

A Roundtable on Jessica Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonialization and the Cold War*

Jason C. Parker, R. Joseph Parrott, Matthew Masur, Shaun Armstead, and Jessica Chapman

Jessica Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War* Passport Roundtable Introduction

Jason C. Parker

If the independent nation-states of the 1960 “Year of Africa” were individual people, they would be bringing up the rear of the Baby Boom, and looking ahead to collecting Social Security next year. The Cold War ended half their “lives” ago, well before they had hit middle age. Thus, although detailed empirical investigation into their lifespans has proceeded apace, it is far from archivally complete. Its conceptual framework is even less so. Our understanding of the twinned postwar phenomena of decolonization and the Cold War, and of their precise interrelationship, is necessarily only in its early stages. Jessica Chapman’s *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War* arose as an attempt to fill both classroom and conceptual needs. Her synthesis curates six case-studies—India, Egypt, Congo, Vietnam, Angola, and Iran—in pursuit of a holistic if not quite comprehensive understanding of the nucleic connections between Cold War and decolonization. The reviewers concur with her core argument of the fundamental inseparability of the two phenomena, “intertwined in a recursive loop” as Masur puts it, and on the whole they praise the book, though not without some reservations.

The reviewers agree on the book’s strengths. In addition to its persuasive central claim of inseparability of the two (in Armstead’s words) “mutually constitutive processes,” they recognize that its scope is ambitious—perhaps beyond the limits of realizability in a single volume. They find nonetheless that Chapman has made an admirable intervention that gains much ground. They laud its inclusion of not just the American and Soviet superpowers but two of the other major external actors involved—the secondary communist powers of China and Cuba—as well as “internal” actors like Nehru and Nasser. All of these could stake a more plausible claim of “Third World” identity in the decolonization drama than could either of the global-North superpowers. This netted them little more external control than had U.S. or Soviet intrusions; all parties were at the mercy of one another, and above all of events. But it did open up avenues for cooperation and manipulation. As Armstead writes, Chapman posits the expiring empires “as less a canvas for the US, Soviet Union, China, and Cuba to paint their aspirations for the future than an active participant in the Cold War.” She does so artfully—all the reviewers praise her prose—including when the tale turns to suffering and tragedy in, for example, Vietnam. Two of the reviewers single out that chapter as especially strong, unsurprising given the author’s expertise and previous book.

Some little overlap exists among the reviewers’ critiques. All acknowledge the challenge of assembling a selection of case-studies that coheres even as it falls short of a perhaps-unattainable comprehensiveness. The number, depth, and selection of case-studies makes structural imbalances of various kinds difficult to avoid. The reviewers’ criticisms are leavened by sympathy for any scholar taking on this challenge, and by the aforementioned recognition of the book’s ambition and accomplishments. For Masur, the most striking imbalances are to be found in individual chapters such as the one on the Congo. In that and a number of others, he laments the lesser attention paid to the late- and post-Cold War phases of the story. Armstead and Parrott disagree on an important conceptual matter, which in turn points to the sharpest critique of the lot. While Parrott finds that Chapman’s framing ultimately reproduces a global-North-centered vision of the postwar era, Armstead finds the rough opposite—that the book balances “both [Cold War and decolonization] in a single narrative that avoids replicating in print the subjugation of the Global South.” For Parrott, this imbalance in sources and structure leads to an asymmetry between the book’s two main themes, such that the book falls short of its stated mission. He argues that this forecloses many of the interpretive possibilities for understanding the postwar global-South, above all the networks and groups that sought more and various internationalist/cooperative alternatives to the Cold War framework and to the postcolonial unitary nation-state alike.

Parrott has a point that such roads-not-taken are in need of deeper and continued study as we rethink the postwar era. But many of these “roads” are more fascinating in retrospect than they were consequential in their moment. Most avatars of internationalist solidarities were themselves unwilling to give up hard-won national sovereignty in the name of some grander abstract aspiration. Chapman concedes that her national-case-study structure ineluctably pulls her analysis away from such visions. She is, however, on solid empirical ground insofar as the nation-state model did in fact triumph in the end. As we exhume that story, we should indeed be mindful of those roads not taken, and perhaps even regret the lost potential opportunities. At the same time, we should take care not to write the nation-state’s triumph into a self-fulfilling prophecy—but, on any realistic scale or timeline, the nation-state was always thought to be the likeliest model by virtually all players who were actually in power, whether at the superpower, metropolitan, or anticolonial-nationalist levels. As the roster of U.N. member nations rose from fifty-one in 1945 to almost two hundred a generation later, the savvy bettor would have if anything wagered on the “over” of the latter number. Finally, *pace* Parrott, “elevating internationalist aspects of the decolonizing project to

operate at the same level as familiar policies such as containment” is tough to imagine given the state of the field as it stands— again, more fascinating than consequential. For all the tragedy at particular sites of decolonization, such stakes amounted to less than the prospect of an existential, worldwide, hair-trigger nuclear apocalypse.

As part of the growing corpus of works by such scholars as Odd Arne Westad, Heonik Kwon, Lorenz Luthi, Jeff Byrne, and Frank Gerits, *Remaking the World* contributes valuably to our classroom efforts as well as to our conceptual ones. Westad’s latest in particular offers a provocative tandem with Chapman’s book; relocating the four decades of the Cold War proper into a century-long time-frame raises captivating questions about our holistic view of modernity in world history. As those decolonized sovereign nation-states enter what would be their human twilight years, they will in the process soon reach an equilibrium in which the spans of their colonial and postcolonial periods are of equivalent length. Chapman’s book adds to the body of scholarship that advances our understanding, and facilitates our work doing the same with our students, of the world that the “long Cold War” and the even longer (ongoing?) process of decolonization made.

Review of Jessica M. Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War*

R. Joseph Parrott

In recent years, decolonization and its ramifications on the global system have arguably begun to displace the bipolar Cold War as the centerpiece of international history. While the superpower conflict cannot be ignored and continues to demand attention for its contemporary echoes, a proliferation of scholarship has offered new analyses of both familiar and novel events from the perspective of actors long seen as peripheral. This has produced an awareness of both the ways that the decentralization of the international system complicated the Cold War and how that conflict constrained ambitious decolonial and anti-imperial projects seeking political, economic, and social independence. Yet many of these fascinating and informative studies have been somewhat esoteric in their interests and dense in their research, limiting their ability to communicate these intellectual shifts outside the field.

Enter Jessica Chapman’s *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War*. This synthetic history uses over three decades of scholarship to explore how economic and military battlegrounds emerged in the Global South as an extension of the Cold War. An expert on the South Vietnamese state, Chapman deploys the same careful consideration of domestic anti-colonial politics – and their operation within Cold War constraints – that informed her previous scholarship, but now on a global scale. With an eye for detail and an ear for pithy analytical quotes from historical actors and historians alike, she lays out a broad examination of how decolonization and superpower conflict operated across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Postcolonial states “faced an onslaught of postcolonial problems that played out under the long shadow of the Cold War” (10). Superpower attempts to manage these tensions, she argues, served to widen and deepen the conflict while often having deleterious, polarizing effects on the nationalist projects that emerged in the wake of imperial retreat.

After setting the stage with an overview of the main events of the Cold War and decolonization, Chapman uses six case studies to explore key inflection points in this interaction. The first two focus on how India and

Egypt sought to forge independent foreign policies while navigating and utilizing the Cold War to achieve goals of domestic development and regional influence. Chapman presents India as the archetype for the superpowers’ economic competition in the Global South. She credits Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with pioneering the idea of non-alignment, an attempt to create “the space necessary to develop independently while also enabling [postcolonial states] to court critical foreign aid” (43). Nehru successfully parleyed these dual sources of assistance into ambitious modernization programs, but the process was complicated by regional rivalries with Communist China and US-allied Pakistan. As regional tensions turned to armed conflict, India drifted toward the Soviet Union while the United States aligned with China and Pakistan, creating a nuclear arms race in South Asia that outlived the Cold War. Egypt under Gamel Abdel Nasser initially followed a similar path to Nehru’s India but achieved its greatest victory by nationalizing the Suez Canal and navigating the crisis caused by European intervention. While not delving deeply into Nasser’s pan-Arab ambitions, Chapman notes that regional tensions again reinforced Cold War divisions as they became entwined with the Arab-Israeli conflict until Anwar Sadat worked with the United States to normalize Egyptian relations with the Jewish state. The lesson here seems to be that neutrality proved difficult to achieve amidst regional competition, which encouraged Cold War alignments even when the superpowers proved reluctant to graft the global conflict onto local ones.

The next pair of case studies shift to highlight the expanding role of Cold War interventionism during the period of rapid decolonization and global revolutions in the 1960s. The complex conflict between the Pan-African nationalist Patrice Lumumba and the Belgian-backed secession of Katanga invited a controversial United Nations intervention and resulted in Lumumba’s assassination. Chapman highlights a general theme of the book when she notes “The intervention of former colonial powers, the superpowers, and the UN into the crisis infused the Congo’s civil conflict with ideological and military characteristics that subverted the country’s – and indeed much of Africa’s – political and economic development” (139). The damage such intrusions caused is nowhere more obvious than Vietnam, which is unsurprisingly the most detailed and convincing case given the author’s expertise on the topic. As anti-colonial revolution gave way to superpower supported civil war, both North and South Vietnam adopted increasingly authoritarian systems, fueling an aggressive militancy in Hanoi and revolutionary challenges to Saigon’s rule. Neither U.S. troops nor diplomacy could protect the South, as the United States underestimated North Vietnam’s commitment to revolution and overestimated the influence of allies like the Soviet Union and China. Indeed, as the American war finally ended, the simmering regional tensions it masked emerged quickly, leading to the brief Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979.

The book concludes with an examination of the long-term effects of Cold War intervention through the cases of Angola and Iran. Chapman provides a good overview of the competing ethnic and ideological origins of Angolan nationalist parties during the anti-Portuguese liberation movement, and their subsequent competition for control of the independent state. She follows Piero Gleijeses’ timeline that posits a U.S. intervention alongside South Africa that invited a Cuban-led, Soviet-backed defense of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The limited MPLA victory helped revive the Cold War; it indicated a new ability for the Soviet Union to project its power directly into the Global South while rallying cold warriors concerned over the post-Vietnam drift of U.S. policy to support an anti-MPLA guerilla movement, fueling a civil war that only ended in 2002. By contrast,

the revolution in Iran emerged from the legacies of an earlier intervention, as the authoritarian rule of the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran elevated the Ayatollah Khomeini's radical Islamist nationalism as the most viable alternative. Khomeini's revolution rejected both Soviet and American visions of modernization but exacerbated ethnic and religious rivalries in the region, inspiring a decade-long war with Iraq in which both sides were supported by U.S. arms. The Cold War continued to fuel internecine conflicts, even as the Islamist revolution challenged the superpower monopoly on ideological competition.

While these cases are all complex, the book manages to offer a highly readable overview of the Cold War in the Global South. Chapman is an excellent writer, and she marshals an impressive ability to balance detailed political histories of individual states with high diplomacy. Most chapters feature multiple, overlapping competitions in both domestic and international arenas, yet the actors and their interests remain clear. Her command of the Cold War literature is impressive, and she ably condenses key insights from long, dense monographs into narratives that remain accessible to non-specialist scholars and students. Her ability to interweave the analyses and conclusions from well-regarded historians of twentieth century international affairs makes this a one-stop-shop for familiarizing the uninitiated with both the factual outline and key interpretations of the Cold War in the Global South. At their best, some of these chapters—like the one on Vietnam and much of the Congo section—are practically state of the field overviews, at least in terms of English-language literature.

Yet as strong as the book is in conceptualizing and covering the Cold War, it is inconsistent in its analysis of the global process and projects of decolonization. While the introduction and conclusion seek to position these two phenomena as near equal in their importance to the twentieth century, the superpower competition is more prominent across chapters. It defines the timeline, cases, and themes to the detriment of fuller discussions of nationalism and Global South anti-imperialism. This begins in the first overview chapter, where the Wilson-Lenin philosophical competition over self-determination introduces the topics of nationalism and decolonization rather than a host of alternatives like the congress movements in India and South Africa, W.E.B. DuBois' conceptualization of the global color line, or even Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905. The first stirrings of post-war nationalism are then situated within a discussion of containment. This framing continues throughout the book, with superpower policies receiving more detailed considerations than Southern ideas, debates, and institutions. In the Egypt chapter, for instance, there are numerous quotes from U.S. officials ranging from John Foster Dulles to Harry Truman to the U.S. minister in Cairo in 1932, but only one passage in Nasser's own words. A quick glance at the index or a text search provides further evidence of this imbalance: Dulles appears more than Kwame Nkrumah, Mao Zedong, or Ho Chi Minh; U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy as much as Frantz Fanon.

As a result, the ways that Global South leaders reimaged the international system, transnational ideas of decolonization and development, and the institutions to address historic inequities get short shrift. To give one surprising example, there are just two vague allusions to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), despite case studies featuring major founding personalities in Nehru and Nasser. Non-alignment is dealt with primarily as an extension of Indian foreign policy, meaning there is no discussion of the competing visions of Southern international activism that informed the institution and ultimately limited its effectiveness far more than the Cold War. Chapman even seems to condense the Bandung (1955) and Belgrade (1961) Conferences into a single event, saying that Nasser rubbed shoulders with Josip Broz Tito at the earlier Afro-

Asian summit (82). I suspect this was a product of editing or trying to integrate too much information into a single sentence, but it gives a sense of how briefly this movement is considered when Cold War topics like Eisenhower's New Look adjustment to containment or Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights get entire paragraphs.¹

Some of these issues reflect the inherent difficulties in balancing many different narratives and themes across the case studies, but it also reveals a real problem with existing scholarship that is replicated in Chapman's research. Frank Gerits notes in his work on Ghana that historians have traditionally downplayed broad visions of international affairs and institutions emanating from the Global South, especially in terms of their ability to operate as universally accessible or interventionist ideologies.² This helps explain why the massive process of decolonization that transformed the globe has long been subservient to discussions of the Cold War in international histories of the twentieth century, only emerging as a phenomenon of equal or greater weight in the last ten to fifteen years. Therefore, even the deeply researched, multi-archival studies of the New Cold War History tended to focus on how Southern nationalism complicated or qualified superpower ambitions, and these texts guide much of Chapman's analysis. This is especially frustrating because scholars like Michelle Louro, Adom Getachew, Jeffrey James Byrne, and Asher Orkaby have produced important work using Southern nations, leaders, and conflicts as starting points to reorient their analysis of the international system and competition within it.³ With inconsistent attention to this scholarship on the global ideas and implications of decolonization, the ideological and military competition between the superpowers serves as the primary element drawing linkages across case studies, limiting Southern projects to a primarily national scope.

This reinforces the temptation to treat the case studies discretely. Lowering the barriers between chapters would have produced some novel conclusions due to the clear and fascinating overlaps that appear throughout the narratives presented in the book. It would have been interesting, for instance, to use Michelle Louro's study of Nehru to highlight the specific influence socialism had on nationalist worldviews during the interwar period, and how the decision to abandon that radicalism after achieving independence shaped Indian ideas of neutralism.⁴ Similarly, Chapman could have considered how the Sino-Vietnamese War complicates Cold War narratives of intervention that rely heavily on assessments of the Franco-American conflicts in South Asia, or she could have used Lorenz Lüthi's exploration of the NAM to explain the ways that Nasser's activist vision of "positive non-alignment" contrasted with Nehru.⁵ Highlighting the central role that Mobutu's Zaire/Congo played in Angola offers implications for assessing whether U.S. interventions caused their own domino effects.⁶ Chapman's habit of quoting liberally from her secondary sources when offering analysis, focused as many are on specific countries and Cold War relationships, further distracts from the connections and cross-currents visible in the book. For instance, a concluding quote in chapter 7 from Paul Thomas Chamberlin saying that the Iran-Iraq War pointed to "the likelihood of resurgent regional conflicts in the Global South as the U.S.-Soviet rivalry began to wind down" is a fine insight, but it felt limited and a little incongruous because previous cases in the book highlight the *consistent* presence of such conflicts (242). The Arab-Israeli wars, the Indo-Pakistani wars, the South African invasion of Angola, and the Sino-Vietnamese War – not to mention other events like Nasser's intervention in Yemen – all indicate that the Cold War always struggled to constrain these rivalries, even when the superpowers desired to do so. The book is peppered with such intriguing connections and overlaps thanks to the detail and depth of the case studies, but their full impact on our understanding

of decolonization and the Cold War is not always clear.

I ultimately wondered if part of my frustration lay in the cases chosen. It is difficult to criticize an author for selecting specific examples as they try to balance themes, sources, and legibility, and Chapman's chapters do an excellent job giving broad coverage of the Cold War and its intersection with local priorities and competitions. While others have done this before, notably Arne Westad in *The Global Cold War* and edited volumes from Robert McMahon among others, Chapman provides expansive fifty-year histories of these countries that go well beyond moments of crisis to illustrate how relationships evolved and legacies outlasted the Cold War.⁷ Nehru's neutrality looks much different in light of the polarization caused by regional conflict in the 1970s and the nuclear arms race it produced. But it would have been interesting to center at least one or two cases on states that better elided Cold War divides and/or superpower constraints, with concrete connections to the other chapters. Algeria, for instance, would have been a fascinating venue to look at how revolutionary forms of decolonization manipulated the Cold War, the material benefits of Pan-Arab solidarity, matters of resource sovereignty in the New International Economic Order, and eventually OPEC with its ability to unite both radical states and American allies like Iran and Saudi Arabia. This would have provided an illustration of the limits of Cold War interventionism – or at least the nuances of superpower influence – while elevating internationalist aspects of the decolonizing project to operate at the same level as familiar policies such as containment.

Despite the overemphasis on the Cold War, this is a worthwhile book. It captures the complex interaction between the superpower conflict and the rapid proliferation of new states in the Global South, showing how the pressure of the Cold War reinforced both regional and internal division among postcolonial states. I found myself marveling at the detail present in these cases and the clarity with which all these events were lined up next to each other. This balance between breadth of coverage and engaging narrative makes *Remaking the World* readily accessible to a variety of audiences and a useful tool in the classroom.

Notes:

1. It may also be the product of relying on older scholarship that dealt with Bandung tangentially and tended to reiterate myths about the conference. See Robert Vitalis, "The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-doong)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4:2 (2013): 261-288.

2. See Frank Gerits, *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the Pursuit of Anticolonial Modernity Shaped a Postcolonial Order, 1945–1966* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023), introduction; Frank Gerits, "'When the Bull Elephants Fight': Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–66)," *The International History Review*, 37:5 (2015): 951-969. See also, Jeffrey James Byrne, "Reflecting on the Global Turn in International History or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Being a Historian of Nowhere," *Rivista italiana di storia internazionale* 1 (January 2018): 11-42.

3. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Asher Orkaby, *Beyond the Arab Cold War: The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-68* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

4. Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

5. Lorenz M. Lüthi, "Non-Alignment, 1946–1965: Its Establishment and Struggle against Afro-Asianism," *Humanity* 7:2 (Summer 2016), 206.

6. See for example, John Marcum, *The Angolan revolution, Vol.2, Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976* (Cambridge: MIT

Press, 1978); Witney W. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004).

7. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Review of Jessica Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War*

Matthew Masur

In *Remaking the World*, Jessica Chapman tackles "two deeply interconnected global phenomena: decolonization and the Cold War" (1). Her account spans more than five decades and touches on subjects ranging from economic aid, nuclear proliferation, international alliances, and covert activities. Key actors include the two great Cold War protagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union; later supporters of anti-colonial movements like China and Cuba; colonial governments; the United Nations; and nationalist leaders in the "global south." The final product is a detailed but readable synthesis of the most up-to-date scholarship that will prove highly valuable to scholars and students alike.

Remaking the World is an ambitious project. Twentieth century decolonization was "both global and highly specific" (1). While some global patterns emerged, each struggle for independence had its unique qualities, shaped by local conditions and the policies of the colonial power. Adding to the complexity, decolonization "unfolded in the shadow of the Cold War," a dispute that endured for nearly a half century and encompassed, in some form or another, virtually the entire world. Chapman effectively weaves together these topics, revealing their inseparable nature. She does not argue that the Cold War drove decolonization, or that decolonization shaped the Cold War. Rather, she asserts that they were intertwined in a recursive loop, with the two processes influencing and in turn being influenced by one another.

The bulk of the narrative encompasses the period from Eisenhower to Carter (or, if you prefer, Khrushchev to Brezhnev). The early- and late-Cold War eras come into play as well, though briefly. Key topics in the book include the role of colonial and post-colonial elites; the non-aligned movement; conflicting Soviet and American visions for the developing world; the consequences of the Sino-Soviet split; and the emergence of China and Cuba as major players in conflicts over decolonization. Chapman also highlights the bloody and tragic consequences of the explosive combination of decolonization and great power rivalry. As she puts it, "breaking free from imperial control, either formal or informal, was no cure all" (10).

Chapman winnows down an unwieldy topic by choosing six representative case studies: India, Egypt, the Congo, Vietnam, Angola, and Iran. The case studies are organized somewhat chronologically, at least in terms of when each area emerged as a nexus of decolonization and Cold War rivalry. Each case study includes pertinent information about the pre-Cold War period (usually focusing on World War I-era nationalist movements and disruptions during World War II) as well as post-Cold War developments. But the bulk of each case study is dedicated to exploring the process of decolonization after World War II and examining how that process was influenced by—and in turn influenced—the Cold War.

The case study approach involves some trade-offs. By focusing on a handful of anti-colonial struggles, Chapman necessarily leaves out countless others. Readers needing a single volume with broad and comprehensive coverage of decolonization during the Cold War may want to look at Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* (a book that Chapman cites extensively). And some readers may question Chapman's particular cases. Why Egypt instead of Algeria? Vietnam instead of Indonesia? Congo instead of Kenya? Chapman's choices may not satisfy everyone,

but by focusing on a limited number of countries, she is able to provide ample detail while keeping the book manageable.

Chapman's carefully selected case studies allow readers to "track connections between the processes of decolonization and the Cold War across time and space" (7). They represent different geographic regions (South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and southern Africa) with distinct regional and local conditions. While each country's experience was different, certain patterns emerge. Anti-colonial movements and newly-independent countries had to navigate a tense international setting. They could choose to lean toward one side in the Cold War, or they could try to establish themselves as neutral or "nonaligned" countries. Each path brought its own risks and rewards. They also experienced interference from the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba—nations that were committed to using anticolonial conflicts for their own ends. And in each case, achieving independence came at enormous cost, both during and after the independence struggle.

Chapman traces American and Soviet involvement in each case study. American officials were seemingly unable to see any part of the globe as inconsequential to American interests. Even when figures like John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter pledged to reevaluate American policy in the developing world, they often fell into the same clumsy interventions as their predecessors. Soviet leaders do not fare any better in Chapman's account. Khrushchev emerged in the years after Stalin's death and oversaw a "thaw" in the Cold War. In spite of his calls for "peaceful coexistence," he saw the rapidly decolonizing world as an opportunity for the Soviet Union to promote global Marxist revolutions and gain an upper hand in the Cold War. Khrushchev's "adventurism" was one of the factors that transformed anti-colonial conflicts into dangerous Cold War battlegrounds.

Despite ample coverage of the United States and the Soviet Union, one of the strengths of *Remaking the World* is that it shifts the focus away from the Cold War superpowers. Especially as the Cold War dragged on, countries like China and Cuba began to play a more prominent role in the global process of decolonization. China, for its part, wanted to eclipse the Soviet Union as the world's leading promoter of Marxist revolution. Cuba intervened in African independence movements in the 1970s, driven by a desire to gain regional influence and export its unique version of revolutionary Marxism. The two Cold War superpowers obviously play an important role in her story, but in Chapman's account, they are part of an ensemble cast, not the headliners.

In *Remaking the World*, anti-colonial figures garner as much attention as American presidents and Soviet premiers. Jawarhalal Nehru and Gamel Abdul Nasser, instrumental leaders in the nonaligned movement, feature prominently in the chapters on India and Egypt, respectively. In the Congo, Chapman traces the fraught relationship between Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasavubu. In Vietnam, Chapman describes Ho Chi Minh's role in organizing the anti-colonial Viet Minh. Other leaders—most notably Le Duan—receive equal or even greater coverage. In Angola, Chapman explains the complex interactions between Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, Agostinho Neto's MPLA, and Holden Roberto's FNLA.

The chapter on Vietnam highlights the strengths of the book. As with the other chapters, Chapman synthesizes the most up-to-date books and articles by leading scholars in the field. She uses these works to trace important historiographical developments. She notes, for example, the factional divisions in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) that have been studied by scholars like Pierre Asselin and Lien-Hang Nguyen. She also traces the rise of Le Duan, who eventually overshadowed more well-known DRV figures like Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. Chapman explains how these political developments unfolded in the shadow of the deepening Sino-Soviet split. By the early 1960s, the schism was widening, with China and the Soviet Union differing over military strategy, ideological purity, and how best to promote communist revolution. These divisions were mirrored in Hanoi, with the Lao Dong Party experiencing its own

political factionalism. The North Vietnamese found themselves in the unenviable position of trying to maintain strong relations with two rival powers. As she explains, "while the Sino-Soviet rivalry posed a challenge for North Vietnamese diplomats, they ultimately benefited from their ability to play the two sides off on another" (173).

Similarly, Chapman explains how competing political factions influenced developments in the Republic of Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem. The chapter is a reminder that the transitions from Eisenhower to Kennedy to Johnson to Nixon are certainly important, and brought about significant changes in America's involvement in Vietnam. But these changes are, in Chapman's account, somewhat eclipsed by the power struggles in Hanoi and the transition from Diem to a revolving door of weak and ineffective governments.

Chapman also delves into Vietnam's post-war history, briefly summarizing Vietnam's conflicts with Cambodia and China and mentioning Vietnam's recent emergence as an important American ally in Asia. But these events are mentioned in passing—they account for only about one-and-a-half pages. As with the other case studies, I was left wanting to know more about the history of these countries after the Cold War ended. For those nations, like Vietnam, who lost an important patron after the fall of the U.S.S.R., one might wonder how it affected their economy and their national security. In the case of Vietnam, were the political schisms of the anti-colonial period mended or did they persist?

The brief attention to post-colonial and especially post-Cold War history arises throughout the book. Coverage of the consequences of decolonization—civil strife, economic exploitation, racial tensions, authoritarian rule—is at times perfunctory. For example, in the chapter on the Congo, Chapman devotes roughly fifteen pages to the critical three-month period from July-September 1960. After such painstaking detail, Congo's entire post-1960 history is covered in roughly the same number of pages, making it appear as something of an afterthought. Other chapters suffered from a similar imbalance of coverage. In Chapman's defense, it is simply impossible to cover every facet of a topic so large and complex. Adding more details to the book would run the risk of making it unwieldy. While I might quibble with some of her choices, *Remaking the World* effectively distills a complex topic to a manageable length.

Chapman's intended audience for *Remaking the World* is undergraduate students. The book should find a place in upper-division courses on American foreign relations, decolonization, the Cold War, and the twentieth-century world. Graduate students, too, will find that Chapman's account has a lot to offer. Her writing is lively, and she condenses an enormous topic into a manageable length. The introduction in particular serves as an excellent overview of the intersection between the Cold War and decolonization. It will be invaluable for students who want a single-volume examination of the connections between these global phenomena.

Instructors might consider pairing *Remaking the World* with Heonik Kwon's *The Other Cold War*. Kwon's volume is also brief and does not endeavor to provide a comprehensive account of decolonization during the Cold War. Whereas *Remaking the Cold War* is heavy on detail and narrative, *The Other Cold War* focuses more on constructing a unified theoretical framework. Read together, the two books could provide students with very different but complementary approaches to the same topic.

Remaking the World may not be the best fit for all syllabi, especially introductory courses or broad surveys. While Chapman is mostly successful at synthesizing a large topic, at times the sheer volume of information can be dizzying. Each case study covers several decades, countless political shifts, and numerous local nationalist figures and organizations. The narrative often veers from colony to metropole to Moscow to Washington. Occasionally the book becomes bogged down in the details, often at the expense of reinforcing the big themes and connections. Less advanced students will likely struggle to follow the narrative.

Scholars of decolonization or the Cold War may overlook a book that is mostly synthetic, especially one that incorporates a rather small number of primary sources. That would be a mistake. Many scholars are spread thin these days, and keeping current on new scholarship can feel like a Herculean task—after reading one important new book, you realize that two more have just been published. Chapman has performed a valuable service by synthesizing voluminous recent scholarship on decolonization in six different countries. But she has not simply summarized or rehased the work of other scholars. She has marshalled this material and used it to construct a clear and cogent analysis of the intertwined phenomena of decolonization and the Cold War.

Review of Jessica Chapman, *Remaking the World*

Shaun Armstead

The connection between the Cold War and decolonization has been a central feature in histories of post-World War II diplomacy. Early efforts focused on the US-Soviet Union standoff. In doing so, these studies presented newly independent nations as little more than stages upon which superpowers waged the battle between communism and liberal democracy. Some scholars have encouraged altering this framework to understand postcolonial leaders and nations as more than pawns in the US-Soviet competition for global hegemony. Such calls have led to a spectrum of scholarship seeking to better understand how the Third World shaped the Cold War and what value Cold War paradigms have for understanding postcolonial hopes.

With *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War*, Jessica M. Chapman offers an intervention that privileges none of the prevailing interpretations. Rather, she asserts, decolonization and the Cold War are best understood as “mutually constitutive processes in which local, national, and regional developments altered the superpower competition as much as it transformed them” (8). *Remaking the World* develops this argument across seven chapters, the first providing a general overview of the period with the remaining six offering case studies on India, Egypt, the Congo, the Vietnam War, Angola, and Iran. Chapman deploys this structure to offer a rich account of the various “turning point[s]” in the Cold War (8). This approach seeks to present the decolonizing world not as a canvas for the US, Soviet Union, China, and Cuba to paint their aspirations for the future but as an active participant in the Cold War and the geopolitical dynamics existing today.

The chapter on India covers an early moment in Cold War and decolonization histories. India’s inaugural prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, wished to transform India to a modernized and autonomous postcolonial nation. To this end, his “Nonalignment” philosophy, in which his nation remained neutral in the US-Soviet standoff, guided his diplomatic efforts. However, as Chapman illustrates, Cold War diplomacy made this position untenable. Since it fell short of an anticommunist position, nonalignment, to the US, represented a threat to American principles of liberal democracy and capitalism. US efforts to undercut nonalignment included aid promises entailing demands for allegiance and arms deals to Pakistan to defend South Asia against communist control. Both US and Soviet interventions in India-Pakistan border disputes, a consequence of decolonization, imposed a Cold War varnish that fueled regular skirmishes. In these ways, Chapman demonstrates how Cold War actors distorted decolonization for their purposes, and how decolonization leaders shaped the Cold War.

Chapman’s next chapter on Egypt further outlines how US and Soviet Cold War imperatives upended postcolonial state building. While nominally independent, Egypt had been under the yoke of British domination since 1882. Gamal Abdel Nasser’s vision for a postcolonial future involved redressing the wrongs of British control and uniting the Arab world under Pan-Arabism and nonalignment ideals. Like Nehru, Nasser sought aid and arms from both the US and Soviet Union without pledging allegiance to either. And like Nehru, this position, as well as Nasser’s

opposition to Israel, worried US politicians and advisors. Oil resources and strategically located airfields enhanced Egypt’s value to the post-Stalin Soviet Union, which piqued US interest as well (77). Similar to its approach to India, the US offered aid with strings attached, namely a demand for Egyptian peace with Israel. When concerns over Nasser’s allegiances rose to a fever pitch, American diplomats sought to isolate the leader by creating a conservative bloc of nations in the Middle East. These actions shaped the dire economic straits Egypt was in by the 1970s as it battled for a reclamation of territory Israel had seized in the Six Day War. The Cold War process in Egypt, as with India, derailed decolonization.

Chapman’s chapter on the Congo further exemplifies the melding of the Cold War and decolonization in forging a new world. In American cold warriors’ minds, political discord in the Congo was fertile ground for Communists to gain access to the country’s raw resources. These concerns, as Chapman shows, undermined Congolese efforts to pursue an independent future. Competing visions from Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasavubu, and Moïse Tshombe for the postcolonial nation included centralized governance and pan-Africanist solidarities, a federation of states, as well as calls for drawing boundaries reflective of the different ethnic groups residing in the Congo. Yet Africans’ desires to forge a path away from imperialism toward freedom and liberation became proof of their vulnerability to Communist puppeteering in the eyes of US policymakers. Chapman also acknowledges how racial biases shaped views that “Congolese politicians, unprepared for self-rule, would be easily duped and co-opted by communist agents” (123). Such impressions motivated interventions into Congolese affairs that resulted in the assassination of Lumumba and the rise to power of the Washington-backed Mobutu. They also reflected deeply ingrained rejections of Black political agency that others have traced back to European and American responses to Haitian independence. Thus, Chapman demonstrates that not all aspects of this post-WWII world were new.

The chapter on the Vietnam War charts significant shifts in the Cold War narrative. Chapman offers a nuanced examination of political actors and their range of ideological positions and strategies. Lê Duẩn, who by the mid-sixties assumed leadership of the Vietnamese Workers’ Party, and Ngo Dinh Diem, the US-backed leader of South Vietnam, are the central Vietnamese figures. Chapman also details the political development of Ho Chi Minh, initial leader of the Vietnamese Workers’ Party and how his successor, Lê Duẩn, who, unlike Ho Chi Minh, preferred China to the Soviet Union, differed from him. At the opposing end was Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader the US reluctantly supported, who, according to Chapman, “was not the American puppet that he has long been considered” (156).

Chapman also delineates how US presidential administrations from Truman to Johnson valued Vietnam’s significance to the Cold War and US interests in different ways. Truman’s interest in anticolonial movements remained tepid when compared to his concern over communist influence in Europe. Eisenhower offered greater aid to Vietnam (and other countries) during his presidency, but it was Kennedy who saw the so-called Third World as the definitive Cold War battleground. His decision to increase aid and send additional military advisors to Vietnam reflected a cautious attempt to forestall increased US involvement while fortifying South Vietnam against the Vietnam Workers’ Party (VWP) and the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam (NLF). This position survived and intensified after Kennedy’s assassination, under Johnson’s presidency. Armed with a “blank check” from a Congress convinced of the need for US global leadership against the communist bogeyman, Johnson increased US troops on the ground to support South Vietnam against communist-controlled Hanoi. This case study functions as a conclusion to a quartet of chapters across which US commitment to global leadership rises and falters, Sino-Soviet relations grow acrimonious, and Third World liberation politics ascend. Attending to these dimensions, Chapman achieves her objective of historicizing two strands—the Cold War and decolonization—of post-WWII global history.

The final two chapters illustrate how the end stages of the Cold War continued to affect decolonizing nations. In the Angola chapter, Chapman highlights how shifting geopolitical goals and allies as well as Vietnam War fatigue converged with postcolonial efforts. Angola gained independence from Portugal in 1975, fifteen years after the “Year of Africa,” in which a record seventeen African countries became independent. Its longer, protracted journey to independence was a consequence of Portugal’s determination to retain Angola as a colony. In the wake of decolonization, Angola became embroiled in a competition among three anticolonial movements. To the right, the anti-western and anti-communist Front for the National Liberation of Angola (FNLA); to the left, the Marxist-influenced Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA); and in the center, the less ideologically rooted Union for the Independence of the Totality of Angola (UNITA) all vied for influence. Complicating the political situation further was the subsequent involvement of the US, Moscow, the People’s Republic of China, Cuba, and apartheid South Africa. As in previous case studies, Chapman elucidates how civil unrest was swept into Cold War geopolitics.

As Chapman illustrates, the US and the Soviets were disinterested in Angolan politics at first. Fatigue and embarrassment from the Vietnam War made the US reluctant to jeopardize Soviet-US détente. The Soviet Union, initially underwhelmed by Agostinho Neto, leader of the MPLA, displayed a similar reticence. This hesitation, however, did not last long. Suspicions that Moscow was sending arms to MPLA to bolster its position against the FNLA/UNITA prompted Gerald Ford to send covert aid to the FNLA under Operation IAFEATURE (194, 195). Yet this “tangled web in southern Africa,” to borrow Chapman’s phrase, exceeded Soviet and US actions. Cuban involvement in 1975 fueled Soviet leaders’ decision to support the MPLA (198). While China aspired to replace Moscow as leader of the global communist revolution, Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Che Guevara wanted to disseminate an ideological model that took seriously both anticolonialism and communism. In Chapman’s words, Africa afforded a means to “strike at the soft underbelly of American imperialism [and] promote socialism” while honoring Cuba’s African roots (197). A postcolonial moment thus became subsumed in Cold War morass as struggles over communism descended on the region. In turn, Angola became yet another tragic example of how “Africa’s process of decolonization, swept up as it was in the Cold War, has yet to be completed” (143).

The concluding chapter on Iran exemplifies Chapman’s argument on the inseparable relationship between decolonization and the Cold War. In “revolutionary Islam” Iranian anticolonial activists advanced another proposed vision for the world beyond the Cold War’s bipolar divisions. The concept articulated aspirations to cast off western influence and pursue a future that neither liberal democracy nor communism directed. For Chapman, Iran-US relations exemplify key aspects of US diplomacy after World War II. Mohammad Mosaddeq, Iran’s prime minister, was the first elected official the CIA ousted to protect American interests. Iran was also an early instance in the Cold War in which anticommunist US politicians betrayed American principles of democratic governance by supporting the shah, a leader who relied on suppressive measures to retain power. Iran’s shah was fixated on amassing a military arsenal and modernizing Iran to improve the nation’s standing. To achieve these goals, he sought friendly relations with the US. For instance, after the British military left the Persian Gulf, the shah positioned Iran as a viable defensive replacement against communist nations (229). His efforts were successful. Iran’s transition from a client state of the US to its partner began during the Johnson administration (228-229). More personally, both Johnson and Nixon spoke admiringly of the shah (226, 230). Friendly relations with the shah ultimately imperiled American interests in the Middle East. Iranians grew increasingly resentful of the shah’s undemocratic practices. As public resentment toward the shah sparked the Iranian Revolution, opposition to the US and the Soviet Union intensified as well. As Chapman explains, both nations exhibited a “failure to apprehend how fully the Islamic

Revolution in Iran circumvented the bipolar ideological structure of the Cold War” (237).

Remaking the World demonstrates the value in and complexity of writing global histories. Other scholars have decentered the West and East-West competitions precisely because the Cold War looms so large, shadowing the experiences of decolonizing peoples, particularly their hopes and proposed solutions for a postcolonial future. Weaving both streams into a single narrative is no easy feat. Chapman expertly avoids replicating old narratives about the subjugation of the Global South to the Global North. Consequently, Chapman offers an ambitious and vital intervention. In its commitment to bringing the Cold War and decolonization into the same analytical frame, *Remaking the World* explains how multiple objectives in the mid-twentieth century shaped and undermined each other. As current events in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East show, the consequences of these commingled global processes remain with us.

Responses to Reviewers

Jessica Chapman

Allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to Andrew Johns for arranging this roundtable, and to Shaun Armstead, Mathew Masur, and Joseph Parrott for their lively commentaries on *Remaking the World*. There are few things in this academic life more gratifying than reading a set of reviews by top notch scholars who see the value in what you aim to accomplish in print. The genesis of *Remaking the World* was a frustration with holes in my own understanding of the connections between the Cold War and decolonization—oft asserted but rarely charted systematically—and the attendant struggles I faced finding classroom-ready readings to assign on the topic. I am gratified that Armstead, Masur, and Parrott concur on the sore need for a book that weaves together the global processes of decolonization and the Cold War, and that they largely agree that *Remaking the World* goes a long way toward filling that void. It was equally heartening that their valid critiques all tied back to the book’s central claim that decolonization and the Cold War were inseparable processes that, as Masur writes, “were intertwined in a recursive loop, with the two processes influencing and in turn being influenced by one another.” At no point did I kid myself that *Remaking the World* would cover the interconnections between those processes comprehensively or flawlessly. My hope, instead, was that the book would distill disparate, wide ranging and, as Parrott points out, sometimes esoteric literature on decolonization and the Cold War into a novel and compelling framework around which discussions about this complex history could be staged.

Masur calls this an “ambitious project” that constructs “a clear and cogent analysis of the intertwined phenomena of decolonization and the Cold War.” Armstead notes that it was “no easy feat” to write a history that balanced the East-West competition and the political projects of decolonizing peoples “in a single narrative that avoids replicating in print the subjugation of the Global South to the Global North.” Parrott, although ultimately concluding that the book “captures the complex interaction between the superpower conflict and the rapid proliferation of new states in the Global North,” is more critical of an imbalance in coverage that he argues tends to privilege the structure of the Cold War and the voices of actors from the Global North. Masur’s desire to see more coverage of the post-Cold War period seems to stem from a similar concern. While I am glad that, on balance, the reviewers agree that the book succeeded in interweaving the narratives of decolonization and the Cold War, I see no reason to dispute these assertions that the manuscript could have been improved.

There is certainly some validity to Parrott’s observation that the scholarship on which I relied, and my own training as a historian of U.S. foreign relations and Cold War history, may have impeded my ability to present a fully balanced picture.

Perhaps the decision to structure the book around six discrete national case studies—connected as they may have been—lent the manuscript to a type of methodological nationalism, leading me to focus more on the local and regional particularities at play than on the larger structures of anticolonial and postcolonial solidarity and activism that, in Parrott’s estimation, received short shrift. Furthermore, Masur is correct to note that a number of alternative cases, like Algeria, Indonesia, or Kenya, would have yielded different insights. As Armstead describes, the selected case studies took readers around the globe to advance a particular narrative arc. Presenting a complete global history was neither the result, nor my intent.

I would not deign to argue against the importance of the cases Masur notes, nor dismiss the Southern ideas and movements that Parrott identifies as having elided the Cold War framework. The book may well have been strengthened by expanding the selection of case studies and tending to solidarity networks in the Global South more systematically. My only defense is to point out that doing so would have entailed tradeoffs that might have undermined the ultimate goal of producing a readable, engaging narrative that tended simultaneously to multiple, overlapping competitions in both domestic and international arenas. As Masur points out, charitably, “It is simply impossible to cover every facet of a topic so large. Adding anything to the book would run the risk of making it unwieldy and would likely detract from the finished product.” Alas, my goal with the introductory chapter was to provide a global snapshot to help readers frame their readings of the six case studies to overarching global processes. After cutting the initial version of that chapter by more than half in service of readability and clarity, I will be the first to admit that it is not comprehensive. My efforts to avoid bogging down readers in confusing detail—even if not entirely successful, in Masur’s view—required making some hard choices and deep

editorial cuts. Perhaps, then, it is useful to think about how to expand the discussion of decolonization and the Cold War outward from *Remaking the World* by reading or assigning it alongside other sources.

I always imagined that the book could be used as an anchor point for examining connections between the superpower competition and the decolonizing process. While it can certainly be read on its own, it is perhaps most useful in conversation with a range of primary and secondary sources that complement—and perhaps challenge or complicate—the book’s arguments. Masur is quite right to point out that *Remaking the World* could be valuably paired with Heonik Kwon’s *The Other Cold War*. Indeed, I did just that with great success when I first taught the book last fall in my own seminar on decolonization and the Cold War. Likewise, many of the issues Parrott points to as important but underplayed could be engaged by assigning complementary sources, including many of those he discusses in his review. My own syllabus included works by some of the scholars he cites, including Jeffrey James Byrne, Lorenz M. Lüthi, and Frank Geritz. What I sacrificed in coverage, whether intentionally or as a result of the limitations in my own training and perspective, can and should be brought into conversations about this book and its overarching claims about, as Armstead writes, “how Cold War actors distorted decolonization and how decolonization leaders shaped the Cold War.”

All three of these thoughtful reviews have prodded me to think in new ways about the Cold War and decolonization. I welcome the opportunity to reconsider questions that have grown a bit stale after pondering them in isolation, and working to hammer them into book form. For this I am deeply grateful to Armstead, Masur, and Parrott for their sustained engagement with issues that we all find so deeply important.

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