

Global Development in the Cold War

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The history of development has become a burgeoning field in the last twenty years.¹ A literature that was once mainly centered on the United States now counts several analyses touching specific case studies and also a few encompassing works, including (in sheer chronological order) Rist's *The History of Development*, Macekura and Manela's *The Development Century*, Unger's *International Development. A Postwar History*; my *Global Development. A Cold War History*, and Kott's *Organiser le monde*.² A number of historians who focus on development as worldmaking interrogate the validity of the Cold War as a framework to understand its history. They argue that seeing development primarily through a Cold War lens involves an implicitly Eurocentric view of the history of the Global South. Therefore, they downsize the Cold War's role in shaping development and stress the continuities with colonial policies and their ideas of modernity and civilization instead.³ After all, they argue, development outlived the Cold War in virtually every area of the world, and reading development as a Cold War history does not appear to cover the project of development as a totality.

¹ Frederick Cooper, "Writing the History of Development," *Journal of Modern European History* 8:1 (2010): 5-23; Marc Frey and Sönke Kunkel, "Writing the History of Development: A Review of Recent Literature," *Contemporary European History* 20:2 (May 2011): 215-232; Joseph Morgan Hodge, "Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6:3 (2015): 429-463; Joseph Morgan Hodge, "Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7:1 (2016): 125-174.

² Stephen Macekura, Erez Manela, *The development century: A global history* (Global and international history). Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018; Corinna Unger, *International development : A postwar history* (New approaches to international history). London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018; Sara Lorenzini, *Global development : A Cold War history* (America in the world). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019; Sandrine Kott, *Organiser le monde : Une autre histoire de la guerre froide* (Univers historique). Paris XIXe: Éditions du Seuil, 2021. As for the most significant works on modernization in the United States Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Timothy Nunan, *Humanitarian Invasion: Global Development in Cold War Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Daniel F. Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

³ Matthew Connelly, "Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence," *American Historical Review* 105.3 (2000): 739-769.

However, it remains undeniable that the Cold War has been especially relevant to the history of development. Foreign aid became a key foreign policy tool and grew its institutional structures with the Cold War and because of the Cold War. The development business as we know it today owes to the Cold War many of its features. Equally, reading the Cold War as a competition between ideas of modernity is fundamental to understand much of its dynamics. Development can thus be easily read as a Cold War global project from the late 1940s until the late 1980s, when the world's imagination was seduced by a concept encompassing progress, modernity, economic growth and welfare.⁴

Defining development

Development was no doubt a global project to shape the world throughout the whole twentieth century, which has fittingly been described as “the development century”. It was so crucial that it is hard to describe the history of international relations during this time without considering the impact of foreign aid. Hardly any other project was then more global than development, that became “a shared language, an object of governance a form of political expectation, and a set of practices that transcended ideological division (capitalist/communist) and political divisions (empire/state/non state).”⁵ But how do we define development? Giving a proper definition is challenging, because like many concepts in global history, development is a concept in evolution. Over time, it has undergone a steady broadening, so that a standard textbook used in development studies courses during the 1990s identified over 700 definitions of development.⁶ Given this variability, authors mostly avoid engaging in definitions. For the purpose of this paper (and more in general in my work), I define development as a process to turn poor, backward countries into wealthy, modern ones. In the colonial period, development was about securing markets and, especially, cheap sources of raw materials. In the early twentieth century, however, imperial authorities and emerging national leaders alike used development to promote large-scale transformations of economic, political, and social life. As decolonization accelerated, development shifted from national or imperial settings toward the global arena. Increasingly, it became international development, and a tool of foreign policy. Economic growth became the new standard, and in the high modernist period of the 1950s and 1960s, development was mainly about increasing the capacity of the postcolonial state. This was when foreign aid reached its apex and when the Cold War, development, and decolonization met.

During the Cold War, there were competing visions of development between the Capitalist West and the Communist East, between the Global North and the Global South, between

⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85; also Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (Oxford, U.K.: James Currey, 1992).

⁵ Macekura and Manela, *The Development Century*, 4

⁶ Kathleen Staudt, *Managing Development, State, Society, and International Contexts*, SAGE Publications, 1991.

donors and recipients, between national governments and international financial institutions. In this overview on global development as a Cold War project, I will discuss three dimensions that I believe are crucial to capture its essence. The first section is about development as an ideology to fight the Cold War. Here, I will sketch the competing hegemonic projects with their ideological dimension and appeal: Western modernization, Socialist modernity, and the "third way" of a transformed European civilizing mission. The second section is about the role of personalities in shaping development trajectories during the Cold War, with a focus on how leaders interpreted national priorities that so often made development controversial. The third and final section will be about development as worldmaking and will center on how international organizations gave voice to the views of alternative modernities promoted by the Third World.

1) Modernization as an ideology to fight the Cold War

At the very inception of the Cold War, with the Marshall Plan, development and foreign aid met, and development converted into a transnational project with potentially global reach. It quickly became the preferred way to conquer the hearts and minds of poor people in Europe and its dependencies. Postwar reconstruction valued cooperation highly, seeing it as the blueprint for dealing with backwardness. The Marshall Plan equivalent for the Third World, Point Four launched in January 1949 by President Truman, is classically identified with the birth of development. The fear of Communism provided incentives for development. Ever since the interwar years, economic aid was devised to counter the specter of revolutions fueled by social discontent and rising expectations. Granting the freedom from want, aid was meant to keep the receiving countries from turning Communist. After Point Four, the language of development traveled through conferences, study programs, and specific projects of technical assistance. Often people who had participated in US-funded postwar reconstruction ended up working in the nascent development business. Development officials were the product of a homogeneous cultural and intellectual climate dominated by trust in a modernizing revolution that would create a future in which all societies had high levels of industrialization, urbanization, mechanization of agriculture, rising living standards, and common (Western) values.

Anticommunism was clearly behind Truman's Point Four, but it was not until 1956 that aid became institutionalized as a tool for Cold War politics. Famously, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev took up the challenge by arguing that the socialist mode of production, with its system of cooperation on an equal base grounded in fraternal solidarity and stressing industrial development, possessed decisive advantages over the capitalist one. Henry Kissinger summed up the new situation on *Foreign Affairs*: "For several years," he wrote, "we have been groping for a concept to deal with the transformation

of the Cold War from an effort to build defensive barriers into a contest for the allegiance of humanity.”⁷ Finally, development had done the deal.

Although Khrushchev’s words stressed technological advancement as the way to accompany the newly independent countries into modernity, ideology and propaganda were still considered crucial means against the imperialist monopoly of the decolonizing world. Soviet views were unsophisticated: underdevelopment was a consequence of colonial rule that persisted thanks to capitalist structures. The recipe for economic modernization was, therefore, equally straightforward: to cut relations with the West and introduce planning, nationalization, industrialization, and close relations with the Eastern Bloc. In 1958, the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations defined "socialist development" using the Soviet experience in the Caucasus, the laboratory for socialist modernity, as the model. First came the establishment of modern, mechanized agriculture based on collective and state farms. Next came investments in infrastructure and industrial plants. Finally, the nascent industry had to be protected by limiting foreign capital and nationalizing existing enterprises so that the state was the only engine of growth.⁸

The combined effect of the collapse of European empires and the Cold War opened a new space in international politics. After the Bandung Conference in 1955, newly independent countries, ideally and strategically united in the Third World, could emulate either the West or the East. To receive aid, they had to choose a social and economic development model. This gave their leaders leverage because as they showcased their needs and stressed the moral obligation of redressing colonial exploitation through generous aid, they systematically threatened to align with the other side to receive assistance for their favorite plans. Recipients were able to manipulate the donors' interests to their own ends, sometimes national, sometimes for a specific group, or even for their leaders.

Soviet funding promoted economic liberation, but the Soviets had to find an ideological basis to justify supporting noncommunist economies. In the early 1960s, national democracies in developing countries were treated as the early stage of scientific socialism—deserving of encouragement and support in their effort to skip the capitalist stage entirely. In December 1960, at the Moscow Conference of Communist and Workers Parties, the Soviet Union praised the cooperation between progressive forces —communists and nationalists— to guide a “national democratic state” wholly independent from “feudal and imperialist” bonds. To get aid, national democratic states had to adopt land reform, seize foreign-owned properties, and orient economic relations toward socialist countries. When the working class was not yet ready to take the reins, noncommunist leaders could start the transition toward socialist

7 Henry Kissinger, “Reflections on American Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs* 35, no. 1 (October 1956): 37–56.

8 Alessandro Iandolo, “The Rise and Fall of the ‘Soviet Model of Development’ in West Africa, 1957–64,” *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (2012): 691. On the model, to be exported from Tajikistan, see Artemy Kalinowski, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan*, Cornell University Press, 2018.

revolution. This new line justified support for neutrals who opted for the one-party formula, even if they threw local communists out of national politics, as Ahmed Ben Bella had done in Algeria, Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Ne Win in Burma, Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea, and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana.

In the 1950s, with the Soviet Union and its allies entering the development business, aid became a fully-fledged weapon in the Cold War arsenal. Until then, albeit conceding that several ways existed to solve the same problem and that experts had differentiated approaches, development was understood as a linear process, and modernity was conceived in the singular. With the entry of the Soviet Union as a potential donor, instead, development turned competitive and increasingly charged with ideological weight. Models were now explicitly pitted against one another in a competition about effectiveness and symbolic strength. Cold War politics determined the stakes, timing, and distribution of aid.⁹ Countries had to take sides, because the decision was presented as a final and irreversible one between irreconcilable proposals. The symbiosis of development and Cold War became systemic in the mid 1950s, and development became, East and West, an expansionist project, a competition to win worldwide support that was orchestrated as a bloc project. The orchestration, though, was far from effortless.

Ever since the early 1950s, social scientists in the United States gave shape to their views of a process by which non-Western societies were transformed along Western lines. Their theories, known as modernization theories, soon became the basis for a much more interventionist foreign policy. With the presidency of John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1961–1963), modernization, as development came to be known, became the representative Western ideology for waging the Cold War. Economic growth, so ran the theory, would promote a gradual social changeable to achieve the revolution of rising expectations keeping within the framework of democratic, anti-communist institutions. This would happen with infrastructural projects and integrating the rural population into the cash economy. Modernization ideas were articulated differently in the large group of social scientists associated with the new theories. They all shared trust in a linear development. The most influential theoretical work was Walt W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Noncommunist Manifesto*, published in 1960. Rostow argued that modernization always entailed five stages, from traditional society to high mass consumption. Once a country entered the fundamental takeoff stage, technological improvement would lead to industrial modernity. Growth alone could automatically produce anticommunism, stability, and democracy. "No economic subject more quickly captured the attention of so many as the rescue of the people of the poor countries from their poverty," recalled economist John Kenneth Galbraith.¹⁰

⁹ N. Cullather, *The Hungry World*, 5.

¹⁰ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Nature of Mass Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 29.

Modernization did not become straight away a policy for the whole West, though. European countries were very jealous of their habits and skeptical about unhinging from traditional colonial knowledge and methods. They were equally jealous of their imperial networks. The European Economic Community (EEC) is probably the best example of how Europeans struggled with the idea of fitting into the American hegemonic project and promoted instead their own idea of regional hegemony: the idea of Eurafrika. The French especially cherished the geopolitical dream of Eurafrika, and much of their principles imbued the aid strategies of the European Communities. In 1957, the former French overseas minister Pierre-Henri Teitgen, although not a particular supporter of Eurafrika, claimed that at independence African countries had several options: the American bloc, the Soviet world, the Bandung coalition, the Afro-Asian group, or Free Europe (Eurafrika).¹¹ The world he pictured was multipolar, not bipolar, and Eurafrika was a project per se, manifestly different from the American ideal of a Western-Atlantic bloc. The EEC discussions about structuring a common aid program show the fundamental tension toward a special regional approach. Regionalism was a legacy of empire. The continuities in personnel, often stemming from the French colonial administration, helped the picture.

Under the Kennedy Administration, the United States became especially eager to group all Western partners in a coordinated effort to fight the Cold War in the Global South through foreign aid. They gave a huge impulse to strengthening Western cooperation in development matters through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in the OECD. Walt W. Rostow was especially active in this respect, but he did not achieve much. Rostow's aid plans were ambitious. He saw aid as the key to the system. As a special assistant of state in 1961, he launched a plan for increasing aid by at least 50 percent by securing an international agreement on the fixed share of GDP each country should devote to aid. The proposal included a commission to assist developing countries in submitting coherent development plans so that aid distribution would be more rational and repayments more likely.¹² His project was rejected. Unable to impose automatic mechanisms for burden-sharing, Rostow thought up the great powers' donors' club. A separate consultative group of the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, Rostow reasoned, would facilitate effective leadership and promote better agreements.¹³ Rostow insisted that "a quantum jump in scale and in conception" of aid was needed to generate increased momentum in economic and social development in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, but the allies rejected too binding solutions, and discussions never began.¹⁴ Deane R. Hinton, US ambassador to the Congo, candidly admitted in the mid 1960s: "The trick here, at least for Africa, is to get the

¹¹ "Ambiguity in France," *New York Times*, 15 June 1957, quoted in Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrika*, 267.

¹² Schmidt-Schlegel-Rostow talk, 27 December 1960; proposal originated by Rosenstein-Rodan, PA AA, B58 IIB1 324.

¹³ "Strengthening DAC and Multilateral Aid Coordination," NARA, RG59, box 25.

¹⁴ "President Johnson's Equivalent of the Marshall Plan," 11 June 1965, and "Record Atlantic Affairs Conference," 17 May 1965, NARA, RG59, box 26.

Europeans interested and, frankly, I don't know how to do it."¹⁵ In January 1965, a disillusioned Rostow wrote to David Bell, the administrator of USAID, that all Western partners were gradually abandoning the enterprise.¹⁶

European countries were not abandoning aid as such, but surely, they had their own national interests and disparate visions on aid. This was true in Western, but also in Eastern Europe, where coordination efforts happened in the Permanent Commission for Technical Assistance in the Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation (CMEA or Comecon). European countries on both sides instrumentally used the recipes proposed by the superpowers' experts or international organizations, adapting them to their own needs. Sometimes what seemed like just a slight difference in approach hid a substantial disagreement, as with Italy and Pasquale Saraceno's ideas on the crucial leading role of the state in promoting industrialization. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, East Germany also did not wish to engage in feuds about the road to follow, and although preferring smaller projects in the processing industry over the big projects favored by the USSR, it mostly refrained from critical comments¹⁷. At other times, the opposition was more explicit. West Germany, for example, openly criticized U.S. program aid and made a point of principle about its preference for a more manageable (and politically attributable) project aid approach. Romania, the troublemaker in the Comecon, insisted on identifying with the Third World instead of the Soviet Bloc, especially after the 1970s.

Increasingly, it became clear that the model offered by the respective superpowers was not the only way to go. In the Western case, the EEC institutions constantly stressed the "apolitical" nature of their aid policies, not willing to become instrumental to the prevailing modernization ideas, neither in the ways promoted by the U.S. administration nor in the way advanced by international economic organizations. European quarters tended to stress their differences with national strategies and to reject planners who "played with statistics," had no interest in local cultures, and were guided by blind faith in technology.¹⁸ Associated countries, contended EEC development officials, did not need to adopt a European way of life or European political conceptions. They would achieve progress "in their own way."¹⁹ In the case of Socialist aid, too, alternative modernity paths were on offer. Most remarkably, the People's Republic of China offered aid to the African continent and contended with the Soviet Union for Third World influence. A huge laboratory for the development strategies of U.S. and international organizations in the interwar years, China became the main recipient of Soviet aid after the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance of February 1950. In his 1963–64 trip to Asia and Africa, Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai visited thirteen

15 Memorandum, Deane R. Hinton to Mr. Leddy, 15 June 1965, NARA, RG59, box 26.

16 Memorandum, W. W. Rostow to Mr. Bell, 29 January 1965, NARA, RG59, box 25.

17 See "Direktive für das Auftreten der Delegation der DDR auf der 1. Sitzung der Ständigen Kommission der Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe für die Koordinierung der Technischen Unterstützung, 26. Juni 1961, Bundesarchiv Berlin, DL2 VAN 76.

18 Robert Delavignette, *Service Africaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946). On the influence of Delavignette, see Dimier, *Invention of a Development Aid Bureaucracy*, 33–34, 116–120.

19 Rochereau address, 8–11 December 1964, quoted in Dimier, *Invention of a European Aid Bureaucracy*, 34.

countries, popularizing the principles of cooperation on which China's policies were founded. Along with equality and mutual benefit came self-reliance as a strategy and goal, the preference for projects that required less investment and yielded faster results, and the principle of non-interference. China promoted its experience as a model and inaugurated a policy of aid on concessional terms, lending at a zero-interest rate. Chinese development assistance preferred large-scale, highly centralized, state-directed projects. The Maoist era's largest foreign development project was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, an ideal showcase for Chinese aid, courage, and skill. It served as the symbol of China's ability to offer an alternative to the superpowers and traditional European donors.²⁰

Although promising in theory, foreign aid's effectiveness as a tool to make friends in the Third World soon became problematic. Recipients were keen on making instrumental use of aid for their purposes. Not only national leaders increasingly manipulated the offers of the donors without clearly taking sides. Even when they did take sides, other problems emerged: leadership could be easily overthrown, as happened in Ghana with the coup against Nkrumah in 1966. Generally speaking, the fact that newly independent countries soon plunged into debt made the sustainability of the relations debatable. This happened on both sides of the iron curtain.

2) Icons of development and the importance of national pride.

Histories of development generally focus on ideas, projects, and institutions. They are less a history of personalities. Nonetheless, personalities were crucial to development. Some of them were fundamental in setting up the system. This is the case of politicians, such as Harry Truman, the "inventor" of development, or Claude Cheysson, who shaped the European Economic Community (EEC) development policy anew. This is analogously the case of economists such as Hans Singer or Raul Prebisch, the fathers of dependency theory, or Barbara Ward, the advocate of the environmental turn in development. Other prominent characters were fundamental because of how they used the system to their own ends. The history of development is abundant in leaders who used aid to promote a dramatic change in their country. In the age of decolonization, national leaders needed to show that independence would soon coincide with a new era characterized by progress and well-being. One of the most prominent of such Third World leaders, Kwame Nkrumah, the leading figure of Pan-Africanism and a great protagonist of the history of independent Africa, put it bluntly. Speaking in 1958, shortly after Ghana, his country, became the first sub-Saharan country to gain independence, he claimed: "We cannot tell our peoples that material benefits and growth and modern progress are not for them. If we do, they will throw us out and seek other

²⁰ On China's Aid and competition with the Soviet Union see, among others, Jeremi Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

leaders who promise more. And they will abandon us too if we do not in reasonable measure respond to their hopes. Therefore, we have no choice. We have to modernize.”²¹

In the hands of national elites in the “age of development” (1940–1973), economic growth became one with the national project, and planning and state investments were key—the conditions that created the developmental state.²² Very often, though, using aid effectively for the postcolonial state was a move of self-determination that national elites exploited to legitimize their rule. Aid became a fundamental resource for local politics, and decentralized despotism, as defined by anthropologist Mamdani, prospered in newly independent countries.²³ Leaders in the newly independent countries needed to connect their name with great infrastructural projects. In archival documents, it is plain to see that donors, both from East and West, faced specific requests from the recipients of aid during the Cold War. They received long “shopping lists” that typically included prestige projects ranging from huge dams with irrigation and industrialization projects attached to important railways, roads, or harbor constructions to huge, symbolic sports facilities. They were required to negotiate compromises on this point, always aware that their clients threatened to move to the other side of the Iron Curtain in case of rejection. Big infrastructures became the ultimate symbol for political power. All of this was compatible across the spectrum of societal organization—either the product of capitalist ventures or be associated with hardcore planning the Socialist Bloc’s way. Many of these projects were in continuity with colonial projects.

The case of the mega dam in Cahora Bassa is an ideal case to study how a postcolonial leader (Samora Machel, the charismatic head of Frelimo, the national liberation movement in Mozambique) reshaped a colonial project and converted the original scheme to brand-new purposes within the context of Cold War dynamics. Cahora Bassa, the iconic project overseas, was meant to reinforce Portugal’s commitment to remain in Africa and perpetuate white minority rule, promoting a security alliance with the like-minded regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. In 1968, Frelimo launched a coordinated diplomatic and military campaign to thwart the dam’s construction, including a guerrilla offensive in the Tete region, blowing up roads and railway, and sabotaging supplies to the construction site. Cahora Bassa became a classic episode of the militarization of the Cold War in the 1970s, with the socialist countries sending weapons and military assistance to Frelimo.

At independence in 1975, Frelimo appropriated the Cahora Bassa project and intended to make it functional to promoting the socialist state. Given that Frelimo had opposed the Cahora Bassa scheme declaring that it was a crime and should never be finished, it was not easy for its leader, Samora Machel, to turn it into a tool for social revolution and the

²¹ Kwame Nkrumah, “African Prospect,” *Foreign Affairs* 37, no. 1 (1958): 51, 53.

²² Frederick Cooper, “Writing the History of Development,” in “Modernizing Missions: Approaches to ‘Developing’ the Non-western World after 1945,” ed. Stephan Malinowski and Corinna Unger, special issue, *Journal of Modern European History* 8 (2010): 11.

²³ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1996, 37-61.

empowerment of the people of color. Like earlier icons of national independence - Nasser in Egypt or Nkrumah in Ghana- he was eager to link his name to a gigantic prestige project such as the huge dam, even if this meant clashing with the afterlife of the colonial system. "We shall be free to sell the energy to whom we want" - Machel claimed. On 4 August 1979, he delivered an important speech to an "enlarged session" of his Council of Ministers announcing the intention to "tame the white elephant" - Cahora Bassa (the white elephant) could and should be domesticated to provide energy for industrialization and water irrigation for Mozambique's development plan.²⁴ However, the property of the hydropower plant was firmly in the hands of the Portuguese company that was not willing to use the energy produced for Machel's plans. Consequently, and paradoxically, Mozambique was legally compelled to be a major supplier of power to the hostile apartheid government in South Africa. A mere 18% of the dam's energy was free to use for Mozambique, and only a few projects were developed with the help of the Socialist countries. The little power available for the modernization of Mozambique was to supply Tete, the provincial capital, and the coal mines at Moatize. Modernization policies, though, including the dam, encountered significant resistance. Collectivization in rural areas and forced settlement into rural communities, introduced after 1977, reminded too many of the abhorred past colonial policies and alienated large sectors of the population. Renamo (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana), supported by Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, was ready to use this dissatisfaction to foment rebellion and civil war. "Plenty of power, not a drop of glory," commented *The Guardian* looking at the paradox of the Cahora Bassa Dam: a project that promised Mozambique and its leader a hope for a visionary future that failed to come to pass.²⁵

For Third World leaders during the Cold War, the construction of a large dam was synonymous with success and power. It reinforced national pride that could be spent with domestic public opinion. It was therefore perceived as a way to consolidate leadership, overshadowing weaknesses and conflicts. Vanity of the leadership can help explain why often unreasonable prestige projects have found and still find their way into the picture, notwithstanding the dire economic, social, environmental, and even geopolitical inconsistencies they carried with them. Majestic damming projects all over the world, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America especially, (to name just a few examples: the Grand Inga Dam in Congo, the Grand Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia, Belo Monte in Brazil, Daming Gorge in southern Guangxi in China) are hugely contentious in their social and environmental consequences, but still figure prominently in the development landscape.

²⁴ Samora Machel, "Facamos de 1980-1990 a decada da vitoria sobre o subdesenvolvimento," Maputo: FRELIMO, 1979.

²⁵ "Plenty of power, not a drop of glory," *The Guardian* [London], 27 September 1974. On Cahora Bassa see especially the very comprehensive work Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965–2007*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013 and the website http://www.mozambiquehistory.net/cahora_bassa.php.

3) Development as Worldmaking: the role of international organizations.

Development scholars often describe development as a global design with Western—usually American—hegemonic plans at its center.²⁶ However, although US-backed modernization theory and the policies it shaped were influential, they did not go unchallenged by national interests and alternative visions. This was clear at the broader international level. From the very beginning, international organizations had a crucial role in working with development as a tool to remake the world. With decolonization, they became the ideal arena to promote development seen from the point of view of the Global South. The United Nations, in particular, became the place where Third World countries reclaimed their rights.

Development institutions tried to forge a universal concept of development. In the 1950s and 1960s, international experts shared a faith in the state as an actor and planning as a method, making it tempting to describe the history of development as a history of planning. All you need to fight poverty is a plan, leading economist Gunnar Myrdal boasted in 1956 - the plan was not just about economics but also about constructing a new society, a matter for anthropologists, sociologists, or geographers together with economists. In both donor and recipient countries, policymakers extolled the virtues of development plans and technology's ability to promote growth. Big infrastructure projects such as dams and power plants were at the center of national development plans and became the ultimate symbols of modernity. Development projects were usually framed in global terms, even when distinctly national and state-centric. And all of this was compatible across the ideological spectrum—it could be the product of capitalist ventures or be associated with hardcore planning the Socialist Bloc's way. Either way, it rested on an optimistic view of society and its future, and on the ability of mankind to reshape the world.

For quite a long time, planning as a method, even if orchestrated in international organizations, put the state at its center. This came to an end in the late 1960s and increasingly in the 1970s, when a crisis of vision surpassed the faith in the state and the fundamental role of science and rational thought in replacing traditions. Poor results in the distribution of wealth shook the optimistic view of economic growth, automatically translating to generalized well-being. Poverty persisted despite economic growth. New anxieties appeared, particularly resource scarcity, unchecked population growth, and a new concern with the environment and sustainability. Trust in progress as linear development toward modernity collapsed. At the end of the decade, while trust in state planning was soon to be replaced by a generalized neoliberal faith in the market, the costs of global

²⁶ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, London: Zed Books, 1997; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 173–175; Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

modernization exploded, leaving national elites in recipient countries with huge debts that they were unable or unwilling to pay.

During the Cold War, international organizations served for the circulation of ideas and promoted the thoughts of worldmaking as a plan that, after all, was to be declined in different ways but with similar goals and prescriptions, based on a similar faith in progress and in planning. Experts, East and West alike, formed in the end an epistemic community so that when observed from the vantage point of international organizations, for quite a time, development did not seem to be marked by huge ideological distance.²⁷ This, however, conceals a reality of dramatic ideological clashes, as becomes apparent when dealing with the debates around rights, entitlement, and the morality of the international system that took place in the United Nations. In the 1970s, international organizations became the place where the Third World and subaltern voices could raise their requests in more vivid ways. During the 1950s and 1960s, reclaiming rights for dependent territories had been about reclaiming self-determination. During the 1960s, newly independent countries advanced new demands: political and civil rights – the classic Western priorities – were less urgent, they claimed. In accordance with Marxist interpretation and with the socialist countries' backing, they held that economic and social rights came first and that they were collective rights of the State. Third World leaders demanded the right to development as a special human right. Talking to the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, Senegalese jurist Doudou Thiam, who also happened to be the foreign minister of Senegal, insisted on the right to development as the right of formerly colonial countries to recover the losses suffered from the depredation of colonial conquest and plunder. Thiam was quite clear in avoiding Cold War traps, such as the ideological identification with the Communist Countries. The class struggle, he argued, was a matter of state actors, and the issue was how to promote the cause of the proletarian nations.²⁸ “Political rights without social rights, and political democracy without economic democracy no longer have any true meaning,” claimed the Shah Reza Pahlavi opening the 1968 Teheran Conference.²⁹ The right to development flowed directly from the right to self-determination, and it was a right of the state (or of the peoples), not of the individual. Thiam argued that it was necessary to use collective unity to correct injustice. Sovereignty alone was not enough. In 1972, another Senegalese jurist, Keba Mbaye, tried to mediate by stressing that development was both a right of individuals and a right of peoples.³⁰

²⁷ S. Kott, *Organiser le monde*, cit.

²⁸ G77 Doc. MM.77/I/SR.14, 25 October 1967, quoted in Daniel J. Whelan, “‘Under the Aegis of Man’: The Right to Development and the Origins of the New International Economic Order,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 99.

²⁹ Quoted in Roland Burke, “From Individual Rights to National Development: The First UN International Conference on Human Rights, Tehran, 1968”, *Journal of World History Vol. 19, No. 3, New Histories of the United Nations (Sep., 2008)*, 275-296.

³⁰ James T. Gathii, “Africa and the Radical Origins of the Right to Development”, *TWAIL Review*, Issue 1 (2020), 28–50.

The comprehensive restructuring of the rules governing the international economic system came to be found in the project of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which soon came to be identified as the preferred Third World way to fight the Cold War. The bone of contention was how to promote development and economic emancipation for the Global South, starting from trade and the control over natural resources. The doctrine of the Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources was crucial. According to the Third World leaders and lawyers, at independence, the new states were not to be bound by preexisting laws and regulations – such as, for example, oil concessions. They needed to gain control over their own resources and, in this way, promote development. Nationalization was to be considered a legitimate tool. As for trade, not only were structural inequalities to be corrected, but also the unequal rules of international trade had to be countered by specific active politics to limit the price volatility of the goods produced by Third World countries and the worsening of the terms of trade. The center-periphery thesis, formulated by Singer and made famous by Prebisch and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), became a powerful political tool. The Prebisch-Singer doctrine, as it became known, argued that technical progress in manufacturing increased profits, whereas progress in the production of food and raw materials led to lower prices. Industrialized countries thus got the best of both worlds—high prices for the goods they sold and low prices for those they bought—while underdeveloped countries lost on both counts. Ever since 1964, the Group of 77 in the UNCTAD asked for special measures to redress this fundamental injustice. The most daring attempt happened between 1973 and 1975, with the discussion around the NIEO, which was on the agenda at the Sixth and Seventh Special Sessions of the General Assembly in New York in 1974 and 1975, and the fourth session of UNCTAD in Nairobi 1976. Reforming the international economic order was about completing the work started at Bandung. Rich countries conceded political self-determination to the South only after securing the continuation of economic dependence, claimed Algeria’s Chairman of the Revolutionary Council Houari Boumediene: it was now time to achieve complete independence. Jurists such as Mohammed Bedjaoui argued that self-determination through political independence was fake because it implied continued subjugation through a postcolonial statehood modeled along European lines.³¹

The NIEO was destined to burn out like a meteor. It was able to find a benevolent fellow traveler, though, in the EEC where Claude Cheysson – the man who was in charge for the Community relations with the Global South starting in 1973 and essentially (with a short break in the early 1980s) until the end of the Cold War - was keen on associating the EEC with the cause of the Third World. Supporting the Third World's requests went well with the new image of the E.C. as a civilian power, a dispenser of civic and democratic standards worldwide, promoting social justice and fighting poverty in the Global South.³² Ever since 1972, the EEC

³¹ Mohammed Bedjaoui, *Towards a New International Economic Order* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979)

³² François Duchêne, “The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence,” in *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems before the European Community*, ed. Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager

listed cooperation with the Third World as its top priority.³³ The Lomé Convention, signed in February 1975, defined a new partnership with former European colonies. It extended membership (association was the technical term used) to 46 countries, including former British possessions, now called the Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.³⁴ It incorporated several requests of the Group of 77 - The most acclaimed innovation was Stabex (short for *Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d'Exportation*), a mechanism for price stabilization of raw materials. The EEC invested resources in staging proximity to the Third World, by fashioning its policies as an affirmative answer to the demands of the NIEO. It presented its strategy as complementary to non-alignment. At the Trilateral Commission in 1975, the Lomé method was praised as a regional contribution toward a global understanding: a peculiar European way to be in the Cold War, and to promote the cause of the West.

Development, which in the 1970s was clearly perceived as a failure as a Cold War weapon, was competing with another emerging issue: the protection of the environment. In the tension between development and the environment, the former would always prevail for the Global South. Pollution, argued Indira Gandhi, was not a technical problem but a political one, connected with the recklessness of the rich that abused their position to pollute and reap resources from the Global South.³⁵

The many motives of development

During the Cold War, development acquired increasingly novel dimensions. New goals were added to the prior ones, rather than replacing them. From specific local projects up to grand conceptual frameworks, development projects were often designed to address multiple challenges at once. They were appeasing geopolitical interests and leaders' vanity; they were attacking inequality, malnutrition, poverty, and economic stagnation; they were struggling with environmental and gender equity concerns. The many competing objectives explain why the Cold War logic seems not enough to explain the pervasiveness of development. However, even today, when looking at the competition between American and Chinese interests in Africa, the Cold War dynamics emerge as an excellent explanatory and predictive tool. Some scholars are inclined to talk of a new Cold War. This is yet another reason to claim that, although maybe not entirely satisfactorily because of the many long-term links that stretch

(London: Macmillan, 1973), 20.

³³ "Statement from the Paris Summit," *Bulletin of the European Communities*, no. 10 (10 October 1972): 14–26, accessed 24 March 2016, http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/b1dd3d57-5f31-4796-85c3-cfd2210d6901/publishable_en.pdf.

³⁴ "Lomé Dossier," *The Courier* no. 31 Special issue, March 1975; *La Commission européenne 1973-1986 histoire et mémoires d'une institution*, eds. E. Bussi re, V. Dujardin, M. Dumoulin, P. Ludlow, J.W. Brouwer, E. Palmero, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU, 2014), 401-421.

³⁵ Barry Commoner, "Motherhood in Stockholm," *Harper's Magazine*, no. 6 (June 1972): 49–54.

development before and after the classic periodization of the Cold War, reading development through a Cold War lens can still be useful to understand dynamics and legacies of the past in North-South relations today.