INTRODUCTION

Tricontinentalism and the Anti-Imperial Project

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Lights glowed brightly from the Hotel Habana Libre on the first day of January 1966. Built by Hilton seven years earlier for wealthy American tourists to enjoy the expat playground that was Havana, the building's facade now featured hundreds of bulbs sketching an image of an outstretched arm gripping a rifle and holding a stylized globe. Thus did Fidel Castro's regime welcome its guests to the first Tricontinental Conference uniting revolutionary Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans.[1] Hundreds of delegates from Indonesia, India, Iran, Guinea, the United Arab Republic, Kenya, China, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere filled the streets of Havana for the next two weeks. Their goal was to define a vision of Third World solidarity that could combat the threats of imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism that Castro saw embodied in the former life of the 25-floor casino hotel. Joining heads of state and diplomats were representatives of armed revolutionary movements from both European colonies and independent states, ranging from the Rebel Armed Forces of Guatemala (FAR) to the recently founded Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).[2] At the center of this loose coalition of governments and activists was a radical vision of self-determination. The majority of attendees championed armed revolt, socialism, the creation of cultural and economic institutions to resist foreign domination, and a new focus

[1] *Souvenir of the First Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, 1966, Arquivo Mário Pinto de Andrade, Fundação Mário Soares, online at Casa Comum: http://casacomum.org/cc/visualizador?pasta=08035.001#!1.
[2] General Secretariat of OSPAAAL, *First Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Havana: 1966), 183–186.

on the "common enemy of North American imperialism."[3] The Havana conference reflected a radical worldview justifying Third World revolution, which is best termed Tricontinentalism.

Secular, socialist, and militant, Tricontinentalism aimed to empower the states of Latin America, Asia, and Africa and mount a revolutionary challenge to the Euro-American dominated international system in the 1960s and 1970s. While the organizers of the Havana meeting described the conference as a continuation of the search for solidarity begun a decade earlier by Afro-Asian organizers at Bandung, they also insisted that their gathering constituted "a new stage in the common struggle."[4] The incorporation of Latin America, heightened concern about economic neocolonialism, and a commitment to internationally contentious revolts in Vietnam, Palestine, and the Congo all demonstrated that solidarity had evolved in radical directions. No longer was it sufficient for Afro-Asian heads of state to collaborate diplomatically to denounce nuclear war and explore new forms of economic cooperation, as earlier examples of Third World cooperation had proposed.[5] A decade of mostly pro-Western coups showed the fragility of postcolonial governance as well as the rising threat of American-led interventionism. New forms of action seemed necessary.

Delegates to the Havana meeting concluded that armed revolts by stateless groups, the creation of new coalitions, and the embrace of radically socialist domestic and international agendas were necessary to defeat global imperialism and empower decolonization. Conspicuous support for this agenda came from the Soviet Union and – initially – China, both of which championed anti-imperialism, claimed linkages to and sometimes membership in the Third World, and offered aid to help balance disparities of power.[6] The Tricontinental Conference thus broke with Bandung's self-conscious neutralism by, in the words of one organizing document, reuniting "the two currents of world revolution ... the socialist revolution of October and that of the national liberation revolution."[7] Cuba's role as

[3] International Preparatory Committee of the First Solidarity Conference of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Cuban National Committee, *Towards the First Tricontinental* (Havana: 1966), 6.
[4] Ibid., 7. [5] Ibid., 6.
[6] China initially positioned itself as first among equals in the Third World. While never claiming Third World membership, the Kremlin used its Central Asian republics (acquired by czarist Russia in order to join the European empire club) to identify with non-Europeans and deepen its anti-imperial bona fides when diplomatically beneficial.
[7] *Towards the First Tricontinental*, 12.

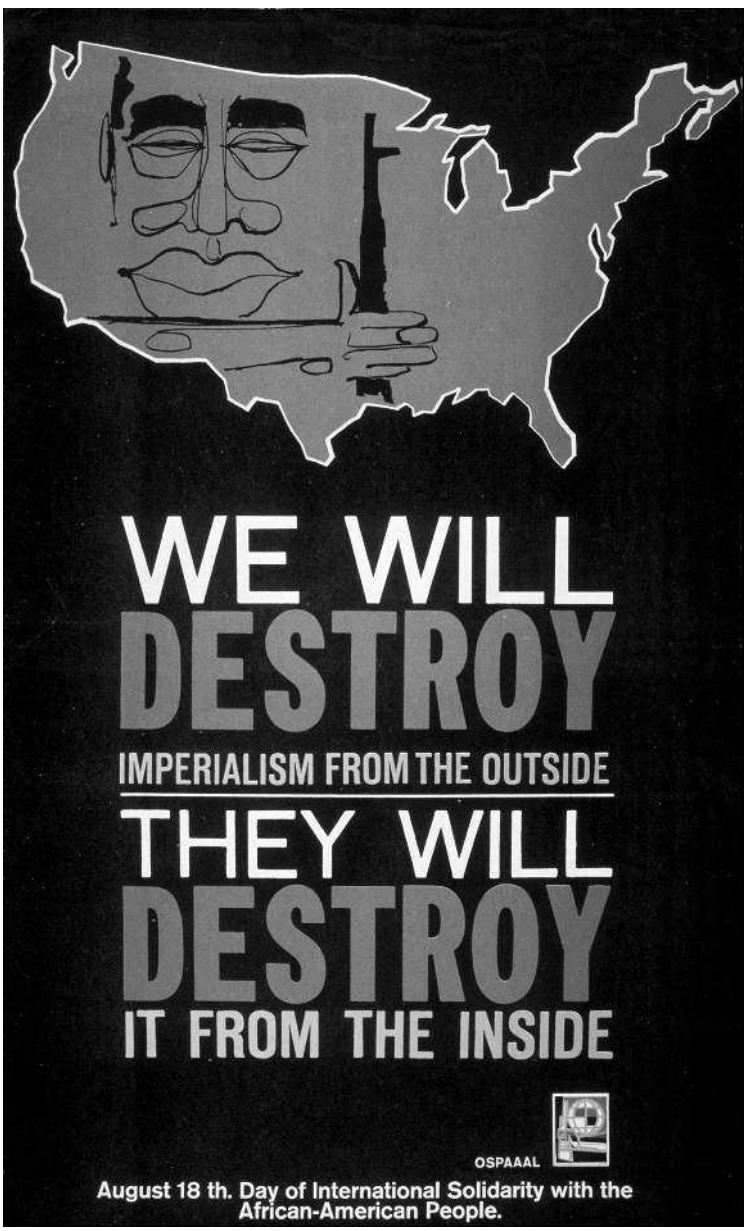

FIGURE 0.1 The OSPAAAL publication *Tricontinental* regularly included posters highlighting specific movements and their relationship to the larger anti-imperial struggle, a practice that established both a roster and an iconography of revolutionary radicalism. This poster captures a common theme related to solidarity with the African American struggle, but it also points to the revolutionary logic uniting state and nonstate actors. OSPAAAL, artist unknown, 1967. Offset, 52x31 cm. Image courtesy Lincoln Cushing / Docs Populi.

conference host was symbolic of this new unity of purpose. The agenda laid out at Havana refined and promoted a new current of anti-imperial activism that had percolated for years and would shape international affairs for a decade.

Tricontinentalism recast the Third World agenda while energizing the Cold War, but its history reveals broader dynamics of anti-imperial solidarity politics within the Global South. In an attempt to recover the complexity of the ongoing challenge to the Euro-American dominated international system, *The Tricontinental Revolution: Third World Radicalism and the Cold War* offers a revised framework and chronology of Third World internationalism by challenging the idea of a single, evolving movement. Third World solidarity emerged during the Cold War, as political scientist Robert Vitalis has argued, from a series of overlapping ideologies and movements that promoted different forms of cooperation as postcolonial countries grappled with political, economic, and social challenges.[8] Adjusting Vijay Prashad's idea of a "Third World Project" pursued by the "Darker Nations," it might be more accurate to talk of a century-long *Anti-Imperial Project* that existed in the overlapping goals of these diverse movements and which informed the Third World idea as it evolved in the context of the Cold War.[9] This project encompassed an array of sometimes competing ideologies and alliances that collectively hoped to achieve sufficient unity to advance the shared interests of the Global South, or the regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that shared historic experiences of empire, economic disparity, and resistance. Using the term "Anti-Imperial" consciously recognizes that this negative opposition to Western imperialism provided a sense of common purpose and inspired transnational cooperation, but Southern actors often diverged – sometimes dramatically – in their visions for the positive programs that would replace it. Although one ideology never triumphed, certain strands of thought rose to prominence within this Anti-Imperial Project at different points in time. From the 1960s through the late

[8] Robert Vitalis, "The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung," *Humanity* 4:2 (Summer 2013): 261–288.

[9] The Anti-Imperial Project captures the complexity of Global South collaboration against Euro-American hegemony, which predated but also informed the post-1945 theorization of the Third World. Prashad offers a more unitary vision with his Third World Project. Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2008), xv–xviii.

1970s, Tricontinentalism was arguably the most influential of these competing visions, ushering in an era in which militant anti-imperialism became a prominent part of the global zeitgeist.

Tricontinentalism gained traction as a radical alternative to the relatively reformist agendas of the first generation of postcolonial leaders. In many places, these politicians inherited fractious societies while facing a hostile international system. Promises of economic development built primarily on adaptations of capitalist and socialist modernization schemes faltered as the 1960s dawned, reinforcing inequitable ties to an international commercial system upheld by Western governments and corporations. Potential allies within the Global South shared problems and interests but embraced a variety of political, ideological, and economic orientations. Superpower interventions further constrained the autonomy of the Third World actors. The sheer economic, political, and military power wielded by the United States and the Soviet Union circumscribed options for economic and political sovereignty by empowering specific socioeconomic agendas aligned with Cold War camps, sometimes undermining governments that aggressively championed independent nationalist programs.

In this setting, armed revolution and confrontational diplomacy became attractive alternatives for Third World elites frustrated by the slow pace of change. Repressed nationalists and diasporic peoples that continued to chafe under Euro-American preponderance championed aggressive, transnational responses that challenged Bandung's emphasis on diplomatic cooperation between independent states.[10] The Cuban, Algerian, and North Vietnamese governments that came to power through armed conflict offered visions of a militant, socialist anti-imperialism.[11] Revisiting earlier ideas and associations, these and sympathetic states like Egypt spoke openly of revolution and flirted

[10] See, for example, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956–1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[11] See Jonathan C. Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

with new alliances such as the increasingly militant Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). By the late 1950s, the radical anti-imperialism present at the Havana conference began to differentiate itself from the neutralism of Bandung. These radical impulses gained momentum as ambitious but measured Third World programs faltered and military coups upended governments in Brazil, Ghana, and Indonesia. Scholars have recognized this shift, describing it vaguely as a "second generation" of Third World leadership and noting "the vogue of revolution in poor countries."[12]

This volume contends that Tricontinentalism provides an essential framework for understanding and analyzing this phenomenon and the era it helped define. At its core was the idea that countries in the Global South shared histories of Euro-American colonization, which gave them reason to seek coordinated, militant strategies of resistance and empowerment in the hostile context of an international system created by empires. International meetings and publications such as *Tricontinental* from the Havana-based Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) became forums for revolutionaries to articulate and debate specific programs. Texts, conferences, and diplomatic exchanges integrated diverse ideas of political, economic, and cultural revolution into a common agenda inspired by and reflected in the oft-referenced armed struggles in Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, South Africa, and elsewhere. Though Third World leaders used the term inconsistently, Tricontinentalism captures how many militant parties and movements described their visions of self-determination and national development as part of a global community of likeminded peers. This "dynamic counter-modernity," in the words of scholar Robert J. C. Young, challenged Western imperialism at multiple levels with interrelated African, Asian, and Latinx

[12] Mark T. Berger and Heloise Weber, *Rethinking the Third World: International Development and World Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 2014), 71–72. Forrest D. Colburn, *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Odd Arne Westad refers to them as "new revolutionary states" in Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 158. Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett speak of the "second wave" of Third World struggles that began in the mid-1960s, "Introduction" in Christiansen and Scarlett, eds., *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York: Berghan Books, 2013).

internationalisms.[13] It also proved more attentive to the demands of a wide array of international actors than had prior iterations of the Anti-Imperial Project, articulating an expansive anti-imperialism that directed popular ire at the capitalist West and its client states in the Global South.

Given the diversity of its adherents, Tricontinentalism is best understood as a worldview. It was a way of understanding how the international system worked and laid down specific goals for marginalized, often impoverished states to achieve genuine self-determination. Eschewing strict dogmatism, this worldview led countries with similar assessments of comparable problems toward a set of best practices for achieving independence that were adapted and negotiated to address local circumstances and insecurities. The ultimate objective was the destruction of colonial and international structures favoring Western interests and their replacement with more egalitarian states and institutions. This perspective and the policy choices it suggested borrowed heavily from socialism, which invited Western reaction and threatened to pull states into the Sino-Soviet competition. The most assertive advocates adopted violence and expanded alliances with the communist powers as the logical response to Euro-American interventions. This leftward revolutionary shift effectively differentiated Tricontinental advocates from moderate postcolonial peers, creating what members argued was the vanguard of a global Third World revolt during the 1960s and 1970s.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TRICONTINENTALISM

Despite its influence, Tricontinentalism remains an underappreciated concept because anti-imperial internationalism has only recently become a popular subject for scholarly study. The global history of the later twentieth century has long been dominated by the Cold War. To the extent researchers have considered the foreign relations of Third World governments, the majority have done so in terms of superpower conflict: how the great powers perceived their interests, and how actors in the ostensible periphery reacted to intervention.[14] Only in the last two

[13] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), 2.

[14] For example, Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University

decades has the international turn led scholars to seriously question this dominant narrative. Many now argue for the equal importance of decolonization, which transformed the international system by adding dozens of new states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Scholarship initially focused on metropolitan retreat has shifted to consider how decolonization empowered the Global South to challenge the Eurocentric international system.[15] South-South alliances and material exchanges encouraged struggles for self-determination during a period of increased superpower attention to these regions.[16] So too did Southern states collaborate to establish new institutions and economic ideologies in attempts to create a fairer international system.[17] Such scholarship is informing new histories of Third World international relations and solidarities that opposed – or even predated or existed independently from – the Cold War.

Though the historiography has expanded to reflect the experience of nations from the Global South in the twentieth century, scholars are still working to understand the complex realities of Third World internationalism – its alliances, ideologies, chronologies, and terminologies. Most

Press, 2001); Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[15] For the former, see Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). For the latter, Westad, *The Global Cold War*; Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Christopher Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c.1950–1976* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[16] For examples, see Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); David Stenner, *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019); South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 5, African Solidarity, Parts 1 & 2* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2013, 2014).

[17] Christopher R. W. Dietrich, *Oil Revolution: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Giuliano Garavini, *The Rise and Fall of OPEC in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

histories of the Third World fall into one of two categories: studies like Odd Arne Westad's influential *Global Cold War* that highlight connections to the superpower conflict and others that detail the foreign relations of noteworthy countries or individuals from the Global South.[18] A smaller third category considers diplomatic conferences as windows into the broad project, with an emphasis on Bandung in historical circles and Non-Aligned Movement summits in political science.[19] Although these latter works are pivotal to our understanding of politics in the Global South, Prashad's polemical exploration of the rise and frustration of the Third World Project remains the primary overarching narrative from which many scholars draw.[20] Prashad hints at the diversity of visions that existed within the movement, but he generally describes the efforts of a continuous, if decentralized, leftist anti-imperial ideology.

In collapsing solidarity politics into a single phenomenon, Prashad and other scholars have yet to fully grapple with the diversity of the Anti-Imperial Project. This is especially true among historians, for whom an exaggerated or mythic version of Bandung and Afro-Asian solidarity orients most studies.[21] The 1955 meeting assembled twenty-nine Afro-Asian

[18] See Westad, *The Global Cold War*; McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World*; Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Scholars of Global South diplomacy continue to privilege the Cold War, though this is changing. See Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*; Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[19] See footnote 21 for histories of Bandung. For political-science oriented studies of the NAM, see Peter Willetts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of the Third World Alliance* (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1978); Robert A. Mortimer, *The Third World Coalition in International Politics* (London: Prager, 1980); S. W. Singham and Shirley Hune, *Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments* (London: Lawrence Hill, 1980). Recent historical studies include Rinna Kullaa, *Non-Alignment and Its Origins in Cold War Europe: Yugoslavia, Finland, and the Soviet Challenge* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012) and Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[20] Prashad, *Darker Nations*; Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (New York: Verso, 2013).

[21] See Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010); Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Paris: Didier Millet, 2005); Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 African-Asian Conference for the International Order* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008); see also various articles on Bandung and superpower responses to it including Augusto Espiritu, "'To Carry Water on Both Shoulders': Carlos P. Romulo, American

states (Map 0.1) in the Indonesian city of Bandung, where they sought collaboration in support of self-determination, economic development, and peaceful coexistence. The vague conclusions of the final statement reflect the fact it was a relatively staid gathering of mostly independent Asian countries, but the "Bandung Spirit" promised much more. Contemporary reporters (and later revolutionaries) cited Bandung to critique an expansive list of global inequalities between and within nations that sometimes diverged from the actual proceedings. Thus, the conference earned a symbolic association with key issues of Third World transnationalism and revolution that more closely align with other iterations of the Anti-Imperial Project such as Tricontinentalism.[22] As a result, even historians of African revolutions and nonstate movements – the vast majority of which had barely a presence at Bandung – feel obliged to connect their studies to the 1955 conference.[23]

Lost in this universalization of the Bandung Spirit are the ways Third World actors devised new forms of solidarity to confront contingent global challenges. The extended process of decolonization, Cold War interventions, the proliferation of multinational businesses, the rise of neo-capitalism, and geostrategic conflicts within the Global South all strained the inclusive vision of solidarity present at Bandung. These multiplying challenges compelled advocates of anti-imperialism to consider

Empire, and the Meanings of Bandung," *Radical History Review* 95 (Spring 2006): 173–190; Jason Parker, "Cold War II: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Reperiodization of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 30:5 (November, 2006). In addition to a focus on the Bandung conference, some literature situates the Non-Aligned Movement as the natural successor to the Afro-Asian impulse. See H. W. Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Natasa Miskovic et al., eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi – Bandung – Belgrade* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[22] The conflation grows from reporting on Bandung that speculated widely on what it *could* mean for non-white peoples. Brian Russell Roberts and Keith Foulcher, eds., *Indonesian Notebook: A Sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[23] Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Jason Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices: US Cold War Public Diplomacy and the Formation of the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonization, 1945–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017). It is illustrative of the phenomenon that recent attempts to move beyond Bandung have felt obliged to refract their scholarship through the conference. See Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War," *Journal of World History* 30:1–2 (June 2019): 1–19.