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The Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid: Historical Perspectives

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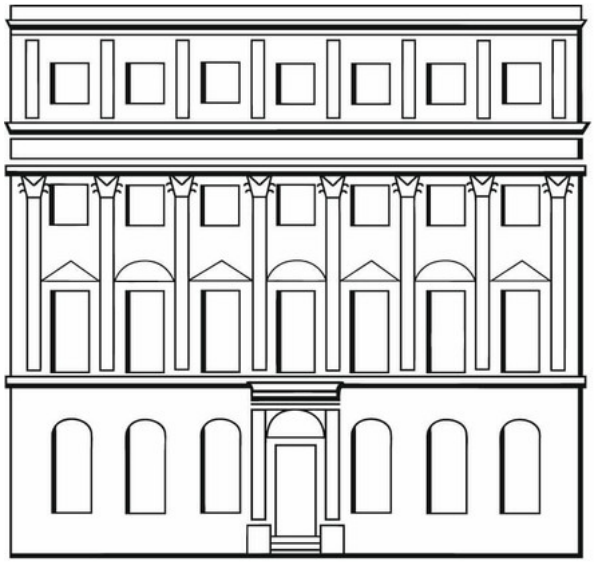

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Johannes Paulmann

The Crisis of Crisis Relief

Contemporary analysts and pundits see humanitarianism in crisis.[1] To some, humanitarian aid has become part of the problem and is no longer part of the solution for people in need: for victims of famine and for refugees, for example, relief creates a culture of dependency. In theory, camps are regarded as safe and neutral humanitarian spaces in which basic needs such as shelter, food, and medical care are provided temporarily. But in practice, anthropologists have shown, living in a refugee camp, often for years, produces new (psychological) suffering and violence within a camp society which is highly gendered and far from apolitical.[2] Furthermore, in war situations, critics contend, aid organizations provide indirect support for warlords, thereby prolonging military conflicts. Aid, it is claimed, has even become a permanent feature of military strategy.[3]

[1] David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (London, 2002); a seminal article in the contemporary debate has been African Rights, *Humanitarianism Unbound? Current Dilemmas Facing Multi-Mandate Relief Operations in Political Emergencies*, Discussion Paper No. 5 (London, 1994); see also Alain Destexhe, *L'Humanitaire impossible, ou Deux siècles d'ambiguïté* (Paris, 1993); Rony Brauman, *Humanitaire: le dilemme*, interview with Philippe Petit (Paris, 1996); Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (Boulder, Colo., 1999); David Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, 2004).

[2] Liisa H. Malkki, 'Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization', *Cultural Anthropology*, 11/3 (1996), 377–404; Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca, NY, 2002).; Michel Agier, *Aux bords du monde: les réfugiés* (Paris, 2002); Michel Agier, *Gérer les indésirables: des camps de réfugiés au gouvernement humanitaire* (Paris, 2008); Ilana Feldman, 'The Humanitarian Circuit: Relief Work, Development Assistance, and CARE in Gaza, 1955–67', in Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield (eds.), *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics* (Santa Fe, N. Mex., 2011), 203–26; Miriam Ticktin, 'Transnational Humanitarianism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43 (2014), 273–89, at 278–9.

[3] See Linda Polman, *War Games: The Story of Aid and War in Modern Times* (London, 2011); more nuanced analysis is provided by Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*

In particular, in the 'War against Terror' from 2001 humanitarian action was endorsed by the American forces, while humanitarian organizations themselves subscribed to the military effort; humanitarian aid instrumentalized in this manner may be seen as the apex of what has been called 'humanitarian government'.[4]

Besides these negative effects of aid, which have been portrayed either as side effects or as essential characteristics of recent relief efforts, the politics and morals of the humanitarian agencies themselves have been questioned. As aid organizations have grown in number and size, humanitarianism is said to have become a business. Academics have accordingly analysed the field in terms of market behaviour and speak of 'the disaster relief industry'.[5] Humanitarian agencies are seen to compete amongst each other for public attention and, ultimately, money, with the larger ones handling vast funds. Critics contend that mainline agencies have become dependent on donor governments, almost acting as subcontractors for national governments or UN agencies, while at the same time abandoning the notion of humanitarianism-against-politics for the 'politics of humanitarianism'.[6] Lobbying for political commitment and even military action is deemed by some too high a price for humanitarianism, which, they contend, 'at its core', should 'remain the vocation of helping people when they most desperately need help'.[7]

Recently, it has even been suggested that humanitarians have built an 'Empire of Humanity' as humanitarian organizations have not only become businesses but also acquired state-like functions, with their own interests in mind rather than the interests of those in need.[8] An international élite of relief agency staff, academics, consultants, specialist journalists, lobbyists, and human rights workers exercise powers for which they lack the legitimacy of participation by those they claim to serve.[9] From this perspective, claims of urgency and necessity often trump democratic principles. Put in terms of imperi-

[4] Cf. Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley, 2011).

[5] Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Business* (Cambridge, 2013); Alex De Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Oxford, 1997); cf. for a historical study using an institutional economics approach Gabriele Lingelbach, *Spenden und Sammeln: Der westdeutsche Spendenmarkt bis in die 1980er Jahre* (Göttingen, 2009).

[6] Rieff, *Bed for the Night*, 23, quotation at 26.

[7] Ibid. 27.

[8] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011).

[9] De Waal, *Famine Crimes*, 65.

alism, the recipients of humanitarian aid equal colonial subjects. Anthropological research seems to confirm this perspective. The practice of administering relief itself silences the beneficiaries by depoliticizing, for example, the refugee category and constructing an ahistorical, universal humanitarian subject in need.[10]

The crisis of crisis relief is usually framed as a post-Cold War story. The assumption is that international conditions for aid changed fundamentally with the breakdown of the existing world order in 1989–90. In a now unstable environment, the new kind of warfare in particular is said to have made humanitarian work more difficult. Civil wars, which are entangled with ethnic and religious strife and fed by economic exploitation of local resources and illegal international trade, do not know clear front lines; along with weak state authority, this appears to diminish the regard for humanitarian law. The result has been rising civilian casualties, population displacements, even attacks on UN forces and Red Cross workers. The new challenges have been described as 'complex emergencies', but the changes are perhaps better viewed from a different perspective: that is, by recognizing that it is the international humanitarian response itself that may have become more 'complex' as numbers and types of actors in the field have proliferated and become more directly involved in the dynamics of conflicts.[11]

From a historical perspective this is, perhaps not surprisingly, a very short-term analysis. We need to look further back to better understand these so-called complexities. The studies of the history of humanitarian aid in this volume show that some of the dilemmas of modern humanitarianism have been inherent in humanitarian practice for more than a century; and that the multilevel, polycentric structure of the field is not new, but was established during specific conjunctures in the twentieth century.[12]

[10] Malkki, 'Speechless Emissaries'; for a historical example of the effects of universalization see Lasse Heerten, 'Biafra und die Universalisierung des Holocaust', *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, 8/3 (2011), 394–413, republished in a revised English version in Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (eds.), *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge, 2015), 249–74.

[11] Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*, 10–15, who is critical of the term 'complex emergency'; cf. David Keen, *Complex Emergencies* (Cambridge, 2008).

[12] See Johannes Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid during the Twentieth Century', *Humanity*, 4/2 (2013), 215–38; cf. the overview by Silvia Salvatici, *Nel nome degli altri: storia dell' umanitarismo internazionale* (Bologna, 2015).

The Blurred Boundaries of Humanitarian Aid

First we need to take a look at the terms and concepts used. The crisis-of-crisis-relief analysis is not merely about the practical difficulties of supporting people in need, it is also a debate on what constitutes humanitarian aid. The *notion* of 'complex' emergencies and the 'complexity' of humanitarian aid, I contend, is a recent, post-Cold War phenomenon. The present-day diagnosis of a crisis contrasts with the previous understanding of humanitarian aid, which was itself current for a specific period, viz. during the Cold War, decolonization, and post-colonial decades. If we take an even longer-term view, including nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideas and practices, we may recognize essential historical features which are, in some respects, still effective today.

To most readers certain delimitations will be familiar. We usually distinguish between humanitarian relief, development policy, human rights, and humanitarian intervention. The last term, humanitarian intervention, refers to diplomatic and military actions by outside forces in conflicts where the sovereign state is considered to be incapable of guaranteeing its people's security.[13] Human rights are about politics and justice; they stand for attempts to rectify violations of basic rights by recourse to law and the judicial system.[14] Development aid is seen as contributing to the economic welfare of a country through long-term investments in infrastructure, industries, and agriculture. The alternative usage, 'foreign' aid, refers to similar activities but highlights the foreign-policy interests inherent in governmental development projects.[15]

[13] Fabian Klose (ed.), *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge, 2015); Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge, 2013); Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton, 2011); Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge, 2004).

[14] For recent studies of human rights as history see Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2011); Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria* (Philadelphia, 2013); Jan Eckel, *Die Ambivalenz des Guten: Menschenrechte in der internationalen Politik seit den 1940ern* (Göttingen, 2014).

[15] Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (Chicago, 2007); Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (Oxford, 2007); for a critical historical assessment of 'development' and 'post-development' see Frederick Cooper,

In contrast to the assumed long-term goals of development, humanitarian aid is understood as the 'assistance given to people in immediate need resulting from natural or man-made disaster'.[16] As clear-cut as this definition appears, it contains assumptions which merit closer inspection. 'Immediate' unduly neglects the fact that many people who provide aid do, indeed, reflect on medium or long-term causes and effects. The adjective disregards the practical and organizational extensions of relief into development assistance and ignores the fact that giving immediate help often implies 'witnessing' suffering and thereby keeping it present in public debates in the long run.[17] The very term 'emergency' also has strong connotations. It suggests that need arises suddenly and unpredictably, while locating the situation in a specific place. The disaster is thereby somehow disconnected from global interactions. Its causes are attributed to forces of nature or the evil nature of man so that the disaster becomes 'naturalized' and appears to stem merely from local 'root problems'. Craig Calhoun accordingly speaks of 'the emergency imaginary', arguing that in the recent past the emergencies we have learnt about have been regarded as local exceptions to an imaginary norm of global order, however frequently they occur.[18] Emergencies have thus become a sort of normal incident to distant observers. Responding to them by quickly delivering assistance worldwide has become one of the modalities of globalization carrying moral imperatives for immediate actions.

Some scholars have argued that the distinction between aid and development stems from models of humanitarianism which are different in principle. The political scientist Michael Barnett speaks of 'emergency humanitarianism' and 'alchemical humanitarianism'; practitioners of the latter seek to remove the causes of suffering, engage with state politics, and base their ideas about how to make

'Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in id. and Randall Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1998), 64–92.

[16] Jonathan Benthall, 'Relief', in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (New York, 2009), 887–93.

[17] See Michal Givoni's contribution in the present volume.

[18] Craig Calhoun, 'The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action', in Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (eds.), *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), 72–97, at 90–1; see also Craig Calhoun, 'A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention, and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Order', *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 41/4 (2004), 373–95.

the world a better place on empirically grounded research, while the former are concerned with immediate relief and attempt to stay clear of politics.[19] His distinction relies on a blend of proclaimed aims and the assumed chances of realizing them. More historically minded (and influenced by his politics and his own experience as president of Médecins sans Frontières), Rony Brauman dates the distinction back to the nineteenth century; he contrasts the Red Cross paradigm (that is, saying no to politics and moral judgement) to that of colonial health services (that is, initiating health projects and thereby also control over colonial populations).[20] Although Brauman rightly points out two essential historical contexts for the evolution of humanitarian aid, namely, war and empire, his distinction is based less on the historical study of humanitarian aid than, to some extent, on the Cold War and decolonization context of his own times.

The familiar distinctions, especially that between emergency relief and development, have arisen since the middle of the twentieth century out of the politics of humanitarianism, the evolution of humanitarian organizations, and the writings of scholars who, as experts, have often been practitioners in the field of humanitarian action. The notion of development emerged during the 1940s from late colonial attempts to transform imperial rule (thus coping with the political conflicts and labour unrest of the late 1930s) by using imperial relations for economic improvement and recovery.[21] The attempt to depoliticize imperial conflicts by means of technical and financial policies, and thereby to relegitimize empire, ultimately did not work in political terms. But the development schemes drawn up by colonial bureaucrats for supposedly backward subjects laid the ground for the linked concepts of development and modernization.[22] It also

[19] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 37–41.

[20] Rony Brauman, *Penser dans l'urgence: parcours critique d'un humanitaire* (Paris, 2006), 44–7; id., *La Médecine humanitaire* (Paris, 2010), 12–20.

[21] Frederick Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, 8 (2010), 5–23; id., 'Reconstructing Empire in British and French Africa', *Past and Present*, 210, suppl. 6 (2011), 196–210; cf. Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold Story of European Integration and Colonialism* (London, 2014).

[22] Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats'; see also Corinna Unger, Andreas Eckert, and Stephan Malinowski (eds.), 'Modernizing Missions: Approaches to "Developing" the Non-Western World after 1945', *Journal of Modern European History*, 8/1 (2010), 24–46; Corinna Unger, 'Histories of Development and Modernization: Findings, Reflections, Future Research', *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 9 Dec. 2010 ⟨http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2010-12-001⟩ [accessed 10 May 2012].

enabled colonial elites to make economic and political claims which, after independence, turned into supplications by post-colonial governments, which also acted as gatekeepers with regard to who would receive what kind of aid.[23] The subsequent establishment of development as an international discourse and practice which involved governments in the First, Second, and Third Worlds was promoted by the creation of international institutions to manage particular projects as well as overall directions, such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, aka the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Trade Organization, and United Nations organizations and programmes such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Word Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The policies rested on existing and new organizations implementing projects and involved experts not only on the ground, but also, so to speak, at the secondary level of evaluation and (scholarly) reflection. Making funds available for development purposes and debating aims, instruments, and outcomes require theoretical conceptualizations; this is part of the reason why, by the late 1960s and 1970s, a distinction was drawn between long-term structural development and emergency relief. There is no space here to describe the intricate link between changing developmental policies and how they affected concepts of humanitarian relief in the 1970s and 1980s.[24] It seems that the clear-cut distinction with which we are familiar is partly a result of the political economy of development policy during these decades, and its shortcomings, especially since the crisis of the 1970s.

The conception of humanitarian aid, however, cannot be written merely as a function of political economy. Another part of the explanation is to be found in the history of humanitarian organizations. These did not see the light of day as specific types—that is, relief, development, or rights organizations—and the people involved cannot be categorized simply as relief workers, human rights activists, or development agents. Apart from two nineteenth-century organiza-

[23] Cooper, 'Writing the History', 15, 17–18.

[24] For a brief outline see Paulmann, 'Conjunctures', 219–21; this needs to be brought together with the heterodoxy of development thinking as emphasized by Cooper, 'Writing the History', 16.

tions which have survived,[25] the secular humanitarian organizations we know today were all founded in the twentieth century. In most cases the establishment was instigated by a particular event or crisis, such as the plight of refugee populations (the dominant inter-war challenge continuing to the present day), or other man-made and natural disasters resulting in famine and sickness; public revelations about physical abuse, especially of children and women, also led to an institutional commitment. In addition to new organizations, existing church institutions, which had often long been concerned with the spiritual and physical well-being of people thought to be in danger or in need of uplifting, continued their work, specializing in distant strangers in need. In practical terms they relied, like the newly founded agencies, on female efforts as their mainstay. Not only specific crises but also perceived deficiencies, such as sustained poverty and its consequences for health and education, were the declared causes for action.

The humanitarian organizations (whether newly founded or based on missionary and church establishments) evolved over time. Once the immediate reason for a relief initiative was gone, activists and agencies often sought out further instances of suffering elsewhere in order to continue their work, developing their organizations accordingly in terms of headquarters, fund-raising, and on-the-spot action; or realizing that to improve the lot of sufferers permanently, structural changes were necessary.[26] From the perspective of those actively involved, this logic of institutionalization offered, at the same time, professional opportunities, especially for women, who could combine work with a moral cause, thereby avoiding the open transgression of existing gender norms. Yet, higher echelons usually remained dominated by men. Some organizations turned into expert think-tanks or advocacy groups, working with national governments and international institutions.[27] Missions and churches challenged by secularization and a colonial

[25] These are, first, the 1823 Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions, its 1839 successor, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, merging in 1909 with the Aborigines' Protection Society of 1837 to form the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society, and continued since 1990 in the Anti-Slavery International; and second, the 1863 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and many national Red Cross societies.

[26] The history of Oxfam exemplifies such a transition over time from famine relief to programmes addressing structural causes of poverty and injustice; see Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Times: Oxfam, the First 50 Years* (Oxford, 1992).

[27] See the contributions in this volume by Joëlle Droux on the Save the Children

past turned to humanitarian aid to legitimize themselves;[28] some shed denominational fronts in order to reach beyond formal church congregations in their efforts to secure support and funding.[29] The ecumenical movement was particularly active in relation to global humanitarian issues.

Despite the trend towards professionalization, secularization, and internationalization described by political scientists,[30] humanitarian aid remains a dynamic variable field. It cannot adequately be understood if we focus merely on these trends, or on established, large organizations: humanitarian entrepreneurs and agencies successfully enter the field without any knowledge or professional background (witness the celebrity aid staged by rock or pop musicians such as Bob Geldof and Bono since the 1980s);[31] some may acquire expertise as time passes. Religious motivation and organizations have not disappeared; on the contrary, some believe.[32] Local voluntary initiatives, national forms of organization, and the national character of aid have remained essential to much of the humanitarian effort.

The evolving nature of humanitarian organizations and the dynamics of a competitive environment explain why there was an apparent need to delimit boundaries, especially since the emergence of new social movements in the 1960s. Organizations had to define their purpose initially as well as when they changed; funding, to the extent that it came from governments, required the definition of tasks; and academics attempted to categorize the rather unwieldy sphere. The strong political agenda of development contributed to the apparently clear-cut categories. Certain humanitarian agencies

International Union and by Heide Fehrenbach on agencies concerned with international adoption.

[28] See e.g. Ruth Compton Brower, 'When Missions became Development: Ironies of "NGOization" in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s', in Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie (eds.), *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Unto the Ends of the World* (Leiden, 2011), 259–91.

[29] With regard to changes of charity laws in West Germany cf. Lingelbach, *Spenden und Sammeln*, 237–68.

[30] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 12–14, 234–5; for a brief critical review of organizational histories see Paulmann, 'Conjunctures', 218–19.

[31] See Andrew F. Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy* (Boulder, Colo., 2008); cf. also Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Iconic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Malden, Mass., 2013).

[32] Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (eds.), *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism* (Oxford, 2012).

in particular, such as the ICRC, MSF, or faith-based organizations, regarded politics as a threat to their mission and insisted on a constitutive difference from political interests. The more recent post-Cold War notion of 'complex' emergencies and the 'complexity' of humanitarian aid therefore also has to do with the governments of industrialized countries withdrawing from responsibility for economic development elsewhere, and with the continued proliferation of aid organizations, their non-political self-perception, and the prominence of scholar practitioners. In this context, a review of anthropological studies of humanitarianism also emphasizes a recent blurring of boundaries—that is, an overlap between humanitarian relief, human rights, development, and humanitarian intervention. Its author claims that the delimitations have been breaking down only in recent decades.[33]

The above observations, which can serve only as an introduction to the history of the terms and concepts used in humanitarian aid, indicate that this blurring followed a rather short period of two or three decades when attempts were made to mark differences. However, blurred boundaries *per se* and the debate about them constitute a characteristic feature of humanitarian aid. A thorough investigation of the historical usage of relevant terms would have to include an analysis of the strategic usage of language by aid agencies, governments, recipients of aid, and academics because appeals and claims to humanitarianism served, and continue to serve, specific goals in specific situations.[34] The power of the actors in this discourse depended on their resources, authority, and media access. How things were labelled affected, for example, the kind of humanitarian policies that could be implemented at a particular time and who, in terms of gender, was encouraged to engage. Terms used, or not used for that matter,[35] could place the humanitarian action in political contexts or keep it out of politics. Such a historical investigation needs to take into account the political in and around humanitarianism, but also the changing

[33] Ticktin, 'Transnational Humanitarianism', 281–3.

[34] See Daniel Laqua, 'Inside the Humanitarian Cloud: Causes and Motivations to Help Friends and Strangers', *Journal of Modern European History*, 12/2 (2014), 175–84; cf. also Geoff Wood (ed.), *Labelling in Development Policy: Essays in Honour of Bernard Schaffer* (London, 1985), esp. 5–31.

[35] For the deliberate avoidance of the humanitarian argument see e.g. Isabella Löhr, 'Solidarity and the Academic Community: The Support Networks for Refugee Scholars in the 1930s', *Journal of Modern European History*, 12/2 (2014), 231–45.

epistemology of scholarship on humanitarianism, and the way both interact.

Multiple Foundations of International Humanitarianism[36]

In the practice of humanitarian aid, the boundaries have been blurred since the beginnings of modern humanitarianism. Its modern European version combines different threads with strong links to empire, religion, and warfare.[37] In the eighteenth century, ideas about humanity were transformed by a conjunction of a 'sentimental revolution', religious reform movements, enlightened cosmopolitanism, and social and economic changes. The new conceptualization of humanity was closely linked to the colonial experience and led to the broadening of the scope of care for others.[38] From the middle of the century onwards, a new kind of empathy with suffering human beings arose.[39] From this emerged not only the political idea of human rights, but also a drive for action directed at needy people at home and abroad. Domestic social reform in European states thus provided a platform and springboard for humanitarian missions overseas with regard to temperance, child welfare, and missions more broadly. Through these specific social and moral causes, women were drawn into imperial affairs. In Britain, humanitarianism based on the new sensibility coincided with a religious urge for individual and collective atonement inspired by a concern for the morality of society in general and the slave-holding British West Indies in particular.[40] The extension of a new moral responsibility into the imperial sphere was embedded in the exchange of capital, labour, commodities, and information, relying on the

[36] Footnotes have been limited in the following sections; see the essays in this volume for further information and references.

[37] For a different tradition in Japan, not based on religion, enlightenment, and imperialism, see Sho Konishi, 'The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organization in Japan: The Tokugawa Origins of the Japanese Red Cross', *American Historical Review*, 119/4 (2014), 1129–53.

[38] For the links between colonialism and humanitarian practices see the overview covering the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries by Johannes Paulmann, 'Humanitarianism and Empire', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (Oxford, forthcoming 2015); see also Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40/5 (2012), 729–47.

[39] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, 2007).

[40] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

global infrastructure of empire and its means of communication.[41] The anti-slavery movement was the first expression of humanitarian advocacy in a global framework stretching through the 1880s and beyond into the inter-war period, and covering all empires from the British to the Portuguese.[42] It provided a model and rhetorical concepts for other campaigns, usually targeting not so much imperial rule *per se* as its abuses. 'Atrocity campaigns' and the 'language of scandal' featured prominently in the nineteenth century, for example, in the fight against white (female) slavery or the outcry over foot-binding in China, and reached well into the twentieth, often acquiring a gendered character regarding the issues at hand as well as the activists involved.[43]

At the turn of the century, the Congo Reform movement highlighted this kind of long-lasting imperial humanitarianism, which evolved at the intersection of government, business, humanitarian campaigns, and missions.[44] This movement assembled various interests and ideologies, which all claimed to act in the name of humanity: protection of indigenous populations from the evils of European expansion, missionary work and evangelical proselytizing, secular concerns about justice and rights, and international trade interests in the Congo Free State. The case illustrates not only the vitality of religious humanitarianism, which after 1906 brought mass support through missionaries' networks, but also the necessary (even if not immediate) willingness of governments to intervene, and therefore the importance of the self-image of virtuous imperialism, especially in its British form, backed up by diplomatic power in a global colonial sphere. The reformist character of humanitarianism was not anti-colonial, but it was inspired by the idea of spreading European Christian civilization by ruling over non-European

[41] Cf. Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility', *American Historical Review*, 90/2 (1985), 339–61, and 90/3 (1985), 547–66.

[42] Andrew Porter, 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, iii. *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford, 1999), 198–221; Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926* (London, 2005); Daniel Laqua, 'The Tensions of Internationalism: Transnational Anti-Slavery in the 1880s and 1890s', *International History Review*, 33/4 (2011), 705–26.

[43] Laqua, 'Humanitarian Cloud', 177–9.

[44] Andrew Porter, 'Sir Roger Casement and the International Humanitarian Movement', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29/2 (2001), 59–74; see also Dean Pavlakis, 'The Development of British Overseas Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Campaign', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 11/1 (2010), online; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 39–78.

peoples. It blended evangelical Christianity with more secular or radical humanitarianism.

The Congo Reform campaign also shaped the use of imagery.[45] The scandal was spread in Christian communities by including photographs of mutilated bodies in missionary lantern lectures. This use of modern visual strategies helped to mobilize mass support. Photographic images of suffering bodies had already been circulating in the context of Indian famine relief meetings; moral outrage had been raised against the Bulgarian horrors of the 1870s. It was during the Congo Reform campaign that mutilated bodies, atrocities and morality were effectively linked.[46] The carefully arranged pictures taken by Alice Harris, a missionary's wife, bridged distance technologically. The selection actually shown at meetings depended on whether a mixed or single-sex audience was expected to attend. Besides the gender distinction during displays, the images themselves generally emphasized the gap between the 'white' observer and the mutilated 'black' bodies. A precondition for empathy, media representation thus reinforced gender differences as well as cultural and racial asymmetries between those in need of moral support and the imperial benefactors.

In addition to imperial humanitarianism, the second essential humanitarian tradition that affected the twentieth century was the Red Cross movement. Matthias Schulz in his essay explains how it had made the call for humanity at times of war its core feature since the 1860s. Empathy for the suffering of human beings, Realpolitik, and new forms of internationalism all contributed to its peculiar nature. Schulz emphasizes the crucial role of governments. He contends that neither utilitarian arguments for getting wounded soldiers back into battle nor the ideas of reciprocity and humanitarian commitment were decisive. Indeed, the adoption of humanitarian norms took hold in each European country under specific circumstances and for particular reasons. National associations strengthened patriotism and contributed to the militarization of civil society, including women,[47] while the International Committee of the Red Cross advanced the development of the international

[45] For the use of photography see Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (eds.), *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge, 2015).

[46] Christina Twomey, 'Framing Atrocity: Photography and Humanitarianism', *History of Photography*, 36/3 (2012), 255–64.

[47] See Cynthia Enloe, *Manœuvres: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, 2000).

humanitarian law of war. Schulz recognizes a major limitation in the deliberate decision by the ICRC to restrict itself to aid at times of war, rather than to expand into peacetime activities during civil emergencies. At the national level, however, it has to be said that the Red Cross associations were active before the First World War and during the inter-war period in establishing nursing schools and setting up hospitals, which furthered the professionalization of female nursing and opened a door for women doctors. As a consequence the Red Cross did not become a source of transnational solidarity for a long time. It was only in the aftermath of the First World War and in co-operation with private voluntary organizations and the League of Nations that the Red Cross movement slowly extended its reach internationally beyond the care of soldiers.

Apart from imperialism and war, religious organizations provided a third tradition of humanitarianism. Among them, the Society of Friends played a prominent part in internationalizing humanitarianism. Daniel Maul analyses the period from 1890 to the end of the First World War, when the Quakers' relief work among victims of war and natural disasters became more professional. The tradition of experiencing and worshipping God through 'testimonies' offers only a partial explanation. By highlighting tensions inherent in their motives and comparing British and American Friends, Maul identifies specific national and international factors which drove this development. A broader engagement in foreign relief emerged from the Young Friends' Movement towards the end of the nineteenth century. The younger Friends shared a zeal for reform with other youth movements of the time. They also responded to the challenge posed by growing evangelical movements in the Christian world. The First World War confronted the Friends with the problem of how to reconcile their belief in peace with patriotic duties. For men, non-combatant service units offered an answer during the war. Afterwards, large-scale relief operations were regarded as necessary works of reconciliation and education for peace. Women were involved beside men in the activities but, as with the Red Cross societies, had no significant share in institutional leadership. Generational impetus and war-related issues were common problems on both sides of the Atlantic. Differences in other areas illustrate that transnational relief networks were also firmly embedded in national cultures. While foreign aid was quickly established among all Friends in Britain, young American Quakers active in this field remained an

independent group outside official religious structures because no overall consensus existed on its desirability for the Society. Americans therefore had a greater need to emphasize professionalism, and they showed more caution in regard to co-operation with others.

Humanitarianism in the Shadow of Colonialism and World Wars

In the wake of the First World War, humanitarianism faced new challenges posed by the breakdown of empires within Europe rather than only by the reform and upkeep of imperial rule overseas. The break-up of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires led to continued civil and international warfare into the early 1920s, large numbers of refugees, hunger and poverty, and the creation of minorities. Building on relief efforts during the war, humanitarian activities flourished. In Russia, the American Red Cross had already become involved in child welfare programmes towards the end of the war, with the ulterior motive of keeping the country in the war by stabilizing the provisional government.[48] During the Allied intervention in 1918–19 continued relief operations served to reinforce military efforts against the Bolshevik government. The political overtones were also part of the famine relief provided to the Soviet Union in 1921 by the American Relief Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover.[49] Official support for these privately run relief efforts served propaganda efforts so that humanitarian aid was also diplomacy by other means, while at the same time seeking to open up markets for American farmers. Russian famine relief led to the parallel establishment of an International Committee for Russian Relief by several European relief organizations, set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross and headed by Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian representative at the League of Nations and later the League's High Commissioner for Refugees. The crisis thus also saw the first activities around the new international body in Geneva, which from then on served as a public

[48] See Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, 2013).

[49] See Benjamin M. Weissmann, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921–1923* (Stanford, Calif., 1974); Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, Calif., 2002); Daniel Maul, 'Appell an das Gewissen: Fridtjof Nansen und die Russische Hungerhilfe 1921–23', in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2011) ⟨http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2011/Article=519⟩ [accessed 10 Dec. 2014].

arena, although not as an effective actor in practice. Its reach was limited by the interests of national governments and the willingness of national private organizations to co-operate with the League and each other.[50]

Colonial rule elsewhere continued to frame humanitarian aid between the wars. The violent conflict in northern Morocco between the Berber population and the Spanish colonial army in the early 1920s gave rise to civilian casualties, mass killings, guerrilla tactics, air and gas warfare, hostage-taking, and famine. Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio in his essay analyses the asymmetrical capabilities of the parties in colonial wars to mobilize aid in the face of competing national powers and restricted internationalism. Each of the parties involved—Spanish, French, and Moroccan—sought to raise funds and, at the same time, to prevent others from intervening on humanitarian grounds. International aid was obstructed, especially the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The ICRC was limited first by its dependence on national Red Cross societies and the principle of sovereignty embedded in its norms. The Spanish government, by framing the conflict in terms of 'police operations' against 'rebels', was able to prevent the Rifians from establishing a Red Cross Society. It also effectively stopped the French Red Cross from acting as the agent of neutral humanitarian intervention. The Rifian belligerents, as the weakest player, hoped to obtain international recognition indirectly by involving the ICRC for their own political purposes. Their leader, Abd el-Krim, manipulated international opinion by exaggerating the suffering of the civilian population and showing foreign journalists around. The Rifian army, indeed, kept some of the food deliveries for their soldiers instead of distributing them to the needy. In conclusion, Martínez-Antonio emphasizes the restrictions placed on international activities in a military conflict overshadowed by colonial rule, thereby demonstrating how strong a factor the interests of nation-states were in international humanitarian actions of the period.

Asymmetries also had a role in other parts of the world. The antagonism between China and the Western powers over the ques-

[50] For the failed attempt to establish an emergency relief scheme under the League's roof see John F. Hutchinson, 'Disasters and the International Order: Earthquakes, Humanitarians, and the Ciraolo Project', *International History Review*, 22/1 (2000), 1–36, id., 'Disasters and the International Order: The International Relief Union', *International History Review*, 23/2 (2001), 253–98.

tion of China's ability to govern itself after the First World War was played out not only in diplomatic circles but also in the field of humanitarian relief. Caroline Reeves illustrates an American 'humanitarian imperialism' in her analysis of a prominent incident in 1923. A luxury train carrying wealthy foreign and Chinese passengers was hijacked by bandits, who took the passengers hostage for five weeks. The widely publicized incident instigated relief efforts by the Chinese Red Cross and the American Red Cross (ARC), with the latter's China Central Committee running operations. The presence of the ARC's China Committee was in clear breach of international Red Cross policy not to establish or maintain RC societies in foreign countries. It reflected the ARC's expansive campaign in China and, indeed, undermined the position of the existing Chinese Red Cross. The ARC field representatives sought to furnish the Chinese with 'a model of proper and effective Red Cross activity' by taking a 'businesslike' understanding of humanitarianism to its Chinese counterpart, which, contrary to evidence, was deemed in need of such development aid. This kind of civilizing mission in humanitarian disguise, Reeves contends, seriously undermined the considerable efforts that had been made since 1904–5 to develop Chinese philanthropy along Western lines. Building on established charitable traditions in the country, the Chinese Red Cross styled itself a modern innovation. It established international ties, advertised its national scope and the use of modern technology, and displayed a military image. The Lincheng incident of 1923 highlighted the contradictory nature of American humanitarian involvement abroad, and robbed the Chinese Red Cross of stature in the international community and the local arena.

Foreign activities in Greece and Asia Minor during the early 1920s illustrate the consequences for humanitarian aid in the context of emergencies in which an immediate crisis is linked by armed conflicts to a partial breakdown of societal coping mechanisms and state authority. Relief quickly ran into dilemmas, solutions to which were contested between and within the various non-governmental and state actors. Davide Rodogno investigates the thin line between short-term relief and medium-term rehabilitation. After the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor, the city of Smyrna became the centre of a refugee crisis in 1922. A division over long-term aims existed among diplomatic agents, relief administrators, missionaries, and merchants. Some favoured the ethnic and religious diversity of

the former Ottoman Empire and for reasons of economic vitality preferred solutions for the Greek refugees within Turkey. Others regarded Turkey as a victim of the European powers and blamed the Greek government for its alignment with British interests. They saw the Greek population as an obstacle to Turkish development and therefore favoured its departure to the European continent. With the outbreak of fire in Smyrna in September 1922 the question was resolved in an emergency by the men and women on the spot, who favoured massive evacuation. The local 'solution' in Asia Minor led to a local 'dilemma' elsewhere, once the refugees arrived in Greece. The ICRC delegate in Greece, Rudolph de Reding, quickly sought to expand international activities beyond the traditional sphere. He developed the idea of *colonisation agricole* for the refugees on uncultivated land in Macedonia. The Geneva headquarters viewed this 'solution' with suspicion. De Reding, however personally crossed the line from relief to rehabilitation. When, in 1923, he became one of the League of Nations' experts on the 'exchange of populations', the League's Refugee Resettlement Commission opened a new phase in humanitarian relief.

International humanitarian agents co-operated regularly, but rivalries were just as common, even between familial organizations. Daniel Palmieri and Irène Herrmann describe the intense struggle within the Red Cross movement between the Swedish and Swiss Red Cross Societies and the ICRC during operations in Greece between 1941 and 1945. From the outset, the apparent co-operation was riddled by Swiss and Swedish tensions, which stemmed in part from a decision taken by the British government. After agreeing to lift its blockade for relief operations, it insisted that practical implementation should be in the hands of a neutral third party. London opted for the Swedish Red Cross to become the responsible agent because it considered the ICRC to be on 'too good terms with the occupying powers'. Tensions gained additional force from the national interests pursued by Sweden through its humanitarian commitment. The involvement was seen as a means of enhancing its standing in relation to Britain and was also motivated by the prospect of opening market outlets for Swedish business in the post-war future. Nor, on the other hand, was the ICRC a purely charitable organization. The close personal ties between its members, the Swiss Red Cross, and the Swiss government allowed motives of self-interest to enter its dealings. Palmieri and Herrmann conclude

that the neutral governments attempted to regain and strengthen their international standing through activities in humanitarian relief as they had been criticized by the Allies for their economic arrangements with the Axis powers.

Originally providing crisis relief to children in countries suffering from war and its aftermath, the Save the Children International Union (SCIU), founded in 1920, developed into an expert international organization concerned with long-term welfare for children. This is one example in which women played a leading role, especially the founders of the Save the Children Fund in Britain, Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton. The case demonstrates how the supposedly 'natural' task of taking care of children would eventually allow women to go well beyond the traditional boundaries of a female sphere. The SCIU exemplifies the transition a humanitarian organization went through when facing the question of what to do when the initial cause for their foundation disappeared, or circumstances changed. Joëlle Droux explores the ways in which the Union adapted its aims and practices, especially during and after the Second World War. The transformation was a difficult process in which the International Union faced challenges in terms of its organizational structure, competition with other agencies, and clarification of its aims. By the mid-1920s, the SCIU had already claimed two different mandates: one for co-ordinating emergency relief in humanitarian crises, the other as an expert body for child welfare. The Second World War severely disrupted the mechanisms of transnational co-ordination used by the SCIU, that is, the circulation of information, people, and material, with the result that it was endangered by lack of funds, connections, and purpose. Between 1944 and 1947 the International Union finally turned from its role as a relief agency for children into an international centre of expertise for the protection of children and young people, becoming part of a network of medical, educational, and judicial experts. And it established closer links with non-European partners, partly leaving its European origins behind. In the process, SCIU had to drop its universal ambitions and become a more focused and specialized agency.

Heide Fehrenbach also locates the origins of international adoption in international humanitarian social work after the First World War, here directed at refugee and migrant families. In the decades up to 1960 two strands of transformation took place, leading to

distinct cultures of inter-country adoption. One was characterized by professionalization and an attempt to set international standards for procedures which aimed to make the welfare of the child paramount while preserving the rights of birth parents. This formed part of the emergence of international organizations and governance structures. The principal agents here were the International Social Service (ISS) and later the United Nations. ISS was a non-governmental organization initiated by female social workers in 1919, targeting refugee emergencies in the aftermath of the war. As a response to the problems in several countries with war orphans and illegitimate or fatherless children after 1945, the principal focus began to change from reuniting separated families to 'creating' new families through inter-country adoption. The ISS became the primary non-sectarian organization for handling international adoption in the United States, Western Europe, and East Asia.

A different mode of adoption grew out of interrelated strands in the media, military occupation, and Christian works. While the ISS was an expert organization with few links to the media, this second, less formal pattern was closely linked with visual media images, creating moral communities among viewers. In the United States two specific groups took up the cause of suffering children abroad. First, the African American press focused on institutional racism in Germany, directed against the children fathered by black American soldiers. Adoption by American families seemed to offer a good solution to the matter of civil rights and assumed individual needs. The creation of new families by inter-country adoption also guided the hands-on Christian humanitarian activism practised by evangelical Christians. This kind of 'moral witnessing' increasingly focused on Asia during the late 1940s and 1950s, advocating the adoption of children from China and Korea. Evangelicals, celebrities, and military personnel lobbied to liberalize immigration law in order to help suffering children find new homes and families in the United States. Thus, Fehrenbach concludes, two distinct approaches emerged: an expert culture of international social work and governance by international organizations; and a humanitarian commitment by various religious, ethnic, and social groups relying on emotional appeal and the media for its purposes.

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) has often been described as a crucial step in professionalizing global humanitarianism. Silvia Salvatici proposes a more com-

plex evaluation. The main task of UNRRA's 'gigantic humanitarian crusade' between 1944 and 1947 was the relief and rehabilitation of Displaced Persons (DPs) in Austria, Italy, and, above all, Germany. Its welfare work in the camps covered a wide range of activities from housing, feeding, and clothing to education, training, employment, recreation, and entertainment. Rehabilitation entailed a definition of the refugees' needs in both general and specific terms—for example, for mothers, children, or the sick. Salvatici argues that conceptualizing DPs as people in need labelled them as recipients; it mirrored the self-perception of UNRRA officers as rescuers who were thereby constructing their own collective identity. The description by UNRRA workers of the 'beneficiaries' as 'apathetic', or, in the case of mothers, as 'lacking a sense of maternal feeling', reflected their ideal of an active person. As welfare officers thought they knew better than the DPs, conflicts often erupted. The very idea of 'helping the people help themselves', which UNRRA described as its principle, can thus be seen very much in terms of constructing needs, despite existing coping mechanisms on the part of those receiving aid. Salvatici concludes that, if the aftermath of the Second World War was indeed a founding moment of contemporary humanitarianism, its techniques drew strongly on the humanitarianism of the inter-war period. It had entailed dilemmas of varying standards, contradictory practices, and the inadequate construction of identities both of relief workers and of persons in need.

Humanitarianism at the Intersection of Cold War and Decolonization

Humanitarianism after 1945 developed at the intersection of decolonization and the Cold War impacting on each other.[51] With decolonization, the relationship between humanitarianism and empires went through a process of transformation which was not linear (from imperial to international humanitarianism). Nor did it completely sever the links between former metropoles and colonies. Certain dimensions were brought to the fore: first, the professionalization of aid agencies, the increasing role of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, among which

[51] Cf., with a focus on the Cold War in Europe and humanitarianism, Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford, 2011).

were several owing their existence to the humanitarian crises of the Second World War and its aftermath, and the more secular motives of those involved; secondly, the distinction between longer-term development and relief, which acted as a catalyst for vocal criticism of Western industrial policies towards the so-called Third World in the 1970s; thirdly, the evolving issue of universal human rights, which, depending on political contexts and strategic use, converged *and* competed with humanitarianism.[52] Yet humanitarianism retained imperial strands which have not yet been fully researched; it is useful to distinguish between the use of humanitarianism by imperial states to preserve influence after independence, and cultural reflexes of non-governmental aid agencies deriving from colonial paternalism and persisting connections with spheres such as the francophone and anglophone, or from Western orientation and sources of funding.[53]

Shobana Shankar explains how, by the end of the 1950s, African children had become the object of humanitarian intervention by UNICEF. She demonstrates that this was a process of transition from one kind of international actor, Christian missions, to another secular one, UNICEF, accompanied by the construction of African 'problems'. Practices and discourses pioneered by missionaries were overlaid with new justifications and activities, particularly of a technical and scientific nature. UNICEF's work relied on the existing structures of Christian orphanages, schools, and hospitals and on informal networks of co-operation. It also built on the previous construction of needs. By 1952 UNICEF began to give priority to fighting disease, shifting away from its earlier focus on nutrition. Shankar regards the principal means by which UNICEF established itself in Africa as the construction of Africa as a continent of disease, which built on previous leprosy missions, and its emphasis on medical science. The late 1940s and the 1950s proved a major turning-point in humanitarian relief before the formal end of colonialism.

In the wider context of international relations in the 1950s

[52] Andrew Thompson, 'Humanitarian Interventions, Past and Present', in Fabian Klose (ed.), *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge, 2016), 331–56.

[53] Paulmann, 'Humanitarianism and Empire'; for an example of the movement of individuals between missionary medicine, late colonial politics, and international organizations see Guillaume Lachenal and Betrand Taithe, 'Une généalogie missionaire et coloniale de l'humanitaire: le cas Aujoulat au Cameroun, 1935–1973', *Le Mouvement Social*, 227 (2009), 46–63; see also Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 106–58.

and 1960s, the example of the Franco-Algerian war exemplifies the emergence of an international humanitarian regime at the intersection between the Cold War and decolonization. Young-sun Hong argues that the architecture of the post-war humanitarian regime was determined by the domestic and geopolitical needs of the Western powers.[54] The 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and cultural and racial beliefs in Western superiority and continued civilizing mission buffered structural blindness to the humanitarian dimensions of decolonization. A case in point is the struggle over assistance during the Franco-Algerian war (1954–62). Hong compares the debate about aid for refugees in Northern Africa with the assistance given to Hungarians fleeing the Soviet invasion in 1956 and the disregard for international law during the Suez crisis. Ideologically determined inequalities and the instrumental use of humanitarian aid for other purposes by the French authorities in Algeria thus became apparent. This was mirrored by another less than selfless practical commitment to solidarity with the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) on the part of the Soviet Union and its allies. The conflict waged in terms of aid was made more complicated by divergent aims within both blocs and among Third World countries, and by the interactive process in which, over the years, 'donors' competed with each other, often disappointing the 'beneficiaries'. As a result, expected political benefits were often not achieved.

The Nigerian–Biafran War has long been regarded as a key event in the history of humanitarian aid. Konrad Kuhn analyses its impact along with the protests against the building of the Cabora Bassa dam in colonial Mozambique a few years later. He regards the discussion of both incidents as part of a general search for new forms of politics in the late 1960s. Protests and activities in the global North were closely linked with events and perceptions of the global South. The famine in the secessionist province of Biafra stirred public opinion in many Western countries when images of starving children were used in a deliberate propaganda effort by Biafra's almost defeated military leadership. A multitude of action groups emerged, especially among students, doctors, and the churches. The appeal in the West was based on general humanitarian grounds but also on the fact that the Biafran Ibos were Christian, while the government was dominated

[54] See also Young-sun Hong, *Cold War Germany, the Third World and the Global Humanitarian Regime* (Cambridge, 2015).

by the Muslim Hausa. Support for Biafra was rarely explicitly political. By contrast, protests against the building of the Cabora Bassa dam were political from the start. The hydro-electric plant was part of a larger development plan to bolster Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. Protest movements emerged in several European countries, especially in 1969–70. Declaring solidarity with the liberation movement FRELIMO, the Western groups denounced governments for their co-operation in granting export loans and guarantees, and banks and large engineering corporations such as Siemens for upholding late colonialism. Information spread among Western initiatives, and between FRELIMO and its European supporters, thus opening an avenue of communication that had not been available before. In a way, the dam project thus also proved a valuable propaganda object for its opponents. The two cases of Biafra and Cabora Bassa illustrate the different ways in which social movements in Europe and North America analysed, constructed, and contested humanitarianism in the context of a global North and South.

While Biafra created lasting images of starvation in Africa, Cabora Bassa politicized economic and political relations with the 'Third World' and was seen as a concrete example of imperialism and dependency theory. Florian Hannig explains how relief measures could themselves become politicized. A cyclone hit the shores of East Pakistan in November 1970; shortly thereafter, tensions between East and West Pakistan culminated in a civil war and the eastern part declared its independence as Bangladesh. By the end of the year 10 million people had fled to India while another 30 million were displaced within Bangladesh. Despite international pressure, Islamabad declared the war an internal matter and refused access to humanitarian groups. Omega, a radical non-governmental group of men and women, undercut this by deliberately blurring the distinction between humanitarianism and politics which other organizations accepted. Their urge to act was based on a reduction of the complexities—a general pattern of humanitarian mobilization—and an interpretation of the crisis in terms of a 'David v. Goliath' narrative. This perception rested on lessons which members of the group thought they had learnt from the Nigerian–Biafran War. Operation Omega combined traditional relief measures with symbolic politics. One team was sent across the border to distribute aid, while a second team, equipped with

token relief supplies, staged a sit-in inside Bangladesh, and had itself arrested in August 1971. Foreign governments and media had been informed in advance. Humanitarian relief missions themselves, Hannig argues, thus became a means of political communication. The small operation undertaken by Omega may therefore be seen as one example of new forms of political participation in the 1970s which aimed to change the public agenda by using media events to mobilize protest against traditional patterns of politics in the name of wider, fundamental aims.

The refugee crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s in South-East Asia led to confrontations between established and new forms of humanitarian aid, which were played out between competing organizations. Michael Vössing looks at relations between the West German Red Cross Society and the Committee Cap Anamur, founded in 1979 by the journalist Rupert Neudeck, inspired by Bernard Kouchner, André Glucksmann, and the French rescue ship *Île de Lumière*. The leading figures of the Red Cross and Cap Anamur clashed at home. Both organizations created a public image of themselves by thrashing the other. This appeared to be a conflict between an established, neutral organization close to state and government, and a committed, flexible newcomer based on civic support. The clash can be explained by the competition, first, for government support—diplomatic, organizational, and partly financial—and, secondly, for funding through public campaigns. The West German public, however, seems to have been concerned less about the organizational struggle than about the question of whether 'Asian' refugees should be brought into Germany. The Secretary-General of the Red Cross published several newspaper articles in 1980–1 demanding strict limits on immigration through the 'humanitarian' back door. Vössing shows that a remarkable number of people felt impelled to protest in writing against Red Cross collections because they opposed immigration, notwithstanding that the Red Cross, unlike Cap Anamur, did not ship Vietnamese refugees to West Germany, but provided aid on the spot in Asia. The West German conflicts in general illustrate that the dividing line between old and new, state and non-state actors was not clear-cut and less important than governance between several agents.

Dilemmas of Global Humanitarianism

Internationally, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), officially founded in 1971, is generally regarded as the hallmark of a new paradigm of global humanitarianism.[55] Set against the dominance of the 'conservative' Red Cross, it has been portrayed as more engaged, more outspoken, and more willing to use the media and public opinion for its humanitarian purposes. The foundation myth relates to the experience of the Biafran War when a group of committed doctors broke with the ICRC policy of confidentiality and discretion. The act of 'witnessing' (*témoignage*) therefore became a key feature. Looking at neglected aspects of the origins of MSF, Michal Givoni reinvestigates the advent of the 'expert witness' and the role of ethical reflexivity in humanitarian governance up to the 1990s. In addition to the 'Biafra doctors', a second group of physicians was involved in the foundation of MSF. At the core of their initiative was medical ethical responsibility, which they saw as endangered by an increasingly bureaucratic, commercialized, and technical approach to medicine. Givoni argues that relief missions in the Third World offered an opportunity for a genuine re-enchantment of the profession. Accordingly, in its first years MSF served as a placement agency, matching development and humanitarian organizations with French doctors willing to spend some time in the Third World. *Témoignage*, for the most part, remained a personal act; only with the MSF protest against the misuse of humanitarian aid in Ethiopia in 1985, and its withdrawal for similar reasons from Hutu refugee camps after the Rwanda genocide in 1994, did *témoignage* become reflexive and transform the cultivation of subjectivity by individual experts into a mode of mobilizing private experts as a prime resource for the deployment of efficient political power on a global scale. *Témoignage* was a mechanism for translating moral claims into political action and vice versa. It changed relations between the humanitarian and the political, bringing them closer together while still keeping them apart.

The history of humanitarian aid has focused on Western donor

[55] But for the inspiration MSF drew from the Catholic tradition of colonial humanitarianism see Bertrand Taithe, 'Reinventing (French) Universalism: Religion, Humanitarianism and the "French doctors"', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 12/2 (2004), 147–58.

countries. In recent decades, however, several Asian countries have changed their position from aid recipients to aid providers. Alain Guilloux, a former board member of MSF France and CEO of MSF Hong Kong, asks why most Asian countries were reluctant to endorse the post-Second World War humanitarian order. He argues that this was the legacy of colonialism, the Western dominance of the United Nations Organization, the Cold War, interventionism, and, finally, the distribution and balance of power between the middle powers and frustrated great powers in Asia. Another crucial period in the history of humanitarian governance began with the end of the Cold War. This period has been characterized by reduced protection for internal refugees and war victims. Further, the regional security arrangements of the Cold War have not been replaced by new ones, and no adequate regional institutions have been developed in Asia to respond to either natural or man-made disasters. Guilloux contends that this apparent reluctance may well be broken down in future by democratization and economic development in Asian countries. If countries such as China see their trade interests endangered by instability caused by humanitarian disasters such as that in the Horn of Africa, giving aid in some form may be a rational option.

Historical research on humanitarian aid has focused on organizations, politics, and discourses. The anthropologist Eva Spies changes the perspective by looking at the intercultural configuration in which European development workers find themselves on the spot. She analyses the situation in terms of intercultural encounters. The resulting dilemmas can be described using the notion of 'participating development'. In practice, a 'participatory' mode results in a conundrum for those who try to follow it because it contains conflicting demands. 'Participation' proves to be an ambiguous concept; differences need to be accepted and used as an asset for sustained development, while it also appears necessary to minimize them in order to facilitate the process. Men and women on the spot cope with the dilemma in several different ways. One is to seek a consensus with locals. Despite the best intentions, this often results in disputes because local counterparts appear not to accept the 'Western' mode of establishing a consensus. Instead, they adopt a mode of situational negotiation of interests, trying not to let the opposite partner gain advantage over them. Other ways of coping with the participatory dilemma are to withdraw from contact or reduce it to a necessary minimum, muddling through, and cynicism.

The pitfalls of 'participatory development' illustrate that everyday problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction help in the understanding of general problems of development aid. In emergencies, similar issues arise from intercultural encounters, but they are even more pressing compared with those in development. The case of Islam illustrates the difficulty of adapting the training of relief workers and humanitarian response tools to a particular religious or cultural system.

Essential Dilemmas

Overall, the contributions to this volume explore the history of humanitarian aid in a polycentric, multilayered manner from the point of view of Europe and the West and of the colonies and the Third World, revealing uneven developments and contingencies of change. Emphasis is put on the coming together of different forces, events, and structures at particular times, explaining the dilemmas faced up to the present day.

In conclusion, several essential dilemmas can be identified as being inherent in the idea and practice of international humanitarian aid. They have shaped the field since the beginning of the twentieth century, if not earlier. (1) Spectatorship and agency: the distance of those who suffer carried inherent tensions. It determined the capacity to help of those who watched others suffer, and it opened a fundamental gap between spectatorship and agency. (2) Media intervention: distance resulted in the construction of similarities and/or otherness. There was a need to translate between abstract universalism and local peculiarities, and between transnational and national settings. Media intervention has therefore always been a basic feature of humanitarian action, although relations with aid agencies varied. The focus of the media on disaster could be at odds with the particular needs for which aid organizations sought to cater while media at the same time generated relief funds. (3) The politics of empathy: narratives of suffering and relief often focused on events and actions. As a consequence of an alarmist and dramatized picture which was regularly gendered by a focus on women and children, the political or structural causes of suffering were often left out. Human empathy appeared in the foreground and was used by some of the political actors in disasters, so that we can speak of the politics of empathy. (4) Humanitarian aid as politics: humanitarian

aid was often used as an instrument to achieve other ends. In foreign aid it became an instrument of foreign policy. It was also part of some governments' economic policy because aid products such as food helped their own producers. Domestic politics in donor and receiving countries determined the size, timing, and geography of aid, while international relations affected who helped, to what extent, and for how long. Humanitarian aid as politics also touched on the fundamental question of the relationship between civil society, the state, and the military. (5) The politics of aid: as a result of proliferation and competition, aid organizations pursued their own politics. One basic feature was the relationship between the international dimension of aid and the national aid structures in donor countries. Multilayered systems of humanitarian aid existed and we need to ask how the aid polity developed over time nationally and internationally—for example, through the League of Nations and the United Nations Organization. Another factor was the competition between NGOs over funds, access, and publicity. (6) Outside intervention and local coping mechanisms: a final dilemma pertained to the relationship between donors and beneficiaries. What were the effects of moral, economic, political, military, or cultural interventions on the existing coping mechanisms of societies struck by disaster? Negative results were, for example, the prolongation of war and support for authoritarian regimes. Humanitarian aid, on the other hand, also strengthened the agency of the beneficiaries individually and, in some cases, collectively.

Taking a historical perspective, it is not so much the crisis of crisis relief which strikes the present observer but the fundamental ambiguities and paradoxes of humanitarian aid; they deserve our attention. One long-standing ambiguity relates to the role of women in humanitarian aid. Although humanitarian narratives put especially women's objects of care—that is, other women, children, and the family—at the centre of attention, active engagement offered opportunities for work and professional careers which allowed individuals to go beyond traditional boundaries of voluntary work. Yet, in terms of organization leadership the ceiling for them remained low. Another long-term ambiguity of the care for distant sufferers was that these remained basically 'strangers', even when the appeal for help was based, say, on a common humanity or Christian brother- and sisterhood. Humanitarian aid tended to reinforce existing racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. It did so through

'victimization', which denied agency to those in need, and by explaining their plight in terms of local causes, which appeared to be rooted in a lack of civilization or modernity. At a more general level, the changing and blurred boundaries of humanitarianism account for the dynamism in the field. They also make its study so rewarding, as the humanitarian cuts across the local, national, or international perspectives of historians and others. Finally, the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and the urge to improve their condition challenges scholarly critique. What is our role when we write, for example, about the 'humanitarian aid industry'; the negative consequences of living in refugee camps; the self-interest of those humanitarians who outwardly engage in 'saving' others but also serve themselves; or the implications for humanitarianism of its involvement with other forces, such as government domination over ethnic minorities, military activities, or economic interests? As scholars, we cannot stop being critical but we should, perhaps, also reflect on the positions we are thereby occupying.

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