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The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975

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In 1958, only one year after his country gained independence from Britain, the Ghanaian prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, delivered a speech before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. In addition to a resolute anti-imperialism, he emphasized that two related imperatives would play a crucial role in shaping the orientation of Africa toward the wider world. First, the tremendous "industrial and military power concentrated behind the two great powers in the Cold War" demanded that the new states of Africa pursue a policy of non-alignment. In Africa, Nkrumah insisted, "the opportunities of health and education and a wider vision which other nations take for granted are barely within reach of our people." To preserve their impoverished continent from devastating violence, African nations would have to remain apart from the Cold War's military alliances, rivalries, and strife. Second, Africa would have to seek dramatically accelerated development. Colonial overlords had failed to deliver promised advances, but "now comes our response. We cannot tell our peoples that material benefits and growth and modern progress are not for them. If we do, they will throw us out and seek other leaders who promise more. And they will abandon us, too, if we do not in reasonable measure respond to their hopes. We have modernize."[1]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the goals of non-alignment and rapid development shaped the ambitions of a wide range of postcolonial leaders. From the Asian–African Conference at Bandung (1955) through the Non-Aligned Conferences at Belgrade (1961) and Cairo (1964), figures like Indonesia's Ahmed Sukarno, India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Algeria's Ahmed Ben Bella, and Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser articulated a shared vision of anti-imperialism, disarmament, accelerated development, expanded trade, and economic cooperation among those emerging from colonial domination. Above all, they

1 Jussi Hanhimäki and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 355–56.

rejected the ideological rigidity of the Cold War and insisted on the right to define freely their own paths to progress in a world of different social systems. As the official declaration from the Belgrade conference put it, "aware that ideological differences are necessarily a part of the growth of the human society, the participating countries consider that peoples and governments shall refrain from any use of ideologies for the purpose of waging cold war, exercising pressure, or imposing their will."[2]

That hope, however, would go unrealized. For the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Cold War was a *fundamentally* ideological conflict, a struggle over the direction of global history and the definition of modernity itself. At the very same moment that the first generation of postcolonial leaders articulated their ambitions for non-aligned, self-determined development, each of the Cold War's main adversaries approached the phenomenon of decolonization through hegemonic, universalistic models of social change. In that context, Third World elites made a variety of difficult choices. Some, attracted to the Soviet Union's impressive record of industrialization and eager to centralize their authority in strong state and party structures, sought ties to Moscow. Others gravitated toward the vastly superior economic resources and development funds offered by the United States and international financial bodies. A final group of states, wary of the military alliances that were often linked to development aid, drew selectively from the different camps, played the superpowers off against each other, and tried to maintain an independent course. In the ideologies through which American, Soviet, and Chinese policymakers interpreted the world, decolonization expanded the scope of the Cold War and created new fields in which the struggle over the acceleration and destination of global change would be fought. In the upheavals of Third World revolution, each of the major powers came to perceive crucial test cases in which liberal capitalism and diverse forms of state socialism would engage in a contest of universal and lasting significance. As a result, places like Cuba, Vietnam, Indonesia, Congo, and Angola all became points of intense Cold War conflict.

Cold War interventions in the Third World would also become more lethal over time. In the early 1960s, the major Cold War adversaries approached the postcolonial world with striking ambitions. Despite the obvious differences in their objectives, US, Soviet, and Chinese policymakers all believed that

2 "Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries," in Henry M. Christman (ed.), *Neither East Nor West: The Basic Documents of Non-Alignment* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1973), 57.

decolonization provided them with a moment of profound opportunity, a window in which they might draw on their own historical experience to identify the crucial levers of social change and transform the future of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. By the mid-1960s, however, their expectations became increasingly frustrated. The Third World, they learned, was not nearly as malleable as they had anticipated. American policymakers found themselves unable to promote a modernizing turn to liberal, democratic capitalism in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Soviet leaders faced growing tensions with Cuba and watched in dismay as governments they supported in Southeast Asia and Africa were overthrown. Chinese policymakers, finally, witnessed diplomatic reversals in Africa and the erosion of their relationship with North Vietnam.

The result, by the late 1960s, was a reorientation in Soviet, American, and Chinese policies that only amplified the ideological polarization of the Third World. As the first postcolonial governments were replaced by repressive military dictatorships or radical Marxist regimes, the space for nationalist elites to pursue viable, non-aligned development diminished. By the middle of the decade, US policymakers increasingly shifted from approaches stressing modernization and accelerated development to a greater reliance on direct coercion and military force. The Soviet Union also turned from a pluralistic embrace of anticolonial movements toward a more rigid insistence on Marxist–Leninist party-building. China, meanwhile, emerged from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution willing to support nearly any cause in the campaign against its Soviet rival. By the late 1960s, superpower-supported violence escalated dramatically. The struggle to determine the course of the Third World helped destroy the foundations for détente, but the greatest damage was done by its contribution to a tragic pattern of expanded militarization, civil war, and human suffering across some of the poorest regions of the globe.

Ideology and the acceleration of history

As many historians have argued, the policies that the major powers directed toward the Third World were shaped by a complex range of factors. Evaluations of strategic demands, material and economic objectives, domestic political forces, bureaucratic politics, and the variables of personality all played significant roles. Yet the fact that countries such as Vietnam and Angola, on the distant periphery, far from national borders and vital markets, became points of intense superpower conflict also suggests the value of taking ideology

seriously. The Cold War, as one scholar explains, was driven by "fundamentally incompatible conceptions of the organization of political, economic, and social life … Indeed, power came in large measure to be defined in ideological terms, gains or losses during the Cold War being measured by the global advance or retreat of regime types to an extent that would confound an orthodox realist."[3] Ideology alone certainly did not wholly determine superpower policies. But as David Engerman argues, recognizing its significance can provide us with a better understanding of the way policymakers defined and pursued a broad range of national interests.[4]

The American, Soviet, and Chinese conceptions of security at home were also intimately tied to the expansion and preservation of their social systems abroad. As European empires collapsed, US policymakers feared that Communists would prey on conditions of poverty and instability to subvert fragile new states. They also worried that a failure to counter such designs with a compelling response of their own would do immense damage to American credibility, emboldening radical aggressors, disheartening allies, and jeopardizing the domestic political consensus needed to support what John F. Kennedy famously called a "long twilight struggle." By the early 1960s, Soviet and Chinese strategists had also concluded that the Third World was an arena of crucial significance. While Soviet capabilities did not enable the same reach, Nikita Khrushchev determined that the rapid decolonization of the world had created a moment in which the "transition to socialism" might be promoted abroad in ways that would help secure the historical foundations of the Soviet state. Mao Zedong, profoundly impressed by the global anti-imperial struggle, also concluded that "only when China's superior moral position in the world had been recognized by other peoples would the consolidation of his continuous revolution's momentum at home be assured."[5] These ideologies certainly did not preclude Cold War powers from pursuing more pragmatic policies, nor did they remain fixed in stone. At different points in time each government supported regimes or movements that had little interest in their own social ideals. As this chapter will explain, these ideologies also changed over time. At the high tide of decolonization, however, they played crucial roles as conceptual frameworks through which policymakers made sense of a rapidly changing world and sought to act upon it.

3 Nigel Gould-Davies, "The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 27 (2003): 195.

4 See David C. Engerman's chapter in volume I.

5 Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 15.

Central to the thinking of policymakers in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing as well was a common tendency to interpret decolonization as evidence of history's global direction. While each power defined that direction in sharply different terms, they all concluded that history was ultimately on their side, and that its course might be profoundly accelerated. In the United States, the ideology of modernization was especially significant in this regard. From the late 1940s through the mid-1960s, American social scientists drew on older, Enlightenment assumptions to frame theories defining a fundamental transition from "traditional" worlds shaped by the contours of family, ascribed status, religion, and fatalism to "modern" orders characterized by individualism, achieved status, rationalism, and scientific confidence in the promise of progress. Sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and Daniel Lerner, political scientists like Gabriel Almond and Lucian Pye, and economists like Max Millikan and Walt Rostow all concluded that the world was moving along a single, universal trajectory in which the impact of Western ideals and technology was creating a "revolution of rising expectations." By positioning the liberal, democratic, capitalist United States at the endpoint of their historical scale, they also gave this framework a decidedly encouraging cast. The United States, theorists maintained, had experienced the world's first "modern" revolution, and others might now follow in its wake.

That conclusion went down well in an American culture that had long defined its own history in prophetic, regenerative terms. It also fit well in the Cold War context. Social scientists, working on projects often funded by the state itself, were quick to point out the strategic significance of their work. While necessary and beneficial, they explained, the transition toward modernity could also be disruptive and chaotic. Societies caught in the anxiety and uncertainty generated by the erosion of traditional worldviews often sought new forms of belonging, substitutions for their fallen faiths, and shortcuts to modernity, and that fact kept the field open for the dangers of Communist subversion. The Communists, as Rostow argued, were "scavengers of the transitional process," a malevolent force that preyed on societies at their most vulnerable moment. But the United States did not have to stand idly on history's sidelines. Using the tools of foreign aid, development planning, and technical assistance, the United States could dramatically accelerate the passage of traditional societies through a crucial "take-off" toward the modern endpoint. By accelerating the great transition, it could slam shut the narrow window of opportunity that Communist aggressors sought to exploit and produce a safer, liberal, more democratic world of thriving capitalist societies.

The Kennedy administration took those ideas to heart and prominent social scientists took on significant roles in US policymaking. But their theories were probably most compelling because they crystallized a set of core assumptions about the transformative power of American ideals that was already widely shared among Cold War liberals. As Kennedy himself argued before the US Congress, "We live at a very special moment in history. The whole southern half of the world – Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia – are caught up in the adventures of asserting their independence and modernizing their old ways of life." The world's "new nations," moreover, needed American help because they were "under Communist pressure … But the fundamental task of our foreign aid program in the 1960s is not negatively to fight Communism: Its fundamental task is to help make a historical demonstration that in the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth – in the southern half of the globe as in the north – economic growth and political democracy can develop hand in hand."[6]

The acceleration of modernity also became a fundamental policy goal. As part of an American-sponsored "Decade of Development," the Kennedy administration launched an Alliance for Progress with Latin America, a ten-year program designed to raise economic growth rates, promote education, improve health care, provide housing, and engineer comprehensive development planning through democratic institutions. The Peace Corps sent thousands of young Americans to promote modernization through "community development" programs in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. The administration also promoted modernization as a counterinsurgency strategy in South Vietnam, linking military objectives to an ambitious vision of social engineering. In Iran, finally, US policymakers hoped that the Shah's "White Revolution" would promote economic growth and diversification as well as form a liberalizing alliance between the monarch and a newly educated, progressive-minded peasantry. American policymakers deeply feared Communist movements in the Third World. But by accelerating the course of modernization they hoped to contain Communism and possibly drive the world into a historical stage in which it would no longer have any appeal.

To an even greater extent than their American counterparts, Soviet strategic thinkers envisaged a world of opportunity in the early 1960s. Following Iosif Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership embarked on a prolonged ideological reassessment. Several related factors shaped that process. First, Soviet strategists came to believe that the advent of tremendously destructive nuclear

6 Hanhimäki and Westad (eds.), *The Cold War*, 361.

weapons made the inevitability of total war between Communist and capitalist states less certain. That conclusion, in turn, placed a new premium on the development of activist policies designed to accelerate the longer-term spread of socialism in conditions of "peaceful coexistence." Where Stalinists had defined a world rigidly divided between a "socialist" camp constituted by the Soviet Union and the Marxist–Leninist states loyal to it and a "capitalist" camp made up of all others, Khrushchev believed that Third World leaders, even determinedly nationalist ones, were not mere "stooges of imperialism" or pawns of their former colonial masters. As Mark Bradley argues, for Khrushchev, decolonization marked a decisive, global turning point.[7] The new, postcolonial states of the world, he concluded, could potentially become elements of a "vast zone of peace," a broad coalition of progressive forces standing in opposition to the powers of imperialism. As Khrushchev declared in 1956, "the new period in world history, predicted by Lenin, when the peoples of the East would play an active part in deciding the destinies of the entire world and become a new and mighty factor in international relations has arrived."[8]

From the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, Soviet leaders worked to put these new concepts in practice. As they debated the possibility that the historical path to socialism might take on a variety of different forms, strategists such as Boris Ponomarev, head of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, joined Khrushchev in considering the implications of the new thinking for Soviet Third World policy. Soviet analysts often disagreed with each other, but like their American counterparts, they came to define the decolonizing world as fundamentally "transitional" and concluded that time was ultimately on their side. Postcolonial and especially non-aligned states, one scholar explains, "were not conceived to be static in equilibrium between capitalism and socialism. Instead, struggling 'progressive forces' within these historically transitional states were expected to encourage them over time to cooperate ever more closely with the socialist camp."[9] Soviet leaders believed that their country's record of steadfast opposition to colonialism and impressive economic growth would appeal to Third World elites seeking an alternative to global capitalism and collaboration with imperial powers. They also expected that as working-class and proletarian forces

7 See Mark Philip Bradley's chapter in volume I.

8 Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17–18.

9 Roy Allison, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 9–10.

gained strength, bourgeois nationalists might form alliances with them and help convert anti-imperialist revolutions into anticapitalist ones. The result would be a trend toward socialism that did not necessarily require armed struggle, a firm allegiance to Marxist principles, or the instrumental, vanguard role of Communist parties.

Following that optimistic vision, the Soviet Union moved quickly to develop close ties with a wide range of postcolonial states. Nehru's India, Sukarno's Indonesia, Nasser's Egypt, Ben Bella's Algeria, and Nkrumah's Ghana all received significant amounts of Soviet military and economic aid. While many Third World recipients of Soviet assistance embraced radical economic policies, the vast majority of them were not Marxist states. Many of them also declared their firm commitment to policies of non-alignment and even suppressed local Communist parties. The Soviets hoped, however, that anti-imperial, nationalist movements would ultimately turn in socialist directions. As Piero Gleijeses explains, Fidel Castro's Cuba became the greatest and most famous source of Soviet enthusiasm in the early 1960s.[10] Although Castro had taken power without Moscow's support, Khrushchev and his colleagues quickly came to perceive the Cuban revolution as both a reflection of the Soviet past and a vision of the future.

The Soviet commitment to "national liberation movements" also led to an intervention in the former Belgian colony of Congo. In the summer of 1960, only weeks after Congo gained independence, the mineral-rich province of Katanga seceded with help from Brussels. Newly elected prime minister and former labor leader Patrice Lumumba then requested that the United Nations (UN) intervene to end the rebellion and expel Belgian military forces from the country. Worried that Lumumba might follow in Castro's footsteps and fearful that he would export his country's uranium to the Soviets, Washington helped ensure that the UN peacekeeping mission would not support his goals. In frustration, Lumumba then accepted a Soviet aid offer, and Khrushchev moved quickly to intervene. The Soviets delivered hundreds of trucks, some two dozen aircraft, and several helicopters to enable Congolese troops to mount an offensive against Katanga. In September, as Lumumba began to make progress, the United States made plans to assassinate him and supported a coup by Colonel Joseph Mobutu of the Congolese army. Lumumba's subsequent capture and murder by his Congolese and Katangese adversaries was a severe blow for Moscow's policy. By delivering arms to Congo and criticizing the UN for supporting the colonizers, however,

10 See Piero Gleijeses's chapter in this volume.

Khrushchev challenged the West and appealed to the Third World with a clear, anti-imperial stance.

Chinese policymakers also perceived decolonization as a force for tremendous revolutionary change. Yet in contrast to Washington and Moscow, Beijing did not suddenly come to that conclusion in the mid-1950s and early 1960s. For Mao Zedong, China's own long historical experience in the revolutionary struggle against Western imperialism made his nation a "natural ally" of the world's "oppressed peoples." From the time the People's Republic was founded, Mao defined the promotion of national liberation as a core element of China's revolutionary mission. In the late 1940s, Mao placed China within the vast "intermediate zone" of oppressed, non-Western countries standing between the threat of US imperialism and the Soviet socialism he admired. Promoting national liberation in the decolonizing world, Mao believed, would help ensure the survival of China's own revolution and defend socialism as a whole. In this regard, Mao and his prime minister, Zhou Enlai, sought close relations with decolonizing countries even before that objective became a major Soviet priority. At the 1955 Bandung Conference, for example, Zhou eagerly pursued a common "united front" against imperialism among postcolonial states that often had little interest in the formal ideology of the Chinese Communist Party.

Starting in the late 1950s, as Sergey Radchenko notes, the growing Sino-Soviet schism also affected Chinese Third World policy.[11] When the Soviets declined to back China in a Sino-Indian border conflict in 1959, and Khrushchev appeared to value his relationship with the non-aligned Nehru over solidarity with Mao, underlying ideological tensions burst into the open. Mao attacked Khrushchev's "revisionism" and insisted that war with the forces of imperialism remained inevitable. "Peaceful coexistence," he argued, was merely a temporary condition, and the "transition to socialism" could only proceed through armed struggle and class conflict. More fundamentally, Mao also viewed the question of Third World revolution through a domestic lens. Worried about the potential for bureaucratic stagnation and a loss of momentum, he sought to accelerate China's own drive from socialism to genuine Communism and feared that Soviet backsliding might infect and corrupt his own government's revolutionary commitments. Just as he promoted the disastrous Great Leap Forward at home, he sought to mobilize his country behind a more radical policy abroad.

11 See Sergey Radchenko's chapter in this volume.

Chinese Third World activism in the early and mid-1960s, therefore, reflected a desire to counter American imperialism and demonstrate Beijing's claim to global revolutionary leadership, a project pursued most aggressively in Vietnam and Africa. While Mao had supported Vietnam's revolution since 1950, as the Sino-Soviet split deepened China dramatically increased its commitment. China's experience, Mao believed, was an essential model for the Vietnamese, and support for that revolution became a "litmus test for 'true communism.'"[12] Worried that higher levels of Soviet aid would draw the North Vietnamese closer to the Kremlin, Mao increased China's own weapons deliveries and deployed a total of over 320,000 engineering, anti-aircraft, transportation, and logistic troops starting in 1965. In the event of an American invasion of North Vietnam, Mao also promised that China would send its own combat units to defend the revolution. In the early 1960s, Zhou Enlai also made three separate trips to Africa, visiting Algeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia in one journey that lasted from December of 1963 through February of 1964. Anticolonial guerrilla commanders were invited to train in China, the PRC sent doctors to Africa despite their shortage at home, and huge shipments of Chinese rice and maize arrived in Guinea and the Sudan even as famine afflicted China itself. In Southeast Asia and Africa, China aimed to promote revolutions that would embody its own experience. As Politburo member Lin Biao confidently declared in 1965, the revolutionary encirclement of the cities by triumphant rural forces during China's civil war was about to be replicated on a global scale. As the "people's revolutionary movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America" continued "growing vigorously," it would steadily surround and overwhelm North America and Europe, putting both the Americans and the Soviets on the defensive.[13]

By the mid-1960s, American, Soviet, and Chinese policymakers perceived decolonization and national liberation as forces of immense significance. Where Americans envisioned modernization as a means to confront the Communist inroads they so feared, Soviet strategists optimistically defined the Third World as a rich field for socialist transformation. Chinese policymakers, finally, insisted on the wider validity of their own anticolonial revolution in opposition to the United States as well as their Soviet rivals.

12 Chen, *Mao's China*, 211.
13 George T. Yu, "China and the Third World," *Asian Survey*, 17 (1977), 1038.

Failures and reassessments

Ambitions to direct and channel postcolonial aspirations, however, were soon disappointed. As they learned, often painfully, that the Third World was not nearly as malleable as they had assumed, both American and Soviet policymakers struggled to reorient their approaches. Chinese policy, consumed by domestic turmoil, also underwent a major shift. The result, by the end of the 1960s, was a sharp escalation in armed conflict and violence.

Much of the frustration experienced by the great powers stemmed from the fact that Third World elites were never simply passive recipients of modernizing or revolutionary models. While they certainly were attracted to the promises of accelerated development and state-building, postcolonial leaders often played the superpowers off against each other and adapted their ideologies for their own purposes. Where Soviet, American, and Chinese policymakers tended to see their models as complete, indivisible packages, Third World leaders displayed a remarkable proclivity for selecting and blending diverse elements while combining them with their own historically and culturally defined priorities.

American policymakers found that phenomenon particularly troublesome. Modernization, in their view, was a single, integrated process in which step-by-step advances in capitalist structures, psychological transformations, and political democracy would each reinforce the other. But leaders like Nehru, willing to "skip stages" and experiment in the pursuit of rapid change, eagerly combined ideas drawn from both Soviet and American experience. In an attempt to contain China and demonstrate its commitment to postcolonial Asia, the Kennedy administration provided substantial support for India's economic development. The problem, however, was that Americans and Indians had fundamentally different understandings of what "development" itself meant. Nehru was deeply impressed by the Soviet record of rapid industrialization, embraced Soviet-style centralized planning, and strongly emphasized the production of steel, machinery, and capital goods. Indian planners also rejected the advice of American economists that instead of a crash drive toward industrialization, long-term development required greater attention to agriculture and balanced growth. Along with Nehru's sharp criticism of US intervention in Vietnam, his leftward economic turn alienated many American supporters. US aid helped alleviate an Indian economic crisis, but the relationship between the two countries remained tense. Through Nehru's death in 1964, the ideology of modernization prevented much of the US government from

recognizing that Nehru's interest in Soviet economics did not extend to Soviet politics.[14]

The internal contradictions and failures of modernization, experienced across different regions, also contributed to a reassessment of US Third World policy during the Johnson administration. Modernization, in the Kennedy period, was frequently considered as an alternative to the direct deployment of American military force, a way to promote structural solutions and win the Cold War in the Third World by speeding up the course of history itself. Lyndon Johnson and his advisers did not completely abandon that perspective, but they did determine that the risk of Communist gains and the potential damage to American credibility required far more immediate and coercive action. As scholars such as Nils Gilman have argued, the ideology of modernization was always ambivalent at best regarding the question of democracy, and by the mid-1960s it increasingly became "the intellectual equivalent of hitting the gas pedal on a skidding car: an attempt to accelerate out of a problem. As moderate solutions to development failed again and again, hard-core solutions found more and more advocates."[15]

In Latin America, Johnson responded to the failures of the Alliance for Progress by reorienting the program away from its original reformist ambitions. By the mid-1960s, few Latin American nations had reached targeted economic growth rates or made expected increases in popular living standards. A handful, such as Rómulo Betancourt's Venezuela, did reduce unemployment, promote modest agrarian reform, and increase the share of the national budget devoted to education and health care. But many Latin American liberals found that their ability to fund further reforms was seriously constrained by the declining terms of trade between exports of primary goods and the imports of manufactured products. The program's economic contradictions were compounded by political ones. Kennedy had warned that "those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable," but the idea of promoting "revolution" of any kind threatened conservative, anti-Communist oligarchs. In Guatemala, for example, Alliance-sponsored community leadership training, literacy programs, and financial cooperatives empowered Indians and poor peasants to challenge the dominance of merchants and landowners. At the same time, however, elites red-baited their adversaries and used the steady flow of US

14 David C. Engerman, "The Romance of Economic Development and New Histories of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 28 (2004), 23–35.

15 Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 12, 50–51.

18. The body of Che Guevara. He was executed after being captured in Bolivia in 1967. Guevara was regarded as the most dangerous opponent of US influence in Latin America.

counterinsurgency aid to make war against them. Johnson did little to correct these failings, and as US-sponsored repression gutted the developmental gains that modernizers had sought, anti-Communist anxieties killed the "peaceful revolution" in its infancy.[16]

The promotion of authoritarian regimes may not have been Johnson's first choice, but as modernization ran aground in Latin America he concluded that such a policy would certainly be preferable to the uncertainties of long-term, democratic development. Thomas Mann, Johnson's new assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, outlined the administration's approach in 1964 by declaring that the United States would no longer make democratic reforms a condition for the delivery of US military and economic aid under the Alliance. In the struggle to prevent a "second Cuba," order and anti-Communist stability would have to precede

16 Stephen M. Streeter, "Nation Building in the Land of Eternal Counterinsurgency: Guatemala and the Contradictions of the Alliance for Progress," *Third World Quarterly* 27, (2006), 57–68.

progress. Accordingly, the administration moved quickly to recognize military coups against left-leaning governments in Brazil, Bolivia, and several other states. More dramatically, in April 1965 the Johnson administration invaded the Dominican Republic with 33,000 troops to prevent the possible return to power of Juan Bosch, a progressive who had been democratically elected in late 1962 and overthrown by a conservative junta ten months later. Although evidence of Communist activity among the pro-Bosch forces was very thin, Johnson concluded that the risk of subversion was simply intolerable.

In Vietnam, Johnson also determined that America could not wait for modernization to produce its expected miracles. While deeply concerned about Communist gains, in 1961 Kennedy planners still believed that it might be possible to derail the Vietnamese revolution through a blend of development and counterinsurgency programs. As the United States increased the flow of arms and advisers, it also stepped up civil service training programs and urged Ngo Dinh Diem toward liberal reforms. The heart of the effort, however, unfolded in the countryside where the United States directed a massive plan to relocate the Vietnamese peasantry in "strategic hamlets" that would separate them from the insurgents and allow for government-sponsored development programs to win their loyalty and support. That ambitious mix of military tactics and social engineering failed miserably. South Vietnamese government and military leaders frequently abused the peasantry they were supposed to protect and assist, but the more fundamental causes were grounded in an ideology that ignored the realities of Vietnamese history and culture. Although US officials continued to define Diem as the root of the problem and hoped for greater success after his removal in late 1963, the National Liberation Front continued to gain ground and American pessimism steadily grew.

Johnson's response was a forceful one. As Fredrik Logevall explains, Johnson feared that a withdrawal from Vietnam would do irreparable damage to America's global credibility as well as his own domestic political power and personal authority.[17] Development-centered counterinsurgency programs continued in South Vietnam, and in April of 1965 Johnson dramatically offered to build a Tennessee Valley Authority on the Mekong Delta. Yet, the president concluded that long-term, structural efforts at "nation building" were simply not enough. In early 1965, he ordered the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, and by 1967 more than a half million US combat troops were in the field. Modernizing ambitions did not vanish, but visions for structural

17 See Fredrik Logevall's chapter in this volume.

change were largely eclipsed by a massive war of attrition designed simply to kill revolutionaries faster than they could be replaced.

In Indonesia, the United States also turned toward a more aggressive policy. By 1964, Sukarno's political confrontation with British-supported Malaysia, his mismanagement of the Indonesian economy, and his declared promise to shift Indonesian politics to the left all alarmed Washington officials. Where US policymakers had previously tolerated Sukarno's neutralism and seen his government as a viable alternative to the Indonesian Communist Party, they now began to work covertly for his removal. In 1965, when General Suharto and other Indonesian army leaders put down a revolt by junior officers and crippled Sukarno's power, the Johnson administration was elated. The United States also threw its firm support behind the army's relentless, sweeping campaign to expose and execute Indonesia's Communists and suspected sympathizers. A resolute American stance in Vietnam, US officials concluded, had emboldened Indonesia's military and might help promote a crucial turn throughout the rest of Southeast Asia as well.

In Vietnam, Latin America, Iran, and Indonesia, US policymakers also discarded even the tentative steps they had previously made to promote liberal reforms. By strongly supporting a string of dictators in Saigon, backing the Shah of Iran's political repression, supporting an anti-Communist, military-driven bloodbath in Indonesia, and embracing right-wing coups across Latin America, the United States steadily turned toward "bureaucratic authoritarian" solutions. Modernization promised stability through long-term progress, but by the mid-1960s US policymakers concluded that the immediate preservation of anti-Communist order required a much more direct approach.

The Soviets also engaged in a revision of their Third World policy during the mid-1960s. Like their American counterparts, Soviet strategists were dismayed by the willingness of postcolonial elites to chart independent courses. Mao Zedong's growing hostility, in particular, raised wider questions about the wisdom of committing precious Soviet resources to build alliances with regimes that might refuse to follow the Soviet political line, or, worse, become potential adversaries. Soviet aid to self-proclaimed, non-aligned socialists like Sukarno and Nkrumah also raised doubts. Neither Indonesia nor Ghana had embarked on a disciplined "transition" to "scientific" Marxist socialism, and both governments had proven unstable enough to fall victim to military coups in the mid-1960s, a result that destroyed years of Soviet political and capital investment.

Frustrated relations with Cuba also played a significant role in triggering a Soviet reevaluation. Castro's fury, when Khrushchev removed Soviet missiles from Cuban soil without consulting him, and his decision to

block the international inspections intended to resolve the missile crisis alarmed Kremlin leaders. Protests by Che Guevara over the terms of Soviet aid, Cuba's refusal to follow the USSR in signing the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, Cuban criticism of Soviet trade with its Latin American enemies, and state trials of members of the old, pre-revolutionary Cuban Communist Party all strained relations between Havana and Moscow. Where Soviet policymakers had once envisioned the Cuban revolution as a wondrous sign of socialist advance and solidarity, by 1966 they found themselves listening to a doggedly independent Castro attack the USSR for its failure to recognize the need for armed struggle in the cause of global revolution.

The Soviet investment in Egypt did not live up to Khrushchev's expectations either. Starting in the 1950s, the USSR took significant steps to cultivate an alliance by providing funding for the Aswan High Dam and supporting Egypt during the Suez crisis. Nasser, however, held firmly to his policy of nonalignment and cracked down aggressively on Egyptian Communists, imprisoning many of them. After Cairo and Damascus created the United Arab Republic in 1958, Nasser spread his anti-Communist campaign into Syria and condemned Soviet support for Communist elements in Iraq as well. While Khrushchev hoped that Egypt would take a more radical turn to the left, Nasser angrily accused the Soviets of hindering the cause of Arab unity and interfering in internal Arab affairs. Although relations improved in the mid-1960s, serious tensions persisted over the terms of Soviet support for the Arab conflict with Israel. Egypt, moreover, never embarked on the kind of thoroughgoing revolutionary transformation that Khrushchev hoped for.

As Svetlana Savranskaya and William Taubman explain, the growing doubt with which Soviet leaders viewed Khrushchev's revolutionary adventurism contributed to his downfall.[18] Doubt also produced a political reconsideration. The "transition to socialism," many strategists concluded, was far more complex than Khrushchev had assumed. Feudalistic forces were more tenacious, peasants less politically mobilized, and the goals of rapid industrialization and land reform far more difficult to achieve than anticipated. Yet the USSR did not retreat from engagement with the Third World under Leonid Brezhnev, nor did Soviet policymakers cease to believe that history was on their side. Indeed, analysts, like Karen Brutents, argued that the USSR should pursue an activist approach. The key, however, would be for the USSR to direct its longer-term, comprehensive support more carefully to movements grounded in explicitly Marxist–Leninist ideology and to place a stronger

18 See Svetlana Savranskaya and William Taubman's chapter in this volume.

emphasis on the role of "vanguard parties" in providing the political structure essential to drive revolutions forward and defend them against imperialist resistance.

As its aspirations for global revolutionary change were chastened, the Soviet Union also shifted its emphasis toward military aid and arms sales, a tool that it often used for shorter-term, instrumental purposes. During the Khrushchev era, the amount of funding for economic development that was offered to a broad range of anticolonial movements and postcolonial states had slightly exceeded levels of military assistance. By the late 1960s, however, the value of military aid surpassed that of development funding, a trend that strongly increased over the next decade. Under Khrushchev limited military capabilities prevented the USSR from playing a larger role in far-flung regions, but under Brezhnev the Soviets used new assets in air transport, shipping, communications, and naval vessels to intervene at much greater levels. Following the American escalation in Vietnam in 1965, the Soviet Union dramatically amplified its military assistance to its Communist ally there, providing the North Vietnamese with surface-to-air missiles, jet fighters, field artillery, and radar as well as technicians and pilots. Thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers and officers also trained in Soviet military schools. But Soviet arms sales, military aid, and advisers also poured into non-Marxist states and fueled wars fought by Egypt, Syria, India, and Iraq. In these cases, the USSR shelved its longer-term, historical vision in favor of the more practical goals of gaining leverage in diplomatic negotiations, obtaining access to naval and air bases, raising hard currency, and frustrating US efforts to build regional alliances. As ideological ambitions cooled, the Soviet Union, like the United States, placed an increasing premium on the utility of force.

From the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, Chinese policymakers endured a series of setbacks of their own in the Third World. The 1965 overthrow of Algeria's Ben Bella eliminated a regime that China had helped come to power and had seen as a model for further armed struggle in Africa. The coup against Sukarno and the decimation of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965 and 1966 also destroyed a government China hoped would become part of a strong anti-Western alliance in Asia. Several moderate African governments broke relations with the PRC in protest over China's support for insurgencies on that continent, and China's confrontation with India alienated other members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Chinese officials also watched in frustration as their relationship with North Vietnam deteriorated. After Mao dismissed a Soviet proposal for a collaborative approach to assisting the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and Soviet arms shipments steadily increased,

Hanoi stopped criticizing Soviet "revisionism." When Le Duan traveled to Moscow in 1966 and referred to the Soviet Union as a "second motherland," Chinese officials were deeply angered. The DRV's 1968 decision to enter into peace negotiations with the United States, over strenuous Chinese objections, also amplified fears of Soviet influence.

As China plunged into the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1969, Beijing's Third World policy fell into disarray. While aid to North Vietnam continued, all Chinese ambassadors, with the single exception of the one in Cairo, were recalled to engage in studies of Maoist doctrine, effectively paralyzing the country's diplomatic organization. When China finally emerged from the chaos, Mao and Zhou replaced their earlier, more flexible promotion of a broad anti-American, anti-imperial united front with an overriding and rigid insistence on the dangers of Soviet aggression. Alarmed by the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and worried that violent border clashes with the Soviets in 1969 might lead to general war, Chinese officials also began to emphasize the need for the PRC and the entire Third World to struggle against the "dual hegemony" of the world's two superpowers. By 1973, after the famous meeting between Mao and Richard Nixon in Beijing, Chinese officials also downplayed armed struggle, deemphasized the cause of national liberation in favor of interstate relations, and subordinated their previous revolutionary goals to the overriding campaign against Soviet "social imperialism."

From Vietnam to Angola, and the demise of détente

The combined American and Soviet turn away from ambitious, open-ended visions of decolonization to a more immediate emphasis on coercion, force, and control in the mid-to-late 1960s intersected with the passing away of the first generation of postcolonial leaders. As non-aligned nationalists were replaced in coups by military juntas or revolutionary regimes, the Third World became increasingly polarized. Resolute, dictatorial anti-Communists like Suharto in Indonesia, Mobutu in Zaire, and the Shah of Iran received substantial US support and, under the Nixon administration, came to be seen as regional bulwarks against the dangers of Marxist insurgency. At the same time, however, revolutionary ideologies, often introduced through the writings of dissident intellectuals in the West, made new headway among activists and students across Southeast Asia and Africa and helped turn liberation movements in more clearly Marxist directions.

Vietnam in particular became a source of inspiration for revolutionaries and guerrilla movements. While few Third World radicals devoted close, serious

study to Vietnam's experience, Hanoi's determined stand in the face of American technological might became an appealing symbol of determined resistance and the power of popular revolutionary war. Despite Johnson's massive deployment of US combat troops and Nixon's sharp intensification of the bombing campaign and invasion of Cambodia, the revolutionaries had struggled on. As Che Guevara proclaimed, the Vietnamese offered a lesson to the world: "Since the imperialists are using the threat of war to blackmail humanity, the correct response is not to fear war. Attack hard and without let-up at every point of confrontation – that must be the general tactic of the people."[19] Where radicals came to see Soviet policies as too conservative and fainthearted, the 1968 Tet Offensive stirred revolutionary imaginations across Southeast Asia and Africa.

Impressed by Hanoi's resilience and the effect of the war on American politics, Soviet leaders also drew important conclusions of their own in Vietnam. With Soviet help, a disciplined Marxist–Leninist party like that in the DRV was capable of raising the political costs of war to the point that the United States would ultimately decide to pull back its forces. If the United States proved unwilling or unable to stop a revolution in Vietnam, where it had made an immense commitment, then the chances of successful revolutions in other areas looked to be on the rise.

As several scholars have argued, the beginnings of superpower détente also made increased Cold War conflict in the Third World more, not less, likely. America's growing frustration in Vietnam contributed to the rise of détente, and Nixon and Henry Kissinger hoped that a diplomatic engagement with the Soviets might persuade them to hold their North Vietnamese allies in check. They hoped, through a strategy of "linkage," to offer the Soviets "recognition of their strategic parity" and "a promise of access to Western capital and technology." In return, "they asked Moscow to recognize the mutuality of superpower interest in stability, especially in maintaining order in the Third World."[20] Yet as Raymond Garthoff explains, détente was "not a clearly defined concept held in common." While Soviet policymakers did expect that détente might help prevent war between the superpowers, they also "insisted loudly that peaceful coexistence among states did not mean an end to 'the class struggle' or the 'national liberation movement' in colonial or neocolonial situations." Where Nixon and Kissinger anticipated that détente

19 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 190.

20 Warren I. Cohen, *America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 183.

would result in a Soviet acceptance of the status quo in the Third World, Brezhnev believed that the Soviet Union retained a free hand to challenge the United States' global engagement there. Convinced that the Communist victory in Vietnam demonstrated that the "correlation of forces" in the world was shifting to the benefit of the USSR, Brezhnev thought it would be a mistake not to press the advantage.[21]

The conflicting expectations came to a head most dramatically in Angola. When the Portuguese dictatorship collapsed in April 1974 and that country erupted into civil war among three competing independence movements, the United States and South Africa both intervened in an attempt to prevent the Marxist-oriented Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) from coming to power. An MPLA victory, South Africa feared, might promote radical attacks on apartheid in Namibia and South Africa itself. Worried about the damage to American credibility done by defeat in Vietnam, Kissinger hoped that an easy win in Angola might repair the domestic Cold War consensus and restore US prestige abroad. By the following summer, US weapons deliveries, CIA advisers, and South African military trainers were deployed there. When it appeared that the MPLA was still edging toward victory, South African troops invaded the country in October 1975 with US approval.

Although they were concerned by the factional splits within the MPLA, the USSR provided the movement with essential military equipment. The decisive contribution, however, came from Cuba. Since the early 1960s, Castro's commitment to anti-imperialism, vision of Third World solidarity, and opposition to white supremacy had led Cuba to support revolutionary movements in Algeria, Zaire, and Guinea-Bissau. Acting on its own initiative, Cuba responded to the South African invasion in November 1975 by deploying 36,000 troops, repelling the assault, and winning the war for the MPLA. As Piero Gleijeses points out, the Soviet Union did not direct Cuban policy.[22] Yet once it became clear that victory was in sight, Moscow was quick to proclaim the triumph in Angola as evidence of Soviet leadership in the cause of Third World liberation.

The wider international ramifications of the Angolan war were significant. Among the immediate losers was the People's Republic of China. By the early 1970s, the PRC had become so committed to opposing Soviet influence that

21 Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American–Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), 27, 45.

22 See Gleijeses's chapter in this volume.

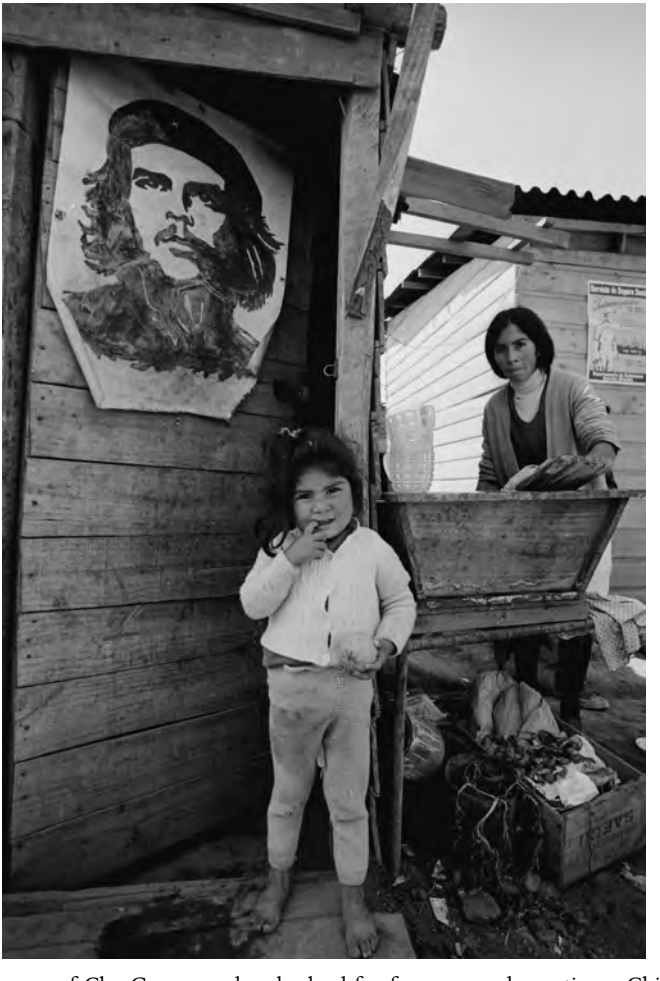
it sacrificed previous commitments to anticapitalist liberation as well as regional diplomatic objectives. As the Soviets and their Cuban allies backed the MPLA, China threw its weight toward the rival National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a nativist, populist movement, and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a nationalist organization without a clearly defined ideological stance. When South Africa invaded Angola, the PRC then found itself in the untenable position of fighting on the same side as the United States and, more crucially, Pretoria's white supremacist regime. Although China stopped training FNLA soldiers within days of the South African attack, the result was a diplomatic disaster: "Its erstwhile clients, the FNLA and UNITA, had been defeated, its relations with the victorious MPLA had been destroyed, and its image as a disinterested and principled friend of African causes had been badly damaged."[23] Gerald Ford's administration also watched in frustration as the US Congress voted in January 1976 to cut off all funding for further US covert action in Angola. The failed attempt to bolster American credibility had only succeeded in further solidifying the anti-interventionist political climate at home. The American cooperation with apartheid South Africa also did grave damage to US relations with other African states, most of which moved quickly to recognize the MPLA government.

The MPLA victory in Angola, however, also had ironic results. Although the USSR gained little in a strategic sense, the Angolan war helped harden a growing perception among US policymakers that the Soviets were exploiting the process of détente and violating its terms. When the USSR went on to promote the Ethiopian revolution, especially after its declaration of Marxist–Leninist principles in 1976, the concept of détente came under fierce political attack in the United States, a process that helped push Jimmy Carter's administration toward a harder line and contributed to the rise of a powerful, right-wing, moralistic, anti-Soviet consensus under Ronald Reagan. Gains in Angola and Ethiopia, therefore, helped jeopardize the arms-limitation agreements that, ultimately, were of far greater value to Moscow. Perhaps even more seriously, those victories encouraged the Soviet conviction that by supporting Marxist parties and moving quickly with new military capabilities they could continue to reshape the course of the Third World, an expectation that would lead to disaster in Afghanistan. The Soviets, in that sense, were about to learn the hard lessons that intervention in Vietnam had taught the United States. Overwhelming military and technological superiority would prove a poor

23 Steven F. Jackson, "China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961–93," *China Quarterly* (1995), 411.

vehicle with which to support a regime lacking real political legitimacy. The forces of culture, religion, and history at work in the Third World, moreover, were not subject to easy manipulation or rapid transformation. The result, moreover, would contribute to the overextension and final crisis of the Soviet state.

The greatest damage done by the Cold War in the Third World, however, was surely suffered by those who lived there. American and Soviet policymakers,



19. The image of Che Guevara, already dead for four years, decorating a Chilean slum in 1971. Guevara and the Cuban revolution continued to provide inspiration for many Third World radicals in the 1970s.

viewing the postcolonial world as inherently malleable, promoted competing ideologies of accelerated development. Believing that their national security depended on the spread of their visions of modernization or socialist transformation, they also deployed tremendous force to propagate them. Many Third World elites, eager for rapid economic and social progress, also embraced those approaches and employed repression in the name of transformation. The sources of violence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were often grounded in anticolonial movements and domestic conflicts along lines of class and ethnicity that pre-dated the Cold War itself. But the intervention of the United States, the Soviet Union, and China made them far more devastating. In this respect, the worry that Nkrumah expressed before his New York audience in 1958 appears prophetic. As the Cold War arrived in Africa and the rest of the Third World, the goals of peaceful, independently charted material advance receded into the distance.