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Humanitarianism and the Global Cold War, 1945-1991

Margot Tudor, University of Exeter (ORCID: 0000-0002-7361-9408)

Abstract

This chapter tracks the evolution and expansion of the international humanitarian sector during the Cold War period. It examines how the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union spilled out beyond the confines of the diplomatic sphere and influenced violence and displacement across the Global South. During this period, I argue that there were three key phases of international humanitarian practice: 1) relief and the post-war reconstruction of Europe; 2) decolonisation and the emergence of the 'Third World'; and 3) global economic organisations and the rise of neoliberalism. Humanitarian practices became increasingly politicised in their logic and delivery as the Cold War intensified, as international organisations struggled to respond to the territorial instability prompted by decolonisation. This chapter demonstrates how organisational pressures, racial hierarchies, and ideological prejudices shaped humanitarian interventions during the Global Cold War.

Key words

Humanitarianism, Cold War, Decolonization, International Development, Conflict, Neoliberalism

Introduction

During the twentieth century, international humanitarian organisations were shaped by the geopolitical pressures and demands of the global Cold War, shifting to adapt to evolving conflicts and disasters whilst navigating complex ideological alignments. A term popularised by historian Orne Arne Westad, the 'global Cold War' refers to the expansive, world-spanning implications of the Cold War (Westad, 2005). As an approach, it sheds light on and encourages a more expansive approach to the ways in which existing domestic or regional tensions and hierarchies were exacerbated by the superpower conflict and spanned the globe (Krepp, Field, and Pettinà, 2020). It also enables historians to trace and identify the impact of Cold War politics and militarism on countries outside of the two superpowers. This chapter draws attention to the effects of the Cold War on displaced populations in Europe and decolonising communities in the Global South – demonstrating how ideological antagonism prioritised political posturing above compassionate humanitarian solutions and encouraged – and legitimised – international interventionism into other sovereign nations (Mazurkiewicz, 2020).

As collaboration between the Second World War Allies – Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union – began to dissolve in the mid-1940s, the ideological separation of communism versus capitalism had ramifications across the humanitarian sphere as principles such as impartiality and objectivity were tested by the ideological line-drawing. Just as decolonisation processes promised liberation, the 'moment of opportunity' also provoked destabilisation and regime changes across the

Global South. Taking advantage of this diplomatic reshuffle, the United States and the Soviet Union struggled against one another for global political dominance, imbuing regional conflicts with international stakes (such as in Congo and Cyprus). Along these Global South front lines, the Cold War became 'hot' as the two superpowers donated financial and military aid to ideologically aligned nations and political movements (Bevins, 2020). Due to the violent nature of these interactions and their international attention, humanitarian organisations became directly involved in responding to these conflicts as the Cold War perpetuated violence and suffering across the Global South. Thus, rather than a conflict that was limited to diplomatic posturing and threats of nuclear deployment between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Cold War had direct physical and political implications for populations in the decolonising Global South during the mid-twentieth century, often exacerbating and extending suffering on the ground (Namikas, 2015).

This chapter provides an overview of three broad transformations and debates within the humanitarian sector during the Cold War: relief, decolonisation, and the economy. Beginning in 1945, the first section examines the humanitarian fallout following the conclusion of the Second World War and the Cold War tensions that fractured continent-wide operations in Europe. The second section focuses on this period of destabilisation and examines how the Cold War influenced humanitarian and shaped their operations in the field. Finally, the last section unpacks the rise of neoliberalism within the humanitarian sector as international economic organisations, such as the World Bank, became dominant actors in the 'development' and 'redistribution' debates towards the end of the Cold War. By focusing on these three themes, this chapter demonstrates the integral role played by humanitarian organisations in *reflecting* and *reproducing* the politics of the Cold War in international diplomatic forums and on the ground across the Global South during the mid- to late-twentieth century.

A brief note on my positionality and terms used in this chapter: I am a historian who uses postcolonial and feminist scholarship to inform my analysis of historiography and primary sources. I am employed by a UK university based in the Global North, thus benefitting from the privileges that international academia affords ex-colonial states and their institutions. My university's power and position within the international academic hierarchy is inherently tied to its legacies of slavery and colonial extraction (Advisory Group, 2022). I choose to use the imperfect but useful terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' as geopolitical categories rather than geographic territories in order to avoid re-entrenching colonial ideas of dependency as with the phrase 'developing world'. Although this geopolitical term is more recent in literature, it addresses the global hierarchies within international peace and security forums without perpetuating that hierarchy itself. Using Luis Eslava's definition, the 'Global South' refers to 'that expansive and usually subordinated socio-political geography'.[1]

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[1] L. Eslava, 'TWAIL Coordinates', Critical Legal Thinking, (2019), [Available at: https://criticallegalthinking.com/2019/04/02/twail-coordinates/ Accessed on 23/01/2022].

Humanitarianism as a sector was increasingly professionalised and institutionalised during the mid-twentieth century, resulting in the emergence of large bureaucratic organisations in the Global North (Iriye, 1999). Global governing institutions like the United Nations (UN) evolved out of this formalising process as humanitarian rhetoric and diplomatic politics were compounded with international security by powerful states in the post-Second World War international community. Indeed, Article 1 of the UN Charter, identifies one of the UN's key purposes as: 'To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character' (UN Charter, 1945, Article 1.3). However, as the Cold War evolved and geopolitical alliances became cemented, the international humanitarian sector became a tool of the West in compounding international security with anticommunism; for UN leadership, it was in the international community's interests to eliminate communism as a threat to world peace (Tudor, 2023). Humanitarian principles, such as neutrality and impartiality, were impossible to implement on the ground whilst pursuing such political aims, thus further disconnecting the field-based practices from the headquarters' rhetoric.

Although this disconnect was not novel in the history of humanitarian action, the polarity between the representation of humanitarian efforts in fundraising appeals versus the political character of humanitarian operations in the field grew starker during the Cold War as ideological considerations became integral to decision-making (Tudor, 2023). The threat of communist aggression and takeover shaped humanitarian logics in the field, preventing meaningful examination of the violence waged by nations and organisations pursuing anticommunism, such as the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Through increasingly formal diplomatic channels and with increasingly larger funds available, dominant humanitarian organisations developed and imposed a hierarchy of moral values to geopolitical alliances which served to normalise liberal internationalism, i.e., legitimise foreign interventions into territories perceived as vulnerable to communism, and weaponise the subsequent crises within the Global South in order to influence ruling domestic politics from the ground. By examining the broad evolution of humanitarianism during the Cold War, this chapter identifies and traces the politics of the international humanitarian sector during the Cold War.

Relief and the Post-war Reconstruction of Europe

This section examines the diplomatic character on relief delivery and its political function in the implementation of an Allied nationalist vision of post-war Europe. Ideological divisions between the Soviet Union and the United States expanded in the immediate post-Second World War period with vast implications for the development of the international humanitarian sector (Nunan, 2016; Sluga, 2013; Kott, 2011). This section uses the case study of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) to examine the humanitarian fallout post-Second World War and explore how relief aid was affected and fundamentally shaped by nascent Cold War tensions and prejudices. UNRRA was not the only humanitarian organisation involved in delivering relief to Europe during 1943-1946 but it

was the largest and most professionalised institution (Reinisch, 2011; Humbert, 2021). Additionally, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was also heavily involved in the humanitarian bureaucracy involved in resettling refugees and reuniting families in the post-Second World War period (Steinacher, 2017; Zahra, 2011). Relief is defined as the immediate or short-term delivery of material or logistical humanitarian aid such as food, water, medical care, and housing. Despite common conceptions of impartiality, relief *is* political. Due to its short-term character, it often serves as a palliative fix rather than as part of a wider systemic solution, feeding into racialised conceptions of aid recipients as passive and dependent. International responses to crises are shaped by geopolitical pressures and domestic priorities.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Europe required a coordinated relief to respond to the 'colossal logistical challenge' or 11 million displaced people in Germany alone (Humbert, 2021, p. 2). Humanitarian operations were diplomatically charged as different regions and sections of states in Europe had been apportioned and occupied by one of the four victorious Allied nations: Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. France was especially poorly prepared to manage and fund a national response to the displacement crisis in their region, having just emerged from four years of German occupation, therefore giving it little time to 'prepare for the chaos and destruction brought on by Nazism' (Humbert, 2021, p. 2).

However, as the challenge to reconstruct Europe became an international concern, the Allied Powers developed UNRRA as an experiment in international collaboration and humanitarianism for the recovery of the continent (Humbert, 2021). Although it had begun operations in 1943, the agency became formally part of the UN as a specialised agency once the inter-governmental organisation was formally founded in 1945. 44 participating nations contributed to the agency to support the relief effort and to enable the resettlement of the millions of displaced persons, hundreds of thousands of whom had been recently liberated from forced labour and Axis concentration camps. For internationalists, UNRRA initiated a new era of humanitarian operations and a heralded 'new world order' of transnational alliance in the name of world peace. Some believed that UNRRA indicated that the United States sought to move away from isolationism and re-establish its relations with the rest of the world, whilst others believed that 'it referred more specifically to America's assumption of its long-overdue role of leadership and duty to supervise the post-war reshaping of the world' (Reinisch, 2011, p. 285). UNRRA brought together men and women from different nationalities and backgrounds to work in collaboration as international civil servants to bring relief to post-war Europeans, exemplifying the internationalists' dream (Harder, 2012).

However, as Jessica Reinisch has argued, 'Within UNRRA, the balance sheet indicates an undeniably Anglo-Saxon and American orientation of international relief' (2011, p. 288). The American government sought to control the planning and implementation of UNRRA from Washington, creating

a vast disconnect between the ideals of the US policymakers and the realities experienced by UNRRA staff on the ground. Reinisch emphasises that ‘many other memoirs, letters, and accounts by UNRRA’s relief workers document the geographical and psychological gap that separated their analyses from those of the planners in Washington and London’ (2011, p. 281). The American and British governments were reluctance to delegate control to those situated in the zones of occupation. Post-war, they sought to use their influence and funding of international agencies, such as UNRRA, as a springboard to install itself as leader of the emerging ‘world government’. This would become a fundamental aspect of US foreign policy during the Cold War. However, UNRRA diplomats’ inflexibility and fixation on control served to set impossible standards for the international field-based staff that excluded cultural and religious sensitivities requested by the refugee population and instead sought to impose American norms (Reinisch, 2011, p. 281).

Although UNRRA diplomats had their own planning ideas for the organisation, this did not mean that the zones of occupation UNRRA staff were apolitical. Laure Humbert has challenged not only the idea that UNRRA’s international civil servants were impartial representatives, homogenous in their politics, experience, and expertise, but the idea that the agency itself was an apolitical operation (Humbert, 2021). This complicated hierarchy – between UNRRA policymakers and UNRRA field-based staff – became a recurring issue within international humanitarian organisations throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Repatriation and return were the key functions of the Allies’ post-war policy. UNRRA became the bureaucratic apparatus in each zone of occupation to verify and collect hundreds of thousands of records as prisoners of war and refugees returned home. The reconstruction and return of millions of civilians ‘posed administrative and logistical problems, to say nothing of the mental and physical damage inflicted on those who had been forcibly uprooted and incarcerated’ (Gatrell, 2019, p. 19). As part of this vast resettlement process, however, the Allies ‘embarked on mass population expulsion as part of an orchestrated programme to create ethnically more uniform nation-states’, thus shaping the racial characteristics and nationalistic self-image of post-war European countries through this forced migration (Gatrell, 2019, p. 20). UNRRA was built upon technocracy, bureaucratic procedures, and fixed ideas of citizenship and nationhood (Reinisch, 2011, p. 259). As part of resettlement processes, UNRRA’s political decisions of ‘competitive nationalism’ were hidden behind the impartial guise of humanitarian bureaucracy and faceless red tape (Gatrell, 2019, p. 44). Allied ideals of racially homogenous European nations combined with post-war ideas of victimhood and victory, influencing who became a recipient of relief and what reconstruction in Europe looked like for its returning population.

The internal cultures and politics between displaced people and humanitarian staff within the displaced camps help undermine representations of an impartial, apolitical post-war humanitarian apparatus. For

instance, Gatrell has demonstrated how methods of survival evolved within the displacement crisis whereby displaced persons cooperated with humanitarian staff to seek greater support in their repatriation: ‘DPs [displaced persons] sometimes curried favour with officials by denouncing fellow DPs for having collaborated willingly with the Nazi regime’ (Gatrell, 2019, p. 41). However, as Humbert (2021) has highlighted, a number of UNRRA staff had also been Nazi collaborators during the Second World War. The supposed ‘fixed’ categories of ‘humanitarian’ and ‘refugee’ or ‘displaced person’ were thus illusionary in post-war Europe.

This complicated dynamic became especially stark as American anticommunist policies began to determine the politics of displaced person they would resettle (Nasaw, 2020). Although the Cold War was yet to begin when UNRRA began operations, tensions between the two superpowers surfaced over debates over Europe, subsequently impeding the transnational compromises that had made UNRRA functional in 1943 (Reinisch, 2011). After five years of relief delivery, UNRRA was replaced by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in December 1946 once the US had announced its plans to withdraw from the agency. Divergent internationalisms and power struggles had split the alliance; the ‘Anglo-American domination in the allocation of relief needs’ had quickly frustrated the other participating nations leading them to look outside of UNRRA to deliver relief (Reinisch, 2011, p. 285). However, as part of the IRO’s resettlement project the US implemented special immigration laws and passed the 1948 Displaced Persons Act which permitted the entry of 400,000 displaced persons. As relations continued to freeze with the Soviet Union, the US filtered the applicants on the basis of their anticommunist politics, enabling Nazi war criminals and collaborators to lie and gain access to international resettlement (Schiessl, 2016; Nasaw, 2020). The Soviet Union, who had rejected the IRO, argued that the humanitarian agency was ‘protecting war criminals and defectors, in breach of the Yalta Agreement, rather than identifying them and returning them to the USSR to face justice’ (Gatrell, 2020). The Soviet Union’s idea of justice was focused on Nazi crimes, however, rather than reconciling itself with the Soviet’s own war crimes during the Second World War, such as the Katyn massacre of 22,000 Polish military officials and intelligentsia (Gatrell, 2020). They sought to attribute Soviet war crimes to Nazi officials, avoiding responsibility and retaining the powerful diplomatic position of a victim state. However, the American preference of justice was to focus on prosecuting key Nazi leadership and to benefit from the anticommunist politics and expertise of those within the displaced camps – some of whom were Nazi collaborators – to support their Cold War agenda against the Soviet Union.

The evolution of the Cold War from nascent tensions to outright antagonism had thus emerged from the European displacement crisis. Humanitarian organisations became sources of tension as alternative approaches to resettlement revealed the superpowers’ divergent imaginaries of how to respond to the Second World War: to punish or rehabilitate? Whilst geopolitical pressures imposed health and background regulations on their possibility of escaping the displacement camps, displaced persons were trapped by complex humanitarian bureaucracies, both UNRRA and the IRO, that could be best

navigated through ideological savvy and luck. By the end of the 1940s, the politics of the Cold War had already influenced millions of civilians across Europe and the next decade further expanded the direct reach of the conflict and expanded the demands upon the international humanitarian sector.

Decolonisation and the Emergence of the 'Third World'

This section examines how the processes of decolonisation lead to greater interventions into Global South states in order for the superpowers to attempt to politically control the post-colonial government. Decolonisation processes in combination with Cold War politics destabilised many regions; the Cold War was very much a 'hot' war in many Global South countries. Through humanitarian organisations and operations, the United States and the Soviet Union fought for ideological control across the decolonising regions. For Western international humanitarian organisations and staff, decolonisation presented a terrifying opportunity for communism to infiltrate takeover territories that they conceived as 'vulnerable', thus destabilising the region and threatening international peace and security (Tudor, 2023). The Soviets frequently sided with the rebelling movement in these 'proxy' wars, siding with those taking an 'anti-colonial' position and seeking to destabilise the West's hold over the Global South despite the USSR's own imperialism in the East Bloc (Gleijese, 2018). During this mid-century period of decolonisation, the UN used the humanitarian guise and military functionality of its peacekeeping operations to pursue anticommunist policies, interfering in the domestic politics of decolonising states and projecting anticommunism as the best agenda for world peace. It also briefly examines how NGOs interfered in decolonising states and dramatically expanded in number during the decolonisation period, working alongside (ex-)colonial states to improve their organisational interests.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the member-state character of the UN General Assembly was completely transformed as waves of newly independent nations joined the international forum seeking international representation and diplomatic credentials. Between 1955 and 1965 almost fifty former colonial territories joined the General Assembly as member-states, giving them the majority of votes and shifting the balance of geopolitical power within the forum (El-Ayouty, 2012, p. xxiii). Although European imperial powers retained significant power within the UN Security Council, as both Britain and France were founding members of the organisation and thus could veto any resolution, the General Assembly enabled newly independent nations to assert their diplomatic weight on the global stage. However, more than a singular 'moment of possibility' or period of utopian liberation for nations escaping colonialism, this peak of decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century broke the world apart, creating opportunities for the reinvention of sovereignty and a dramatic reimagining of geopolitical hierarchies and colonialism *as well as* opportunities for international solidarity and anti-colonial activism. A variety of anti-colonial movements emerged during the post-war period to directly challenge imperial administrations through insurgent *and* non-violent strategies (Thomas, Moore and Butler, 2008). Movements led by national liberation groups, socialist internationalists, and Black internationalist

thinkers, for instance, all centred solidarity and anti-colonial activism and focused on constructing an alternative world vision – or politics – that would prioritise racial equality (Matera, 2015; Lawrence, 2013; Getachew, 2020).

The expansion in member-states intersected with the complicated global allegiances and politics of the Cold War, as the Afro-Asian bloc positioned itself between the two superpowers as the Non-Aligned Movement (Dinkel, 2019; Schaufelbuehl et al, 2015). Decolonising countries soon became the 'battleground' of the 'global Cold War' as nations such as Congo, Indonesia, and Chile, became militarily and diplomatically embroiled in ideological factionalism between the Soviet Union and the United States, whilst also navigating their own national politics and alignment (Harmer, 2011; Namikas, 2015; Bevins, 2020). Domestic leadership had their own perspectives on which ideology would best benefit their nation, many attempting to use a non-aligned position to seek funding or development support from both superpowers, further complicating the political situation for decolonising populations (Hanhimaki, Wyss, and Bott, 2015; Friedman, 2021). Non-aligned nations, most of whom had recently achieved independence from European imperial powers, became known as the 'Third World', in opposition to the 'First World' of the liberal West, and the 'Second World' which referred to the Soviet Bloc. This hierarchical geopolitical structure revealed the prejudices of the post-colonial international order, but it also enabled the 'Third World' nations to join in alliances to shift the balance of power within diplomatic forums like the UN General Assembly.

Post-colonial nations formally organised the Afro-Asian voting 'bloc' in the General Assembly following the 1955 Bandung conference and controlled the dominant 'anti-colonial' position in the international community, with some using this alignment to exempt their own expansionist foreign policy from accusations of imperialism (Ewing, 2019). Dominant newly independent states, such as Indonesia and India, argued that any attempts to annex other territories was both distinct and a result of their experiences of European imperialism. They contextualised their expansionist activities as part of a process of restoring the pre-colonial or maintaining colonial borders, thus characterising their imperialism as a natural and righteous part of their process of decolonisation under the legal principle of *uti possidetis* (translated, as you possess) (Agusman, Afriansyah, and Fadilah, 2021). Indeed, many post-colonial states searched through (pre)colonial-era cartography to support their territorial claims and legitimise their annexations (Kumarasingham, 2016; McGarr, 2019; Gardner, 2021; Wang, 2021; Guyot-Réchard, 2021). Through this territorial 'scramble' during decolonisation, many middle power nations projected their own – or other Afro-Asian bloc states' – imperialist claims as the practical implementation of 'anti-colonial' foreign policy; their expansionism was built on the belief that their shared colonial experience, geographic proximity, or, even, a similar climate qualified them to 'save' territories and populations from European domination through annexation (Amrith, 2018, p. 157;

Goettlich, 2018). Thus, these post-colonial states shaped their independent national identity from both their own colonial experiences *and* imperial aspirations.

This neocolonialism complicated existing conflicts in decolonising spaces, agitated US imperial operations, and sparked territorial conflicts, human rights abuses, and international concern. In the case of West Papua, the United States government sought to support and police the annexation of the territory by Indonesia in the early 1960s in order to maintain strong diplomatic relations with the non-aligned nation (Tudor, 2021). Although Indonesia had only been independent from Dutch colonisation since the late 1940s, following a long and violent fight for liberation between 1945-1949, Indonesian leader, Suharto, immediately initiated his own imperial agenda through the annexation of West Papua. Scholars of Indonesia's post-independence foreign policy have largely focused on the nation's involvement in the construction of the Afro-Asian bloc and vocal resistance to European imperialism, thus neglecting Indonesia's own imperialist aggression towards territories like West Papua and, later, East Timor (Weinstein, 2007; Acharya and Send Tan, 2008). West Papua represented a meeting point between the Pacific and Asia at a time when the United States was militarily committed to wars in Vietnam and Laos, thus making the superpower eager to maintain – or at the very least not agitate – one of the most powerful nations in the region (Kulantzick, 2017; Bevins, 2020). Anxious that Indonesia could turn to the Soviet Union for military support in occupying the territory (which had remained a Dutch colony despite the decolonisation of Indonesia from the Dutch East Indies), the US government and the UN leadership sought to resolve the crisis without endangering the possibility of a communist-aligned Indonesia (Simpson, 2008; Kuitenbrouwer, 2016). Humanitarian organisations, like the UN, were staffed with leadership that were similarly concerned with the threat of growing communism in the region and regularly met with the US government to collaborate on their anticommunist policy (Tudor, 2021). During decolonisation, therefore, neocolonial aspirations from newly independent nations were further complicated by the anticommunist agenda of international humanitarian organisations, such as the UN, as the organisation prioritised the global ideological conflict over the rights of the populations suffering from neocolonial occupations or annexations (Tudor, 2021).

In recent year, historians have increasingly drawn attention to this wave of decolonisation an explosive moment for NGOs and humanitarian organisations, shifting from colonial studies and British studies to examine how powerful nations, such as Britain, sought to retain their influence over Global South nations through humanitarian practices and collaborations (O'Sullivan, 2014; 2021; Hilton, 2018; Cullen, McCorriston, and Thompson, 2021; Baughan, 2021). The evolution of international development and, as discussed above, the surge in destabilisation and political revolutions around the globe, many of which had been amplified by counterinsurgency campaigns and Cold War politics, put an increasing demand on the international humanitarian sphere to respond and provide solutions. Indeed, 'The rapid expansion of non-governmental activity promoting aid and development occurred

alongside, and was fundamentally affected by, the collapse of European colonial rule' (Cullen, McCorriston, and Thompson, 2021). International NGOs as well as smaller networks, especially those originating in the Global North, served as points of continuity between the ex-colonial power and the new independent nation, perpetuating hierarchies between elites and citizens, and enabling extractive economic relationships to flourish despite the ostensible political disconnect (Bocking-Welch, 2012). Emily Baughan's work on Save the Children in Kenya during the Mau Mau emergency has demonstrated the power of NGOs in shaping decolonisation processes and counterinsurgency and working alongside colonial states to win funding and legitimacy (Baughan, 2020). Similarly, Yolana Pringle has shown how the International Committee of the Red Cross became 'entangled in the British Government's project of denial' in relation to the detention camps in Kenya during the 1950s (Pringle, 2017). Thus, during decolonisation, the ongoing context and violent reach of the 'global Cold War', in addition to the collapse of European empires and the imperial aggression of new imperial powers, Western humanitarian organisations and international NGOs became increasingly integral to state-led efforts to control and stabilise regions seeking independence and self-determination (Baughan, 2021).

The 'first wave' of non-Western NGOs emerged and expanded during the 1950s and 1960s during decolonisation (Cullen et al, 2021). Indigenous African NGOs expanded and institutionalised their humanitarianism during this destabilising period. They argue that it was through these smaller African NGOs that, 'Africans sought to assert their agency and to achieve greater control over development agendas' (Cullen, McCorriston, and Thompson, 2021, p.; 722). These locally formed African NGOs have traditionally been excluded from development and humanitarianism historiography as they have disrupted the idea of the monopoly of international organisations on aid. However, these smaller organisations were fundamental to the delivery of aid:

> …indigenous African NGOs were a response to social change 'on the ground', whether the disruption of existing networks arising through land loss, forced displacements of population and rapid urbanisation, or the politicisation of society via new expectations of what the post-colonial state could and should be delivering in terms of welfare. (Cullen, McCorriston, and Thompson, 2021, p. 726)

Through this recent research, we must recognise the complex relationship between local African NGOs and international organisations, going beyond the traditional historiographical conception of one-way aid provision or exclusively transactional networks.

Thus, international organisations were shaped by the demands and ideas of local NGOs just as much as they sought to impose a development policy. More than 'implementing partners', local NGOs were collaborating voices in the emergence of the development sector in the 1960s, seeking to subvert the

power of the international or Global North agents in post-colonial nations. The professionalisation and expansion of the international and local humanitarian sector during this period emerged from the violence of decolonisation and the Cold War, but it also was a representation of complex geopolitical transformations. As hegemonic power relations shifted in the General Assembly and neocolonial actors sought to capitalise on the 'end of empire' and the emergence of the 'Third World', Global South activists and humanitarians were *not* passive recipients of aid and development policies. They were fundamental in the reimagining and rebuilding of a post-colonial Global South.

Global Economic Organisations and the Rise of Neoliberalism

In the aftermath of decolonisation, international economic organisation offered leaders in the West a pathway to stabilising and policing the growth and political power of the Global South, enabling political interference under the guise of technical support. During the latter decades of the Cold War, these technocratic organisations became an important frontline in the ideological battle between the US and the USSR as both sought to establish one dominant global economy. Through the promotion of 'corporate' capitalism and neoliberalism, international organisations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), shaped the evolution of a political economy of development. This political economy targeted Global South nations, incentivising debt and expanding the inequality between the richest and the poorest countries, perpetuating existing colonial hierarchies and further extracting from newly independent states. However, these international organisations also became sites of Global South revolution and intellectual radicalism, challenging the idea that Global South nations were dormant in the construction of the global economy (Thornton, 2021). Although the 1970s witnessed a growth in the private sector – shifting influence away from the technocratic internationalism that had reigned during the post-Second World War era – these economic organisations still possessed great political authority in the allocation of global resources, justifying this power through the technocratic credentials of their staff (Steffek, 2021). This final section briefly examines the role played by these international organisations in reframing capitalist competition as 'development' for post-colonial nations and in entrenching neoliberalism within global governance.

The product of two years of negotiations from 1942-1944, the Bretton Woods system established a strategy of neoliberal globalisation in the shadow of the Second World War and prompted the construction of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now the lending arm of the World Bank) and the IMF – the two foremost financial institutions of the postwar global economic order. The creation of these institutions in 1944 was 'underpinned by an innovative "embedded liberal" vision that sought to reconcile a commitment to liberal multilateralism with new interventionist economic practices…' (Helleiner, 2014, p. 1). However, rather than being an amiable collaboration solely between Anglo-American politicians, Bretton Woods was a fiercely fought intellectual debate between the hegemonic powers as both sought to negotiate the design of the global economy in the

postwar context (Stell, 2013). Bretton Woods was also foundationally shaped by emerging Global South actors. Representatives from Brazil, China, India, and Mexico were formative in developing proposals that introduced international development goals into the global financial order. As Eric Helleiner has argued, 'Particularly important were Latin American policy-makers who worked closely with US officials from the late 1930s onward – well before the Anglo-American negotiations of 1942-1944 – to build a new pattern of international finance relations that favored their aspirations for state-led development' (Helleiner, 2014, p. 2). Christy Thornton has similarly demonstrated the significance of Latin American representatives in the emerging global economic order, drawing attention to the important economic concessions won by Mexican officials as they fought to protect multilateral liberalism (Thornton, 2021). Thus, although these global financial institutions offered hegemonic powers like the US and Britain an opportunity to entrench their North Atlantic ideological preferences across the international community, these institutions were also influenced by the policies and state-level development goals of Global South nations. Although paternalism and racism remained present within these negotiations, Southern countries also found ways to influence the character of the Bretton Woods system (Thornton, 2021, p. 3).

Developed as an organisation to support the delivery of relief to Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, the period of decolonisation saw the World Bank shift towards international development, global health, and longer-term education programmes across the Global South. The end of empire during the 1960s and 1970s radically transformed the relationships of the global economy and provided the World Bank and the IMF new opportunities for interference in Global South countries under a 'humanitarian' or 'modernising' guise. As postcolonial nations joined the international community, the international institutions' leaders sought to ensure that these countries functioned within the capitalist system, enshrining these institutions with the power to police international development, tying loans to the type of infrastructure or agricultural technique and perpetuating the colonial tradition of economic paternalism. The emerging language of human rights was compatible with neoliberalism during decolonisation, serving to legitimise interventionism and greater economic institutional control over postcolonial states (Whyte, 2019). As Amy Staples has established, this period witnessed the growing role of 'international actors in modern foreign relations' and their power as 'nongovernmental actors, often under the guise of neutrality [to] carry into the global arena a different set of interests, ideas, and ideologies than those of nation-states' (2002, p. 397). Thus, it is important to recognise how the increasing professionalisation of the humanitarian and international development sector during this period also increased the level of agency and decision-making of the unelected officials in charge of these international organisations and institutions.

The 1970s, however, saw some of the greatest shifts in geopolitical power with the collapse the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the oil shocks of 1973. During the oil shock, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) rose to prominence as the member-states – the majority of

which were from the Global South – were able to establish greater global control over the international oil market. As Quinn Slobodian has argued, 'The oil shock of 1973-1974 placed postcolonial actors at centre stage' (2020, p. 18). OPEC politics led to greater South-South cooperation and collaboration as global powers navigated their presence and resources 'in a world that become increasingly dependent from the trade in hydrocarbons as a key energy source' (Garavini, 2019, p. 6). OPEC became a space where members could work together despite the alliance-politics of the Cold War, sharing development goals. 'Petrostates' aligned with one another in the institution despite their divergent ideological stances in other international forums (Garavini, 2019, p. 7). The inequalities within the global economic system and the hierarchies within international finance institutions led to the 'revolt against the West', prompted by Global South actors' motivations to 'change the rules of the game' and seek economic redistribution (Thornton, 2021, p. 4). Decolonisation had ultimately provided a greater voting weight for Global South nations, allowing postcolonial states to build upon the democratic influence developed within the General Assembly and to target this diplomatic power into other international institutions, such as the World Bank (Thornton, 2021, p. 5).

Thus, during the 1970s and 1980s, the US struggled to control the World Bank as it desired. During these decades, US officials sought to prevent the institution from lending to communist governments or to countries committing human rights abuses, but they failed to avoid accusations of political machinations and motivation (Sharma, 2013, p. 573). Although the World Bank diversified its funding in the 1970s, the US remained financially critical for the survival of the international organisation, limiting the decision-making of the Bank's staff and giving the United States leverage to control the distribution of global finance (Sharma, 2013, p. 574). Thus, in the latter years of the Cold War, the United States was able to put economic pressure on governments participating in proxy wars, such as Vietnam, and weaponize the global finance institution to support its own ideological interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken a broad perspective on the politics and power of humanitarian international organisations and institutions during the Cold War. By approaching the Cold War period as a global conflict, it has addressed how the transformative postwar and decolonisation periods helped to promote the professionalisation and expansion of the international humanitarian sector and had direct implications 'on the ground' across the Global South. Beginning with the formative international organisations and systems in the postwar period, this chapter has identified and traced how the Cold War and colonial hierarchies shaped the development of humanitarianism in the twentieth century. It has addressed the politics of relief in the shadow of the Second World War as the victorious allies sought to reconstruct Europe into ethno-nationalist units. It then addressed the neocolonialism of postcolonial states during the decolonisation period, focusing on how humanitarian organisations grew in power as they responded to proxy wars across the Global South as Cold War alignments compounded

existing domestic tensions. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining how the rise of neoliberalism was not simply a tale of Global North domination over the Global South. Instead, it links together works that have addressed the integral role of Global South nations, such as Mexico, in informing the development of the international financial order, in spite of hegemonic challenges and institutional paternalism. During this period, global economic institutions, such as the World Bank, became critical to debates on redistribution and international development, thus shaping the increasing 'quantification' of the international humanitarian sector. Towards the close of the Cold War, the neoliberal order was fully entrenched within the international order, restoring a neocolonial relationship between the Global North and the Global South through bureaucratic processes of debt and 'development programmes'. Overall, the politics and conflicts of the global Cold War were integral to the evolution of the humanitarian sector during the twentieth century, influencing the neoliberal character and actors at the centre of the sector in the post-Cold War period.

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