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# The Cold War Politics of Soviet Federal Structures, 1945–1965

International Dimensions and Domestic Consequences

❖ Étienne Forestier-Peyrat

Although both de-Stalinization and decolonization feature prominently in the general narrative of Cold War history, seldom have they been treated together in the field of international history. Historians have for many years been interested in the Soviet push into the Third World after Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953.<sup>1</sup> A rapidly growing body of scholarship has analyzed Moscow's strategies to win the hearts and minds of the newly independent states of Asia and Africa. These studies emphasize how the "Soviet offensive" toward the postcolonial world moved beyond traditional power diplomacy to make the most out of the transnational possibilities of post-Stalinism through cultural, intellectual, and economic exchanges.<sup>2</sup> Yet, this association remains an external rather than a structural one: the chronological coincidence of the two processes is still seldom taken as a sign that they were intrinsically connected.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 67; and Andreas Hilger, ed., *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt: UdSSR, Staatszialismus und Antikolonialismus im Kalten Krieg, 1945–1991* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009).

2. Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); Ragna Boden, *Die Grenzen der Weltmacht: Sowjetische Indonesienpolitik von Stalin bis Brežnev* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006); Constantin Katsakioris, "L'Union soviétique et les intellectuels panafricains: Internationalisme, panafricanisme et négritude pendant les années de la décolonisation, 1954–1964," *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 47, Nos. 1–2 (2006), pp. 15–32; and Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

3. Two major exceptions are Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); and Moritz Florin, *Kirgistan und die sowjetische Moderne, 1941–1991* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2015).

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A quick glance at the two phenomena should reveal similarities in the parlance of law, rights, and freedom that characterized them on different levels. In the Soviet Union, criticism of the cult of personality was accompanied by considerable discussion around questions of nationalities, minorities, and language in the late 1950s.<sup>4</sup> The violent unrest in Soviet Georgia in March 1956 mobilized a strongly nationalist argument that was also found in non-violent crises, such as the 1958 debate on the language of education in the republics and the attack against national Communists in Latvia a year later.<sup>5</sup> The rhetoric of de-Stalinization, in its equivocal ambition to correct past wrongs, mirrored key slogans defended by actors who tried either to mend imperial systems or to precipitate their downfall.<sup>6</sup> Thanks to scholars who look at the role of non-Slavic Soviet republics, notably in Central Asia and the Caucasus, progress has been made in comparing Communist policies with the postcolonial world in the 1950s–1970s.<sup>7</sup> Artemy Kalinovsky argues that the peripheral status of the Central Asian republics increased the self-consciousness and assertiveness of their leaders who “certainly did not think of their republics as ‘colonies’ of Moscow or dream about political independence, [. . . but] did feel material and cultural inequality not only relative to Moscow but to each other.” He concludes that “the wave of decolonization occurring beyond the USSR’s borders provided the impetus to complete the ‘decolonization’ of the Central Asian republics within a Soviet framework.”<sup>8</sup>

4. Jeremy Smith, “Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics,” in Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic, eds., *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2011), pp. 79–93; Michael Loader, “The Rebellious Republic: The 1958 Education Reform and Soviet Latvia,” *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, No. 100 (2016), pp. 113–139; and Jamil Hasanli, *Azərbaycanda milli məsələ: Siyasi rəhbərlik və ziyalılar 1954–1959* (Baku: Adiloğlu Nəşriyyatı, 2008).

5. Timothy K. Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Power* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2016); Timothy K. Blauvelt, “Status Shift and Ethnic Mobilisation in the March 1956 Events in Georgia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2009), pp. 651–668; and Loader, “The Rebellious Republic,” *iya* pp. 113–139. For a perceptive contemporary account, see Grey Hodnett, “The Debate over Soviet Federalism,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (April 1967), pp. 458–481.

6. Florence Renucci, “La ‘décolonisation doctrinale’ ou la naissance du droit d’Outre-Mer (1946–début des années 1960),” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines*, No. 24 (2011), pp. 61–76; and Meredith Terretta, “Cause lawyering et anticolonialisme: Activisme, politique et État de droit dans l’Afrique française, 1946–1960,” *Politique africaine*, No. 138 (2015), pp. 25–48.

7. Masha Kirasirova, “‘Sons of Muslims’ in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962,” *Ab Imperio*, No. 4 (2011), pp. 106–132; Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930–1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), pp. 243–244; and Eren Taşar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).

8. Artemy M. Kalinovsky, “Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1965,” *Ab Imperio*, No. 2 (2013), p. 192.

In Kalinovsky's interpretation, this internal "decolonization" involves a shift from strictly agricultural economies to industrialization.<sup>9</sup> This shift makes sense insofar as it echoes the rich literature on development in the Cold War and the way it played out in postcolonial countries.<sup>10</sup> But the use of "decolonization" in this way is deliberately provocative because the term has come to be associated with national independence.<sup>11</sup> How, then, can a process that did not lead to political independence for the Soviet Union's constituent entities be compared to decolonization? The concept of decolonization is actually used for two other periods in Soviet history. For Soviet leaders and politicians, decolonization happened after the October 1917 revolution, when Bolshevism allowed for a radical overhaul of national and class relations across the former Tsarist empire.<sup>12</sup> Much more recently, decolonization was used as a category to describe the fall of the Soviet Union, the "last Empire," and the emancipation of the national republics from the late 1980s onward.<sup>13</sup> The "potent and troublesome analogy of the 'decolonization' of the Soviet 'Empire,'" as Todd Shepard has argued, has given birth to research comparing "post-Soviet" and "postcolonial" situations, notably in the case of the USSR's southern republics, Ukraine, and the Baltic republics.<sup>14</sup>

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9. Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "A Most Beautiful City for the World's Tallest Dam: Internationalism, Social Welfare and Urban Utopia in Nurek," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (2016), pp. 819–846.

10. David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); David C. Engerman et al., eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Cold War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and Hubertus Büschel and Daniel Speich, eds., *Entwicklungswelten: Globalgeschichte der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009).

11. Dietmar Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–2. For a critique, see Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

12. Mikhajlo Kulichenko, *Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi partii za reshenie natsional'nogo voprosa v 1918–1920 godakh* (Kharkiv: Izdatel'stvo Kharkovskogo Gosuniversiteta, 1963); and Lowell Tillelt, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 18–34.

13. Serhii Plokhyy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); and Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

14. Todd Shepard, "Making French and European Coincide: Decolonization and the Politics of Comparative and Transnational Histories," *Ab Imperio*, No. 2 (2007), p. 340; David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," in Violeta Kelertas, ed., *Baltic Postcolonialism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 11–44; and Epp Annus, *Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View from the Western Borderlands* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2017).

But what if decolonization is understood in a different manner, one that does not require independence and particularly not the independence of post-colonial nation-states? Historians of colonial and postcolonial history have been debating precisely this possibility in the wake of Frederick Cooper's work on colonial Africa in the post-1945 period. Cooper argues that nation-states may not have been an *horizon indépassable* in the 1950s for colonial and anti-colonial actors, who were open to a wide array of political options, most notably federalism.<sup>15</sup> Focused on French West Africa, Cooper's work also draws on recent scholarship about imperial and colonial reform and the diversity of plans designed by reformers and anti-colonial activists alike in their attempts to reshape a global order.<sup>16</sup> His work has, however, been criticized for overstating the case of federalism and alternatives to the nation-state without explaining sufficiently why federalist projects failed in the early 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Samuel Moyn, Michael Goebel, and Richard Drayton are among the most vocal detractors of what Goebel calls a "revisionist wave" in the historiography of decolonization, lumping together Cooper and historians such as Todd Shepard and Gary Wilder.<sup>18</sup> Although this criticism may shed light on weaknesses in Cooper's argument, it is mostly a defense of the traditional conception of decolonization.

The respective merits of the competing theses can be investigated by assessing the global dimensions of the debate in order to test the idea that

15. Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Frederick Cooper, "Alternative to Nationalism in French Africa, 1945–60," in Jost Dülffer and Marc Frey, eds., *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 110–137.

16. Martin Lynn, ed., *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and Their Roads from Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014); Pierre Grosser, "Une 'création continue'? L'Indochine, le Maghreb et l'Union française," *Monde(s)*, No. 12 (2017), pp. 71–94; and Charles Becker et al., eds., *AOF: Réalités et héritages*, Vol. 1 (Dakar: Direction des archives du Sénégal, 1997).

17. Samuel Moyn, "Fantasies of Federalism," *Dissent*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter 2015), pp. 145–151. See also the forum on Cooper's *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*: "Kitabhkhana: A Discussion with Sam Okoth Opondo, Gregory Mann, Richard Drayton, and Frederick Cooper," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2017), pp. 391–411; and Séverine Awenengo Dalberto and Sandrine Perrot, eds., "Autour d'un livre," *Politique africaine*, No. 136 (2014), pp. 179–203.

18. Michael Goebel, "After Empire Must Come Nation?" 8 September 2016, *Afro-Asian Visions: New Perspectives on Decolonisation and the Cold War*, available online at <https://medium.com/afro-Asian-visions/after-empire-must-come-nation-cd220f1977c>; Hugh McDonnell, *Europeanising Spaces in Paris, c. 1947–1962* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 131–132; Todd Shepard, "A l'heure des 'grands ensembles' et de la guerre d'Algérie: 'L'état-nation' en question," *Monde(s)*, No. 1 (2012), pp. 113–134; and Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

decolonization was not exclusively conceived as a transition to the nation-state and that this pluralism deserves attention. The Soviet Union in the 1950s combined seemingly incompatible elements: vociferous support for the independence of colonial territories, especially in the late 1950s and early 1960s, *and* an equally staunch assertion that decolonization was not necessarily coterminous with political independence, as demonstrated by the situation of the “sovereign” Soviet socialist republics within the USSR. Tania Raffass has highlighted this difficulty to account for the nature of the Soviet Union—that is, whether it should be considered a “federation” or an “empire”—in a book that goes beyond the image of “Potemkin federalism.”<sup>19</sup> As my discussion here shows, many evolutions of late Stalinism and of the de-Stalinization period may be explained as part of an attempt to overcome this contradiction. The notion of de-Stalinization as decolonization is in line with Antony Hopkins’s attempt to “rethink decolonization” and track down its consequences in unexpected *loci* and events, in a manner similar to that used for the history of European integration and the civil rights movement in the United States.<sup>20</sup> By the same token, it provides an opportunity to reconsider the theoretical boundaries of decolonization and its political imaginary in the ideological Cold War.<sup>21</sup>

In doing so this article relies on a combination of existing historiography on decolonization and de-Stalinization and archival material and published sources from several former Soviet republics, the United Kingdom, France, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The specific post-Soviet archives have been chosen deliberately to avoid being confined to what one could conceive as the “(post)colonial” republics of the Soviet Union in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The archives used here encompass a broader range of the Soviet republics (Estonia, Latvia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Russia), to demonstrate that decolonization should not be confined to a

19. Tania Raffass, *The Soviet Union: Federation or Empire?* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1–2.

20. A. G. Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization,” *Past & Present*, No. 200 (2008), pp. 213–214; Louis Sicking, “A Colonial Echo: France and the Colonial Dimension of the European Economic Community,” *French Colonial History*, Vol. 5 (2004), pp. 207–228; Giuliano Garavini, *Dopo gli imperi: L’integrazione europea nello scontro nord-sud* (Milan: Mondadori Education, 2009); Yves Montarolo, *L’Eurafrique, contrepoint de l’idée d’Europe: Le cas français de la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale aux négociations du traité de Rome* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2010); and A. G. Hopkins, “Globalisation and Decolonisation,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (2017), pp. 729–745.

21. Kenneth A. Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 85–107.

Western/non-Western relationship. Instead, it can also be applied to relations between the Soviet regime and its western republics, including the Slavic ones.<sup>22</sup> Three main Soviet sources bolster this argument: first, the archives that illustrate the international activity of Soviet republics after the 1944 constitutional amendments gave them certain paths to conduct international relations;<sup>23</sup> second, the archives of the central and republic Institutes for State and Law, which played a central role in the emergence of new legal concepts in the 1950s and 1960s;<sup>24</sup> third, the archives of the constitutional committee established by Nikita Khrushchev on 15 June 1962, particularly the subcommittee on nationalities policy headed by Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan, which marked the apex (interrupted in October 1964) of de-Stalinization as decolonization.<sup>25</sup> As for the Stalin constitution (1936) and the Brezhnev constitution (1977), the public debate that surrounded the constitutional work preceding the issuance of these documents presents a rare opportunity to observe Soviet approaches to federalism, nationhood, and law.<sup>26</sup>

## Soviet Republics as Dominions

Comparisons between constituent entities of the USSR and colonial territories would have been unacceptable in official Soviet discourse during the interwar period. The Bolshevik regime, fully devoted to its “indigenization” policy toward the nationalities of the Soviet Union, developed a rhetoric of national-cum-social emancipation that purported to put an end to exploitation in all

22. Epp Annus, “The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2012), p. 26.

23. Sabine Dullin and Étienne Forestier-Peyrat, “Flexible Sovereignities of the Revolutionary State: Soviet Republics Enter World Politics,” *Journal of the History of International Law / Revue d'histoire du droit international*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2017), pp. 178–199.

24. John N. Hazard, *Managing Change in the U.S.S.R.: The Politico-Legal Role of the Soviet Jurist* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Jean-Guy Collignon, *Les juristes en Union Soviétique* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1977).

25. A. Danilov, “Utaennaya Konstitutsiya Nikity Khrushcheva,” *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, No. 1 (1997), pp. 40–55; A. Danilov and A. Pyzhikov, “Neizvestnyi konstitutsionnyi proekt (O razrabotke Osnovnogo Zakona strany v 1962–1964 gg.),” *Gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 1 (2002), pp. 84–89; and George Ginsburgs, “A Khrushchev Constitution for the Soviet Union: Projects and Prospects,” *Osteuroparecht*, No. 3 (1962), pp. 191–215.

26. Ellen Wimberg, “Socialism, Democratism and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992), pp. 313–334; and Ulrich Schmid, “Constitution and Narrative: Peculiarities of Rhetoric and Genre in the Foundational Laws of the USSR and the Russian Federation,” *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 62, No. 3/4 (November 2010), pp. 431–451.

its guises.<sup>27</sup> The creation of nominally independent Soviet republics and their political union in the USSR from 1922 to 1924 was considered sufficient evidence in support of the idea that Soviet nationalities had gained independence after the October Revolution and had willingly recreated an aggregated structure to provide for defense and other common goals. The creation of new union republics in 1922, 1924, 1929, and 1936 contributed to the sense that national emancipation was an ongoing project to be pursued as socialism reached new heights.<sup>28</sup> The declensions of the federal structure of the regime spread widely through the Soviet Union, notably via the promotion of national cadres and national cultures within a “state-sponsored evolutionism.”<sup>29</sup> Early Soviet historians—in particular Mikhail Pokrovskii and his followers—supported the claims of the regime by contrasting Communism with Tsarist colonial oppression and Great Russian chauvinism. In the 1930s, numerous historiographical disputes arose as Stalinist repressions took a heavy toll on minorities and national republic elites, accompanied by the reintroduction of Russian nationalism as part of the official Soviet rhetoric.<sup>30</sup>

The assertion of Russian nationalism, however, did not exclude the possibility of official Soviet support for peripheral nationalisms, a fact amply demonstrated during the Second World War. As the war unfolded, the Soviet regime relied more and more on nationalist motives to mobilize the population. This was, in part, a return to the early Bolshevik strategy of using cross-border minorities to legitimize diplomatic and military gains, such as the conquest of “Western Ukraine” and “Western Belarus” at the end of 1939, as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. These conquests were largely presented as the “reunification” of divided peoples and struck a nationalist chord in

27. Juliette Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial: Russie-URSS 1860–1940* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2007); and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

28. Lavrentii Beriia, *Novaya Konstitutsiia SSSR i Zakavkazskaya Federatsiia* (Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo Zakkrajkoma VKP-Zarja Vostoka, 1936), pp. 13–15; Steven Sabol, “The Creation of Soviet Central Asia: The 1924 National Delimitation,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1995), pp. 225–241; Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 2–3; and Etienne Forestier-Peyrat, “Soviet Federalism at Work: Lessons from the History of the Transcaucasian Federation, 1922–1936,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018), pp. 529–559.

29. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 8–9.

30. David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Cultures and the Formation of Modern Russian Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Vladimir Kuznechevskii, *Stalin i “russkii vopros” v politicheskoi istorii Sovetskogo Soyuza, 1931–1953 gg.* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2016).



the two republics.<sup>31</sup> Of deeper immediate impact was the Axis powers' use of anti-Soviet rhetoric of national emancipation that could exploit domestic discontent and appeal to nationalist émigré networks established during the interwar period. Such anti-imperialist rhetoric was widely used in the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Moldova, and also further afield in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Italian propagandists reused rhetoric developed in the 1930s during the *Prométhée* movement that depicted the USSR as a new "prison of peoples."<sup>32</sup> These overtures were hindered to some extent by divisions among Nazi officials about the best way to approach Soviet nationalities.<sup>33</sup> Even so, the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe, as with the Japanese occupation of Korea and other parts of Asia, fueled nationalist and anti-Bolshevist movements.<sup>34</sup>

The restoration of Soviet rule in the occupied territories required the imposition of both Communist *and* national policies. In Ukraine, a national military order harking back to the seventeenth-century national hero Bohdan Khmelnytsky was approved in August 1943 and quickly inspired Communists in the Baltic republics to follow suit with similar proposals.<sup>35</sup> Reunification was again propagandized for the western republics of the USSR, and the rhetoric soon extended to non-European borderlands of the USSR. Soviet actions in Xinjiang, northern Iran, and eastern Turkey in 1944–1946 also were accompanied by the renewed use of an anti-imperialist rhetoric conducive to what would become decolonization. Of particular importance are Georgian

31. Jan Tomasz Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

32. Lauro Mainardi, *U.R.S.S.: Prigione di popoli* (Rome: Cremonese, 1941); Lauro Mainardi, *Erivan contro Mosca* (Rome: Edizioni HIM, 1941); Beatrice Penati, "C'est l'Italie qui est prédestinée par l'histoire: La Rome fasciste et les nationalistes caucasiens en exil (1928–1939)," *Quaderni di Oriente moderno*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (2008), pp. 41–73; and Etienne Copeaux, "Le mouvement prométhéen," *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 16 (July–December 1993), pp. 9–46.

33. Memorandum of the German Foreign Minister, 5 June 1941, in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Berlin, R 105190, in Andris Caune et al., eds., *Arvalstu arhīvu dokumenti par okupācijas režīmu politiku Latvijā 1940–1968: Dokumentu krājums* (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2008), pp. 176–178; and Björn Michael Felder, *Lettland im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Zwischen sowjetischen und deutschen Besatzern, 1940–1946* (Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 2009).

34. Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb, eds., *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895–1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); and Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

35. Serhii Jekel'chuk, *Imperiya pam'yati: Rosiis'ko-ukrains'ki stosunky v radyans'kii istorychnii uyayi* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2008), pp. 70–73; and Authorities of Estonian SSR to Stalin, 20 June 1944, in Eesti Riigiarhiiv (States Archives of Estonia), Tallinn, Estonia, Fond (F.) 1, Opis (Op.) 5, Delo (D.) 83, Listy (LL) 75, reprinted in Tõnu Tannberg, *Politika Moskvy v respublikakh Baltii v poslevoennye gody (1944–1956): Issledovaniya i dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010), p. 88.

and Armenian attempts to reclaim eastern parts of Turkish Anatolia, renegeing on the 1921 Moscow and Kars treaties.<sup>36</sup> In a letter dated June 1945, Armenian Catholicos Kevork VI hailed Stalin as a liberator of nations and requested support for the reunification of Armenian territories, demands that the Armenian diaspora also supported.<sup>37</sup> These territorial claims had roots in the republics themselves and mirrored the reunification propaganda in Ukraine and Belorussia; that is, when the claims went unfulfilled, discontent increased among republican leaders.<sup>38</sup>

National emancipation is not necessarily coterminous with decolonization, but a strange convergence could be observed in early 1944, when measures taken to evince the supposed leeway enjoyed by Soviet republics led to a constitutional reform in January and February. The amendment to the 1936 constitution, defended in the Supreme Soviet by Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, entitled the USSR constituent republics to maintain external relations and set up their own commissariats for defense and foreign affairs.<sup>39</sup> Molotov hailed this development as a new stage in the history of the Soviet Union; arguing that

the nationalities problem has been solved in the multinational Soviet State. . . . This transformation signifies a great expansion of the activities of the Union republics, which has become possible as a result of their political, economic and cultural growth, or, in other words, as a result of their national development.<sup>40</sup>

A striking move, this reform startled foreign observers, especially diplomats from the United States and the British Empire. Commonwealth diplomats

36. Georges Mamoulia, "Les crises turque et iranienne 1945–1947: L'apport des archives caucasiennes," *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 45, No. 1–2 (2004), pp. 267–292; Arman Kirakosyan, ed., *Armeniya v sovetsko-turetskie otnosheniya v diplomaticheskikh dokumentakh 1945–1946 gg.* (Yerevan: Natsional'nyi Arkhiv Armenii, 2010), pp. 32–44; and Dzhamil' Gasanly, *SSSR-Turtsiya: Ot neytralizeta k kholodnoi voine 1939–1953* (Moscow: Tsentri propagandy, 2008), pp. 9–10.

37. Report of the Soviet consulate general in Tabriz, Iran, 1 June 1945, in Hajastani Azgajin Arkhiv (National Archives of Armenia, HAA), Erevan, Armenia, F 326, Op. 1, D. 16, Ll. 6–9; and Maike Lehmann, *Eine sowjetische Nation: Nationale Sozialismusinterpretationen in Armenien seit 1945* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), pp. 57–58.

38. Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union and the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 58; and Georges Mamoulia, "Les premières fissures de l'URSS d'après-guerre: Le cas de la Géorgie et du Caucase du Sud, 1946–1956," *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2005), pp. 594–595.

39. Etienne Forestier-Peyrat, "Un problème de cadres: Républiques soviétiques et relations internationales après 1945," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, No. 1 (2018), pp. 3–22.

40. "Report Delivered by Molotov in Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R., 1st February 1944," in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), London, DO 35/1600, F 125; and N. P. Farberov, "SSSR—Obrazets mnogonatsional'nogo gosudarstva," 1951, in *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 2 (1951), p. 27.

were even more puzzled when several high-ranking Soviet officials mentioned that “the position of [the] constituent Republics was analogous to that of several units of [the] British Commonwealth of Nations.”<sup>41</sup>

The comparison with British dominions may strike the contemporary reader as wildly off-base, but, as A. G. Hopkins points out, the story of the British colonies in 1945 was still as much a story of “continuing components of empire” as it was a story of “new nation states.” The colonies, Hopkins maintains, still “had to make the transition from one state to another.”<sup>42</sup> Their exact position in the future international system was far from clear, and the explicit comparison of Soviet republics with British dominions was a ploy to extract as much international stature for them as the Commonwealth would get for its own territories. Even India had enjoyed a sui generis membership in the League of Nations since 1919, a status hotly disputed by Indian nationalists during the interwar period.<sup>43</sup> Unsurprisingly, Stalin found in Winston Churchill a more amenable partner on this issue than Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, as the president of a federation of states that frequently challenged the federal government’s jurisdiction, was less enamored of the idea of multiple representation than was the prime minister of the largest imperial structure in the world.<sup>44</sup> The 1944 Soviet constitutional reform was an attempt to cope with a rising tide of nationalism in the republics by demonstrating the promotion of Soviet nationalities in the wake of the war. By re-asserting the “sovereignty” of the republics, the Moscow authorities could try to counter complaints about the forceful integration of the Baltic republics into the USSR, an annexation that was never formally recognized by Western governments, including the wartime Allies.<sup>45</sup>

41. Cable from A. Clark Kerr (Moscow) to the Foreign Office, 2 February 1944, in TNAUK, DO 35/1600, F. 181; and “Harriman, Ambassador in the Soviet Union, to the Secretary of State,” 31 January 1944, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1944, Vol. IV, Doc. 753, p. 809.

42. Hopkins, “Globalisation and Decolonisation,” p. 734.

43. T. A. Keenleyside, “The Indian Nationalist Movement and the League of Nations: Prologue to the United Nations,” *India Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1983), pp. 281–298; and William Harrison Moore, “The Dominions of the British Commonwealth in the League of Nations,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (May 1931), pp. 372–391.

44. Edward R. Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), pp. 162–163; and James P. Nichol, *Diplomacy in the Former Soviet Republics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), pp. 12–14.

45. Kaarel Piirimäe, *Roosevelt, Churchill and the Baltic Question: Allied Relations during the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Ainars Lerhis, “Latvijas PSR Arlietu ministrijas darbības pamatvirzieni, 1944–1950,” *Latvijas vēsture*, No. 68 (2007), pp. 74–92.

The Soviet regime's attempts to compare the USSR with the British empire created even greater confusion in the Soviet Union and colonial empires.<sup>46</sup> But confusion could be conducive to new comparisons and inspirations. In the United Kingdom, left-leaning colonial reformers and anti-imperialist thinkers grew markedly more interested in the Soviet experiment. Former colonial civil servant and leftwing Labour Party adviser Leonard Barnes published in 1944 a widely circulated Penguin Special titled *Soviet Light on the Colonies*.<sup>47</sup> The imaginary trip of a Soviet citizen to British African colonies was the pretext for a general comparison of British and Soviet policies, much to the advantage of the latter. Barnes was committed to reconstructing the British empire as "a higher level human association" and therefore emphasized the need to pay attention "to what has been happening during the last two decades in the one country which has reached a definitive solution of its colonial problem."<sup>48</sup> The book featured a visually striking map comparing the size of Soviet Central Asia and colonial Africa.<sup>49</sup> In 1946, former British Communist Party member George Padmore published *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empires*. Although Padmore had been critical of many aspects of Stalinism, he emphasized that "the transformation of this vast ramshackle Empire into a socialized commonwealth was one of [Vladimir] Lenin's greatest achievements."<sup>50</sup> But comparisons work both ways, and the British were quick to reuse them in the Russian-language newspaper they edited in the Soviet Union, the *British Ally* (*Britanskii Soyuznik*), which aroused discontent among Soviet authorities in 1946–1947 for "making demagogic comparisons and confrontations, designed to cast unfavorable light on Soviet nationalities policies."<sup>51</sup> At the end of the 1940s, therefore, a parallel existed between the

46. Amir Weiner, "Robust Revolution to Retiring Revolution: The Life Cycle of the Soviet Revolution, 1945–1968," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (April 2008), p. 210.

47. Julius Lewin, "Leonard Barnes, the Man and His Books," *African Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 297 (October 1975), pp. 483–484; and William Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 976.

48. Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies* (London: Penguin Books, 1944), pp. 6, 10.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

50. George Padmore, *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire: A Challenge to the Imperialist Powers* (London: Dennis Dobson Limited, 1946), p. ix; and Theo Williams, "George Padmore and the Soviet Model of the British Commonwealth," *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2019), pp. 531–559.

51. Report of the Ukrainian Society of Cultural Relations to the Ukrainian CP Central Committee, n.d. (February 1947), in Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromads'kykh Ob'ednan' Ukrainy (Central State Archive of Social Organizations of Ukraine, TsDAHOU), Kiev, Ukraine, F. 1, Op. 23, D. 4,366, Ll. 13; and Vladimir Pechatnov, "The Rise and Fall of the Britanskii Soyuznik—A Case Study in Soviet Response to British Propaganda of the Mid-1940s," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1998), pp. 293–301.

Soviet republics and some British dependencies as a result of the circumstances that prevailed at the end of the war and Stalin's political gambits.

## Decolonizing Moods after Stalin

Late Stalinism did not live up to the political expectations created both in the Soviet Union and abroad by the USSR's 1944 constitutional reform. Molotov did not respond to British requests to establish an embassy in Kyiv.<sup>52</sup> This did not prevent the connection from surviving. Union republics remained at the forefront of Soviet policies in the first crises of decolonization. Ukraine was particularly active at the United Nations (UN) during the Indonesian crisis. In early 1946, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Manuils'kyi spoke before the UN Security Council about the situation in Southeast Asia, and the topic came up again in 1948, when Ukraine was elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council.<sup>53</sup> These speeches were widely republished in Ukrainian- and Russian-language newspapers and even inspired propagandistic literary works, such as Oleksij Kundzich's *Lysty z mlyna* (1951), in which Ukrainian peasants discuss such speeches in the evening by the fireside. The potential influence of foreign policy on domestic politics was emphasized by émigré writers such as lawyer Vsevolod Holub, who suggested that "the more Ukraine will intervene in the UN in defense of colonized peoples, the more the Ukrainian people will become conscious of their own colonial situation."<sup>54</sup> Thus, at least some observers, despite being aware of the limits Stalinism posed to the republics' autonomy, were considering longer-term and unwanted potential impacts of the political manipulation of the trappings of statehood and nationhood in the early Cold War.

Stalin's death confirmed the evolutionary nature of Soviet federalism. One of the officials striving to succeed Stalin in the spring of 1953, Lavrentii Beria, embraced proposals for new arrangements between the central government and the republics. In a series of sweeping and controversial measures, Beria curtailed earlier Russification policies and dismantled the heavy-handed control institutions in the western borderlands that had been annexed in 1944-1945. This change was particularly notable in the Baltic republics,

52. Theofil I. Kis, *Nationhood, Statehood, and the International Status of the Ukrainian SSR/Ukraine* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1989), pp. 80–85.

53. Vsevolod Holub, *Ukraïna v Ob'jednanykh Natsiyakh* (Munich: Vydavnytstvo Suchasna Ukraïna, 1953), pp. 60–65.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

which had been submitted to harsh treatment under the special Bureaus of the Communist Party's Central Committee (CC) since November–December 1944.<sup>55</sup> However, Beria's downfall in late June 1953 was followed by accusations against him for (among other things) supposedly stirring up interethnic antagonism.<sup>56</sup> Although clearly intended to defuse the tense situation that existed in many western borderlands of the USSR, the reforms that were enacted in the spring of 1953 did produce unexpected and, from the point of view of Soviet hierarchs, undesirable effects. Reports of the Lithuanian Ministry of Internal Affairs quoted average citizens who were convinced that “no Russian will remain in Lithuania, and Lithuanians will fill all positions in organizations and institutions where they will do as they please,” and even that Lithuania would “establish an independent state.”<sup>57</sup> More generally, the early post-Stalin “Thaw” saw a recrudescence of national rights claims, most notably with the Chechens and Crimean Tatars. Demands for cultural and economic rights were voiced by national minorities throughout the USSR, and nationalist feelings were fueled by regional crises especially the 1956 unrest in Central Europe.<sup>58</sup>

That the attempt was short-lived did not prevent the new Soviet leaders from pursuing a similar, although more cautious, policy of “widening the rights of the republics”—a phrase that became quite well-known by the mid-1950s. The phrase itself gives a clue to the importance of law in this process. Although “socialist legality” became a popular slogan of post-Stalinism, historians have only recently started to reassess the importance of “rights talks” in Communist societies—a trend facilitated by the burgeoning literature on human rights.<sup>59</sup> The dissidents of the 1960s and supporters of the Helsinki

55. Elena Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kremli'* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), pp. 139–142; Mindaugas Pocius, *Lietuvos sovietizavimas 1944–1947 m.: VKP(b) CK dokumentai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2015), pp. 135–136; Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 189–190; and William D. Prigge, *The Bearslayers: The Rise and Fall of the Latvian National Communists* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 38–39.

56. Kaganovich's speech at the plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, 3 July 1953, in Ju. V. Sigachev, ed., *Laurentii Beriya, 1953: Stenogramma iyul'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratiya, 1999), pp. 237, 277.

57. Weiner, “Robust Revolution to Retiring Revolution,” pp. 216–217.

58. Krista A. Goff, “‘Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?’ National Rights and Citizenship in Khrushchev's Soviet Union,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2015), pp. 27–44; Zbigniew Wojnowski, *The Near Abroad: Socialist Eastern Europe and Soviet Patriotism in Ukraine, 1956–1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); and Moritz Florin, “What Is Russia to Us? Making Sense of Stalinism, Colonialism and Soviet Modernity in Kyrgyzstan,” *Ab Imperio*, No. 3 (2016), pp. 165–189.

59. A. K. R. Kiralfy, “The Campaign for Legality in the U.S.S.R.,” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (October 1957), pp. 625–642; Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human*

process are obvious examples, but non-dissenters also used legal arguments from the 1950s onward, and on a daily basis.<sup>60</sup> As far as the rights of the republics were concerned, socialist legality was not confined to individual rights. Discussion of collective rights, in the form of the “rights of the republics,” quickly emerged, offering an interesting parallel with the competition between individual and collective rights during decolonization, a point emphasized in the historiography of transnational human rights.<sup>61</sup> In the spring of 1955, important reforms in central planning and investment were adopted to the benefit of the republics.<sup>62</sup> Khrushchev’s anti-ministerialist campaign in 1955–1957 led to the disbandment of several federal ministries and reform of the *nomenklatura* system in a combined effort to thwart political enemies and relieve republic and regional administrations that were overwhelmed by paperwork, as the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had noted in January 1954.<sup>63</sup> This trend culminated in the creation of the *sovmarkhoz* system in May–June 1957, which increased the clout of the republics by territorializing the management of the economy.<sup>64</sup>

The new role of law was accompanied by a reassessment of history made possible by the early dynamics of post-Stalinism. A flurry of works were published that reconsidered the first years of the regime. Historians and lawyers discussed the links between the Soviet republics before the creation of the Soviet Union, describing them as purely diplomatic, confederal, or

*Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 2–3; and Akira Iriye et al., eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

60. Benjamin Nathans, “Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era,” in Stefan Ludwig Hoffman, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 166–190; Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 299–300; and Marc Elie, “Ce que réhabiliter veut dire: Khrouchtchev et Gorbatchev aux prises avec l’héritage répressif stalinien,” *Vingtième siècle: Revue d’histoire*, No. 107 (2010), pp. 101–113.

61. Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

62. M. L. Kogan, *Bjuzhbetnyye prava soyuznykh respublik* (Moscow: Gosizdatel’stvo Juridicheskoi Literatury, 1960), pp. 81–82.

63. Yoram Gorlizki, “Anti-Ministerialism and the USSR Ministry of Justice, 1953–1956: A Study in Organisational Decline,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 8 (December 1996), pp. 1279–1318; and O. V. Khlevnyuk et al., eds., *Regional’naya politika N.S. Khrushcheva: TsK KPSS i mestnye partiinye komitety 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009), pp. 5–12.

64. Nataliya Kibita, *Soviet Economic Management under Khrushchev: The Sovnarkhoz Reform* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2013), p. 41; and Nikita Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha* (Yerevan: Izdatel’stvo RAU, 2008), p. 67.

proto-federal.<sup>65</sup> A consensus soon emerged to reassert the contractual character of the documents signed in connection with the creation of the Soviet Union, supposedly based on the voluntary and sovereign will of the republics. David Zlatopolskii, a prominent lawyer from Moscow State University, played a key role in this process through several major publications. In 1954, he published *The Creation and Development of USSR as a Federal State*, an attempt to explain and justify the Bolshevik conversion to multinational federalism.<sup>66</sup> Stalin was implicitly criticized in this approach, as demonstrated by the simultaneous publication of documents that recalled Vladimir Lenin's opposition to Stalin's infamous "autonomization plan" and the initial uncertainties about the forms of Soviet federalism.<sup>67</sup> New access to the archives was a central support for this reexamination of early Soviet history, and Anna Pankratova and the journal *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History) were the major sponsors.<sup>68</sup> Historical and legal scholarship therefore legitimized the ongoing decentralization of the Soviet Union, and the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution presented an opportunity to publish new texts that not only explored the rights of the Soviet republics but were aligned with Khrushchev's political orientation.<sup>69</sup>

This renewed emphasis on the contractual origins of federalism dovetailed both with the promotion of law as an intermediary between public institutions and, more generally, with the larger place of legalism in public affairs.<sup>70</sup> The creation after 1956 of juridical committees to serve as advisory bodies to the federal and republic governments replaced the ministries of justice and

65. V. M. Kuritsyn, "Gosudarstvennoe sotrudnichestvo RSFSR i USSR v 1918–1922 godakh," *Voprosy istorii*, No. 5 (May 1954), pp. 19–31.

66. David Zlatopol'skii, *Obrazovanie i razvitie SSSR kak soyuznogo gosudarstva* (Moscow: Gosizdatel'stvo juridicheskoi literatury, 1954), p. 3.

67. V. Pentkovskaya, "Rol' V. I. Lenina v obrazovanii SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, No. 3 (March 1956), pp. 13–24; V. Pentkovska, *Rol' Lenina v stvorenni SRSR* (Kiev: Politychne Vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1957); and A. P. Nenarokov, *K edinstvu ravnykh: Kul'turnye faktory ob'edinitel'nogo dvizheniya sovet-skikh narodov, 1917–1924* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), pp. 28–32.

68. P. V. Korablev, "Razrabotka Leninym i Stalinym osnovnykh printsipov sovet'skogo mnogonatsional'nogo gosudarstva," *Voprosy istorii*, No. 3 (March 1954), pp. 3–18; G. S. Akopjan, "Perepiska V. I. Lenina i S. G. Shaumjana po natsional'nomu voprosu," *Voprosy istorii*, No. 8 (August 1956), pp. 3–14; and Reginald E. Zelnik, *Perils of Pankratova: Some Stories from the Annals of Soviet Historiography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 51–55.

69. David Zlatopol'skii, *Leninskaya natsional'naya politika i dal'nejshee rasshirenie prav soyuznykh respublik* (Moscow: Znanie, 1957).

70. In June 1957, Khrushchev used the Party Statute against the "Anti-Party group." See Mark Kramer, "Declassified Materials from CPSU Central Committee Plenums," *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 40, Nos. 1–2 (1999), p. 276.



sought to improve the legal quality of official texts.<sup>71</sup> Legal institutions developed at a rapid pace in the republics to provide training for the cadres needed in all branches of law. While only Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev had hosted major law institutes, the 1950s marked the creation of institutes dedicated to legal studies at each republic's Academy of Sciences.<sup>72</sup> Of central concern for all these institutions was the drafting of Codes of Laws in criminal and civil matters, a responsibility transferred to the union republics in 1956–1957.<sup>73</sup> During this debate, two contradictory trends could be observed: on the one hand, some participants argued in support of more law-making leeway for the republics, as part of political devolution; on the other hand, legal harmonization, in particular in criminal law, was frequently demanded as a way to liquidate the heritage of a time when some republics were considered underdeveloped and to accelerate the modernization of Soviet law.<sup>74</sup> For the first time, questions of harmonization and diversity were discussed at numerous levels, including interrepublic forums, local meetings of lawyers, and expert conferences.<sup>75</sup> Simultaneously, a debate developed on questions of public law, in particular the federal constitution, whose chronic instability since 1936 had undermined its “authority” because political voluntarism often bypassed the official procedure for constitutional revisions and strained the republics.<sup>76</sup>

71. Federal Juridical Committee to the Institute for State and Law, 17 October 1960, in *Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* (Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, ARAN), Moscow, F. 1934, Op. 1, D. 798, Ll. 166–170; and Decision of the Latvian government on the creation of a Juridical Committee, 1 October 1959, in *Latvijas Valsts Arhīvs* (Latvian State Archive, LVA), Riga, F. 938, Op. 3, D. 116, Ll. 1–3.

72. Ukraine had a Sector for State and Law from 1949 on, but its director, Volodymyr Korets'kyi, repeatedly demanded that its activity be expanded. See note from Korets'kyi, n.d. (September 1956), in *Instytut Derzhavy i Prava Akademii Nauk Ukrainy* (Institute for State and Law, Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, IDP ANU), Kyiv, Ukraine, Op. 1, D. 114, Ll. 1–5.

73. Memorandum from K. I. Satpaev, president of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, to the Kazakh government and Central Committee, 14 October 1957, in *Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstana* (Presidential Archive of Kazakhstan), Almaty, F. 708, Op. 30, D. 152, Ll. 48.

74. Minutes of the scientific committee of the Department of Law, Belorussian Academy of Sciences, 5 May 1958, in *Tsentral'nyi Nauchnyi Arkhiv Akademii Nauk Belorussii* (Central Scientific Archive of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, TsNA ANB), Minsk, F. 4, D. 2, Ll. 138ff.

75. Director of the Federal Institute for State and Law to the CPSU Administrative Organs Department, 26 July 1958, in ARAN, F. 1934, Op. 1, D. 708, Ll. 53–56.

76. Petro Nedbajlo, “Programma KPSS i voprosy Konstutsitsii,” n.d. (1962–1964), in *Natsional'na Biblioteka Ukrainy im. V. I. Vernadskoho* (National Library of Ukraine), Kyiv, F. 217, Op. 1, D. 196, Ll. 97; Boris Meissner, *Partei, Staat und Nation in der Sowjetunion* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1985), p. 305; G. Kļava, V. Millers, and E. Stumbaņa, *Padomju varas konstitucionālie akti Latvijā (1917–1957)* (Riga: Latvijas Valsts Izdevniecība, 1957), pp. 364–374; and Michel Fridiff, “Note bibliographique sur le *Traité de droit constitutionnel soviétique* (1962),” *Revue internationale de droit comparé*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1963), pp. 612–615.

## Transnational Debates over Federalism

The incipient debate over Soviet federalism found two major points of reference and comparison in the international context of the 1950s: North America and the (post)colonial world. Desegregation and decolonization have recently been the objects of much comparative work insisting on the parallels between the two processes. By the mid-1950s, comparisons of the situations of black Americans and colonial peoples were routinely made, although they were sometimes rejected by black activists themselves, such as James Ivy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who declared in September 1956 at the Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Paris) that “the problem of integration [was] not a colonial problem.”<sup>77</sup> A key aspect of the possible comparison and mutual influence between desegregation, decolonization, and de-Stalinization has to do with federalism. In each case, federalism was part of the political situation that unfolded: as a structural constraint for desegregation, as a potential solution for decolonization, and as a work-in-progress for de-Stalinization. This simultaneity helps explain why constitutional issues and federalism could be seen as part of the “peaceful competition” between East and West; more globally, it was an answer to challenges that did not necessarily fit into the Cold War straitjacket and revealed latent fears about cultural, racial, and religious antagonisms.<sup>78</sup> As a result, Soviet leaders and intellectuals in the 1950s increasingly heeded foreign perceptions of federalism in the USSR.<sup>79</sup>

In a striking parallel with the “rights of the republics” in the USSR, the civil rights movement in the United States and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case prompted those in the U.S. South who favored racial segregation to champion “states’ rights.” In a spirit reminiscent of the early nineteenth-century nullification crises, several U.S. states created special organs seeking to prevent encroachments from the federal government. Mississippi took the lead in 1956 by setting up a “State

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77. Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 174.

78. Matthew Connelly, “Taking Off the Cold War Lens—Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 3 (June 2000), pp. 739–769; and Ryan M. Irwin, “Imagining Nation, State and Order in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, No. 37 (April 2012), pp. 12–22.

79. Discussion at the Institute for Law of the Soviet Academy of Sciences of a Ph.D. dissertation defended in Paris by an Iraqi citizen on administrative “decentralization,” 28 April 1955, in ARAN, F. 1934, Op. 1, D. 621, Ll. 4–5; and Maskhud Dzhunusov, *Mezhdunarodnoe znachenie opyta stroitel'stva sotsializma v respublikakh Sovetskogo Vostoka* (Bishkek: Obshchestvo po rasprostraneniyu politicheskikh i nauchnykh znaniy Kirgizskoi SSR, 1958).

Sovereignty Commission,” whose archives nowadays afford valuable insights into the crisis of American federalism at that time.<sup>80</sup> When speaking to foreign audiences about the persistence of segregation in the South, U.S. diplomats regularly alluded to a state-centered federalist conception that hindered attempts to desegregate the country, but they often met with skepticism in the late 1950s.<sup>81</sup>

The Soviet bloc’s denunciation of U.S. racism—long a staple part of Soviet propaganda—was now combined with hefty criticism of the U.S. federal system.<sup>82</sup> If states were strong enough to hinder desegregation, the argument went, federalism played into the hands of reactionary forces and checked whatever progressive measures could be adopted in Washington. The argument encompassed not only segregation but also welfare and labor laws.<sup>83</sup> Soviet observers, however, often made contradictory claims. They would reproach the U.S. federal government for imposing its decisions on the states, arguing that this meant federalism in the United States was but an illusion. This line of argument drew from earlier Soviet and U.S. scholarship that emphasized the rise of the U.S. federal government in the years following passage of the New Deal and the start of the Second World War.<sup>84</sup>

The Cold War conflict between the two systems was waged at the transnational level in part through the question of racial and national policies, which related the conflict to the ongoing issue of decolonization. Most notable was the way this rivalry from the mid-1950s was staged in UNESCO, whose mission to promote mutual understanding and cross-cultural contacts included a program on racial equality. The UN organization put out a series of publications on the topic, including Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *Race and*

80. Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States’ Rights* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. xi–xiii; Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); and Jean-Philippe Feldman, *La bataille américaine du fédéralisme: John S. Calhoun et l’annulation (1828–1833)* (Paris: PUF, 2004).

81. Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 107; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 200–201.

82. Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928–1937* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

83. B. S. Krylov, “O razlichnykh tendentsiyakh razvitiya federatsii v zarubezhnykh gosudarstvakh,” *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 9 (September 1959), p. 65.

84. A favorite of Soviet authors was G. Findlay Shirras, *Federal Finances in Peace and War* (London: MacMillan, 1944).

*History*.<sup>85</sup> In 1954, UNESCO published *Racial Equality and the Law*, an essay on “the role of law in the reduction of discrimination in the United States,” that in effect tried to give an optimistic assessment of desegregation.<sup>86</sup> Two similar projects were commissioned from Soviet scholars after the USSR joined UNESCO in 1954. Mikhail Kammari, an ethnic Finn and specialist in Marxism-Leninism and nationalities policy, was commissioned to write a primer about the Marxist perspective on racism. Soon afterward, two Soviet scholars, I. Tsameryan and S. Ronin, were solicited to write a text on the Soviet experience in fighting racial discrimination.<sup>87</sup> The first version of their manuscript, received in August 1958 by the department of social sciences, glorified the Soviet approach to nationalities policy, which was not distinguished from racial questions, with significant attention devoted to the formal aspects of Soviet federalism. Upon receiving it, Alfred Métraux, an anthropologist and key figure in the department, wrote to T. H. Marshall, head of the department, that “the whole book is a long and dull recital of the Soviet achievements in developing and industrializing the Federal Republics of the Soviet Union. The dullness of the enumeration is almost unbearable.”<sup>88</sup>

Whatever the merits of the comparison between Soviet federalism and U.S. federalism, a second strand of debate had to do with the purported uses of federalism in the colonial context of the 1950s.<sup>89</sup> Here, the ambiguities of the Soviet experience resurfaced. Building on a debate begun by Cooper, one could say that Soviet specialists were trapped between two positions. On the one hand, they did not consider the possibility that colonized peoples could genuinely desire revamped federal unions with their metropolises. Consequently, the federal projects of the 1950s were discarded as neocolonialism and mere window-dressing aimed at dividing national liberation

85. Chloé Maurel, “La question des races: Le programme de l’Unesco,” *Gradhiva: Revue d’anthropologie et d’histoire des arts*, No. 5 (2007), pp. 114–131; Anthony Q. Hazard, *Postwar Anti-Racism: The United States, UNESCO, and “Race,” 1945–1968* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Edgardo C. Krebs, “Popularizing Anthropology—Combating Racism: Alfred Métraux at *The UNESCO Courier*,” in Poul Due Dahl, ed., *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 29–48.

86. Morroe Berger, *Racial Equality and the Law: The Role of Law in the Reduction of Discrimination in the United States* (Paris: UNESCO, 1954).

87. Alfred Métraux to Aleksandr Topchiev (scientific secretary of the Soviet Academy of Sciences), 12 October 1956, in UNESCO Archives, File 3 A 31 “Equality of Rights between Races and Nationalities in the USSR.”

88. Alfred Métraux to T. H. Marshall, 30 January 1959, in UNESCO Archives, File 3 A 31 “Equality of Rights between Races and Nationalities in the USSR.”

89. Michael Collins, “Decolonisation and the ‘Federal Moment,’” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2013), pp. 21–40.

movements.<sup>90</sup> This claim was based on the example of the Central African Federation (CAF), a caricature of a federalist state that was an amalgamation of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. The CAF was created in 1953 by British colonial authorities to ease tensions with white settlers, notably the Labour government of Roy Welensky in Northern Rhodesia, and to counterbalance the influence of apartheid South Africa.<sup>91</sup> The Federation of Malay, created in February 1948 against a backdrop of national tensions and rising insurgency, was also frequently mentioned in critiques of colonial federalism.<sup>92</sup>

On the other hand, as soon as former colonial territories became independent, the Soviet doctrine on federal experiments proved to have significant limitations. When the February 1958 establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) was widely opposed by Arab Communist parties in light of Gamal Abdel Nasser's repression of Communists, Soviet perceptions of the project were at best ambivalent, despite the UAR's avowed anti-imperialism.<sup>93</sup> More generally, Pan-Arabist projects were perceived as hostile to the Soviet Union, an idea notably promoted by the highly influential Iraqi Communist Party.<sup>94</sup> The authors and supporters of these projects were more often than not inspired by the United States, as demonstrated by Sati' al Husri's *Defence of Arabism (Difa' an al-'Uruba*, 1956) and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz's *Unitary State and Federal State (Al-dawla al-muwahhida wa al-dawla al-ittihadiya*, 1960). Al-Bazzaz had toured the United States and, despite being critical of racial segregation, considered U.S. federalism more genuine than its Soviet counterpart. In the USSR, he argued, "all military, political, economic, and industrial powers are in the hands of the federal government."<sup>95</sup> A few years

90. Krylov, "O razlichnykh tendentsiyakh," p. 69.

91. Ronald Hyam, "The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1948–1953," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1987), pp. 145–172; and Philip Murphy, "Government by Blackmail: The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered," in Lynn, ed., *The British Empire in the 1950s*, pp. 53–76.

92. Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942–1948* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991); and S. Gerasimov, *Federatsiya Malajzii (gosudarstvennyi stroi)* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1969).

93. Minutes of a meeting between Khrushchev and Nasser, 30 April 1958, in Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, AVPRF), Moscow, F. 087, Op. 21, P. 44, D. 2, Ll. 7–25, reprinted in Vitalii Naumkin, ed., *Blizhevostochnyi konflikt, 1957–1967* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratiya, 2003), pp. 190–197.

94. Johan Franzén, *Red Star over Iraq: Iraqi Communism Before Saddam* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011).

95. Abd el-Rahman al-Bazzaz, *Al-dawla al-muwahhida wa al-dawla al-ittihadiya* (Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1960), p. 70; and Nathan J. Citino, "The 'Crush' of Ideologies: The United States, the Arab World, and Cold War Modernisation," *Cold War History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2012), pp. 96–97.

later, Soviet officials exercised prudence after the creation of the short-lived Mali Federation (1960), which failed mainly because of Western—particularly French—plots hostile to African unity.<sup>96</sup>

A similar ambiguity can be observed in the exportation of the Soviet federal model to other left-leaning states. As late as April–June 1945, the Seventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party had proclaimed China a “federated republic” (*liánbāng gònghéguó*). Soviet leaders were initially willing to share their experience in nationalities policy with China in the 1950s and contributed to a series of wide-ranging projects involving minority languages and cultures, territorial autonomy, and so on.<sup>97</sup> Cooperative ventures were established between Soviet republics and Chinese institutions to foster direct exchanges about nationalities policy.<sup>98</sup> But Soviet experts and diplomats understood that the Chinese were reluctant to “learn from the USSR” or replicate the Soviet model when it came to defining “nationalities” and establishing a federalist state structure.<sup>99</sup> Disquiet over Xinjiang, Tibet, and other minority regions that were harshly suppressed under Communist rule was foremost among the PRC’s reasons for delaying the adoption of meaningful federalism. A backlash against national elites followed a seminar on nationalities issues held in Qingdao in mid-1957, where local leaders were accused of “local nationalism.”<sup>100</sup> Only after the Sino-Soviet rift at the end of the 1950s could China’s nationalities policy be attacked officially in the USSR and the superiority of the Soviet federal model be asserted.

96. H. Aleksandrenko, “Federatsiya Mali, utvorennya i rozpad,” *Radyans’ke pravo*, No. 6 (November–December 1960), pp. 105–108.

97. Minglang Zhou, “The Fate of the Soviet Model of Multinational State-Building in the People’s Republic of China,” in Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-yu Li, eds., *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present* (Washington, DC: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 484–485.

98. Central School of Political and Legal Cadres (Zhōngyāng zhèngfǎ gǎnbù xuéxiào) to E. Tikhonova, 27 July 1956, and Korets’kyi to the Foreign Department of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 9 August 1957, both in IDP ANU, Op. 1, D. 134, Ll. 28–29 and 49, respectively.

99. Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Wang Jianmin, “Revisiting and Reconsidering the Historical Survey of the Chinese Minority Nationalities Society,” *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001), pp. 59–82.

100. David Brophy, “The 1957–58 Xinjiang Committee Plenum and the Attack on ‘Local Nationalism,’” *Sources and Methods* [blog], 11 December 2017, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/the-1957-58-xinjiang-committee-plenium-and-the-attack-local-nationalism>; Sòng Yuèhóng, “Zhōu Ēnlái yǔ 1957 nián quánguó mínzú gōngzuò zuòtánhuì,” *Dǎngshǐ yánjiū yǔ jiāoxué*, No. 4 (2008), pp. 35–43; and Justin M. Jacobs, “Exile Island: Xinjiang Refugees and the ‘One China’ Policy in Nationalist Taiwan, 1949–1971,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter 2016), pp. 188–218.

## The International Politics of Khrushchev's Constitutional Reform

After Khrushchev announced the creation of a constitutional committee to replace the 1936 constitution, the legacy of a decade of transnational debates about national self-determination, racial equality, and alternatives to colonial empires was felt particularly strongly in the subcommittee that dealt with nationalities policy. Its chairman, Mikoyan, was a veteran of Soviet politics who had survived the pitfalls of Stalinism as commissar and then minister for foreign trade. In February 1955 he became First Deputy Prime Minister, a position he held until 1964. When he retired from politics in December 1965, foreign newspapers hailed him as the “Talleyrand” of Soviet politics and the “survivor of the Kremlin.”<sup>101</sup> Throughout Khrushchev’s time in power, Mikoyan was one of his closest associates and a lead figure in de-Stalinization, delivering the opening speech at the CPSU’s Twentieth Congress. During this period, two aspects were particularly noticeable. He was a major asset for Khrushchev’s foreign policy, thanks to years of interactions with the West, the Eastern Bloc, and, increasingly, the Third World.<sup>102</sup> Having become chair of the fifth subcommittee (i.e., the one responsible for the nationalities question), he was keenly aware of foreign opinions about the Soviet Union. At the same time, he had become the authoritative arbiter of controversies involving the national question, being one of the only non-Slavs on the CPSU Presidium.<sup>103</sup>

At the end of July 1962, Mikoyan invited to his office a small group of experts on the legal and political aspects of Soviet federalism. Among them were David Zlatopol’skii of Moscow State University; two leading constitutional lawyers from the Institute for State and Law of the All-Union Academy of Sciences (Petr Romashkin, and Viktor Kotok); Mikoyan’s brother-in-law Anushavan Arzumanyan, who was head of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and a highly influential figure in the reformist

101. See the compilation of press commentary in Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoi Istorii (Russian State Archive of Social-Political History, RGASPI) Moscow, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 333, L. 10, cited in M. Yu. Pavlov, *Anastas Mikoyan: Politicheskii portret na fone sovetskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 2010), p. 11.

102. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization*, pp. 108–109; and Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, “Economic Growth in the Governance of the Cold War Divide: Mikoyan’s Encounter with Japan, Summer 1961,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring 2018), pp. 129–154.

103. Andreas Oberender, “Am besten wäre es, man schwiege über die Exzesse: Anastas Mikoyan und der geschichtspolitische Konflikt zwischen Armeniern und Aserbaidschanern,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2011), pp. 509–533.

milieu of the time; and the editor of *Pravda*, Atyk Azizjan.<sup>104</sup> The panel also included two familiar figures from the Institute of Philosophy, Mikhail Kamari and Ivan Tsameryan, the latter of whom was embroiled in an international controversy about the merits of Soviet nationalities policy thanks to attacks organized by Western governments and media against his UNESCO-sponsored brochure.<sup>105</sup> Taking advantage of the informal context, the participants spoke their minds and criticized the functioning of the Soviet system. Speaking at length, Zlatopol'skii was outspoken about the defects of the Soviet system. "Lawyers cannot reach agreement," he said, on whether the "Union" (*soyuz* or *soyuznoe gosudarstvo*) was the same as a "federation" (*federatsiya*), an ambiguity recently brought to light by "the famous English professor Carr in a recently published book" (a reference to E. H. Carr's multivolume *History of Soviet Russia*).<sup>106</sup> Zlatopol'skii made his argument clearer by alluding to Lenin's well-known quotation about "fictitious constitutions."<sup>107</sup> Although "the socialist constitution has never been a fiction, some stipulations of our constitution do have a fictitious character," he cautiously added.<sup>108</sup> He specifically cited the possibility of holding referendums and the existence of republic defense ministries, as well as contradictions between the programmatic texts of the party and the state, something that other leading Soviet officials frequently noted in internal reports.<sup>109</sup>

Mikoyan closely heeded these remarks. At the end of the meeting, he asked Romashkin, as head of the Institute for State and Law, to prepare a confidential study of foreign criticism of Soviet nationalities policy, with particular attention to legal and political issues. He had to "be straightforward in collecting all existing statements and summarize them, in particular our weak

104. Yakov Feygin, "Reforming the Cold War State: Economic Thought, Internationalization, and the Politics of Soviet Reform, 1955–1985," Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2017, pp. 52–54.

105. Note from René Maheu to A. Bertrand, 16 April 1963, in UNESCO Archives, File 3 A 31 "Equality of Rights between Races and Nationalities in the USSR"; and G. E. Wheeler, "Review of *Equality of Rights between Races and Nationalities in the U.S.S.R.*," *Race*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 1962), pp. 121–122.

106. Minutes of a meeting between Mikoyan and jurists, 28 July 1962, in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 37, Ll. 51. E. H. Carr discussed Soviet federalism in several of his books, including *A History of Soviet Russia*, Vol. 1: *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923* (London: MacMillan, 1951), pp. 136–137.

107. "A constitution is fictitious when law and reality diverge; it is not fictitious when they coincide." V. I. Lenin, "Kak sotsialisty-revoljutsionery podvodjat itogi revoljutsii i kak revoljutsiya podvela itogo sotsialistam-revoljutsioneram," *Proletarii*, No. 20 (January 1909), reprinted in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 17 (Moscow: Gosizdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1968), pp. 349–353.

108. Minutes of a meeting between Mikoyan and jurists, 28 July 1962, L. 53.

109. See, for example, the internal reports in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (Russian State Archive of Recent History, RGANI), Moscow, Russia, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 441, Ll. 18–23; and Aleksandr Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaya "Ortepel" 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), p. 98.



points, without hiding anything from the most vicious attacks.”<sup>110</sup> Based essentially on West European and North American literature, the report amply fulfilled Mikoyan’s wishes by drawing a dark portrait of the USSR as a pseudo-federalist and neocolonialist state.<sup>111</sup> This argument, though categorically rejected in Soviet public discourse, was thoroughly synthesized in the report, which quoted at length harsh criticism of the regime, including excerpts from a lecture given in Munich by Walter Kolarz, author of *Russia and Her Colonies* (1952), who contended that “the Soviet nationalities policy towards Muslims as well as towards Belarus and Ukraine smacked of classical colonialism.”<sup>112</sup> The lecture had been delivered at the Munich Institute for the Study of the USSR, an organization that frequently attacked Soviet nationalities policies.<sup>113</sup> (The institute, operating from 1950 to 1971, was secretly funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, unbeknownst to most of its affiliates.) By the time Romashkin wrote his 1962 report, the international context that had informed Kolarz’s writings in the early 1950s had changed. With colonial territories now independent, the USSR’s union-republic structure had lost most of its appeal.

This loss of attraction could be offset on multiple levels. The fetish for political “independence,” which camouflaged the persistence of Western imperialist interests, could be criticized. The level of economic development attained by the Soviet republics could be flatteringly compared to the levels achieved by many of the newly independent countries, and foreign diplomats and delegations were regularly invited to the USSR to admire the achievements of the republics, as well as the concrete signs of their sovereignty: their parliaments, governments, and ministries of foreign affairs.<sup>114</sup> A more political response was still needed, however, insofar as some Western actors were keen to exploit the

110. Minutes of a meeting between Mikoyan and jurists, 28 July 1962, Ll. 51.

111. Report “Ob osvshchenii v burzhuaznoi literature sovsetskoi natsional’noi politiki i natsional’no-gosudarstvennogo stroitel’stva,” 13 September 1962, in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 37, Ll. 64–78. This report was circulated among high-ranking Soviet officials, as demonstrated by Jamil Hasanli, *Khrushchev’s Thaw and National Identity in Soviet Azerbaijan, 1954–1959* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), p. 440.

112. “Ob osvshchenii v burzhuaznoi literature sovsetskoi natsional’noi politiki,” L. 65.

113. Charles T. O’Connell, *The Munich Institute for the Study of the USSR: Origins and Social Composition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies 1990).

114. Report of the Protocol Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a visit of foreign diplomats to Georgia, 6 March 1961, in Sakartvelos Shinagan sakmeta Saminist’ros Arkivi—P’olitik’uri Arkivi (Georgian Security Archives—Party Archives), Tbilisi, F. 14, Op. 36, D. 266, Ll. 2–7; Report of Soviet ambassador to Canada, Arutjunjan, 9 May 1960, in HAA, F. 1, Op. 40, D. 67, Ll. 94–95; and Elidor Mēhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 57–61.

more jaundiced perceptions of Soviet federalism and sought to make use of the League for the Liberation of the Peoples of the USSR and numerous other émigré lobbies and organizations that had come into being, which explicitly used an anti-colonial framing of their fight against Communism.<sup>115</sup> On 26 September 1960, during the UN General Assembly, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker launched a salvo of accusations against Soviet policies and actions in Eastern Europe, including the domination of “captive peoples” and the incorporation of the Baltic states and Ukraine into the USSR.<sup>116</sup> The declaration was all the more provocative as it was made in front of the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Nikolai Podgorny. A legacy of the 1944 constitutional reform, Ukraine’s (and Belorussia’s) presence in the UN posed a risk for the USSR if Western powers decided to attack the Ukrainian SSR’s credentials. In 1960–1962, the Ukrainian and Belorussian delegations to the UN grew alarmed whenever “Soviet colonialism” was mentioned, and some feared the Western powers would ask that the two republics be excluded from the UN.<sup>117</sup> However, the impact of Diefenbaker’s attack was mitigated by disagreement among the Western countries about the relevance of his campaign, with British diplomats particularly reluctant to support his comments.<sup>118</sup>

The structure of the Soviet public sphere and the censorship of information meant that the impact of such attacks on the Soviet regime was less than the impact in the United States of international coverage of the civil rights crisis in the U.S. South. However, altercations at the UN and elsewhere did have an impact on domestic developments in the USSR. Soviet legal experts

115. For a presentation on one such group, the League for the Liberation of the Peoples of the USSR (formed in March 1953), see the first issue of the journal *Problems of the Peoples of the USSR*, No. 1 (1958); and Pierre du Bois, “Cold War, Culture and Propaganda, 1953 to 1975,” in Wilfried Loth and Georges Henri-Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–1975* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2008), p. 18.

116. Jamie Glazov, *Canadian Policy toward Khrushchev’s Soviet Union* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), pp. 98–99; Jaroslav Petryshyn, “The ‘Ethnic Question’ Personified: Ukrainian Canadians and Canadian-Soviet Relations, 1917–1991,” in Rhonda L. Hinthner and Jim Mochoruk, eds., *Re-Imagining Ukrainian-Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 240; and Mary Ann Heiss, “Exposing ‘Red Colonialism’: U.S. Propaganda at the United Nations, 1953–1963,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 2015), pp. 82–115.

117. Ukrainian Foreign Minister (Luka Palamarchuk) to the Ukrainian CP Central Committee, 17 October 1962, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 24, D. 5562, Ll. 190, 195–196; and Minutes of the Scientific Committee of the Department of Law, Belorussian Academy of Sciences, 9 January 1960, in TsNA ANB, F. 4, Op. 1, D. 14, Ll. 25.

118. Minutes of a FO meeting on Soviet colonialism, 4 February 1963, in TNAUK, DO 181/48; and Asa McKercher, “The Trouble with Self-Determination: Canada, Soviet Colonialism and the United Nations, 1960–1963,” *International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2016), pp. 343–364.

and officials pinpointed the negative impact of Article 14 of the 1936 constitution, which limited the sovereignty of Soviet republics. The point was debated in Mikoyan's subcommittee, and a suggestion was made to erase this section of the article. Moreover, Mikoyan proposed that the right of secession each republic enjoyed should be codified in more solidly in the future constitution.<sup>119</sup> The international activity of Soviet republics was also perceived as a way to bolster claims about their sovereignty. Lawyers made suggestions that were more technical. From the late 1950s onward, experts often suggested that the treaty-making capacity and international legal powers of the Soviet republics should be clarified. Article 18-a of the constitution had to be amended to allow republics to conclude "treaties," not just "agreements."<sup>120</sup> In June 1962 at the beginning of the constitutional process, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Luka Palamarchuk wrote to Podgornyi to insist on this point and to emphasize that the right of each republic to "ratify" and "denounce" treaties should be made explicit. He noted that foreign diplomats had been asking about the treaty-making capacity of the Ukrainian SSR: "At the International Labor Organization doubts have been expressed for many years about the legal capacity of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet Presidium to ratify international labor conventions."<sup>121</sup> Internationalization thus had a concrete impact on political actors in the USSR, and the debate over Khrushchev's constitution reveals that Soviet citizens themselves had not forgotten this issue. In a letter to the Supreme Soviet in January 1963, a certain S. Zibrev demanded that all republics be admitted into the UN: "Why are all British dominions members of the UN, while they were until recently colonies or half-colonies? Why are colonies and territories dependent upon the U.S. members of the UN?"<sup>122</sup>

## The Cold War and Soviet Inflationary Federalism

Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964 ended the constitutional reform effort. (When the issue of reform was revived in the 1970s, it moved forward

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119. Preliminary notes for the Constitution project, n.d., in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 37, Ll. 34.

120. M. V. Janovskii, "Suverenitet Uzbekskoi SSR kak ravnopravnogo chlena Sovetskoi Federatsii—SSSR—i ee mezhdunarodnaya pravosub'ektnost'," *O'zbekiston ijtimoiiy fanlar*, No. 1 (1962), pp. 21–22.

121. Luka Palamarchuk to Nikolai Podgornyi, 18 June 1962, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 24, D. 5501, Ll. 17–19.

122. Summary of letters sent to the Constitutional Committee in January 1963, 12 February 1963, in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 40, Ll. 82–84.

without any of the innovative aspects proposed a decade earlier.) This aborted constitutional process was nonetheless important in entrenching the federal character of the Soviet Union. In 1961, the passages of the party program that mentioned the “decreasing significance of borders between the Soviet republics” were much commented on and disputed. Far from promoting such a decline, the early 1960s confirmed the centrality of the union’s republics. This centrality was illustrated by Khrushchev’s failed attempt to create regional authorities as replacements for the CPSU’s Central Asian Bureau (December 1962) and Transcaucas Bureau (January–February 1963) in order to improve economic coordination and planning.<sup>123</sup> The creation of such structures was not Khrushchev’s only misguided effort on the matter. Letters were also sent to the constitutional committee advocating the reestablishment of internal federations within the Soviet Union, in the Baltics, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.<sup>124</sup> These structures, however, were but pale copies of their namesakes in the 1920s and 1930s and in no way forestalled direct subordination of the republics to Moscow. They were disbanded in late October 1964 at the request of republic leaders. A similar fate awaited other regional structures, such as the Baltic Planning Commission (1963–1966). The elimination of these organs helped stimulate economic nationalism in the republics, as demonstrated by Saulius Grybkauskas and other scholars.<sup>125</sup>

The Cold War debate over Soviet federalism actually strengthened the political constraints of Communist ideology. Although Communism initially heralded the end of national differences—and nominally held to that idea until the end—Soviet federalism created an inverse trajectory whereby all nationalities strove to attain the rank of union republic.<sup>126</sup> The correlation between the status of the territory assigned to each nationality created a series of hierarchies that culminated in the hierarchy of the union republics. The equation of union republic status with national “maturity” and full development was already strong in the mid-1930s, prompting Stalin to criticize the idea of an automatic transfer from one category to another during deliberations about the new constitution. “The Tatar republic,” he stated on 25 November 1936, “may remain an autonomous republic, whereas Kazakhstan becomes a Union

123. Decision of the CPSU Presidium on the *Sredazbyuro*, 20 December 1962, in RGANI, F. 3, Op. 18, D. 117, Ll. 5–8; and Decision of the CPSU Presidium on the *Zakbyuro*, 7 February 1963, in RGANI, F. 3, Op. 18, D. 132, Ll. 6–8.

124. Summary of letters sent to the Constitutional Committee in November 1962, 8 December 1962, in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 40, Ll. 42–43.

125. See, for example, Saulius Grybkauskas, *Sovietinė nomenklatūra ir pramonė Lietuvoje 1965–1985* (Vilnius: LII Ieidykla, 2011).

126. Olivier Roy, *La nouvelle Asie centrale ou la fabrique des nations* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1997), p. 10.

republic, but this does not mean that the latter is more culturally and economically developed than the former. The reverse is true.”<sup>127</sup> In an apparent attempt to check the perceived superiority of union republics, he mentioned three minimal criteria for obtaining union status: a geographical location on the periphery of the USSR (to make feasible the secession right); a “more or less compact” demographic majority; and a population equal to at least one million people.<sup>128</sup>

De-Stalinization was an opportunity to criticize Stalin’s theses about union status. The Mikoyan subcommittee emphasized that Stalin’s criteria were obsolete. Romashkin remarked that Ukraine, Belorussia, and Moldova were no longer border republics after the creation of the “people’s democracies” in East-Central Europe.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, human migration in the USSR had transformed the demographic balance of many republics, notably in Central Asia and the Baltic region.<sup>130</sup> Kazakhstan at that point was only 28 percent ethnic Kazakh as a result of Stalin-era mass deportations of minorities to Central Asia and influxes of Slavs during the “Virgin Lands” campaign. However, path dependence was illustrated by the subcommittee’s aversion to downgrading a union republic. Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who at the time was prime minister of Kazakhstan and a member of the subcommittee, wrote to Mikoyan that the demographic majority requirement was inappropriate and that there was no justification for a demotion.<sup>131</sup> Demotion after World War II had happened only once, in July 1956, when the Karelo-Finnish SSR was transformed into an autonomous republic within Russia.<sup>132</sup> At that time, Kazakhstan’s northern region was threatening to establish itself as a separate entity, and its leader, T. I. Sokolov, was proposing to create a union republic for the Virgin Lands.<sup>133</sup>

By the early 1960s, Stalin’s criteria were being criticized for “preventing autonomous republics from gaining union status.” A 1963 textbook of the

127. “O proekte Konstitutsii Soyuza SSR: Doklad na Chrezvychajnom VIII Vsesoyuznom s’ezde Sovetov, 25 noyabrja 1936 goda,” in *Sochineniya*, Vol. 14 (Moscow: Pisatel’, 1997), p. 140.

128. *Ibid.*, pp. 140–141.

129. Minutes of a meeting between Mikoyan and jurists, 28 July 1962, Ll. 48.

130. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia’s Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

131. Kunaev to Mikoyan, 10 January 1963, in RGASPI, F. 84, Op. 3, D. 37, Ll. 107–108.

132. David Zlatopol’skii and Oleg Chistjakov, *Obrazovanie Soyuza SSR* (Moscow: Juridicheskaya Literatura, 1972), p. 286; Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 197–198; and Hazard, *Managing Change in the U.S.S.R.*, p. 22. On Finno-Karelia, see Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, 1920–1939* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2007).

133. Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaya “Ottepel,”* pp. 172–173.

Higher Party School even deemed them a “leftover of the erroneous *autonomization* policy.”<sup>134</sup> Union status was therefore restored as a legitimate aspiration for nationalities across the Soviet Union, creating expectations for a legally authorized process of long-term national realization. Each national group could strive for a higher level of statehood: smaller groups such as Assyrians and Kurds could petition Armenian and Azeri authorities to obtain a form of national autonomy.<sup>135</sup> In each of these local situations, a discourse of Soviet citizenship could be turned against the supremacy of titular ethnic groups in the republic while simultaneously embracing ethnicity to argue for similar rights.<sup>136</sup> The tension was particularly acute in the autonomous republics. The Institute for State and Law suggested in the late 1950s that their prerogatives be augmented and cemented constitutionally.<sup>137</sup> But the subcommittee proposed that, unlike the union republics, the autonomous republics would not be deemed “sovereign,” an outcome that fueled conflicts in some areas, especially Abkhazia, an autonomous republic within Georgia that had enjoyed the ad hoc status of a “treaty republic” from 1921 to 1931.<sup>138</sup>

Even the nature of the autonomous republics as “states” was disputed. Many Soviet lawyers limited this category to the union republics.<sup>139</sup> This restriction was important given the exaltation of the *statehood* of union republics since the late 1950s. Combined with the notion of sovereignty, use of the term “statehood” was a practical way to enter a postcolonial era without addressing the issue of independence. Statehood emphasized the existence of political, administrative, economic, and cultural institutions in union republics. Although it was used in propaganda abroad concerning the achievements of Soviet federalism, especially the international activity of Soviet republics, it was also important for domestic propaganda, serving as the only

134. Boris Kravtsov, ed., *Torzhestvo Leninskoi natsional'noi politiki* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo VPSH i AON, 1963), p. 238.

135. Kurdish citizens to Azerbaijani CP Central Committee, February 1963, in Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin İşlər İdarəsinin Siyasi Sənədlər Arxivi (Presidential Archive of Azerbaijan), Baku, F. 1, Op. 50, D. 18, Ll. 142–153, cited in Cəmil Həsənli, *Azərbaycanda Sovet liberalizmi* (Baku: Qanun, 2018), pp. 504–509; and Aleksander Ishoev to Khrushchev, 15 December 1961, in HAA, F. 1, Op. 42, D. 59, Ll. 3–4.

136. Zbigniew Wojnowski, “The Soviet People: National and Supranational Identities in the USSR after 1945,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2015), p. 5.

137. V. Kotok to CPSU Department of Science, 28 February 1958, in ARAN, F. 1934, Op. 1, D. 708, Ll. 27–31.

138. Nino Kemoklidze, “Georgian-Abkhaz Relations in the Post-Stalinist Era,” in Blauvelt and Smith, eds., *Georgia after Stalin*, pp. 129–145.

139. Mariya Blum et al., *Gosudarstvenno-pravovoe stroitel'stvo Latviiskoi SSR* (Riga: Zinatne, 1968), p. 52.

legitimate and ideologically acceptable form of expressing nationalism in the Soviet Union. This explains the extraordinary rise of the concept as a staple of civic education. For example, each union republic developed textbooks and brochures on the “State and Law of Republic X” to be circulated to a wide audience. Such efforts were particularly important in the Baltic republics, Armenia, and Ukraine, which had to deal with strong émigré communities. In Latvia, Soviet lawyers conceived their *History of State and Law of the Latvian SSR (1917 to 1967)* for “all citizens interested in the history of the legal and state development of our republic.”<sup>140</sup> The stabilization of republic leaders under Leonid Brezhnev allowed for a routine exaltation of “our republic,” to the point that Ukraine’s long-time leader, Petro Shelest, compared Ukraine’s achievements to those of West European countries. The border between orthodoxy and sedition was thin, however, and Shelest’s political opponents used the opportunity to denounce his claims for supposedly creating a “sense of economic self-sufficiency” that was bound to “lead to politically harmful consequences.”<sup>141</sup>

Adversaries of the regime were all too alert to ways they could use the official rhetoric on the nationalities issue. Starting in the 1950s, Ukrainian émigrés had argued that the best strategy to fight the Soviet regime was not to deny the international personality of the Soviet republics. On the contrary, as early as 1953 Holub considered that Ukrainian SSR membership in the UN could foster nationalist feelings in the republic and, in the long run, political independence.<sup>142</sup> As a lawyer, he rejected the claim made by some émigrés that Ukraine was a “stateless nation,” suggesting instead that émigrés ask whether the Ukrainian state was really “sovereign” and “independent.”<sup>143</sup> In the Soviet Union itself, dissidents also used the national trappings of the regime to push their demands. Whereas human rights activists could shield themselves behind the provisions of the Helsinki agreement, the right of secession was invoked by many nationalists after the March 1956 unrest in Georgia.<sup>144</sup> In the 1960s, a series of trials involved “Ukrainian lawyers” who wanted

140. Minutes of a meeting of the Department for State and Law at the Latvian State University, 12 June 1969, in LVA, F. 1340, Op. 39, Ll. 30, Lp. 166a.

141. N. Shamota, B. Babii, and Ya. Shevelev to Ukrainian CP Central Committee, 12 September 1972, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 16, D. 111, Ll. 10.

142. Holub, *Ukraina v Ob’ednanykh Natsiyakh*, p. 5.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

144. On 9 March 1956, Georgian First Secretary Vasil Mzhavanadze received an anonymous letter urging him to summon a special session of the Georgian Supreme Soviet to exercise Georgia’s right to

the Ukrainian SSR to exercise its right to secession under Article 14 of its constitution.

“Should Article 14 of the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR be put into effect, the political order in Ukraine would remain Soviet, and the economic order would remain socialist. As a socialist state Ukraine would remain within the commonwealth of socialist countries,” Stepan Virun wrote from his deportation camp in Mordovia.<sup>145</sup> In a letter sent to the chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet in May 1967, one of the “Ukrainian lawyers” emphasized that the Ukrainian SSR had signed in December 1960 the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.<sup>146</sup> In the 1960s, the apparent consolidation of Communist regimes gave traction to such internal and constitutionalist dissent. Among émigré communities, mavericks embraced curious projects that turned the Soviet constitution against its creators, while claiming to work for peace and stability. Among these was a project devised by a few U.S.-based Estonians, led by a young engineer-cum-political scientist, Rein Taagepera, who sent to Soviet and Western leaders in 1964–1966 a memorandum advocating a policy change toward the Baltic republics. The group suggested that the West abandon the non-recognition policy and that the Soviet Union agree to convert the Baltic republics into “people’s democracies” like those in Eastern Europe, based on what the group’s members perceived to be internal trends in the Baltic republics themselves and the opportunities of détente.<sup>147</sup> Such a proposal illustrates a juncture between domestic and transnational spheres of debate. Although the idea was already perceived as outlandish in the 1960s and generated barbed criticism from later Estonian anti-Soviet activists, it was submitted at a time when the existence of a nationalist underground was revealed by clandestine publications and manifests smuggled out of the Soviet Union.<sup>148</sup>

secede. Yurii Aksyutin, *Khrushchevskaya “otpepel” i obshchestvennyye nastroyeniya v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), pp. 212–213.

145. Stepan Virun to Oles’ Honchar, 1966, reprinted in Michael Browne, ed., *Ferment in the Ukraine: Documents by V. Chornovil, I. Kandyba, L. Lukyanenko, V. Moroz and Others* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 47.

146. Browne, ed., *Ferment in the Ukraine*, p. 91.

147. Rein Taagepera, “Baltic Quest for a Hungarian Path, 1965,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (March 2013), pp. 19–47.

148. Report of the Soviet embassy in Canada, 27 September 1971, in ERA-R, F. 1970, Op. 1, D. 267, Ll. 158–160; and Lars Fredrick Stöcker, “The 1972 Memorandum to the United Nations and Its Repercussions: Émigré Politics and Soviet Estonian Dissent during the ‘Era of Stagnation,’” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2017), pp. 109–133.



## Conclusion

In October 1980 an international conference was held in Erevan on the “resolution of the national question” in the USSR and its relevance for developing countries in Asia and Africa.<sup>149</sup> The conference tried to demonstrate that the USSR’s nationalities policy and federal structure could be useful, but African and Asian delegates confined themselves to broad, noncommittal declarations. By this date, Soviet federalism had clearly lost its appeal and was no longer a major reference. Nonetheless, Soviet federalism was part of the transnational debate on the future of composite polities and thus was emblematic of new political currents in the Cold War confrontation. This indicates that the debates of the 1950s were more complex than usually assumed and that issues such as imperial reform, civil rights, and de-Stalinization need to be linked. But whether Cooper’s thesis about the diversity of paths that could have been taken is valid is another matter. Soviet official propaganda did showcase union republics as models for newly independent states in the Third World but never clarified the exact meaning of the comparison. At a time when U.S. federalism was in trouble and colonial empires, facing the prospect of a hasty end, were looking for a path to renewal, Soviet federalism could potentially have had appeal for Third World leaders. However, in longing for the demise of colonial empires, the Communists never supported federal reforms that would have been most similar to the Soviet example. Although the display of sovereign union republics and their achievements might have been useful during the transition period from empire to independence, the political message conveyed by the USSR was not in favor of multinational federations.

This point highlights the relevance of the Cold War. The new visibility of the Soviet republics in international propaganda and Western attacks on “Red Colonialism” did not necessarily change the overall structure of Soviet federalism, but the impact of the negative comments was still felt at multiple levels. First, they definitively cemented the republic-based structure of the country and the proclamation of republican sovereignty, as revealed by the debates of the Mikoyan subcommittee in 1962–1964. As Soviet diplomatic correspondence makes clear, foreign criticism of nationalities policy and federal mechanisms in the USSR did not go unheeded by Soviet leaders. Second, leaders in the republics grew accustomed to using international arguments when seeking to extract concessions from the central government. Kalinovsky’s argument

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149. A. Gromyko, ed., *Sovetskii opyt resheniya natsional'nogo voprosa i ego znachenie dlya narodov Afriki i Azii* (Erevan: Izdatel'stvo AN Armyanskoi SSR, 1982), p. 5.

about Central Asia can thus be extended to all republics of the USSR. Finally, the Soviet evolutionary approach to national identity and statehood, as well as routine mentions of the sovereignty of the republics and their international relations and recognition, fostered grassroots expectations well into the 1980s and provided nationalist activists with tools they readily seized during perestroika.

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