

Towards global equilibrium: American foundations and Indian modernization, 1950s to 1970s*

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Abstract

This article studies the activities of American philanthropic foundations in India between the 1950s and 1970s. It discusses why private institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation felt committed to responding to problems of hunger and population growth abroad and how they managed to establish themselves as leaders in the development aid arena. Instead of considering the foundations as handmaidens of US national strategic interests shaped by the Cold War, the article argues that they should be understood as highly flexible transnational agents who, in an ambitious combination of philanthropic motives, institutional interests, and trust in the power of science, diagnosed political problems and developed methods to overcome them in order to reduce global inequality.

Keywords development aid, Cold War, India, modernization, philanthropy

Introduction

American modernization and development programmes in the so-called ‘Third World’ after 1945 have long been considered part of the attempt to establish capitalist structures in non-Western parts of the world, to combat communism, and to realize American hegemonic ambitions abroad. In this context, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation have often been portrayed as Washington’s handmaidens. The story goes like this: after the Second World War, the foundations, as representatives of the American establishment, feared that communism could spread throughout the newly decolonized regions and endanger the economic interests, security, and privileges of the Western nations in general and the United States in particular. Hence the foundations became active in the field of development aid, which was anchored in modernization theory, an activist form of academic anti-communism. According to modernization theory, poverty led to instability and provided a seed-bed for socialist ideas; therefore, the standard of living of the poor nations had to be

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improved and their population growth rate had to be slowed down. This neo-Malthusian line of thinking was informed, in part, by the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which had taught observers that peasants might revolt if their socioeconomic conditions did not improve substantially. Another historical observation provided the background for the favoured solution to the perceived problem: after 1945, Europe and Japan had profited from the Marshall Plan, which had succeeded in preventing both from joining the Soviet camp or opting for a third way. Acutely aware of the strategic advantage that their institutional and financial flexibility implied, eager to prove their ability to help defend alleged national interests, and with political support from Washington, the Rockefeller and Ford foundations set out to repeat the economic miracle in the 'Third World'. This meant providing technology, money, and experts to the new nations to anchor them in the capitalist matrix. Compared to this overarching goal, individual concerns and egalitarian ideas mattered little. They could not compete with the attraction of fast growth rates and political prestige, and they could not withstand the pressure that American politicians, businessmen, experts, and philanthropists put on the 'developing countries' to embrace the technocratic market ideology that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund would later promote.¹

There is no doubt that many of the elements contained in this story influenced the ways in which American development and modernization programmes were planned and implemented in the 'Third World' after 1945. Cold War strategic interests and anti-communism did figure prominently in many American minds after the War, as did the belief in the superiority of capitalism. The philanthropic foundations did play an important role in promoting American elite interests of all sorts. Development aid was, to a large degree, an instrument of foreign policy and business interests. But it was much more than that. It was a combination of utopian ideas, the belief in planning, and philanthropy, and it embodied different approaches to interpreting crises and fighting 'backwardness'. If one follows the historical documents' anti-communist rhetoric too closely and limits one's view to the conflict between Washington and Moscow, one misses several elements that complicate the story and give it a different, more complex, less teleological character. Due to the historicization of the Cold War, easier access to archival materials, and a new awareness of the relevance of transnational and global processes, a new picture has emerged with regard to the relations between Western and non-Western societies, experts, and elites; between ideological and political factors; and between modernization discourses and practices. This perspective, which is informed by the concepts of knowledge societies and the transfer of knowledge, does not intend to render earlier findings irrelevant.² Rather, it aims at re-evaluating the role of the Cold War, and it takes into greater consideration processes and developments that were not necessarily rooted in, or caused by, the conflict. This also means looking more closely at the role of private and transnational actors and their interests and motives. As Matthew Connelly has argued, 'Exploring the multiplicity and mobility

1 See, for example, Eric B. Ross, *The Malthus factor: poverty, politics and population in capitalist development*, New York: Zed Books, 1998; Edward H. Berman, *The ideology of philanthropy: the influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American foreign policy*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983. More generally Arturo Escobar, *Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

2 David C. Engerman, 'Bernath Lecture: American knowledge and global power', *Diplomatic History*, 31, 4, 2007, pp. 599–622.

of discourses through specific institutions and policies allows us not only to discover their varied and paradoxical consequences but also to connect text and context, cultural practices and political economy.³ I believe that the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation offer important insight into how the problem of inequality gained its global quality and how the belief in the power of expert knowledge, planning, and technological solutions to structural problems gained such immense influence in the post-war era.

In what follows, I will offer a critical reading of the activities of the Rockefeller and Ford foundations in India between the 1950s and the 1970s, with a focus on the nexus between agricultural reform and population policies. The modernization of India's agriculture was supposed to put an end to poverty, dependence on food aid, and 'underdevelopment', while simultaneously undermining the attraction of the Soviet development model. Inseparable from the issue of hunger was the 'population problem', which the philanthropic foundations helped to diagnose. Reducing population growth was considered imperative to preventing political turmoil and providing the ground for economic growth and overall development. I argue that the philanthropic foundations acted as transnational distributors of knowledge, or 'know-how', and contributed to creating a global community of modernization experts and modernization culture that had a lasting impact on the 'Third World' countries involved. It should be understood that this article is primarily interested in the American perspective on and American projects in India. One should remember, however, that Indian politicians, bureaucrats, and experts had their own ideas, visions, and concerns about development and modernization, many of which went back to colonial development experiences, and that the Americans studied here constituted only one group of many involved in India.⁴

The article begins with a glance at the mindset of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation and their respective fields of activity in the post-war era, linked to a discussion of the role of modernization theory and practice and the prominence of development economics and planning with regard to 'Third World' development. I then discuss agricultural modernization and family planning programmes in India initiated and/or supported by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. In the last part of the article, I sketch the changes in foundation development activities in the 1970s and summarize my findings.

The mindset: population, food, the Cold War, and modernization

In the post-war era, the Rockefeller and Ford foundations established themselves as two of the most influential institutions in the field of Western development aid. During and after the Second World War, when the international situation was about to change dramatically, not least with regard to the colonies, the Rockefeller Foundation specified its fields of activity in response to the world's pressing problems. Among them were 'world hunger'

3 Matthew Connelly, 'Taking off the Cold War lens: visions of North-South conflict during the Algerian war for independence', *American Historical Review*, 105, 3, 2000, pp. 766-7.

4 See, among others, Manu Goswami, *Producing India: from colonial economy to national space*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004; Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India: an intellectual and social history, c. 1930-50*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

and ‘human ecology’.⁵ While, in the early 1940s, the foundation’s considerations had focused on Europe, its attention shifted to the non-European world in the 1950s – with regard not only to food supplies but also to levels of wealth and poverty in general.⁶ Discussing ‘the great enemies of the welfare of mankind’, a programme director of the Rockefeller Foundation stated in 1951: ‘Hunger, the incapacity of the hungry, the resulting general want, the pressures of expanding and demanding population, and the reckless instability of people who have nothing to lose and perhaps something to gain by embracing new political ideologies designed not to create individual freedom but to destroy it – these seem to be basic dangers of our present world.’ From that, it followed that ‘Americans . . . must, in their own enlightened self-interest and not motivated merely by generosity or sentimental humanitarianism, do everything within their power to raise the living standards of their neighbors’.⁷ This position provided the background for the Rockefeller Foundation’s international activities over the next two decades.

A similar perception of the world’s problems in the post-war era propelled the Ford Foundation’s metamorphosis from a regionally into an internationally active foundation. Based on the recommendations of an expert committee, the foundation (established in 1936) reinvented itself in the late 1940s as an energetic anti-totalitarian force and took on the problem of poverty in the non-Western world, especially in Asia. ‘Democracy is on trial in an area where up to now economic well-being exists only potentially and the revolutionary temper still rules politically. . . . If democracy should fail, . . . communism will be immeasurably and perhaps decisively strengthened and a third world war made virtually inescapable.’⁸ Speeding up economic development to prevent poverty from providing a seed-bed for political radicalism became the central task of the Ford Foundation’s work abroad. The largest American foundation in terms of capital, Ford started its ambitious Overseas Development Program in 1951 and quickly became a major player on the development field.

The focus on the foundations’ post-war development efforts should not suggest that the idea of promoting economic and social development abroad as such was new. Colonial powers had long practised what was called ‘colonial development’, with the goal of making the colonies profitable (*mise en valeur*) and/or reducing the colonial populations’ dissatisfaction with miserable living conditions in order to stabilize colonial rule.⁹ American

5 Rockefeller Archive Center, Rockefeller Foundation, Record Group (hereafter RAC, RF, RG) 3.2, series 900, box 29, folder 156, ‘Special report to the Board of Scientific Directors of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation: human ecology (population)’, 4 November 1949 (900 PRO Pop 1).

6 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, Series 900, box 39, folder 207, ‘Food as a possible field of interest for the Rockefeller Foundation: collected memoranda’, 4 November 1943 (900 PRO Food 1).

7 RAC, RF, RG 3, series 915, box 3, folder 23, Warren Weaver (Rockefeller Foundation), ‘The world food problem, agriculture, and the Rockefeller Foundation’, 21 June 1951.

8 Ford Foundation Archives (hereafter FFA), Report 003306, Ford Foundation, ‘The problems of Asia and the Near East in relation to world peace’, 16 April 1953. See also the *Report of the study for the Ford Foundation on policy and program*, Detroit: n.p., 1949.

9 Herward Sieberg, *Colonial development: die Grundlegung moderner Entwicklungspolitik durch Großbritannien*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African society: the labor question in French and British Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Dirk van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur: Deutsche Planungen für eine Erschließung Afrikas 1880 bis 1960*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004; Joseph M. Hodge, *Triumph of the expert: agrarian doctrines of development and the legacies of British colonialism*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.

foundations, such as church groups and other non-governmental organizations involved in one or other kind of civilizing mission,¹⁰ had early on been involved in international development efforts. The Rockefeller Foundation, founded in 1913 by the oil magnate John D. Rockefeller, had a long tradition of engaging abroad. In the 1920s and 1930s, its trustees had appropriated large sums to public health and agricultural projects in China, Latin America, and Africa.¹¹ The Carnegie Corporation had sponsored vocational training schools in British Africa.¹² While sometimes critical of colonial rule, the foundations' perception that poverty presented a political and economic challenge had prompted them to engage and, sometimes, cooperate with colonial administrations in addressing 'underdevelopment'.

What was new after the Second World War, and what made the foundations decide to take on the gigantic task of alleviating poverty and reducing inequality on a *global* level, was the combination of the 'scientization' of the social and the internationalization of the American perspective. Both factors were directly linked to the Second World War. As part of the war effort, American anthropologists had begun to survey Asian and African cultures, and many continued their work in the newly blossoming field of area studies after the War.¹³ The same was true of many geographers who 'discovered' the non-Western world during the War and went on to systematize their theories in military laboratories in the Cold War years.¹⁴ Decolonization and the Cold War drew lasting attention to 'remote' regions and their peoples, whose living conditions seemed much worse than those one could find at home (with the exception of the African American population in the South). Development economics provided the image of poverty abroad with a scientific basis. New empirical and statistical methods allowed for an utmost 'real' description of a nation's development situation – from average income to saving rates, from the number of schools and hospitals per inhabitant to literacy rates. The 'trust in numbers' so characteristic of the post-war era went back to the 1930s, when the New Deal had promoted the professional standing of social scientists, especially economists, and had paved the way for economics to become a lead discipline with immense influence on public life.¹⁵

10 Margherita Zanasi, 'Exporting development: the League of Nations and republican China', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 49, 1, 2007, pp. 143–69.

11 John Farley, *To cast out disease: a history of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation (1913–1951)*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003; Marcus Cueto, ed., *Missionaries of science: the Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994; Corinne A. Pernet, 'Die Zivilisierungsmission der Zivilgesellschaft: die andere Art der US-Intervention in Lateinamerika von 1910 bis 1945', in Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Zivilisierungsmissionen: imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005, pp. 311–33.

12 Edward H. Berman, 'Educational colonialism in Africa: the role of the American foundations, 1910–1945', in Robert F. Arnove, ed., *Philanthropy and cultural imperialism: the foundations at home and abroad*, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980, pp. 179–201.

13 See, for example, Ron Robin, *The making of the Cold War enemy: culture and politics in the military-intellectual complex*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001; Herbert S. Lewis, 'Anthropology, the Cold War, and intellectual history', in Regna Darnell and Frederic W. Gleach, eds., *Histories of anthropology*, vol. 1, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, pp. 99–113.

14 Matthew Farish, 'Creating Cold War climates: the laboratories of American globalism', in John R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger, eds., *Environmental histories of the Cold War*, Washington, DC and New York: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 51–83.

15 Theodore Rosenof, *Economics in the long run: New Deal theorists and their legacies, 1933–1993*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997; Robert Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis and the*

The numbers established by data surveys of the former colonies suggested that a huge gap existed between what came to be understood as the ‘First’ and the ‘Third’ Worlds. Sooner or later, many observers agreed, this situation would lead to social unrest and political instability not only in the ‘Third World’ countries but also on a global scale. As early as 1953, John E. Gordon, a public health specialist at Harvard University who received support from the Rockefeller Foundation for a research project on the possibilities of ‘family limitation’ in India, stated: ‘Overpopulation is a *global* problem. Communications, transport and trade have made the world a unit, a single epidemiological universe. Overpopulation in one region or continent is the concern of all others.’¹⁶ The systems approach that Gordon employed was characteristic of American social science in the 1950s, when cybernetics, game theory, and modelling (some of whose roots went back to wartime operations research) left a visible mark on the thinking of an entire generation of scholars.¹⁷ According to the systems logic, developmental, income, and population inequality provided a threat to the stability of the globe. It therefore seemed extremely urgent to close or at least reduce the material gap between the ‘First’ and ‘Third’ Worlds, and that meant elevating the standards of living abroad via modernization. Like Dean Rusk, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation who would become Secretary of State under John F. Kennedy, most Americans involved in development aid believed that the American approach to modernization was superior to the Soviet alternative. Rusk argued in 1953 that communism would try to exploit differences in living standards and ‘preach the doctrine of “leveling down.”’ The American answer is “leveling up”, based upon a hope of improvement plus actual performance sufficient to sustain the hope.’¹⁸ Note the ‘economistic’ language and the promise of progress tied to the willingness actively to work towards ‘improvement’.

birth of development economics, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005; George Rosen, *Western economists and eastern societies: agents of change in South Asia, 1950–1970*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 19–27; Mary S. Morgan, ‘Economics’, in Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross, eds., *The Cambridge history of science*, vol. 7: *The modern social sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 275–305; Daniel Speich, ‘Travelling with the GDP through early development economics’ history’, *Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do Facts Travel?*, 33, 8, <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/economicHistory/pdf/FACTSPDF/HowWellDoFactsTravelWP.aspx> (consulted 7 December 2010); Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in numbers: the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

- 16 RAC, RF, RG 1.2, series 200, box 45, folder 369, John E. Gordon (Harvard University) to James S. Simmons, Dean, Harvard School of Public Health, 6 October 1953, emphasis added. For the product of Gordon’s study, which was carried out in cooperation with the Indian government and an Indian university, see John B. Wyon and John E. Gordon, *The Khanna study: population problems in the rural Punjab*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971. On the Khanna study see Mahmood Mamdani, *The myth of population control: family, caste, and class in an Indian village*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- 17 Sonja Michelle Amadae, *Rationalizing capitalist democracy: the Cold War origins of rational choice liberalism*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003; Michael Hagner and Erich Hörl, eds., *Die Transformation des Humanen: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Kybernetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008; Jakob Tanner, ‘Komplexität, Kybernetik und Kalter Krieg: “Information” im Systemantagonismus von Markt und Plan’, in Hagner and Hörl, *Die Transformation*, pp. 377–413; Robin, *The making*.
- 18 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 29, folder 159, Dean Rusk (Rockefeller Foundation), ‘Notes on Rockefeller Foundation Program’, 1 December 1953; Prepared for discussion at meeting of Board of Trustees, 1–2 December 1953 (900 Pro-46).

Despite modernization theory's obvious links to the Cold War, it would be short-sighted to understand it primarily as an expression or instrument of the conflict. Certainly, it was shaped by its promoters' anti-communism, but it was also an academic product that responded to other social scientific developments of the time. Moreover, modernization theory did not invent a genuinely new kind of thinking about development. Instead, its representatives took up older ideas and practices (particularly those of the New Deal era), built them into a coherent academic model, and draped it in a language of progress to promote the model's key ideas internationally.¹⁹ They called for an integrated approach to change, one that would not focus solely on infrastructure but that would also take into concern the 'hearts and minds' of those to be modernized. The belief that even the most 'traditional' individuals could not but recognize the advantages of science and modernity was hardly questioned, and, in the view of many American proponents of modernization, discarding the limitations imposed by age-old customs seemed at least as attractive as speeding up economic growth.²⁰

With the help of innovative public relations methods, Americans succeeded in presenting themselves as the masterminds behind a new approach to development that would allow individuals and societies to share the benefits of modern life that people in the United States were already enjoying.²¹ Moreover, American modernizers' anti-colonial stance gained them sympathy from many decolonized nations or those still working their ways towards independence, several of whom suspected European aid offers of covering up neo-colonial power schemes. Modernization à la Rostow was an imperfect model, but nevertheless it was the most coherent, most ambitious, and most promising one available in the West. The liberal attempt to reduce poverty and minimize inequality by injecting capital and knowledge was, in itself, altruistic enough, and if it helped to contain communism, allowed the newly independent societies to enjoy their hard-won freedom, and prevented another world war, who could possibly oppose it? And did not the fortunate ones have a responsibility to help others achieve this goal if they had the necessary funds and instruments to hand? It was this mindset, combined with clear-cut institutional and professional interests, that inspired American foundations to invest private money into a public project on a global scale.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that American philanthropists embraced modernization uncritically. Some were quite aware of the concept's limitations. Charles B. Fahs of the Rockefeller Foundation emphasized its complexity in an internal memorandum in 1950. He stated that 'What development means even to Americans is seldom clearly

19 David Ekbladh emphasizes the continuity of American modernization ideas between the interwar and the post-war eras in *The great American mission: modernization and the construction of an American world order*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

20 Michael E. Latham, 'Modernization', in Porter and Ross, *Cambridge history*, vol. 7, pp. 721–34; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the future: modernization theory in Cold War America*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003; David C. Engerman et al., eds., *Staging growth: modernization, development, and the global Cold War*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

21 See Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American way: U.S. propaganda and the Cold War*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American propaganda and public diplomacy, 1945–1989*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Marc Frey, 'Tools of empire: persuasion and the United States's modernizing mission in Southeast Asia', *Diplomatic History*, 27, 4, 2003, pp. 543–68.

defined', and that many of the nations in question, while in favour of improved health and living standards, were critical of 'Westernization' or 'modernization', which seemed to threaten their 'self-esteem and cultural stability'. Fahs acknowledged that modernization required 'changes throughout the society's system of institutions, concepts, attitudes, and values, as well as in its technology'. To 'give "underdeveloped" peoples a feeling that instead of being run down by a colossus they are participating in a world-wide, important human advance', Fahs suggested that the Rockefeller Foundation should engage in research and training in order to disseminate knowledge about modernization and enable individuals in the 'Third World' to take an active role in the development process.²²

In contrast, in its external communications the Rockefeller Foundation (like the Ford Foundation) presented itself as an energetic force in the fight against communism. One of the reasons for this highly political self-portrayal was the attempt to dismiss anti-communist allegations that the foundations were facing in the wake of McCarthyism. Moreover, the anti-totalitarian rhetoric was a constitutive element of the era's liberal consensus and mirrored the political convictions of many of those involved in development aid, who believed it to be vital to American interests to prevent 'totalitarianism' from taking over in the 'Third World'. While the US government seemed too inflexible to act appropriately, owing to partisan and diplomatic limitations, an independent, 'disinterested' institution such as the Rockefeller Foundation could establish and run programmes that, if successful, could be continued with government support later on.²³

Close cooperation with the governments of 'developing countries' characterized both the Rockefeller and the Ford foundations' work abroad.²⁴ In the context of decolonization, governments were, as foundation officers recognized rightly, 'the only centres of effective power'.²⁵ In societies that lacked many of the public structures on which Western societies relied, a strong governmental apparatus was required to implement their development plans. Most Americans involved in development aid did not share the ideological bias against planning, and many of those who worked for the newly established international organizations had been socialized intellectually during the New Deal and were convinced of the need for state interventions to regulate the economy.²⁶ Some had been fascinated with the Soviet modernization experiment of the 1920s, which had privileged central

22 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 69, folder 349, Charles B. Fahs (Rockefeller Foundation), 'Development programs and the RF', 26 September 1950 (900 PRO Unar 3).

23 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 29, folder 159, John Marshall (Rockefeller Foundation), 'Relations of the Foundation with governmental and intergovernmental agencies', 3 November 1950 (900 PRO 51).

24 Kathleen McCarthy, 'From government to grassroots reform: the Ford Foundation's population programs in South Asia, 1959–1981', in Soma Hewa and Philo Hove, eds., *Philanthropy and cultural context: Western philanthropy in South, East, and Southeast Asia in the 20th century*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997, pp. 131–4; Corinna R. Unger, 'Investieren in die Moderne: Amerikanische Stiftungen in der Dritten Welt seit 1945', in Thomas Adam, Simone Lässig, and Gabriele Lingelbach, eds., *Stifter, Spender und Mäzene: USA und Deutschland im historischen Vergleich*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009, pp. 259–61.

25 FFA, Report 012621, Waldemar A. Nielsen (Ford Foundation), 'Overseas Development Program', undated [1955].

26 Amy L. S. Staples, *The birth of development: how the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization changed the world, 1945–1965*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006; Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A new deal for the world: America's vision for human rights*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005; Ekbladh, *Great American mission*.

planning and regulation.²⁷ At a time when planning was condemned as ‘unfree’ by some, most of those involved in development aid considered planning more than just an inevitable necessity; they shared what might be called a social democratic affinity to planning and tried to perfect its methods.²⁸

The setting: India

Newly independent India seemed to provide a perfect setting to test and apply American development and modernization concepts abroad. India’s nationalist leaders had been debating different kinds of development long before their country’s independence.²⁹ When, in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru became India’s first prime minister, he and his government set the country on a development path that was supposed to make India economically independent via industrialization, solve India’s rural problems, especially the harsh inequality and poverty, and provide the foundation for ‘democratic socialism’. Like many other new nations’ leaders, Nehru considered central planning essential to realize India’s ambitious development goals.³⁰ In the eyes of Western development experts, India’s interest in planning and development provided an exceptional opportunity to ‘do good by practicing economic development, simultaneously contributing to the reduction of world poverty, to world peace, and to America’s national security’.³¹

What made India so important with regard to world peace? One reason was that India’s population growth was spectacular (and the actual increase even higher than projected at the time). Between 1941 and 1951, the national population growth rate had been 1.26%. By 1956, the population had reached nearly 400 million, and the growth rate continued to rise. By 1961, another 60 million people would be living in India.³² Rapid population growth was a trend experienced by many ‘Third World’ nations in the post-war era. Similar developments had already caused concern in the interwar era.³³ However, the professionalization of demography and the increasing scientization of population questions after the Second World War let the picture appear more dramatic. For example, demographic transition theory, whose main assumptions had been developed in the late 1920s, was completed

27 David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the other shore: American intellectuals and the romance of Russian development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

28 See the contributions on twentieth-century planning in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 34, 3, 2008, especially Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, ‘Ordnung jenseits der politischen Systeme: Planung im 20. Jahrhundert: ein Kommentar’, pp. 398–406; Peter Wagner, ‘Social science and social planning’, in Porter and Ross, *Cambridge history*, vol. 7, pp. 591–607.

29 See Zachariah, *Developing India*.

30 Judith Brown, *Nehru: A political life*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003, part 4; Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 139–68.

31 Rosen, *Western economists*, p. 26. Also see David C. Engerman, ‘West meets East: the Center for International Studies and Indian economic development’, in Engerman et al, *Staging growth*, pp. 199–223.

32 Daniel L. Spencer, ‘India’s planning and foreign aid’, *Pacific Affairs*, 34, 1, 1961, pp. 30–4.

33 Alison Bashford, ‘Population, geopolitics and international organizations in the mid twentieth century’, *Journal of World History*, 19, 2008, pp. 327–47.

in the late 1940s. Its representatives argued that death rates in countries that were in the process of modernization decreased much quicker than birth rates.³⁴ Population growth could be considered an expression of progress, but individual living conditions did not necessarily improve as part of that process, as many of the new nations were unable to meet the most basic needs of their growing populations. In the eyes of Western observers and postcolonial elites, high fertility was an unmistakable sign of ‘backwardness’, a cause for serious worry, and a reason for intervention.³⁵ More people meant less space, less access to land, less food, and a lower per capita income; this multiplication of ‘less’ could easily result in social and political turmoil when the many demanded that the few share their privileges. Violence might erupt. What followed from this neo-Malthusian line of thought was that modernization had to be accelerated to bring down population growth rates more quickly. At this point, demographic transition theory joined forces with modernization theory, with the latter providing a distinct vision of the social norms to be implemented. Whereas traditional societies favoured large families with many children (many of whom would die before reaching adulthood), families in modern societies were small, which afforded the parents the possibility to invest into their children’s education; in the long run, this would help secure the growth of a stable middle class with all its associated material and political characteristics. Thus, the effort to limit family sizes became a top priority on the modernization agenda.³⁶

In contrast to India’s population growth rate, the country’s agricultural production rate and its overall economic growth rate did not climb as steadily as projected by Delhi’s planners. Although 80% of India’s workforce was employed in the rural sector, agricultural yields were low, as were income and consumption rates. Lack of capital and an insufficient industrial foundation hampered the rise of national income levels. The rural population was growing at an especially steep rate, which increased the pressure on access to land and resources and implied the danger of large-scale unemployment. Repeated droughts caused food shortages. With those problems in mind, Western observers feared that India, the leader of the non-aligned nations’ movement and a direct neighbour of the People’s Republic of China, might be destabilized and turn to communism in response. ‘If the experiment in democracy fails and India . . . goes the way of China, the whole of Asia will be split into two and perhaps lost irrevocably to the free world. Such an outcome would be a disaster of catastrophic dimensions’, many Americans believed.³⁷ To prevent this from happening and to

34 John C. Caldwell and Pat Caldwell, *Limiting population growth and the Ford Foundation contribution*, London: Frances Pinter, 1986, pp. 10–30; John Sharpless, ‘Population science, private foundations, and development aid: the transformation of demographic knowledge in the United States, 1945–1965’, in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International development and the social sciences: essays on the history and politics of knowledge*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 188–91; Matthew Connelly, *Fatal misconception: the struggle to control world population*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008, pp. 122–3; Marc Frey, ‘Experten, Stiftungen und Politik: zur Genese des globalen Diskurses über Bevölkerung seit 1945’, *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, 4, 1–2, 2007, <<http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Frey-2-2007>> (consulted 7 December 2010), pp. 142–3.

35 Nilanjana Chatterjee and Nancy E. Riley, ‘Planning an Indian modernity: the gendered politics of fertility control’, *Signs*, 26, 3, 2001, p. 832.

36 Caldwell and Caldwell, *Limiting population growth*, pp. 26–9.

37 FFA, Report 002832, Ford Foundation, ‘Program for Asia and the Near East’, 1959.

stabilize South Asia, which was shaken by India's partition and the lingering conflict with Pakistan, the United States began to supply India with economic and food aid in the mid 1950s. This followed the belief that 'Communism makes attractive promises to underfed people; democracy must not only promise as much, but must deliver more.'³⁸ Under Public Law (PL) 480, which was passed in 1954, India received surplus American grain at very favourable rates, a total of US\$30 billion by 1965.³⁹ Government aid programmes such as PL 480 were not considered sufficient, however, for they provided only short-term relief that did not solve India's vital economic problems.

By the early 1960s, the conviction that 'The two greatest problems which the world faces during the years ahead are the stabilization of population and the satisfaction of hunger' had become widely accepted in Western political and academic circles.⁴⁰ Less or too little food meant a waste of calories and energy, deficiency diseases, and a reduced ability to work and engage in civic affairs, all of which rendered the community in question 'unproductive and unprogressive, and its social organization primitive and debilitated'.⁴¹ Not only did insufficient food supplies prevent development, they also increased the risk of political unrest. 'There is a tragedy and danger in human hunger and the resultant suffering. Hunger is a powerful enemy of peace.'⁴² It was this line of thinking that made the United States and other Western nations demand that India do more to improve the food situation and slow down population growth by using new technology.⁴³ India thus became a test case for solving the interrelated problems of hunger, population growth, and poverty that characterized the 'Third World' at large.

From the foundations' point of view, the consensus among academic, administrative, and political elites about the existence of a crisis and the imperative to dissolve it provided a singular chance to establish themselves as innovative forces in the highly contested development arena. Nehru had asked the Ford Foundation for help with development programmes as early as 1951. The widespread perception that the experts sent by the Foundation were 'objective', 'apolitical' helpers (which mirrored those experts' self-understanding) was a considerable bonus. American foreign-policy makers were acutely aware of the bona fide status that the foundations enjoyed. Allen Dulles, who directed the Central Intelligence Agency, stated in 1955 that he believed the Ford Foundation's Overseas Development Program to be 'a "great asset" to the U.S. in its international relations'. Consequently, he encouraged the Foundation 'to work in the difficult areas where the U.S. Government technical

38 Weaver, 'World food problem'.

39 Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994; John H. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, genes, and the Cold War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, ch. 7; Kristin L. Ahlberg, 'Machiavelli with a heart': The Johnson administration's Food for Peace program in India, 1965-1966', *Diplomatic History* 31, 4, 2007, pp. 665-701, p. 673; Christ Barrett, *Food aid after fifty years: Recasting its role*, New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 18-25.

40 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 39, folder 207, Rockefeller Foundation, 'Toward the conquest of hunger', excerpt from 12/63 report to Trustees, December 1963 (900 PRO Food 1 a).

41 Ibid.

42 Weaver, 'World food problem'.

43 John H. Perkins calls the alleged need to employ modern technology to solve the food problem as the root of political instability in the 'Third World' 'population-national security theory' (PNST): Perkins, *Geopolitics*, pp. 119-20.

assistance would be relatively ineffective because of the suspicions of the indigenous governments'.⁴⁴ Hence the Ford Foundation could push for reforms in India that the American government could not have supported without causing diplomatic trouble. At the same time, the Foundation's special position allowed its officers to *differ* from official US positions. This flexibility increased individual experts' influence on policy-making in the Indian development effort, as the examples of agricultural reform and family planning show.

Producing equilibrium, part one: agricultural reform

In 1948, the Indian government instituted the 'Grow More Food' Programme, which continued wartime efforts to secure the population's food needs. Increasing agricultural production was only one step towards solving India's food problem, however. Many Indians were convinced that a far-reaching land reform was necessary to overcome the structural inequalities that kept agricultural production low. The Nehru government succeeded in abolishing the *zamindar* system and instituting land ceilings that limited the amount of land that one person could legally own. However, domestic resistance against a full-scale redistributive land reform prevented further steps from being realized. The Community Development Programme, which was inaugurated in 1952, mirrored the government's pragmatic attempt to alleviate the most pressing problems. It covered all Indian states and was divided into pilot projects, each of which covered 300 villages. Villagers were involved in creating irrigation systems, building roads, schools, and public health clinics, and experimenting with new agronomic practices. Together, those measures were meant to promote economic growth on the village level and, by producing an agricultural surplus, constitute the basis for India's industrialization. With its focus on the villages as the centres of development, the programme was inspired by Gandhian lines of thought. It also drew on earlier, community-focused, missionary efforts and on American agricultural extension practices.⁴⁵

The philosophy of self-help and grassroots development very much appealed to the Ford Foundation's representatives whom Nehru had invited in 1951 (probably following a suggestion by the American ambassador, Chester Bowles). The Foundation officers considered the Community Development Programme to be a promising way to alleviate poverty in the Indian countryside. Consequently, over the course of the 1950s the Foundation supported the programme, especially its training and evaluation segments, with several million dollars. The American government, too, funded the programme, contributing US\$25 million.⁴⁶

The high hopes tied to the programme were difficult to meet in practice. The village-level workers were overburdened by the enormity of their task and the size of the blocks into which the programme was organized.⁴⁷ Although emancipatory in principle, the community

44 FFA, Report 005611, Waldemar A. Nielsen (Ford Foundation), interview with Mr. Allen W. Dulles, Director, Central Intelligence Agency, 18 April 1955.

45 Subir Sinha, 'Lineages of the developmentalist state: transnationality and village India, 1900–1965', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 1, 2008, pp. 57–90.

46 Rosen, *Western economists*, pp. 11–15; Howard B. Schaffer, *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 64 and 67.

47 Francine R. Frankel, 'Ideology and politics in economic planning: the problem of Indian agricultural development strategy', *World Politics*, 19, 4, 1967, pp. 630–41.

development approach contained a strong paternalistic undertone. Many of the bureaucrats involved believed that the peasants lacked 'modern' know-how and needed to be told what to do. Conceptually, the programme did not set out to alter structures of inequality but focused on the technical issues of agricultural production. This orientation implied that the programme neglected small peasants and privileged landowners, who were believed to be more receptive towards new agronomic practices and who could serve as multipliers of the new approach.⁴⁸ By the second half of the 1950s, Indian administrators and American philanthropists began to grow impatient with the meagre results of community development efforts. A growing number of Indians became convinced that a different approach was needed to achieve the desired increase in production. They received backing from American experts who, at Nehru's invitation, were sent to India by the Ford Foundation in 1959 to analyse the country's food situation. The scientists wrote a report in which they recommended a technocratic path towards agrarian modernization that emphasized intensification, extension, and technologically improved means of production such as chemical fertiliser, hybrid seeds, and tube-well irrigation.⁴⁹

Mentioning the Ford Foundation report is not to suggest that the market-oriented outlook on the food problem was a specifically American one. More generally, one should not misinterpret the shift in India's agricultural policy (from redistribution to technology) as part of a capitalist conspiracy. Many Indians who had been in favour of Nehru's reformist politics came to believe that the obstacles were too great, and they felt a responsibility to do what was necessary to feed the Indian population. Private economic and national prestige interests played an important role; for India, which was desperately trying to prove how modern it was, advanced science and technology were essential. The concept of community development could be useful as a nation-building tool but possessed limited powers to achieve high growth rates. Consequently, the Indian administration applied the American experts' recommendations to the so-called Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP), which was integrated into the third five-year plan (1961–66). One of the drivers behind the IADP was Douglas Ensminger, the Ford Foundation representative in Delhi, who was close to Nehru and other Indian leaders. With his support, the IADP received US\$10.5 million from the Ford Foundation in 1960.⁵⁰

The IADP, in which seven selected Indian districts participated before it was extended into the Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP), was a 'package programme' intended to help farmers increase their yields by giving them better access to seeds and water, offering credits, stabilizing prices, and supplying chemical fertiliser as well as new seed varieties.⁵¹ Some of those varieties were contributed by the Rockefeller Foundation. In the

48 Sinha, 'Lineages', pp. 74–6.

49 Ford Foundation, Agricultural Production Team, and Indian Ministry of Food and Agriculture, *India's food crisis and steps to meet it*, Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 1959.

50 FFA, reel 3372, grant 60–83, section 4, Douglas Ensminger, Draft docket item, December 1959. On Ensminger, see Rosen, *Western economists*, pp. 13, 17, 53, 78.

51 FFA, Report 009453, George F. Gant to David E. Bell (both Ford Foundation), 'The Foundation and IADP', 29 August 1966; FFA, Report 003578, A. A. Johnson (Ford Foundation), 'The Intensive Agricultural District Program (IADP): An Evaluation', July 1975. See also Günther Lanier, *Die Entwicklungspolitik Indiens von 1947 bis 1967: die Zeit der Illusionen*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991, pp. 210–29; Rosen, *Western economists*, pp. 76–83; Perkins, *Geopolitics*, pp. 182–3 and 240–1.

1940s and 1950s, that Foundation had been the driving force behind the mechanization of Mexican agriculture and the introduction of new, more resistant wheat and maize varieties in Mexico, Chile, and Colombia. In 1956, the Indian government approached the Rockefeller Foundation and requested participation in the Foundation's hybrid maize research programme.⁵² The same year, the Foundation set up the Indian Agricultural Program, in which it invested nearly one million dollars up to 1960 and even greater amounts of money up to the early 1970s. In the eyes of the Rockefeller Foundation, its agricultural programmes in the 'developing countries' provided 'an exceptional opportunity for Foundation personnel to conduct research under a variety of environments ... The operating programs of the Foundation function, therefore, as a reservoir of resources for the improvement of agriculture in many regions of the world'.⁵³ Demonstrably, the Rockefeller Foundation was aware of the potentially global character of its work and made an active effort to realize it, especially through institution-building. One of those institutions was the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, which had been established in 1905. The Foundation began to support the institute in 1956 by adding a postgraduate school modelled on American land grant colleges, which combined research and teaching. The school gained university status in 1958 and became one of the most important centres for agricultural education and research in India. Its first dean was Ralph Cummings from the Rockefeller Foundation, under whose leadership research stations and laboratories were established throughout the country. Cummings also helped to coordinate several crop improvement projects.⁵⁴

The global outlook of Rockefeller support for agricultural modernization is most visibly expressed in the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines. As early as 1954, Warren Weaver, director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Natural Sciences programme, and George Harrar, who had directed the Mexican programme and would later become the foundation's president, had suggested the founding of such an institute.⁵⁵ Six years later, the IRRI came into being in cooperation with the University of the Philippines and the Ford Foundation. The latter financed the building (in Internationalist style, a visible sign of 'modernity') while the Rockefeller Foundation was responsible for the scientific work. Opened in 1962, IRRI helped to develop rice varieties suitable for Asian soil and climate conditions and trained scientists from the countries involved to make them independent from foreign expertise.⁵⁶

52 RAC, RF, RG 1.2, series 464, box 1, folder 4, Secretary, Food & Agriculture, Government of India, to Dr. Weaver, Rockefeller Foundation, 9 January 1956. For an overview of the Rockefeller Foundation's agricultural programmes, see Nancy Adgent, "'Their bellies are being satisfied": agriculture and Rockefeller philanthropy', *Rockefeller Archive Center Newsletter*, 2008, pp. 6–8.

53 RAC, RF, RG 1.2, series 464, box 1, folder 1, Rockefeller Foundation, Minutes, 6–7 December 1960.

54 RAC, RF, RG 6.7, series II, box 27, folder 153, Rockefeller Foundation, 'The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (position paper for IAP review)', for discussion only, undated [1970].

55 RAC, RF, RG 3, series 915, box 3, folder 23, Warren Weaver and J. George Harrar (both Rockefeller Foundation), 'Research on rice', 21 October 1954, Appendix I to Minutes of Board Meeting, 30 November–1 December 1954.

56 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 39, folder 207, Rockefeller Foundation, 'Toward the conquest of hunger', excerpt from 12/63 report to Trustees, December 1963 (900 PRO Food 1 a). See also RAC, RF, RG 6.7, series I, box 6, folder 36, Guy B. Baird (Rockefeller Foundation), 'The relationship of conquest of hunger to university development in India' (draft), 11 December 1967. On the IRRI, see Nick Cullather, 'Miracles of modernization: the Green Revolution and the apotheosis of technology',

The IRRI's work bore fruit: IRRI scientists managed to develop resistant varieties that produced much larger harvests than indigenous varieties. One of them was IR-8, the so-called miracle rice, which gained widespread admiration and became a symbol of the Green Revolution it helped to fuel. Some believed that it 'would win the Cold War'.⁵⁷ The Indian government, which established the All-India Coordinated Rice Improvement Project in April 1965, bought 18,000 tons of that rice, as well as large amounts of the new wheat varieties, and planted them in experimental fields. The American foundations provided experts, tools, fertiliser, and educational materials to train Indian farmers and administrators. Apart from the technical support, the enthusiasm of the Rockefeller Foundation staff and their willingness to perform manual labour in the fields side by side with the Indians were considered important contributions to Indian agriculture's modernization.⁵⁸

Encouraged by the technological developments and pressured by the United States and other Western nations, India's new minister of food and agriculture, Subramaniam, who had entered office with Nehru's successor, Shastri, in 1964, completed the turn from all-India rural development to selective intensification.⁵⁹ John F. Kennedy had predicted in 1963 that 'the key to a permanent solution of world hunger is the transfer of technology to food deficit nations'.⁶⁰ This belief was shared by American experts and Indian planners alike. However, it would be oversimplifying to suggest that the protagonists believed technology to be the exclusive solution to India's problems. The development experts working for the foundations and organizations involved were quite aware of the fact that hunger resulted from a variety of structural factors, among them 'economic weakness, chronic disease, educational deficiencies, and often unsatisfactory climatic and soil conditions' – in short, from all the elements that together defined 'underdevelopment'.⁶¹ Following this logic, one had to solve the food problem to enable individuals to contribute to development and to overcome the deficiencies that created the food problem in the first place. Technology seemed to offer the quickest and most effective way of doing so: once technological innovations took hold, agricultural production would go up, and with it the overall level of efficiency and productivity, creating the basis for economic growth and educational and health improvements.

Diplomatic History, 28, 2, 2004, pp. 227–54; Margreet van der Burg and Harro Matt, eds., *International rice research and development*, New York: CABI, forthcoming 2011.

- 57 Mary Ann Quinn, 'RF grants in the Philippines, 1958–1990', *Rockefeller Archive Center Newsletter*, 2006, p. 11. On the role of IR-8 in the United States' Vietnam War strategy, see Cullather, 'Miracles', pp. 247–53.
- 58 RAC, RF, RG 6.7, series II, box 27, folder 153, Rockefeller Foundation, 'Rice project assessment', undated [1970]; folder 154, Johnson E. Douglas to Dr. Knowles (both Rockefeller Foundation), 25 September 1972; Cullather, 'Miracles'.
- 59 Francine R. Frankel, *India's political economy: the gradual revolution*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 237–40 and 246–56; Perkins, *Geopolitics*, pp. 180 and 238–9.
- 60 Quoted in Nick Cullather, 'Parable of seeds: the Green Revolution in the modernizing imagination', in Marc Frey, Ronald W. Pruessen, and Tan Tai Yong, eds., *The transformation of Southeast Asia: international perspectives on decolonization*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003, p. 265.
- 61 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 39, folder 207, Rockefeller Foundation, 'Toward the conquest of hunger, excerpt from 12/63 report to Trustees, December 1963 (900 PRO Food 1 a).

The IADP and the use of new agrotechnologies did result in record production increases in the first few years. In the selected districts that practised the package approach, harvests reached record levels.⁶² A documentation published by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1969 presented the jubilant story of a miracle of growth. ‘India’s farmers are breaking out of centuries-old patterns of subsistence agriculture into a new day of commercial food production. Given demonstrably superior seed and a price incentive to produce, they are impressing the world with their enterprise. The result is that India approaches self-sufficiency.’ In practically no time, yields doubled and tripled, storehouses overflowed with grain, new and improved housing sprung up, people were able to afford luxuries they had never dreamed of before, and children (including girls) could go to school instead of having to work in the fields.⁶³ For a brief moment in history, there was reason to believe that world hunger, ‘overpopulation’, and inequality could be overcome. Development and modernization were no longer an illusion, they were reality.

However, as scholars in science and technology studies have emphasized, ‘One of the most misleading and dangerous aspects of technological determinism is its equation of technological change with progress.’⁶⁴ Machines and technology do make history, but not necessarily the kind of history that helps to realize egalitarian ideals. Parallel to raising production levels, the Green Revolution deepened socioeconomic and status differences in India’s countryside. Better-off farmers profited from the new seeds, credits, and marketing schemes, but many of the poor farmers remained poor or experienced a worsening of their situation. Many could afford neither tube wells nor high-yield varieties nor sufficient amounts of chemical fertiliser, and some did not apply for credits because they feared the authorities or the bureaucratic burden. As anthropological studies have shown, farmers embraced some elements of the new techniques but did so selectively; for example, they used chemical fertiliser but did not follow the recommendations concerning the amount and timing of its application. The partial fusion of ‘indigenous’ knowledge with new technologies resulted in a hybrid kind of agriculture that did not fulfil the demands of the package approach.⁶⁵ Furthermore, in times of crisis, the use of market-driven incentives led to an increase in food prices, from which the poor suffered the most. Some of them reacted with violence.⁶⁶

62 Francine R. Frankel, *India’s Green Revolution: economic gains and political costs*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 7–8; A. K. Chakravarti, ‘Green Revolution in India’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 63, 3, 1973, pp. 319–30; Pierre Spitz, ‘The Green Revolution re-examined in India’, in Bernhard Glaeser, ed., *The Green Revolution re-visited: critique and alternatives*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 56–75.

63 Carroll P. Streeter, *A partnership to improve food production in India: a special report from the Rockefeller Foundation*, New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1969 (quotation from p. 3). For a contemporary evaluation, see Uttar Pradesh Agricultural University, *Changing agriculture and rural life in a region of northern India: a study of progressive farmers in Northwestern Uttar Pradesh during 1967/8*, vol. 1, Patnagar: U. P. Agricultural University, 1969, esp. pp. 209–10.

64 Sally Wyatt, ‘Technological determinism is dead; long live technological determinism’, in Edward J. Hackett et al., eds., *The handbook of science and technology studies*, 3rd edition, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008, p. 172.

65 Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial developments: agriculture in the making of modern India*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003 (1998), pp. 9, 196–7, 203.

66 Vandana Shiva, *The violence of the Green Revolution: ecological degradation and political conflict in Punjab*, Dehra Dun: Research Foundation for Science and Ecology, 1989.

Wolf Ladejinsky, an expert on agricultural reform, was probably right in noting that the Green Revolution had not created the crass disparities between the few and the many but had brought them into sharper focus.⁶⁷ However, the Green Revolution did more than sharpen the perception of inequality: it anchored it in existing structures and perpetuated it. The Rockefeller and Ford foundations contributed to this process insofar as they offered expertise that highlighted the supposed need for fast action as well as the possibility of technical solutions. On a more abstract level, the shift in agricultural modernization approaches promoted by the foundations illustrates how they responded very flexibly to changing needs and interests in India. When, in the early 1950s, community approaches seemed to be the only possible and yet most promising way of increasing agricultural production, the Ford Foundation helped to institutionalize the Community Development Programme. When Indian and international dissatisfaction with the programme grew stronger, the foundations eagerly sought and supported alternative ways of helping India to reach its goal of becoming independent from external food aid. Cold War concerns influenced those efforts, but stronger and more important were the foundations' optimistic sense of feasibility and the perception of being able actively to help solving global problems.

Producing equilibrium, part two: family planning

The Indian decision to embrace a technology-driven approach to agricultural reform was accompanied by a shift in Delhi's population policy.⁶⁸ Demographic questions had been discussed in India for many decades before independence, and the concept of 'overpopulation' was a mainstay in Indian political thinking.⁶⁹ In fact, India had been the first of the newly independent nations to integrate family planning into its official development programme. In the first half of the 1950s, some 140 birth control clinics were set up around the country, and family planning experts from abroad (especially from Scandinavia) came to India to lobby for more systematic family planning.⁷⁰ Yet, despite those efforts, the national population growth rate went up from 1.5% to nearly 2%, and the death rate continued to decline over the course of the 1950s and 1960s.⁷¹ If there was not enough food for the existing population, how was India supposed to feed the projected 537 million by 1969? Consequently, in the second half of the 1960s, the Indian government, under pressure

67 Wolf Ladejinsky, 'How green is the Indian Green Revolution?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8, 52, 1973, pp. A133–5, A137–9, A141–4.

68 For an overview on Indian population debates and politics, see Mohan Rao, *From population control to reproductive health: Malthusian arithmetic*, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004.

69 Chatterjee and Riley, 'Planning', pp. 818–22; Caldwell and Caldwell, *Limiting population growth*, pp. 37–43.

70 Rosanna Ledbetter, 'Thirty years of family planning in India', *Asian Survey*, 24, 7, 1984, pp. 737–8; Annika Berg, 'A suitable country: the relationship between Sweden's interwar population policy and family planning in post-independence India', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 33, 3, 2010, pp. 297–320.

71 Ledbetter, 'Thirty years', pp. 739–40.

from the United States and other industrialized nations, 'transformed the family planning program from one providing voluntary services into an incentive- and target-driven population reduction program'.⁷²

When Indira Gandhi came into office in 1966, she set the target to reduce the birth rate to 20 or 25 per 1,000 by the mid 1970s. The number of family planning clinics was increased dramatically, and centres were set up all over the country to train medical personnel in integrated family planning. This approach relied on the cooperation of health workers, family planning educators, and elected leaders in villages (note, once again, the use of the village as the basis of development). The Ford Foundation, whose commitment to population control has been studied in detail in recent years,⁷³ actively promoted the new direction in family planning. It gave grants to the Indian government, the National Institute of Health Administration and Education, and the Central Family Planning Institute to promote population control measures in India and produce the necessary medical and demographic knowledge.⁷⁴ At a more immediate level of involvement, the Foundation's Delhi office supported and participated in the so-called Intensive District Scheme, which promoted competitions among groups of people for the highest number of sterilizations performed and intrauterine devices (IUDs) inserted, and sponsored 'conversion campaigns'. Ford Foundation experts also supported the Indian administration's decision to introduce an incentive programme that paid a small cash sum to those who underwent sterilization or had an IUD fitted.⁷⁵ The new approach was accompanied by a high rate of complications and in some cases even deaths, while the introduction of incentives prompted some of the very poor to be sterilized in order to receive the monetary reward.⁷⁶ Later on, during the Emergency years (1975–77), the Indian government, as part of an authoritarian, populist campaign to 'combat poverty', forced many thousands of people to undergo sterilization.⁷⁷

It has recently been emphasized that the American foundations contributed to establishing a political climate in which 'Third World', and particularly Indian, population growth was considered to have such dramatic consequences that an increasing number of increasingly radical instruments came to be seen as acceptable in order to stop population growth.⁷⁸ From the foundations' point of view, population growth and its assumed consequences provided an opportunity to make themselves heard and seen internationally. In

72 Chatterjee and Riley, 'Planning', p. 824. See also Matthew Connelly, 'Population control in India: prologue to the Emergency period', *Population and Development Review*, 32, 4, 2006, pp. 646, 651–2.

73 Sharpless, 'Population science'; Connelly, *Fatal misconception*; Frey, 'Experten'; FFA, Reports 016626, Radhika Ramasubban and Bhanwar Singh Rishyasringa, *Sexuality and reproductive rights: fifty years of the Ford Foundation in India*, New Delhi: The Ford Foundation, 2002, pp. 12–14.

74 FFA, Report 003673, Edward M. Humberger (Ford Foundation), 'Population program management: the Ford Foundation in India, 1951–1970', 22 April 1970.

75 FFA, Report 003685, Reuben Hill (Ford Foundation), 'Comments on programs in India', 18 October 1965. See also see Ramasubban and Rishyasringa, *Sexuality*, pp. 15–16.

76 Ledbetter, 'Thirty years', pp. 741–3; Connelly, *Fatal misconception*, pp. 216–27.

77 Sunniva Engh, 'From northern feminists to southern women: Scandinavian population aid to India', in Monika Pohle Fraser and Helge Pharo, eds., *The aid rush: aid regimes in northern Europe during the Cold War*, Oslo: Oslo Academic Press, 2008, pp. 253–84.

78 Connelly, *Fatal misconception*, pp. 318–25.

1960, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, when speaking about ‘the rapid world changes that might be expected in the next decade’, underlined ‘the need for responding promptly and imaginatively to the *special opportunities* that these changes are likely to provide for [the] Foundation program’. Since one of those opportunities was believed to be ‘the world-wide “population explosion”’, ‘the officers were instructed to explore ways in which the Foundation might make significant contributions in this field’.⁷⁹ The Cold War did not figure in this strategic consideration. Although the ties between geopolitical interests and demographic developments concerned many foreign-policy experts, the foundation’s decision to engage in the demography and family planning field was a purely institutional one. By 1964, the Rockefeller Foundation had decided on a Population Program that focused on four areas of interest: demography; biological and medical research on reproduction; support for family planning services through research and demonstration; and educational programmes ‘directed to clarifying the effects of population growth on individual and collective social and economic well-being’.⁸⁰ Huge amounts of money were channelled into research activities at American universities to develop family planning methods, to Planned Parenthood and similar organizations for educational purposes, and to research and training institutions in the ‘Third World’. Together, those activities contributed to establishing population growth as a global problem that required scientific regulation.

However, one should not overstate the immediacy of the relations between the foundations’ population-related activities and the radicalization of population control practices in countries such as India. Not only would such an interpretation overstate the foundations’ relative importance. It would also neglect their responsiveness to problems with existing birth control approaches and their active interest in developing alternatives. For example, from the second half of the 1960s, the Ford Foundation supported family planning projects in India that paid attention to the role of women and education in reproductive behaviour. Its initial top-down approach to controlling population growth was first complemented and then slowly replaced by grassroots methods focusing on women. Whereas the international development community began to pay more systematic attention to the role of gender in family planning (and in development issues in general) in the 1970s, the foundations, thanks to their direct engagement in local projects, recognized and acknowledged the importance of gender much earlier. For example, experiences at the Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning (IRHFP), an integrated research and training centre in the state of Madras that received financial support from the Ford Foundation, led a Ford Foundation officer to comment in 1965 on the ‘evidence . . . that women are the decision-makers on matters of child-bearing and on many other matters of interpersonal relations in the home’. The officer also noted the importance of working with informal, elected leaders as family planning educators instead of relying solely on external experts.⁸¹ A few years later, the IRHFP staff came to the conclusion that family planning needed ‘to move from clinic-based programs

79 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 57, folder 311, Rockefeller Foundation, Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 6–7 December 1960, emphasis added.

80 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 57, folder 311, Rockefeller Foundation, ‘The Population Program of the Rockefeller Foundation’, excerpt from report to Trustees on five principal program areas, December 1964.

81 Hill, ‘Comments on programs’.

to ones which rely on extension education and a wide and sympathetic network of contacts with and services for the target population'.⁸² The Ford Foundation took this insight to heart and supported projects and institutions that promoted an integrated, gender-sensitive approach to family planning. In a similar shift of perspective, the Rockefeller Foundation staff responsible for population programmes recommended in 1972 that, instead of focusing on medical and biological problems related to family planning, 'the social science aspect' should be taken much more seriously.⁸³ In that sense, the Rockefeller and the Ford foundations, having helped to diagnose the 'population problem' in the 1960s, were central to re-orienting the international perspective on family planning and development in the 1970s.

Changes in philanthropic development policies in the 1970s

The shift in philanthropic development activities that one could observe from the late 1960s and over the course of the 1970s had a variety of reasons, some of them domestically anchored, others an expression of shifting global power tectonics. The Cold War's temporary relaxation played a less important role than the economic crises of the early 1970s. In their aftermath, the American foundations came to realize that they could not compete institutionally and financially with establishments such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund in the long run.⁸⁴ They had to cut back their programmes and began to focus on smaller, more specialized projects, many of which were set up on the local level. Those grassroots projects were not only less cost-intensive than large-scale institution-building measures. They also mirrored the perception that the modernization schemes of the 1950s and 1960s had overemphasized economic growth and national development interests while neglecting individual concerns and livelihoods. By the mid 1970s, not much was left of the previous decade's steadfast optimism 'about the world's future ability to feed itself'.⁸⁵ The 'failure' of so many development projects was attributed to a blind trust in the universal problem-solving capacity of technology. In response, many development experts came to argue 'that solutions must be developed from indigenous models in order to deal effectively with local problems'. Linked to that was the belief 'that piecemeal solutions will not work and that the problem is the "total environment"'.⁸⁶ This perspective was expressed most clearly in the names of new campaigns initiated in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as

82 FFA, reel 5352, grant 690-0721, section 1, Ford Foundation, David E. Bell to McGeorge Bundy, Request for grant action, 3 September 1969.

83 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 57, folder 311, Rockefeller Foundation, 'Two-page summary' of the Population Program, 25 October 1972.

84 McCarthy, 'From government', pp. 138-41; Alice O'Connor, 'The Ford Foundation and philanthropic activism in the 1960s', in Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, ed., *Philanthropic foundations: new scholarship, new possibilities*, Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1999, p. 170.

85 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 39, folder 207, Rockefeller Foundation, 'The Rockefeller Foundation Conquest of hunger program', December 1974 (900 PRO Food 3).

86 RAC, RF, RG 3.2, series 900, box 38, folder 203, BW (Rockefeller Foundation), XXV, 'Anniversary of INCAP', XIV, International Biological Symposium in Latin America on Nutrition and Agricultural and Economic Development in the Tropics, Guatemala, 2-6 December 1974.

UNESCO's World Literacy Campaign, the FAO's World Plan for Agricultural Development, and the International Labour Organization's World Employment Programme.⁸⁷ The foundations neither had the resources nor the interest to establish similar large-scale programmes. Their advantage lay in their institutional and conceptual flexibility; theirs was a world of niches, which they helped to define.

Conclusion

The Rockefeller and Ford foundations' activities in India are a notable example of how expert knowledge, technological innovation, and the broadening of the political arena played out in the context of decolonization, the Cold War, and accelerated globalization. The simultaneity of those phenomena created disorientation among elites across the globe. As this article has shown, the foundations played a vital role in diagnosing and defining issues as problems that seemed to require immediate action. The Cold War intensified the perception of crisis and the need for solutions, but it was not the decisive factor that it has been portrayed to be. Population growth and food production had been of concern in the interwar era, and in the post-war years the scientization of the social and the internationalization of the American political perspective transformed those issues into concerns of global relevance. Global challenges required overarching solutions, and the foundations successfully claimed a prominent position in producing and applying the necessary knowledge and know-how. They combined academic expertise with their financial and social capital and thereby took on a role as transnational mediators between modernization research and practice. Owing to their status as private institutions, they possessed an extraordinary degree of political and organizational flexibility, which they employed to push specific topics onto the development agenda and to establish transnational expert alliances.

The many shortcomings of the foundations' efforts are easy to name. They all mirror the 'typical' problems inherent in planning: the ahistorical perspective, the negligence of individual lives and interests, and the blurring boundaries between a plan's rationality and the visionary myth that it embodies.⁸⁸ However, we should also note that the foundations demonstrated the willingness and capacity to adapt and correct their approaches if those did not produce the expected results or expired in terms of political support in India or internationally. Again, their small size and institutional independence made them exceptionally responsive and flexible, not only in terms of activities but also with regard to their policies and programmes. Furthermore, they promoted the top-down approach that characterized the twentieth-century development project, but they took the liberty to look for alternatives if those promised higher effectiveness and better results. This is not to say that each and every decision taken by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation was exclusively based on philanthropic motives. The institutional and political interests in shaping foundation policies were as important as the genuine desire to help. It was the

87 Daniel R. Maul, "Help them move the ILO way": The International Labour Organization and the modernization discourse in the era of decolonization and the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 33, 3, 2009, p. 399.

88 Doering-Manteuffel, 'Ordnung jenseits der politischen Systeme', pp. 399–402.

combination of both that allowed the foundations to produce an ‘atmosphere of “anything can be done”’, which inspired the development community far beyond the foundations’ headquarters.⁸⁹

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89 Rockefeller Foundation, Rice Project Assessment, not dated [1970]. RAC, RF, RG 6.7, Series II, Box 27, Folder 153.