Introduction

"We look into history from motives of two kinds," says the Oxford classicist Jasper Griffin. "There is curiosity about the past, what happened, who did what, and why; and there is the hope to understand the present, how to place and interpret our own times, experiences, and hopes for the future."[1] As with the history of antiquity, the best contemporary history is usually driven by both kinds of motives; those that see the past as past and those that see the past as present. In the spirit of Professor Griffin's injunction, this is a book about the creation of today's world, about how the mightiest powers of the late twentieth century – the United States and the Soviet Union – repeatedly intervened in processes of change in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and through these interventions fuelled many of the states, movements, and ideologies that increasingly dominate international affairs. In its choice of topic it is, in other words, an unabashedly presentist book, even though it is also an historical account, written by a historian.

The volume grew out of my interest in the motives and decisions of the Cold War superpowers in their Third World policies, which I felt needed to be reinvestigated now that archival materials from both sides are available for the first time. During the research, however, the subject of the book turned into something broader: I found it impossible to understand Moscow's and Washington's decisions without exploring both the ideological origins of their Cold War interventionisms and the transformation of Third World politics that precipitated the superpower involvement. What had started out as a book about interventions increasingly became one about Third World processes of change. Its perspective shifted south.

Such a shift may not have been presaged exclusively by the historian's curiosity. It was also, undoubtedly, a residue of having spent much time in Africa and Asia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, where – as a very young man – I was an excited witness to the social and political changes taking place. I sympathized profoundly with those who attempted to achieve a more just and equitable society, and with those who defended their communities against foreign interventions. (As I am writing this, I still recall walking home from a political rally in Maputo on a night some

twenty-five years ago, astonished at the courage and determination shown by ordinary Mozambicans in the face of poverty and war.) This sympathy and fascination still remains with me, even though I hope by now to have been weaned off easy political solutions to complex social problems. It certainly made it impossible for me to write a book about the Cold War in the Third World from a superpower perspective only.

A friend of mine, who studies language, noted with more than a touch of friendly irony how chronologically well attuned my choice of conceptual terms for this book is to the topic covered: Both "Cold War" and "Third World" are late twentieth-century neologisms, employed for various purposes and in various cultural settings to create some of the most fundamental hegemonic discourses of the era. My linguist friend is of course right. Neither of these terms existed prior to World War II, and the ways in which they have been used are signals for which side you were on in the last great conflicts of the century. "Cold War" was first used by George Orwell in 1945 to deplore the worldview, beliefs, and social structure of both the Soviet Union and the United States, and also the undeclared state of war that would come to exist between them. "The atomic bomb," Orwell found, may be "robbing the exploited classes and peoples of all power to revolt, and at the same time putting the possessors of the bomb on a basis of equality. Unable to conquer one another they are likely to continue ruling the world between them."[2] Although a critical term at first, the term "Cold War" in the 1950s came to signal an American concept of warfare against the Soviet Union: aggressive containment without a state of war. The Soviets, on their side, never used the term officially before the Gorbachev era, since they clung to the fiction that their country was "peaceful" and only "imperialism" was aggressive, in a way similar to how US (and Western European) leaders used the "Cold War" to imply a Soviet threat.

The concept "Third World" came into being in the early 1950s, first in French and then in English, and gained prominence after the Bandung conference of 1955, when leaders from Asia and Africa met for the first large postcolonial summit. With its French connotations of *tiers état* – the "third estate," the most populous but least represented of the French prerevolutionary social groups – the term "Third World" implied "the people" on a world scale, the global majority who had been downtrodden and enslaved through colonialism, but who were now on their way to the top of the ladder of influence. The concept also implied a distinct position in Cold War terms, the refusal to be ruled by the superpowers and their ideologies, the search for alternatives both to capitalism and Communism, a "third way" (if that expression can be decoupled from present-day Blairite hypocrisy) for the newly liberated states.

My use of these terms may therefore be seen to point in two opposing directions: the term "Cold War" signals Western elite projects on the grandest of possible scales, while the term "Third World" indicates colonial and postcolonial processes of marginalization (and the struggle against these processes). Some critics have claimed that by positioning one "in" the other I do violence to their separateness – I implicitly subsume one discourse under the other. Having reread the literature that was written on the Cold War in the Third World towards the end of the Cold War era, I can sympathize somewhat with this position: the greater amount of these mostly American writings attempted to delegitimize domestic Third World revolutions or radical movements on the grounds that they were Soviet-inspired or Soviet-sponsored.

Still, the argument that the Cold War conceptually and analytically does not belong in the south is wrong, mainly for two reasons. First, US and Soviet interventionisms to a very large extent shaped both the international and the domestic framework within which political, social, and cultural changes in Third World countries took place. Without the Cold War, Africa, Asia, and possibly also Latin America would have been very different regions today. Second, Third World elites often framed their own political agendas in conscious response to the models of development presented by the two main contenders of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union. In many cases the Third World leaders' choices of ideological allegiance brought them into close collaboration with one or the other of the superpowers, and led them to subscribe to models of development that proved disastrous for their own peoples. The latter aspect of the Cold War in the Third World is the least explored, perhaps because it is the most difficult for both former Cold Warriors and their opponents to accept.[3]

For the purpose of this volume my definitions of the key terms are rather straightforward. "Cold War" means the period in which the global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs, roughly between 1945 and 1991. "Third World" means the former colonial or semicolonial countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that were subject to European (or rather pan-European, including American and Russian) economic or political domination.[4] "Global" means processes that took place on or toward different continents at roughly the same time. "Intervention" means any concerted and state-led effort by one country to determine the political direction of another country. These are brief, operational definitions that make sense in the particular context in which they are used here (but that are obviously open to challenge in any broader context).

In a study that aims both at discussing the origins and the course of Third World revolutions and the superpower interventions that

accompanied them some hard choices obviously had to be made in order to avoid the text spilling over into two or three volumes. The focus of the book is on the 1970s and the early 1980s, when superpower conflict in the Third World was at its peak and when developments in the Third World had most significance for the wider conduct of the Cold War. As will be shown later, this is, of course, not to say that the Third World was unimportant for the Cold War conflict in earlier periods, but only that by the 1970s the conditions in the Third World and the capabilities of both superpowers had reached a stage that made events in Africa, Asia, and Latin America central to international affairs. Likewise, not all Third World conflicts in which the superpowers were involved are given equal weight in the chapters. Instead, conflicts in which foreign interventions set both the framework and the course of events are given priority, meaning, for instance, that the Arab–Israeli or the Indo-Pakistani wars (which were governed more by their very specific regional rationale than by their Cold War context) are treated in less depth than they would have been if the purpose was to provide a general survey. Such limitations have made it possible to opt toward inclusivity on other issues, such as the tracing of the historical development of superpower interventionist ideologies and postcolonial Third World politics in the first three chapters.

While serving as comfort for nervous editors concerned with length, the geographical exclusions also serve as useful reminders to the reader that while the Cold War is a central discourse in the international history of the late twentieth century, it is by no means the full story. Other major discourses with geneses that are in part separate from the Cold War – such as the economic rise of East Asia or the upsurge of political Islam – have histories of their own, which for some time existed in parallel to the superpower conflict (and which in the end, as I have argued elsewhere, came to overtake it as the fulcrum of international affairs). The Cold War is a separate, identifiable part of a much richer spectrum of late twentieth-century history, but one that gave shape to a recognizable international system based on two opposing versions of European modernist thought.

This book argues that the United States and the Soviet Union were driven to intervene in the Third World by the ideologies inherent in their politics. Locked in conflict over the very concept of European modernity – to which both states regarded themselves as successors – Washington and Moscow needed to change the world in order to prove the universal applicability of their ideologies, and the elites of the newly independent states proved fertile ground for their competition. By helping to expand the domains of freedom or of social justice, both powers saw themselves as assisting natural trends in world history and as defending their own security at the same time. Both saw a specific mission in and for

the Third World that only their own state could carry out and which without their involvement would flounder in local hands.

It is easy, therefore, to see the Cold War in the South as a continuation of European colonial interventions and of European attempts at controlling Third World peoples. I have little doubt that this is how historians of the future will regard the epoch – as one of the final stages of European global control. The means and the immediate motivations of Cold War interventions were remarkably similar to those of the "new imperialism" of the late colonial era, when European administrators set out to save the natives from ignorance, filth, and the consequences of their own actions. In both the early and the late twentieth century the European ideological rationale was that the path toward the future had been discovered by them and that they had a duty to help Third World peoples along that road. Throughout my research I have been astonished at the sense of duty and sacrifice that advisers on both sides showed in aiding friends or opposing foes in, for them, faraway places. The Cold War ethos – for those who accepted it – was at least as alluring and evocative as the imperialist ethos that it replaced, both for Europeans and for their collaborators. (While interviewing leaders of long-forgotten Third World people's republics, I have often been reminded of the Indian writer Nirad Chaudhury's dedication of his autobiography to the memory of the British empire, by which "all that was good and living within us was made, shaped, and quickened."[5])

One crucial comparative distinction needs to be made, however. It is to me less meaningful to talk about patterns of US or Soviet domination as "empires" than to describe them in a specific temporal sense. Different from the European expansion that started in the early modern period, Moscow's and Washington's objectives were not exploitation or subjection, but control and improvement. While this distinction may be rather ethereal seen from the receiving end, it is crucial for understanding the Cold War discourse itself: while imperialism got its social consciousness almost as an afterthought, in the Cold War it was inherent from the very beginning. Both US and Soviet criticisms of early twentieth-century European imperialist practices were genuine and deeply held ideological views. Indeed, some of the extraordinary brutality of Cold War interventions – such as those in Vietnam or Afghanistan – can only be explained by Soviet and American identification with the people they sought to defend. Cold War interventions were most often extensions of ideological civil wars, fought with the ferocity that only civil wars can bring forth.

The need to understand the Cold War in light of the colonial experience has influenced the way this book has been structured. The first three chapters deal with the ideological and political origins of the Cold War in the Third World by exploring the motives of American, Soviet, and

postcolonial leaders in an historical perspective. Chapter 1 discusses the development of US thinking on non-European peoples and their relationship to American identity and foreign policy. It argues that discourses on liberty, progress, and citizenship already in the early years of the republic's existence set an ideological pattern of involvement with the Third World that has persisted up to this day. Chapter 2 deals with the origins of Russian discourses on the Third World, from the creation of the empire up to the post-Stalin era. It shows how the Bolsheviks took over many of the problems of the past, and how they tried to transform them through their emphasis on a collective form of modernity, which via the Comintern and Soviet foreign policy they tried to spread to other parts of the world. Chapter 3 concludes this overview of the historical origins of mindsets and ideologies by focusing on Third World resistance against European colonialism and on the development of different forms of anticolonial revolutionary movements. It explains how anticolonial movements interacted with the early Cold War conflict and how some Third World leaders chose to align themselves with one or the other of its competing ideologies, while others defined themselves in opposition to both.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the interrelationship between the growing success of the anticolonial resistance and the creation of US Cold War interventionism. Chapter 4 argues that in the period between 1945 and 1960 the United States, through its policies toward Africa, Asia, and Latin America, helped to create the Third World as a meaningful concept in international politics, symbolizing resistance against Western domination. Chapter 5 looks at the foreign policy of Cuba and Vietnam in opposing US control, and at how they provided foci of inspiration for revolutionary movements elsewhere (although mostly in the form of creative misunderstandings, rather than straightforward lessons).

Chapters 6 to 8 deal with key cases of intervention and revolutionary transformation in the Third World during the late Cold War. Chapter 6 provides an overview of the international aspects of the struggle against apartheid and colonialism in Southern Africa, while focusing on the Angolan civil war and the Cold War interventions that accompanied it. Chapter 7 discusses the Ethiopian revolution and its links both with the United States and, especially, with the Soviet Union, and looks at how the Ethiopian-Somalian war helped to undo both the prospects for socialism in the Horn of Africa and also the brief period of *détente* between the superpowers. Chapter 8 shows how the growth of Islamism in both Iran and Afghanistan helped to destroy the modernization enterprises of the regimes, and how the Soviet Union decided to intervene in order to recreate a modernizing, socialist regime in Kabul.

The final two chapters and the conclusion provide a discussion of the Cold War in the Third World in the 1980s and its effects up to our own time. Chapter 9 outlines the Reagan offensive against left-wing revolutionary regimes and against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Angola, and Central America. It also discusses the global economic and ideological changes that made the offensive succeed. Chapter 10 shows how Mikhail Gorbachev, after a brief period of euphoric engagement, decided to withdraw the Soviet Union from intervening in Third World conflicts and how he attempted, unsuccessfully, to build an international order around principles of the self-determination of states. The conclusion evaluates the impact the Cold War had in the Third World and how it fuelled continued resistance against foreign domination. It also discusses how interventionism weakened both the Soviet Union and the United States and how it continues to bedevil US foreign policy ideology today.

The literatures on superpower interventions and on Third World revolutions are enormous, and I am indebted to a multitude of scholars for their insights, many more than can be mentioned in the acknowledgments or even in the notes. Strangely enough – and to the detriment of students – these two literatures have so far been mostly unconnected in an intellectual sense; they seem to speak past each other rather than engage across intellectual boundaries in addressing issues that are of consequence to both. An important reason for this deficiency is that the most important research into each field have been divided by disciplines: while historians and international relations experts have been concentrating on aspects of interventions, sociologists and social anthropologists have been studying Third World revolutions and their consequences. It has been my aim to draw insights from all these disciplines on their objects of study (even though the limitations of my own discipline are bound to shine through from time to time).

For me, as an historian, the core reason why this book could be written at all is the extraordinary extension of access to archives in the (former) First, Second, and Third World. While historians of the Cold War up to the last decade had only meager access to archives outside the United States and Western Europe, we can now make use of Soviet and East European archives, as well as an increasing range of collections from countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This increased access to source material carries the promise of changing the field profoundly – both, I hope, in terms of its overall approach and interpretations and also in terms of making it more relevant to a larger number of people as a field of study. The present volume is an attempt at furthering both of these processes.

1 The empire of liberty: American ideology and foreign interventions

In the 1890s, as the United States for the first time prepared to colonize peoples outside the North American continent, the debate over whether a republic could also be an empire raged intensely. When accepting the Democratic nomination for president in 1900, William Jennings Bryan castigated the American colonization of the Philippines, claiming that such policies undermined the essence of republicanism: "Our whole history," Bryan said, "has been an encouragement not only to the Filipinos, but to all who are denied a voice in their own government ...

> While our sphere of activity has been limited to the Western hemisphere, our sympathies have not been bounded by the seas. We have felt it due to ourselves and to the world, as well as those who were struggling for the right to govern themselves, to proclaim the interest which our people have, from the date of their own independence, felt in every contest between human rights and arbitrary power.[1]

In the century that followed Bryan's doomed battles for the presidency the complexity of his sentiments was to be often repeated at key moments of making decisions in US foreign policy: could Americans, jealous of their own freedoms, govern others? And, if not, what form should that "interest" in the world that Bryan proclaimed take? Was liberty for Americans enough to satisfy the promise of America, or was the agenda of American liberty the world? If America's mission stopped at its shores, how could the United States in the long run defend its own liberties? And if that mission extended *ad infinitum*, how could American power protect the United States *and* build global freedoms at the same time?

Historians, with their sense of dichotomies, have often seen the 1890s and Bryan's defeats as a struggle between the republican preoccupation with liberty and the Republicans' preoccupation with money and interests – a contest that the latter decisively won. But, at least in terms of foreign policy, the turn of the nineteenth century could as well be seen as a particularly intense moment in a continuous creation of a distinct American

ideology, a process that extends back to the eighteenth century and forward to the twenty-first. When Thomas Jefferson in 1785 praised the *principle* of an America concentrated on perfecting freedoms at home, he himself added that avoiding war may be "a theory which the servants of America are not at liberty to follow." The problem, Jefferson found, was in the very foundations of the nation – "our people have a decided taste for navigation and commerce."[2] In the creation of the American state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "theory" and "tastes" competed for primacy, while becoming increasingly entwined and mutually adjusted.

By the mid-twentieth century both liberty and interests – "theory" and "tastes" – had natural and integrated places in US foreign policy ideology, welded together as symbols and key perceptions in a universalist understanding of America's mission. During the Cold War what set the function of these ideas apart from those of "normal" states within the Western state system was how American symbols and images – the free market, anti-Communism, fear of state power, faith in technology – had *teleological* functions: what is America today will be the world tomorrow. While American universalism and teleology go back to the revolutionary origins of the state, their ideological manifestations developed more slowly, often as much needed compromises between divergent ideas. As historian Michael Hunt has observed, the outer form of these symbols all go back to the revolutionary era, while their content can be strikingly contemporary.[3] It therefore makes sense to speak of an American ideology that goes back two hundred years, but it is an evolving ideology into which generational experiences are interpreted and perceptual conflicts solved.

The history of America's interventions in the Third World is very much the history of how this ideology developed over time and how it framed the policies of the US foreign policy elite. Although there were periods of strong domestic opposition to the policies pursued, the Cold War era stands out as a time when there also was, by American standards, a remarkable consensus as to the immediate aims and means of US policy abroad. This relative lack of political controversy has sometimes made scholars oversimplify the relationship between ideology and practice in how Washington has conducted its international policies. But as the genesis of America's relations with the world shows, the Cold War consensus developed out of profound conflicts in the past over the role and the means a democratic republic could take up when influencing others.

"In every contest"

From its inception the United States was an interventionist power that based its foreign policy on territorial expansion. Its revolutionary message – free

men and free enterprise – was a challenge to the European powers on a continental scale. Even for those few who in the early nineteenth century did not believe in divine providence, the core ideas that had led Americans to nationhood were the same ones that commanded them to seize the vastness of America and transform it in their image. Together these ideas formed an ideology that motivated US elites in their relations with the outside world from the federal era to the Cold War.

First among these core ideas was the American concept of *liberty*, with its particular delineations and extensions. Liberty for its citizens was what separated the United States from other countries; it was what gave meaning to the existence of a separate American state. American freedom was, however, sustained by a human condition that was different from that of others. The American, Jefferson argued in the wake of the French Revolution,

> by his property, or by his satisfactory situation, is interested in the support of law and order. And such men may safely and advantageously reserve to themselves a wholesome control over their public affairs, and a degree of freedom, which, in the hands of the *canaille* of the cities of Europe, would be instantly perverted to the demolition and destruction of everything public and private ... But even in Europe a change has sensibly taken place in the mind of man. Science has liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect, and the American example has kindled feelings of right in the people. An insurrection has consequently begun ... It has failed in its first effort, because the mobs of the cities, the instrument used for its accomplishment, debased by ignorance, poverty and vice, could not be restrained to rational action. But the world will recover from the panic of this first catastrophe.[4]

To the third president, and his successors, liberty could not exist without private property and the dedication to an ordered society that followed from that particular right. Liberty, therefore, was not for everyone, but for those who, through property and education, possessed the necessary independence to be citizens of a republic. Already during the federal period it was widely accepted that most Europeans could achieve such status if they were enlightened by the American example, and, in ethnic terms, the circle of possible enlightenment widened in the twentieth century. Up to the Cold War, however, most of the world's population – including the internal African colony the Europeans had brought to America – was *outside* that circle. Native and Latin Americans were also excluded. "I join you sincerely, my friend," Jefferson wrote to de Lafayette in 1813, "in wishes for the emancipation of South America.

> That they will be liberated from foreign subjection I have little doubt. But the result of my enquiries does not authorize me to hope they are capable of maintaining a free government. Their people are immersed in the darkest ignorance, and brutalised by bigotry & superstition.