



Small Wars, Faraway Places: Global Insurrection and the Making of the Modern World, 1945-1965

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A sweeping history of the Cold War's many "hot" wars born in the last gasps of empire

The Cold War reigns in popular imagination as a period of tension between the two post-World War II superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, without direct conflict. Drawing from new archival research, prize-winning historian Michael Burleigh gives new meaning to the seminal decades of 1945 to 1965 by examining the many, largely forgotten, "hot" wars fought around the world. As once-great Western colonial empires collapsed, counter-insurgencies campaigns raged in the Philippines, the Congo, Iran, and other faraway places. Dozens of new nations struggled into existence, the legacies of which are still felt today. Placing these vicious struggles alongside the period-defining United States and Soviet standoffs in Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba, Burleigh swerves from Algeria to Kenya, to Vietnam and Kashmir, interspersing top-level diplomatic negotiations with portraits of the charismatic local leaders. The result is a dazzling work of history, a searing analysis of the legacy of imperialism and a reminder of just how the United States became the world's great enforcer.

Small Wars, Faraway Places: Global Insurrection and the Making of the Modern World, 1945-1965 Details

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From Reader Review Small Wars, Faraway Places: Global Insurrection and the Making of the Modern World, 1945-1965 for online ebook

Kym Robinson says

One of the talents that Michael Burleigh possesses is an ability to carry his pen with a combination of knowledge and wit. It provides the reader with an informative narrative that keeps you yearning for more despite an already generous amount of information considering the vastness of the subject and the limitations of the books modest size.

I found that this book was a splendid overview showing the origins of blowback and reality that exists across the globe today so many decades on. At times Burleigh manages to allow his disregard for certain historical players to show as his words drip with a certain amount of serpitness. While this can be condemned by many as far as historical matters go it is for the most part refreshing considering the very real consequences and tragedy that befalls the victims of such 'great men' of history.

At times Burleigh interjects a little too much of the personal defects of historical figures which does help to colour these people, some times it is however unrelated to the matter at being discussed. In a wider biographical context this is certainly welcome but when one has such a wide period of subject to cover, at times these highlights of flawed human character is a tad unwarranted. That being said it is in no way a defence of such people as most, if not all are deplorable and should not be above reproach, context however is the point on hand.

For the most part despite Burleighs wit and at times poisonous pen this is an excellent and most informative read. It certainly is a good platform for one to seek more on the various regions and conflicts discussed while also providing the reader with a solid one stop read of a period in history that is often over looked despite its wider implications.

I would recommend this book for the casual historian to those who have a deeper knowledge base. Burleigh does not talk down at the reader nor does he talk over their head instead he invites you to listen, respecting your grasp of events and language in such a way that one wishes to know more.

90%

Andrew says

In retrospect it seems inevitable that the European powers would lose their grip on their colonial possessions after the conclusion of the Second World War. But at the time there were many in Europe who saw it as far from a natural process and often as undesirable. "Small Wars, Far Away Places" tells the extraordinary story of the period from 1945 to 1965 when the European empires fell. In chapters loosely based around territories (Korea, Malaya, Suez, Kenya, Cuba, Vietnam among others), he shows how Britain and France pulled messily out of Africa and Asia. He illuminates the period with tales of resistance, oppression and bizarre colonial administrators and soldiers who clung on to the life to which they and their ancestors had become accustomed. In the process he fills in the backstory of the first half of the twentieth century, when the spores

of the rot began to spread, unnoticed, through the imperial edifice.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the book is the deft way in which Burleigh shows how the Americans assumed the mantle of imperialism almost by accident. In the immediate post-war world the US spoke loudly of its aversion to the idea of empire. But the realities of the perceived communist threat dragged them into conflicts in Korea, Indochina, and Cuba. The behaviour of US administrators and soldiers (in particular in Vietnam) soon began to echo earlier European projects. The analysis of President Kennedy's "Camelot" administration and its actions in Cuba and Vietnam (as well as how they may or may not have been contributory factors to his assassination) is particularly fine.

An excellent book!

Peter McLoughlin says

It is as if the destruction of World War Two had pushed the reset button on geopolitics. The world in the ashes of 1945 had the victorious allies trying to rebuild a superpower system focused initially on Europe but the real cold war action for the coming decades was in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Tensions in Europe were always a factor but the cold war was mostly fought by proxies from the decolonizing areas in the third world. The small proxy wars in these countries caused much misery and shaped most of the globe into developing countries looking for assistance or being meddled with by the two superpowers. In Asia China was a major factor when it went red for a stronger containment policy by the U.S. that was ratified by the experience of the Korean war. America's dislike for colonies may on the one hand have helped end the British and French colonies become independent nations but meddling in the new nations at sometimes overthrowing governments became standard operating procedure for the U.S. The book looks at the first two decades of the cold war which saw the end of the old colonial order and a new and problematic order of two powers governing the world with rest of the world becoming chess pieces in their struggle. The book ends with the beginning of the Viet Nam war where domino strategies and the simplistic bipolar cold warriors world view got the U.S. in serious trouble. The period after 1965 was the fruition of much of animus against the U.S (and Russia) from this early cold war hubris.

John says

"Small Wars, Faraway Places" is a highly readable and informative book with an importance that is undercut at most every turn by the author's condescending attitude.

The idea of writing an engaging book about the military conflicts that erupted around the world during a span of approximately 20 years is a timely one for several reasons. First, the fallout from some of these conflicts still troubles the world (e.g., the fraught relationship with Iran, the lack of resolution to the Korean War, the unresolved tensions with Cuba, and the seemingly never-ending problems in the Middle East). Second, the history of these conflicts may hold lessons, however modest, for today's world. Third, the conflicts profiled by Michael Burleigh are close enough to the present to be of interest but far enough in the past to require explanation and interpretation for the many people too young to have any real memories of them. Finally, the fact that these conflicts were driven by the intersection of the end of the historical era of European colonialism and the rise of global ideological conflict embodied by the Cold War may offer parallels for what seems to be a contemporary era of geopolitical transition combined with ideological strife.

Burleigh is an excellent writer who clearly knows his material, and consequently, his profiles of individual conflicts are engaging, compelling, and illuminating. For example, his discussion of the Malayan Insurgency is clear and explains the nature of the counterinsurgency model implemented by the British and why it may be of limited applicability to modern conflicts. Many of these individual profiles are gripping, and as a result, it often is hard to put the book down.

What mars the book, however, is the author's tendency to inject seemingly unfounded personal biases and highly subjective assessments of personal character into the profiles. For instance, Burleigh possesses a seemingly visceral hatred of John F. Kennedy, resulting in a discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis periodically interrupted by swipes at Kennedy's sexual proclivities and supposed perversions. That may be the case, but Burleigh just asserts this and writes with an anger that would lead a reader to think he knew Kennedy well or was part of the administration. Yet Burleigh was roughly five years old--not to mention living in the UK--when Kennedy was elected.

Perhaps the best that can be said about Burleigh is that he is an equitable in the disdain in which he holds key figures from the conflicts about which he writes. To paraphrase (and probably misquote) the old Archie Bunker television show, "I'm not a bigot. I hate everybody equally."

For readers looking for an accessible one volume account of the global conflicts that played out immediately after the end of the Second World War, "Small Wars, Faraway Places" is an informative book worth reading. Had the author managed to keep his biases and condescension at bay, it would have been an excellent book rather than an ultimately interesting but unsatisfying one.

Alan says

Excellent, engaging history of the Post-WW2 world that emerged from the far-flung European empires as they collapsed. Burleigh deftly flits from place to place, drawing comparisons and contrasts between the various insurgencies and nationalist movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Alongside this, he examines the growing involvement of the US in "liberal imperialism" (the US of course, did not see its actions that way). While not engaging in what he terms "advocacy history", Burleigh does not shy away from offering his opinions of events and the key players. His portrayals of Churchill, De Gaulle, Eden and JFK, Mao and McNamara are particularly scathing while LBJ comes off, as modern historiography leans, as a tragic figure undone by Vietnam. This terrific book remedies the myopic view of the Cold War period as a bipolar struggle between the US and USSR and their proxies and shines a light on the important conflicts that are all too often ignored or subsumed into it.

Jerome says

In this sly and readable book, Burleigh examines the strategic and political context of the years 1945-1965, years notable for wars big and small, most of which can be traced to the end of the second world war. He provides anecdotal portraits of all the major players involved in this turbulent era, and is rather critical of all of them (Eisenhower comes off the lightest). Despite this, however, the book is rather balanced, and both Western and insurgent leaders receive a fair share of criticism. The book is not as in-depth as it could be (he never really analyzes the various insurgencies, for example), but perhaps this has to do with the breadth of the material Burleigh attempts to cover. A glance at Burleigh's bibliography reveals that he draws almost

entirely on secondary sources; mostly English-language books and newspapers, many of them quite dated. Nor does he really try to explain what he means by “the making of the modern world,” as he puts it in the title; more than likely this was just a publisher’s ploy. And Burleigh admits that the conflicts he chooses to cover are those that interest him the most; as a result, we don’t really see any of the de-colonization projects that went relatively smoothly.

Burleigh vividly describes the West’s retreat from their colonial empires following 1945, and how they too often failed to realize how much the war with Japan had altered the situation. The British tended to approach the situation more pragmatically than the French, but its strategic position was irreparably damaged following the Suez fiasco in 1956. In Kenya, the British handed government over to an ill-prepared African majority and triggered the infamous Mau Mau uprising. The US tended to view the Europeans’ policy of empire with a self-righteous distaste, then switched to a more pragmatic approach themselves as the Cold War began, and saw the Soviets behind every international crisis that popped up (hence the Domino Theory, which Burleigh, like many historians before him is critical of). Burleigh describes all of this mostly in terms of statesmanship---what leader made what decision, how did it affect events, etc. He provides little coverage of social or economic factors.

The book is readable for the most part, although Burleigh seems to have a thing for fragmented sentences. And his writing is both amusing and distracting: he calls Lord Salisbury “stupid” and introduces Kennedy under the heading “All Mouth and No Trouser.” America’s ambassador to China is called a “drunken idiot.” He writes that “the US was disparaged as big clumsy people,” John Foster Dulles is called a “tough, complex, and cunning man,” Loy Henderson is “our old friend.” In one instance he writes that “Few regimes in history---other than the one in North Korea---have so completely mobilized hysterical levels of enthusiasm or hatred, as well as enthusiastic hate too.” For some reason he calls John Quincy Adams America’s second president and refers to the national security advisor as “National Security Assistant.” Burleigh makes references to “jet freighters,” refers to “the Netherlands East Indies” rather than the Dutch East Indies, writes that “Ho survived [Stalin’s wrath] because Stalin did not regard Indochina as a serious place,” and in another instance writes that “truly great powers do national security strategy rather than simply react in ill-thought-out spasms.” Like many older historians, he calls the Inchon landings “brilliant,” although it seems that the landing was not as risky as is sometimes portrayed since the North Korean air force at that time had been significantly damaged and US aircraft carriers ensured sufficient air cover.

On a whole, Burleigh’s book is not very cohesive and often he has little new to add (Cuba and Vietnam, for example). He also attempts to link this period to the modern era of Middle Eastern terrorism and insurgency, but this part has a tenuous feel to it (he compares Syngman Rhee with Ahmed Chalabi rather dubiously). Burleigh’s story, while interesting, is not very cohesive.

mali says

The number of factual errors in the first 20 pages alone is astounding. The author gets wrong the name of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, two of three Kim leaders of North Korea, and the fact that Manchuria was a Japanese puppet state, not directly “conquered.” If he gets that much wrong about things I have a passing knowledge of, what about the other sections? I just can’t trust any of the information here.

This is not even to go into the author’s self-professed admiration of western empires’ inculcation of “the Christian values” into their subjects nor his Cold War biases (for example never criticizing Chiang Kai-Shek while laying into the Chinese Communists) that make me suspicious of the value judgments that are made so

casually while recounting events. Again, I feel like I can't trust anything that's being related to me.

With such an important and interesting topic, I'm sorely disappointed here. This book had a lot of potential, but ultimately suffers from unrecognized bias and frankly just carelessness, in addition to this vague sense of racism I can't put my finger on.

In short: don't bother. There is nothing to be gained here.

Benjamin Eskola says

In short: this is a dreadful book.

There is, of course, no such thing as an unbiased work of history, and the most biased authors are generally those who think they're unbiased but are instead just blind to their own preconceptions. Burleigh, despite (or because of) his claim to have 'little ideological and even less nostalgic investment in the events described', displays a deep-seated antipathy for anyone who could remotely be described as left-wing. While it's true that he's not outright defending imperialism, those who opposed imperialism are, in his portrayal, either pathetic figures worthy of nothing but contempt, or comic-book villains worthy of both contempt and demonization.

His usual method, it seems, is to describe atrocities committed by both sides in the hope that this constitutes balance. It does not: those perpetrated by imperialists, and by the right in general, are described dispassionately, while those committed by the left are always presented in more emotive terms. Thus he reports calmly that thousands of South Korean police, assisted by US forces, rounded up and murdered suspected Communists in Pyongyang; but the reverse is committed by the North Korean 'secret police' (a term never used of equivalent bodies in democracies). Stalin becomes, inexplicably, 'Generalissimo Stalin', although his military rank was never (so far as I'm aware) more than honorary (in the same way as Queen Elizabeth is commander-in-chief of the British armed forces); presumably it's mere oversight that stops him according Eisenhower (an actual general) the same title. He talks with disdain of the "mindless nationalism" that is supposedly unique to China and North Korea, a claim so stupid it's hardly worth pointing out the counterexamples. Mere paragraphs after reporting that women suspected of being nationalist supporters in Algeria were routinely raped by interrogators, he complains that "the liberal press ignored nationalist barbarity"; French nationalists killed 14,000 people in a single year, 80% of whom were Muslim, but it's the Algerian independence movement whom he describes as having 'death squads'.

Coinciding with these double standards is a constant assumption of bad faith on the part of any and every left-wing movement. He disparages the Americans for their supposed monolithic view of Communism; yet he suffers from the same weakness, continually contrasting "nationalists" with genuine desire for independence with "communists" who always have some ulterior motive. Reporting on the Viet Minh's literacy campaign, for example, he suggests that the reason behind it is that "one needed to read to understand their propaganda." Indeed, on the occasions when it does become impossible to accuse a left-wing revolution of being incited by Moscow (or perhaps Beijing), Burleigh is shocked that they are able to think for themselves. This cognitive dissonance extends to being able to cite the CIA's finding that 80% of South Vietnamese citizens would have voted for Ho Chi Minh, that the Viet Cong won support "through a genuine understanding of their concerns and by simple but effective measures", and yet still consider them brutal terrorists and support for them as fundamentally inexplicable. Americans in the Philippines apparently simultaneously wanted to prevent electoral fraud and 'ensure a favourable outcome' (using \$500,000 of CIA

funds). In Iran, Mossadeq is presented as a comic figure (with vaguely racist undertones), but more concerningly, one who brought about his own demise by failing to abandon the policies that upset British and American oil interests (MI6 and CIA interference is, presumably, a force of nature in these circumstances, which can't be avoided except by doing what they want). In Malaya, Burleigh consistently refers to the independence movement by the British propaganda term CTs ("communist terrorists"), even in sections predating the introduction of this term in practice (i.e., both biased and anachronistic).

It was clear within a few chapters that I wasn't going to agree with the author's politics, but it soon became impossible to even trust it as a factual description of events, since he's incapable of separating fact from opinion; for example, when discussing the post-war British economy, it's stated without question that full employment was 'suffocating' and unhealthy, as if this were no more controversial a claim than stating that the earth is round and that gravity makes things fall downwards. On the contrary: it's nothing if not a political claim, and Burleigh is either ignorant or intentionally misleading.

As the book progresses he makes even less effort to hide his politics: British 'Special Branch' police are 'heroes', both in Malaya and in Northern Ireland (a conflict which is otherwise outside of the scope of this book); he classifies French colonists in Algeria as being unfairly demonized by the black-and-white thinking of the left, along with (among others) the apartheid regime in South Africa. By this point he's ceased to pretend to be apolitical: all his political complaints are specifically directed at straw leftists (yet, without a trace of irony, dismisses as 'ahistorical advocacy' works that might suggest that imperialism was bad, or that imperialists can be blamed for it).

I only read as far as I did out of sheer annoyance, and even that got boring towards the end. I skimmed the last few chapters; Castro, like Mao, is presented as a comic-book villain who apparently had no motivation except for a desire for power; in Mao's case, this interpretation is based on the flimsiest of sources, whereas by the time the book reached Castro I'd long lost faith that the book could be trusted.

Don't bother reading this book. Try Odd Arne Westad instead, who can at least make criticisms of the USSR grounded in something like reality.

Addendum: I got so caught up in addressing the content of the book that I completely overlooked the failings of form. Burleigh is attempting to address a period of 20 years, over most of the world, involving multiple empires each fighting multiple overlapping colonial wars. As he rightly points out, this presents a problem in terms of structuring the book in order to be readable. Unfortunately, I don't think his solution succeeds. He attempts to address each conflict in more-or-less individual chapters, and then orders the chapters roughly chronologically; however, this doesn't avoid the significant overlap between chapters, such that we encounter individual participants late in their career towards the end of one chapter, and then a few chapters later they're introduced at an earlier stage of their career. He also tries to make some sort of point in the introduction about a geographic logic to the structure; I don't see it. This is, perhaps, not really Burleigh's fault, but a natural result of the source material. A stricter chronological ordering would have meant confusing leaps back and forth between multiple theatres; a stronger geographical focus would have meant even greater confusion of the chronology. Either way, the result is a confusing structure.

Khaled says

Reading this book was a challenge for me. I end up focusing on Middle East pieces . This book is rich with details and make you go back to past and live the experience.

The American Conservative says

"Small wars that roiled distant places over the 20 years after 1945 highlight the difficulty of maintaining political order amid deeper cultural and social upheavals. Understanding complex situations, particularly when they involved different cultures, presented difficulties Western leaders rarely overcame. Intervention all too often entailed a costly struggle or made outside powers the means to self-interested ends sought by local groups.

Burleigh's analysis underlines the limits of what outsiders can accomplish: seizing the golden hour of opportunity sometimes works to push events along a desired path, but all too often the chance never really existed. Better to forgo transformative ambitions or dreams of glory when most pressing burdens, after all, are typically found at home."

The full review, "Empire's Aftermath," is available here on our website:
<http://www.theamericanconservative.co...>

José Monico says

Michael da a luz una perspectiva refrescante en este tomo enfocándose en la época del medio siglo anterior. La frustrante implementación de bloqueos geoestratégicos vía los poderes occidentales contra el desarrollo comunista se base en una complicación normativa que empieza con los jugadores.

Tenemos las soberanías que buscan gloria comparadas con su pasado en Francia; o estados pequeños que simplemente se encuentran en el estado de aprovechar de una potencia colonial. Este último me refiero a los holandeses. Los dos ejemplos fallan respectivamente en las regiones de Vietnam e Indochina. Pero en los esfuerzos de contrarrestar la nueva credencia del comunismo, tenemos dos hegemónicos en Britania y "los nuevos Romanos" en EE.UU que toman la batalla contra las ideologías de los rusos soviéticos.

Si el autor – en su compendio genio – que a la larga solo puedo narrar un sumario de lo sucedido entre los '40s-'60s; y en que eficientemente autora un preciso recital; uno solo puede atentar un recuerdo de lo sucedido. De todos modos, tenemos una gran pintura embrochada con trazos mediocres ejemplándose en el apoyo del generalísimo Chiang Kai-shek, o en la futilidad de la región de Vietnam: donde la división entre el norte y el sur introduce tácticas propagandísticas y ataques indirectos pero muy violentos. Este último el preludio a la segunda guerra Indochina.

Bueno, no solo ablando de las fallas de los poderes capitalistas/nacionalistas: tenemos la falla de los rusos en no implementar una perspectiva abarcando más de las ideologías que ellos empleaban. Cada nación se forma y base sus doctrinas en experiencias únicas. Si, la pizca de comunismo fue – y continua en tiempos contemporáneos – muy favorecido por la región asiática, pero la inflexibilidad de esas ideas anti-capitalistas concluye en un bloque no basado en realidad. Es natural que nociones familiares se desarrolle en sabores completamente contrastando sobre diferentes grupos. Esencialmente, los poderes occidentales querían continuar el status quo de poder monetario; una idea abierta a posibilidades. Hasta uno puedo concluir que si el poder expansionista en los rusos no existía – que viene siendo una hipérbole absolutamente fantástica, ya que eso niega las doctrinas de Karl Marx - podemos concluir que los imperios grandes no tomarían estas

ideas igualitarias muy en serio. De todos modos, la inflexibilidad, la situación económica interna y la atracción intrínsecamente humanística que atrae el capitalismo causó la derrota de ‘la madre patria’.

Por último, el tercer ejemplo – la atracción de estabilidad a la mayoría – ase la transición ideológica en el medio siglo teóricamente redundante. La revolución industrial abrió las puertas a un estado de cosas que nunca se ha visto: la posibilidad de crecimiento más-allá de la minoría, y el aumento de calidad en condiciones domésticas de la mayoría. Hasta introduciendo un nuevo grupo de clases in la clase media. Claro, el capitalismo tiene sus fracasos – intentando de implementar una perfección no tiene una base in la normativa; pero si nos damos cuenta de la futilidad que ocurrió en las regiones de China – Mao derrotó a Kai-shek - , y Vietnam – fallas de parte del Estados Unidos y el sur; casi todos que se ubican en el cinturón comunista, están unidos a esas doctrinas en lo nominal: ellos adaptando pólizas económicas comparadas con los hegemónicos: asuntos sociales, mercados abiertos, acumulación de equidad en estructuras privadas y la libertad de competición gratis para esas instituciones.

Steve says

After reading this book, I have a much clearer understanding of all the foreign news stories I read/heard/watched while growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. And, thanks to the author's razor-sharp skewers of most of the politicians, statements, revolutionaries and crooks who were involved in the events, I have a much better sense of why they happened. A wonderfully well-written book which should be read by everyone.

James Murphy says

I was impressed by Burleigh's history. The small wars he writes about--Korea, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Malaya and Mau Mau Emergencies, the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, French Indochina, Hungary, Suez, India's wars with Pakistan and China, Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam--are all, with a couple of exceptions, familiar. But Burleigh writes about them so engagingly they have new lives. He writes so anecdotally and with such sharp, analytic insight that he makes it fun to revisit the individual histories. One of his main strengths is the clarity with which he chronicles each of these complex military and diplomatic struggles. Another is his penetrating examinations of the leadership involved on all sides and how it impacted events. I think he's objective and sometimes surprising. In discussing Cuba, for instance, his scathing criticism of the Kennedy brothers almost reaches polemic. But what he writes about the Castro brothers and Khrushchev is equally harsh. The overall theme seems to be that he sees these small wars which helped shape today's world as rebellions against the liberal imperialism of Britain, France, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. And finally America whose Vietnam tragedy--he emphasizes the word more than once--was brought about not for profit but through an idealized belief they could do it better.

Rick says

Talk about a dense book. But how else can you summarize the 20 years following WWII? I learned a lot about the ugly end of European colonialism and the not-so-pretty American attempts to expand its influence in the aftermath of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War. The major theme among Britain, France, and

USA is that they usually didn't understand the people they were trying to conquer; fissures among the occupied populations were often mischaracterized, or missed altogether. The capabilities of nationalist movements were often underestimated. Efforts to control other nations sadly and ironically replicated many of the atrocities committed in Hitler Germany.

Burleigh does a good job of explaining the political context in which many of these conflicts occurred. He also does a fairly good job of summarizing very complex events... enough to get you up to speed, and enough to spark your curiosity for further reading. His witty criticisms of some of the more despicable politicos are entertaining as well.

I'm not going to lie, this wasn't an easy read; there were many people to keep track of, and Burleigh drops a SAT word into almost every paragraph. Words I have never seen in my life, like irredentism and fissiparous. My Merriam Webster app came in handy. That said, he is a very good writer, and I would consider reading his other books sometime.

Andrew says

Michael Burleigh's "Small Wars, Faraway Places: Global Insurrection and the Making of the World, 1945-1965," is a fascinating history on some of the post-WWII era conflicts that engulfed the planet. Burleigh focuses on conflicts in Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Algeria, Kenya, DRC, Palestine and Cuba as well as briefs on Ghana and Guinea, China and the Japanese forces in WWII. As you can see, this book is epic in scale, and covers these conflicts in great political detail. The background for each conflict and the cast of characters are laid bare with as much detail as can be mustered, and Burleigh should be commended for this wonderful history.

As one may wonder with such a book, Burleigh tries his best to be as neutral as possible, covering each conflict from the viewpoint of the protagonists, whether they are Nationalists, French, British, American, Soviet or Chinese or whathaveyou. The most fascinating part of this book is the revolving interests that may see the Soviets and the Americans agreeing on something the British have opposed (ex. Palestine), or dividing opinions between Communist China and Russia. The cast of characters that centre on many of these conflicts, including such figures as Winston Churchill, Douglas MacArthur, Edward Lansdale and Ho Chi Minh are wonderful to read about, as they involve themselves in first one conflict, and then another. It is almost frightening to realize how much of the modern world was shaped by the ideas of the politicians and generals present within this book.

All things considered, this book is a fascinating read on Cold War era politics and conflicts, and touches on a number of primary and secondary resources throughout. This is not necessarily an easy read, and many may be shocked by the callousness and sociopathy that many of the often revered characters in this chronicle operate. Even so, this is an important read to understand much of the past's conflicts, and a good resource for gaining insight on characters and events that warrant further study. Highly Recommended.
