

Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World.
Edited by James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020. 352 pp.

Recently, a small yet growing number of researchers have been working on the transnational history of the socialist countries during the Cold War. Their studies make clear that the socialist countries after the 1950s were far from isolated or autarkic and that these countries developed various transnational connections with the Global South and other parts of the globe. However, while they shed light on various concrete cases of these interconnections, it is often not easy to situate these findings in a larger picture of postwar globalization. The present volume edited by James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung makes an important contribution to the scholarship, not only by illuminating various aspects of the East-South interconnections, but by also synthesizing these case studies into a wider history of “alternative globalizations.”

The book consists of an introduction and fourteen essays on political, economic, and cultural aspects of the Soviet and Eastern European connections with the Global South. Many contributors do not adopt the simplistic view of the Cold War as a mere binary confrontation between the two camps and instead depict the story of the East-South entanglements in connection with the activities of the Western counterparts. Furthermore, they often do not regard these relations as a one-sided transfer of socialist modernity from the developed East to the Global South and point out various unintended or surprising impacts on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The introductory essay by the three editors deserves particular attention, since it integrates the essays of the volume and situates the interactions between the Eastern and Southern peripheries in a broader process of postwar globalization.

The first essay, by Mark and Yakov Feygin, offers a well-written overview on the rise and fall of the alternative, anti-imperialist visions of global economy presented at the fora of the United Nations by the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from the 1950s to the 1980s. As Mark and Feygin show, while the socialist countries initially advocated these visions, their adherence to economic bilateralism, the halfway commitment to them, and the accumulating debts to the West fundamentally weakened such visions. The provocative yet stimulating essay by Oscar Sanchez-Sibony also focuses on Soviet economic relations

with the Global South in the 1950s and 1960s, but from different standpoint. According to Sanchez-Sibony, none of the visions of an alternative modernity were the main motive behind the Soviet economic entanglements with the Global South. Rather, these entanglements were motivated by the desire to increase economic exchange with the outer world in the margins of capitalist globalization. While these two articles differ widely from each other on the role of socialist modernity, they are, in fact, mutually complementary and are of special value in that they both further a rethinking of the processes and characteristics of postwar economic globalization.

On a more concrete topic of the interconnections, Alena K. Alamgir and Christina Schwenkel explore Vietnamese labor migration into Eastern Europe. The Vietnamese labor program was initially designed as a means to help Vietnam, but as the economic crisis and labor shortage in Eastern Europe deepened, it became a source of a cheap workforce in the receiving countries. Massimiliano Trentin also examines the attitudes of non-Soviet actors by investigating East German policy in the Middle East. He points out that because of its rivalry with West Germany and its own economic interests, East Germany sometimes behaved autonomously in the region.

As to the cultural relations with the Global South, Łukasz Stanek investigates the interactions between Eastern Europe, West and North Africa, and the Middle East in the field of architecture. To deal with their “weak” bargaining positions, Eastern European actors in West Africa and the Middle East behaved flexibly, which made them highly instrumental for local elites in these areas. Marung examines Soviet Africanists’ activities concerning African agricultural problems. The failure of the Soviet agricultural model in Africa urged these scholars to rethink Soviet agricultural policy at home. The impact of transnational relations on the domestic politics of the socialist countries was also examined by Kalinovsky. He analyzes the interrelations between the Soviet policies in its own South and in the Global South, and he concludes that the Soviet attempt to instrumentalize the regions of Central Asia and Caucasia as a showcase for development in the Global South backfired. In fact, it revealed the weaknesses of the model and encouraged resistance against the regime in these Soviet republics. Maxim Matusевич focuses on the strained relations between the Soviet authorities and the African students at Soviet universities. Whereas the Soviet authorities wished to educate African students about socialist modernization, in practice, these students often emerged as educators of their fellow Soviet students. These interesting case studies make clear that

socialist entanglements with the South were not a simple diffusion of a certain model, but the developed socialist countries were also influenced and reshaped by the South.

At the same time, it should be noted that the transnational approaches by the socialist countries, like every other such endeavor, had its limits. In the case of socialist globalization, the actors from the East often did not show great interest in thinking and acting within a global framework, preferring instead to maximize their own interests. For example, Bogdan C. Iacob presents an interesting case of Balkan scholars' encounters with the Global South in UNESCO. Using the UNESCO project as a platform for their cause, these scholars emphasized the shared experience of Western European colonialism in the Balkan region and the Global South. But since their aim was Eurocentric rather than transregional, they lost momentum in the global arena. Such limits were also present in the transnational relations cultivated by the oppositional movements in Eastern Europe. Kim Christiaens and Idesbald Goddeeris examine transregional collaboration between the Polish *Solidarność* and the oppositional movements in the Global South and conclude that the engagement of *Solidarność* abroad remained limited in scope, as its reserved attitude toward the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa suggests. Adam F. Kola approaches the limitedness of the Eastern European intellectuals' internationalism from a different perspective. He examines the reason why Polish intellectuals in the late socialist period avoided postcolonial discourse in emphasizing the "Soviet colonization" of Poland.

While these essays analyze the Soviet and Eastern European entanglements with the decolonizing countries, the essay on Sino-Soviet competition over the Global South by Péter Vámos broadens the scope by introducing the Chinese factor to the discussion. In response to the Chinese attempt to forge a worldwide anti-Soviet coalition, the Soviets coordinated the policies of bloc countries vis-à-vis China in an attempt to isolate it globally. Hanna Jansen examines the intellectual thaw under Khrushchev and the activities of Soviet Orientalists in the context of Sino-Soviet disputes. Quinn Slobodian focuses on East German grassroots internationalism, which emerged as a result of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989.

The book thus covers geographically and thematically wide-ranging topics of global interconnections that emerged after decolonization in the 1950s. The introductory essay provides a good reference point to position these cases within a wider framework of postwar globalization. On the whole, the book enhances

our knowledge of the socialist postwar global entanglements with the Global South, and it will be of use and interest to readers who are curious to know more about the subtle, as yet lesser-known aspects of globalization.

Jun Fujisawa
Kobe University
junfujisawa@phoenix.kobe-u.ac.jp