this round table and the four reviewers, whose work I greatly admire, for taking the time to review this book. I read the reviews as being, for the most part, positive. They praised *Winning the Third World* for its research, writing, and organization. The reviewers did raise some questions, however. They asked why I did not include some points or go into greater detail on some issues. And some of the reviewers do not find my argument about status—the core concept of the book—completely persuasive.

In many cases the problem that I have with the points raised by these critiques is not so much that I disagree with them but that incorporating them would have forced me to make different choices about how the book was organized and written, ultimately weakening its focus. I think it therefore might be most profitable to go over some of the choices that I made in writing the book and reflect on why I think more extended treatment of some of the issues brought up by the reviewers would not have strengthened it.

As the book's subtitle plainly states, I chose to focus my narrative on Sino-American rivalry in the Third World. In particular, I analyze how China strove to expand its status and influence in the Global South and how the United States sought to counter these efforts. As I explain in the introduction, Sino-American competition is one of many possible windows for looking at the Cold War in the Third World. While it brings some aspects of the conflict into sharp relief, it necessarily obscures others or pushes them to the background.

Focusing on how Beijing and Washington aimed to "win" the loyalties of Afro-Asian peoples meant that domestic politics (in both China and the United States) did

not receive as much attention. Mitch Lerner and Jeffrey Crean both criticize the book on this point, arguing that Mao's efforts to expand Chinese influence abroad seemed as much geared at bolstering domestic legitimacy as enhancing new China's prestige at the international level. I do not disagree that Chinese diplomacy also had a domestic political function. But greater attention to this would not, in my view, have deepened our understanding of how the struggle between the United States and the PRC unfolded in the Third World, which is the story I wanted to tell in the book. Even if this was an important motive for the PRC, I saw little evidence in Chinese sources that it was more important to PRC policy toward Afro-Asian countries than Beijing's internationalist objectives. Moreover, Chinese domestic politics were not really an arena of Sino-American competition. While American policymakers did seek to weaken the Chinese Communist Party domestically where they could, by the 1950s they were realistic about that effort and recognized that Mao and his comrades would be in power for the foreseeable future.

Zeroing in on competition between Beijing and Washington also meant a heavier focus on some parts of the Third World and some time periods than others. I was not writing a Cold War history of Tanzania, Vietnam, Indonesia or any other Afro-Asian country so much as I was trying to demonstrate how the different countries in the region were impacted by Sino-American competition. This brings me to Pierre Asselin's critique of my handling of Vietnam in the book. Somewhat modestly, he does not bring up what I acknowledge is a flaw in the manuscript: my failure to cite his 2013 work on Vietnam, which, unfortunately, I did not become aware of until my book was in press. I suppose this speaks to the need of Cambridge University Press to increase its presence at SHAFR more than anything else.

Asselin makes two criticisms of my treatment of Vietnam: (1) that I overstate the importance of the NLF and (2) that I overemphasize Sino-American competition and downplay the impact of Sino-Soviet rivalry. On the first point, I would say that it is not so much that I overstate the importance of the NLF as that my handling of it in the book reflects the importance accorded to it by Beijing and Washington. As I argue, it was often the perceptions of Beijing and Washington—in this case that the NLF was answering to Hanoi—that shaped their policies more than the underlying realities. Thus, regardless of the underlying reality, Beijing's perception of the NLF as a revolutionary organization that was emulating the Maoist revolutionary model was a key part of what drove Chinese support for it and Chinese policy. It is for this reason that Chinese support for the NLF (militarily and diplomatically) receives so much attention in my chapter.

On the second point, I do acknowledge in the book that the Soviets would eventually gain influence in Vietnam and that, ironically, neither the United States nor China really benefited from their involvement in Vietnam. I also explain in the book (chapter 6) how Beijing was driven to support revolutionaries in the Third World in part by its competition with Moscow and how that had the ironic effect of intensifying Sino-American rivalry as well. At the same time, Asselin is right to say that most of my attention is focused on Sino-American rivalry and that I do not go into as much detail on Vietnam after 1966 (when Soviet involvement grew) as I do on the earlier period. While I believe that this story is relevant to Vietnamese history or the history of the Vietnam War, it is less relevant to a history of Sino-American competition in Vietnam, which petered out by the late 1960s. I can understand that the book might not be completely satisfying to regional or country specialists seeking a more complete account of how the Cold War played out in particular places. But if I had chosen that approach, the narrative of Sino-American rivalry, which has been mostly ignored by other scholars, would have

ended up getting subordinated to the numerous different national histories that the rivalry influenced.

In writing this history of Sino-American rivalry, I strove hard to create a balance between Chinese and American viewpoints and actions through the use of materials gathered in both countries. I do not know if I would go so far as Meredith Oyen does and say that I created a sort of “Western impact and Eastern response model” in reverse. But I do try to highlight that in many times and places, China was a critical actor and that the Cold War in the Third World was shaped not only by American policies but also by what the Chinese were doing. In this sense, the book is very much in keeping with the broader, ongoing effort in the field to encourage more multi-national, multi-archival research.

I must say it comes as something of a surprise that the promising young scholar of the group, Jeffrey Crean, seems to want to bring the field back to a more U.S.-centric perspective. He contends that I fail to demonstrate that blocking China’s efforts to gain status in the Afro-Asian world was an important part of the Kennedy administration’s grand strategy. The problem with this critique is that I never said that it was. Rather than taking American grand strategy as the starting point and organizing my work around it, I sought instead to view the history of Sino-American rivalry in the Third World as a more dialectical process in which America’s China policy was sometimes completely reactive to what Beijing was doing and did not fit into any larger strategy. The book gives hundreds of pages of examples of how the Kennedy and Johnson administrations tried to diminish the influence of Chinese efforts to support insurgencies, implement aid projects, and spread the influence of Maoism. Vast amounts of time, resources, and energy were spent on these efforts. Whether or not they were related to a broader grand strategy is less relevant in my view than the fact that they were made throughout the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies.

Finally, the central argument of *Winning the Third World* is that status was the key driving force behind Sino-American competition in the Third World. I argue that China’s craving for status motivated many of its policies while American officials were loath to see the PRC gain legitimacy or prestige anywhere in the world and did what they could to prevent it from doing so. As I explain in the book, defining status precisely is a difficult task because it cannot be measured objectively like territorial gains or economic wealth. I thought a great deal about exactly what to say about status in the introduction. If I defined it too narrowly I could not have applied it to many of the initiatives that Beijing pursued in Afro-Asian countries, while if I defined it too broadly, the term would lose its analytical utility.

Mitch Lerner and Pierre Asselin both think that I erred on the side of defining it too broadly. Lerner in particular wonders whether the efforts China made to lavish attention upon foreign dignitaries that I describe in the book were truly meant to enhance its status. He notes that receiving foreign dignitaries is a part of standard diplomatic protocol and gives the example of the American reception for the Italian premier, Amintore Fanfani, in 1963. To some degree, this is exactly my point. Much standard diplomatic protocol is geared—either explicitly or implicitly—at enhancing the status and prestige of the participating countries. State visits raise the visibility and legitimacy of the leaders and nations that are involved in them. Were diplomatic historians to pay more attention to status as an interpretive paradigm they would doubtless find that it inserts itself into the day-to-day practice of diplomacy in a myriad of ways.

In the introduction to *Winning the Third World*, I acknowledge that states often pursue status because it can be a means to more tangible ends. Picking up on this point, Lerner and Asselin both ask how we can know if status was the primary objective of Chinese and American policies or if the tangible objectives that came along with status were more important. I think, however, that this criticism ignores one nuance of my argument. I contend that status is the best framework for understanding Sino-American competition in the Third World. I do not argue, however, that it completely explains all Chinese (or American) policies toward the Global South. Thus, even if Beijing and Washington were in fact pursuing status as a means to achieve other goals, the actual competition between them was focused primarily on status itself. Since the primary purpose of the book was to describe the competition, it did not make sense to focus on all of the more tangible objectives that China and the United States hoped would go along with their enhanced status.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat one other point that I make in the introduction. *Winning the Third World* is, in many ways, a starting point. I made choices about what to include and exclude so that the book could highlight an important dimension of the Cold War that has not been given enough attention by other scholars despite its obvious relevance to the present. Many of the issues raised by the reviewers are indeed worthy of further exploration and I expect they will receive fuller treatment in different kinds of historical works. I do hope that my book (along with Jeremy Friedman’s excellent recent work on Sino-Soviet competition) helps to establish the pivotal importance of China as an actor in the Afro-Asian world during the Cold War. Now it will be up to others to spend time in Africa, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere to explore the full scope and many facets of Chinese influence.