

## Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy initiated a bold new policy of engaging states that had chosen to remain nonaligned in the Cold War. In a narrative ranging from the White House to the western coast of Africa, to the shores of New Guinea, Robert B. Rakove examines the brief but eventful life of this policy during the presidencies of Kennedy and his successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson. Engagement initially met with real success, but it faltered in the face of serious obstacles, including colonial and regional conflicts, disputes over foreign aid, and the Vietnam War. Its failure paved the way for a lasting hostility between the United States and much of the nonaligned world, with consequences extending into the present. This book offers a sweeping account of a critical period in the relationship between the United States and the Third World.

Robert B. Rakove is a lecturer at Stanford University. He has held fellowships at the Miller Center for Public Affairs, the Merhshon Center for International Security Studies at Ohio State University, and the University of Sydney's United States Studies Centre. This is his first book.

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Robert B. Rakove  
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ROBERT B. RAKOVE

*Stanford University*



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*To my parents, Helen and Jack Rakove*

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worked to put together a peerless institution for the study of policy and the presidency. At a time when fellowship programs sometimes fall under the budgetary axe, the Governing America in a Global Era program sets and maintains a much-envied standard.

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## A Note on Terminology

While writing this book, I have tried, whenever possible, to use contemporaneous names. Although now long known as Irian Jaya or West Papua, the final remnant of the Dutch East Indies is referred to here as West New Guinea, the name commonly used in the early 1960s. Portuguese Guinea refers to the country currently known as Guinea-Bissau.

I observe a similar principle with regard to the various names for nonalignment. As H. W. Brands has observed, the phenomenon was better known as neutralism in the 1950s, a term that lingered in American usage well into the following decade. Here the words are used somewhat interchangeably, although “neutralism” is used with reference to political sentiment and “nonaligned” with regard to foreign policy. Similarly the term “Non-Aligned Movement” (NAM) is reserved for the conclusion. Only with hindsight can we say that the 1961 Belgrade Conference marked the emergence of the NAM; debate about the movement’s fundamental nature raged well into the 1960s. The NAM uses the hyphenated word “Non-Aligned.” In common usage, however, the hyphen has long since become optional, so I have chosen to treat this as one word.

The names of capital cities are often used to refer to national governments. This choice is purely stylistic; it does not reflect a sense that any state in this era approached policy in a wholly unitary fashion.

Finally, my use of the term “Third World” simply reflects its political meaning in the 1950s and 1960s, as opposed to the uglier associations it has since acquired. The music group The Police put it best: one world is enough for all of us.

Abbreviations

IN TEXT

BNSP	Basic National Security Policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FRELIMO	Liberation Front of Mozambique
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
ONUC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PL-480	Food for Peace (Public Law 480)
PRC	People’s Republic of China
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations

IN CITATIONS

AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, Germany
CF	Country File
CFPF	Central Foreign Policy File
DDEL	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas
DDF	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Français</i>
DDRS	Declassified Document Reference Service
DOS	Department of State
DOSB	<i>Department of State Bulletin</i>
DSCF	Department of State Central Files
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
GPO	Government Printing Office
GWPB	George W. Ball Papers
JFDP	John Foster Dulles Papers

JFKL	John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts
LBJL	Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, France
MC	Miller Center, Charlottesville, Virginia
Memcon	Memorandum of Conversation
MfAA	Ministerium für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten
(MS)	Microform Supplement to <i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
NA	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NSF	National Security Files
NYT	<i>The New York Times</i>
OH	Oral Histories
POF	President's Office Files
PPP	<i>Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States</i>
PRP	Presidential Recordings Project
RG-59	Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State
RWKP	Robert W. Komer Papers
TNA	National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom

## Introduction: A Genuine Departure

On November 23, 1963, Egypt entered a state of mourning. The city of Cairo, in the words of an American diplomat, was “overcome by a sense of universal tragedy” over the death of United States President John F. Kennedy. As the embassy counselor, Donald Bergus, reported, a thousand Egyptians came to the American embassy to write messages of condolence. Many were prominent citizens, including Vice Prime Minister Ali Sabri and an influential member of the Presidency Council named Anwar al-Sadat. Others, though, were ordinary Egyptian citizens. Bergus observed: “The expressions on their faces left no doubt concerning the genuineness of their sorrow.” Mourners remarked that “Kennedy was the first American President who really understood the Afro-Asian world.” In the Egyptian media, journalists normally critical of the United States declared their heartfelt sense of shock and grief over the event. An editorial in the daily *Al-Ahram* stated that Kennedy had transformed the United States from the “repugnant rich brother” to the “cherished rich brother of the human family.”<sup>1</sup>

Egypt’s grief was not exceptional. The American embassy in Algiers reported “genuine shock and dismay” among average Algerians. U.S. Ambassador William J. Porter received a call of condolence from an “obviously shaken” Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella, who quickly declared a week of official mourning.<sup>2</sup> In New Delhi, an American diplomat observed a “remarkable demonstration of admiration and sympathy by the people of India.” Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru spoke before the Indian parliament, decrying “a crime against humanity” – the murder of “a man of ideals, vision and courage, who sought to serve his own people as well as the larger causes of the world.”<sup>3</sup> The U.S. consulate in Bombay wrote: “Indians from all walks of life

<sup>1</sup> Airgram A-438, Cairo to Washington, December 9, 1963, NSF, box 430, “Reactions to Death, Miscellaneous” folder, JFKL.

<sup>2</sup> Airgram A-233, Algiers to Washington, November 30, 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Airgram A-442, New Delhi to Washington, November 27, 1963, *ibid.*

took occasion to mention their sorrow to Americans of their acquaintance.”<sup>4</sup> “Seldom have the Indian people been so shocked and dazed by the assassination of a leader of another country,” observed the *Times of India*.<sup>5</sup> In Indonesia, President Sukarno tearfully remarked in a lengthy eulogy, “The good die young.” Flags in Jakarta flew at half mast.<sup>6</sup> Ghana’s President Kwame Nkrumah eulogized “a great world statesman and a relentless fighter for equality and human dignity.”<sup>7</sup>

This striking outpouring by Indians, Indonesians, Egyptians, Algerians, and other peoples across the newly independent states of Africa and Asia reflected the profound power of the Kennedy image in the postcolonial world. As a young, charismatic, dynamic American leader with an interest in fostering development and, by the summer of 1963, combating segregation, Kennedy was idolized in life and mourned in death. There was, however, another common feeling that brought ordinary people of Africa and Asia to grief: that Kennedy seemed to have understood the issues that galvanized them. His policies had narrowed the gap between the United States and the postcolonial world. At his death, millions of people in places like Egypt, India, and Algeria viewed him as a friend. Kennedy’s policies, as understood by the peoples of the developing world, made them receptive to his image. Without this perception, the murder in Dallas would have struck the average resident of Cairo or New Delhi as a distant tragedy, not a universal calamity.

Contrast these scenes with those of successive years. In 1964, angry mobs assaulted U.S.-owned libraries in Egypt and Indonesia. Leaders who had praised and eulogized Kennedy denounced his successor, Lyndon Johnson, in increasingly fiery speeches. In 1967, Egypt broke relations with the United States after the Six Day War, while other nonaligned states vehemently denounced Johnson’s war in Vietnam. With dismaying rapidity, the United States had come to be seen not as an ally to Third World aspirations but as a malevolent foe. Polarizing accusatory rhetoric unusual in the early 1960s became unremarkable by the decade’s end, emerging as a lasting feature of world politics, a recognizable precursor to contemporary denunciations of the United States.

Tumultuous by any accounting, the 1960s constituted a critically determinative era in the relationship between the United States and the postcolonial world. Ties between the two moved between pendular extremes during the eight years of Kennedy and Johnson – particularly in the cases of states that declared themselves to be “nonaligned” in the Cold War. At stake was more than a particular set of bilateral relations; the 1960s tested the ability of the United States to comprehend and tolerate nonalignment itself. The concept of nonalignment fused ideas of neutrality with ideals and agendas specific to the

<sup>4</sup> Airgram A-239, Bombay to Washington, December 13, 1963, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> “Delhi Grieved,” *Times of India*, November 24, 1963, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ganis Harsono, *Recollections of an Indonesian Diplomat in the Sukarno Era*, ed. C. L. M. Penders (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 230.

<sup>7</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Selected Speeches*, Vol. 5, ed. Samuel Obeng (Accra: Afram, 1997), 158–160.

## Introduction

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era of decolonization; it posed old and new challenges for its practitioners and the Cold War's major combatants.

### FROM MELOS TO BANDUNG

Neutrality has been a controversial concept for as long as states have gone to war. Bystanders to conflict have, for millennia, protested their right to stay removed from the fighting, just as belligerents have received such claims warily and, on occasion, hostilely. The most famous instance of this debate is well known to classicists and innumerable students of international relations classes: during the Peloponnesian War, Athens invaded the neutral island-state of Melos, charging that Melian independence and neutrality constituted a standing rebuke to Athenian power. Having conquered Melos, the Athenians proceeded to massacre the male inhabitants and sell the others into slavery.<sup>8</sup>

The history of the United States provides ample proof of this tension. Memorably enshrined in George Washington's Farewell Address, neutrality emerged as the core principle of the young nation's foreign policy: to some Americans it offered an idealistic escape from Europe's cynical balance-of-power system; to others, it represented an acceptance of that balance and the most prudent choice available. Whatever the rationale, neutrality served as the lodestar of U.S. foreign policy for more than a century. At times commitment to the principles of neutrality superseded the desire to avoid war; broad definition of the commercial rights of neutral states lay behind U.S. involvement in the Quasi War and the War of 1812, and then, a century later, the First World War. An ironclad popular belief in the virtues of a neutral foreign policy delayed U.S. entry into the Second World War for more than two years, only to be punctured by the bombing of Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, however, came an eruption of enthusiasm for a crusade against the Axis powers – and over time, an altered view of neutrality during the war and in its immediate wake.

In the postwar years, the United States became embroiled in another global conflict largely understood along moral lines. The Cold War against the Soviet Union seemed, as the historian Melvyn Leffler has put it, a struggle “for the soul of mankind”: an all-determining contest between democracy and tyranny.<sup>9</sup> Faced with this moral battle, Americans proved newly reluctant to accord respect to declarations of neutrality by the smaller and newer states of the international system.<sup>10</sup> These new states, many enjoying their first decade of independence, in turn sought to organize in defense of the rights to which the Melians had alluded. From their collaboration came a new and little-understood variant of

<sup>8</sup> Robert Strassler ed., *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 350–357, 402–410, 482.

<sup>9</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 1–10.

<sup>10</sup> Marc J. Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith: The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism, 1945–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 139–142, 163–165.



neutrality: nonalignment. The stage was set for confrontation between the new faces of neutrality and its largest former practitioner.

Tracing nonalignment to its moments of inception is a complex project and not the one pursued in these pages. The term and concept first appeared in the immediate postwar years, if not before. Nonetheless, most agree that nonalignment emerged most prominently in April 1955 in the city of Bandung. There, Indonesian President Sukarno opened the first Asian-African Conference. Bandung drew a wide range of attendees, many representing countries that *had* taken sides in the Cold War. Nevertheless, it featured heartfelt declarations of the rights of the new states to remain uncommitted in the global struggle. However, Bandung was much more than a conference dedicated to the rights of neutrals. A meeting of decolonized states, still euphoric over their newfound independence, evoked feelings of solidarity, promises of cooperation, and professions of outrage over the perpetuation of colonialism elsewhere in the world and the growing risk of nuclear war between the superpowers. Nonalignment was more than a synonym for neutrality (it was regularly and mistakenly termed “neutralism”): it also expressed a strong sense of solidarity among postcolonial peoples and an activist agenda directed against remnants of empire. These two facets of nonalignment coexisted uneasily at best; both could be heard in Sukarno’s passionate opening address to the gathering.<sup>11</sup> Although no cohesive organization emerged from the conference, Bandung signaled a growing activism and cohesion among postcolonial states.

Neither superpower was initially prepared to deal with this vocal group of states. The Soviet Union was still undergoing a political transition following the 1953 death of Joseph Stalin, who had taken little interest in the postcolonial world. Over the 1950s, however, Moscow developed a sophisticated strategy for appealing to the nonaligned states, founded in large part on a shared vision of development and a common antipathy to European colonialism. The United States was slower to respond. Under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Washington balanced uneasily between expressions of sympathy for newly decolonized states and annoyance at their refusal to choose sides in the Cold War. The 1950s were years of ambivalence for the United States in its dealings with the nonaligned world. During the following decade, however, President Kennedy pursued an ambitious program of outreach toward the nonaligned states, one that constituted, in the words of one key policy maker, a genuine, if temporary, departure from established Cold War foreign policy.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> George McT. Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 39–51; Jason C. Parker, “Small Victory, Missed Chance: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Turning of the Cold War,” in Kathryn C. Statler and Andrew L. Johns eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 153–174; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 97–104.

<sup>12</sup> See Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 57–67.

## THE POLICY OF ENGAGEMENT

This book examines a foreign policy without an official name that, even so, profoundly shaped the modern history of United States foreign relations. Kennedy came to office convinced that the Cold War would be decided on the battlefields of the Third World: in Latin America, and in the postcolonial states of Africa and Asia. Believing that his predecessors in the Eisenhower administration had waged the Cold War with insufficient vigor or subtlety in this new arena, Kennedy and his advisors adopted a diverse array of programs. JFK authorized the development of counterinsurgency programs to defend against communist rebellions in friendly, impoverished countries. He established the Peace Corps, dispatching eager young volunteers across the globe to burnish the image of the United States as a supporter of Third World development. With a particular concern about the political ramifications of poverty in Latin America and the dangers posed by the recent Cuban revolution, Kennedy inaugurated the Alliance for Progress, a deeply ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful program to advance prosperity and social stability in the lands south of the Rio Grande.

Alongside these named policies, he pursued one that never received a public christening, a policy that will be referred to in these pages as “engagement.” Alarmed by the spread of Soviet influence in the nonaligned states of Africa and Asia, Kennedy sought to appeal to these states. By and large, he did this not expecting to win their formal support against communism but to forestall their enlistment as allies of Moscow or Peking. Broadly comprehending the distinction between nationalism in the Third World and the communism of the First World, Kennedy believed that the former could be separated readily from the latter. The new states did not need to be formal allies; simply by remaining independent of the communist bloc, they stood to limit the expansion of Moscow’s control and influence. Economic development and the ebbing of colonial-era animosity would, over time, narrow the divide between the West and the postcolonial world. Kennedy and his advisors believed the democratic West held an intrinsic advantage when it came to dealing with an international system made diverse by decolonization.

Engagement was also a product of the high age of modernization theory; indeed, nonaligned states held special significance to theorists of economic development. Unlike mainland Latin America, where Soviet aid was essentially nonexistent, nonaligned states represented active battlefields between the two blocs and their legions of economists, experts, and technicians. Troublingly to Americans, the Soviet and Chinese models of centrally planned industrialization held real appeal to Third World leaders, seeming to offer a quick and proven road to economic modernization. Both communist powers approached the postcolonial world with avid interest, seeing it as a decisive ideological proving ground. So, too, did the Americans. At stake was not only the position of the United States amid a world of rising postcolonial powers, or its continued access to vital resources, but also the validity and relevance of the

American ideology of democracy and free markets. By the end of the decade, modernization theory faced sharp challenges, but it was reaching its intellectual zenith when Kennedy took office.

Engagement employed three distinct tactics. In the first place, Kennedy made prominent use of presidential diplomacy. He met frequently with nonaligned leaders, forged personal bonds with them, and thereby better conveyed the views of the United States on key global issues. Economic assistance programs constituted the second leg of the triangle. Aid was intended both to foster economic development in the nonaligned states and also to serve as a political statement of U.S. friendship. Finally, and most critically, the task of engaging these states necessitated policy adjustments on the part of the United States, requiring American decision makers and diplomats to heed their views on the issues that most concerned them – particularly colonial questions. In this third area, Kennedy's departure from Cold War precedent is most clearly discernible.

Kennedy's pursuit of this policy is one of the less-well-understood aspects of his presidency. Scholarship on Kennedy's foreign policy has traveled between far-flung extremes. The first wave of accounts – immediately following his assassination and including key memoirs by administration insiders – seemed to idealize Kennedy. He was depicted as an astute practitioner of diplomacy, able to see past the stale doctrines of 1950s-era Cold War strategy. To these authors, JFK stood apart from his Cold War peers as a president likely to have drawn down Cold War tensions and avoided entanglement in Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> A second wave, emerging in the wake of the Vietnam War, found Kennedy far less remarkable amid his Cold War peers, terming him aggressive, even reckless, in his pursuit of Cold War victory. Kennedy has been taken to task for his support of coups in Latin America, as well as for his culpability in the overthrow and murder of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem.<sup>14</sup> The end of the Cold War and the release of recordings made during the Cuban Missile Crisis have begun to move scholarship back toward the middle ground. Although third-wave Kennedy scholars acknowledge his avid pursuit of Cold War victory, they also note his prudence amid crises. To varying degrees, they have renewed speculation that Kennedy had called into question cardinal Cold War precepts, that he might have further eased tensions with the Soviet Union, and that he was at least less likely than Johnson to go to war in Vietnam.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> See John Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 198–273; Thomas Paterson ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961–1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Stephen G. Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Howard Jones, *Death of a Generation: How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917–1963* (New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 2003); Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964*

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Kennedy's ability to mix lofty rhetoric with pragmatic, sometimes ruthless, strategy presents a perennial challenge to historians, as do innumerable questions of how he might have proceeded in office after November 1963. Much about him must remain unknowable.<sup>16</sup>

To date, scholars have yet to examine comprehensively Kennedy's and Johnson's policies toward the nonaligned states. Broad overviews of Kennedy-era foreign policy have tended to define the Third World geographically, encompassing both aligned and uncommitted states. Accordingly, they have fundamentally blurred a distinction that was cardinal to the Kennedy administration. This dividing line between aligned and nonaligned is of little consequence when making an argument about the morality of Kennedy's foreign policy, but it has broad import when we examine his outlook toward what his contemporaries considered the "Third World." His approaches to India, Egypt, and Indonesia, among others, reveal a more cautious, tolerant Kennedy, and the disparity is worth pondering. Where individual Third World states or regions are concerned, we have outstanding books by scholars such as Robert J. McMahon, Andrew J. Rotter, Douglas Little, H. W. Brands, Thomas J. Noer, Thomas Borstelmann, and Bradley R. Simpson. Such accounts not only illuminate policies toward particular countries or areas, they also cast light on its broader outlook toward the Third World. Even so, the task of surveying in a comprehensive fashion the Kennedy-Johnson approach to the nonaligned world has yet to be undertaken.

Much has been written recently on the topic of modernization theory and its policy impact in the 1960s. To borrow a phrase from Walt W. Rostow, modernization theory's most prominent advocate, this decade represented a period of political "takeoff," when means and ends seemed to move into harmonious alignment and successive Democratic administrations enjoyed the opportunity to tackle directly the interlinked problems of underdevelopment and social instability in the Third World. Scholars have examined aid programs toward both aligned and nonaligned states; here I have stuck strictly to the latter.<sup>17</sup> I focus more on the politics of aid than the concepts behind it but am struck by the range of visions on the part of both aid recipients and their American donors. For some, aid programs were an expression of American mission in the poorer parts of the world; for others they served largely political ends,

(New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); and Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 174–192; and James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 221–254.

<sup>17</sup> On this, see David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960–1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Nick Cullather, *The Hungry Word: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Sciences and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

regardless of what the proffered funds accomplished. My examination of the politics of aid to nonaligned states reveals an uneasy coexistence between the goal of modernization and expectations of gratitude on the part of recipients. Above all, the uncommitted status of nonaligned states tended to enhance their leverage in obtaining aid from the United States and in advancing their own ideas about development, while posing substantial political difficulties for the two administrations.

Scholarly work on nonalignment is largely recent, but promising. Historians have begun to discern, in the rise of revolutionary nationalism in the post-colonial states of Africa and Asia in the middle of the twentieth century, fundamental shifts in the nature of the international system, characterized by the tentative emergence of new fault lines and new international norms that challenged prior notions of global politics. In *The Specter of Neutralism* H. W. Brands postulates that Bandung initiated a new era in which states could not be compelled to choose sides in the Cold War. Subsequent research has examined the interplay between Cold War combatants and noncombatants. Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* and Matthew Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution* look broadly at the calamitous interrelationship between the Cold War and decolonization as the rival superpowers applied their ideologies and conceptions of progress in the underdeveloped global south. Both Connelly and Westad confront the complex multidirectional interaction between decolonization and the Cold War. The emergence of nonalignment served to delineate the limits of superpower influence, allowing its adherents to coordinate action on common issues. It represented the most significant reaction by the uncommitted states of Africa and Asia to the expanding superpower struggle.

Kennedy's policy of engagement offers a vital window on his conceptions of foreign policy and the tectonic shifts in world politics during his era. In his reflections on the new forces of nationalism and nonalignment, Kennedy emerges as a perceptive observer of international politics, convinced that the Cold War could not be treated as a Manichean affair, and highly cognizant of the strength of nationalism in the postcolonial states. Kennedy approached the nonaligned countries as states to be persuaded, not coerced. Differentiating between his policies toward these states and those he believed to be in the Western sphere of influence illuminates much about his outlook. While he adopted interventionist policies elsewhere in the world, notably in Latin America and mainland Southeast Asia, Kennedy grasped the counterproductive consequences of treating nonaligned states forcefully. Although he famously swore in his inaugural address to bear every burden in the global struggle for freedom, engagement testifies to his grasp of the limits of U.S. power.

This policy came with real costs. Nervous allies in Europe, Africa, and Asia demanded and often obtained statements of continued American solidarity. At home Kennedy's approach to the nonaligned world came at considerable expense to his political standing, particularly in the summer of 1963 when his foreign aid bill faced a devastating Congressional gauntlet. Kennedy did not live to see the end of this struggle, but his statements and actions during

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his final months leave no doubt that he planned to continue the policy. Even though politically cautious and preparing for the 1964 election, Kennedy clearly thought engagement was worth the attendant risks.

His successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson, departed substantially from Kennedy's approach at a critical time in U.S.-nonaligned relations. Johnson, too, is the subject of much debate among historians. Scholarship has understandably focused on Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War, but recent accounts have insightfully examined his policies elsewhere in the world.<sup>18</sup> Although often portrayed as a novice in the realm of foreign policy, Johnson was his own man, with a distinct outlook and a uniquely forceful way of crafting policy. He held substantially greater experience in the political arena than his predecessor. He also brought his own particular interests and passions to the table, and these differed deeply from Kennedy's.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas Johnson was capable of dealing subtly and prudently with other foreign policy issues, this was much less often the case in his relations with non-aligned states. His policies toward them reveal a reliance on coercion – a tactic that Kennedy had largely forsworn. At heart, Johnson lacked Kennedy's interest in the Third World and his comprehension of nonalignment. Consequently, LBJ's goals in this realm were far less lofty. The product of an impoverished upbringing in the Texas Hill Country, he empathized with peoples struggling against deprivation; but, as a legislative maestro who expected that no favor would go unrewarded, he was reluctant to aid or otherwise abet states that refused to side with the United States. Johnson's own utterances reveal a general exasperation with the proclamations and demands of nonaligned states, an attitude shared by much of the American public.

Johnson's ambivalence about engagement attests to his own core concerns about U.S. credibility and his understanding of the Cold War. He famously remarked that he could not yield South Vietnam without being subsequently chased halfway across the Pacific by the communists. Like Kennedy, he considered the global power balance to be fragile, but he accorded far more concern to the signals his policy sent to allies. Facing his own war, Johnson instinctively sought solidarity from allies, the same solidarity he felt obligated to offer them in their own regional conflicts. He had comparatively little patience for states that refused to choose sides or, even worse, that accepted U.S. aid while continuing to criticize or oppose his policies. He held, at heart, a more traditional

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Warren I. Cohen and Nancy B. Tucker eds., *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963–1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and H. W. Brands, *The Wages of Globalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> The leading biographies of Johnson are Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961–1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Randall Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006). Fredrik Logevall painstakingly examines the impact of the Kennedy-Johnson transition in *Choosing War*; as does Melvyn Leffler in *For the Soul of Mankind*, 201–224.



view of the Cold War, as a struggle in which states ultimately should choose sides, and it meshed seamlessly with the vote-counting outlook of a senate majority leader. Thus, with Johnson's ascendancy, the departure that Kennedy initiated came to its end – not immediately, but inexorably.

The next seven chapters chronicle the ebbs and flows of relations between the United States and the nonaligned world in the Kennedy and Johnson years. Chapter One provides a prologue to the New Frontier, offering a brief sketch of U.S.-nonaligned relations during the Eisenhower presidency. Chapter Two profiles the most senior policy makers in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, focusing on the outlooks that they carried into office. Chapter Three chronicles early policy toward the nonaligned movement as a whole, particularly responses toward the 1961 Belgrade Conference, while also examining nonaligned reactions to the major Cold War crises of the period. It concludes at the end of 1962, when Kennedy and his advisors believed their efforts in the nonaligned world had begun to yield real dividends.

Chapters Four through Seven examine fundamental problems that frustrated and ultimately undermined the policy of engagement. Chapter Four offers an integrated history of four key colonial disputes that pitted nonaligned states against European allies of the United States. Regional conflicts – rivalries between African or Asian states – are the subject of Chapter Five, which also chronicles four cases. Both of these chapters focus on the period between 1961 and the end of 1964, by which point U.S.-nonaligned relations stood in a state of crisis. Going past the close of 1964, Chapter Six depicts the problems that plagued U.S. aid: both the domestic difficulties that the aid program faced and the futile efforts of both administrations to resolve the question of what the United States could expect in return for American aid. Finally, Chapter Seven looks at the decline of engagement in the era of Vietnam, linking the political damage done by the war with the evolving character of nonalignment in the middle of the 1960s.

Two interrelated phenomena fundamentally altered the Cold War in the 1960s: the Sino-Soviet split and the formal establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement. Both emerge throughout these chapters. The former redefined the global struggle as a fundamentally multipolar affair, particularly as China and the Soviet Union engaged in a costly battle for influence across the Third World. The latter, however, weakened the pull that any one pole could exert upon states caught in the middle. Nonalignment, consequently, ushered in an era of weak polarity, in which major, midsize states such as Egypt, India, and Indonesia could exert substantial leverage on the superpowers. Determined headstrong national leaders charted their own courses, playing great power patrons against one another, sometimes to beneficial outcomes, sometimes as preludes to disaster. In the political map of the 1960s, we can recognize some of the contours of our contemporary world.

This book focuses its attention on the American side of the story: on the outlooks held by policy makers and other actors, the ways these were expressed in acts of policy, and the outcomes that followed. It is my belief that sustained

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attention to the personalities, views, and debates of these two administrations is needed to understand the profound shifts in U.S.-nonaligned relations over the course of the 1960s. In key ways, the challenges presented by nonaligned states in 1965 were not substantially different in character from what they had been in the 1950s. What had changed over the preceding years were the ways in which they were perceived within the White House. As an informal policy, engagement rose and fell based on the internal politics of the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies. It is best understood – and thereafter situated in a broader international history of the 1960s – through intensive examination of American sources.

Nevertheless, any consideration of outcomes must necessarily make this, at least in part, an international story. I utilize British, French, and German archival documents to complement the perspective offered by American sources, providing for a fuller understanding of events. Transcripts, memoirs, and news reports from key nonaligned countries have yielded further insights. Studying the U.S.-nonaligned relationship led me to observe that changes in American politics and policy were accompanied by concurrent shifts in the leadership and direction of the movement. Chronicling the evolution of this vast diverse grouping is the task for another book; yet I think this story of U.S. policy gains further insight from a (tentative) examination of nonaligned politics – a fascinating story in its own right.

Readers may note the relative brevity of discussion of the more familiar events of the 1960s: the Berlin and Cuba crises and the descent into the Vietnam War. I came to this project with the belief that there were other revealing stories to tell about the Kennedy-Johnson years and that the foreign policies of these two administrations could not be reduced to Cold War crises and war in Southeast Asia. Discussion of the Vietnam War has, understandably, dominated interpretations of American foreign policy in this period; yet we stand to benefit from setting the familiar narrative of the war alongside developments that it has long overshadowed. Where Kennedy and Johnson are concerned, the crushing weight of Vietnam tilts the scales of historical judgment sharply to one side but does not remove our obligation to examine carefully the contents of both baskets. Although this book accords more direct attention to less familiar events such as the West New Guinea crisis and the Belgrade Conference, it also speaks to the broader impact of the long war in Vietnam and the myriad ways that a single war can affect seemingly far-off relationships. In the end, I found that I was writing this book not to dismiss Vietnam but to add something to our understanding of this tragedy.

It is my belief that engagement offers its practitioners a measure of credit. For good and for ill, nonalignment and the Cold War's emerging multipolarity transformed the world. Kennedy and Johnson were among the first to attempt to come to grips with the ensuing diffusion of political power. Their response – engagement – was at once a success and a failure. The New Frontiersmen were myopic planners yet skilled tacticians. They overestimated engagement's benefits and underestimated its costs. Early triumphs obscured the ways in which



engagement was irreconcilable with preexisting commitments. The Cold War concerns that had initially spurred engagement increasingly circumscribed it; indeed, engagement came undone because it was fundamentally incompatible with long-standing popular views of the global struggle. As the costs came due, Lyndon Johnson shifted away from his predecessor's endeavor. Yet it remained a worthwhile policy. Engagement, for all the misconceptions embedded in it, was a prudent reaction to the emerging phenomenon of nonalignment. Its failure yielded grave and lasting consequences for the United States and the world.