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Global reporting from the Third World: the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association, 1963–1974

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ABSTRACT

Originating from the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association (AAJA) promoted international collaboration among journalists in newly independent countries. Built on an inclusive foundation of peaceful co-existence, the AAJA contributed to the development of expansive global information networks, lively intellectual traffic, and rich visual arts among Afro-Asian nations. However, the cosmopolitanism of its early years was later undermined by the decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia and a lack of cohesion among Afro-Asian nations. After the September Thirtieth Movement in Indonesia in 1965, the AAJA relocated to Beijing and was mobilized by the Chinese state to promote the P.R.C. as the leader of an embittered Third World's battle against American imperialism and Soviet revisionism. In the early 1970s, ideological fervor began abating in China. During this time, Mao's reframing of the three worlds, which was based on developmental measurements, redirected the AAJA's Third World discourse to issues of modernization until its quiet dissolution in 1974. The history of the AAJA demonstrates the complex and often conflicted ways in which two important post-colonial states – Indonesia and China – conceptualized “the Third World” and formulated media representations during the Cold War.

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Introduction

During the Cold War, the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association (AAJA)¹ fostered solidarity among journalists from formerly colonized nations. The AAJA's inaugural meeting held in Jakarta in April 1963 was attended by delegates from forty-seven countries. Prominent participants included Lionel Morrison (1935–2016), a South Africa-born journalist who was a defendant in the South African treason trial,² Mamadou Gologo (1924–2009), a Malian government minister and physician, Asrar Ahmad (1923–2012), a founder of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, and Mamani Abdoulaye (1932–1993), an itinerant poet for the cause of Pan-African unity, and someone who was referred to as “the Che

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¹In Indonesian, *Persatuan Wartawan Asia-Afrika*, PWAA.

²In December 1956, the government of South Africa arrested 156 people and charged them with participating in a communist conspiracy to overthrow the state. This raid stifled political opposition against the apartheid regime, although all of the defendants were found not guilty in the trials that lasted until 1961.

Guevara of Niger.”³ From its office in the five-story *Wisma Warta* (the Press House) in central Jakarta, the AAJA organized international conferences, offered journalist-training programs, and published its flagship English-language magazine, *Afro-Asian Journalist*. However, the September Thirtieth Movement (*Gerakan 30 September*) in Indonesia in 1965 and ensuing nation-wide anti-communist campaign shattered the apparatus of the AAJA, with members of its staff either persecuted or forced into exile. In 1966, Djawoto (1906–1992), the AAJA’s first secretary general, announced its relocation to the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.). From its new headquarters, first at the Peking Hotel and then inside a traditional Beijing courtyard, the AAJA continued its activities, including frequent international exchanges and regular publishing, until its informal dissolution in 1974.

Beyond this tale of two cities, the AAJA’s history is part of a larger story of transnational collaboration among newly independent countries during the Cold War. It originated from the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955. Its early years were influenced by Indonesian President Sukarno’s call for progressive “new emerging forces” to fight against the reactionary “old established forces,” as well as by Indonesia’s ambivalent relationship with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It relocated to Beijing after the 1966 Tricontinental Conference, which expanded the realm of Afro-Asian solidarity to Latin America. In 1974, the year of the AAJA’s demise, Mao Zedong announced his theory of three worlds. In the same year, the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which proposed a revision of international economic rules in order to empower less developed countries, was adopted as a United Nations (U.N.) resolution.

How did the AAJA define the “Third World” differently at different times? What visions for Third World solidarity did the AAJA promote during its eleven years of existence? Why did it manage to weather the political turmoil of 1965 in Indonesia only to quietly unravel in a year (1974) usually recognized as a “triumph of Third Worldism”⁴ in light of the promulgation of the NIEO? As part of the broader phenomenon of the global movement for social, racial, political, and economic justice among formerly colonized nations, or what historian Vijay Prashad calls “the Third World project,”⁵ was the AAJA a rebellion against the Cold War, or a product of this?

I address these questions through an analysis of AAJA publications and an examination of the memoirs and personal papers of its key participants. I reconstruct three phases of the AAJA’s development, each with its corresponding styles of journalistic writing and visual arts expression. During its Jakarta period (1963–1965), the AAJA maintained some of the cosmopolitan outlook of Indonesia’s liberal democracy era (1949–1959), characterized by commercial awareness, cultural pluralism, and artistic vibrancy. After the radicalization of Indonesian foreign policy under President Sukarno, the AAJA adopted a more aggressively anti-imperialist view of international affairs, projecting an idealistic vision of synchronized world revolution. Later, during the first part of its Beijing period (1966–1971), the AAJA became the P.R.C.’s international mouthpiece, featuring a rigid reporting format and Cultural Revolution propaganda that accentuated the image of Mao as a world revolutionary leader. In its last two years of existence, due to the

³Boyd-Buggs 1999.

⁴Rist 2002, 140.

⁵Prashad 2007, xv–xix.

reorientation of Chinese foreign policy following the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, the AAJA shifted its emphasis from militant anti-imperialism to economic development. Tracing these changes in the AAJA demonstrates the complex and often conflicted ways in which two important actors in the Third World project – Indonesia and China – conceptualized “the Third World” and formulated media representations during the Cold War.

Bandung and a cosmopolitan approach to reporting

The Third World made its debut on the international stage at the 1955 Bandung Conference. The term “Third World” had been coined by French demographer Albert Sauvy in 1952 to refer to formerly colonized societies who remained outside the division between the First World – the capitalist bloc led by the United States – and the Second World – the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The root of the term was the “Third Estate,” which referred to the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution. Although it had less status than the First Estate of clergy and the Second Estate of aristocracy, the Third Estate led France toward popular sovereignty. In the same fashion, Sauvy suggested that the Third World would be a powerful new force in world affairs.⁶ Although Bandung was not “the first intercontinental conference of colored peoples in the history of mankind” as Indonesian President Sukarno claimed in his opening address,⁷ it marked the Third World’s entry into international politics as an independent player instead of “an adjunct of the First or Second Worlds.”⁸ Strategic pragmatism about and accommodation for ideological, cultural, and religious differences formed the cornerstone for collaboration among the twenty-nine countries represented at the Bandung Conference. Looking to the past, participants were brought together by their shared experience of colonial exploitation and racial oppression. Looking to the future, they collectively demanded autonomy for themselves and disarmament by the United States and U.S.S.R.

In addition to its political significance, Bandung is one of the very few international diplomatic conferences that has entered the realm of popular culture across continents.⁹ The mushrooming mass media in the early post-World War II era helped bring this event to ordinary people in post-colonial states. Alongside the meeting among Third World dignitaries, reporters from various backgrounds gathered and mingled at Bandung. For instance, the renowned African-American writer Richard Wright attended the conference as a freelance reporter and exchanged ideas with some of the archipelago’s leading intellectuals and journalists during his three-week stay in Indonesia.¹⁰ In his book about the conference, *The Color Curtain*, Wright asserted that media coverage of Bandung in Europe and North America was distorted by anxieties concerning the presence of communist China, discontent over the exclusion of former colonial powers, and fear of a worldwide rise of racial consciousness and anti-Western sentiments.¹¹ Encounters among journalists at Bandung and their shared dissatisfaction with media in Europe and North

⁶Sauvy 1952. Cited in Prashad 2007, 11.

⁷As Amitav Acharya points out, there had been gatherings against racialism before, such as the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression in Brussels in 1927, and Asian Relations Conferences in New Delhi in 1947 and 1949. See Acharya 2016, 342.

⁸Prashad 2007, 45–46.

⁹Shimazu 2014.

¹⁰Roberts and Foulcher 2016.

¹¹Wright 1995.

America gave rise to the idea of building a global alliance of reporters in the Third World. In 1962, Djawoto, editor-in-chief of the national ANTARA news agency and Chair of the Indonesian Journalists' Association (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia*, PWI), proposed to Sukarno that Indonesia host a formal conference of Afro-Asian journalists.¹² In 1963, the AAJA was established under the umbrella of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), a left-leaning platform for collaboration among non-governmental organizations in Afro-Asian countries.¹³

The AAJA was established in Indonesia at a time when the left was in the ascendant. The Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI) was the third largest in the world, after the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The PKI-affiliated LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, Institute for the People's Culture) was "the most prominent, important, and active cultural force" in the country.¹⁴ Indonesia enthusiastically participated in international labor, women's, and youth movements, as well as literature and art projects organized by AAPSO, including the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the Afro-Asian Federation for Women, and the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau.¹⁵ However, unlike communist states such as China or North Vietnam, the PKI did not have a monopoly on either political discourse at home or cultural links abroad. The AAJA's key figures were undeniably left-leaning but also cosmopolitan. Djawoto and his successor as AAJA secretary-general, Joesef Isak (1928–2009), had been educated in the Dutch school system and were well-versed in European literature. Lionel Morrison, a member of the Permanent Secretariat and executive editor of the magazine *Afro-Asian Journalist*, was one of the founders of the South African National Union of Journalists. He went into exile in 1961, after the Sharpeville massacre, and traveled in Europe and China before arriving in Indonesia to focus on the AAJA in 1963.¹⁶ Important contributors such as Francisca Fanggaldaej and Umar Said had diverse careers outside of journalism as writers, translators, and activists for women's rights. Many had served as representatives of the Republic of Indonesia at international conferences and were well-traveled, professionally versatile, and linguistically talented.

The ethos of the AAJA was an extension of the Bandung Conference's emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference in journalism. The most enduring legacy of Bandung was that the formerly colonized nations framed non-intervention and universal sovereignty as norms for international relations during the Cold War. These "deeply emancipatory ideas" were designed to protect newly independent states from becoming targets of predatory former colonial powers.¹⁷ At the first AAJA meeting on April 24, 1963, held on the eighth anniversary of the Bandung Conference, a delegate from Cambodia named Hu Nim summarized the purpose of the organization as to "apply the Bandung principles to journalism." Journalists in Asia and Africa had to stand up against the attitude of "injustice and scorn" that the Euro-American media "systematically assumed toward *tiers-monde*."¹⁸ Rajab Salim Salem, vice president of the All Zanzibar Journalists'

¹²Hill 2010, 30.

¹³For an overview of the AAPSO, see Friedman 2015, 29, 44 and 97. For Indonesia's role in the AAPSO, see McGregor and Hearman 2017.

¹⁴Lindsay 2012, 21.

¹⁵See McGregor 2013 and Hearman 2016.

¹⁶Beckett 2016; Liz Morrison, email message to author, August 21, 2018.

¹⁷Acharya 2016, 350.

¹⁸*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 8.

Organization, pointed out a dilemma faced by Afro-Asian countries: although media had been widely recognized as “a powerful weapon to materialize national independence,” “the golden rule of colonialism – silence and misinformation” – still reigned due to a shortage of modern printing facilities and professionally trained journalists.¹⁹

At this inaugural meeting, Secretary-General Djawoto declared that the mission of the AAJA was to challenge the “hegemony of capitalist and imperialist presses” in formerly colonized countries.²⁰ Randrianja Rene Anselme, the first secretariat of the Malagasy Communist Party, described how agencies such as “the Goethe Institute of Federal Germany, the embassies of Taiwan, of France, and of Israel” were distributing “thousands of tons of newspapers, magazines, photos, etc.” in Madagascar.²¹ In Gambia, according to Dixon Colley, the co-founder of the Gambia Press Union, colonial powers suppressed the growth of independent newspapers by requiring exorbitant security payments for any print media to be published.²² To combat the capitalist presses, the AAJA believed that journalists in the Third World had to assume the role of “doctors of the mind” by imparting the truth and exposing lies.²³ For AAJA members, “the truth” meant information and comments that were in accordance with “the legitimate aspirations of peoples for national independence, social progress, democracy, freedom, and peace.”²⁴ In contrast, “lies” referred to reports in the interests of colonial powers or the indigenous exploiting classes. Quoting Russian writer Maxim Gorky, the AAJA leadership urged Afro-Asian journalists to serve their countries in the same way a doctor serves his or her patients: “They both examine, diagnose, and prescribe. The journalist has a great responsibility in informing public opinion.”²⁵ In the long run, journalists in Afro-Asian countries were to aim for “a complete surgical operation” of the “cancer” of reactionary media, which “infectiously spread its evil germs” in the body politics of the newly independent countries.²⁶

While the AAJA disapproved of the contents of capitalist media, it valued their professional practices, such as “the art of headlining and displaying the news,” as something to be emulated by revolutionary journalism. According to Lionel Morrison, the mission of Afro-Asian journalists was to “make the masses better informed and more skillful in their approach to life.” However, a dull style was not to be associated with the seriousness of this objective.²⁷ Quoting Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), he urged Third World journalists to make their publications “attractive to the eye and easy to handle and read.”²⁸ The ultimate goal was to elevate revolutionary journalism to the level of art, which would bring its audience not only political awareness but a pleasurable escape from the daily burden of work. In an introductory essay published in the two sister magazines of *Afro-Asian Journalist*, *The Spark* (headquartered in Accra) and *Revolution* (based in Paris), Morrison attributed much of their success to colorful styles and

¹⁹Salem 1964, 15.

²⁰Djawoto 1964, 1.

²¹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 10.

²²Colley 1964, 22.

²³*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 13.

²⁴*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 13.

²⁵*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 13.

²⁶Isak 1964, 1.

²⁷Morrison 1964a, 10.

²⁸Morrison 1964a, 13.

appealing designs. Each volume of *Revolution* contained “140–160 tight packed well and glossy illustrated pages” while *Spark* was “printed in large newspaper size.” He praised the magazines’ “liberal and effective” use of “striking photos” and eye-catching layouts.²⁹

The AAJA’s leaders recognized that the challenge faced by leftist journalists in the Third World included not only competition against Euro-American-controlled presses, but also low literacy rates of their target audience, the working class. Visual art could convey ideas and emotions in a way that did not require as much effort and education on the part of its audience. A key feature of the *Afro-Asian Journalist* was its extensive use of images, including photos and political caricatures. Humor, in the words of Indonesian painter and cartoonist Sibarani (1925–2014),³⁰ is a tremendously effective political weapon.³¹ Besides a winning sense of humor, caricatures should also have a firm political stance.³² In the cartoons in the *Afro-Asian Journalist*, satires of imperialist intrigues and menace were usually straightforward (Figure 1).

Global reporting from the Indonesian archipelago

In 1959, Indonesian President Sukarno imposed restrictions on press freedom, suspended elections and the country’s parliament, and implemented what he called “Guided Democracy.” In doing so, he had to maintain a delicate balance between two antagonistic political forces – the Indonesian Army and the PKI.³³ The President relied on the PKI for organizing mass support, while the PKI depended on Sukarno for protection against harassment from the military. Like much left-wing media in Indonesia, the AAJA refrained from criticizing the increasingly autocratic Sukarno. For example, PKI-affiliated journalist Soepeno wrote in *Afro-Asian Journalist* that the liberal democratic era (1949–1959) was “a period of confusion” for Indonesian journalism, because excessive freedom had led to conflicts among different newspapers that oftentimes involved the use of what he claimed was “abusive language.” Soepeno praised Sukarno for starting a “new era” and for closing down newspapers that “had a tremendous interest in splitting up the Indonesian people.”³⁴

Simultaneous with Sukarno’s turn toward the left at home was a hardening of his government’s attitude toward the U.S.-led capitalist camp. In a speech at the U.N. in September 1960, Sukarno spoke as a representative of a non-aligned Third World. However, in contrast to his call for peace and stability at Bandung in 1955, Sukarno in this speech appealed to newly independent states to “build the world anew” through relentless struggle against imperialism.³⁵ A year later, in 1961, NAM was established in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Although NAM was an outgrowth of Bandung and Sukarno was one of its founding fathers, there were major differences between the neutralist stance advocated by leaders such as Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Sukarno’s worldview. In particular, the

²⁹Morrison 1964a, 10.

³⁰A renowned political cartoonist whose work often became a topic of conversation, Sibarani established his reputation as the editorial cartoonist for the pro-Sukarno leftist daily *Bintang Timur* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. See Anderson 1978, 292.

³¹Sibarani 1964, 39.

³²Sibarani 1964, 39.

³³Feith 1963, 323.

³⁴Soepeno 1964, 23.

³⁵Sukarno, “To Build the World Anew,” address at the fifteenth general assembly of the United Nations, New York, September 30, 1960; in Modelski 1963, 1–33.

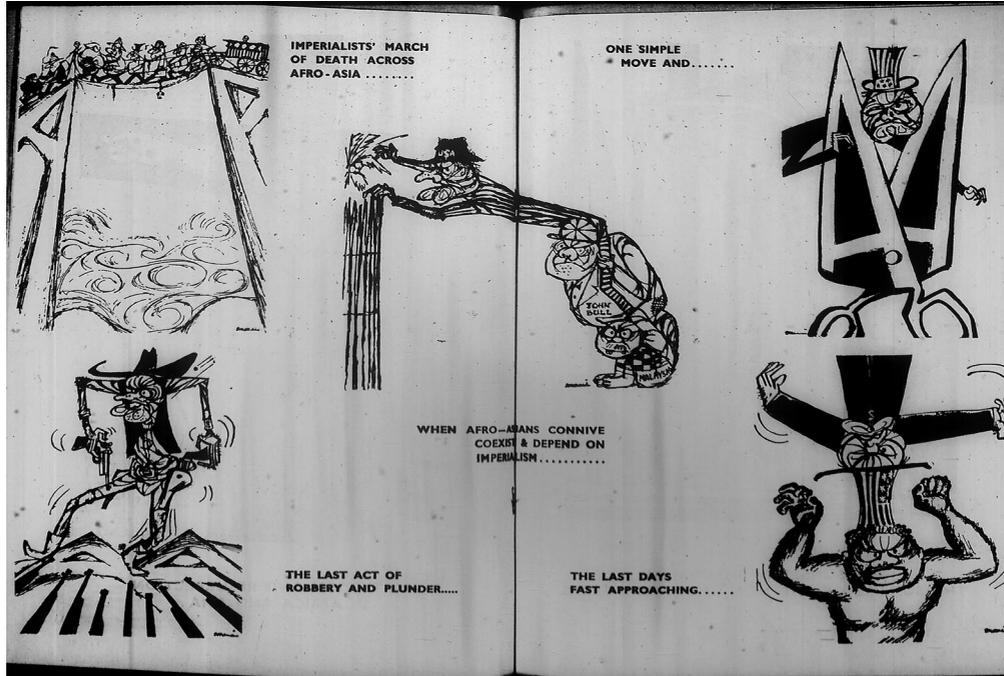


Figure 1. "Martyrdom and Resurrection in Africa and Asia": a set of cartoons depicting "imperialists' march of death across Afro-Asia" and their "last act of robbery and plunder."

Credit: *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1965 (3): 33-34.

latter's preoccupation with advancing his crusade against neocolonialism, colonialism, and imperialism (*Neokolonialisme – Kolonialisme – Imperialisme*, NEKOLIM) took increasing precedence over his role as a non-aligned mediator in the Cold War.³⁶

Sukarno's passionate rhetoric on the global stage developed into a foreign policy doctrine which divided the world into two rather than three camps. He proclaimed that the "new emerging forces" would destroy the vestiges of the "old established forces" and claim primacy in world affairs. In September 1963, five months after the AAJA's inaugural meeting in Jakarta, Sukarno declared Indonesia's opposition to the newly formed Federation of Malaysia, which included the already independent Federation of Malaya as well as Singapore and the former British colonial territories on the island of Borneo.³⁷ In launching a campaign of confrontation (*konfrontasi*), Sukarno angered the United States and its allies while alienating Indonesia from the détente-seeking Soviet Union and the archipelago's former friends in the Third World. As such, Indonesia was drawn closer to other countries pursuing militant anti-imperialist foreign policies, such as the P.R.C. In his August 17, 1965 independence day speech, Sukarno declared: "We are now fostering an anti-imperialist axis – the Jakarta–Phnom Penh–Hanoi–Peking–Pyongyang axis."³⁸ With the support of these allies, Sukarno planned to build a new international order by replacing the Olympic Games and the U.N. with the "Games of New Emerging Forces" and the "Conference of New Emerging Forces," respectively.

The PKI, mirroring Sukarno, emphasized a future world order in which "the rural" overpowered "the urban" on a global scale. In the widening Sino-Soviet split, the Soviets welcomed the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism, whereas the Chinese refused to subordinate the anti-imperialist struggle to détente. The PKI sided with Beijing and joined its denunciation of the view that Third World countries should refrain from joining either bloc while seeking to bring pressure on both superpowers in order to relieve international tensions. In his political report to the second plenum of the seventh central committee of the PKI in December 1963, General Secretary Dipa Nusantra Aidit (1923–1965), who would later be executed by Suharto's forces after the September Thirtieth Movement, declared:

On a world scale, Asia, Africa, and Latin America are the villages of the world, whilst Europe and North America are the towns of the world. If the world revolution is to be victorious there is no other way than for the world proletariat to give prominence to the revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, that is to say, the revolutions in the villages of the world. In order to win the world revolution, the world proletariat must go to these three continents.³⁹

In this life-and-death struggle between new emerging forces and old established forces, the Afro-Asian press was, in the words of Sukarno, the "pen mightier than the sword." In his opening address to the first AAJA conference in 1963, the Indonesian President announced that although many countries had been liberated from colonial rule during the eight years following the Bandung Conference, "national independence alone is not

³⁶Cribb and Kahin 2004, 294.

³⁷The Federation of Malaya became independent on August 31, 1957. On September 16, 1963, the British colonies of Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak joined the Federation and the country was renamed "Malaysia." On August 9, 1965, Singapore was expelled from the Federation and became an independent republic.

³⁸Green 1990, 36.

³⁹Aidit 1964, 84–85.

enough.”⁴⁰ The press must serve as an instrument for revolutionary forces in Asia and Africa to destroy the “old order built on domination and oppression.”⁴¹ The AAJA sought to live up to these expectations and endorsed militant anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggles as exemplified by Sukarno’s *konfrontasi* with Malaysia. The first issue of *Afro-Asian Journalist* included a congratulatory message on the founding of the AAJA from A. M. Azahari (1928–2002), a Brunei politician who had fought for the independence of North Kalimantan, a political entity which included Brunei, Sabah, and Sarawak. Azahari criticized the unreliability of foreign reports about North Kalimantan and chastised some journalists for producing “British colonial propaganda.”

Have you visited the hospitals where our courageous freedom fighters lie wounded or dying? Do you realize the threats and the physical as well as mental torture perpetrated by the colonialists on our people now? ... Are you aware of the curtailment of press freedom in Kalimantan Utara today and the wanton disregard of the Bill of Rights and the UN Charter?⁴²

Notwithstanding its fiery condemnation of imperialism, the legacies of the Bandung era helped the AAJA maintain its inclusiveness as a broad transnational movement. In spite of Indonesia’s estrangement from NAM, representatives from non-aligned countries such as Iran, India, and Sri Lanka joined the AAJA inaugural conference. Behrouz Jahangir, a former member of the Tudeh Party of Iran who, by 1964, no longer considered himself a Marxist and was living in exile, openly discussed the “misunderstandings and disputes amongst the Afro-Asian community of nations” in his speech at the conference.⁴³ The press, according to him, was in charge of “a most delicate duty” of leading public opinion toward peaceful solutions for disagreements, which would otherwise damage Third World solidarity. Jahangir expressed his hope for the AAJA to be free from infighting and independent from the politics of any particular government.⁴⁴

Not entirely free from Sukarno’s embroilment in the factional divisions within newly independent countries, the AAJA still tried to create a unified information domain for the entire Third World. *Afro-Asian Journalist* situated itself at the center of a worldwide network of leftist media. Each issue, except for the first volume, contained a column entitled “News and Views,” a collection of reports on global affairs from left-wing newspapers in Asia and Africa, including both government publications such as the *People’s Daily* in the P.R.C. and *Rodong Shimoon* in North Korea, and private newspapers as well as those owned by non-ruling political parties, such as *Ludu* (Burma), the *Bintang Timur* (Indonesia), the *Barisan Weekly* (Singapore), the *Ghanaian Times*, the *Pakistan Observer* and *Dawn* (Pakistan), *Himaichuli* (Nepal), *L’Essor* (Mali), *Le Peuple* (Algeria), the *Nigerian Morning Post*, and *Al-Massa* (Egypt). Reports were selected to form a unified narrative of shared themes, creating an image of robust transnational information flows centered on common struggles against imperialism. Also present in all but the inaugural issue was its signature center spread. These juxtaposed images of militant resistance against colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism in different parts of the world

⁴⁰Sukarno 1963.

⁴¹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964b, 6.

⁴²*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 10.

⁴³Maziar Behrooz, email message to author, September 10, 2017.

⁴⁴*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 9.

encouraged readers to visualize political solidarity and temporal simultaneity among spatially distant events (Figure 2).

The AAJA showcased the interconnectedness of revolutionary struggles in Asia and Africa not only through its reporting but also through transnational professional exchanges and synchronized political ceremonies. It established friendly working relations with regional organizations such as the Arab Journalists' Union and the Pan-Africa Journalist Union. In 1963, Suraedi Tahsin (1923–2003), general secretary of the PWI who was later appointed Ambassador to Mali by Sukarno, attended the second conference of African Journalists in Accra as the AAJA's representative. Tahsin's speech, which emphasized the common ideals and shared destiny of African and Asian journalists, was reported to have won a standing ovation from more than 200 African journalists from thirty-two countries.⁴⁵ In 1964, the AAJA organized a mass meeting in Jakarta to celebrate African Liberation Day (May 25), which commemorated the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of today's African Union (AU). In a statement issued at this event, the AAJA compared the revolutionary struggles of Africans to similar developments in North Kalimantan, South Vietnam, and Laos.⁴⁶ Through all of these activities, the AAJA demonstrated commonality in anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggles across the Third World, or in Lionel Morrison's words, "the singularity of our struggle, the sameness of our enemy."⁴⁷

The events that most inspired the AAJA's internationalism were the political upheavals in the Congo. The assassination of the charismatic independence leader Patrice Lumumba in January 1961 was a common reference point for Third World left-wing forces' fury toward superpower intervention in decolonization. For Indonesia, the political unrest in the Congo had special symbolic meaning. Between 1960 and 1963, the "Garuda Contingent" (*Kontingen Garuda*), Indonesian soldiers serving as U.N. peacekeepers, completed two missions in the Congo. In April 1961, shortly after Lumumba's death, LEKRA published a collection of poems entitled *We are all Lumumba*, which was originally presented at the Council Meeting of Asian-African People's Solidarity in Bandung. This anthology included poems by PKI leaders such as Politburo member Njoto (1927–1965), who wrote in a tone of revolutionary romanticism: "Congo, your hunger is our own, your hunger we have in common, hunger for the revolution."⁴⁸ *Afro-Asian Journalist* was printed and distributed by the Lumumba Foundation in Jakarta. The logo of the Lumumba Foundation – which depicted a pen and flaming fires – routinely appeared alongside a quote from Asrar Ahmad on its back cover. In this quote, Asrar Ahmad highlighted the point that Lumumba's "gruesome murder," allegedly orchestrated by Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the U.N., was not a stand-alone tragedy but part of larger "imperialist and colonialist conspiracies" across Asia and Africa. Asrar Ahmad praised the Lumumba Foundation for being "a fresh source of unity and solidarity among the Afro-Asian nations" (Figure 3).⁴⁹

⁴⁵Morrison 1964b, 15.

⁴⁶*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964c, 21.

⁴⁷Morrison 1964a, 14.

⁴⁸Njoto 1961.

⁴⁹Back covers, *Afro-Asian Journalist*, 1964–1965. The logo and the quote no longer appeared in the magazine after the headquarters of the AAJA moved to Beijing.

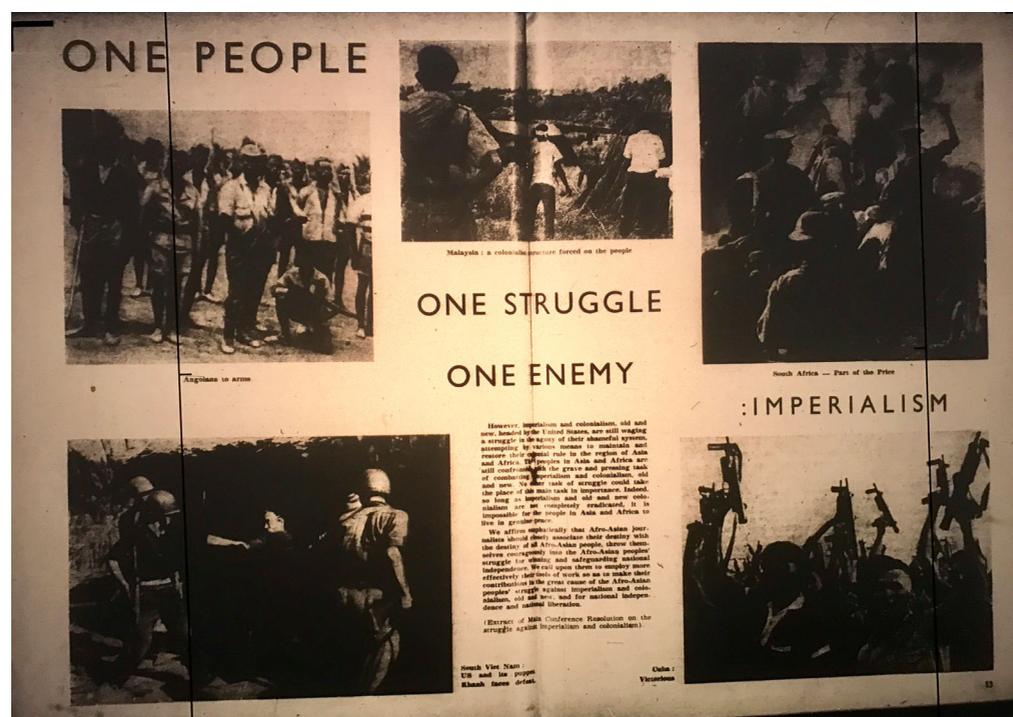


Figure 2. "One People, One Struggle, One Enemy": pictures of militant resistance against colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism in Angola, Malaysia, South Africa, Cuba and Vietnam. The paragraph in the middle declares: "... as long as imperialism and old and new colonialism are not completely eradicated, it is impossible for the people in Asia and Africa to live in genuine peace."

Credit: *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964 (2): 12–13.

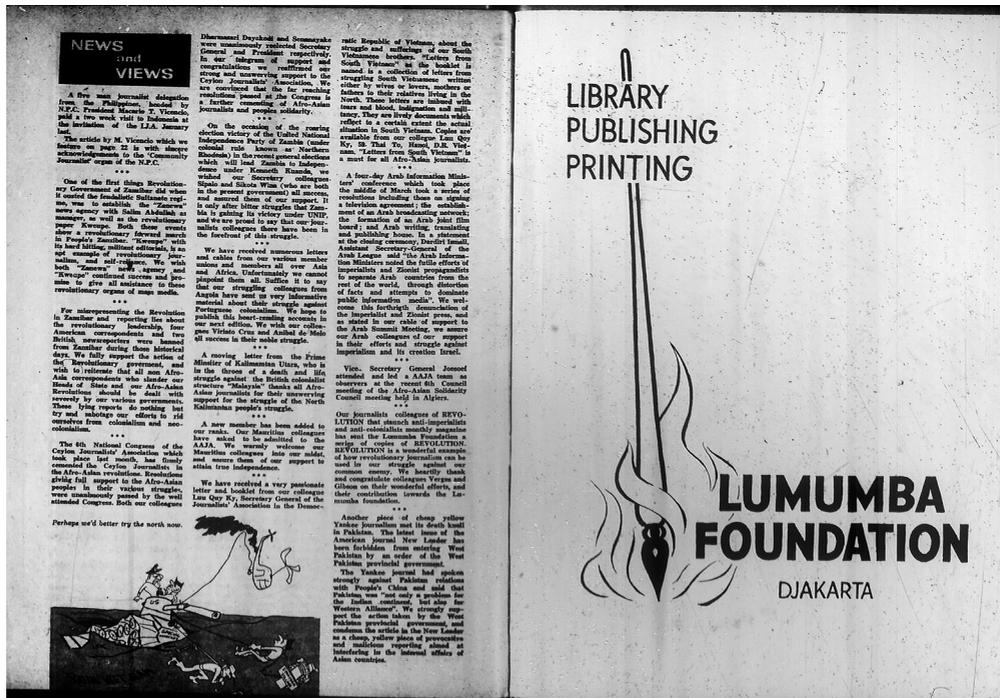


Figure 3. The column “News and Views” and the logo of the Lumumba Foundation.
 Credit: Afro-Asian Journalist 1964 (2): 24–25.

The Congo crisis symbolized the introduction of the Cold War, understood by AAJA intellectuals as the superpowers' contestation for power and influence, to Asia and Africa. *Afro-Asian Journalist* portrayed the "cold war," in lower case, as an exogenous force that could cause Asian and African countries to deviate from their desired path of development. Critics claimed that First World powers used political divisions that were not meaningful to the people of the Third World to "Balkanize" them.⁵⁰ By hijacking local political discourse, the imperial powers sought to erode revolutionary solidarity among the people of Asia and Africa by engaging them in irrelevant domestic or international conflicts and distracting them from achieving their goal of independence.⁵¹ One prominent example of this was the apartheid regime in South Africa, whose racial segregation policies made Africa the "last happy play and hunting ground of White supremacy" and posed "a direct challenge to the Afro-Asian-Latin-American peoples as well as the progressive forces of the whole world."⁵²

The AAJA held that the task for Asians and Africans in the postcolonial era was to restructure local politics and economies in a manner suited to their historical and cultural heritage. To achieve this goal, the AAJA supported the political, economic, and media unity of the African continent and the Muslim world.⁵³ The AAJA aspired to help lay the foundations for anti-colonial, anti-imperialist associations unbounded by sovereign statehood. For example, *Afro-Asian Journalist* enthusiastically reported on the All-African Trade Union Federation, set up in May 1961 in Casablanca at the initiative of Ghana's first prime minister and president, Kwame Nkrumah. Adopting a class-based analytical framework, the AAJA described a united trade union as "a forerunner of the unification of the African continent."⁵⁴ The organization celebrated Nkrumah's proposals for agrarian reform, nationalization, and strong state control of trade with Europe and North America to facilitate Pan-African economic integration. These policies highly resembled Sukarno's economic schemes in Indonesia in the 1960s.

Echoing Sukarno's interpretation of indigenized socialism in Muslim-majority Indonesia and Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pan-Arabism, the AAJA depicted transnational solidarity as forged on the basis of the Bandung spirit and the teachings of Islam.⁵⁵ It highlighted the convergence of secular socialism and Islamic social justice in its coverage of the Middle East. National revolutions in the Arab region, for example, were portrayed as representing "a strong desire to strengthen the principles of socialism."⁵⁶ A commentary published in *Afro-Asian Journalist* lamented the fact that "the Arab land was divided into fourteen states of different political character with different social standards and different cultures." These diverse political administrations were deemed obstacles to the emergence of a strong and united Arab press.⁵⁷ In June 1964, Indonesia hosted a "preparatory African-Asian Islamic conference" in Jakarta, which was attended by representatives from Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Republic, among other countries. This preparatory gathering proposed to support Muslims' political struggles for self-

⁵⁰Morrison 1964b, 17.

⁵¹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964d, 27.

⁵²*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964e, 23.

⁵³Al-Aref 1965, 19.

⁵⁴*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964d, 27.

⁵⁵*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964f, 45.

⁵⁶*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964a, 9.

⁵⁷Al-Aref 1965, 19.

determination and promote religious collaborations in organizing Islamic missionaries, interstate scholarships, and fellowships to further Islamic studies in African and Asian states.⁵⁸ Yet, due to the political tumult in Indonesia in 1965, a planned African-Asian Islamic conference failed to materialize.

Beijing's revolutionary messages

The mid-1960s was a turning point in Indonesian history and in the Afro-Asian movement. In the early morning hours of October 1, 1965, Indonesian army units from the presidential palace guard abducted and later killed six senior generals. The next day, the head of the Army Strategic Reserve, Major General Suharto, launched a counterattack against what he claimed was an attempted coup by the PKI. The campaign escalated into one of the worst cases of political violence in the twentieth century, with an estimated 500,000 alleged communists murdered. Suharto deposed President Sukarno, cut diplomatic ties with China, and joined the American-led anti-communist coalition.

Sukarno's downfall was a blow to the Afro-Asian movement, which suffered from a loss of leading figures at the Bandung Conference and a lack of ideological cohesion. U Nu (1907–1995) of Burma was placed under house arrest in 1962 and Jawaharlal Nehru of India died in 1964. A coup in Algeria in 1965 removed Ahmed Ben Bella (1916–2012) from power, while another, in Ghana in 1966, overthrew Nkrumah. Meanwhile, divisions deepened between African and Asian states which wanted to pursue peaceful co-existence within the existing structure of Cold War politics and those that demanded a radical reconfiguration of the world order through force. The Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in January 1966 was a major gathering of representatives from countries which regarded revolutionary violence as a just form of resistance. Its host, Fidel Castro, intended to replace the AAPSO, whose efficacy was undermined by the Sino-Soviet split, with the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), headquartered in Havana.⁵⁹ Castro was frustrated with the Soviet Union's peace initiatives and regarded any supplication to the U.S. or its allies as worthless. Instead, he asserted that genuine solidarity of the Third World meant concerted revolutionary wars and concrete military solutions for countries combating colonialism and imperialism, such as Vietnam.⁶⁰

Besides the Cuban government, another determined champion of armed opposition to imperialism was China. With its status between being a member of the Third World and a great power, China had a complicated relationship with the Afro-Asian movement.⁶¹ At Bandung, where the P.R.C. was suspected of communist infiltration, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai successfully defused tensions by emphasizing that differences in ideology and social systems should not prevent Third World states from seeking common ground.⁶² Between late 1963 and early 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai visited ten African countries and promised economic, technological, and medical aid. Largely due to reciprocal support from newly independent African countries, the P.R.C. claimed a major diplomatic victory at the U.N. in 1965 when a General Assembly vote to recognize the People's

⁵⁸ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1964f, 45.

⁵⁹ Friedman 2015, 148.

⁶⁰ Prashad 2007, 108–110.

⁶¹ Lawrence 2013, 144.

⁶² Zhou 1955, 23.

Republic, instead of the Chinese Nationalist Government in Taipei, as China's legitimate representative ended in a draw.⁶³ But with the unfolding of the Cultural Revolution, the P.R.C. was unable to further expand its influence in the Third World. In 1965, Chinese Marshall Lin Biao incorporated PKI leader Aidit's theory of the world's countryside encircling the world's cities into his speech, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War."⁶⁴ In this foundational text for global guerrilla warfare, the P.R.C. offered support to armed insurrections in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as long as foreign revolutionaries recognized the universality of Mao Zedong thought. During the Cultural Revolution, the CCP abandoned the principles of peaceful co-existence promoted by Zhou Enlai at the Bandung Conference. P.R.C. representatives abroad were either expelled for violations of diplomatic protocol or called back for domestic political campaigns. China's links to the Third World became few, although the CCP continued to imagine itself to be the center of international affairs.⁶⁵ In 1966, a motion to replace the Republic of China with the People's Republic on the U.N. Security Council was defeated by a large margin.⁶⁶

The AAJA carved out a new political space in Cultural Revolution China after its escape from suppression by the emerging Suharto regime. In December 1965, the Indonesian Army searched AAJA headquarters in Jakarta, confiscated documents, cut off its communications with the outside world, arrested three staff members, and harassed many others. Suharto's New Order government detained Joesef Isak on subversion charges and appointed Arifin Bey, a former announcer for the Voice of America, as secretary general of the AAJA.⁶⁷ Lionel Morrison's secretary was killed in his presence and his fiancé, a trade unionist in Bali, was murdered during the mass violence.⁶⁸ Indonesia's Ambassador to China and Mongolia, Djawoto, condemned the Suharto regime's "banning of progressive newspapers," "mass arrests and massacre of progressive journalists," and "wanton interference and obstruction against the AAJA Secretariat in Jakarta."⁶⁹ Insisting that his loyalty remained with Sukarno and "the revolutionary solidarity of the Afro-Asian people," Djawoto resigned from his diplomatic post. However, he decided to continue living in China as leader of the AAJA, which, he announced, had temporarily withdrawn from Jakarta to Beijing. The Suharto regime denounced Djawoto as a traitor and revoked his Indonesian citizenship.⁷⁰

The reconstituted AAJA Secretariat in Beijing became a magnet for Indonesian left-leaning intellectuals from different parts of the world. At the time of the September Thirtieth Movement, more than 4000 Indonesian delegates were in Beijing to attend China's National Day (October 1) celebration. For those who chose not to return to Indonesia, the Chinese government offered asylum. Eventually they were joined by other left-leaning Indonesians who had been abroad when the September Thirtieth Movement occurred. Suraedi Tahsin, the Indonesian Ambassador to Mali who had played an active role in the AAJA, moved to China with his family in October 1967.⁷¹ Other

⁶³Chen 2013, 92–93.

⁶⁴Lin 1965.

⁶⁵For details on Chinese diplomacy during the Cultural Revolution, Westad 2012, especially chapter nine.

⁶⁶Chen 2013, 93.

⁶⁷*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966a, 39.

⁶⁸Liz Morrison, email to author, September 21, 2018.

⁶⁹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966b, 19.

⁷⁰*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966a, 39.

⁷¹Hill 2010, 31.

AAJA-affiliated exiles who settled in the P.R.C. included Isa Ibrahim, Umar Said, and Francisca Fanggalidaj, all of whom were important participants in Third World cultural exchanges. Isa Ibrahim was the head of the Indonesian Organization for the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity (*Organisasi Indonesia untuk Setiakawan Rakyat Asia-Afrika*, OISRAA) and was Indonesia's resident representative at AAPSO headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, from 1960 until 1965. Umar Said worked as a journalist at various news agencies in Indonesia, including the PKI's *Harian Rakyat*, and later became a member of the AAJA and Indonesia's representative to the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) based in Prague. Fanggalidaj had been a Dutch and English language teacher and interpreter before becoming a journalist, chair of *Pemuda Rakyat*, the PKI's youth organization, and member of the Indonesian Parliament. On October 1, 1965, Isa Ibrahim was on a flight from Cairo to Jakarta for the International Conference against Foreign Military Bases (*Konferensi Internasional Anti-Pangkalan Militer Asing*, KIAPMA) scheduled for mid-October 1965. Umar Said had recently arrived in Algiers to prepare for the second congress of the AAJA. Fanggalidaj was attending a congress of the IOJ in Chile.

In January 1966, Isa Ibrahim, Said, and Fanggalidaj represented Sukarno's deposed government at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana. This was the first international opportunity for the Indonesian left to voice its opposition to the anti-communist dictatorship at home. Fanggalidaj used the conference stage to denounce the "fascist acts" of persecution and torture used by the Indonesian military on the leaders of the Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*).⁷² Isa Ibrahim, Said, Fanggalidaj, and five international activists were confronted by a delegation representing Suharto's New Order government, headed by Brigade General Latief Hendraningrat.⁷³ Isa Ibrahim castigated the opposing delegation as "spokesmen of the Indonesian Army instead of the Indonesian people."⁷⁴ Conference delegates endorsed the delegation led by Isa Ibrahim, forbade the Latief Hendraningrat delegation from entering the conference hotel, and condemned the Indonesian Army's "suppression of democratic forces" in their final resolution.⁷⁵ In response, the Suharto government issued a strong protest to the Cuban government and annulled the passports of the members of the Isa Ibrahim delegation.⁷⁶ Suddenly rendered stateless in a foreign land, Isa Ibrahim, Umar Said, and Fanggalidaj accepted an offer of asylum from the P.R.C. delegation.⁷⁷ With newly issued Cuban passports (what Isa Ibrahim called "souvenirs from Castro") they made their way to Beijing.⁷⁸

During its Beijing years, while the AAJA remained a transnational non-governmental organization in name, it was under the tight control of the Chinese government. The Chinese government provided financial resources and regularized AAJA activities.

⁷²Francisca Fanggalidaj, "To the Women of Asia, Africa and Latin America," January 1966, Francisca Fanggalidaj Papers.

⁷³The other five members were: Margono, Indonesia's representative to the World Federation of Democratic Youth headquartered in Budapest; Willy Hariandja, Indonesia's representative to the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee; Sugir, leader of *Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* (All Indonesia Center of Labor Organizations); Wiyanto SH, Indonesia's representative to the Afro-Asian Juris Association headquartered in Conakry; and Suharjo Wakil, who represented the *Harian Rakyat* at the *World Marxist Review*, headquartered in Prague. See Ibrahim 2013, 100.

⁷⁴Ibrahim 2014.

⁷⁵Ibrahim 2013, 104.

⁷⁶"Peristiwa Havana Sepenuhnya Mendapatkan Perhatian DPR-GR; DPR-GR menyatakan protes," February 1, 1966, Antara, Jakarta, in Francisca Fanggalidaj Papers.

⁷⁷Ibrahim 2014.

⁷⁸Ibrahim 2013, 104. Umar Said lived in China for seven years while Isa and Fanggalidaj each spent two decades there. Isa Ibrahim worked for the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries while Umar Said and Fanggalidaj worked for the AAJA.

Publication of *Afro-Asian Journalist* averaged four issues per year between 1966 and 1974. The AAJA's friendship delegations frequently visited Arab and African countries. Every year, it continued its tradition of organizing celebrations for AAJA Day on April 24 and African Liberation Day on May 25. These events were attended by AAJA members and Chinese officials and covered in *Afro-Asian Journalist* and Chinese domestic media outlets. The Afro-Asian journalism course, which began in Jakarta in 1965, became a standardized training program held annually between 1966 and 1971 in China.

Yet, uniformity and consistency also meant that the AAJA had almost no autonomy. Mu Guangren, the former editor-in-chief of the official New China News Agency (NCNA), recalled that the radical politics of the Cultural Revolution permeated Chinese media as well as the AAJA. Convinced that China was in the eye of a worldwide revolutionary storm, Mao ordered the NCNA to "take charge of the entire globe."⁷⁹ In 1967, Mu traveled to several countries in Asia and Africa to distribute invitations to the forthcoming fifth plenary secretariat meeting of the AAJA. However, even countries that used to have cordial relations with the P.R.C., such as Algeria, Egypt, Mali, and Pakistan, showed little interest. After his return to Beijing, Mu paid a visit to Djawoto in an attempt to persuade him to accept Mao Zedong thought as the guiding principle of the AAJA. Djawoto was initially opposed, as he believed that doing so would undermine the AAJA's commitment to serving journalists from countries with different social systems and ideologies. In the end, as an exile living under the patronage of the P.R.C., Djawoto had little recourse. The AAJA passed a resolution recognizing Mao Zedong thought as its guiding principle, which Djawoto praised in public as "more powerful than an H-Bomb."⁸⁰

Transformed from a socialist cosmopolitan alliance of presses to an international branch of the P.R.C.'s propaganda system, the AAJA shifted its focus from creating a global leftist information network to elevating China's prestige in the Third World. This new task required the AAJA to vigorously attack the Soviet Union, the P.R.C.'s competitor for influence in Afro-Asian countries. Admittedly, even during the Jakarta period the AAJA's attitude toward the Soviet Union had been lukewarm, due to the PKI's siding with the P.R.C. after the Sino-Soviet split became evident in 1961. However, AAJA also had avoided offending the Soviet Union. Indonesia participated in the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), one of the front organizations launched by the Soviet Union, and invited the IOJ to send observers to the AAJA's inaugural meeting in Jakarta in 1963. However, the Soviets' condoning of the Suharto regime's mass violence in 1965 infuriated many Indonesian leftist exiles in China. Moreover, in Havana, the Soviet Union rejected the Isa Ibrahim delegation's proposal to include the massacre in Indonesia on the agenda of the Tricontinental Conference.⁸¹ As a result, in Beijing, the AAJA harshly condemned the U.S.S.R. as an imperialist country no different from the United States and a patron of the brutal Suharto regime.⁸² They attacked Soviet revisionists for their "splittist" acts in Afro-Asia socio-cultural organizations and accused the Soviet-controlled IOJ of "engaging in criminal activities of capitulation and betrayal," "begging the U.S. imperialist-controlled International Federation of Journalists for co-

⁷⁹Mu 2013.

⁸⁰*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967a, 22.

⁸¹"Konperensi Havana kurang memuaskankan delegasi Afrika," January 20, 1966, Antara, Cairo, in Francisca Fanggidaj Papers.

⁸²Gunawan 1966, 52–59.

operation,” and for “humbling itself before UNESCO in order to acquire a consultative status.”⁸³ When the U.S.S.R. organized Afro-Asian Writers’ and AAPSO conferences that excluded the P.R.C., the AAJA called these events “illegal,” “fake,” and “bogus.”⁸⁴ *Afro-Asian Journalist* commented: “The Soviets only pretend to support the liberation struggles that are being waged in many countries in Africa and Asia. In reality, they are colluding and conniving with the U.S.-led imperialists to suppress those struggles.”⁸⁵

Mirroring political campaigns within China against Liu Shaoqi, whom Mao had labeled “China’s Khrushchev,” the AAJA secretariat called for a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution on the journalism front to combat a counter-revolutionary revisionist line and repudiated its own Khrushchevs.⁸⁶ *Afro-Asian Journalist* routinely published articles by foreign visitors and AAJA staff members praising the Cultural Revolution.⁸⁷ However, few of these were products of influential overseas supporters. The only notable piece was by Mamadou Gologo (1924–2009), the Mali Minister of Information at the time, who had participated in the AAJA since its Jakarta period. Gologo claimed to be “carried away in spite of himself” during his ten-day immersion in the “essentially democratic and popular” Cultural Revolution.⁸⁸ Events organized by the AAJA became laden with Cultural Revolution rituals such as collective chanting of political slogans and reading the “Little Red Book,” *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. At the AAJA day celebration in 1967, the after-conference entertainment included a tenor singing, “The people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America want liberation,” a dance performance entitled, “The people of the world love chairman Mao,” and an opera entitled, “Down with China’s Khrushchev! Thoroughly criticize and repudiate him!” (Figure 4).⁸⁹

The AAJA’s outreach programs, such as its journalism courses and friendship visits, also became tools to showcase the supposed global support for the Cultural Revolution. The first AAJA journalism course, held between May and August of 1965, took its eleven students from eight countries to Indonesia, China, and North Vietnam. Besides emphasizing the importance of ideology, the course covered photography, newspaper design and layout, editing, news analysis, and the basics of broadcasting. The students were taught that these techniques, together with a creative artistic taste and strong organizational ability, were indispensable for producing “a good, popular, and dignified” revolutionary press.⁹⁰ Yet, professional training barely appeared in the courses that followed, held in China during the Cultural Revolution. Djawoto distributed *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and Mao badges to the students. He declared that the journalism course would concentrate on Mao Zedong thought, which was “the most correct, scientific, and revolutionary truth.”⁹¹ Students were taken on tours to sites such as communes, Mao’s native town of Shaoshan, and the “sacred revolutionary base,” Yan’an. Foreign journalists living in China at the time, such as Isa Ibrahim and Sidney Rittenberg, the first American

⁸³ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966c, 60.

⁸⁴ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966d, 62; *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967b, 44.

⁸⁵ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967b, 44.

⁸⁶ Djawoto 1968, 1.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Aboukoss 1968; Rahman 1969; Handojo 1970; Manuweera 1970; Iskandar 1970.

⁸⁸ Gologo 1967.

⁸⁹ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967c.

⁹⁰ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1965, 44.

⁹¹ *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967d, 10.



Figure 4. "After the Meeting: Variety Entertainment." Performances celebrating the AAJA's fourth anniversary included songs, dances, and instrumental recitals with titles such as, "We are the young red fighters of Chairman Mao" and, "A quotation from Chairman Mao set to music." In the picture on the upper right corner, Djawoto shakes hands with the performers.

Credit: *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967 (3): 18.

citizen to join the Chinese Communist Party, gave lectures.⁹² The fifth and final course, which lasted for four months in 1971, targeted journalists from Congo-Kinshasa. Politburo member Yao Wen Yuan, who later would be purged as part of the “Gang of Four,” received them (Figure 5).⁹³

The AAJA’s friendship delegations became mobile propaganda teams which “utilized every opportunity” to promote “the international significance and historical importance” of the Cultural Revolution.⁹⁴ In 1966, 1967, and 1968, the AAJA dispatched delegations to Arab countries including Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, the United Arab Republic, Mauritania, and Kuwait, and African countries including Tanzania, Zambia, Mali, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia. In Palestine, the delegation met with Ahmed Shukeiry (1908–1980), the first Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Shukeiry expressed his “high respect for Chairman Mao,” whose military thinking on people’s warfare was, he claimed, “guiding the Palestine people’s road to liberation.”⁹⁵ In Yemen, a guerrilla fighter from the South Yemen National Liberation Front told the delegates that “many of his fellow fighters carried with them the book of quotations when they went to battle.”⁹⁶ In Angola, revolutionaries were reported to have “printed in a pamphlet a Portuguese translation of Mao’s *Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War* and other military writings.”⁹⁷ Reports on the AAJA’s visits to Yemen, Tanzania, and Zambia highlighted how P.R.C. economic and medical aid liberated residents from imperialist exploitation, religious oppression, and patriarchy. At a P.R.C.-sponsored textile factory in Sana’a, Yemen, AAJA delegates found it “moving” to see women “casting off their black veils for the first time in history.” Their “Chinese sisters, armed with the brilliant thought of Mao Zedong,” trained them to be “modern industrial workers.”⁹⁸ The AAJA claimed that, compared with American and Soviet assistance, Chinese aid did not harbor dark underlying motives, making it more appealing to impoverished countries in Africa. For example, the China-financed Tan-Zam Railway was portrayed as “the most meaningful project that Africa has ever witnessed” which “made all the Western projects, including the Russian construction of the Aswan Dam, look rather puny.”⁹⁹

Instead of projecting a global vision that was open to international influences as in the past, the AAJA’s reporting during the Cultural Revolution years became inward-looking, its focus solely on the applicability of Chinese experiences to Afro-Asian countries. The column “News and Views” was reduced to a small number of international reports with unclear indications of sources, suggesting that the AAJA had been cut off from the global network of leftist media. Rather than exhibiting the unity of the Afro-Asian world through diverse angles, its signature center spread featured images unanimously testifying to the popularity of Mao Zedong’s thought all around the world. For example, photos of “freedom fighters of Mozambique absorbed in Chairman Mao’s works” were juxtaposed with images of guerilla fighters in Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, and Portuguese

⁹²Chiang 1967, 23; *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967d, 10; *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1968a, 35.

⁹³*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1971.

⁹⁴*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966e, 3; *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1968b, 18.

⁹⁵*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967e, 9.

⁹⁶*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1968b, 18.

⁹⁷Andrie 1967, 28.

⁹⁸*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967f, 5.

⁹⁹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1970, 28.

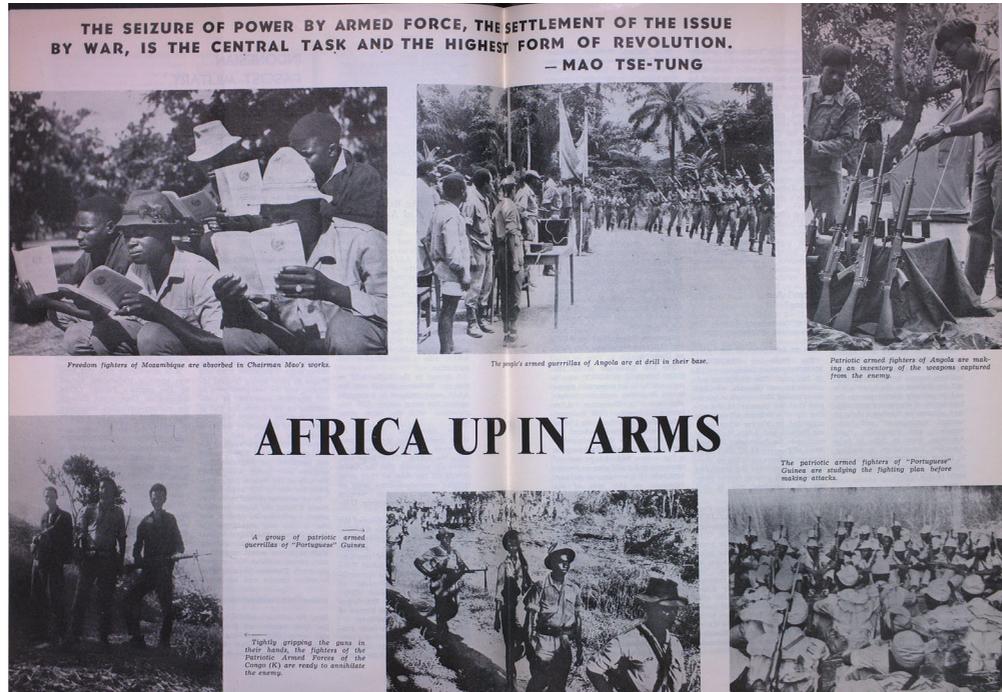


Figure 6. "Africa up in Arms." These six photos are labeled, clock-wise, "freedom fighters of Mozambique absorbed in Chairman Mao's works," "a group of patriotic armed guerilla of 'Portuguese' Guinea," "the fighters of the Patriotic Armed Forces of the Congo (K), tightly gripping the guns in their hands, ready to annihilate the enemy," "the people's armed guerillas of Angola at drill in their base," "patriotic armed fighters of Angola making an inventory of the weapons captured from the enemy," and "patriotic armed fighters of 'Portuguese' Guinea studying the fighting plan before making attacks."

Credit: *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1968 (1): 24–25.

Guinea to illustrate Mao's dictum that "the seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution" (Figure 6).

In its Jakarta period, the AAJA had used caricatures as a tool to increase the marketability of revolutionary media. This continued after it relocated to Beijing, for domestic political mobilization and propaganda abroad. In November 1966, the AAJA organized the "Afro-Asian anti-imperialist caricature exhibition" in Beijing, which attracted over one million visitors.¹⁰⁰ Hailed as "a milestone in the history of the creation of anti-imperialist cartoons in Asia and Africa," the display included more than 180 cartoons from twenty-four countries and regions, including South Vietnam, Congo, and Angola. Cartoons from different parts of the world showed Chinese viewers that Mao Zedong thought was "the most powerful weapon in the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of the world."¹⁰¹ After Beijing, the exhibition moved to Shenyang and Wuhan, attracting tens of thousands more visitors.¹⁰² In 1967, the AAJA published a collection of "Afro-Asian people's anti-imperialist caricatures" with introductions and captions in four languages – English, French, Arabic, and Chinese – and distributed it in the Middle East and Africa as Cultural Revolution propaganda material¹⁰³ (Figure 7).

A new Third World

In the early 1970s, this ideological fervor began abating and Chinese diplomacy took a more moderate tone, including engagement with governments and international organizations that the P.R.C. had previously considered reactionaries or lackeys of imperialists.¹⁰⁴ In July 1971, the Sino-U.S. rapprochement went public. Three months later, the U.N. General Assembly voted to give China's seat to the P.R.C., displacing the Republic of China. The AAJA reported these shifts without appearing to abandon revolutionary causes. For example, on Sino-U.S. rapprochement, the *Afro-Asian Journalist* commented that "Nixon's visit to China was an admission of the total failure of US imperialists' attempts during the last two decades and more to contain the P.R.C., due to the latter's growing strength."¹⁰⁵ The U.N., on the other hand, used to be "a political bargaining place for a few big powers, especially the two superpowers." The P.R.C.'s admission proved that "the UN can no longer be isolated from the further awakening" of the peoples of Asia and Africa.¹⁰⁶ Following this change in the Chinese government's policy, the AAJA adopted a friendlier attitude toward NAM, although its advocacy for peace and stability had not long before been regarded by the AAJA as a betrayal of Afro-Asian countries.¹⁰⁷ At celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of the AAJA, Djawoto included the first NAM Conference in Belgrade in 1961 as one of a series of Afro-Asian gatherings inspired by Bandung. He praised the progress of anti-imperialist struggles in both "non-violent and violent" forms, signaling a departure from militant

¹⁰⁰*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966f, 33.

¹⁰¹*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967h, 25.

¹⁰²*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1967g, 37; *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1968c, 40–41.

¹⁰³The Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association (ed) 1967.

¹⁰⁴Brazinsky 2017, 306–307.

¹⁰⁵Djawoto 1972, 3.

¹⁰⁶Wibisono 1974, 1.

¹⁰⁷*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1972, 1 and Gunawan 1972, 29.



Figure 7. “The Caricature: A Powerful Weapon of Expression.” This center spread features eight anti-imperialist cartoons: “They say it’s time to go home, isn’t it?” “No, we can’t go until we are completely finished!” by Le Hong Huan (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam); “Imperialism get out of Africa!” by Al-Hassan (Tanzania); “Bury Johnson in fire,” reprinted from *Mekong Yat Pao* (Cambodia); “Mayflies trying to topple the giant tree” by Sumi Ikeda (Japan); “The new ‘Munich Agreement’” by Cartoon Group of Peking (China); “The shooting game” by Mohei-El-Din Labbad (United Arab Republic); “Saigon Menagerie” from the Vietnam National Liberation Front journal *Forces armées de libération*; and “Reware” by S. Nar (Indonesia).

Credit: *Afro-Asian Journalist* 1966 (2): 34–35.

anti-imperialist ideology.¹⁰⁸ The AAJA also endorsed the 1973 NAM summit in Algiers, which called for the establishment of a “New International Economic Order” (NIEO) more favorable to the interests of Third World countries.

With the P.R.C.’s decision to join the international community, the term “Afro-Asian” (*yafei*), given its longstanding association with armed struggle for national liberation, was replaced by “Third World” (*di san shijie*) in Chinese public discourse. In February 1974, Mao Zedong introduced his “Three Worlds” thesis at a meeting with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda. Mao’s tripartite division differed from the Cold War’s basic communism-versus-capitalism framework in the sense that the groupings were made on the basis of developmental measurements rather than ideology.¹⁰⁹ Mao placed the U.S. and U.S.S.R., which he deemed the two largest international exploiters, in the first world. His second world included “middle elements,” such as Japan, Europe, Australia, and Canada. While these countries faced threats from the two superpowers, many were also guilty of colonialism or the oppression of weaker nations in the past. Mao included in his third world “all Asian countries, except Japan, and all of Africa and also Latin America.”¹¹⁰ Mao asserted that the third world, although the poorest and least powerful, was nevertheless the major force in promoting progress in the world.

This reframing of Cold War international politics signified a redefinition of China’s domestic and international policies. Internally, this was the harbinger of China’s shift from a state-centered socialist model of development and transition to market-directed economic development. Externally, the pursuit of economic growth and industrialization, rather than belligerence against perceived imperialist domination of world politics, became the new common ground between the P.R.C. and Third World states. The P.R.C. significantly reduced aid to communist insurgents abroad and sought to establish stable state-to-state relations with countries of different political systems.¹¹¹ In April 1974, at the initiative of the President of the NAM at the time, Algerian President Houari Boumediene, the U.N. held its sixth special session to study the problems of raw materials and development and adopted the NIEO as a resolution. This marked a high-point for Third World leaders who had been seeking to correct structural economic disadvantages. Also, on this occasion, China’s Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping presented Mao’s Three Worlds thesis to a global audience. Deng announced: “China is a socialist country, and a developing country, as well. China belongs to the Third World. China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one.”¹¹²

If this was the prelude to China’s transformation from revolutionary state to state capitalism, it was the epilogue of the AAJA. In the early 1970s, the general reporting and art style of *Afro-Asian Journalist* adhered closely to the metamorphosis of the P.R.C. The magazine praised the NIEO as a bold initiative to revamp the global economy and published the full English translation of Deng’s U.N. speech. The AAJA’s overall reporting shifted toward the achievements the Third World had made and the challenges it faced in the economic realm. The personality cult of Mao and Cultural Revolution propaganda

¹⁰⁸*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1973, 3.

¹⁰⁹Chen 2013, 85.

¹¹⁰The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China Party Literature Research Center of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed.) 1993, 454.

¹¹¹Chen 2013, 85.

¹¹²*Afro-Asian Journalist* 1974, 30.

art completely disappeared. Instead of showcasing worldwide armed insurrections, for instance, one of the last issues of the *Afro-Asian Journalist* juxtaposed photos of Guinean students taking part in productive labor, a section of the Tan-Zam railway, and a state-owned oil refinery in Peru. Yet, despite these changes, the AAJA had lost its relevance. Publication of *Afro-Asian Journalist* stopped in November 1974, when the AAJA was unceremoniously disbanded in Beijing.

Changes also took place in the personal lives of the Indonesian exiles working for the AAJA. During the Cultural Revolution, the non-Chinese staff members of the AAJA were paid high salaries and enjoyed privileged status as “foreign experts,” living sheltered lives insulated from economic difficulties.¹¹³ Nevertheless, worldly comforts did not fully compensate for the emotional stress of living in a stifling atmosphere. As Umar Said recalled, the AAJA’s activities in the late 1960s in China were very limited. From his perspective, the organization had lost “the spiritual inspirations of Sukarno” while Afro-Asian countries had lost their solidarity.¹¹⁴ The Indonesian exiles were isolated from the general Chinese population and their personal freedom was heavily curtailed.¹¹⁵ Both the P.R.C. government and a PKI overseas delegation headed by Jusuf Adjitorop, the most senior Indonesian communist leader abroad in the aftermath of the September Thirtieth Movement, subjected them to a strict code of secrecy and silence.¹¹⁶ Soerjono, a *Harian Rakyat* journalist stationed in Beijing, learned from letters delivered to him with traces of postal censorship that his personal communications were also under the close scrutiny of the Chinese government.¹¹⁷ Like all Chinese citizens at the time, the Indonesian exiles were compelled to study Mao Zedong thought, conduct sessions of “criticism and self-criticism,” and engage in endless internal debates verbally as well as in handwritten, wall-mounted “big-character posters” (Chinese *da zi bao*, Indonesian *koran dinding*).¹¹⁸ These campaigns deepened existing fissures among the exiles, who had different understandings of the tragic fate of the PKI.¹¹⁹

Ironically, following the political shifts in China in the early 1970s, the transnational networks previously forged by the AAJA in the name of anti-imperialism became platforms that facilitated the migration of Indonesian left-wing journalists exiled in the P.R.C. to the capitalist West. Many of them had been separated from their families and were unable to travel for years. After Djawoto resigned from his position as Indonesia’s Ambassador to China, the exiles became technically stateless when their Indonesian passports expired. For official travel on behalf of the AAJA, they could use travel permits from the Chinese government. However, as stateless individuals, they faced many obstacles and restrictions.¹²⁰ After much research and deliberation, Umar Said decided that the only way he could leave the suffocating environment in China and reunite with his family was to extend his old passport by using a fake stamp. During a visit to Africa as a member of the AAJA’s friendship delegation in 1967, he obtained a duplicate of the stamp from the Indonesian Immigration Office from a printing company in Damascus, Syria. In

¹¹³Ibrahim 2014.

¹¹⁴Said 2004, 127–130.

¹¹⁵Hill 2010, 34.

¹¹⁶Hill 2010, 37; Hearman 2010, 90.

¹¹⁷Folder 1, Soerjono Papers.

¹¹⁸Hill 2010, 35.

¹¹⁹Hearman 2010, 90.

¹²⁰Said 2004, 127–130.

1973, with this altered passport, he took an experimental trip to Western Europe to conduct a survey on living conditions and job opportunities in different countries. The following year he settled in Paris, France, where he opened an Indonesian restaurant.¹²¹ In the late 1970s and 1980s, Djawoto, Isa Ibrahim, and Fanggidaej all settled in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

“The Third World was not a place. It was a project,” wrote Vijay Prashad in his historical account of the making of the Third World. The history of the AAJA shows that the Third World is not just one project, but many. As the most important global alliance of journalists in the formerly colonized world, the AAJA was a multilingual, multicultural, and multifaceted organization. Its history shows the expansive global information networks, lively intellectual traffic, and rich visual arts of Afro-Asian nations. However, its decline and ultimate disappearance also demonstrate the fragility endemic to transnational non-governmental organizations during the Cold War, as well as the heterogeneity of a conglomerate of different peoples with different pasts and visions for the future.

With its roots in the 1955 Bandung Conference, the AAJA was originally established as a broad international media platform for left-leaning countries in Asia and Africa. It was the fruit of Third World left-wing intellectuals’ collective efforts to promote international collaboration on an inclusive foundation centered on the principle of peaceful co-existence. As the nexus of print culture in the Third World, it briefly created a transnational public space for disparate and diverse peoples and nations to explore their own approach to journalism free from imperialist intervention. However, these cosmopolitan aspirations were undermined by the decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia and a lack of cohesion among member countries. Parallel with the ideological disagreements between the U.S.S.R. and P.R.C., some postcolonial states wanted to pursue peaceful co-existence within the structure of Cold War politics, while others demanded armed opposition to imperialism and a radical reconfiguration of the world order. Indonesia under Sukarno preferred challenging imperialism on the battlefield to patient diplomatic maneuvering. In the months leading up to the September Thirtieth Movement in 1965, the AAJA became the primary media outlet for Indonesia and a small number of its equally radicalized allies who wished to instill a heightened state of militancy in the oppressed peoples of the Third World. The AAJA during this period promoted revolution among the “new emerging forces” while advocating for a supranational political geography that differed from artificial and arbitrary territorial divisions imposed by imperial powers.

The September Thirtieth Movement changed the historical trajectory of modern Indonesia as well as the fate of the AAJA. After the overthrow of Sukarno and the establishment of an anti-communist regime in Indonesia, the AAJA found a new home in the P.R.C. However, its relocation to Beijing coincided with the most intense and radical phase of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese domestic politics descended into chaos and the country became isolated on the world stage. The AAJA was hijacked by the radical politics of the Cultural Revolution and mobilized to promote China’s self-image as the leader of an embittered and belligerent Third World’s battle against both American imperialism and

¹²¹Said 2004, 127–130.

Soviet revisionism. As the P.R.C. redirected Third World discourse to issues of modernization in the early 1970s, the AAJA became historical baggage. In contrast to its grand establishment in 1963, the AAJA dissolved quietly in 1974 with the suspension of its publications and the departure of many of its staff members from China to Western Europe. After leaving the AAJA, Morrison settled in Britain and became the first black president of the National Union of Journalists. From Paris and Amsterdam, Umar Said and Isa Ibrahim became leaders in an online community that connected the Indonesian exile community all over the world in the 2000s.

The AAJA's history was shaped by different understandings of the ideological underpinnings of and membership in the "Third World." These conflicting Third World projects were the antithesis of the Cold War as well as its very product. The intellectuals who founded the AAJA believed that the Cold War was an invention of the superpowers and a barrier to progress for Third World nations. The AAJA, although created for the purpose of preventing the spillover of the Cold War into the Third World, nevertheless became embroiled in geopolitical competition, internal ideological disputes, and interpersonal rivalries among Third World leaders. Although it succumbed to the political pressures of the shifting Cold War, the AAJA's founding philosophy – including the principles of journalism, its aesthetic values, relation to politics, and responses to commercialization – captured the creativity and dynamism of the Third World shortly after Bandung. More than half a century later, media outlets in the Third World still face the same challenge of competing with technically more advanced and financially more secure international media corporations and of producing high quality and yet easily accessible journalism for the general masses. In this sense, some of the ideas developed and disseminated by the AAJA have transcended the Cold War context.

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