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Review by **Christopher R. W. Dietrich**, Fordham University

“For the first time in history the international system has truly become global,” Henry Kissinger said in a March 1976 speech to the Boston World Affairs Council. “Decolonization and the expansion of the world economy have given birth to scores of new nations and new centers of power and initiative.” The lessons of complexity and interdependence, concepts Kissinger invoked more than a dozen times that day, were at the root of the speech. “Complex realities cannot be dissolved or evaded by nostalgic simplicities,” he told the audience. “[W]e live in a more complex world.”¹

The complexity of global politics in the 1970s is an issue with which readers of H-Diplo are well aware. The interdependence, multipolarity, and linkages of the period, to use just some contemporary jargon, crossed traditional national boundaries and centered on topics that most often were not the traditional fare of the Cold War.²

¹ Bureau of Public Affairs, “America’s Permanent Interests,” March 11, 1976, National Archives and Records Administration, General Records of the Department of State, Policy Planning Council, Policy Planning Staff, Director’s Files (Winston Lord), Box 358.

² On the concept of linkage, Hedley Bull wrote, “Kissinger bears a heavy responsibility for giving currency to this hideous and unnecessary word.” See: Bull, “Kissinger: The Primacy of Geopolitics,” *International Affairs* 56: 3 (Summer, 1980): 484-487. On the development of the concept, which began with concerns about the connections between national and international politics, see: James N. Rosenau, ed., *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems* (New York: Free Press [for the Princeton Center of International Studies], 1969); Daniel Lerner, ed., *Parts and Wholes* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957); Robert A. Dahl, *Congress and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950); and Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961 [1948]). On the concept of interdependence and its relationship to “state-centric” analyses: Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and

The editors of the volume under review should be congratulated for emphasizing that complexity. They have provided a thoughtful review of the foreign policy of the Nixon and Ford administrations concerning a variety of issues negotiated in the United Nations, other international governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The edition not only draws from extensive research into the archives of the State Department and the Presidential Libraries, it also pulls from the papers of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Daniel Patrick Moynihan and the voluminous UN documents regarding the World Food, Population, and International Women's Year Conferences in 1974 and 1975.

Each chapter of the volume is more specific than the last. The first discusses the nature of the U.S.-UN relationship. The second examines the politics of representation in the General Assembly. The final three are progressively precise, covering population policy, food policy, and women's issues. The decision to move from the general to the particular is a good one, because it forces the reader to engage the global context from the beginning, successfully pre-empting our natural predisposition towards parochialism.

The first chapter indicates why U.S. policymakers found the United Nations an especially frustrating venue. Here, officials formed part of a broader American consensus. Norman Cousins, the recently retired editor of *The Saturday Review*, questioned "whether the UN any longer serves a useful purpose."³ In a meeting of the minds, Hans Morgenthau of the New School believed it did not. "The UN does not reflect the world," the founding father of realism told Cousins. "It is a caricature; it distorts actual power relations."⁴ The cartoonist Pat Oliphant approvingly depicted the notoriously aggressive Daniel Patrick Moynihan as a buffed-up boxer dropping a horse-shoe into his glove. "What do you call a Six Foot Five angry Irishman?" one Third World leader asks another upon observing the scene. "Sir," the other responds.⁵

In one early document in this volume, Kissinger and Richard Nixon describe the UN and its members as "revolting," "horrible," "a bunch of apes," and "just ridiculous" (Document 4). We know that the two could make off-color statements, but the disillusionment with U.S.-

Robert O. Keohane, "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction," *International Organization* 25: 3 (Summer 1971): 329-349. On its historical use: Daniel J. Sargent, "The United States and Globalization in the 1970s," in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent, eds. *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2010). On multipolarity: Richard N. Rosecrance, "Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and the Future," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 10 (Sept. 1966): 314-27; Karl W. Deutsch and J.D. Singer, "Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability," *World Politics* 16 (April 1964): 390-406; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964): 881-907.

³ Meeting in the Office of Morris Abram, December 6, 1974, The Papers of Daniel P. Moynihan, I: 334, Library of Congress.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Pat Oliphant, news clipping without date (1975), The Papers of Daniel P. Moynihan, I: 335, Library of Congress.

UN relations was particularly bad in these years. The reason for American ennui was summarized by the mission in New York in late 1973. “The degree of mutual, unqualified, and generally effective support” given by the African bloc to the Arab bloc on the issues of South Africa and Israel was “potentially alarming.” The Non-Aligned Movement had the “votes to dominate most aspects of U.N. activities, and to paralyze the rest, if they so choose” (Document 9). As the “poorer, weaker, and very often smaller nations” found common ground, the Non-Aligned Movement became the dominant force in UN affairs (Document 11).

The Global South had found a soapbox, and they would use it. “One of the most evident blocs in the world today is, ironically, the almost automatic alignment of the unaligned,” Kissinger quipped to the World Affairs Council.⁶ The shared positions of the developing countries were frequently at odds with those of the United States. The second chapter, on the politics of UN representation in the General Assembly, makes the North-South schism clear. The chapter discusses how and why American policymakers opposed recognition of the communist regimes claiming to represent Vietnam and Cambodia, and how the Third World bloc supported those regimes and tried to expel South Africa, Portugal, and Israel. The debates on these issues were drawn repeatedly on a straight North-South line.

The editors write in the preface that American policymakers sought to reverse the trend of ostracism that plagued American participation in the UN General Assembly. This is true, and the volume proves that questions of global affairs took up an increasing amount of Henry Kissinger’s time near the end of his tenure. But American objectives should be closely examined. Historians of human rights have scrutinized the sincerity of the public “turn” towards humanitarianism in international organizations by the Ford administration between 1973 and 1976.⁷ The position raises an important question. Was the same true for American policy towards United Nations? In polemic terms, was the oft-conciliatory tone of American policy towards the UN an earnest effort or an empty gesture?

The answer to that question depends on the actor and the moment—any system of interdependence involves different degrees and types of dependence.⁸ The editors rightly note that the real question is how the second Nixon administration and the Ford

⁶ Bureau of Public Affairs, “America’s Permanent Interests,” *op. cit.*

⁷ Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 43-49; James Peck, *Ideal Illusions: How the United States Coopted Human Rights* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2011); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2010), 151; Jussi Hanhimäki, “‘They Can Write It in Swahili’: Kissinger, The Soviets, and the Helsinki Accords, 1973–1975,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 1: 1 (2003): 37–58.

⁸ A universal truth best portrayed in the tragic end of Orwell’s equals: “Some animals are more equal than others.” See George Orwell, *Animal Farm and 1984* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 66-82. For an interpretation of interdependence in the 1970s, see Daniel J. Sargent, “The United States and Globalization,” 58-64.

administration defined interdependence. Historians should not confuse endeavors to gain American support in the UN with compromise. The posture of the Ford administration toward the UN more often than not gives the lie to the rhetorical emphasis found in some of these documents that links interdependence to compromise.

Moynihan in particular was combative, and had been hired because of an influential article he wrote while ambassador to India arguing for toughness in the face of anti-American hostility.⁹ “The only consensus now is to screw the United States,” he told Kissinger and Ford in their first meeting. “This bunch is just anti-American by nature,” he later said to Ford and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft (Document 22, Document 26). The primary objective of American policy towards the UN was to reassert American primacy. “On the broader North/South question,” Kissinger told Treasury Secretary William Simon in May 1975, “I want to split them....That is why we have Moynihan going up there to take them on.”¹⁰ The volume details how the State Department sought to move major issues out of the control of the General Assembly to more friendly forums. The Department also began to log UN votes, in order to make its case to Congress about limiting aid to countries that consistently voted against the United States (Document 31).

That the tenuous balance between compromise and confrontation often shifted towards the latter is evident in the final three sections of the volume. Here, the editors begin the documentation with the growing concern experts, policymakers, and the general public expressed about global overpopulation. The gravity of the topic was made clear by a National Security Study Memorandum in December 1974: “The enormous built-in momentum of population growth resulting from the extreme youthfulness of populations in developing countries makes the development of population growth control programs a matter of urgency” (Document 118). The stakes were high. Excessive population growth would hold back economic development and social progress. The failure would “increase North-South tensions, and lead to political instability, violence, and conflict... among the developing countries” (Document 118).

The highlight of this section is a long, rambling memo from the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Caspar Weinberger, to Kissinger relating his experience as the head of the U.S. delegation to World Population Conference in Budapest. After paragraph upon paragraph of interesting marginalia, Weinberger noted the gap between U.S. policy to encourage developing nations to reign in population growth and “the general Third World and African bloc theory that we should cut our consumption so as to be able to supply them” (Document 117). Still, it appeared as if officials believed the United States had some success. By mid-1976, the U.S. government reported less resistance to family planning in “problem areas” like Egypt, Tanzania, the Philippines, and Mexico (Document 123).

⁹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The United States in Opposition,” *Commentary* (March 1974): 35-38.

¹⁰ *FRUS, 1969-1976*, Volume XXXI, 293. Memcon, “IEA and OECD Meetings,” May 24, 1975.

The emphasis on the question of population links nicely to the following two sections, on food production and women's health. For the concerned mid-level policymakers, these problems were fastened at the hip. Concerns about overpopulation rose to prominence in part because worldwide food shortages raised the threat of famine. Likewise, the specter of starvation—and in a more general sense, scarcity—led many government officials to arrive at a conclusion shared by international aid workers, ecologists, and the leaders of foreign governments.¹¹ Attending to endemic problems regarding the rights of women would help reduce population growth, thus easing pressure on the over-extended foodways of developing nations.¹²

To conclude, there is much to commend in the volume and its companion, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume E-3*. That edition covers other global issues, including Antarctic resource exploitation, international drug control, human rights, oceans policy, telecommunications, and terrorism. Together, the two contain the essential seed information for literally scores of monographs or articles. They will also be useful as introductions for graduate and upper-level college students who are interested in these particular issues and the complex global context in which they arose.

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¹¹ Thomas Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 2012).

¹² Only one document broaches the issue of forced sterilization, an issue that social scientists interested in transnational population and gender studies have found of interest (Document 185). See Sandra D. Lane, "From Population Control to Reproductive Health: An Emerging Policy Agenda," *Social Science & Medicine* 39: 9 (Nov. 1994): 1303–1314.