The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War Roundtable Review

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http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/.
If you look at lecture notes from the late 1960s and 1970s when most of the authors of this new collection were either not yet breathing or playing AYSO soccer or Pac Man on their Atari game machines, you rediscover typewritten, discolored notes—not crumbling since paper was still at least partially a wood product then. The titles for lectures on the foreign policies of the Eisenhower administration in the Third World—very much of a dated term from that period—include old standbys such as “The Perils of Intervention” and “More Perils of Intervention” or “U.S. Covert Operations in the Third World.” The familiar topics include the U.S. interventions in Iran and Guatemala in 1954, a swift cruise through the Middle East via the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the Lebanon intervention/Eisenhower Doctrine in 1958, a jump shift to Asia with Indochina as the main focus along with the Taiwan Strait Crises, and then we brought it home with Cuba, Castro, and the Republicans which set the stage for even more crises in the sixties.

The authors in this study, from Chester Pach’s framing introduction to David Anderson’s conclusion, offer perspectives, a focus, and archival research that not only transcends the earlier, initial assessments but also moves beyond the revisionism of the 1980s and early 1990s. This revisionism effectively challenged the stereotypical view of President Eisenhower as being more interested in his golf game than strategy and tactics to deal with the crises of the Third World. The authors in this book all agree that Ike was in charge and not Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who almost becomes something of a bit player rather than a supporting actor in the essays. They also all endorse Pach’s suggestion that the real issue is whether or not U.S. policies in the 1950s were effective and wise.

The commentators bring significant publications and teaching experience to this subject and, although they are highly impressed with the overall quality and interpretations of the study, they do raise some questions that merit further discussion, research, and ultimate publication, including

1) The thesis of failure on the part of the Eisenhower administration to manage U.S. policy in the third world wisely and with success—which is endorsed by many of the authors-- is summarized most succinctly by Mary Ann Heiss who stresses the failure of Washington to reconcile deeds with words, the misapplication of tactics, and the pursuit of misguided and inappropriate goals.

2) Within the context of the challenges faced by the United States as it attempted to set up and manage a global involvement as the leading world power, is the overall record really one of failure? As all of the authors note, the Cold War was a primary, even excessive, preoccupation for Eisenhower, Dulles and other U.S. policymakers and advisers. The importance of the European NATO allies to the United States at the same time that their colonial empires were crumbling from the Middle East to Asia and back to Africa posed very difficult choices for Washington. Could the United States have taken the consistent stance that the authors call for, one of
support for nationalistic independence movements in these areas at the expense of relations with European allies? Could Eisenhower have stood against France in Indochina or against the powers in the African independence struggle in the same way that Washington stopped Great Britain, France, and Israel in the Suez Crisis of 1956 despite major suspicions and reservations concerning Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser?

3) In evaluating the success or failure of Washington’s policies—the authors do note some degree of success in relations with Bolivia, China and the Taiwan Strait, the Bandung Conference, and the Middle East—do the authors adequately develop and give weight to the challenges posed by Washington’s major Cold War adversaries, Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Zedong? This might require a significant increase in the size of the essays and an expansion of their focus. However, if the authors are making assessments of success and failure, wisdom or lack thereof, then consideration should be given to the nature of the adversaries and their policies in the Third World. There is some discussion of the presence or lack thereof of communist parties in several of the essays such as Nathan Citino’s study on U.S.-Iraqi relations, 1958-1961, and Mao in the Taiwan Straits. However, Khrushchev and Mao’s policies toward the Third World are not considered, even though Washington’s perceptions of their policies, however mistaken, did make it difficult for the U.S. to back up its rhetorical support for national independence vis-à-vis the European powers with meaningful action.

4) The authors skillfully extend the coverage of factors shaping U.S. policy from the earlier emphasis on security or economic concerns by including a range of considerations including the impact of the racial perspectives and biases of U.S. leaders. Should other considerations receive more attention such as the impact of domestic issues, opinion and political considerations? An exception is James Merriwether’s essay on U.S. policies and Africa in which Merriwether integrates the impact of the domestic civil rights movement on policy calculations.

5) In evaluating the methods used by Washington to manage its global involvement in the Third World, the authors critically evaluate the full range of Washington’s arsenal, from diplomatic and economic measures to covert political action operations, cultural diplomacy, and psychological pressures. This is an impressive strength of their evaluations as noted by the commentators who agree with the authors’ extensive criticism of the willingness of Eisenhower and Dulles to approve CIA interventions into Third World countries with destructive consequences for the countries and long term undesirable repercussions for the United States.

6) The tone of many of the authors—exceptions would include Yi Sun, James Siekmeier, and Peter Hahn—is one of complaints that the U.S. worked against or did not vigorously support national independence movements, that U.S. economic policy did not promote Third World economic development even at the expense of U.S.
interests and economic beliefs, and that the U.S. went against and violated its own principles of self-determination in a variety of ways such as in attempts to manipulate leaders in a neo-colonial manner or as clients in South Vietnam, Iraqi, Bolivia, etc. A perspective of realpolitik or recent imperial interpretations on the U.S. and its post-1945 empire advanced by Charles Maier, Niall Ferguson, and others with different interpretations, would not totally disagree with the authors on methods and consequences and issues such as the relationships between the imperial power and client states on the frontier. Should the authors, however, approach the subject with less moralistic hindsight and less surprise that an imperial power pursues and protects its strategic and economic interests?

7) If we return to those old lecture notes, the word Cuba and the name Fidel Castro jump off the page. In this study, Cuba is not in the index and Castro gets only two brief references. Yes, the subject has received far more attention in the published literature than the rest of the countries in the articles combined. Yet, there are definite ironies in the Republican relationship with Cuba. Unlike many of the examples in the book, the relationship is not new; the U.S. involvement is multifaceted from A to Z; and Eisenhower and his advisers tried to deal with the collapse of Fulgencio Batista’s regime and Castro’s victory in a manner significantly different from many of the examples in the book, more like their response to the MNR in Bolivia in Siekmeier’s essay. When problems emerged, when the red light of communist influence started to blink, when the Soviet Union moved to exploit an opportunity, Eisenhower reverted back to the normal unsuccessful methods: economic and diplomatic retaliation, covert political action operations including schemes to assassinate Castro, and setting up the Bay of Pigs disaster for his successor.

Statler and Johns have put together an outstanding collection of stimulating essays and I encourage all to read them and the commentaries, debate them, and share them with your students.

—Tom Maddux
It was a pleasure to read this intelligently conceived book about the Eisenhower administration’s approach to the third world at the height of the Cold War. The editors did an excellent job of selecting the contributions, which cover a wide range of topics and many areas of the Third World from Asia, to Latin America, to Africa, and finally to the Middle East. All of the chapters are well researched and very well written, concise and very much to the point. I learned a great deal about the administration’s approach to colonialism and related issues, and I think other readers will as well.

Historians are well aware of the debate about the Eisenhower administration’s foreign policy, with revisionists arguing that the President, who was initially ridiculed for being uninvolved in policy and not very bright (he played much too much golf), was actually much more complex than originally thought and certainly did not abdicate his responsibilities in policy making to anyone else, including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The revisionists are convincing on this score, but Chester Pach gets it exactly right in his introduction: the more important question is whether Eisenhower’s “policies were effective or wise.” (p. xiv) These essays, taken together, bolster the revisionist case about Eisenhower’s engagement but generally answer Pach’s challenge with a resounding “no.”

The book begins with three chapters on general topics. Kenneth Osgood’s essay on race, colonialism, and propaganda provides an outstanding start to the book. Osgood demonstrates that Eisenhower was devoted to psychological warfare because the Cold War was primarily an ideological and cultural conflict. But he finds the president unable to persuade much of the developing world that the United States really wished their nationalist struggles well. This was partly because the United States needed, or felt it needed, to retain close ties to the very colonial powers that colonial peoples were resisting. Further complicating the American task was race. Osgood is absolutely compelling on this score. Given Eisenhower’s ambivalent ideas about race (he was initially opposed to the Brown decision, for example, and never again invited Chief Justice Earl Warren to the White House, except when protocol demanded it), together with the reality of widespread racial discrimination and segregation, American educational or propaganda efforts in colonial areas were unlikely to have much impact.

Interesting, the administration ultimately realized the problem here, Osgood asserts, and eventually placed more attention on cultural diplomacy, including the teaching of English around the world in an effort to make English the universal language. In this the United States has largely succeeded, and although Osgood seems to regard this as a form of cultural imperialism (the host countries are seen as passive recipients), in fact, at least to some degree, they may well have seen advantages in making the use of English more widespread – much as students and ordinary citizens everywhere in China today strive to learn English and do so with great dedication. This example may, in fact, foreshadow one of the themes in some of the essays, that alleged “puppets” were not really so, that they had agency of their own and to an extent were able to manipulate the United States. But on the
larger point, Osgood seems to have it right: the problem for the United States was not one of words but of deeds, and given American ties to the colonial powers, combined with its own racism and racial problems at home, it was difficult to convince many in the Third World that the American way was the best way.

John Prados follows with an excellent overview of the CIA’s activities related to the decolonization process. Prados confirms that the Eisenhower administration was much more attracted to covert actions that was its predecessor. Iran and Guatemala are very important, because their apparent and relatively easy (and inexpensive) successes early on in overthrowing allegedly procommunist governments served as models for involvement in a number of other countries, most of which were less successful. In Syria an attempt to overthrow the government was thwarted when one of the Syrian plotters revealed the conspiracy; in Indonesia American efforts to assist the regional rebellions in 1958 failed utterly (as Robert McMahon details in a later chapter).

After Michael R. Adamson’s overview of the Eisenhower administration’s use of foreign aid in the Third World, the book moves on to several case studies that illuminate the general themes. Robert McMahon, noting, like Prados, the importance of the Iran and Guatemala precedents, provides a fine account of American meddling in Indonesia. Efforts to sway Sukarno away from neutralism with an invitation to the White House proved unsuccessful (shortly after the Washington visit the Indonesian leader accepted aid from the Soviet Union), and the United States became increasingly concerned. McMahon utilizes important secondary sources, including the essential work by Audrey Kahin and George Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), to examine the actual covert intervention in the regional rebellions of 1958. The intervention was, as he aptly puts it, “an abject failure. The president’s reckless interventionism and promiscuous use of clandestine paramilitary measures proved as ineffectual as they were counterproductive.” (p. 96)

McMahon’s essay is the most adamant about the “failure and counterproductive” nature of American intervention. Many of the other authors would not disagree (indeed one of the unifying themes throughout the book is the failure of the Americans to have much understanding of the force of nationalism), but they approach American policy asking different questions. Thus Kathryn C. Statler’s extremely stimulating and well written essay on South Vietnam argues that Ngo Dinh Diem was no puppet of the United States. On the contrary, he wagged “the tale [sic] of the dog” (p. 102) and “systematically thwarted American desires in South Vietnam.” (p. 103) At the same time she insists that South Vietnam was a “client state” (p. 101) and that the United States produced a “colony” (p. 117) in South Vietnam. This apparent contradiction is not fully resolved in the article, as Statler also argues that American neocolonialism was “indirect, informal, and incomplete” (p.102) and, on another occasion, that the United States “assumed a quasi-colonial position.” (p. 116) What is compelling in this piece is the argument that Diem was not a puppet and that previous accounts (which she does not specifically identify) have underestimated his abilities. The essay, while based on excellent primary sources, could
have been benefited the readers with more discussion of the historiography of American policy toward Vietnam in the 1950s. George Herring is not mentioned at all, and David L. Anderson’s book on precisely the same topic is accorded only one notation. Since she and Anderson have quite different assessments of the Michigan State Group advisers, for example, more engagement with the literature would have been very helpful, though again I found the piece to be excellent overall.

Statler’s emphasis on Third World “agency” is echoed to some degree in James F. Siekmeier’s contribution on Bolivia, which argues that, although Bolivia received more aid from the norteamericanos than did any other Latin American country, it was not beholden to the United States. The United States did not control its policy, and the important Bolivian revolution of 1952, a true social revolution, managed to retain most of its gains despite American influence. Much like Diem, Bolivian leaders took advantage of American largesse and maximized their gains. At the same time, Siekmeier indicates that Bolivia paid a great price for the American aid, and the revolutionary movement, the MNR, splintered over an American-backed stabilization scheme. Thus it appears to me that if Bolivia did exploit its client state position, the United States nevertheless had considerable clout regarding Bolivian developments.

Eisenhower revisionists will find some comfort in Yi Sun’s essay on Taiwan and Jason Parker’s on the Bandung Conference. Yi finds the Eisenhower administration’s approach to the Taiwan crisis to be non-ideological, pragmatic, and generally astute. Essentially both the United States and China saw the Taiwan crises of the 1950s (over the status of the offshore island of Jinmen and Mazu) primarily from the standpoint of national security, though both powers also faced domestic pressures. Mao played “hardball” (p. 128) on Taiwan to stop it from becoming a U.S. military base. Mao’s effort backfired, as the United States and Taiwan concluded a defense treaty and Congress passed the Formosa Resolution. To appease right wingers in the Republican Party, Dulles used strong rhetoric, but he quietly sought a way out of the crisis. The treaty with Taiwan was deliberately ambiguous on the question of defending the offshore islands, for example, and the secretary also tried to resolve the first crisis through the United Nations (though China, which was not represented in the U.N.) declined to go along. But Mao also wanted no war, and so both sides backed away for the moment.

The shelling resumed (much to everyone’s surprise) in 1958, and Yi provides much insight into Mao’s complex reasons for doing so, including the need to support anti-Western movements around the world, whip up nationalist fervor at home, and challenge those Soviet officials who sought detente. But as in the previous crisis, both sides ultimately showed much restraint, despite much bluster on both sides. Thus in the final analysis, she concludes, both Mao and Dulles (whom she seems to think was at least as important as Eisenhower in formulating policy in this instance) deserve credit for not carrying things to extremes.
Jason Parker is less fulsome in his praise for the administration’s response to the Bandung Conference of 1955. But he too concludes that the United States handled the conference reasonably well and, unlike in most of the situations described in this book, actually demonstrated a certain sensitivity to issues of nationalism, anticolonialism, and neutralism. The conference of Asian and African nations, called by Indonesia’s leader Sukarno, initially worried the United States, particularly after it became evident that China would attend. However, the United States kept a low profile and worked through its Asian allies to try to bring about a satisfactory outcome. African American Congressman Adam Clayton Powell attended as a journalist, which worried the Americans; but in the end the administration came to view the conference much as Powell did: European colonialism was a dying institution that the United States should oppose. In the end, the United States had no objection to the conference’s conclusions. In fact Dulles characterized the conference as (in Parker’s words) “more or less a windfall for American diplomacy.” (p. 164)

After Bandung, Parker believes, the United States became more outspoken against European colonialism and more nuanced in its treatment of neutralism. But the change was ultimately more rhetorical than real. Thus, although Parker thinks that the Americans approached the Bandung Conference in a constructive way and even learned some important lessons, they missed an opportunity to follow up on what they had learned by making real policy changes. American involvement in such places as Indonesia, Cambodia, and Africa would certainly seem to bear this out.

The lack of substantive change was particularly evident in Africa, which James Meriwether discusses in yet another revealing, interesting, and well written chapter. Meriwether demonstrates that there was very little real change in American policy toward Africa over the decade. Although the Eisenhower administration said it was seeking a middle course between support for the colonial powers and the African nationalists, in fact American policy favored the former. At heart this derived from the racist, negative perceptions that policy makers had toward Africans. For Henry Byroade, Eisenhower’s Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, writes Meriwether, “the white man’s burden had not ended.” (p. 178) But the more important point is that Eisenhower and most of his top advisers shared such attitudes. Maurice Stans, Director of the Bureau of the Budget, for example, observed that many Africans “still belonged in the trees.” (p. 185)

Domestic developments – notably the civil rights movement – forced some changes. In 1956 for the first time the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs was created in the Department of State, and in 1957 on the occasion of Ghana’s independence Vice President Richard Nixon took an extended trip to Africa. Nixon returned urging the United States to become more involved in African affairs, perhaps because of Nixon’s more liberal racial views but even more because of fear of communist inroads in the continent. As for South Africa, the administration was unquestionably comfortable with white rule. After the brutal Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 the State Department put out a statement condemning South Africa. But the statement had not been cleared with Secretary of State Christian Herter, and Herter and the President were livid.
that it had been distributed. They called in the South African ambassador to apologize. The chapter concludes with a riveting account of Congolese independence in 1960 which brought Patrice Lumumba to power. The Americans planned to assassinate him, though in the end others killed him.

In sum, American policy in Africa remained strongly in favor of the colonial states. Realities on the ground and the impact of American racial problems at home forced some cosmetic changes. But that was about all.

The book concludes with two pieces on the Middle East. Peter Hahn traces American policy toward Israel, while Nathan Citino examines American policy toward Iraq from 1958-1961. These chapters fit less easily into the larger book, particularly the essay on Israel, since it would be hard to argue that Israel was a part of the Third World. Nevertheless, Hahn’s article is instructive on its own terms because it demonstrates that Eisenhower repudiated Truman’s strong support for Israel and instead adopted a more balanced position. There was no “special relationship” with Israel during the Eisenhower period, he shows. Israel countered the administration by working with the Congress and attempting to sway public opinion. Its success was mixed; when Israel’s efforts were blatant, in fact, the administration dug in its heels. Hahn does demonstrate that Eisenhower was in charge of policy, thus reinforcing the revisionists’ views of presidential primacy.

Citino’s essay on Iraq fits more easily into the larger themes of the book. In Iraq the United States seriously considered trying to topple the regime of Abdul al-Karim Qasim who had an alliance with domestic communists, just as it also considered regime change in other parts of the world. The United States found itself in something of a dilemma here since Qasim was bitterly disliked by Egyptian (and United Arab Republic) President Gamal Abdel Nasser, whom the United States also disliked. There was in fact an abortive coup against Qasim (one Saddam Hussein was one of the plotters). Whether the United States was involved in the coup is hotly debated. No firm evidence has yet emerged that it was, but this was about the same time that the United States was unquestionably involved in efforts at regime change in Indonesia and Cuba and had adopted a policy in Cambodia allowing support, in certain circumstances, to antigovernment forces. Given the administration’s attraction to covert operations it would not be entirely surprising if the CIA was in fact involved.

But with the failure of the coup attempt, the United States backed off, much as it also did in Indonesia and Cambodia. There were a variety of reasons for this, including a divided bureaucracy, opposition from the British, and Qasim’s decision to curb communist influence.

Out of this crisis came the creation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which Citino argues was an American success. It split the Arab world and reduced the importance of pan-Arab nationalism, which had always worried Washington. Qasim was nevertheless overthrown in 1963, which resulted in a terrible bloodbath as the
Ba’thists purged and slaughtered the communists in gruesome ways. Just as the CIA supported the bloody purge of communists in Indonesia in 1965, it may be that they did so in Iraq in 1963.

So what, then, do we come away with from this excellent collection of essays? These essays bolster the revisionist case that Eisenhower, not Dulles, was engaged and directed policy (except perhaps in the case of Taiwan). There is also some evidence that the administration could be surprising pragmatic and competent in its approach, notably in Taiwan and in response to the Bandung Conference. But for the most part the authors, like Chester Pach, question the wisdom of the policies. This was particularly evident in the response to nationalism. With some exceptions, the United States was insufficiently attuned to the force and vitality of nationalism sweeping the Third World. There had been Americans in the previous decade who had warned their country precisely of this and urged it to side with the nationalists for both moral and realistic reasons. William Phillips, a senior diplomat sent to India by President Franklin Roosevelt, for example, had glimpsed the forces of nationalism, not just in India but all over Asia, even before the end of World War II, and Roosevelt himself was not unaffected by his reports. But the emerging Cold War, to say nothing of continuing condescending racial attitudes, complicated the American approach to nationalism, and under Eisenhower one can only conclude that the American response was tepid and inadequate.

Years ago Felix Gilbert wrote that from the earliest days the United States “has wavered in her foreign policy between Idealism and Realism, and her great historical moments have occurred when both were combined.”¹ Based on the evidence in most of these essays, few of Eisenhower policies would qualify for Gilbert’s “great historical moments.”

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It goes without saying that foreign relations historians are driven in large part by present-day concerns in foreign policy. For much of the latter half of the twentieth century, as most of the members of this list are aware, foreign relations historians were obsessed with the origins and conduct of the Cold War conflict that afflicted it. The central question of responsibility for the Cold War, which has been so important to scholars of earlier generations, has seemed less important to scholars who have come to intellectual maturity in the 1980s and 1990s. Younger scholars have followed somewhat different agendas, a fact which has been reflected in the exploration of eras and subjects unconcerned, or only peripherally concerned, with the origins, character, and conduct of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War accelerated this trend, and foreign relations history is increasingly populated today with studies not only studying other eras but also emphasizing culture, gender, non-state actors, race, international perspectives, and so on in an effort to understand different facets of America’s relationship with the world.

It not yet clear how the events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will shape the historiography of American foreign relations over the next thirty years—but that it will have an impact is without question. And if current questions about America and the Third World serve as the foundation for this shift in historiography, the contours of this new focus will bear a striking resemblance to the central questions of Cold War historiography. In the wake of Third World terrorism on American soil, an ongoing war on terror, the fraying of US-European relations, and the rise of economic nationalism in Latin America, Americans are asking themselves: how did this happen, who is responsible, and, flowing from these two questions, where do we go from here?

In this sense, Kathryn Statler and Andrew Johns’s edited volume, *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War*, could not come at a better time. In offering the first systematic treatment of Eisenhower’s foreign policy toward the Third World, it provides a long-needed focus on this crucial time in America’s relationship with the developing world. The very term itself, the Third World, was coined on the eve of Eisenhower’s assumption to office, and the 1950s were dominated by a global “earthquake,” in the words of David Anderson, of Third World nationalism. The essays in this volume collectively present a forceful and sobering perspective on American handling of the Third World at one of the most important times in this relationship. Although all of the essays are first-rate and deserving of individual attention, the thrust of this review is to examine and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their similar approaches.

As Chester Pach points out in an excellent introduction, this volume represents a decisive turning away from the original historiographical debate concerning Eisenhower. Using recently declassified documents, early revisionists such as Stephen Ambrose challenged popular impressions that Eisenhower was not in charge of his own foreign policy. Elevating “process over policy,” in the words of Stephen Rabe, these revisionists argued that not only was Eisenhower in charge but that he was a decent, committed, and
ultimately successful leader.¹ No work in this volume disputes the first and most important part of this interpretation: all agree that Eisenhower was in charge.

Rather than addressing the policymaking process, the works in this book heed the call of Robert Divine and others to assess the policies of the Eisenhower administration. The essays in this volume evaluate Eisenhower’s policy toward the Third World from a number of perspectives. The first three essays address specific programs that dealt with the Third World. Kenneth Osgood’s essay concerns public diplomacy in the Third World, John Prados’s essay deals with intelligence operations, and Michael Adamson looks at Eisenhower’s policy of foreign aid. The next three examine Eisenhower’s policy in Asian countries. Robert McMahon’s essay addresses Eisenhower’s approach to Indonesia, Kathryn Statler’s focuses on Eisenhower’s handling of Vietnam, and Yi Sun’s contribution judges John Foster Dulles in light of Mao Tse-Tung. The third section addresses Eisenhower’s policies in Latin America and Africa, with essays by Jason Parker on the Bandung Conference, James Meriwether on Africa, and James Siekmeier on Latin America. Finally, the last two essays assess Eisenhower’s Middle Eastern policies. Peter Hahn probes the nature of the relationship between the United States and Israel during Eisenhower’s administration, and Nathan Citino explores Eisenhower’s policies toward Iraq and Egypt.

Following the path first blazed by Robert McMahon, and later, after it had become so heavily traveled, christened “Eisenhower postrevisionism” by Chester Pach, these essays uniformly sound an overarching theme of failure. The programs evaluated in the first three essays failed to achieve their objectives. Osgood argues that Eisenhower’s administration failed to reconcile its rhetoric with its actions. Prados contends that Eisenhower failed to use covert operations to achieve long-term goals. Adamson points out that Eisenhower failed to use foreign aid programs effectively to develop a healthy international political economy. As the rest of the authors highlight, the Eisenhower administration worsened relations with important countries in the Third World. In Asia, McMahon and Statler underscore that American relations with Indonesia and Vietnam soured during the Eisenhower period. In Latin America and Africa, Meriwether and Siekmeier observe the Eisenhower regime embittered important nations with their policies. In the Middle East, Hahn and Citino show that the Eisenhower administration had difficulty balancing multiple rivalries while pursing their objectives.

Eisenhower failed in the Third World, these authors argue, because it failed to capitalize on and lead the rising tide of Third World nationalism. And here is where failure turns into tragedy for most of these authors. As many of them note, key figures in the Eisenhower administration understood the importance of accommodating Third World nationalism. Osgood points out that even though Eisenhower administration officials understood that

nationalism and anti-colonialism were the greatest forces in the Third World, and that the United States was often seen as an ally with European imperialists, the Eisenhower administration was unwilling to support policies that were anticolonial in nature. Prados highlights that the CIA understood the inevitability of decolonization and the desirability of cultivating friendly relations with the newly emerging nations, but Eisenhower “routinely bungled the policy aspect” (p. 42). Adamson argues that despite the positive assessments of American social scientists and postcolonial elites, and Dulles’s own belief that foreign aid represented “far and away the most important single aspect” of containing communism in the Third World, US officials failed to provide the amount of aid necessary to stimulate the system (p. 48).

Tragedy also describes American foreign policy with various countries in the Third World during Eisenhower’s tenure. Despite the early, more even-handed observations of Ambassador Hugh Cummings and CIA operatives on the importance of nationalism in Indonesia, McMahon points out that Eisenhower administration resolved to get rid of Sukarno because of his relationship with both domestic and international communists. Statler highlights that even though Eisenhower grasped the negative effect of French colonialism in Vietnam on world opinion and sought to create a noncommunist and noncolonialist Vietnam, the United States ultimately pursued neocolonialist policies similar to the French in shaping the country. Parker argues that American policymakers recognized the significance of Bandung, but failed to take advantage of the opportunity to lead the movement. Meriwether, Hahn, and Citino find similar dynamics in their studies. Prominent members of the Eisenhower administration understood the importance and inevitability of Third World nationalism, but the administration failed to take actions that would have been both morally righteous (in the eyes of many) and wholly within the long-term interests of the nation.

Naturally, the question becomes why: why did the Eisenhower administration implement policies that were counterproductive in the Third World? And here, in understanding the reasons for Eisenhower’s tragic failure in the developing world, a book dedicated to the Third World spends a great deal of time talking about the First and Second Worlds. Put simply, the Eisenhower administration emphasized priorities in the industrialized and communist worlds over the concerns and objectives of those in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In some cases, these priorities involved domestic politics. As Osgood, Parker, and Meriwether show, Eisenhower refused to take a more muscular stand in favor of the civil rights movement, even though he knew how badly racial segregation and discrimination played in the Third World, because of his own rigid views regarding race and federal power. In others, these priorities concerned the domestic economy. As Siekmeier and Citino demonstrate, the Eisenhower administration blunted economic nationalism in Bolivia and the Middle East to maintain an advantageous position for American businesses.

Most importantly, however, Eisenhower’s concerns about the Cold War played a powerful role in shaping his attitudes toward developing nations. Playing on David Anderson’s witty appropriation of Townsend Hoopes’s “devil” metaphor in his conclusion to this volume, I
would label these administration arguments as “the devil made me do it” and “better the devil you know than the devil you don’t.” Using the former line of reasoning, administration officials often argued that they had no choice but to fight against Third World nationalism, because, in their minds, Third World nationalists often harbored sympathy for the international communist movement. Fighting an evil expansive system, they argued, sometimes required subverting the wishes of local rulers. Such was clearly the case in the US handling of Indonesia and Vietnam (and Guatemala, Cuba, and Iran, although they are not covered in this volume). Using the latter, administration officials contended that, no matter how odious European colonialism might be, European imperialists were predictable and generally could be counted on to support American foreign policy. Many policymakers believed that Third World nationalism was an unpredictable X factor that could lead, in the worst case scenario, to communist subversion. Such fears were clearly at work in Eisenhower’s handling of Bandung and Africa. Of course, these lines of argument were often mutually supportive and, as such, were often cited at the same time in defense of American policy against Third World nationalism.

If we return to the questions posed at the beginning of this review, it becomes obvious that the essays in this volume represent an important and necessary examination of American policies in the Third World during a critical time. All of them are top-shelf in their research and interpretation and provide, with a strong, clear, and collective voice, a unified answer to one of the questions that we ask ourselves about the America’s relationship with the Third World today. These essays demonstrate that virtually all nations in the First and Second Worlds bear some responsibility for the current difficulties experienced in the Third. Despite the vigorous American-bashing going on these days across the Atlantic, it is fair to point out that things might have turned out differently had many European nations not sought to maintain or reestablish influence over their colonies in the Third World. It’s also clear that the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China attempted to inspire communist revolutions in the Third World to further the reach and influence of the communist nations in their global struggle with the West. And the United States, often caught between these contradictory movements and blinkered by its own domestic political and economic imperatives, usually played it safe and supported stability, thereby backing their imperialist allies in the process. For much of the Cold War, Third World nations were the pawns of the great powers, and today, these essays suggest, we are dealing with the consequences of that exploitation.

Although these essays do a masterful job of assessing American foreign policy and assigning blame, they are less useful in helping us understand where we go from here. Most of the essays point out the hypocrisy of American policy toward developing nations and suggest that this hypocrisy had terrible consequences for America’s reputation in the various regions of the Third World, but none of the essays really provide any evidence of the reception of these policies. And to be fair, this is not their aim. All of these authors are concerned with the explication of American foreign policy, and, as I said before, most of them carry out their goals beautifully. But I would encourage these authors (and others working on similar topics) to follow their analyses through to the logical conclusion—how
precisely did these policies engender resentment toward the United States and contribute to the global rise of anti-Americanism? The participants of a recent roundtable in the American Historical Review on anti-Americanism point out that many scholars across disciplinary lines have taken up the study of this very large and timely subject. And although the contributions by Greg Grandin and Jessica Gienow-Hecht demonstrate that anti-Americanism is a complicated phenomenon that often has nothing whatsoever to do with the United States (the U.S. as the “other” for Europeans or Latin Americans), Juan Cole’s contribution reminds us that American foreign policy does affect how other nations understand the United States.\(^2\)

In this sense, linking American foreign policy to the rise of anti-Americanism would provide a real service to both historians and policymakers. Taking their studies in this direction would mean following Emily Rosenberg’s advice many years ago to “walk the borders” of power and consider how imperial power has been viewed, constructed, and attacked from the periphery.\(^3\) It would require the combined perspectives of international history and cultural history to ferret out and process how American foreign policies have generated attitudes, domestic policies, and political movements in Third World countries. It would also ask them to take their projects in directions where sources would doubtless be harder to find and more difficult to interpret. But as Juan Cole suggests, a clear understanding of how others have responded to specific American policies would provide policymakers with the means (if not the resolve or inclination) to lessen the rampant anti-Americanism that fuels Third World terrorism.

Explaining anti-Americanism, of course, is not the aim of this book. But I think that it speaks to the quality of the work contained in this volume that this reviewer found the research and interpretation so convincing that he spent the bulk of his time not quibbling with specific essays but wondering what the next step should be in the evolution of the historiography. Together with Chester Pach’s excellent introduction and David Anderson’s outstanding conclusion, these essays provide a needed and important perspective on the historical literature regarding both the Eisenhower administration and the United States’ relationship with the Third World. From today’s perspective, the continuing effects of decolonization, not the Cold War, appear to be the most enduring legacy of the latter half of the twentieth century. This book provides a vital departure point for understanding and wrestling with how the United States handled this issue at a critical juncture in its relationship with the Third World.


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The cover of *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* reprints a "Box Score of the Cold War" that originally appeared in *U.S. News and World Report* in 1955. Of the eighteen, mostly Europe-centered Cold War developments assessed, a dozen are deemed clear Western victories: the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan; the Berlin blockade; communist troubles in Yugoslavia and Italy; the formation of NATO and West Germany; Soviet disarray following Stalin’s death; the Austrian Treaty; West Germany’s entry into NATO; and economic advances in the United States and Western Europe and concomitant slumps in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Lest the United States and its allies get cocky about their apparent lead in the Cold War confrontation, however, the box score lists a number of communist successes—victories in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and China; Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb; and the ongoing conflict in Indochina (it declares the Korean War a tie)—and concludes with an ominous warning that the Cold War conflict was by 1955 entering an undefined and presumably more dangerous “new phase” that might yield additional communist gains.

That new phase, of course, was the shift in Cold War tensions away from Europe and China and toward Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia—the so called Third World. As the contributors to this rich and valuable volume make manifestly (and sometimes painfully) clear, the Eisenhower administration’s Cold War record in the Third World consists of a virtually endless string of defeats, the negative consequences of some of which endured for decades. To a degree uncommon in edited volumes, this one holds together remarkably well, and despite their divergent geographical and topical foci, all of the essays coalesce, albeit to differing degrees and in varying ways, around a number of common themes that collectively complicate—in the most positive sense of the word—the extant literature on the Eisenhower administration’s foreign relations.

As suggested above, many of the essays in this volume—almost all, in fact—argue for the Eisenhower administration’s failure in the Third World. And while this claim alone might not constitute a radical revision in the historiography, the nuanced way that the various authors deal with it does, for they skillfully dissect the administration’s policy in ways that move beyond simply claiming that a certain policy initiative did not work to actually ferreting out precisely why that was the case. To that end, the authors identify a number of overall shortcomings in the administration’s Third World policy that resulted in a colossal failure to win the allegiance of peoples in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. The end result of this failure to manage postwar change in the Third World, they intone, was a number of serious Third World crises—David Anderson calls them “earthquakes” in his informative conclusion to the volume—during the 1960s, crises that more considered policies during the 1950s might have averted. The long-term Eisenhower legacy in the Third World, therefore, is far from positive.

One serious Shortcoming in the administration’s approach to the Third World that comes out in many of the volume’s essays is what might be termed a failure to reconcile deeds
Kenneth Osgood effectively argues that the administration’s efforts to win the hearts and minds of Third World peoples through lofty pronouncements touting the United States’s traditional anti-colonialism were seriously hampered if not completely derailed by the fact that such pronouncements notwithstanding, official Washington continued to support its Western European allies’ efforts to retain their colonies in the postwar period. Talking tough about independence, it seems, did not in the end translate into action to help bring it about. John Prados notes the same general failing in his useful essay on the CIA’s role in Third World decolonization. Like Osgood, he bemoans the hollowness of the administration’s public support for Third World nationalism while concurrently siding with the colonial powers in resisting the logical result of that nationalism—indeed nationhood—as well as the administration’s repeated resort to covert action as a way of dealing with Third World nationalism that threatened the status quo too profoundly. Ultimately, the administration faced a serious credibility gap because its words, embodied in propagandistic endorsements of national independence, did not square with its deeds, particularly the resort to covert action to prevent that eventuality.

If Osgood and Prados issue a general indictment of the administration for failing to match its anti-colonial words with appropriate deeds, other authors drive home the point in respect to specific case studies. Jason C. Parker’s cutting-edge account of the administration’s response to the 1955 Bandung Conference laments that while the administration seemed to grasp the conference’s importance, its overriding preoccupation with the Cold War prevented it from marshaling the sort of constructive long-term response to Bandung that might have resulted in better U.S. relations with the participating countries. James H. Meriwether sees a similar pattern at work in the administration’s Africa policy, which he describes as essentially a middle-of-the-road stance that paid lip service to eventual black majority rule throughout the continent but for all intents and purposes favored continued colonial control. Fearful that premature independence would lead to instability and potential communist gains, the administration backed continued white minority rule or, at the urging of Vice President Richard M. Nixon, authoritarian yet Western-leaning strongmen who lacked concern for the best interests of the local populations.

As all four of these authors—and others in the volume as well—make abundantly clear, the Eisenhower administration failed to craft and implement policies that gave truth to its rhetoric when it came to colonial liberation and national independence. Time and again, Washington did not put its money—or its policies—where its mouth was. And the end result was dashed hopes and disillusionment throughout the Third World as nationalists came to see U.S. leaders as speaking with forked tongues on the question of anti-colonialism. Is it any wonder that anti-Americanism ran so high in much of the Third World during the 1950s—and beyond?

Related to the administration’s failure to align words and deeds is another common problem noted in many of the essays: a general misapplication of tactics or tools for the challenges the United States faced when dealing with the Third World. Prados faults the
administration for utilizing covert operations tools initially developed for use against the Soviet Union to the Third World. The long-term consequences of U.S.-led covert action from the Middle East to Latin America and Southeast Asia, he compellingly argues, were disastrous for the people on the ground and damaging to U.S. interests. He issues, in fact, one of the volume’s strongest condemnations of the administration’s apparently blatant disregard for the potential consequences of its actions in the Third World.

The essays by Robert J. McMahon and Kathryn C. Statler both provide ample evidence in this regard with specific reference to U.S. policy in Indonesia and South Vietnam, respectively. In an essay that makes excellent use of previously underutilized material, McMahon lays bare the devastating consequences of the Eisenhower administration’s reliance on covert operations to prevent a communist victory in Indonesia. Beyond being remarkably short-sighted and woefully misguided in the short run, the administration’s misplaced faith in covert action damaged U.S. relations with Indonesia for decades to come. Like Prados, McMahon is scathing in his criticism of Eisenhower’s approach to Indonesia, which he declares nothing less than “an abject failure” (p. 96). Statler issues the same sort of condemnation of the administration’s treatment of Ngo Dinh Diem’s regime in South Vietnam. Rather than working to help Diem build a strong, viable, independent state, she asserts, the administration sought instead to create a quasi-colonial puppet akin to the sort of dependent entity created by French colonial authorities. Because Washington never saw Saigon as its equal and sought to export American military, political, economic, and cultural systems to South Vietnam instead of encouraging or even recognizing indigenous institutions or norms, it never gave Diem a chance to build a real nation in the South—with devastating consequences. Ironically, Statler notes ruefully, American nation-building efforts did assist in the development of a strong (communist) Vietnamese state north of the 17th parallel.

By applying inappropriate tools to the challenges it faced in the Third World, the Eisenhower administration clearly blundered. Instead of meeting the admittedly difficult task of formulating new strategies and tactics to deal with Third World challenges, the administration adopted a one-size-fits-all mentality, applying old tools to new problems, as it were, yet reaping only hardship and suffering throughout the Third World that ultimately ran counter to long-term U.S. goals.

The question of administration goals, in fact, constitutes another common thread running through many of the essays. Just what was the Eisenhower administration seeking to accomplish through its policy toward the nations of the Third World anyway? And how did its goals for the underdeveloped world relate to its Cold War strategy? In answering these questions, the volume’s authors agree that the administration erred, oftentimes grievously, in setting goals for American policy toward the Third World that were often inappropriate or misguided.

Some note with distress that the administration lacked a real understanding of Third World nationalism and the needs of Third World nations. Michael R. Adamson makes this point in
his thought-provoking essay on U.S. foreign aid policy, noting that rather than focusing on the construction of essential infrastructure and helping to modernize Third World economies, the administration oriented its aid programs around security considerations, which meant that military aid was privileged over development assistance. An emphasis on security also meant that recipients of U.S. foreign assistance had to align themselves with the West in the Cold War, something neutralist Third World nationalists were often loath to do. Meriwether faults the administration on similar grounds, this time for failing to support legitimate nationalist drives for independence throughout Africa.

Other authors key in on what appears to be the administration’s preference for maintaining good relations with its allies in Western Europe to the detriment of Third World interests. Osgood, Prados, McMahon, Parker, and Meriwether, for example, all bemoan the way that European considerations affected policy toward the Third World. Unwilling to alienate important NATO allies, the Eisenhower administration time and again turned a blind eye toward Third World nationalism, whether in the form of oil nationalization in Iran, land reform in Guatemala, true neutralism in the Cold War confrontation as embodied in the Bandung Conference, or full political independence throughout Africa. In all these cases and many others, the end result was not at all what U.S. officials had intended. Careful consideration of the consequences of stifling Third World nationalism should have told administration policymakers that disillusionment with the United States, if not outright hostility, would likely result, yet it seems that such consideration did not occur. The depressing record of anti-American sentiment throughout much of the Third World that followed must thus rest in large part on the shoulders of the Eisenhower administration.

Still other contributors to this collection explicitly address the overriding influence of the Cold War when it came to the formulation of policy toward the Third World. Peter L. Hahn’s essay on U.S. relations with Israel during the 1950s demonstrates this point quite clearly, revealing how Washington’s preoccupation with the Soviet threat in the Middle East pushed it toward measures to protect Western access to Arab oil, such as the ill-fated Middle East Defense Organization and the Baghdad Pact. Because these measures threatened U.S. relations with Israel, however, the administration traded one policy goal for another—and demonstrated in the process the all-important role of oil in shaping U.S. policy toward the Middle East. Nathan J. Citino and James F. Siekmeier make similar cases for the way the Cold War shaped the Eisenhower administration’s relations with Iraq and Bolivia, respectively. Citino outlines how Cold War and petroleum considerations shaped U.S. policy toward “regime change” in Baghdad during the 1950s and early 1960s. In extending his story beyond the end of the Eisenhower administration, Citino is able to demonstrate the consequences of the administration’s preoccupation with both, and its tragic consequences for Iraq. Indeed, his is one of the most depressing essays in the volume for what it reveals about the origins of the contemporary morass in Iraq. As Siekmeier makes clear, the global struggle with the Soviet Union led to extensive economic assistance to Bolivia and support for the non-Communist right in that country, to the detriment of the mass of the population. In fact, the deleterious effects of the Cold War
come out in some way in every essay in the volume, as the authors successfully bring to light the way the Cold War was indeed tragically globalized on Eisenhower's watch.

This volume is without a doubt a significant contribution to the literature. The individual essays, each of which presents a valuable case study of either a crucial tactic in the U.S. Third World policy arsenal (propaganda, covert action, and foreign aid) or an important event or region where that policy was applied, are all gems that demonstrate the value of careful multi-archival research. Co-editors Kathryn C. Statler and Andrew L. Johns are to be commended for putting together the fine group of scholars whose excellent pieces make this volume so helpful, for students and scholars alike. Indeed, from my perspective, the volume's only flaw is that it couldn't include even more essays. That it didn't leaves the door open to future researchers, though they will have a tough act to follow.

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**Eisenhower, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War Roundtable**

6 March 2007

**Review by Christopher Tudda, Office of the Historian, Department of State**

**Note:** The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States Government. I would like to thank my colleagues Douglas Kraft and Kristin Ahlberg for their helpful comments and suggestions.

This new volume reflects the recent emphasis in the historiography of the Eisenhower administration’s diplomacy toward the nations emerging from decades of colonialism.¹ Eleven essays mainly based upon primary sources, found in U.S., European, Chinese, and Israeli archives, demonstrate that in their eagerness to combat the Soviet Union and win the allegiance of Third World nations, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles often adopted counterproductive policies that actually alienated the very countries they courted.

Eisenhower believed that given the chance, communism could penetrate every area of the world. He thus decided to wage “total peace” in every region of the world by diplomatic, political, economic, and covert means. However, these essays suggest that his administration could not reconcile the tension between America’s professed anti-colonial ideology with its need to maintain the cohesion of the NATO alliance against communism. The former colonial areas had been only recently and reluctantly abandoned by the Europeans, yet the administration inflamed Third World peoples by ultimately siding with the Europeans, even as it privately recognized they would not befriend the newly developing nations by adopting such a policy.

Instead, the administration criticized the emerging nations for adopting a policy of “neutralism” between the Western and Soviet blocs, an approach that had been championed by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In fact, Dulles branded neutralism “immoral” and argued that the developing world must choose between Washington and Moscow. As Chester Pach notes in his introduction, the administration contended that communism would undermine, and ultimately destroy, their independence, while democracy would preserve their independence. (p. xi)

Kenneth Osgood’s chapter on Eisenhower’s propaganda efforts in the Third World is an excellent summary of his recently-published book.² Characterizing the Cold War as “first

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and foremost a political war, a war of persuasion” to be waged by the United States and
Soviet Union throughout the world, (p. 3) Osgood writes that after Soviet Premier Josef
Stalin died in March 1953, his successors embarked on a drive for “peaceful coexistence”
between the two blocs. According to Osgood, this campaign attracted many, especially in
the Third World, who viewed the Eisenhower administration’s “rigid anti-communism—
not to mention Joseph McCarthy … as the greater threat to international peace and
stability.” (p. 7)

In order to counter the Soviet peace offensive and the attraction of neutralism, Osgood
argues that Eisenhower adopted an intense, all-encompassing psychological war that
highlighted his administration’s peaceful intentions. Public relations programs such as
“The Chance for Peace,” “Atoms for Peace,” and “Open Skies” showed that the U.S. had
undertaken a nuclear buildup not only to rework its defense strategy but to also expose the
“insincerity” of the Soviet peace offensive. (p. 8) Osgood documents the administration’s
failure to convince its Third World audience that communism rather than European
imperialism threatened their new-found freedom.

In his essay on foreign aid, Michael Adamson explains that Stalin’s death also impacted
Eisenhower’s economic policy toward the Third World. Stalin’s successors not only
courted the developing nations politically but also economically. This new Soviet gambit,
Adamson contends, “altered Washington’s strategy” and convinced Eisenhower and Dulles
to respond with their own aid program based upon democratic “capitalism as a
development strategy.” (p. 56) Ostensibly designed to re-establish a liberal “international
political economy,” this foreign aid program, which emphasized private investment and
development, failed because the administration used aid to buttress U.S. national security
rather than to modernize the former European colonies. (pp. 47, 48) While the
Eisenhower administration saw everything “through the prism of the Cold War,” it
provided bilateral aid through the Mutual Security Program (MSP) only to those countries
threatened by communism. (p. 57) Adamson convincingly demonstrates that although
grounded toward creating independent economies, the MSP actually “created dependent
relationships” between the U.S. and allies in the developing world that retarded economic
growth. Meanwhile, many developing nations “leverage[d] Cold War tensions” to receive
more economic aid, but funneled that aid into state-sponsored, not private, development
programs.

Less compelling is Kathryn Statler’s analysis of U.S. policy toward South Vietnam, which she
describes as “neocolonial.” (p. 101) While I agree that nationalism, decolonization, the Cold
War, and U.S. foreign policy all “collided” in South Vietnam (p. 101), and that U.S.
involvement deepened during the decade, Statler’s subsequent argument is weakened by
the very evidence she cites. As she adroitly documents President Ngo Dinh Diem’s nimble
Asian diplomacy and his ability to “manipulate” the administration to obtain more
economic and military aid, she shows that in reality, Diem’s nationalism actually paralleled
Washington's increased involvement. (p. 102) Statler fails to adequately explain why both simultaneously occurred.

More importantly, her discussion of U.S. “neocolonialism” is unconvincing. For example, she argues that the South Vietnamese army's decision to wear helmets rather than berets reveals creeping U.S. neocolonialism. (p. 113) Curiously, this decision actually seems to have had a practical basis, since helmets provide better protection from bullets than do berets. Indeed, strangely absent from the entire chapter is the constant military threat from North Vietnam and communist insurgents in the South, as if a shift in dress, and the growing U.S. presence, occurred in a vacuum. Statler also contends that in 1955 the newly independent government of South Vietnam “modeled itself after Washington” by changing ministries to secretaries, adopting a constitution, and pushing its people to learn English. (p. 113) This seems to be the very antithesis of “neocolonialism,” since the Diem government freely implemented these changes.

On the other hand, John Prados and Robert McMahon each persuasively illustrate how the Eisenhower administration’s use of covert action crashed on the shoals of Third World nationalism. Prados argues that the administration, through the CIA, wanted to “remobilize” the former colonial powers on the U.S. side of the cold war. (p. 30) By the administration’s cold war calculus, Third World resentment at this intrusion did not matter. Thus the administration sided with Britain and France by covertly attempting to influence governments in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon (even though it had refused to back London and Paris during the 1956 Suez crisis), the Dutch in Indonesia, and Belgium in the Congo crisis. The administration therefore “made a mockery of [the U.S. rhetorical commitment to] self-determination” because it could not move beyond its conception of the threat from a communist monolith. (p. 43)

McMahon skillfully examines the administration’s “ill-conceived and reckless” attempt to covertly topple President Sukarno in Indonesia, whose nationalist stance and tolerance of the Indonesian Communist Party infuriated Eisenhower and Dulles. (p. 75) Propelled by the success of covert operations in Iran and Guatemala, McMahon argues that the administration failed to account for the power of nationalism in Indonesia. Indeed, despite criticizing Sukarno’s pledge of neutrality in the cold war, the Eisenhower administration ironically adopted a neutral position over control of West Irian (Western New Guinea) that in effect became a pro-Dutch position. (p. 78) It even preferred a divided, anti-communist Indonesia to a united, neutralist Indonesia. (p. 79) This public policy strengthened Sukarno’s anti-imperialist bona fides and doomed the subsequent U.S.-backed coup.

Jason Parker offers a fine analysis of the challenge that Sukarno’s conference of non-aligned nations at Bandung posed to Washington. The administration attempted in vain to convince the visiting delegates that the “new colonialism of communism” created a greater threat than the old European colonialism. (p. 155) Even though the administration took the conference seriously, it was “insufficiently ambitious.” (p. 169) Parker concludes that Eisenhower and Dulles squandered a chance to curry favor with developing nations.
because of their insistence that ideology was more important than racialism, regionalism, or anti-colonialism. (p. 154)

Yi Sun has contributed a very important examination of Dulles’s rhetorical diplomacy over the Taiwan Straits islands that supports what I have previously theorized about the administration’s Asian policy. At the same time, she has uncovered Chinese sources that demonstrate that Chinese Premier Mao Zedong used the same strategy to promote his foreign policy towards Taiwan. Both Dulles and Mao publicly used belligerent rhetoric and “competed for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Third World countries in Asia” in order to “test each other’s resolve and limit,” while privately advocating a cautious policy resembling détente. (p. 126) Thus while both created crises in 1954-55 and 1958 over the islands, both restrained the hawks within their governments who were willing to go to war over Taiwan.

In another strong essay, James Meriwether shows how the need to blunt Soviet penetration of Africa and prejudices about the inability of Africans to govern themselves convinced Eisenhower to view nationalism and decolonization as a “problem,” rather than an opportunity to disseminate democracy. (p. 179) The administration realized that its spotty domestic racial record continued to undermine its efforts to woo even the most sympathetic African nation, but nonetheless insisted on channeling its Africa policy through its global cold war strategy. Meriwether explains that even Vice President Richard Nixon—a liberal on civil rights—believed the Africans were unready to govern and recommended that the administration stick with the former colonial masters or back military strongmen after his official visit to the continent in 1957. (p. 185) Thus the Eisenhower administration subsequently supported the white minority government in South Africa, even after the brutal Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, and backed the Belgians against the nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba in the Congo.

Since James Siekmeier is a friend and colleague of mine at the Office of the Historian in the Department of State, I have decided not to comment on his essay on the Eisenhower administration’s relationship with Bolivia.

Turning to U.S. policy in the Middle East, Peter Hahn provides an excellent corrective to the much-ballyhooed “special relationship” thesis that scholars have employed when discussing Israel and the U.S. Tapping into both U.S. and Israeli sources, Hahn demonstrates that Eisenhower’s determination to “practice impartiality on Arab-Israeli issues” led to a “fundamental security divergence” between the two nations. (pp. 226, 229)

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3 I speculated that Eisenhower’s and Dulles’s reliance on “rhetorical diplomacy” as a public strategy in their European diplomacy, which differed greatly from its confidential goals, in all likelihood was also employed toward Asia. See Chris Tudda, The Truth is Our Weapon: Eisenhower’s and Dulles’s Rhetorical Diplomacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), p. 11.

Viewing the Arab-Israeli dispute strictly in cold war terms, the administration feared that Moscow would use Arab nationalism to further its own ends and did not want to be branded as Israel’s sole defender, so it vowed to “build bridges to estranged Arab states” and pursue an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. (p. 235) Israel, conversely, worried that U.S. policy, in particular the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1958, would strengthen the Arabs militarily so they could wage another war against the Jewish state. Israel reacted by going around the administration and appealing for help from pro-Israeli congressmen and interest groups in order to blunt the administration’s efforts at establishing a peace settlement.

Nathan Citino examines U.S.-Iraqi relations in the last essay. In keeping with the overall theme of the collection, Citino credibly demonstrates that the administration perceived intra-Arab relations and Arab nationalism through the prism of its global struggle with the Soviet Union. He also excoriates Eisenhower for ignoring an “Arab cold war” between Egyptian President Gamel ’Abd al-Nasser and Iraqi leader ’Abd al-Karim Qasim in favor of oil politics and an attempt to “incorporate the region into the global economy.” (p. 247) By 1958, Citino argues, quite persuasively, the administration treated Iraq as “a major foreign policy crisis” and extensively documents the workings of an interdepartmental committee the President himself created to analyze the Iraqi situation. (p. 245, pp. 254-55) The administration then set into motion a covert action against Qasim because he, like Sukarno in Indonesia, had ties to Iraqi Communists and could thus be drawn into the Soviet orbit. (p. 249)

Citino overreaches, however, when he attempts to draw a parallel between the Eisenhower administration’s use of covert action against the Qasim government and President George W. Bush’s decision to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein in 2003. Much of this is speculation, and historians engage in counterfactual debates at their peril. Citino admits that so far, documents proving U.S. covert action in Iraq in 1959 and 1960 have yet to be declassified, and contends that this information has been withheld because of “the political controversy about America’s subsequent relationship with the regime of Saddam.” (p. 255) Citino cites no evidence to back up his claim and expects the reader to assume that the lack of evidence proves his point. He then says that “disclosure of U.S. policies in the pre-Saddam era might also tend to undermine official rhetoric about American democratization of post-Saddam Iraq.” (p. 255) Again, this is unfounded speculation, rather than an argument backed by any evidence.

Furthermore, Citino alludes to allegations of U.S. involvement in the 1963 coup that toppled Qasim which, of course, occurred under President John F. Kennedy, not Eisenhower. This is confusing to the reader because on the very next page, Citino cites a highly speculative claim by a writer for United Press International in 2003 that Saddam Hussein himself was involved in the 1963 coup with U.S. knowledge, only to knock it down because “historians have more rigorous standards of proof than journalists do. Not only must they base their conclusions on documentary evidence, but they must also try to understand events in their contemporary context.” (p. 260) Had Citino heeded his own advice, his argument might
have been more persuasive. Instead, his claims about Saddam Hussein and current U.S. policy influencing declassification decisions, not to mention his speculation about what occurred after Eisenhower left office, undermine an otherwise compelling and well-written discussion of U.S.-Iraqi relations during the Eisenhower administration.

In his conclusion, David Anderson argues that “the connecting theme of these studies is disconnection.” (p. 273) Indeed, the front cover of the book effectively summarizes the administration's commitment to a zero-sum game strategy, reprinting a “Box Score” of the Cold War from a 1955 issue of U.S. News and World Report. Any “loss” by the free world during the Cold War necessarily meant a “gain” for the Soviets. Had Eisenhower and Dulles been willing to adapt to local or regional conditions, understand the growing power of nationalism, and de-emphasize the bogeymen of communism and neutralism, they might have increased their gains and prevented Moscow from making headway in the Third World.

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Response from Kathryn Statler and Andrew Johns

Andy and I are most appreciative of the insightful and thought-provoking reviews that Kenton Clymer, Brian Etheridge, Mary Ann Heiss, and Christopher Tudda provided on *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War*. As we were putting together the volume, which derived from a 2003 conference held at the University of San Diego, we hoped to provide a systematic assessment of what we considered to be an overlooked but vital issue facing the Eisenhower administration at a critical point in the Cold War: how could the administration create policies that would persuade so-called Third World countries to side with the United States and its allies against the communists? As all four reviewers conclude, the essays in the volume demonstrate that although possibilities existed to entice Third World nationalists into the American camp, the tragedy was that Eisenhower and Dulles rarely took advantage of such opportunities. As Clymer and Tudda note, Eisenhower administration officials were “insufficiently attuned to the force and vitality of nationalism sweeping the Third World” and “inflamed Third World peoples by ultimately siding with the Europeans.” The result, according to Etheridge and Heiss, was that American policies tended to “engender resentment toward the United States and contribute to the global rise of anti-Americanism,” which ultimately led to “a colossal failure to win the allegiance of peoples in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.”

Since the individual authors have the opportunity to respond to the reviews of their essays, I will confine my remarks to a couple of points Clymer and Tudda raised regarding my essay. First, the essay is in fact a brief overview of a much larger project that will be published this April by the University Press of Kentucky. So let me take the easy way out by saying see *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* for more detail on historiographical debates, Diem’s attempts to distance himself from the United States, and American “neocolonialist” behavior in South Vietnam. Still, I feel obliged to address some of Clymer and Tudda’s remarks here. Both mention the apparent contradiction in the essay: on the one hand I emphasize Diem’s agency in trying to achieve a South Vietnamese foreign policy independent of the United States, and, on the other hand, I also stress the increasing American presence in all aspects of South Vietnamese society. My point is that the more the United States attempted to control South Vietnam militarily, politically, economically, and culturally, the more determined Diem became to resist U.S. influence and to follow his own path. Diem, more than anyone, recognized the dangers of becoming a western puppet, but ultimately he proved no match for the American nation-building machine, as witnessed by his assassination in 1963.

Tudda also asserts that “strangely absent from the entire chapter is the constant military threat from North Vietnam.” But the military threat from North Vietnam was, in many respects, absent. The North Vietnamese first put most of their energy into the diplomatic arena, trying to pressure France and the other 1954 Geneva Conference signatories into holding the 1956 elections. When these attempts failed, Hanoi built up its propaganda campaigns against the United States and South Vietnam. Although assassinations and
bombings, presumably on the part of communists or communist sympathizers, began to increase from 1957 to 1959, the military threat from North Vietnam did not become an issue until the very end of Eisenhower’s presidency. Rather, Diem (and his American advisers) spent most of their time scrambling to deal with one internal crisis after another as they used the South Vietnamese armed forces to combat non-communist threats—the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen, various French-backed generals, and political figures dissatisfied with Diem’s rule.

Finally, with respect to my assessment of American actions in South Vietnam as neocolonial, I am the first to admit the term is messy, but I haven’t been able to come up with a better one to describe American actions from 1954 to 1961. American neocolonialism goes far beyond a transition from berets to helmets. Granted, as Tudda notes, the helmet protects better than the beret, but why did it have to be American styled, as did the uniforms, insignia, military training, currency, government, constitution, education, public administration, police, and banking, to name some of the many areas where Americans attempted to mold and build on an American model. And what Tudda does not mention is that this neocolonial behavior did not take place in a vacuum—it was specifically directed against the French to prove not only that the Americans could do a better job of protecting South Vietnam from the communists but also that American methods of modernization, and, let’s face it, “civilizing” South Vietnam were far superior to French ones. In their determination to be better than the French, Americans on the ground in South Vietnam became just like them.

In closing, we would like to thank the contributors, who made the volume possible, and the reviewers, who have provided such excellent feedback. Our sincere hope is that the essays contained in The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War will lead to further research on the U.S. response to rising nationalism as the forces of Cold War and decolonization collided in the 1950s. We also look forward to seeing more scholarship on the reception of American policies by nationalist leaders and their publics.


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