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Introduction by Nicholas J. Cull

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Review by Frank Gerits, University of Amsterdam

In *Hearts, Minds, Voices* Jason Parker provides an insightful and thought-provoking analysis of the different ways in which U.S. public diplomacy during the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy years played a key role in shaping the conceptual entity of the Third World. The cold-war battle for hearts and minds in the underdeveloped areas of the world forced groupings which had been forming since the 1930s to become more political, coalescing around nonalignment, economic development, and modernization. Parker refines the argument that the Third World was created by the cold-war standoff by pointing out that this creation was an "unintended consequence" rather than a conscious effort on the part of the superpowers or postcolonial leaders to structure the world (167).

The approach of U.S. public diplomats to build on subtle persuasion was confronted with an explosion of Global South public diplomacy that nurtured the Third World as an imagined community. Moreover, the mental map of the Third World became defined less by its colonial past and more by its poverty, which is also how Latin America entered the definition of the Third World after 1961. Parker's book thus seeks to expand Odd Arne Westad's definition of third-world intervention.[1] The Third World was not only shaped by violence and a competition over development, but also by a "multifront media war" or public diplomacy, a non-violent type of intervention (3).

From the vantage point of the U.S. archives, this book provides readers with a host of insights which are refreshing in their subtlety. The first two chapters survey the Truman Administration's public diplomacy policy beyond Europe. The study of President Harry Truman's efforts in the developing world has concentrated on Point Four, the technical assistance program which was announced by the President in his inaugural speech on 20 January 1949. Parker, however, convincingly shows that the White House also turned to psychological warfare to address the challenges of the Third World. While instruction rather than persuasion was the focus, the public image dimension quickly became more important. The war in Korea in 1950 not only impressed upon the Truman administration the need to fight the cold-war battle for hearts and minds, as Walter Hixson wrote in *Parting the Curtain*.[2] It also "led the Truman administration to redouble" the propaganda for Point Four while countries like India and Indonesia refined their neutralist stance (39-40). Moreover, these early public diplomacy experiments produced important legacies in terms of goals and methods. Whereas the United States Information and Educational Exchange (USIE) stressed the importance of public persuasion, the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) emphasized the need for instructional educational materials to complement the development aid that was being offered. This tension between persuasion and development, Parker shows, remained a constant source of concern throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In the summer of 1962, for instance, observers worried that the outreach surrounding the Alliance for Progress, President John F. Kennedy's signature initiative in Latin America, was succeeding better than the actual policy, creating a gap between expectations and results of U.S. development efforts.

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

[2] Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 16.

One of the biggest achievements of this book is the reconstruction of the Eisenhower administration's response to the Bandung Conference. While Parker still views the U.S. answer as a failure, he does reject the claim that the President "wanted to avoid Africa"–and by extension the Third World–"as much as possible" as Tim Borstelmann has quipped.[3] Parker's book also reveals the administration's reliance on proxies at the Afro-Asian meeting, an interesting extension of a concept that is so closely connected with violent intervention. Piecing together the White House's response to decolonization is a strenuous undertaking because the collections of the Eisenhower Library are organized to reflect the image of a general turned Cold Warrior. As archivists impress upon researchers who visit Abilene, Eisenhower was a man concerned with the Soviet Union and the military industrial complex, not a leader troubled by a nascent Third World. Parker defied the logic of those archives and paints a vivid picture of an administration who took this "minor threat" seriously (80).

Parker's study is important because it is the first book to pay sustained attention to U.S. public diplomacy in the Third World. Although a more explicit discussion of the role of public diplomacy in the different presidential doctrines might have been interesting, it convincingly refutes the claims that U.S. public diplomacy towards the Third World was improvised and solely aimed at repairing the damage done by the civil rights debate to the U.S. image.[4] On the contrary, U.S. public diplomacy allowed new concerns about a changing world to seep into policy-making.

This book is even more remarkable because of its methodology. Parker wants to further the "internationalization of postwar historiography," but does so "within certain limitations." Since this study relies solely on U.S. sources it can only reflect on "Global South agency as seen from Washington" (14). It presents the U.S. as a "nation among nations," to borrow a phrase from Thomas Bender, which joined a multitude of third-world countries that were engaged in a conversation about the third-world project, primarily via public diplomacy.[5] It traces how the United States Information Agency (USIA) became more aware of the issues animating third-world conversation. The superpower conflict–Parker argues–acted as a glue for the diverse intellectual and geographic parts of the Global South, since it prompted peoples in the Global South of their common interest in seeking to transcend rather than join the Cold War.

While unravelling many of the complexities behind U.S. decision-making in a nuanced fashion, Parker's global approach to U.S. diplomatic history has its limitations. First, Parker's conclusion that public diplomacy was a "cacophony" rather than a one-way conversation is an important insight (92). However, it is unclear why this book excludes the colonial powers from this conversation, particularly since U.S. officials feared that their backing of third-world nationalism could alienate the European partners. The fact that the Eisenhower

[3] Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 116.

[4] Kenneth Osgood, "Words and Deeds: Race, Colonialism, and Eisenhower's Propaganda War in the Third World," in Kathryn Statler and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 15.

[5] Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

administration was so successful in orchestrating aspects of the Bandung conference, "even those parts over which Washington had no control" was due in part to European efforts and Asian agendas (87). When John Kotelawala, Prime Minister of Ceylon, described the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe as "another form of colonialism", he angered many at Bandung. However, Oscar Morland, the British ambassador to Indonesia, had assured Kotelawala that the speech was a good strategic move when he stayed overnight at the British embassy.[6] International archives, therefore cast doubt on the notion that the administration averted the threat coming from Bandung "thanks to a well-executed public diplomacy" (80). European colleagues might have made their mark as well.

Second, the book's methodology makes it difficult to pinpoint the precise role of race in international affairs. Parker highlights how "a series of events–from Bandung to the Suez Crisis to the independence of Ghana" delineated the global race revolution of the postwar era (93). Ghana and Little Rock–this book argues–had put both Africa and race at the forefront of world attention in 1957 (110). It is important to highlight, however, to what extend this was a U.S. assessment of the world. The argument that the image of a "global race revolution" forced U.S. officials to reconsider their approach as well as the notion that decolonization and the race-revolution were seen as interchangeable–"decolonization-cum-race revolution"–is intriguing (169). Nonetheless, liberationist thinkers such as Frantz Fanon or postcolonial statesmen like Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah observed an altogether different process. They were working to reach the opposite goal: the elimination of race as a factor in international relations. Former colonial subjects could only safeguard their political and economic interests if they were taken seriously and not pushed aside as somehow racially unfit for self-government.

Similarly, it is difficult to determine how much Jim Crow laws undermined the U.S. position abroad, especially from the vantage point of U.S. archives. Parker admits that the African resentment of Jim Crow in retrospect can be "overstated" (158). Nonetheless he lists "the black freedom movement in sub-Saharan African and the US South"–alongside the Nonaligned Movement Conference in Belgrade and the Congo Crisis–as one of the "three elements around which a Third World continued to concretize in the early 1960s" (141). However, when postcolonial leaders thought about racial injustice, they first and foremost pointed to Apartheid in South Africa, not civil rights. The archives of Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Senegal do not reveal an obsession with civil rights. These nations–while proudly African–were obsessed with the challenges of development, the ideological boundaries of the new postcolonial world and the defiance of Apartheid South Africa. In Ghana the sense of kinship, felt with Martin Luther King and others, was used primarily as a means to strengthen Nkrumah's continental agenda of casting Ghana as the most important leader involved with pan-Africanism.

U.S. public diplomacy towards Africa and Asia while focussing on the Third World–I would argue–actually echoed and amplified U.S. sentiments about civil rights at home. Because U.S. officials were so sensitive to the potentially devastating impact of Jim Crow, they overstated the importance of racial segregation while also offering USIA officials an argument to obtain more funding from Congress.

Nonetheless, *Hearts, Minds, Voices* reveals that a detailed study of those changing U.S. ideas about the world is still important. In contrast with international multi-country histories, Parker's book is much better able to

[6] Frank Gerits, "Bandung as the Call for a Better Development Project: US, British, French and Gold Coast Perceptions of the Afro-Asian Conference (1955)," *Cold War History* 16:3 (2016): 255-272.

sketch out changing perceptions and other evolutions within the United States. The French, for instance, admired the use of the radio by USIA and wanted to adopt many of the techniques of the seemingly experienced USIA officials. Parker's research, however, reveals that USIA was itself only a novice in the area of radio propaganda towards the Third World. It was the Suez crisis that pushed the Americans to increase the use of the radio, since Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser's Radio Cairo blared through the receivers of so many people in the Third World (96).

Herein lies the enormous value of Parker's book. He has taken the study of U.S. public diplomacy beyond the narrow confines of the Cold War and unlocked new conceptual opportunities that force us to think about the impact of public diplomacy, not only abroad but also at home, among foreign policy officials. Public diplomacy should not only be understood as "an international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics."[7] As one of the most prominent areas where ideology, perception, and decision-making merged, it also injected different world views into U.S. decision-making, altering how officials viewed the international system. *Hearts, Minds, Voices* encourages scholars to think more deeply about the "American discovery of that wider postwar non-European world" which came "haltingly and unevenly" rather than as a direct product of the Global cold-war rationale.

There can therefore be little doubt that others will heed Parker's call to "test" his book's arguments in third-world archives (14). It will–in line with the official mission of U.S. public diplomats–lead to some interesting conversations.

[7] Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), x.