Journal of International Social Studies, v. 7, n. 2, 2017, pp. 121-135

The Third World Perspective on the Cold War: Making Curriculum and Pedagogy Relevant in History Classrooms

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Abstract: American and global history curriculum frameworks for high schools across the 50 states generally present the topic of the Cold War from the Western political perspective and contain material about the impact of the US-Soviet ideological rivalry on American society. This article argues that since the Cold War impacted the lives of people in the Third World as well, their stories deserve a place in the history curriculum. This article also suggests that since American society is culturally diverse, it is imperative for history educators to teach history in the learners' social and cultural contexts. Therefore, both the Cold War history content and pedagogy should include perspectives from the Third World so that the past is relevant and meaningful for all students learning about the global Cold War.

Key words: Cold War, Third World, social history, pedagogy, curriculum

Introduction

An examination of the state curriculum frameworks for secondary American and global history suggests that the Cold War is recognized as an important topic for teaching and learning. With different emphases, content knowledge about the Cold War is included in both American history and global history standards. Whereas the American history curriculum presents an interpretation of the Cold War from the American domestic perspective, the global history curriculum includes some additional topics such as colonization, decolonization, revolutions, and nationalism in the Third World. However, both American history and global history curricula present interpretations that are top-down, and Cold War history is presented solely as a history of political conflicts. More importantly, while the global history curriculum frameworks include additional material on the Cold War, an adequate discussion on its societal impact on the people of the Third World is absent from the narrative. As a result, an important global story that deserves a respectable place in the curriculum is mostly narrowed to political events and

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http://www.iajiss.org ISSN: 2327-3585

decision-making in high places like Washington, Moscow, and European capitals. Such a top-down approach to Cold War history, whether traditionalist or revisionist, excludes what historian Howard Zinn (2015) calls the "peoples' history." More than half of the world population in the Third World was, in some fashion, affected by the decisions of the competing World Powers during the Cold War period, but their experiences are excluded from the narrative and are, therefore, hidden from history. Hence, what the curriculum presents is a Manichaean perspective that is narrow and parochial. Unless that vital story is included in the history curriculum, learners will continue to receive a truncated and jaundiced narrative about the Cold War period. To address this lacuna, this article makes two interrelated arguments about teaching and learning Cold War history in secondary schools, the first about content knowledge and the second about pedagogical knowledge.

First, I argue that since Cold War history is unique in that it straddles both American history and global history courses, it offers multiple opportunities for students to learn about change and continuity in the 20th century, both in the United States and in the world beyond its borders. Second, I argue that in the globalized and pluralist world of the 21st century, the methods of teaching and learning Cold War history in the American classroom should reflect a change from how Cold War history was taught in the 20th century. Whereas Cold War history during the period of the latter half of the 20th century, 1946-1991, was taught as current history or as a history of current events, in the current American curriculum, the Cold War belongs to the past and is taught as past history.

Moreover, American society in the 21st century is demographically different from that in the second half of the 20th century. Present-day communities and schools are far more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, faith, culture, and technological skills, which suggests that the educational needs of current students are, indeed, different from the educational needs of students growing up during the Cold War period. For students growing up in the post-Cold War world—a world that is more culturally diverse, globally interdependent, and technologically advanced—it is imperative that they learn history lessons that are germane, objective, meaningful, engaging, evidence-based, and taught as a systematic inquiry of the past.

Considering the educational needs of students in the post-Cold War pluralist society, I propose that it would be culturally relevant, intellectually beneficial, and pedagogically effective for Cold War history to be taught as social history instead of simply presented as the history of the ideological conflict between socialism and capitalism. There is no doubt that the global ideological conflict between the two power blocs remains the overarching context of the Cold

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War, but how, when, why, and where that global ideological conflict affected the everyday lives of more than half of the world's population are questions which warrant consideration in history curriculum and pedagogy. Investigating these and other similar questions in the classroom would help students understand how the events of the Cold War shaped their present world. Also, a case can be made that since American students learning world history lessons in 21st century classrooms belong to culturally diverse communities, they would benefit more by relating the story of the global Cold War to their family roots, cultural context, and heritage. Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton (2001) suggest that through history projects, students may be able to establish linkages between their own families and national and world events. Thus, the history of the Cold War in the Third World may be assigned to students as a research project in which they have conversations with older members of their families to establish linkages between their own family heritage and the events of the Cold War.

Teaching and learning about the effects of the Cold War on Third World nations requires an interdisciplinary approach and an understanding of the basic concepts of geography, economics, sociology, and anthropology. In other words, the history of the Third World during the Cold War period is much more than political or diplomatic history—students should be taught to integrate history with other social sciences to investigate cultures, religions, economies, and political institutions of specific countries in the Third World. Also, learning the social history of Third World countries during the Cold War is tantamount to doing history from below, which means that students will focus on the study of the dependent variable, and they will learn about those societies and populations that were affected, positively or negatively, by policy decisions made by the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, the history of the Cold War is the history of an event with global dimensions encompassing all facets of human experience, which means that through inquiry, students will learn to think globally, develop empathy for the people of the Third World, understand their challenges and struggles, and perhaps reflect on the enduring consequences of the Cold War.

The Cold War and the Third World

As a constructivist teacher, my aim in introducing a new topic is to simplify the material, ignite my students' curiosity, engage them in conversation about their prior knowledge, and learn about their perspectives. To accomplish this, at the outset I define the new concepts or terms and trace their origins. This practice has helped my students and I experience history together. So, what do the terms "Cold War" and "Third World" mean, and how are they related?

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"Cold War" and "Third World" are two 20th-century terms that are conceptually interconnected. We can trace the historical origins of both of these terms to the first decade after the end of the Second World War. Two distinguished Cold War historians, John Lewis Gaddis (2005) and Odd Arne Westad (2012), agree that British novelist George Orwell first coined the term "Cold War" to describe his vision of the post-War world under an undeclared state of war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Two prominent Americans of the mid-1940s, presidential advisor and financier Bernard Baruch (1960) and columnist Walter Lippmann (1947), also used "Cold War" to refer to the emerging conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and the condition of neither war nor peace. Since then, Western historians have used "Cold War" to refer to the period of ideological rivalry and absence of a "hot" war between the United States and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1989. The Cold War was a period of social, political, and economic change not just in Europe where it originated, but all over the world.

The Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union into 15 independent nation-states in 1991. While there was a prolonged fear of potential nuclear attacks between the two competing superpowers, the Cold War era was paradoxically a period of a "long peace" in that, in spite of the intense hostility between the two rivals, there was peace, and no bullets were exchanged between them (Gaddis, 1989). However, the same cannot be said for most of the Third World nations, which underwent entirely different experiences during the Cold War, including modernization, violence, revolutions, prolonged internecine conflicts, inter-state wars, the rise of nationalism, decolonization, and many coups d'état.

What is the "Third World?" The term is a Cold War construction referring to those regions of the world such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, where the people were non-white, poor, colonized, or in the early stages of their political and economic development. Scholar Arif Dirlik (2007) suggests that in 1952, French scholar Alfred Suavy first coined the term "Third World" to differentiate the newly independent nations from the advanced capitalist nations of the West and the socialist nations of Eastern Europe. Hence, the Third World became a new and distinct third category of nations. Westad (2013, p. 208) notes that different perspectives existed on the idea of the Third World. To anti-colonial radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, the term "Third World" was a point of satisfaction: it represented the future of the world because it opposed both the "First World" and the "Second World." However, to right-wing politicians and commentators in the United States and Western Europe, the Third World represented radical, socialist, and anti-capitalist ideologies. In any case, the Third World represented a movement seeking equality and social, political, and economic justice for the newly-independent nations.

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Nonetheless, at the onset of the Cold War era in 1946, most Third World nations were either colonized by Western imperial powers or, in the case of Latin American countries, ruled by military dictators, and were economically dependent on the affluent West. Historians and social scientists have categorized the nations of the Third World as underdeveloped nations, developing nations, poor nations, the periphery, and, recently, the global South. In any case, the nations of the Third World were in many respects different from other nations and faced numerous social, political, and economic challenges. It would be fair to say that during the Cold War period, the Third World was an ideological battlefield between global capitalism, led by the United States, and international socialism, led by the Soviet Union and China (Rotter, 2013).

The Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union profoundly affected the social, political, and economic order in societies beyond American and European national borders, especially the colonized, post-colonized, and economically weak and dependent societies of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the West Indies. How did the people in the Third World react to the global Cold War? How did global competition between the ideologies of capitalism and socialism affect the daily lives of the people? These are questions that deserve analysis in the Cold War narrative.

Asking these questions is important for three reasons. First, contextualizing teaching about the Cold War from the perspectives of the United States and the Soviet Union presents a parochial view of a global conflict that had social, political, cultural, and economic implications for billions of people who were culturally, socially, politically, and economically different from the two competing global power blocs. Since the Cold War was a global conflict, it is necessary to learn about its impact on all societies, advanced industrialized societies as well as underdeveloped or developing societies, both in the global north and in the Third World.

Second, the post-Cold War world is a globalized world: people, ideas, and products cross international borders with relative ease, which was problematic during the Cold War period because national borders were strictly controlled due to security and ideological tensions. Indeed, current trends in globalization and the increasing role of multinational corporations in international affairs have raised questions about the rationale of the idea of the nation-state itself. Also, during the Cold War, nationalist and anti-colonial movements led to the birth of many new sovereign nation-states in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the West Indies. Through a variety of international treaties, some new sovereign nation-states joined either the Communist bloc or the Western bloc. In 1955, however, 29 new nation-states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, held a conference at Bandung, Indonesia, known as the Bandung Conference, and launched

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the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) that promoted independent foreign policy and resisted the political influence of the two ideological global blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union.

Therefore, to present a comprehensive picture of the Cold War in the global context, it is vital to empathize with the people of the Third World who, as a consequence of the Cold War, went through a variety of experiences, including violence, the rise of nationalism, decolonization, revolutions, ethnic and religious persecution, dislocation of populations, repression, and coups d'état.

Third, history is personal. When we teach about the Cold War in a culturally and ethnically diverse high school classroom, our students learn about themselves and the lives of their parents and grandparents. Some students' parents and grandparents may have, at some point, migrated from one of the nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, or one of the former Communist bloc countries. For example, some of our students may belong to immigrant communities such as Vietnamese-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Arab-Americans, Russian-Americans, Iranian-Americans, Latino-Americans, Polish-Americans, and so forth. Some of our students' grandparents may have served with the U.S. troops deployed overseas during the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and numerous conflicts in the Middle East, or may have served as Peace Corps volunteers in one of the countries in the Third World. Perhaps some of our students were born into families that became political refugees during the Cold War or were persecuted by dictators for their political ideas or religious beliefs. All students can learn about the Cold War from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, the topic of the Cold War could be assigned as a research project in which the students act as historians using the historical method, examining primary and secondary sources to construct narratives about the Cold War through their own family heritage.

Historical Inquiry on the Third World

Although history educators Levstik and Barton (2015) find the inquiry method an effective strategy for learning about the past in elementary and middle schools, one could argue that it is also appropriate for students in secondary schools to do historical inquiry and write reports on the social history of the people of the Third World during the Cold War period. Social history is an eclectic approach that focuses on the struggles of ordinary people and communities rather than on the privileged few. Famous historians including Eric Hobsbawm (2012), Edward Thompson (1966), and Harold Perkin (2002) used social history as a tool to document, analyze,

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describe, and explain the social dimensions of different communities and social groups. Their purpose was to identify the basic socioeconomic factors that contributed to the historical change. By following the social historians' tradition, the students will be able to make meaning and develop a better understanding of the struggles of the people of the Third World during the Cold War period.

Since the students' social history project will focus on chronicling the people's narratives, it is vital to collect authentic evidence—to engage in conversation with those individuals who witnessed the Cold War events in the Third World, and who may be able to share their experiences of everyday life in one of the Third World countries. To accomplish this task, the students will follow the rich tradition of oral history, which has been used effectively by ancient as well as modern historians, including Herodotus, Thucydides, Hubert Howe Bancroft, Leopold Von Ranke, Marc Bloch, and Studs Terkel. Renowned oral historian Donald A. Ritchie (1995) suggests that as a research methodology, oral history has several advantages. First, it brings history home: the students will interview people in their own families and local communities who share their generational memories. Second, oral history requires students to have an active rather than passive involvement in learning history. Third, using oral history as a method helps students learn important research skills.

The students' research project will have two main goals: a) to investigate the impact of the global Cold War on the everyday life of the indigenous people in any one of the countries in the Third World, and b) to compare and contrast the perspectives of the people of the Third World with the perspectives presented in the curriculum and textbooks. The students will begin the project by first learning about the causation and chronology of the Cold War from the material in textbooks, class lectures, and encyclopedias.

A vast amount of raw material, primary and secondary sources, related to the causation and chronology of the Cold War are available at libraries and museums. While using chronology and causation are the essential components of doing history, students also need to learn to use evidence, interpretation, and implications of historical events. For example, people in different parts of the world had diverse experiences during the Cold War period and, therefore, hold diverse opinions about it. Essentially, there are three main narratives: The American narrative, the Communist narrative, and the Third World narrative. In other words, the Cold War affected different societies differently, so it has a different meaning for different people in different parts of the world. Recognizing those diverse perspectives is vital for developing an objective understanding of the history of the Cold War. Moreover, since the history standards and

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textbooks present the Cold War from the American perspective, very little is mentioned about the fear and aspirations of the people in the Third World who also were part of the story for almost half a century and, in some cases, even beyond the official end of the Cold War.

One way to guide the students in their history project on the Cold War in the Third World is to teach them the process of historical inquiry, which involves studying the "what, who, when, how, and why" of past events, gathering evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources, verifying the chronology of past events, formulating historical questions, understanding the historical significance of the story, identifying causes and consequences, developing historical empathy, and constructing a narrative. While the students' goal is to learn about the Cold War and its worldwide social, political, and economic implications, they will also learn about themselves and their heritage.

After learning about the causation and chronology of the Cold War, students will interview at least two older individuals who witnessed the consequences of the Cold War in one of the countries in the Third World. The older individuals may include the members of the students' own families, retired military personnel in the community, retired U.S. Aid workers, Peace Corps volunteers, and/or those who, in some capacity, have direct experience with Third World countries. The students will use the questionnaire below as a guide to conduct these interviews.

The rationale for the interviews is that the students will be able to do history like a historian and will appreciate the zeitgeist of the Cold War period. In other words, the students will be able to look at the Cold War from non-Western perspectives and, by collecting sufficient evidence, draw their own conclusions about the Cold War. Indeed, as historian Robert J. McMahon (2013) posits, the people of some Third World nations such as the Congo, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba, Angola, Guatemala, Granada, Bangladesh, Iran, Palestine, and Afghanistan either experienced or witnessed extreme violence and disruption to the extent that the Cold War was for them a "hot" war; millions of people lost their homes, land, family members, businesses, and lives.

It is not to suggest, however, that the citizens of the United States and the Soviet Union, which competed against each other for world domination for 45 years, remained unscathed. Needless to say, thousands of American soldiers lost their lives in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s. Similarly, in the 1980s, the Red Army of the Soviet Union lost thousands of its soldiers in Afghanistan while fighting the US-backed Mujahideen. Since both ideological as well as physical wars were fought in the Third World countries, it is imperative to investigate the implications of the global superpower struggle for the populations of those countries.

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Asking the following questions should help the students construct narratives as well as learn historical thinking skills such as historical comprehension, chronological thinking, historical analysis, and historical inquiry skills:

Suggested Questions for the Interview:

1. Did you grow up in a democratic society or under a military dictatorship?
2. Was your country ever colonized by one of the Western nations?
3. How many political parties were there in your old country?
4. Did you enjoy religious and political freedom?
5. Were elections held regularly, and were all adults allowed to vote freely in elections?
6. What movies did you watch as a young man? Did you watch Hollywood movies or Russian movies?
7. Was mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and television) free or controlled by the government?
8. What books, newspapers, and magazines did you read, and in what language?
9. What were the national and international issues that the mass media covered?
10. Could you publish an article or a book without being censored by the authorities?
11. Did you work for the government or a private corporation?
12. Were you a member of a labor union in your country?
13. Was your native language the official language of the country or was the dominant language one of the European languages?
14. Were you allowed to travel overseas?
15. During the Cold War, was the culture of your country predominantly traditional, modern, or transitional?
16. What foreign countries were considered to be friendly to your country and why?
17. What made you decide to migrate to the United States?

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18. Was your family ever affected by a revolution, liberation movement, civil war, coup d'état, colonization, or political repression? If yes, please explain.
19. Did you write or receive any letters, diaries, and articles during the Cold War?
20. What were your fears, hopes, and options during the Cold War?

After collecting information, the students will write narratives in the past tense that will present a clear perspective of the people of the Third World. The students should be sensitive to the biases of the interviewees. As the students construct their narratives, they will also be building tenable arguments. In other words, the students should include multiple perspectives on the topic. The students' projects should describe the social and cultural life of the people explaining change and continuity. That is to say, the students should focus on everyday human experiences such as art and literature, popular culture, customs and traditions, citizens' civic participation, economy, political ideologies, social and political movements, individual freedom or the lack thereof, the role of the media, government policies on censorship, educational opportunities, and change and continuity, but in the end, they should present their own positions that they could defend in a debate. All students will share their projects with the class and hold a discussion.

Conclusion

This article discusses two interrelated issues about the history of the Cold War: content knowledge and teaching methods. First, it argues that although current state history curriculum frameworks present the Cold War history as a history of the ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, they overlook the impact of the Cold War on the nations of the Third World. Such an approach is Manichaean and truncated because it presents the Cold War history from the dominant perspectives of the capitalist West and the socialist East. The third, overlooked perspective on Cold War history is that of the Third World, which also deserves a respectable place in the history curriculum. The rationale for paying attention to the Third World perspective is that the Cold War was a global event and, therefore, we should present an unabridged narrative. Therefore, students should learn about the wider implications of the Cold War on the social, political, cultural, and economic life of all people, including the people of Third World nations.

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Second, the article suggests that since schools and communities in the United States are becoming culturally diverse, we should teach Cold War history in the learners' social and cultural contexts so that it is relevant and meaningful for them. It proposes that the students may benefit more if the Cold War history is taught as social history rather than simply presenting it as the history of ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Social history integrates other social sciences and focuses on the everyday experiences of the ordinary citizens. In other words, social history is people's history. Moreover, the students could explore the social history of the Cold War through the method of oral history by interviewing older individuals in their families and communities, asking them questions about their experiences during the Cold War period both in the United States and overseas. By using the techniques of oral history, the students will be actively engaged in doing historical research and, also, learning multiple academic skills.

Cold War Vocabulary

Détente; McCarthyism; Third World; North-South Dialogue; Containment; Colonization; Decolonization; Iron Curtain; Communism; Capitalism; Socialism; Marxism; Berlin Wall; Nuclear weapons; Disarmament; Bandung Conference; Non-aligned Movement; Realpolitik; Marshall Plan; Post-colonial world; Deterrence; Developing world; Anti-imperialism; Domino theory; Cuban missile crisis; Nation-state; Espionage; Modernization; Dictatorship; Nationalism; Non-proliferation Treaty; Arms Race; The Atlantic Alliance; NATO; SEATO; CENTO (The Baghdad Pact); Balance of Power; Military-industrial Complex; Independence; Truman Doctrine; Cuban Missile Crisis.

Chronology of Cold War Events in the Third World

First Indochina War (1946-1950)

Birth of the American CIA (1946)

Occupation of Palestine and the Birth of Israel (1948)

Korean War (1950-53)

Taiwan Crisis (1954-1959)

CIA Overthrow of democratically elected government in Iran (1953)

U.S. involvement in Guatemala (1954)

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Vietnam Conflict (1955-1975)

Suez Crisis (1956)

Beirut Crisis (1958)

Cuban Revolution (1959)

U2 spy plane shot down in the USSR (1960)

Peace Corps Founded (1960)

Bay of Pigs (1961)

War between India and Pakistan (1965)

Six-Day War in the Middle East (1967)

Disintegration of Pakistan and the Birth of Bangladesh (1971)

Coup d'état in Chile (1973)

The Yom Kippur War (1973)

Fall of Saigon (1975)

Revolution in Iran and Hostage Crisis (1979)

The Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan (1980)

War in Afghanistan (1980-Present)

U.S. Marines attacked in Beirut (1982)

The U.S. invasion of Granada (1983)

Iran-Contra Conspiracy Case (1983-1988)

Tiananmen Square Incident (1989)

The Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991)

The End of the Cold War (1991)

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Films about the Cold War

From Russia with Love (1963)

Dr. Strangelove (1964)

Seven Days in May (1965)

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold (1965)

Torn Curtain (1966)

Funeral in Berlin (1966)

State of Siege (1972)

Spies like Us (1985)

Operation Condor (1991)

Thirteen Days (2000)

Lumumba (2000)

Kandahar (2001)

The Quiet American (2002)

Osama (2004)

Charlie Wilson's War (2007)

The Kite Runner (2007)

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http://www.iajiss.org ISSN: 2327-3585

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http://www.iajiss.org ISSN: 2327-3585

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