City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

Citation: Tudor, M. (2024). Mission Impossible? Humanitarian Actors and the Civilizational Logic of International Aid Delivery during the “Congo Crisis,” 1960–1964. Humanity,

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/34156/

Link to published version:

Copyright: City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

Reuse: Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@city.ac.uk

Mission Impossible? Humanitarian Actors and the Civilizational Logic of International Aid Delivery during the "Congo Crisis," 1960–1964

Margot Tudor

Introduction

In 2018, Oxfam was publicly censured following the publication of a UK Charity Commission report on the systemic sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by international officials in Haiti in the aftermath of the hurricane in 2010–2011.[1] This report ignited a global debate about humanitarian misconduct in the field as well as a conversation about the racist and patriarchal internal cultures that enabled—and justified—these behaviours in aid organizations.[2] In response to this widespread criticism of Oxfam, classicist professor Mary Beard tweeted: "Of course one can't condone the (alleged) behavior of Oxfam staff in Haiti and elsewhere. But I do wonder how hard it must be to sustain 'civilised' values in a disaster zone. And overall I still respect those who go in to help out, where most of us wd not tread."[3] Following this Tweet, Professor Priyamvada Gopal challenged Beard's framing of the Oxfam scandal. For Gopal, Beard's tweet encouraged sympathy for the Western humanitarian staffers criticized in the report as those faced with a supposedly impossible mission, thus implicitly flattening their agency into Conradian stereotypes: "Western aid workers as resistance fighters, white aid workers as Mr. Kurtz figures caving in the strain of 'The horror, the horror.''[4] Beard's reference to "civilised" values is rooted in a long history of Western imperialism and white supremacy that imposes a racial hierarchy and moral taxonomy across the globe. This logic ascribed global south places and peoples with the power to corrupt colonists—sometimes using medical language to pathologize this perceived contamination—serving to exaggerate difference and racial anxieties for those abroad as well as inform understandings at home.[5] However, Beard's belief that

Commented [AZ1]: Mr.?

Commented [AZ2]: I wonder if this discussion might be better in present tense, given that you discuss it is an enduring syndrome.

"civilised" values—and the international humanitarian personnel who allegedly hold them—are especially vulnerable to corruption in global south "disaster zones" was not new in 2018.

This article focuses on a range of field-based transgressions during the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC), deployed in 1960–1964. The Congo crisis was an early example of a humanitarian nexus, bringing together Western humanitarian officials and development personnel from the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as well as a range of other national agencies and international NGOs. As such, Congo became a "hinge" case between colonialism and liberal internationalism as international officials negotiated their principles and careers at the "end of empire." During decolonization, humanitarian and conflict response was contested terrain—no single institution led all operations; the UN was still a relatively young international organization in 1960 and the geopolitical stakes of the crisis encouraged Western leaders to deploy field-based officials. Once on the ground, these officials were linked by a shared imperial logic and civilizational ordering in Congo within the postcolonial international hierarchy: their desire to force assimilation upon the newly independent population.

The article traces the genealogy of a specific civilizational logic and utilitarian thinking which was threaded through liberal humanitarianism and seeks to moralize and maximize interveners' "good intentions," thus supposedly minimizing any negative impact. It is not my intention to homogenise all humanitarian violence and to falsely equate acts of wrongdoing with equal offense or impact to the scale of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse crimes.[6] Instead, I move beyond ideas of official misconduct as limited to one form of violence (SEA) and limited to soldiers, taking a more nuanced approach to the spectrum of humanitarian wrongdoing and the normalization of transgression in international interventions.[7] Rather than approaching

humanitarian misconduct as an unfortunate-but-natural side-effect of humanitarianism in the global south, the acts of transgression by Western officials explored in this article were undertaken *as* humanitarian action—or, at the very least, were framed as well-meaning and as part of a broader strategy of aid delivery in the region. Within this utilitarian logic, any poor judgement in the field was negated by the "bigger picture" of a humanitarian operation, fostering a culture of impunity in the field. Officials perceived Congo as "lawless," a "blank slate," and thus the perfect environment for experimental, improvised, or performative relief work: any Western intervention was perceived as better than none.

Although this culture of impunity and power was increasingly curtailed as ONUC weathered a series of controversies and international critique, the racialized idea of disorder and age-old question of "who guards the guardians" still shaped the behavior of humanitarian leadership in Congo, empowering officials' misconduct in the name of saving lives.[8] The officials' behavior, and their own framing of their actions, exposed the normalization of imperial morality within the Western aid sector and the continuities of colonial stereotypes and cultures of impunity in field-based interactions between humanitarians and recipients during decolonization. These individual acts shed light on the field-based cultures and practices that were made possible by and reproduced from the structural harms and hierarchies of the liberal international order. UN mission officials and other Western humanitarian representatives became conduits for the continuity of colonial practices and "othering" logics in newly independent states. Replacing the colonial "man on the spot," international representatives used their physical presence in the field to prioritize (often improvised) action over inaction and results over red tape thereby reinforcing racial and civilizational hierarchies between local civilians and foreign officials.

Unlike Beard's assessment of humanitarian officials as corrupted and detached from their "civilised values," the officials discussed in this article knowingly crossed ethical and legal boundaries as a method for *imposing* what they framed as "civilised" order upon the "disaster zone." This logic was built on colonial ideas of racial difference, Christian evangelicalism, and paternalism, according to which the official was mythologized as a "saviour" forced to take risks, make the "tough" decisions, get on "their level," and risk losing sight of their "natural" moral standards in service of a larger humanitarian goal. Indeed, for Western audiences, the idea that humanitarians were transgressing societal expectations and taking risks made the region seem all the more "uncivilised" (and, by virtue, their intervention all the more necessary and heroic).[9] Justifications for humanitarian misconduct depended on their ranking and elite currency: low-level "bad apple" peacekeepers or aid workers had been psychologically damaged by the conflict context; their original intention to undertake a humanitarian mission was sincere enough to forgive the imagined "rugged" white male official for any subsequent transgression.[10] The perceived corruptive environment "untamed" their masculinity and absorbed them into "degeneracy," unleashing "civilised" men to their baser instincts and "atypical" behavior.[11] Sherene Razack has explored this dynamic in the context of UN peacekeepers in 1990s Somalia: "When peacekeepers are violent, as they were in Somalia, we are easily able to forgive it and even expect it, understanding that it is the cruelties of Africa and Africans who push Western men to violence."[12] Despite partial recognition of how these "cruelties" may be a product of past colonization, liberal organizations continued to naturalize global south spaces as corruptive to Westerners. However, leadership figures, such as those identified in this article, framed their transgression as a moral and paternalistic choice to adapt to the perceived different standards of behavior in Congo; their misconduct was a necessary step in the course of their larger

humanitarian mission—rather than an obstacle to that goal. At the very least, their transgression was, for them, in the interests of protecting their organization's reputation. The corruptive effects of foreign deployment were thus paradoxically exceptionalized, or deified, depending on the elite credentials of the personnel involved.[13]

This article builds upon the wealth of recent international histories that have uncovered the racial, gendered, and material inequalities concealed within the liberal international project in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[14] It has been well established that the civilizing mission, or *mission civilisatrice,* had a second life within the international humanitarian organization and global governance, remaining foundational to the political thought and legal structures of a range of Western state, inter-state, and non-state spaces.[15] However, this literature often explores international organizations or state operations in isolation of one another, rather than as a common network of liberal internationalism and humanitarian practice during decolonization. As I have written elsewhere, the movement of officials among state, NGO, and UN positions during this period was integral to the types of organizational bureaucracies that evolved in the postwar liberal international order.[16] However, we also must be attentive to the fluidity of *operations* in field-based humanitarian contexts among these different humanitarian organizations and agencies, which also enabled the continuity of cultures and logics. In this article, I explore how these fluidities fostered a shared culture of humanitarian bravado and improvisation for Western officials on the ground.

Scholarship on the Congo crisis has rarely examined the practices and politics of humanitarian officials on the ground, especially with regard for previous missions and forms of international administration.[17] Most historians have explored high-level Congolese politics, international diplomacy, and Cold War politics, shedding important light on the international

dimensions of the crisis.[18] Indeed, the literature on peacekeeping rarely examines Cold War–era missions beyond as a foil to the controversies of present-day operations;[19] supposedly the early Cold War was a "golden era" of simple, apolitical missions.[20] Rather than examining humanitarianism through public mandates or press releases, this article uses a variety of archival and visual sources to focus on the *conduct* of humanitarian officials and peacekeepers. In the same vein as several recent peacekeeping scholars, this approach helps to highlight the disconnect between headquarters or governmental public-facing rhetoric and the conduct of officials and troops on the ground.[21]

Approaching this topic with the use of a variety of source material—including photographs, video clips, newspaper articles, oral testimonies, and personal papers—has facilitated a more holistic understanding of field-based wrongdoing. The official UN Archives' recordkeeping of criminality or misconduct has failed to preserve instances of misconduct by personnel at a midlevel or leadership level, focusing instead on troop criminality or smuggling.[22] Using oral testimonies recorded by researchers as part of the Yale University Oral History Project on the United Nations in the early 1990s provides vital—if fragmentary—insight into field-based humanitarian misconduct absent from official archival documents, filling in some gaps and suggesting the existence of others. These testimonies of mid-level UN officials are also critical for elucidating how they framed their own behavior, revealing the pervasiveness of humanitarian bravado, privilege, and racialized anxieties against the Congolese population even decades later.[23] Where possible, I have corroborated the details provided by officials in the oral testimonies, recognizing the methodological limitations of using these interviews.[24] Importantly, this article demonstrates just how incomplete official UN and Western archives are for research into field-based operations. These gaps in the official record may also suggest a significant

Commented [AZ3]: Missing word(s)?

Commented [AZ4]: Not "fails" or "has failed"? In other words, these procedures have been corrected?

decision-making role for field-based staff in shaping the inclusions and exclusions of field-based activities in humanitarian organizations and official nation-states' archives.

To identify the civilizational logic of international aid personnel during the Congo crisis, this article is structured into three key arguments. First, I show how the ONUC mission staff perpetuated the idea that unqualified Western interveners were better than no interveners at all, provoking improvisation, experimentation, and transgression in the field. Second, I explore how the humanitarian imperative created a relational power dynamic between subjects with privileges (humanitarians) and subjects that are de-humanized (Congolese children). Finally, I demonstrate how racialized representations and ideas of local populations as inherently criminal encouraged surveillance on humanitarian recipients and provoked official transgression.

<A>Entitlement to Expertise: Technocratic and Racialized Supremacy</A>

ONUC was the largest international peacekeeping mission, with—at its height—nearly twenty thousand UN military and civilian staff deployed to the newly independent country.[25] Building upon the perceived success of the first UN armed peacekeeping mission during the Suez Crisis, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF), ONUC, was a significant scale up for the young organization.[26] The size of the mission was in proportion to the economic and political interests of powerful Western nations in Congo; these governments hoped that ONUC would limit and deescalate the crisis before it expanded beyond its national borders. The scale of the conflict and the international interests in the crisis, in addition to the Congolese leaders' requests for post-independence development support from the UN,[27] empowered the ONUC field-based leadership to experiment on the ground in the guise of humanitarian necessity and in the interests of the new state's "advancement." However, this dynamic of "anything to help" and overconfidence without training encouraged field-based decisions and paternalism.

The crisis had begun as a rebellion of sections of the Congolese Army (or ANC) against their white Belgian officers following an announcement that no changes within the structure of the ANC would result from the nation's independence.[28] Following a mutiny, the Belgian government pursued an illegal military intervention, breaching the UN Charter's prohibition of the use of force and claiming that the Congolese government was unable to control its soldiers and was putting the remaining Belgian settlers at risk.[29] In tandem, the evacuation of Belgians from the country led to the collapse of the Congolese infrastructure. This administrative chaos, in addition to existing colonial inequalities in health, education, housing, and unemployment, created a nationwide humanitarian crisis.[30] Within days, Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu called upon UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to militarily intervene, following the escalation of tensions and violence across the country.

The UN Security Council authorized ONUC a fortnight after thirteen million Congolese achieved independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960.[31] As Hammarskjöld negotiated the military contingents for the Congo mission in July, he also innovated peacekeeping practices by assembling a large-scale civilian presence to manage Congolese governance and infrastructure. UN official Ralph Bunche articulated this dual mandate of military and civilian administration to the deployed ONUC staff in July 1960: "You are here to pacify and then to administer the Congo."[32] ONUC's military wing was mandated to restore law and order and withdraw the invading Belgian force, and the mission civilian staff staffed the host state departments—including infrastructural sites such as airports, radio stations, and fuel distribution centers—in addition to several development projects.[33] For the first three years of the mission, ONUC struggled to amass adequate materiel resources and trained staff to the field.[34] The mission—in

collaboration with the ICRC and the Congolese National Red Cross as well as USAID and other national aid agencies—transported and distributed foodstuffs and medical aid to Congolese hospitals for the approximately 250,000 people displaced by the violence.[35] As the conflict continued, displacement and poor sanitation provoked widespread famine and outbreaks of smallpox.[36] Additionally, the collaborative relationship between the ICRC and the ONUC civilian leadership was rocky, especially between Šture Linnér, UN Chief Civilian Administrator for ONUC, and Maurice Thudichum, director of the ICRC delegation in Congo, because Linnér had hoped that the delegation would assume much of the relief and medical work, and lessen the humanitarian burden for the overstretched ONUC civilian operations.[37]

This dynamic of host-state-as-laboratory was not new in the 1960s, especially in contexts of international governance and war. International personnel followed a long tradition of colonial experimentation and technocratic paternalism in the global south, believing their interventions were necessary for the development of populations they racialized as Black.[38] Colonial administrations' approaches to war and governance were built upon ideas of innate criminality or violence within colonized populations, especially those racialized as Black, as justification for exerting control and dominance.[39] Colonists unevenly implemented the law to manage the colonized population; the law applied to the colonized not the colonizers. As Robert Knox has argued, portraying "certain individuals as 'monsters' often relies on racial stereotypes about the propensity of black people towards violence," reinforcing the need for enhanced strategies for law and order.[40] Colonial ideas of governance were integral to shaping how international officials approached issues of stability and law and order in the conflict contexts—such as during the Congo crisis. Colonial administrators often framed their vigilance and violence as "protection" from colonized male perpetrators, both for local women and girls, who were

essentialized as passive victims (as well as fetishized by interveners), and for the safety of white European settlers.[41] Joaquín Villanueva also noted this racist framing: "This uneven geography of corruption helps perpetuate an age-old imperial myth that colonial and postcolonial subjects are deficient, and need intense monitoring and discipline to correct their corrupt tendencies."[42]

In pursuit of this civilizational logic, colonial officials (and missionaries) saw their intervention as necessary to bringing the local population into the light of (Western) modernity: supposedly, progress could not arrive without "sacrificing" oneself to possible moral corruption through local interaction.[43] This colonial rhetoric was integrated for the postcolonial period into the language of progress, free markets, and technocracy, as liberal international representatives and organizations, such as the UN, began to offer development aid and technical advice to newly independent nations on the "path to modernity."[44] Through hegemonic liberal internationalist thinking, White, capitalist, and (Western) European nation-states remained the model for international peace and development despite the geopolitical transformations during decolonization.[45] Although increasing numbers of officials from newly independent states began to populate the international humanitarian sector, they entered an epistemic community of liberal internationalism led by Anglo-European officials that left little room to maneuver beyond reinforcing Western hegemony.[46]

These colonial practices were perpetuated in UN peacekeeping missions through the civilizational logic of liberal internationalism and the attitudes of international humanitarian leadership, many of whom had held previous careers in colonial administration or had trained in elite schools and Western universities.[47] As was common to the mindset of Western interveners, the ONUC staff's perception of postcolonial Congo as a "blank slate" reinforced beliefs within the international bureaucracy that any and every UN employee was more qualified than any and

every Congolese citizen.[48] As Eva-Maria Muschik has demonstrated, "the early [UN] Secretariat... was dominated by Western civil servants. In 1956, for example, nationals from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France filled about half of all high-level posts within the UN bureaucracy."[49] Midlevel Western officials arrived in Congo with a mandate to establish law and order and an approach to governance that emphasized their "doing" over "thinking," perpetuating colonial patterns of paternalism and development in Congo.[50] As James Ferguson has highlighted in his work on international development officials in Lesotho, international staff viewed the global south as a space in which they could interchangeably apply their "expertise," steering the decolonizing/postcolonial nation toward a "best practice"—that is, a European model of national development.[51]

ONUC civilian officials were not alone in Congo, as mentioned earlier, as global attention on the crisis had attracted a range of Western humanitarian actors to the ground. This influx of hundreds of international officials manifested a segregated society in regions across Congo, essentially replacing the colonial Belgians who had evacuated less than a month previously. Spaces of aid, as Lisa Smirl terms, were geographically and culturally environments of deployment that confined international humanitarians to interactions with one another, isolating them from host populations and reinforcing ideas of racial and civilizational difference.[52] This physical and psychological separation "othered" the Congolese population as well as encouraging an instrumentalized view of Congolese humanitarian workers and employees.[53] International staff curated their own environments—a microcosm of the Western-dominated international community. These divisions between humanitarians and civilians cemented an uneven power dynamic for those in field-based leadership positions as well as other associated international officials and diplomats who found safety and kinship alongside UN staff.

ONUC's civilian administration was populated by international officials seeking to bring their development knowledge to newly independent Congo. Hammarskjöld and other UN leadership perceived ONUC as a development contribution as much as a military operation; the international officials believed they would help guide Congo away from infrastructural destabilization, humanitarian crisis, and national collapse, while also imbuing them with a sense of technocratic and racial superiority.[54] However, due to the proposed scale of the mission and the demands for technical staff in Congo, international officials from specialized agencies under the UN umbrella—such as UNESCO, WHO, and so forth—were frequently installed in positions for which they were unqualified and spread thinly across the country, challenging the organization's reputation for professionalism, credibility, and expertise.

Despite the intention of UN secretariat leadership for the mission to produce a world-class bureaucracy of international experts, Antony Gilpin, deputy chief of Civilian Operations in Congo, noted in a personal letter that, because of ONUC's need for such a high number of staff, the mission "was quite evidently scraping the bottom of the barrel for some of its personnel."[55] Gilpin had extensive experience working internationally with different UN agencies, and his reflections indicated his surprise at the inappropriate appointments made for the mission in Congo. He even commented on his own lack of specialism in his appointed role in ONUC's civilian administration: "Apparently my job is to assist in setting up the provincial government services—an assignment for which I've made it clear I have no technical qualifications whatsoever! Since it will be starting from scratch, perhaps that won't matter... one can see the whole thing as a quite astonishing experiment which has somehow got to succeed."[56] Underpinned by civilizational logic and Western officials' belief that their "doing something was better than doing nothing"—despite their lack of career background or training—this proactivity

combined with stereotypes about the population's underdevelopment, thus curating the perfect conditions for harm to be committed and justified by a form of humanitarian utilitarianism.[57]

<A>Cutting through Red Tape: Humanitarian Privilege and Bravado<A>

A prime example of official misconduct and bravado being minimized by a larger "humanitarian" goal was the recruitment and operational ethos of Šture Linnér, UN Chief Civilian Administrator for ONUC. Guided by civilizational logic, he conceived of Congo as an experimental space for the staff to prove their humanitarian credentials to their colleagues in the UN headquarters and to demonstrate the success of their organization in restabilizing the state by any means necessary: he saw himself as the anti-bureaucratic cog in the vast UN machine.[58] Linnér left a job as executive vice president and general manager of the Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company (LAMCO), which was chaired by Bo Hammarskjöld, the UN secretary-general's brother, in order to take up the role as chief of civilian operations for ONUC in 1960. Remembering his discussion with Hammarskjöld about the job, Linnér recalled his reluctance to join the organization due its large bureaucratic nature:

> And he said, "that's why I would like you to come because you don't know the rules and regulations and I would not like you to become acquainted with them because I need someone I trust who speaks the same language, in more than the literal sense, and who understands towards where I would be driving and who would not feel hampered by the usual civil servant caution, looking things up in the textbook all the time, but, would go ahead and create rules, breaking the old ones in the process if necessary." Doing what needs to be done. So, I found that very attractive, I must say.[59]

Hammarskjöld's efforts to outline the difference in expectations of procedure between the UN headquarters and the field persuaded Linnér that his lack of experience as a humanitarian or in

governance would not obstruct his intended position in Congo—indeed, it was his outsider perspective, his *lack* of experience with the professional standards of humanitarian operations and organizational systems—that had drawn Hammarskjöld to him in the first place.

Once on the ground, Linnér was delighted by the influx of Western international staff joining the mission and other relief agencies in Congo. In his oral testimony, he recalled his desire for ONUC to exercise a "civilising" influence on the host population and environment.[60] Ashamed of his "primitive working conditions" in Léopoldville (Congo's capital city, now Kinshasa), Linnér hoped that the "aristocratic" quality of these incoming civil servants and aid workers would challenge the chaos he saw in Léopoldville from the host population.[61] His delight in welcoming large numbers of international civil servants and experts into roles vacated by Belgian colonists revealed that his conception of the conflict was grounded in racism and a civilizational hierarchy. ONUC bureaucracy became a microcosm of international society; an experiment of liberal internationalist governance rather than a force acting in support of Congolese self-determination and political agency.

Linnér sought to live up to Hammarskjöld's expectations of him as a rogue humanitarian, fixing problems and smoothing over issues without concern for local repercussions if, in the bigger picture, ONUC was *seen* to be doing its job. As Ilana Feldman has identified, humanitarianism is "a tradition of 'compromised action,' in which humanitarian organizations can be distinguished not by whether they make such compromises but, instead, by which ones they make."[62] She argues that a line-drawing process is undertaken in the field to determine whether and when "bad practices"—such as "fraud, nepotism, misuse of resources, and duplicity"—are considered severe enough to subvert the "'proper' working of the humanitarian apparatus."[63] This culture empowered field-based leadership to make the determination of

Commented [AZ5]: perception? framework?

whether their behavior was within acceptable bounds, shaping mission cultures of impunity and misconduct.

An uneven expectation of behavior for Western officials was prevalent during the crisis, as humanitarians perpetuated imperial morality while being continually anxious and policing Congolese civilians and troops' behavior. Recalling one incident in the southern region of Congo, Kasai, Linnér admitted to stealing several trucks from the Congolese Army, or ANC, supposedly ONUC's allies, and disguising them with fake UN branding in order to deliver food aid to Congolese civilians:

> So, what we did was to steal trucks from the Congolese army who used them for mischief anyway and paint them with the UN emblem. This, of course, was highly unorthodox. And you can imagine when the UN auditors started getting close to this sort of operation they became, should I say, a bit confused. For years after I had finished there I remember someone was writing to me about it and asking for receipts and checks and so forth. So, I said to him quite simply, "We stole them. We saved people and that was what the whole thing was about." We had to get the food to the people. If we had gone along with protocol they would have died, quite simply.[64]

The UN auditor did not report this incident to the Congolese police, nor did they record Linnér's behavior formally and undertake an investigation into whether this was incident part of a wider pattern of criminal behavior within the ONUC mission. This impunity suggests that the auditor accepted his justification or felt unable to challenge the man holding executive authority of the mission. However confident Linnér felt about his defensibility, he largely concealed his behavior until after the mission had withdrawn from Congo, acknowledging that his decision to steal the ANC trucks was dubious and potentially politically—and operationally—disruptive. Ultimately,

the silence and complicity of his ONUC colleagues *as well as* the UN system demonstrated the context of impunity on the ground, even if Linnér quietly recognized that discussing his actions with a UN auditor sent from the UN headquarters during the mission would not be received with the same field-based camaraderie as that of his fellow ONUC personnel.

Linnér's deviance from UN protocol and Congolese law illustrated a disconnect between ONUC field operations and the projected procedural, institutional environment of the international organization's New York and Geneva offices. The image of the organization as a space of liberal efficiency and professionalism was undermined by the bravado of the leadership staff in the field. Furthermore, Linnér's argument that the ANC would have used the trucks "for mischief anyway" illustrated his condescension toward the Congolese army, implying that his criminality was somehow minimized by his belief that they did not undertake their jobs. This behavior also revealed how the ONUC staff were vigilant about *Congolese* wrongdoing—in this instance, withdrawing property from the army on the basis that he believed their plans with the trucks were less important than his own. Linnér's behavior suggested the normalization of racialized exceptionalism, humanitarian machismo, and cultures of impunity in ONUC; high-level peacekeeping staff did not hold themselves to the very standards that they claimed to be instilling in the Congolese.

The lack of field-based guidance or formal oversight for these humanitarian officials left them to experiment with different approaches to undertake their broad mandate, leading to instances of misconduct and mistreatment. UN official Gilpin took personal photographs during his repeated short periods of service with ONUC, providing a uniquely unstaged insight into peacekeeper life on the ground. As part of an operation to unload ONUC military equipment, including UN "Ferret" armored cars from a shipment on the river, he recorded the peacekeeping

officials using Congolese convicts to move the vehicles. During this operation, he photographed Colonel Louis F. Thompson, executive officer for the UN Congo Fund, being “piggy-backed” across knee-high muddy water by a convict in a striped uniform while others looked on (see Figure 1).[65]

< INSERT HUM2024015.2006_FIG1.JPEG >

< INSERT HUM2024015.2006_FIG2.TIFF >

The image of Thompson being carried by the Congolese convict is reminiscent of the colonial trope of Westerners seeking transport across “impossible” landscapes or in difficult “exotic” climates by being carried by one or more colonized person (see Figure 2). Methods of dehumanization and violence, like piggy-backing, were common colonial tools for control and oppression. As Brett Shadle has argued, “[Whites] used physical violence and humiliation to create and enforce a racial hierarchy.”[66] Being carried was a bodily demonstration of masculine power and racial supremacy, a performative act of humiliation and servitude that only served to further entrench civilizational logics. As executive officer of the Congo Fund, Thompson was tasked with monitoring the ONUC officials and processing UN finances for the mission. In sharp contrast with his own treatment of Congolese convicts, he was employed as a moral authority for the UN mission, checking the expenses of all international officials and agencies, eliminating fraud and corruption in the field, and—if necessary—disciplining staff for “unauthorized purchases” made using UN money.[67] In his professional correspondence, he acted as a bureaucratic check on personnel purchases: in once instance, demanding administrative clarification behind a UNESCO worker’s claim to “excess baggage” on a flight, and in another chastening an International Labour Organization (ILO) official for purchasing magazines on the UN’s dime.[68] For Thompson to have openly sought a piggy-back in front of his UN colleagues

Commented [AZ6]: Stands for?

and several other convicts, imperial notions of “morality” had to have been adopted wholeheartedly and normalized among his humanitarian colleagues. Gilpin believed that his Quaker religion and the UN’s military operations worked toward the same aims of a better world, but his documentation and preservation of these instances of abuse indicate that he did not perceive these acts as misconduct and was content to benefit from the power dynamic not only between peacekeeper and civilian but also between peacekeeper and convict. This mindset speaks to the perpetuation of imperial morality within the Western humanitarian community during the Congo crisis.

By his own admission, Gilpin was far from the only UN official seeking to make his mark in Congo regardless of his lack of qualification or background. In a short piece of footage filmed by UNTV, the multimedia department of the organization, UN Secretariat official Brian Urquhart exploits the media opportunity to record himself feeding Congolese infants bowls of milk in Congo in 1960. Urquhart was present on the ground as an aide to Ralph Bunche, the special representative of the secretary-general in 1960, before later taking over that position the following year. As aide, Urquhart saw the UN weather a reputational and financial crisis during which he leaned into colonial tropes and imagery to stimulate funding from member-states for the mission and to demonstrate the humanitarian value of the organization. His promotional video reveals the foundational prejudices and reflexive stereotypes that underpinned UN officials’ interventions.

In the clip, Urquhart is dressed formally, in a light suit with a visible “ONU” armband and a coiffed haircut.[69] The contrast of his clothing with the naked or half-clothed Congolese infants is stark. Perhaps his sartorial choice of a suit in this setting reflected an intention to demonstrate the humanitarian capacity and agency of UN bureaucrats—a display that the

organization's ethos was imbued in all staff regardless of their position in the UN's hierarchy. It also inverts the traditional gendered stereotype of a woman humanitarian feeding milk to a child in a relief setting,[70] the suit only setting the contrast into sharper relief. However, the idea of the masculine "humanitarian bureaucrat"—active in the field while dressed for the General Assembly—was undermined by Urquhart's visible lack of competence or skill in feeding the children.

Urquhart was in Congo to observe and participate in meetings in support of Bunche; he was an expert in international administration, not medical care or nursing. His lack of training and experience feeding children is obvious in the video as he holds his right hand to the back of both infants' heads and pushes them into the bowl, forcing them to participate in the film and play their role as grateful recipients. In the first clip, the children look directly at the camera while Urquhart holds the bowl to their face for them to drink. Their reluctance leads the milk to spill over the sides. In the second clip, another child watches on in horror as a first child is forced to drink. The observing child checks behind himself to see if the two adult figures—possibly the parents—are witnessing the same scene as the first child's face is entirely submerged in the bowl, uncomfortably pressed downward by the official. Urquhart smiles and poses throughout these scenes, despite the milk spilling, and does not appear to speak to the children throughout the process. His lack of care and efficiency are blatant—to the viewer and the children—further emphasizing the pantomime of the press footage. The culture of humanitarian bravado in Congo during this period empowered him to access the feeding center and "play-act" as a relief worker for a moment.

< INSERT HUM2024015.2006_FIG3.JPEG >

< INSERT HUM2024015.2006_FIG4.JPEG >

In the footage, Urquhart simulated the racist trope of white humanitarian and naked Black child recipient from past humanitarian campaigns, flattening the iconography of the political conflict of the Congo Crisis into a form of "innocence-based solidarity," apoliticizing and decontextualizing the child's hunger.[71] As the legitimacy of humanitarian organizations became tied to the perceived worthiness of its recipients, children became popular props for organizations in their marketing and fundraising as well as targets for materialist development goals.[72] Indeed, as Sonya de Laat and Valérie Gorin have argued, "the humanitarian image is less concerned with the events causing suffering than with the *image* of the humanitarian organization, its self-representation and branding," using Congolese children as props "in an effort to further organizational ends, triggering emotional responses, aestheticizing suffering, objectifying, essentialising, infantalizing and exploiting victims and reinforcing stereotypes of Africa as a continent of dependence and violence."[73]

Far from an anachronistic critique, this problematic imagery was judged contemporaneously. First, the children in the clips visibly object to the situation and clearly feel violated in that encounter; their facial expressions, attempts to recoil from Urquhart, and effort to alert other adults physically communicate their distress. Moreover, "poverty porn" and the "iconography of famine" in Africa became hot button issues in the post–World War II era as images of emaciated Black children became increasingly common in humanitarian campaigns by Save the Children and the ICRC.[74] The stereotypes communicated in these UNTV clips were

thus understood—by both those in the footage *and* many of those within the international humanitarian sector—as perpetuating harmful homogeneous and decontextualized perceptions of Africans in the 1960s, regardless of Urquhart's intentions. The clips of Urquhart reflect the instrumentalization of an extreme power dynamic between UN officials and the Congolese population amid a humanitarian and political crisis during this mission. Although an ICRC worker can be seen standing behind Urquhart in the first clip, the bureaucrat attempts to feed the infant.

The opportunities for harm because of mis-appointment—and sharp contrast with the focus on bureaucratic professionalism and ostensible credentialism within the UN headquarters—were not significant enough to give pause on the ground. Indeed, Urquhart's behavior was a model of how UN leadership designed the mission as a space for international officials to experiment with different approaches to relief work and build upon colonial stereotypes to foster support for the UN's development work in Congo. The panicked rhetoric around the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Congo, the reputational and financial chaos within the UN, and the need for an international intervention concealed the responsibility of UN leadership for poor recruitment processes, mis-appointed officials, and a lack of resources; the quality of the intervention fell far below the promises UN leadership was making in international media and within its own diplomatic forums.

Commented [AZ7]: As meant?

Thus, within ONUC civilian operations emerged a paradox. The international actors intervened in the crisis, directed Congolese development and "advancement," and maintained law and order through technical, policing, and military activities. However, international staff, like Linnér, simultaneously undermined the UN's own procedures and violated the dignity and trust of Congolese parties in the name of "saving lives." As we have seen, Linnér's attraction to

the field was his perception that it was an environment that justifies a policy of "doing what needs to be done" regardless of red tape or legal restrictions. The field was thus a space where international staff could experiment with "creative" solutions and use their initiative, rather than act in line with the standards and procedures established in the headquarters or in the same manner they expected of Congolese staff. International staff held themselves to a different standard, rooted in humanitarian superiority and ideas of saviourhood, and thus believed they had special privileges and were, to a certain extent, above the law.

<A>Protecting 'strings-attached' Aid: Racial Anxieties and Exposing the 'great racket'<A>

Linnér was not the only international official in Congo who deployed his perception and anxieties of Congolese "mischief" to justify or mitigate his own misconduct. This section examines the activities and racialized fears of US Ambassador Edmund Gullion as he reacted to small-scale smuggling across the Congo River and sought to restore control over a situation that undermined the U.S. aid effort during the conflict. For scholars such as Feldman, fears of misuse or abuse of aid are baked into the humanitarian provider/recipient relationship. According to Feldman, these "Concerns about corruption ensure that suspicion, distance, and distrust are central to the humanitarian dynamic" and therefore reinforce the detachment between both groups and "othering" processes.[75]

Gullion was appointed US representative in Congo from 1961 to 1964, working closely with the ONUC mission staff to maintain the political unity of the country and overseeing the U.S. economic aid program through the newly established U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Gullion was keenly aware of the significance of the conflict in Congo for U.S. foreign policy and Cold War politics, recognizing how Congo was an important "asset"

for the United States.[76] Additionally, the U.S. economic aid program in Congo used UN staff to avoid dedicating too many of their own staff to the peacekeeping context, further demonstrating the disconnect between UN headquarters and UN operations in the field. Congo was an important appointment for Gullion, but he had no experience in humanitarian aid or famine relief and had only been appointed for his diplomatic credentials. His approach to aid delivery in Congo was thus that of a diplomat: he focused on the optics of USAID transactions—its diplomatic currency during the conflict—rather than the practical benefits of the aid itself.

Gullion met regularly with the ONUC leadership, including Linnér, to discuss peacekeeping operations and regional conflicts, ensuring that the United States remained apprised of UN movements around the country and supporting ONUC determination to deescalate the violence in Katanga, especially after the death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in September 1961. He worked closely with Moise Tshombe, secessionist leader of Katanga, and Congolese Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula throughout 1962 and helped to negotiate talks between the two Congolese politicians, adapting to the role of diplomatic "middle-man" in the field.[77] Despite his hesitant beginnings in Léopoldville, by May 1962, Gullion was comfortable in his role among the liberal internationalists in Congo and increasingly became hands-on in his efforts to police the delivery of U.S. economic aid to the newly independent Congolese population. During his time in Congo, Gullion visited mission camps around the country with UN staff, such as Gilpin.

In February 1963, the United States announced its delivery of $23,820,000 worth of foodstuffs to Congo as part of its surplus food program, Food for Peace.[78] *The New York Times* reported that "the food will be sold for Congolese francs, which will then be used by the United States for aid programs here [in Léopoldville]," reporting that Congolese would still have to buy

the U.S.-supplied food and that the profit from these sales would go toward other USAID programs established in Congo or the UN.[79] The United States framed this process as import assistance, designed to "assure minimum levels of essential imports into the Congo and to support U.N. technical assistance programs."[80] A small portion of US surplus food supplies were delivered to the ONUC mission for free distribution to Congolese refugees as part of the USAID emergency assistance.[81] Gullion recognized the great diplomatic value that USAID relief brought to the U.S. government and understood his responsibility to ensure that the branded foodstuffs were smoothly transported across Congo for sale and/or ONUC distribution.[82]

For Gullion, the relative peace of deployment to Congo was disrupted by scandal in 1963. He became aware of the open frontier between Brazzaville (the capital of Congo-Brazzaville, a separate nation-state to Congo) and Léopoldville, separated only by the Congo River, which was irregularly patrolled. Gullion received reports that some Congolese individuals used this open border to transport goods across the river and make a profit from the exchange between Brazza francs and Congolese currency. These reports also noted that some Congolese had been seen carrying sacks of USAID foodstuffs—typically flour or butter—to the river. One day, one of Gullion's "country team," Robert L. West, director of USAID for Congo, spoke to J. Anthony Lukas, a *New York Times* reporter, about the situation, stoking fears about the unknown levels of aid "smuggling" in Congo.

Lukas's article was published on the front page and caused scandal in Léopoldville *and* Washington. Lukas painted a picture of the smuggling as a flagrant, public performance (visible to all U.S. officials in Léopoldville) that undermined the entire U.S. and UN relief effort in Congo: "The women padded single file past the U.S. Embassy and down the hill toward the Congo River. From an Embassy window one could see the package of butter rocking in the huge

wicker baskets on their heads. 'Sometimes I see all those headloads of butter slipping past and I want to rush out and tell those women to turn around,' said Robert L. West, director of U.S. aid in the Congo." [83] Officials did not know (nor did they ask) whether the women had acquired their butter or flour through legitimate purchase or through the Food for Peace program via ONUC distribution, but the fear remained that they were selling these goods in Brazzaville for profit. Regardless of the incomplete information, Gullion perceived this as a "great racket."[84]

Although the article reported these activities as relatively minor—far from a sophisticated criminal scheme—Lukas's conjecture ignited anxieties within the U.S. government and the U.S. "country team" about Congolese criminality and its potential escalation. Despite his lack of information about the volume of relief foodstuffs lost this way, Lukas exaggerated the implications of the supposed "smuggling racket" and its future expansion, arguing, "It is difficult to estimate just how much gets out this way, but Brazzaville's food markets are filled with New Jersey frozen chickens, wheat flour from Iowa, and dried milk from Wisconsin."[85]

The perception of aid being wasted or used for purposes other than those approved by U.S. officials prompted colonial and racialized ideas about Congolese ingratitude and the ineffectiveness of humanitarian relief more broadly. U.S. officials' fears were distorted by the knowledge of the smuggled foodstuffs being the products of—supposed, although, unconfirmed—U.S. humanitarian relief. Legacies of colonial perceptions of race and law and order in global south contexts underpinned these mainstream Western understandings of aid delivery in (post)colonial territories.[86]

By reproducing stereotypes of colonial populations as "primitives" who were "naturally prone to criminal behaviour" and motivated by "immorality and greed,"[87] Western humanitarian officials felt it necessary to remain vigilant to combat the population's untrustworthiness—a

prejudice that was integral to the moral ordering built into international governance and humanitarian operations strategies. Even if the individual in Lukas's article *was* smuggling their allotted flour, the outrage from U.S. officials was predominantly focused on the smuggler's violation of an implicit humanitarian agreement to be—perceived as—legitimately "needy" and not to profit from humanitarian donations. Traditionally, humanitarian aid—the delivery of relief and the "gift" of food or other necessary resources—is an act of trust on behalf of the donor;[88] that the recipient will not only be "worthy" of the aid (which in itself involves meeting a myriad of political requirements), but also use it for the intended purpose as expected by the donor. Feldman's study of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the postwar period similarly examined how Palestinian refugees were frequently under suspicion by humanitarian staff for not putting their limited rations to "proper use."[89] This is also understood as "strings attached" aid. The donor's sense of betrayal is grounded in their perceived entitlement to control the decisions of the recipient in their use of the aid and to avoid being seen as gullible or naive.

Lukas's article was included in full during the U.S. Senate hearings for the Foreign Assistance Act of 1963 as part of a discussion about "end-use controls and diversion of aid goods in Congo," with senators, such as Wayne Morse, voicing concerns about the burden on American taxpayers and the increasing levels of U.S. foreign aid more broadly.[90] However, despite the popularity of the article, David E. Bell, an administrator for USAID, argued that he had spoken to West and other USAID officials in Léopoldville and asserted that although "there had been some loss... this particular story gives an exaggerated impression." He then included a cabled report from USAID representatives to address the accusation of a smuggling ring in Léopoldville relying upon USAID relief foodstuffs. He emphasized that of all the illegal activity and

Commented [AZ8]: Isn't that what they are supposed to do?

smuggling operations in Congo,[91] this was one of the most insignificant, causing minimal damage or loss to the USAID program in Congo: “On the basis of information presently available it does not appear that U.S. aid commodities have been involved in this traffic on a large scale.”[92]

However in Léopoldville, Gullion was upset that West had spoken to the press and drawn Washington’s attention to the situation on the ground. He reported, “I needed that like a hole in the head.”[93] A consequence of Washington’s anxieties about the smuggling was the creation of a team of inspectors (composed of U.S. officials) who would visit Léopoldville and investigate the smuggling on the river, determining whether it was the threat to U.S. foreign aid that Lukas had projected it to be. He was convinced that there *was* a racketeering ring, but he wanted to deescalate the political context and appease Washington officials; his line of argument was that any problems were due to failing Congolese security and impossible conditions, rather than negligence by U.S. officials. Despite little evidence of the smugglers’ professionalism or large-scale profit, he did not question that a “great racket” was operating on the Congo River.

The U.S. inspectors arrived in June. The jetlagged inspectors, most of whom were fellow U.S. State Department officials, had flown to Léopoldville from Washington, DC, with little notice. However, Gullion was initially troubled about how to both convey his perception of the situation to his fellow diplomats and avoid censure from his department: he believed this was a large-scale racketeering ring, audacious enough to move USAID items below the ambassador’s window; but he recognized the limitations of his office—and the broader security systems in Congo—to prevent the smuggling. Gullion and his embassy staff were unsurprised by the practice and, indeed, more troubled by bad press in the United States and their reputation in the U.S. government than by the loss of USAID relief stuffs. During his first morning meeting with

the inspectors, he had “a funny inspiration” about how to best communicate the smuggling ring to the inspectors. He needed them to see that it was a real practice—but that it was beyond the embassy’s jurisdiction to intervene in the smuggling, even if it was targeting USAID produce. He recalled that: “I said to Colonel Rowsand, ‘Get me two boats tonight. We’re going out on the river.’ And I said to these fellows, ‘We'll meet here in the lobby at the embassy after sundown but late around 11 o'clock and we'll get ready to go.’ I said, ‘Wear rough clothes and we'll probably go in black face.’”[94] To impress the situation upon the inspectors, Gullion felt it best for the group of international diplomats and civil servants to go undercover to the Congo River in “black face.” Gullion believed that the inspectors needed to witness the smuggling themselves, to falsify Congolese embodiment and improvise a stakeout as a means of confirming criminal behaviour and assess the extent to which it tangled USAID and the U.S. Embassy in its operations. This was not a stakeout for the purpose of arrest and prosecution, however, as Gullion expected the inspectors to simply observe and report back to their superiors that he was not negligent; he did not want to open up a large investigation, he sought to quash the existing one. Irrespective of how “great” the racket and of his responsibility for the delivery of USAID humanitarian donations in Congo, the priority was protecting his reputation, not the cessation of the smuggling ring.

Armed and in “black face,” the U.S. Ambassador, his wife, and the group of U.S. inspectors traveled to the shore of the Congo River on the outskirts of Leopoldville, expecting to discover proof of their shared racial stereotype: “So, we hit the beach and there were four guys with their canoes and they were covered over with palm fronds. So, I said, ‘Let’s see your cargo.’ And there was contraband cargo consisting of—and this is a true story—bibles in English that they had stolen from the missions. They were going to sell them. I don’t know what they

thought they were going to do with them."[95] Although Gullion was unable to evidence the connection of USAID to the smuggling, he emphasized that the movement of Bibles across the river was part of the same racket. He concluded that Congolese civilians were stealing in order to personally profit—a story that fit with his existing narrative of perpetual criminality in Léopoldville. However, he did not know that the Bibles were stolen, nor did he know that that the men were planning on selling them in Brazzaville; he assumed criminality because this tallied with his racialized ideas about the host population.

Gullion made no mention of subsequent attempts to follow up this discovery with local missionaries, but he felt the extravagant effort he made by wearing "black face" and staking out the river was worth it for the discovery of four men moving Bibles. For him, it was a successful strategy, both protecting his interests and proving himself an adaptable field diplomat in a "complex" conflict context. He reported "We had no more problems with the inspectors. They saw this problem. However, had there been a State Department inspector along he would have said, 'What the hell is this bastard doing monkey shining on the Congo River at midnight?' But, they got to see it first-hand. It worked and there was not further problem. Everybody understood the problem."[96] Gullion focuses on the value of ensuring that the inspectors saw the situation "first hand." By "cutting through the red tape" of what the hypothetical U.S. State Department official would have insisted upon, he was able to communicate the "reality" on the ground and thus convince the inspectors of his perspective. This aim was a common one for field-based officials who felt that their headquarters-based colleagues were ill-informed of the demands in the field and unable to appreciate the need for improvisation on the ground in order to react to the needs of the conflict. However, this humanitarian bravado fostered a culture of guerrilla technocracy, whereby experts and humanitarian officials could behave however they deemed fit

in order to “problem-solve,” thus holding themselves to an entirely different standard than that they required of the Congolese population. Decisions on the ground made by Gullion and his State Department colleagues normalized racialized anxieties about Congolese criminality within the international community in Congo during the 1960s crisis. In turn, these anxieties became the basis of ambassadorial strategy in Léopoldville.

Gullion recognized that the stakeout was not professional conduct and was highly inappropriate. Despite the long history of blackface in U.S. white supremacist culture and its purpose to mock enslaved people, it remained ingrained in U.S. heritage and popular culture, particularly with minstrel performances at fraternities and theaters across the country.[97] Its widespread acceptance by U.S. white communities for entertainment purposes, however, did not mean that the U.S. government welcomed its strategic use. The decision to go undercover and put on “black face” in Congo in the commission of an investigation led by the US ambassador would have been controversial and challenging to justify to a U.S. public increasingly attuned to race issues. Conveniently for Gullion, his decision was concealed, and the group of inspectors returned to the United States to confirm his assessment of the situation in Léopoldville. Although the inspectors protected Gullion—largely, due to their complicity in the act—at least one of the U.S. officials recalled the incident as a notably dangerous and excessive undertaking for a U.S. ambassador and a group of officials: “I was down visiting a friend, the Ambassador to Venezuela, and he happened to have a reception there for a visiting team from different government departments. I happened to be there and this fellow from the Department of Agriculture said, ‘Oh, I remember you. You're the guy that took me out to get killed on the Congo River.’ He remembered it.”[98] Reinforcing the disconnect in expected approaches between the field-based official and the headquarters-based personnel, the inspector and Gullion each

took up the polarizing roles of the “cautious” HQ-bureaucrat and the “rolled-up-sleeves” humanitarian on the ground during ONUC. By framing the field-based official as navigating the impossible, the HQ-official was unable to meaningfully police their operations or challenge their decision-making; what if “going rogue” saves lives or leads to a quieter solution on the ground? Deferring to the supremacy of field-based expertise—the “you don’t know what it’s like here” power dynamic—the HQ officials were more likely to accept and overlook misconduct and criminal behavior by staff on the ground, even if they recognized its danger and its far cry from the responsibilities of a U.S. ambassador. Thus, the hierarchies of knowledge production, organizational cultures, and colonial imaginaries of conflict contexts in the global south converged to foster a permissive attitude toward international humanitarian officials’ misconduct in the field.

Commented [AZ9]: ?

<A>Conclusion<A>

Transgressions between humanitarian and civilian manifested from the same unequal power dynamic as that between colonizer and colonized. This article has demonstrated how field-based humanitarian misconduct during decolonization was part of longer historical narratives of liberal colonialism and the civilizing mission. By examining a range of wrongdoing, it has identified how civilizational logic, first, fostered the conditions for misconduct against Congolese civilians and property and, second, underpinned justifications for officials’ misconduct. Although criminal acts were not encouraged by the organizational leadership, patterns of racist stereotyping, paternalism, and cultures of impunity in the field animated officials to problem-solve on the ground or improvise utilitarian solutions by “cutting through red tape.” The utilitarian rationale of Western “sacrifice” forged a belief that any misconduct or harm during the period of “going native” was an unfortunate but, ultimately, an inevitable and worthwhile side-effect; the larger—

abstract—goal of “saving lives” provided moral justification for any harms committed in its pursuit. Not only was racial privilege integral to their wrongdoing and its coverup, but it was also integral to the cultures and logics that provoked the harmful action in the first place.

This article has also highlighted how humanitarian criminality has been long framed by colonial stereotypes and racist prejudices, preventing systemic reform and lesson-learning within the international humanitarian sector. Based on the paternalistic concept that the intervention of humanitarian action is better than “doing nothing,” peacekeeper or humanitarian misconduct has been minimized by utilitarian calculations and beliefs in the inevitability of “corruption” in global south contexts. Organizations have sought to “sweep it under the rug,”[99] or develop training and risk management toolkits.[100] For instance, commentary on present-day peacekeeping wrongdoing by top UN figures such as Kofi Annan has frequently defended the missions embroiled in scandal, blaming “a few bad apples,” rather than acknowledged the structural inequalities baked into liberal internationalist practices.[101] Uncovering the legacies of colonial narratives and justifications for this behavior—as well as how these colonial roots are entangled with field-based anti-bureaucratism and humanitarian machismo—helps us to contextualize the power dynamics in twenty-first century peacekeeping and connect them to patterns of misconduct in past missions. The (in)visible nature of humanitarian criminality preserved in sources such as oral histories should also encourage us to reflect on the number of cases that have been erased or deemed inconsequential in past *and* present-day operations. By taking a holistic approach to these historical instances of misconduct—fragmentary though they are—we can better understand the intellectual entanglements between civilizational logic and international humanitarian operations. The civilizing mission was thus revitalized and recoded

through liberal humanitarianism during decolonisation, thus moralizing the protection of Western hegemony and white supremacy in the postcolonial international order.

---

[1] “Oxfam Criticised over Haiti Sex Claims,” *BBC News,* June 11, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48593401.

[2] Melanie Sauter, “#AidToo, or When the Situation Permits Rape: Sexual Violence among Humanitarian Aid Workers,” *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 9, no. 1 (2024); Lydia Zigomo, “Institutional Racism in the Aid Sector and how Oxfam is Responding,” *Views & Voices*, March 17, 2021, https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/2021/03/institutional-racism-in-the-aid-sector-and-how-oxfam-is-responding/.

[3] Mary Beard, (@wmarybeard). “Of course one can’t condone the (alleged) behaviour of Oxfam staff in Haiti and elsewhere. But I do wonder how hard it must be to sustain “civilised” values in a disaster zone. And overall I still respect those who go in to help out, where most of us wd not tread,” *Twitter*, February 16, 2018, https://twitter.com/wmarybeard/status/964613592833253376.

[4] Priyamvada Gopal, “Response to Mary Beard,” February 18, 2019, https://zen-catgirl.medium.com/response-to-mary-beard-91a6cf2f53b6.

[5] For more, see Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

[6] Especially as feminist scholars have demonstrated that the term “SEA” has been expanded to include a variety of consensual sexual activities and crimes by peacekeepers, including paying for sex workers. See Marsha Henry, “Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Missions: Problematising Current Responses,” in *Gender, Agency, and Coercion. Thinking Gender in Transnational Times,* ed. Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 122–42.

[7] For recent scholarship on SEA, see Sabine Lee and Susan Bartels, "'They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You': A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti," *International Peacekeeping* 27, no. 2 (2020): 177–209; Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 1 (2016): 100–15.

[8] Guglielmo Verdirame, *The UN and Human Rights: Who Guards the Guardians?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[9] This logic of humanitarian "saviours" thus also served to confirm the colonists' racial hierarchy of civilised/uncivilised populations.

[10] Charlotte Lydia Riley, "Powerful Men, Failing Upwards: The Aid Industry and the 'Me Too' Movement," *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2020): 49–55.

[11] For more on gender, masculinities, and humanitarian identities, see Bertrand Taithe, "Humanitarian Masculinity: Desire, Character and Heroics, 1876–2018," *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century: Practice, Politics and the Power of Representation,* ed. in Esther Moller, Johannes Paulmann, and Katharina Stornig (London: Palgrave, 2020), 35–59.

[12] Sherene H. Razack, *Dark Threats, White Knights: The Somalia Affair and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 24.

[13] See Roland Paris, "International Peacebuilding and the 'mission civilisatrice,'" *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 637–56.

[14] See Ntina Tzouvala, *Capitalism as Civilisation: A History of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Emma Stone Mackinnon, "Declaration as Disavowal: The

Politics of Race and Empire in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Political Theory* 47, no. 1 (2019): 57–81; Meredith Terretta, "'We Had Been Fooled into Thinking That the UN Watches over the Entire World': Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 329–60.

[15] Among others, see Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (2008): 251–74; Bronwen Everill and Josiah Kaplan, eds., *The History and Practice of Humanitarian Intervention and Aid in Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Meera Sabaratnam, *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017); Razack, *Dark Threats, White Knights*; José Pedro Monteiro, *The Internationalisation of the "Native Labour" Question in Portuguese Late Colonialism, 1945–1962* (Berlin: Springer, 2022); Joël Glasman, *Humanitarianism and the Quantification of Human Needs: Minimal Humanity* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Jennifer A. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Silvia Salvatici, *A History of Humanitarianism, 1755-1989: In the Name of Others* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019); Emily Baughan, *Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); Marie-Luce Desgranchamps, *L'humanitaire en guerre civile: La crise du Biafra (1967-1970)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2022); Yolanda Pringle, "Humanitarianism, Race and Denial: The International Committee of the Red Cross and Kenya's Mau Mau Rebellion, 1952–60," *History Workshop Journal* 84 (Autumn 2017): 89–107; Tom Crook, Rebecca Gill, and Bertrand Taithe, *Evil, Barbarism and Empire: Britain and Abroad, c. 1830-2000* (London: Palgrave

Macmillan, 2011); Davide Rodogno, *Night on Earth: A History of International Humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, "Empire and Globalisation: From 'High Imperialism' to Decolonisation," *The International History Review* 36, no. 1 (2014): 142–70; Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*: *A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Alice L. Conklin, "19. The Civilizing Mission," in *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates,* ed. Edward G. Berenson, Vincent Duclert, and Christophe Prochasson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 173–81; Harry Liebersohn, "Introduction: The Civilizing Mission," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2016): 383–87.

[16] Margot Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats: United Nations Peacekeeping and the Reinvention of Colonialism, 1945–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 22–23.

[17] An exception is Eva-Maria Muschik, *Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945-1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[18] See Alanna O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019); Lise Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960-1965* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (London: Routledge, 2010); Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Patrice Lumumba* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa, from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Henning Melber, *Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the Decolonisation of Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 2019); Brooks Marmon, "Operation Refugee: The Congo Crisis and the End of Humanitarian Imperialism in Southern Rhodesia, 1960," *Cold War History* 22, no. 2 (2022): 131–52.

[19] Exceptions include Norrie Macqueen, *Peacekeeping and the International System* (London: Routledge, 2006); Michael K. Carroll, *Pearson's Peacekeepers: Canada and the United Nations Emergency Force, 1956-1957* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[20] See James Sloan, *The Militarisation of Peacekeeping in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Marrack Goulding, "The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping," *International Affairs* 69, no. 3 (1993), 451–64.

[21] For example: Lou Pingeot, *Police Peacekeeping: The UN, Haiti, and the Production of Global Social Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Marsha Henry, *The End of Peacekeeping: Gender, Race, and the Martial Politics of Intervention* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024); Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Emily Paddon Rhoads, *Taking Sides in Peacekeeping: Impartiality and the Future of the United Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[22] Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats,* 248–52.

[23] Colonial anxiety—to maintain power, to reject humiliation— is a symptom of civilizational politics for the oppressor, as articulated by Jasmine Gani in "Racial Militarism and Civilizational Anxiety at the Imperial Encounter: From Metropole to the Postcolonial State," *Security Dialogue* 52, no. 6 (2021): 546–66.

[24] For more on the methodological use of transcriptions of oral testimonies in academic research, see Jane C. Richardson and B. S. Godfrey, "Towards Ethical Practice in the Use of Archived Transcripted Interviews," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6, no. 4 (2003): 347–55.

[25] "Republic of the Congo—ONUC," *United Nations*, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/onucB.htm.

[26] Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats,* 248–52.

[27] Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats,* 248–52.

[28] Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2013).

[29] Margot Tudor, "'The re-establishment of satisfactory conditions in the Congo': Examining the UN's Response to the Belgian Military Intervention in July 1960," *The King's Student Law Review and Strife Journal*, Joint Edition, I (2018): 1–13.

[30] Jeremy McMaster Rich, *Protestant Missionaries and Humanitarianism in the DRC: The Politics of Aid in Cold War Africa* (Martlesham, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 34.

[31] UN Doc, S/4387, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 143," July 14, 1960.

[32] Henry Tanner, "U.N. IN CONGO: Some Resentment Found Among Congolese at World Agency's Large Role," *The New York Times*, July 31, 1960.

[33] UN Doc, S/4531, "First Progress Report to the Secretary General, from His Special Representative in the Congo, Ambassador Rajeshwar Dayal"; UN Doc, S/4557, "Second Progress Report to the Secretary-General."

[34] Lincoln P. Bloomfield, "Headquarters-Field Relations: Some Notes on the Beginning and End of ONUC," *International Organization* 17, no. 2 (1963): 379–80.

[35] ICRC Library, CI (1963 ENG Ref.) 1-18, "Relief Distributed or Forwarded from 1 January 1958 to 31 December 1962," *International Conference of the Red Cross (Centenary Congress) Geneva* (September 1963): 5.

[36] Hansard, HC Deb, "Congo (Famine, South Kasai)," January 25, 1961, vol. 633, Cols. 171–76.

[37] ICRC Archives, B AG 130 051.03, "Rapport de Delegation du CICR au Congo," January 31, 1961, 3; B AG 130 051.03, "Concerne: relations de la Croix-Rouge, Geneve. Note no. 538," February 6, 1961.

[38] H. Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[39] Among others: Camilla Boisen, "The Changing Moral Justification of Empire: From the Right to Colonise to the Obligation to Civilise," *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 3 (2013): 335–53; Bertrand Taithe, *The Killer Trail: A Colonial Scandal in the Heart of Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Frédéric Mégret, "From 'Savages' to 'Unlawful Combatants': A Postcolonial Look at International Humanitarian Law's 'Other,'" in *International Law and Its Others,* ed. A. Orford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 265–317.

[40] Robert Knox, "Valuing Race? Stretched Marxism and the Logic of Imperialism," *London Review of International Law* 4, no. 1 (2016): 99.

[41] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Penguin, 2003).

[42] Joaquín Villanueva, "Corruption Narratives and Colonial Technologies in Puerto Rico," *NACLA Report on the Americas* (2019), 188.

[43] Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); T. J. Tallie, "Sartorial Settlement: The Mission Field and Transformation in Colonial Natal, 1850–1897," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2016): 389–410; Francesca Piana, "The Dangers of 'Going Native': George Montandon in Siberia and the International Committee of the Red Cross, 1919–1922," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 266–67.

[44] Sebastían Gil-Riaño, *The Remnants of Race Science: UNESCO and Economic Development in the Global South* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023); Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[45] Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[46] Kira Huju, *Cosmopolitan Elites: Indian Diplomats and the Social Hierarchies of Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[47] Karen Gram-Skjoldager, Haakon Andreas Ikonomou, and Torsten Kahlert, eds., *Organizing the 20th-Century World: International Organizations and the Emergence of International Public Administration, 1920-1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

[48] Meera Sabaratnam, *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 134.

[49] Muschik, *Building States*, 5.

[50] Bertrand Taithe and Guillame Lachenal, "Une Genealogy Missionaire et Coloniale de l'Humanitaire: The Aujoulat Case in Cameroon, 1935-1973," *Le Mouvement social* 227 (2009/2): 45–63.

[51] James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 70.

[52] Lisa Smirl, *Spaces of Aid: How Cars, Compounds and Hotels Shape Humanitarianism* (London: Zed Books, 2015); Junru Bian, "The Racialization of Expertise and Professional Non-Equivalence in the Humanitarian Workplace," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 7, no. 1 (2022): 3, doi: 10.1186/s41018-021-00112-9.

[53] Myfanwy James, "'Who Can Sing the Song of MSF?': The Politics of 'Proximity' and Performing Humanitarianism in Eastern DRC," *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2020): 31–39.

[54] Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats,* 142.

[55] Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. c. 4674 (fols 244–324), Antony Gilpin, fol. 247.

[56] Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. c. 4674 (fols 244–324), Antony Gilpin, fol. 256.

[57] Tudor, *Blue Helmet Bureaucrats,* 140.

[58] Šture Linnér, interview transcript, *Yale-UN Oral History Project*, November 8, 1990, 39.

[59] Linnér, interview transcript, 6.

[60] Linnér, interview transcript, 4.

[61] Linnér, interview transcript, 46.

[62] Ilana Feldman, "The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief," *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 701.

[63] Ilana Feldman, "Care and Suspicion: Corruption as Definition in Humanitarian Relations," *Current Anthropology* 59, S18 (2018): 161.

[64] Linnér, interview transcript, 7.

[65] Bodleian Library, MS. Photograph c. 50, Antony Gilpin, fols. 52–3.

[66] Brett L. Shadle, "Humiliation and Violence in Kenyan History," in *Violence, Gender and Affect: Interpersonal, Institutional and Ideological Practices,* ed. Marita Husso (London: Palgrave, 2021), 204.

[67] UN Archives, S-0732-0001-06-00004, "C/FIN/100/1/1 - Congo Fund," Jan–May 1963.

[68] UN Archives, S-0732-0001-06-00004, "C/FIN/100/1/1 - Congo Fund," Jan–May 1963.

[69] The UN in French is initialised as ONU.

[70] For work on humanitarianism, milk, and gender, see Jennifer M. Morris, *The Origins of UNICEF, 1946–1953* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); Tehila Sasson, "Milking the Third World? Humanitarianism, Capitalism, and the Moral Economy of the Nestle ́Boycott," *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (2016): 1196–1224.

[71] Kate Manzo, "Imaging Humanitarianism: NGO Identity and the Iconography of Childhood," *Antipode* 40, no. 4 (2008): 647.

[72] Baughan, *Saving the Children,* 88–96.

[73] Sonia De Laat and Valérie Gorin, "Iconographies of Humanitarian Aid in Africa," *HPG Working Paper* (2016), 15.

[74] David Campbell, "The Iconography of Famine," in *Picturing Atrocity,* ed. Geoffrey Batchen (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

[75] Feldman, "Care and Suspicion," 161.

[76] Guillion, interview transcript, *Yale-UN Oral History Project*, May 8, 1990, 41.

[77] Waldemar A. Nielsen, "Our Envoy Searches for Peace in the Congo," *The New York Times,* April 15, 1962.

[78] "U.S. to Send Congo Food," *The New York Times,* February 25, 1963.

[79] "U.S. to Send Congo Food."

[80] "United States Participation in the United Nations: Report by the President to the Congress for the Year . . . on the Activities of the United Nations and the Participation of the United States Therein," *US Office of Public Affairs* (1963), 359.

[81] "The Food for Peace Program," *US Department of Defense* 1, no. 13 (January 15, 1962): 2–3.

[82] Rich, *Protestant Missionaries,* 35–36.

[83] J. Anthony Lukas, "Smugglers in Leopoldville: Abuses Marring U.S. Aid in Congo," *The New York Times,* May 28, 1963.

[84] Guillion, interview transcript, 42

[85] Lukas, "Smugglers in Leopoldville."

[86] Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[87] Samuel Kalman, *Law, Order, and Empire: Policing and Crime in Colonial Algeria, 1870–1954* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2024).

[88] For more on the complex relational ties of "gift giving" and humanitarian aid, see Robert Kowalski, "The Gift—Marcel Mauss and International Aid," *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare* 27, no. 3 (2011): 189–205.

[89] Feldman, "Care and Suspicion," 165.

[90] "Foreign Assistance Act of 1963, United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations," *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88 Congress, First Session on H.R. 7406 and S. 2214,* vol. 2., June 12, 1963, 114–15.

[91] For instance, gem smuggling: "Smuggled Goods Aid Brazzaville: Contraband Industrial Gems Reduce Trade Deficit," *The New York Times,* January 20, 1964.

[92] "Foreign Assistance Act of 1963," 118.

[93] Guillion, interview transcript, 42.

[94] Guillion, interview transcript, 42–43.

[95] Guillion, interview transcript, 44.

[96] Guillion, interview transcript, 44.

[97] For more on blackface minstrels in U.S. popular culture, see Rhae Lynn Barnes, “Darkology: The Hidden History of Amateur Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of Modern America, 1860-1970” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016).

[98] Gullion, interview transcript, 47.

[99] J. Stern, “Reducing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping: 10 Years after the Zeid Report,” *Civilians in Conflict Policy Brief* 1 (February 2015): 10.

[100] Chris Ries, “Sexual Abuse during Humanitarian Operations Still Happens. What Must Be Done to End It,” *The Conversation,* May 10, 2021, https://theconversation.com/sexual-abuse-during-humanitarian-operations-still-happens-what-must-be-done-to-end-it-169223.

[101] Martina Vandenberg, “Peacekeeping, Human Trafficking, and Sexual Abuse and Exploitation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict,* ed. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Naomi Cahn, and Dina Francesca Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 404–7.