



# Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid

*Kimber Charles Pearce, Charles Pearce*

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## **Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid** Kimber Charles Pearce, Charles Pearce

*Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* is the first comprehensive, critical analysis of the influence of economic historian Walt Whitman Rostow's theory of the "stages of economic growth" on U.S. foreign aid policy during the 1950s and 1960s. Kimber Charles Pearce analyzes Rostow's rhetorical approaches to producing and promoting his modernization theory to U.S. policymakers during the Cold War, as a template for development aid programs designed to contain Soviet expansionism around the world. Drawing upon Rostow's writings, public speeches, congressional testimony, personal interviews, and recently declassified documents, Pearce examines the economist's protracted campaign to convince policy makers to apply his theory of economic growth to the development aid initiatives of Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson. The analysis culminates in a case study of Rostow's influence on the planning, advocacy, and implementation of President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress to develop Latin America.

Pearce demonstrates how Rostow's dual role as a leading architect of U.S. development aid programs and U.S. military escalation in South Vietnam made him a key figure, both in the history of developmental economic theory and in U.S. diplomacy during the Cold War. He argues that Rostow's role in economic diplomacy epitomized the social scientific turn toward argumentation and advocacy that occurred in the United States after World War II. Using methods of rhetorical analysis, Pearce offers new insights into how Rostovian theory was translated into political language by members of the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations, and how Rostow's themes of nation-building, fiscal interdependency, and macro-management of the global economy have become commonplaces of post-Cold War policy discourse. By illuminating relations of social scientific research, foreign policy advocacy, and political power in the context of U.S. economic diplomacy during the Cold War, *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* makes a significant contribution to the study of the rhetoric of economics and American diplomatic history.

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