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The Emergence of a Multipolar World: Decentring the Cold War in Chinese History Textbooks

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Introduction

In compiling a history textbook, the authors must—regardless of their own national context—make a multitude of decisions about how to interpret and present their content. The resulting accounts bear witness to how those particular authors interpret the world and their country's place in it. In the case of how current Chinese textbooks portray the Cold War, textbook authors must take into account both China's complicated past and its equally complicated present.

China held an unusual position during the Cold War. In 1949, the American-backed nationalist regime was ousted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) and declared solidarity with the Soviet Union. A decade later, they were at odds with Moscow. After a period of enmity with both superpowers, the USA and the USSR, Beijing achieved a working relationship with the countries of the Western camp (Chen 2001, 49–50; 2010, 182–183).

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During the course of the Cold War, China oscillated between both camps, refusing to align with either, even as it was at odds with many of the non-aligned countries (Latham 2010, 266, 274–5; Yu 2013, 695). China's shifting orientation during the Cold War had global weight in that at each stage it was, and was seen as, powerful enough to tip the balance between the two superpowers and profoundly influence the global stage, even if it could never independently shape the world to the same extent as the US and USSR (Chen 2001, 2–6). The authors of Chinese history textbooks must decide how to integrate China's changing stance and significant, if secondary, role in the Cold War into their narrative of the period.

They must also address the enormous changes China has been undergoing for the past several decades, including changes to its identity. With China's ongoing economic growth, its social transformation, and its growing global influence, how to describe China as a whole is an open question. Is it socialist or capitalist? Do economic changes require a political reimagining? Is the country a developing post-colonial country or a political and economic superpower? Is it outside or inside global structures of power? The answers to these questions are as numerous as the researchers seeking to answer them. What answers, then, do the compilers of history textbooks give, considering the rich subject of the Cold War and China's complicated history during the period? With China's identity in flux, what do they say about the country, its future, and its place in the world when describing the past, and how do they integrate China's rapid change into their narrative?

Writers of Chinese textbooks are hardly the only authors confronted with a complex background when creating a national text. That this historical and social complexity is compounded with political demands is not unique to China, nor is it unexplored in the Chinese context; indeed, the influence of the Chinese government on textbooks, as through the 'patriotic education campaign', is an area of study in its own right (Wang 2012; Zhao 1998). As with textbooks the world over, the various pressures on authors, the multiple national images they seek to convey, and the need to reconcile these with a complex history, lead to texts that combine multiple narratives, perspectives, and priorities, some of which are complimentary, and some of which are not. The result is compromise,

ambivalence, and contradiction, and the fault lines in the text speak to the goals that created them (Klerides 2010, 38–41).

Against the backdrop of these complicated influences, some of which reflect universal conditions and some of which are particular to the Chinese context, this chapter analyses how a set of history textbooks currently used in many Chinese classrooms narrates the Cold War (Ahn 2009, 24–5; Li 2011, 140; Müller 2011, 48). Special emphasis is given to three interrelated aspects: how the textbook authors explain the origin of this conflict, how the Cold War past is linked to the post-Cold War present, and what all this means for the image of the national Chinese Self that emerges from the textbook's accounts. I will thus assess how Chinese textbook accounts compare with ongoing global debates and controversies regarding the Cold War. Assuming that we can learn a great deal about the messages conveyed by the textbook from how the subject matter is structured and segmented, I begin by analysing the structure the textbook authors impose on the story of the Cold War. I attend particularly to the decisions made by the authors to break down the historical narrative into separate units and chapters. Referring to current debates in global historiography, I also determine how much space is allocated to actors and events that can be categorized as relevant either for the conflict between East and West or for the conflict between North and South. In a second step, I then focus on how the narrative portrays the United States, the Soviet Union, the so-called 'Third World', and China as key actors of the conflict. How coherent or ambivalent are these portraits, and how do the authors address the tension that might arise from a complicated history during which China not only changed its alliances but also its identity?

Cold War Stories of the Cold War

Early in the Cold War, China was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union and adopted the orthodox Soviet interpretation of the conflict (Yu 2013, 685–6). This interpretation attributed the Cold War to the expansionist global ambitions of the United States, and saw the Soviet Union as the leader of the peaceful, democratic camp that stood in opposition to the

imperialist capitalists led by the US (Hopkins 2007, 914–15). Mao contributed the notion that between these two camps was an intermediate zone, including China, that neither superpower controlled but both hoped to influence. Later, after the Sino-Soviet split, Mao reorganised the globe into ‘three worlds’ (Chen 2010, 184; Yu 2013, 693–4). The Western idea of multiple ‘worlds’ during the Cold War divides the globe into capitalist, communist, and developing countries, the last being the ‘Third World’ (Tomlinson 2003, 307, 309–10). However, in the Chinese context, the divisions are different. The USA and the USSR together make up the First World because of their power and imperialism, while the other capitalist countries belong to the Second World. All other countries belong to the third, with China as their leader in fighting against the oppression of the First World (Yu 2013, 683, 693, 696). In this new conception, the Soviet Union was as much an adversary as the United States, and development, rather than class struggle, defined the different sides of the Cold War (Chen 2010, 184–5).

Both these conceptions of the Cold War appeared in Chinese history textbooks of the era. Textbooks published immediately after the founding of the PRC reflect the Soviet influence, resulting in Eurocentric and Soviet-centric texts that pitted the United States against the Soviet Union (Martin 1990, 91–2; Yu 2013, 685–8). By the mid 1950s, however, Asia, Africa, and Latin America became more prominent, and the trend continued during the 1960s and 1970s as the Sino-Soviet split developed. During this time, textbooks came to portray the world as divided along the lines of the ‘three worlds’, allocating more space to the ‘Third World’ (Croizier 1990, 158–9; Yu 2013, 693, 696). In the late 1970s, after the beginning of Deng Xiaoping’s programme of reform and opening, textbooks once again shifted, placing less emphasis on class struggle, revolution, and ideology, and more on economics, reflecting the new goals of the state. At the same time, the ‘Third World’ began to merit less attention and textbooks focused more on the west (Croizier 1990, 167–8; Martin 1990, 102–3).

While textbook narratives reflected geopolitical divisions of the Cold War, for much of the period the Cold War itself was not actually included in the history. From the late 1950s to late 1970s, the political standards prescribed for textbooks changed faster than authors could revise the

books. At the same time, many events of recent history became extremely sensitive issues due to domestic political shifts and China's tense relations with the Soviet Union and other formerly friendly countries. As a result, only the textbooks published prior to 1959 extended their narratives to the present. For much of the 1960s and 1970s, history ended with WWII or the Chinese Revolution (Croizier 1990, 161; Martin 1990, 28; Yu 2013, 686, 693, 695–6). It was not until the late 1980s that the Cold War era was once again included in textbooks (Croizier 1990, 165–6).

The Segmentation and Organisation of the Textbooks

The authors' priorities and the themes they see in history shape how the content is organised into volumes, units, and chapters. Especially when we consider the relative amount of space allocated to different actors and themes, these divisions also show how the texts compare to other histories of the period.

The set of history textbooks I examine divide the course material into three volumes by subject rather than chronology or region. Each spans ancient history to the present day, and incorporates Chinese as well as world history. The first volume is dedicated to political history, the second examines economic and social history, and the third covers the history of culture, thought, science, and technology. Overall, structuring the books by subject matter ensures that multiple aspects of history are examined, and that culture and economics find their place alongside political history. However, simply having one volume devoted to intellectual and cultural history and another to social change does not necessarily guarantee sufficient coverage of culture and everyday life, as seen in Table 5.1. This table presents the distribution of textbook contents between various topics and time periods and shows that during the Cold War, the attention given to politics far outweighs that allocated to culture and everyday life. This shift occurs largely because the third volume dedicates two chapters to political theory in China. This content enumerates the ideas of China's top leaders without delving into their content or impact on

Table 5.1 Table showing the share of the text devoted to domestic and international history and to political, economic, and cultural history in the three textbooks combined

	All Time Periods	Pre-Cold War (to 1945)	Cold War (1946-91)	Post Cold-War (after 1991)
Entire Textbook Series	329 pages	226 pages	71 pages	32 pages
Chinese History	59%	55%	67%	64%
World History	41%	45%	33%	36%
Politics and Political Ideology	40%	39%	49%	32%
Economic Policy	26%	24%	29%	36%
Culture and Everyday Life	33%	37%	22%	31%

society, focusing on elite politics rather than everyday life. This imbalance in general, and that the attention is centred on developments in state ideology in particular, underlines the textbooks' interest in China's political institutions rather than its social transformations.

Within each textbook, the content is organised into eight multi-chapter thematic units, again eschewing a purely chronological approach, and providing students with a framework for historical interpretation. Each unit deals with either Chinese history or world history, and in each case China's experience during a given period is given first, foregrounding the Chinese experience. Meanwhile, the titles and chapter divisions of the thematic units begin to demonstrate how the textbooks interpret the Cold War as a less than definitive historical period. For example, the final unit of the politics textbook covers international history from the end of WWII to the present, and is titled 'The Trend Towards Multipolarity in the Modern World Political Structure'. Of the three chapters of the unit, only the first deals with the tension between the US and the USSR that is usually portrayed as central to the Cold War. The second turns its attention to the emergence of 'multipolarity' through other countries' efforts to resist both superpowers. The final chapter sees this trend continue at the turn of the 21st century (People's Education Press 2011a, v) (All quotations from Chinese translated by the author). Combined, this method of segmenting content reveals that the bipolar rivalry of the Cold War was only one phase in a larger historical arc rather than a definitive

period in itself. The economics textbook builds on this perspective, and its final unit, which covers the same period of history, is named ‘The Trend towards Globalisation in the World Economy.’ One chapter deals with the post-war creation of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, while the other two address the growth of regional and global trade agreements that continue to develop to the present day (People’s Education Press 2011b, v). In the case of culture, not even WWII is a meaningful watershed; one unit covers global art and culture from the 19th century on, and its chapters each address developments in a different artistic medium rather than being organized by time period (People’s Education Press 2011c, v). Clearly, the textbooks do not see the Cold War as a sealed, singular period, and while the large trends of history are certainly shaped by it, it is insufficient to determine them.

Meanwhile, the relative importance of the East vs. West and the North vs. South divides during the Cold War in the view of the textbook authors is reflected in how much space is allocated to each, detailed in Table 5.2. Here, I examined divisions and groupings as well as conflicts. The textbooks devote a considerable amount of space to developments and relations within the blocs, especially the Western bloc, rendering this distinction necessary.

These numbers suggest the relative importance of certain Cold War actors. Clearly, North versus South conflicts and the developing world in general are given little attention. Meanwhile, despite the preponderance of attention to East and West, a closer look shows that a relatively small amount is allotted to the USSR and the Eastern bloc. Of the international coverage of the Cold War, 49 per cent concerns the Western bloc alone, while 22 per cent is about its Eastern counterpart. The remainder

Table 5.2 Table showing the most salient divisions found in the international history of the Cold War. That is, a chapter on economic developments in capitalist countries after WWII would show a division of East vs. West, whereas the growth of the non-aligned movement would show a division of North vs. South

	Overall	Politics	Economics	Culture and Everyday Life*
East vs. West	94%	90%	100%	82%
North vs. South	6%	10%	0%	15%

*A brief passage about the development of film and television avoids drawing any divisions.

deals with the two sides in conflict or divides the world into the global North and South. The chapter topics illuminate some of this discrepancy. Both the USSR and the capitalist world are allocated units on their respective economies in the 20th century, with one chapter of each dealing with the economy after WWII. However, in the unit that explores globalisation, another two chapters are given to the international economic institutions that arose in the West during the Cold War. One single chapter on the Soviet Union claims to cover the economic history of the entire communist world (People's Education Press 2011b, 88–91, 98–101, 104–10). This imbalance is also seen in the chapters about China's international relations during the Cold War, where 30 per cent of the eight pages of text are about China's relations with the West, while only eight per cent are devoted to China's dealings with the Eastern bloc. A further 26 per cent is devoted not to China's interactions with any particular country or group of countries, but to general statements regarding China's principles, intents, and achievements in its international relations. When we turn our attention to the details of the narrative, we see that the relative absence of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc becomes only more evident, the exact nature of Cold War divisions becomes more nuanced, and efforts to establish China's identity continue to supersede any detailed discussion of its actions.

The Narrative of the Cold War: Origins, Agency, Culpability, and Conflicts

The first description of the global Cold War in the history textbooks depicts a bilateral struggle between communist and capitalist camps marked by global tension and local wars. While no judgment is rendered there, American aggression towards other countries quickly becomes a theme, giving the United States the bulk of the blame for the Cold War (People's Education Press 2011a, 108, 117–18). The rest of the Western world is both part of and oppressed by American efforts. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union seeks hegemony of its own, remaining, however, largely passive by comparison, or simply absent. While the 'Third World' is part

of the anti-hegemonic resistance, the little attention it receives focuses just as often on its good relations with China. Combined, these narratives result in the themes of hegemony and opposition that create the textbooks' particular definition of the Cold War.

The United States, Hegemony and Multipolarity

Throughout the Cold War, the behaviour of the United States is marked by a desire for global control, and in this desire lie the origins of the Cold War. Some blame for the Cold War is attributed to the other Western nations, as in describing Churchill's 1946 'Iron Curtain' speech as a 'wanton attack' on the USSR (People's Education Press 2011a, 118). However, the Western camp is always characterised as being led by the United States without specifying which other countries it encompasses, thus in no way mitigating American culpability (People's Education Press 2011a, 107, 109, 112, 118, 119). Likewise, while 'contradictions' between the two superpowers in matters of 'social system and national interest' are mentioned at the outset as causes of enmity between the US and the USSR, no further elaboration is offered. Instead, the Cold War is explained as growing from the United States' desire to dominate the world and its need to overcome the USSR in order to achieve this goal (People's Education Press 2011a, 118).

Once the Cold War has begun, it takes the form of the United States leading Western countries to 'adopt all hostile behaviour short of armed attack' towards the Soviet-led socialist countries (People's Education Press 2011a, 119). NATO and the Marshall plan are further efforts to contain the Soviet Union (People's Education Press 2011a, 119–21). Until Sino-American relations are normalised in the 1970s, the United States also directs a particular hostility towards the newly founded PRC. Because of the thematic arrangement of the textbook, it is in the context of this hostility that we first encounter the Cold War. The United States seeks to isolate the new country diplomatically and economically, interferes in its domestic politics, and occupies the Taiwan Straits, despite Chinese hopes for better relations. American involvement in both Korea and Vietnam is part of the pattern of American aggression in pursuit of

hegemony and, just as importantly, it allows the United States to directly threaten China. These threats are mentioned repeatedly, twice as an aspect of Sino-American relations, and again as a reason for China's weapons and nuclear programmes. By comparison, the actual wars in Korea and Vietnam only appear once (People's Education Press 2011a, 109–10, 112–14, 120–1, 2011c, 92, 95).

However, the textbooks make clear that the Cold War is something different than just a conflict initiated by the West against the East. The United States' hegemonic ambitions are also part of its relations with other capitalist countries. The Marshall Plan's purpose is to increase American control in Europe as much as to support economic recovery, and much the same can be said of the post-war Bretton Woods system (People's Education Press 2011a, 119, 2011b, 104–5). This control does not go uncontested, and most of the agency seen from other Western countries is expressed through disagreements within the Western bloc. When France, Germany, and other European countries unify for their own security during the 'American-Soviet Cold War', it is not clear which superpower is the actual object of concern (People's Education Press 2011a, 122, 2011b, 107). By the 1960s and 1970s, Western European unity and economic strength leads them to 'start shaking off American control', and De Gaulle's challenge to American leadership in Europe confirms the divisions emerging in the Western camp (People's Education Press 2011a, 123). This pattern distances the Cold War narrative from that of a West-versus-East conflict, but rather than making the Cold War a North-versus-South conflict, it brings to mind the Chinese 'three worlds' theory with an emphasis on conflict between the First and Second Worlds.

According to these Chinese textbooks, American ambition also extends past the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States 'attempts to dominate the world single-handedly' and continues to stir up trouble abroad (People's Education Press 2011a, 127). The Western countries continue to resist, as does a rising China and a renewed Russia. As a result, the trend towards a multipolar world continues its inevitable progress. However, because of American ambitions, revived conflicts, and international terrorism, the modern world remains an unsettled one. Indeed, compared to the Korean War or any other Cold

War event, NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia draws as much attention and even harsher criticism for the US.¹ In this historical vision, the theme of hegemony continues to the present day, and the root cause of suffering during the Cold War does not end with the collapse of the USSR. The entire Cold War becomes just one more phase in the constant shifts in power relations (People's Education Press 2011a, 117, 120–1, 127–9).

As much as the blame for the Cold War is attributed to the United States, there are times when the text is less damning. With regard to the division of Germany, the building of the Berlin Wall, and the Cuban missile crisis, the United States is given a comparatively neutral treatment (People's Education Press 2011a, 120–1). However, the textbooks become decidedly positive when describing American popular culture and its economic growth and technological change after WWII (People's Education Press 2011b, 90, 2011c, 64, 116–18). While the United States' interactions with other countries are portrayed as exploitative, its internal development, like that of other Western countries, is given a more positive depiction. Rock and roll is vibrant and exciting, while film and television make great strides to become new forms of art as well as signs of technological progress. The development of bebop contains the only, and somewhat oblique, reference to racism in the US in the entire set of textbooks, once a major theme used to illustrate the injustice of a Cold War adversary (People's Education Press 2011c, 116–18; Yu, 2013, 689, 692). And while modernist literature and art after WWII is described as reflecting the spiritual anguish felt in the West, this anguish is attributed to the experience of social change, two World Wars, and the Great Depression. The text seems sympathetic to the desire of artists and authors to explore these emotions (People's Education Press 2011c, 107–8, 112–13). The discussion of Cold War-era culture is not connected to the Cold War itself; rather, it is about the everyday human experience and explains ongoing developments in the global cultural landscape. In this way, the textbook narrative does not present a uniform and unceasingly critical image of the United States during the Cold War, but instead shows shared cultural trends in the West. Moreover, the interest in developments in popular culture as an aspect of technological advancement is similar to that exhibited towards economic growth in general.

In the realm of economic development, the image of the United States and the West is not simply disconnected from ideas of hegemonic struggle in the political realm, but actually contradictory to them, and the two aspects must be resolved through selective emphasis and omission. While the creation of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Bretton Woods system in general is explained as a way for the United States to control other capitalist countries after WWII, the textbook treats the functioning of these organisations positively and credits them with promoting economic development. The authors do not fault the macroeconomic ideas these organisations embody; they only criticise them for being controlled by the United States (People's Education Press 2011b, 104–5). The Marshall Plan is depicted as a similar tool of control, while the rapid post-war recovery in Europe is seen as marvellous and independent of the Plan. As a whole, the post-war economic growth of the Western world is described as 'a "golden age" of economic development' in which countries develop the welfare state and even 'stagflation' is overcome with grace (People's Education Press 2011a, 119, 2011b, 88–90). And while in a later chapter competition within the Western bloc extends into trade, the description here does little to disaggregate the western countries, except to highlight American science and technology, and the positive role of the service sector (People's Education Press 2011b, 89–90, 108). In the face of economic success, questions of hegemony and strife disappear. This shift in perspective suggests China's recent emphasis on economic development. In the midst of the Cold War, the economic history of the West becomes a positive role model for China's own development. Meanwhile, the communist bloc is marred by economic failure, becoming a negative example, and in the political realm it offers no sympathetic counterpoint to the United States.

The Disappearing Soviet Union

Neither in its actions nor in the space allotted to it does the Soviet Union occupy a significant position in the textbooks' account of the Cold War. It more often appears as a necessary counterpart to the United States or China rather than as an active player in its own right. The actions by the

Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries in the late 1940s and early 1950s, finalising the division of Europe, are, according to the textbooks, simply reactions to the United States' efforts to contain communism (People's Education Press 2011a, 119). While the USSR also appears in various world events, it is only to be overshadowed by other actors. The chapter dealing with the early diplomatic relations of the PRC describes the Soviet Union's rapid recognition of the new Chinese regime and the treaty of friendship and alliance they sign. However, the portrayals of these events focus on how they allow the PRC to avoid diplomatic isolation by the West rather than on the relationship between the two countries (People's Education Press 2011a, 109). The same chapter also deals with the 1954 Geneva conference, which was convened to negotiate peace settlements for Korea and Indochina. The USSR attends but plays no active role. Rather, the conference is defined by obstructionist Americans and Zhou Enlai's leadership (People's Education Press 2011a, 110). In fact, of all the major incidents that mark the Cold War, the USSR is only an active participant in the Cuban Missile Crisis, when it hopes that a missile installation might 'change [its] unfavourable position in the balance of nuclear power' and secure its strategic interests (People's Education Press 2011a, 121). Even this description is fairly bland. The global influence or ambitions of the USSR appear negligible at best.

With so little space dedicated to Soviet actions and motivation, it would be unlikely for a reader to attribute much of the blame for the Cold War to the USSR. However, whenever the Soviet Union is mentioned in passing, it is clear that it, like the US, is in search of hegemony during the Cold War. Beginning in the 1950s, the newly independent countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America initiate the non-aligned movement to avoid both American and Soviet domination (People's Education Press 2011a, 124). The bilateral contest for hegemony is mentioned as a reason for the United States to seek better relations with China, and Brezhnev seeks to gain an advantage by developing Soviet heavy industry (People's Education Press 2011a, 113, 2011b, 99). This desire for hegemony establishes that although the Soviet Union is not the primary villain of the Cold War period, it is not a model to be emulated either. It still contributes to the broader pattern of hegemonic struggles that are the cause of tensions during and after the Cold War.

However, unlike the United States, the Soviet desire for hegemony is not extended towards its own camp, because its camp simply disappears. Of all the Eastern bloc countries, only the Soviet Union appears in the sections on economics, culture, and most aspects of international relations. Not only are the countries of the Eastern bloc absent from the discussion of economics and culture, but in the chapters on film and literature, all the examples from the Soviet Union predate World War II, before the Eastern bloc existed (People's Education Press 2011c, 105, 108, 117). Politically, the countries of the Warsaw Pact disappear between its founding in 1955 and the upheaval that marks its end. The sole exception is seen when the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) is founded with the support of the USSR, while any ongoing relationship between the two countries is not explored (People's Education Press 2011a, 120). The theme that the Soviet Union possesses a great power's desire for hegemony does not overwhelm its general absence from the scene.

Another way in which the Soviet Union disappears from the Cold War is in the minimal attention given to the Sino-Soviet relationship. Aside from the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty, there are signs of early cooperation between the two countries, although the textbooks do not engage in detailed discussion. For example, the Soviet experience influences early education policy, and until the Hundred Flowers campaign, China adopts Stalin's dogmatic rejection of the theory of genetics (People's Education Press 2011b, 66, 2011c, 96). However, the eventual disintegration of the Sino-Soviet relationship is explored even less. A decade after the split, while the threat the Soviet Union poses to China factors into improved Sino-American relations, there is no mention of any intermediate steps that led to the threat in the first place (People's Education Press 2011a, 113). Khrushchev's 1956 speech criticising Stalin is presented in the context of the economic reforms he was seeking to implement, a speech that, the textbooks claim, caused 'huge reverberations inside and outside the Soviet Union' (People's Education Press 2011b, 98). What these reverberations were and whether or not China reacted to the speech remain unclear, however.

The clearest juxtaposition, if not explanation, of the changed relationship appears in the chapter about China's technological achievements. In

1957, the Soviets assist China's weapons development by sending them missiles to serve as models. Elsewhere on the same page, students learn that China developed its own atomic bomb to 'break the monopoly on nuclear weapons . . . held by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other countries', suggesting that by 1964, the country saw a threat from both superpowers (People's Education Press 2011a, 92). This double threat appears again in the end-of-chapter questions; the reasons behind it, however, are omitted. The making of the Sino-Soviet split, a subject other historians see as a major feature of China's Cold War experience and one that fundamentally changed the conflict, disappears through the cracks in the narration while the authors place much more emphasis on American actions and the Sino-American relationship (Chen 2010, 183–4; People's Education Press 2011c, 92, 95; Z. Shen and Li 2011, xvii–xviii; Xia 2008, 104–5). The reason for this inconsistency is explained in part by the internal developments of the Soviet Union.

The economy of the Soviet Union is given a chapter that parallels that dedicated to the post-war economies of the capitalist world. Unlike the glowing account in its capitalist counterpart, however, the narrative in the Soviet chapter is of repeated attempts and repeated failures to reform a stagnant economy. Impatient with the uninterrupted economic decline, Gorbachev turns to political reforms, resulting in the dissolution of the USSR (People's Education Press 2011a, 126, 2011b, 98–101). One effect of this failure is that the Soviet Union becomes less relevant than the United States for an understanding of the modern world, as the Soviet system no longer exists.

Instead, the Soviet experience is primarily useful in that it serves as a negative model for Chinese development, and as a contrast to the path charted by the CCP. The failures of the Soviet Union are rooted in its leaders' shortsightedness and insufficiently 'scientific' understanding of the conditions they face (People's Education Press 2011b, 99–100). By comparison, Chinese political theory is characterised as scientific and adapted to Chinese conditions, allowing for the country's successful economic growth (People's Education Press 2011b, 56, 98–101, 2011c, 83–4, 87–8). Even in failure, the Soviet Union serves as a foil for the actions of others.

The portrayal of the end of the Cold War reflects another way in which the compilers of the history textbooks differ from many historians in identifying themes and questions about the Cold War. Instead of distributing credit for its peaceful end, they ask who should be blamed for the dissolution of the USSR. The depiction of the Soviet flag being lowered for the last time creates a mournful sense of domestic dislocation, and the entire period is described as one of upheaval and nationalist separatism. While Soviet economic troubles began with Stalin, ultimately the blame for the country's collapse goes to Gorbachev's decision to promote 'so-called "democratisation" and "openness"', causing his reforms 'to go awry' (People's Education Press 2011a, 126, 2011b, 98–100). The reasons how and why the textbook authors frame the end of the Cold War in this way reveal yet more about the vision of the Cold War and the vision of China they present.

First, the end of the Cold War is not presented as a cause for relief, because in this presentation nothing fundamentally changes. Hegemonic ambitions and the tensions they create outlast the Cold War. Meanwhile, fears of nuclear weapons that others identify as a major source of Cold War anxiety go unmentioned (Gaddis 2005, 48–82; Walker 1995, 1658). The Chinese effort to develop nuclear weapons to defend itself against the USSR and the US constitutes one of only two sections in the textbook that describe nuclear weapons as having a place in the Cold War. The other instance is in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which begins as a confrontation over nuclear missiles and nearly leads to war. However, in neither case does the textbook suggest that nuclear war might have devastated the entire world (People's Education Press 2011a, 121). There is no association between the end of the Cold War and a subsiding fear of nuclear annihilation, as no such fear, it appears, existed in the first place.

Second, China's efforts to restore its territorial integrity are important enough to merit a chapter of their own, so the breakup of the Soviet Union is the actual source of anxiety. By contrast, the sole bright point in the turbulence in Eastern Europe is the reunification of Germany, where readers are shown images of people breaking down the Berlin Wall and celebrating in front of the Reichstag building (People's Education Press 2011a, 126). When reunification with Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan is a major goal the textbooks attribute to China, and combating separatism

in Xinjiang and Tibet is a major concern of the government, the breakup of the Soviet Union naturally becomes a cautionary tale of political liberalisation.

A Hollowed Out 'Third World'

The 'Third World' has been receiving increased attention in recent Cold War studies in the global North, and appears in the 'three worlds' theory put forward by Mao where it includes the same newly independent and developing countries (Suri 2011, 5). In the Chinese textbooks it receives some attention, with roles in the broader trends of multi-polarity and, to a degree, globalisation, but also as support and background for China's Cold War accomplishments.

The texts explain the rise of the non-aligned movement among newly independent countries as part of the trend towards a multipolar world, with these countries banding together to oppose the imperialism and the hegemonic ambitions of both superpowers. Their resistance is part of the same reaction to hegemonic ambition shown by Western Europe. However, many aspects of the histories of these developing countries are thinly covered. The textbooks say that these countries came into being due to the development of national liberation movements and decolonisation; specific struggles, however, are not explored. The Vietnam War is the only war of national liberation mentioned, and it is grouped with incidents such as the division of Germany and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Vietnamese resistance to French and American forces is described as 'heroic', but otherwise the conflict is given only a single, brief paragraph (People's Education Press 2011a, 121, 124). Whereas textbooks in years past emphasised anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World to the point of excluding all other aspects of those countries' histories, that theme has dwindled as the textbook authors' priorities have changed (Martin 1990, 96–101).

Economically, the non-aligned movement has the stated goal of 'establishing a new economic world order', but no further details are given about their efforts or the economic conditions of developing countries in general, unlike the attention given to Soviet and capitalist development

(People's Education Press 2011a, 124). Instead, within the discussion of globalisation, the challenges it poses to developing countries and to China are raised in general terms, but the text suggests that good decision-making and 'reasonable countermeasures' can allow countries to overcome them and take advantage of the opportunities (People's Education Press 2011b, 103, 111–13). As with the Bretton Woods system, the principles of globalisation itself are not challenged. Instead, globalisation is presented as a positive historical trend that has been developing for centuries (People's Education Press 2011b, 103). In both the political and economic realms, actions that Third World countries take for their own purposes are hinted at in broad terms, but receive little elaboration.

Instead, newly independent and non-aligned countries most commonly appear as friends of China. They are presented as among the first with which China establishes diplomatic relations, and they are key to giving China's seat in the United Nations to the mainland government (People's Education Press 2011a, 109–10, 112–13). The Bandung Conference is portrayed as the first major meeting without representatives from a colonial power, while the countries that convened it are not necessarily portrayed as the driving force behind its success, or even its near failure. After an outside imperialist plot helps create dissension among the attendees, Zhou Enlai plays the key role in rescuing the conference from disputes and defeat (People's Education Press 2011a, 110–11). Incorporated into the chapter about the early foreign relations of the PRC, the episode serves as a diplomatic 'coming-out party' for China, with decolonised countries in attendance. Readers are also told that when the non-aligned movement took shape, China maintained good relations and cooperation with it and its members (People's Education Press 2011a, 124). Despite this friendship, the textbooks refrain from identifying China as a member of the 'Third World'. There is a hint of association when the Chinese author Lu Xun is listed as an anti-imperialist and nationalist writer alongside Rabindranath Tagore of India, Gabriel García Márquez of Columbia, and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, but China's Cold War era arts and literature are separated into their own chapter (People's Education Press 2011c, 108). This separation is part of a broader effort by the authors to maintain distance between

China and all other factions during the Cold War, part of their process of constructing a specific identity for China.

China and its Place in the Cold War

Several aspects of China's national image and its place in the Cold War, as presented in these textbooks, have already been mentioned, hinting at the broader picture. In addition to China's distance from all sides of the Cold War, there is its desire for friendly relations on all sides, the interest in national reunification, a focus on economic growth and technology, and a comparison to other socialist countries. Further elaboration on these themes is seen in the coverage of China's foreign relations and domestic history during the Cold War. Overcoming potential incongruities, it creates an image of China that is independent, influential, and successful in pursuing its goals, yet also just, peaceful, and somewhat withdrawn in its relations with the world. China retains its socialist identity while prioritising stable institutions and market-driven economic growth.

An Independent, Successful China

The textbook portrayals of China's relationships with the West, the East, and the South during the Cold War suggest that it is not part of any side. Instead, the textbooks emphasise the degree to which China decided its own course. They make multiple explicit statements that, following the founding of the PRC, China was 'independent and acted of its own initiative' both domestically and in its foreign relations (People's Education Press 2011a, 80, 107–9, 111). Invasions, unequal treaties, foreign spheres of influence, lost territories, and payment of indemnities were a major part of China's experience in the hundred-plus years following the First Opium War in 1840. Both Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong characterised China as having been reduced to a 'semi-colonial country' during this period (Wang 2012, 47–69). Reiterating China's autonomy demonstrates a break from this past and establishes the end of this 'century of humiliation' as a major achievement of the CCP in establishing the PRC, a

narrative found throughout official interpretations of history (Wang 2012, 100–4). In a similar vein, the reunification of Hong Kong and Macao with the mainland and progress towards reconciliation with Taiwan are further successes of the PRC and party leadership (People's Education Press 2011a, 93, 102–5, 2011c, 87).

In the wider world during the Cold War period, the textbook asserts China's growing influence and newfound national stature. This influence appears in China's participation in the conferences in Geneva in 1954 and in Bandung in 1955, and is implied when the United States is interested in rapprochement. Otherwise, until China begins participating in UN activities in the 1980s, the effects of the influence suggested by the textbooks remain unclear (People's Education Press 2011a, 108–14, 124). China's international influence is a marker of its national renewal, yet at the same time the text separates China from all factions and the conflicts of the period. This depicts China as a peaceful and upstanding nation, and avoids conflicts between China's pursuit of its ideals and the pursuit of its interests, even though it renders the discussion of China's international influence somewhat thin.

Idealism and Interests

These interests and ideals include peace and non-aggression, opposition to hegemony and imperialism, national security, reunification with lost territories, and economic development at home and abroad. In general, the ideals and the interests are presented as mutually reinforcing. China's early policy of supporting the socialist camp in foreign relations is implemented to protect peace, independence, and the successes of the revolution. The country's support of global peace and anti-hegemony are mentioned repeatedly. Meanwhile, China's noble intentions in the pursuit of peace have the distinct pragmatic advantage of creating conditions beneficial for China's development and increasing China's international stature. In turn, both developments allow it to negotiate the return of Hong Kong and Macau from a position of strength and to regain its seat in the UN, major victories for China (People's Education Press 2011a, 81, 103, 107–15, 129, 2011c, 85). While the textbook's evidence for

China's influence is perforce rather slim as it seeks to maintain the moral image of China, its account of China's successes does not suffer the same problem.

The account of the Korean War is careful to reinforce the image of a peaceful China that would only become involved in a war for justified self-defence. The description of the start of the war reads: 'In 1950, the Korean War broke out. The "United Nations Army" led by the United States crossed the "38th parallel", invading the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and drawing near to the Sino-Korean border' (People's Education Press 2011a, 120). It makes immediate national defence the motivation for China's involvement, and also obscures the North Korean invasion of the south. Eliding their ally's role in starting the war helps preserve China's wholesome intentions in joining it.

In a few instances, China could come across as less than perfectly peaceful, but the textbooks are able to justify China's actions. The textbook mentions that the People's Liberation Army ended the shelling of Jinmen Island in 1979 as part of a new policy seeking peaceful reunification with Taiwan, but when and why the shelling started is not mentioned. Moreover, Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan straits so desire unity that these past military efforts to achieve it are quickly passed over (People's Education Press 2011a, 104). Elsewhere, China's weapons programme is discussed as part of its scientific achievements, casting the development of nuclear weapons and missiles as positive accomplishments that increased the stature of the country. In this case, however, the text is aware of the potential conflict, asking students to consider two statements evaluating the development of nuclear weapons. One criticises it on the grounds of China's needs for economic development and 'love for peace' while the other reconciles that love with weapons development on the grounds of external security threats and a declared no first-strike policy (People's Education Press 2011c, 95). On the contrary, it argues, China actually developed nuclear weapons to safeguard world peace. Neither statement casts doubt on China's status as a peaceful country, and the main text itself pairs the development of nuclear weapons with building nuclear power plants (People's Education Press 2011c, 92, 95). In both these cases, as with the Korean War, military force is put in

the context of national unity and security, becoming part of the nation's achievements rather than undermining China's high ideals.

China's Socialism and Socialism beyond the Cold War

Despite the distance the text maintains between China and the Soviet Union or the socialist camp during the Cold War, it does claim a socialist identity for the PRC throughout. The victory of the communist revolution strengthens the global socialist cause. Mao launches the Cultural Revolution in an honest effort to find a Chinese path to socialist modernity, an enterprise revitalised under Deng that continues to this day (People's Education Press 2011a, 81, 98, 2011b, 54–7). Looking beyond labels, the text establishes that China is socialist in that it absorbs lessons from other socialist countries, avoiding their mistakes (People's Education Press 2011b, 93, 2011c, 84, 88). And in setting up the contrast noted above between the leadership of the USSR and China, the textbook establishes a socialist yardstick for measuring Chinese success.

By this measure, it succeeds. The textbook states that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 'the world wide socialist movement suffered a setback', and that China's reforms were challenged, but not defeated (People's Education Press 2011b, 56). Later, the textbook reasserts that the dissolution of the Soviet Union has not halted efforts to build socialism elsewhere, and China's efforts are clearly among these. These statements establish that socialism remains relevant even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, further diminishing the degree to which the Cold War can be seen as a contest between Communism and capitalism, instead of the result of a particular set of hegemonic ambitions. However, the socialist identity that China carries with it into the present is a remarkably flexible one, adapting to the demands of economic development and discarding the class struggle that had once been treated as central (People's Education Press 2011b, 49, 54, 93). The textbooks exhibit this shift with an interest in development rather than revolution. With that comes positive coverage of capitalist economies, as well as a history that prioritises institutions and, despite claiming that the victory of the CCP was an inspiration to revolutionary struggles around the world, is deeply

suspicious of revolutionary change in China (People's Education Press 2011a, 81).

China's Domestic Politics and the Minimising of Revolution

In fact, after 1949, the text celebrates only China's institutions and economic growth, depicting the country's efforts at radical change as restricted to particular periods and as interruptions in China's proper path. The early political history of the PRC is presented as the formation of China's political bodies, including the People's Political Consultative Congress, the National People's Congress, its local counterparts, and the minority nationality autonomous areas. The official functions and genesis of each are explained, but without details of their practical implementation. Likewise, Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders are elected to high positions, but they are not shown making decisions, or trying to transform China (People's Education Press 2011a, 94–7). Economic changes happen through orderly reforms and are guided by impersonal Five Year Plans (People's Education Press 2011b, 50–1). The chapter on Mao Zedong's thought and theory is also interested in institutions and development, with Mao's real achievement lying in synthesising the collective wisdom of the party, and his theory's achievement is in adapting Marxism to the needs of China (People's Education Press 2011c, 83–5). Prior to the Cultural Revolution, there are no rapid political shifts, and prior to the Great Leap Forward, no radical change at all.

The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution are presented as the two disruptions in China's development. The Great Leap Forward is characterised by waste and chaos as 'objective laws' are ignored in a revolutionary effort to develop the economy. As a result, China experiences 'the most severe economic difficulties since the founding of the country' while no further details are provided (People's Education Press 2011b, 52). A few years later, the Cultural Revolution is presented as a catastrophe on multiple fronts, derailing education, attacking innocent scholars, officials, and party leaders, undermining social order, and throwing the economy into chaos. It is also presented largely in the passive voice, or as

a force of nature outside of human agency. With great pathos the text describes how it tramples the laws and constitution of the country and prevents the governing bodies from doing their work (People's Education Press 2011a, 98, 101, 2011b, 48, 50–3, 2011c, 101). The Cultural Revolution is described as a 'calamity' or 'great catastrophe', compared to the 'mistake' of the Great Leap Forward (People's Education Press 2011b, 49, 52–3). While both disrupt the regular, well-ordered conduct of the economy, the Cultural Revolution disrupts all levels of Chinese society, and is an even greater revolutionary intrusion. Thus, it is a greater catastrophe in a history that looks to depict a narrative of steady progress and institution-building. Any support textbooks might have shown in the past for revolutionary ideology was removed several revisions ago (Müller 2011, 41–6).

Conclusions: Evaluating the Cold War

Drawing together the analysis above, we can take from it three main insights. First, from the perspective of Chinese textbook authors, the Cold War does not mark a significant turning point in the history of the twentieth century. Rather, it appears to be one of many phases in the emergence of a multipolar world. Second, the USA and the USSR are not predominantly described as representatives of opposing social systems and ideologies. They are instead shown as two powers pursuing hegemonic ambitions, with the sole difference being that the Americans were much more successful than the Soviets in the long run. Finally, referring to the dominant narrative of the emerging multipolar world order, China is primarily portrayed as a successfully modernising power on the rise. We find hardly any traces of an old narrative that would portray China as the spokesperson of the 'Third World', the role of which is consistently marginalised. However, as the main narrative is about the emergence of a multipolar and thus simultaneously more just world, China's rise appears to be not only in the interest of the nation but also in the interests of peace and stability for all.

The most important lesson to be drawn from my analysis of the Chinese textbook is that the Cold War is not seen as an ideological

struggle between communism and capitalism but rather as a contest between superpowers seeking hegemony, as well as between them and the countries they attempt to control. There is little doubt that the United States bears the greatest responsibility for the Cold War, although the Soviet Union had hegemonic ambitions of its own. Likewise, there is little doubt that the Cold War was bad. The bipolar period was marked by global tension and local war. It interfered with humanity's trend towards economic integration, and China faced threats from all sides.

However, the condemnation of the Cold War lacks the force one could expect. The bipolar order is an impediment to globalisation, but globalisation in half the world carries on regardless, accompanied by shining economic growth. Pursuit of hegemony, while portrayed negatively, is not restricted to the Cold War period, and the United States maintains its ambitions and continues its interventions to this day. We see the global tension but not the nuclear fears, and only the two paragraphs about Korea and Vietnam explain the local 'hot' wars that occurred. It is after the Cold War, when NATO bombs Yugoslavia, that violence becomes a clear tool for hegemonic ambition (People's Education Press 2011a, 117, 120–1, 127). And although China suffers threats during the Cold War, it takes reasonable measures to defend itself, pushing back the American challenge in Korea unscathed and rising above the turmoil of the period. Even the failure of communism in other countries during the Cold War cannot derail China's economic growth and search for a socialist path to modernity. The larger theme of hegemonic ambition dominates the negative aspects of the Cold War, while the ongoing positive trends in history—increasing multi-polarity, globalisation, and the relevance of socialism—also existed during the era. The ways in which the Cold War is not essential to the periodisation of history reduce its sting.

How does this view towards the Cold War era compare to current debates in mainly Western historiography? The movement away from seeing the Cold War as a definitive period and the emphasis on globalisation brings to mind a thesis articulated most prominently by the historian Akira Iriye who argues that the Cold War was only one and certainly not the most important aspect of history after WWII. However, the textbooks barely engage with decolonisation and do not acknowledge the emergence of a global human and environmental rights discourse, all

trends Iriye sees as being highly significant for the history of the second half of the 20th century (Iriye 2013, 16–17, 22). In acknowledging but rejecting the idea of competition between East and West, and instead focusing on hegemony exerted by both the US and the USSR, the textbook discourse seems to echo the ideas of the historian Prasenjit Duara. However, the Chinese textbooks devote more attention to American measures to dominate Western Europe and Japan, and those countries' efforts to break free, than they do to the relations between the superpowers and the developing world. In Duara's account, the industrialised West became the United States' willing 'junior partner', a pattern not seen here (Duara 2011, 461–4, 479). While the two views divide the world along similar lines of superpowers, industrialised allies, and developing countries, the tensions seen between them are different.

At the same time, the textbooks seem to display a fair amount of continuity with older interpretations. The emphasis on American ambition after WWII echoes the Soviet interpretation developed at the dawn of the Cold War, a connection not lost on at least one Chinese history teacher (C. Shen 2013, 11). Meanwhile, portraying the USSR as imperialist alongside the United States, seeing differences between the US and its allies, and defining the Third World as standing opposed to the demands of the two superpowers continues the 'three worlds' theory China developed after the Sino-Soviet split. However, in the theory's initial deployment, the struggle between the First and Third Worlds was seen as paramount, whereas the current textbooks instead explore the tensions between the First and Second and give precious little attention to the Third (Yu 2013, 693, 696). Perhaps this shift springs from the authors' changed conception of China. With its economic development, integration into the world economy, and growing political influence, it bears more comparison to the Second World, which was always defined by being comparatively well developed, and second only to the superpowers in might (Chen 2010, 184–5). Thus, they place it alongside the European Union as a force for multi-polarity, and no longer feel that it resembles the post-colonial countries of the Third World. Granted, Chinese textbooks never gave much room for the Third World to speak for itself, substituting Chinese leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle even when the Third World merited significant attention (Martin 1990, 99–102; Yu

2013, 695). Now, however, that leadership is gone, even though China's recovered independence and national development after 1949, which receive so much attention, form a quintessential post-colonial narrative. China's particular Cold War experience led it to develop its own theories about the conflict, and these theories continue to be deployed in narrating that history, even as they are adapted in response to changing ideas about national identity and China's place in the world.

As to the question of what national identity the authors convey, and how they convey it, China is shown as successful in asserting its independence, regaining lost territories, and ensuring its security while upholding its ideals of promoting peace and opposing hegemony. Sometimes, these two aspects are made to align by arguing that China's pursuit of security is in fact part of the pursuit of peace. For the Cold War period as a whole, China is shown as keeping a distance from all sides, ensuring its independence and anti-hegemonic credentials, but downplaying the interactions China had in a complicated era and rendering its influence superficial. China is resolutely socialist, focused on economic development, and well governed by its institutions. The desirability of economic growth and technological advancement are great enough that for all the criticism the United States merits, its economic success is praised, and the international institutions it established to feed its ambition are never criticised in their own right. The benefits of economic growth go unquestioned, even though the authors must create narrative disconnects to do so. Meanwhile, to maintain the narrative of development and good government within China throughout the history of the PRC, the country's efforts to revolutionise itself under Mao are presented as unfortunate interruptions, not a central goal (Chen 2001, 49–50, 72).

Moreover, because continuity and institutions, not disruption and revolution, are emphasised, the questions that might arise from China's rapid development are softened. Yes, China's growth is an economic miracle, rapidly altering people's lives and providing them with a bounty of goods, but the reforms do not require abandoning China's socialist identity. In a system that is socialist with Chinese characteristics, it is no contradiction to speak of a 'socialist market economy' (People's Education Press 2011b, 56–7, 66–7). The authors disassociate China from the developing world and emphasise its influence, but because China also

opposes the desire for international control that seems to define superpowers, the text sidesteps the question of whether China is an insider or outsider in matters of global power. As to whether economic change has made political change necessary, the answer is quite the opposite. Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union implemented political changes, but only because economic changes had failed to take hold. The very success of China's economy proves that political changes are unnecessary. The emphasis on institutions and discrediting of revolutionary politics in China does nothing to undermine this point.

The collapse of the Soviet Union as a warning for China is one way in which the history of the Cold War is used to inform the present. However, in looking for other ways in which connections are drawn between the Cold War past and the present, we see that they are all encompassing. The overarching themes that make the Cold War less central, less of a watershed event, also make the period enormously relevant to the present world. The connection is not one of cause and effect, but direct explanation. All of the essential trends of the Cold War era, including its central conflict, continue to the present day. Explaining them explains the world.

Note

1. While the account of NATO involvement in Yugoslavia leaves out the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, this event lends the conflict particular resonance in China (Wang, 2012, 171–178)

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