Humanitarianisms in Context

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Abstract
This introduction describes the rapidly expanding history of non-state humanitarianism in terms of three themes. First, it argues that we should think about humanitarianism less in terms of ruptures or breaks, and focus more on the moments of acceleration and the continuities that shaped that narrative: how the relationships among local, national and international discourses were played out in the shift between imperial and post-colonial worlds, in the dialogue between religious and secular traditions, and in the transformative processes of decolonisation, de-regulation and globalisation. Second, we suggest the need to re-think the geography of non-state humanitarianism. Drawing attention to the transnational contexts and traditions in which ideas of humanitarianism have been articulated not only adds to our understanding of transnational action and the strength of global civil society beyond the West, we argue, it allows us to better appreciate the myriad languages and practices of humanitarianism employed in a global context. Finally, this introduction also re-visits the question of motivation. By looking beyond the state, we argue, we can better understand the variety of motives that shaped the act of giving: from compassion to capturing markets, the search for efficiency, and the construction of local, national and international identities.

Keywords
Humanitarianism, Non-governmental Organisations, Empire, Development, Cold War, Foreign Aid

Introduction

Humanitarianism is one of the defining features of our contemporary world. It's on our televisions. It's in our newspapers. It's even on our streets: from the tin-rattling collectors in branded t-shirts to the 'chuggers' who ask, 'Can you spare a moment for…?'. At its forefront are the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that implore us to give in times of crisis and to remember them in times without. Anyone can have an impact, they promise: 'It's amazing what can be achieved with just a small amount of money from people like you … Your help will make a real difference to people's lives around the world'.[1] Yet this 'concern for distant strangers' is nothing new.[2] On the missions, in empire, through the international Red Cross movement, and particularly in the aftermath of the two world wars, the last 150 years have witnessed the rise of non-state humanitarianism as a global norm. NGOs have become model transnationalists, conduits for internationalism, and – through their language and actions – interlocutors between their supporters and the outside world. They have also proliferated as humanitarianism has been adapted and articulated in its myriad cultural forms: from Haku-Ai-Sha in 1870s Japan to Islamic Relief's expanding world role.[3]

[1] Oxfam International, 'Donate'.
[2] Skinner and Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire', 732.
[3] The Overseas Development Institute's 'Global history of modern humanitarian action' project (2011-2015) has been to the forefront in highlighting the long history of non-Western forms of humanitarianism; http://www.odi.org/projects/2547-global-history-modern-humanitarian-action-moving-forward-hpg (accessed 23 Oct. 2014).

The articles in this volume describe the rise of humanitarianism since the mid-nineteenth century as a global phenomenon, played out in any number of sites across the world – East and West, North and South. They build on a decade-long boom in historical research on humanitarianism, aid and development that has opened myriad new avenues for understanding the experience of, and motivations for, such altruistic actions. By focusing our attention away from official agencies and towards non-state actors, however, they offer an important corrective to much work on the mechanics of global humanitarianism to date. They prompt us to think again about the relationships between donors and recipients. They ask us to revisit the interactions among local, national and international languages of charitable action. And they lead us in turn to seek out the spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which those narratives took shape.

They do so by addressing three key themes. The first is chronology. Moving away from the all-too-prevalent assertion that non-state humanitarianism is the product of a post-Cold War era, or – at best – of post-Second World War reconstruction in Europe, the essays here point towards a set of more deeply rooted norms that have shaped the contemporary humanitarian world. They draw on previous attempts to describe the period from the mid-nineteenth century in terms of ages or phases of humanitarian action, but ask us to think more deeply about the continuities that have shaped the history of NGOs.[4] Prominent among them are the humanitarian encounters that inform our vision of the outside world. The history of humanitarianism, Rob Skinner and Alan Lester remind us, is intrinsically linked to that of empire – both in its imperial origins and in its attempts to come to terms with the realities of a postcolonial world.[5] Empire was just as important in shaping Indian humanitarian responses to the crisis in Spain in the 1930s as it was to the language and interpretative frameworks employed by West German aid workers operating through Cap Anamur more than four decades later. But empire is not the only constant that shaped the humanitarian past. Once we begin to read the history of non-state humanitarianism in terms of continuities, this volume suggests, we can also begin to think more broadly in terms of the things that humanitarianism could not leave behind: from local to international forms of humanitarian action (as in the relationship between Haku-Ai-Sha and the Japanese Red Cross, for example), or from pre- to post-(First, Second or Cold) war worlds.

Disrupting the traditional narrative in this way also leads us to revisit the geography of non-state humanitarianism. The articles in this volume broaden our understanding of the locations of humanitarian action, by drawing on new histories of NGOs in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The narrative of humanitarianism, they suggest, is not simply one of aid provided by 'the West' to 'the rest'. From its very beginnings, humanitarianism was not only a North–South but also a South–South phenomenon, and – as in the case of Indian aid to Spain – a South–North one as well. Unpacking how and where those interactions were shaped not only adds to our understanding of transnational action and the strength of global civil society beyond the West, it also allows us to better appreciate the myriad languages and practices of humanitarianism employed in a non-Western context. What motives and moral frameworks inspired them? Did humanitarianism take on a different shape when viewed through a non-Western lens?

[4] See, for example, Michael Barnett's 'ages' of humanitarianism: Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*; and Johannes Paulmann's 'conjunctures' approach: Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid'.
[5] Skinner and Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire'.

The answers to those questions lead us to the third theme of this volume: motivation. Two decades of research into the history of official aid have provided us with a nuanced picture of the dynamics that drive development co-operation, from realist influence-buying to the pursuit of social democratic principles on the world stage.[6] In recent years we have also developed a deeper understanding of the individual act of giving: as a way 'to continue believing … in this concept of humanity which presupposes that all human beings are of equal value because they belong to one moral community'.[7] By looking beyond the state, however, the essays in this volume show just how varied – and complex – the motives that shape the act of giving can be. The NGOs they describe were expressions of something more than simple compassion. They were conditioned by political interests and a desire to capture markets. They were driven by the search for efficiency. But they were also closely linked to the construction of local, national and international identities. British youth engagement with NGOs, for example, became a way of finding a new role for the nation and its people in the aftermath of empire, and an attempt by a new generation to distance itself from the legacies of empire. Like many of the actors in this volume their donations – in time and money – were the result of what we might term humanitarian patriotism. But they also exhibited a strong sense of what Tamara Myers described in the Canadian case as a 'global helpmate identity': a way of projecting their international good citizenship on to the world stage.[8]

Together, the essays in this volume make a rich and lively contribution to the growing academic debate on humanitarianism. But they also speak to one additional, overarching theme: the growing interest in history across the contemporary humanitarian sector.[9] In 2011, for example, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) began work on its 'Global History of Modern Humanitarian Action' project, 'to promote the use of history in the practice and policy-making of humanitarian action'.[10] The same year, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) published *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed*, an open – and frequently critical – discussion of its work in the field.[11] That organisation has also since made available a rich array of case studies and primary source materials through its *Speaking Out* website .[12] Save the Children has also been working with historians to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of its history and politics that can inform future strategy.[13] And those organisations are not alone in their desire to apply the lessons of the past to the policy-making sphere. Representatives from both ODI, and MSF, along with officials from a number of other European NGOs, were integrally involved in the 'Non-state Humanitarianism' research network from which these essays emerged.[14] In April 2014 the network convened a workshop on 'the global and the local in humanitarian action' at Save the Children's London offices, involving participants from Oxfam, Plan International, Christian Aid, ODI, MSF, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs

[6] See, for example, Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*; Lumsdaine, *Moral Vision*; Noël and Thérien, 'From Domestic to International Justice'; Olesen, Pharo and Paaskesen (eds), *Saints and Sinners*; and Stokke (ed.), *Western Middle Powers*.
[7] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 252.
[8] Myers, 'Local Action and Global Imagining'. On Britain, see Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses'.
[9] See, for example, Davey and Scriven (eds), 'Aid in the Archives'.
[10] Overseas Development Institute, 'Global History of Modern Humanitarian Action'.
[11] Magone, Neuman and Weissman (eds), *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed*.
[12] Médecins sans Frontières, 'MSF Speaking Out', url: http://speakingout.msf.org (accessed 23 Oct. 2014).
[13] See, for example, Baughan and Fiori, 'Save the Children, the Humanitarian Project, and the Politics of Solidarity'.
[14] For details, see the network website, http://nonstatehumanitarianism.com (accessed 23 Oct. 2014).

(UNOCHA), Amnesty International, and others.The spirit of those conversations, and the connections they generated, is visible in the essays presented here.

On account of the urgency of emergency response, the humanitarian sector seems to have little time to reflect on the past. Yet campaigning and fundraising narratives often invoke historical moments. Moreover, humanitarian discourse is, to a remarkable extent, built upon golden era narratives, hagiographies and mythmaking, Whiggish reconstructions, and marketable prophecies about 'unprecedented' and apocalyptic developments in human affairs. Historically grounded and thematically expansive, the essays in this collection speak to a desire to learn from the past and enrich our understanding in terms of context and process.[15] They explore histories that challenge essentialist and simplistic assumptions about the origins and nature of humanitarian concern. In that sense they should be seen as part of a broader attempt to present history as a method of critical reflection; indeed, one that can be valuable to the humanitarian sector.[16] And in this way, they can serve as an antidote to the treatment of history as a 'useful' commodity or repository of vendible stats and anecdotes.

Mapping the history of non-state action

Humanitarianism is a broad church. To many in the contemporary aid sector, the term has come to be associated with crisis, intervention and disaster relief. Consequently, NGO structures, fund-raising models and campaign narratives have followed suit, broadly subscribing to the notion of 'humanitarian organisations … careening from one major emergency to another'.[17] Yet to historians the story is much more complex. When its narrative is read over a 150-year period, humanitarianism becomes 'a complex entity, with many arms and faces'.[18] Its protagonists (including NGOs) saw their roles not in terms of the compartmentalised division of labour but as a range of benevolent actions that defined their engagement with the outside world. The Save the Children Fund, to take just one prominent example, made its name in responding to humanitarian catastrophe in the aftermath of the First World War, but was also one of the leading advocates of the rights of the child and ran a large number of children's homes in Central and Eastern Europe in the inter-war period – each of which it viewed as inseparable parts of its overall mission.[19] It was not alone. As NGOs grew into larger and more complex entities, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, their activities on the ground were articulated in terms of a broad spectrum of 'humanitarian' activities. In El Salvador, for example, Irish NGO Trócaire's attempts to provide immediate relief to the thousands made refugees by that country's civil war in the early 1980s were closely intertwined with a broader campaign to 'help those suffering the effects of human rights violations'.[20] By the middle of the following decade, the 'right to development' had become integral to mainstream NGO speak.

[15] Woolcock, Szreter and Rao (How and Why History Matters', 12-13) see these as the two key lessons of history for the contemporary humanitarian sector. Similarly, Borton and Davey ('History and Practitioners', 154) suggest that a 'greater of use of history' can have 'contextual and strategic' benefits for the humanitarian sector. See also Davey, 'Humanitarian History in a Complex World'.

[16] Ramos Pinto and Taithe ('Doing History in Public?', 11) suggest that it is as a 'mode of thinking about and questioning the world, both past and present' that history can have 'impact'.

[17] Barnett and Weiss, 'Humanitarianism', 1.

[18] Mazlish, *Idea of Humanity*, 72.

[19] Save the Children's early history is among the best documented of the humanitarian NGOs. See, for example, Baughan, '"Every Citizen of Empire"'; Boucher, 'Cultivating Internationalism; and Mahood and Satzewich, 'The Save the Children Fund'.

[20] 'Trócaire launches annual Lenten Campaign', *One World*, Apr. 1982.

It follows that we should read the historiography of NGOs in terms of a broader shift in our understanding of the humanitarian impulse over the past decade. Histories of official aid have led the way by mapping the patterns of motivations and international relations that drove the aid industry, as well as aid's implications for global governance.[21] The recent boom in human rights history has added considerably to that debate, drawing out the discussion of where and how our humanitarian sensibilities are formed, and tracing the pursuit of those ideals in a broadly transnational context.[22] It has also underlined the holistic nature of humanitarian discourse and action. As scholars continue to chip away at the edifice of the rights narrative, it becomes ever clearer that its histories are inseparable from our understanding of what it means to feel compassion and how that solidarity has been expressed: what Frederick Cooper termed 'the relationship of individual, state, and humanity'.[23] The historically grounded, but inter-disciplinary focused *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development* has best embodied that shift. Since its establishment in 2010 that journal has emphasised the entangled nature of rights, aid, development, and disaster relief. The baton of holisticism has in turn been taken up elsewhere, including in one recent article that argues for a hybrid 'humanitarian rights' category when describing the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) intervention in Soviet Russia in the aftermath of the First World War.[24]

Historians of non-state humanitarianism have benefited enormously from that evolving discourse. Michael Barnett's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (2011) remains the most obvious marker of an explosion of interest in the subject that has occurred since the beginning of the 2010s, but his work has been accompanied by a rapidly expanding body of articles, monographs, edited collections and a vibrant postgraduate research community that have taken us a considerable distance in our quest to unravel the dynamics of humanitarian action.[25] The availability of new archives and online resources has greatly assisted in that process. New narratives and research foci followed, from studies of aid's recipients to the technologies and spaces of humanitarian aid.[26] With them come a number of key questions that inform this volume, all of which focus on the languages of humanitarianism and how they have been promoted, adapted and contested in their various contexts. What are the different levels of historical engagement between local actors and transnational networks of humanitarianism? Have there been specific local, national and regional contributions to these global debates? Where does the stimulus come for change? Can we understand historical shifts in humanitarian discourse in terms of key 'moments' of humanitarianism? What are they?

In answering those questions, the focus on non-state actors here is significant. The essays in this volume are framed within a methodological shift that began with Akira Iriye's call in 1999 to re-think the twentieth century as 'a century of NGOs'. The commitment that those

[21] On foreign aid, see fn. 6, above. On the history of development, modernisation and global poverty, see Cullather, *Hungry World*; Ekbladh, *Great American Mission*; Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Frey, Kunkel and Unger (eds), *International Organisations and Development*; and Rist, *History of Development*.
[22] See, for example, Hoffmann (ed.), *Human Rights*; Iriye, Goedde and Hitchcock (eds), *Human Rights Revolution*; and Moyn, *Last Utopia*.
[23] Cooper, 'Social Rights and Human Rights', 473.
[24] Lowe, 'Humanitarianism and National Sovereignty', 654.
[25] Among the most recent publications are Cabanes, *Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism*; Forclaz, *Humanitarian Imperialism*; Little (ed.), 'Humanitarianism in the Era of the First World War'; Laqua (ed.), 'Ideas, Practices and Histories'; Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*; and Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*.
[26] See, for example, Gatrell, *Making of the Modern Refugee*; Lester and Dussart, *Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*; and Scott-Smith, 'How Projects Rise and Fall'.

organisations exhibited 'to activism derived from a moral conception of the world, their humanitarianism, and their support of human (and animal) rights', Iriye argued, made them an important barometer of the 'core values' of that period.[27] And though he wrote primarily of the United States, Iriye's emphasis on non-state actors proved an inspiration for the scholars that followed. Global historians looked to NGOs as key building blocks of an interdependent world: 'Stumbling, fumbling, fudging, and nudging, NGOs as a social movement are a major, almost dominant factor in present-day globalisation. As someone said of religion, if it didn't exist, we might have to invent it.'[28] Others traced the origins and structure of transnational civil society through the story of non-state action.[29] NGOs offer a window on to a world outside the Cold War and great politics and a way of understanding the 'ordinariness' of political action in the twentieth century world.[30]

This volume follows in their path. The better we understand the actions of NGOs and the kind of 'people-to-people' action that they precipitated, it suggests, the better we can appreciate the myriad layers that make up our response to poverty, disaster and the pursuit of justice in the outside world. But its impact is not limited to the humanitarian sphere. The articles in this volume allow us to re-visit a number of established fields of history by looking anew at the patterns of interaction and exchange that shaped them. They use the lens of humanitarianism to revisit debates about empire, from the ways in which the discourses of 'imperial humanitarianism' and 'neo-humanitarianism' were shaped, to the role of humanitarianism in shaping identity in a post-colonial world.[31] And they ask us to think again about the nature of globalisation and global governance: how and where power is wielded, and how and where the relationships that shaped those processes were formed.

Woven into their narratives are stories of internationalism, modernisation, development, and the evolution of global civil society that move beyond a narrative of a Western-imposed rationality and towards a more flexible understanding of the kinds of transnational exchanges that have shaped the modern world. By bringing these various case studies into dialogue with each other, they draw attention to the locations and traditions in which ideas of non-state humanitarianism have been articulated, and how these interact with their local, national and international contexts. In doing so the essays here also allow us to develop the 'century of NGOs' concept and to move towards a more nuanced understanding of the good and bad of non-state action – all the while avoiding a zero-sum game approach that assumes the rise of NGOs necessitated an equally diminished role for the state.

Chronology

The 1940s are widely regarded as a significant moment of change in the history of humanitarianism.[32] The establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) ushered in a new era of official intervention that dwarfed the previous efforts of the voluntary sector. United States President Harry Truman's famous Point Four declaration – part of his inauguration speech in 1949 – introduced the concept of 'under-development' and marked the beginning of the era of official development aid. The

[27] Iriye, 'A Century of NGOs', 435.
[28] Mazlish, *New Global History*, 50.
[29] See, for example, Davies, *NGOs*; and Alston and Laqua (eds), 'Transnational Solidarities'.
[30] Hilton, 'Politics is Ordinary'; and Hilton, McKay, Crowson and Mouhot, *Politics of Expertise*.
[31] The concepts of 'imperial humanitarianism' and 'neo-humanitarianism' are developed in Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*.
[32] The 1940s has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years. See, for example, Cohen, *In War's Wake*; Reinisch (ed.), 'Relief in the Aftermath of War'; Reinsich, 'Internationalism in Relief'; and Reinisch, '"Auntie UNRRA"'.

decade was an equally significant one for NGOs: humanitarian crisis in Europe created new opportunities for non-state actors, while the expansion of the UN agencies into the Middle East and Asia later in the decade prompted NGOs to follow suit. For existing organisations those developments precipitated a massive expansion in their activities – both in terms of the attention they received, and of their ambition and scope. Most significantly, however, the war and its aftermath also provided the impetus for new actors to emerge, among them Oxfam and Christian Aid in Britain, and CARE and Catholic Relief Services in the United States.

Yet this emphasis on the 1940s as a period of change has tended to sideline important continuities that have shaped humanitarian thinking and practice since at least the mid-nineteenth century. The essays in this volume demonstrate significant institutional continuities in non-state organisation from that period onwards. Not only were imperial connections and mindsets allowed to continue, but the interwar period also proved to be something of an experimental moment for the sort of transnational solidarities that later became far more common. Indeed, in terms of the history of unofficial humanitarianism, the moment after the First World War appears just as important as that after the Second, as demonstrated by the essay by Friederike Kind-Kovacs in this volume. It was then that organisations such as Save the Children appeared, seeking to cross official policies on intervention in order to relieve the suffering of those civilians caught up in conflict. It was then that communities of officials and technicians were formed that would later lead the humanitarian sector. And it was equally visible then that humanitarians did not operate independently of the global power struggles that helped to shape and direct their interventions. What Branden Little termed 'the humanitarian war' lasted until well into the 1920s and 'endures in both the prevailing concepts of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and the vast international aid regime today – the indisputable by-products of those catalytic endeavours'.[33]

Rather than replace one genesis moment (the 1940s) with another (the First World War and its aftermath), however, the essays in this volume suggest viewing humanitarianism in terms of moments of acceleration. We should read its history not as a series of sudden right-turns, but instead see it in terms of bursts of activity that refreshed the sector while carrying with them the baggage of what had come before. Reading the history of non-state humanitarianism in this way, the intersection of imperial humanitarianism and Henri Dunant's brand of Red Cross internationalism becomes the first such phase, the post-First World War period another, and the 1940s the third moment of significant expansion for the non-state sector. Since then, humanitarianism has undergone two further moments of acceleration. The fourth phase came in the 1968-85 period – the 'NGO moment' between the Biafran humanitarian crisis and the global fund-raising extravaganza of Live Aid – when the rise of global media, the creation of a global development industry from above, and the immediacy of crisis in the decolonised world fostered a proliferation of NGOs, allowing them become the primary manifestations of global concern for the less-well-off.[34] The post-Cold War period was the fifth, when the immediacy of the bipolar conflict had dissipated and prompted the search for new forms of intervention in a rapidly changing world.

Taking that approach a step further, thinking in terms of accelerations underlines the continuities that have shaped non-state humanitarianism since the mid-nineteenth century. Each of our five moments of acceleration was defined not only by the changes it brought to the international NGO community, but also by the people, languages and practices of

[33] Little, 'An Explosion of New Endeavours', 13.
[34] For an introduction to the 'NGO moment' concept, see O'Sullivan, 'Humanitarian Encounters'.

humanitarianism that endured. The continuities from empire are many. Humanitarianism follows paths established by centuries of imperial activity, clings to the vernacular of empire in shaping how we 'imagine' the outside world, and adapts the organising frameworks of 'civilisation' to our efforts to understand inequality and poverty in a globalised era. In keeping with those imperial sensibilities, contemporary NGOs have adopted what Nandita Dogra terms 'a double logic of "difference" and "oneness" … to show the global poor as different and distant from the [developed world] and yet like us by virtue of their humanity'.[35]

And such continuity is also visible in other parts of the sector. The 'professionalisation' of non-state humanitarianism, for example, is often described as a product of the rapid expansion of the sector in the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of 'development studies', and the transformation of 'charity' into an 'aid industry'. Yet if we look more closely at the culture and managerial structures of non-state actors over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a number of patterns emerge. The essays in this volume – not least Heike Wieters's essay on CARE and Daniel Maul's work on the Quakers – remind us of the capitalist roots that Thomas Haskell ascribed to humanitarianism.[36] They lead us to think again about where and when the sector 'professionalised', while reminding us, for example, of the Christian missionaries who had worked and trained for decades in the areas of education and health. And they also help us to better understand how deeply imbued humanitarianism has been with the spirit of entrepreneurship: how non-state actors 'managed' their 'consumers', how they engaged in public-private partnerships, and how and where they embraced the tropes of managerialism.

Geography

In describing humanitarianism in those terms, however, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of reading the history of non-state humanitarianism solely in terms of the imposition of a Western world order. Recent work on transnationalism and global civil society has destabilised our traditional assumptions about the flows that constitute the international system.[37] The essays in this volume extend that process, shifting the focus away from the West to sites of interconnection that appeared across less expected routes. The Red Cross, for example, was already a global phenomenon by the end of the nineteenth century, inflected with the languages and particularities of its local societies. South–South and South–North transfers were also much more prominent than the recent 'discovery' of 'new' Southern donors suggests. Those narratives open new ground for understanding the practical and intellectual structures of humanitarianism. NGOs, as the essays here by Maria Framke (on Indian assistance to Spain) and Frank Käser (on the Red Cross in Japan) tell us, were products of something more than a Western imagining of compassion. They were shaped and re-shaped according to the local contexts and traditions in which humanitarianism operated.

The same narratives also warn us of the dangers of privileging certain patterns of action and exchange. While recent studies of the Cold War have underlined the significance of the bipolar conflict in shaping global power dynamics, the turn to non-state actors has demonstrated the rich transnational flows of ideas and institutions, care and compassion that operated alongside, and often on the edges of, its many borders and barriers. Akira Iriye accorded this 'global community' of inter-governmental organisations and NGOs great

[35] Dogra, *Representations of World Poverty*, 3.
[36] Haskell, 'Capitalism, part 1'; and Haskell, 'Capitalism, part 2'.
[37] See, for example, Arsan, Lewis and Richard (eds), 'Roots of Global Civil Society'; and Hilton and Mitter (eds), 'Transnationalism'.

influence in shaping a world of activity 'outside the drama of the Cold War'.[38] Humanitarian organisations were at its forefront. NGOs worked alongside the UN agencies in shaping the fields of development, human rights and disaster relief. They drew individuals – North and South – into new conversations and collaborations that were not easily described within the boundaries of the bipolar conflict. And, in turn, they also gave people a sense that they belonged: to a broader conception of 'humanity', but also to 'an imagined community of solidarity activists' committed to building a better world.[39]

Yet the kind of 'people-to-people' action that humanitarian NGOs pursued was not always the benign process that their supporters would have us suppose. Understanding how and where these organisations operated helps us to unpack what Frederick Cooper termed 'the lumpiness of cross-border connections' and the power that they conceal.[40] The continuities that shaped humanitarian action are significant in that sense: from the enduring language and practices of empire, to the actors (such as colonial officials) that transferred their involvement in one field into the arena of humanitarian aid, its stories underline the crucial role of humanitarian NGOs in global governance.[41] Equally important are the (often blurry) dividing lines between official and unofficial agencies in the humanitarian sector, as Wieters's essay on CARE highlights. NGOs are constantly engaged in debates as to whether certain organisations have become 'too close for comfort' to their donors and have thus lost their independence of thought and action.[42] They have also raised questions about what constitutes a 'state' and 'non-state' actor. The stories told here enable us to glimpse the ever-changing dynamics between non-state and official humanitarianism, especially as NGOs have continued to grow and expand their scopes and fields of operation. As Sending and Neumann put it, those organisations were 'not brought into the fold and as such deprived of their autonomy and as recognised representatives of "civil society". Rather, it is precisely their status as actors that possess expertise central to the task of governing … that make them key subjects of, and allies in, governmental tasks'.[43]

That assertion also has important implications for how we understand the impact of NGOs on the nation-state. It reminds us first of all that increased non-state activity did not always lead to a corresponding diminution of power at the level of the nation-state, nor did the re-assertion of state power necessarily lead non-state actors to fall away. Once we begin to pursue that line of argument, it becomes possible to see NGOs not simply as alternatives to the official apparatus, but as carriers of the values of, and providers of services for, the state. That process was visible in empire – as Skinner and Lester argue: 'The long-distance webs of concern spun by humanitarians within empire have always been intrinsic to the politics both of empire itself and of nation-state foundation'.[44] Non-state humanitarians not only acted according to altruistic motives; those same actions reinforced and helped to constitute the 'civilising' mission of the imperial project. Their influence endured in the aftermath of empire too. NGOs elaborated the response to decolonisation by providing an outlet for compassion, the expression of interest – and enduring (if by then largely informal) forms of influence. By the 1980s they had also become agents for new forms of pseudo-imperial control, not least the advance of neoliberalism and the deregulating policies of the World

[38] Iriye, *Global Community*, 62.
[39] The concept of 'an imagined community of solidarity activists' is developed in Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*.
[40] Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 95.
[41] See, for example, the kinds of exchanges described in Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*; Cullather, *Hungry World*; and Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War*.
[42] Hulme and Edwards (eds), *NGOs, States and Donors*.
[43] Sending and Neumann, 'Governance to Governmentality', 668.
[44] Skinner and Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire', 731.

Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Africa, Asia and further afield.[45] The history of the interconnections between the official and unofficial spheres is a messy one, as Peter Gatrell's essay shows. If ever a subject demanded the need for further research, it lies in that fuzzy and ever-shifting boundary – financial, ideological, institutional, personal – between the governmental and non-governmental worlds

Motivations

The emphasis placed here on seeking out the nature of power also leads us to investigate the complex reasons why we give aid – and why we direct it through NGOs. There is a long-standing critique that charity says more about the donor than the recipient, that it alleviates the guilt of the advantaged more than the poverty of the poor; what Didier Fassin termed 'the response made by our societies to what is intolerable about the state of the contemporary world'.[46] Too often, however, these judgments are made on assumptions, and we actually know relatively little about the motivations of donors (whether or time or money). Many of the articles here, especially by Anna Bocking-Welch on Youth Against Hunger and Patrick Merziger on Cap Anamur, by either investigating the nature of giving or by looking at who is giving (and to what), help to uncover the range of reasons why people support and get involved with humanitarian agencies, as well as what their support says about their view of the world. They start from the premise that NGOs have always had to make very deliberate decisions as to how their work fits in with their goals and beliefs. More than official agencies, non-state actors are prone to soul-searching struggles over the meanings of their interventions. In this sense, they become a particularly rich site for the examination of the ever-changing sphere and meaning of humanitarianism. To act and to intervene involves discussions over their proper roles and the locations of aid. The very fact that no new humanitarian action is ever the same as that which came before imposes a constant dialogue upon those organisations: whether they can or should act.

Those discussions, in turn, are shaped by the ever-shifting spaces of humanitarian thought and practice. To understand the relationships among local, national and international discourses of humanitarianism, we need to explore how those interactions were played out in the transition between imperial and post-colonial worlds, in the dialogue between religious and secular traditions, and in the bonds between non-state actors and their donor publics. The essays in this volume throw light on two of those spaces. First, they underline the role played by NGOs in reinforcing the kind of 'internationalist project' that Emily Baughan ascribed to Save the Children in the 1920s.[47] In that sense, humanitarianism became a way of shaping the kind of world that the donors wished to mould. NGOs pursued their individual visions of 'welfare', 'development', 'progress' and 'modernisation' in the name of 'trying to remake humanity to fit global norms'.[48] Religious organisations, for example, mixed humanitarianism with a 'spiritual internationalism' that emphasised reconciliation through personal religious practice. Cap Anamur's 'radical humanism' in the 1980s took that process to another level, by shifting attention away from the territorial 'occupation' involved in development and towards a tightly organised form of control justified by the imperative of humanitarian relief.

Second, the essays here also allow us to think about the intersections between humanitarianism and identity. Non-state actors played an important role in shaping individual

[45] For an introduction to the Bank's relationship with NGOs, see Cleary, 'World Bank and NGOs'.
[46] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 252.
[47] Baughan, '"Every Citizen of Empire"', 131.
[48] Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*, 380.

and collective senses of belonging by blurring the lines between humanitarianism's local, regional, imperial and international contexts. The 'humanitarian patriotism' involved in providing aid from India during the Spanish Civil War could only be understood within the context of empire and the local and international traditions from which it derived. Egyptian Red Crescent volunteers in the 1950s were also involved in a project that had strong local, regional and international dimensions, while their counterparts in Jami'at al' Islam pursued an anti-communist and anti-colonial rhetoric from their base in Munich. In post-imperial Britain the re-making of young people into volunteers, global citizens and financial donors was inseparable from domestic concerns about the country's future expressed through youth. In each case the act of giving involved individuals in decisions that go far beyond our traditional understanding of why we donate, reminding us that while humanitarianism allows us 'to hold onto the shreds of [our] humanity', it also touches many other elements of our individual and collective identity.[49]

Conclusion

The themes highlighted in this special issue – chronology, geography, motivation – are too broad for definitive answers to be found in what follows. The history of humanitarianism remains a fledgling if vibrant subject. The articles below constitute empirically rich case studies that will in turn go on to become expanded monographs and eventually syntheses of rapidly expanding bibliographies. They make a contribution to what is sure to become a flood of new work emerging from a new generation of scholars concerned, at the widest level, with major questions about the interconnected nature of the modern world. Endeavours to understand humanitarianism can contribute to the demystification of those interconnections, complementing and usefully complicating the significant body of work already undertaken on the darker aspects of modernity's global exchanges. What will emerge is further evidence for what scholars just a decade ago recognised as the rise of the NGOs. But rather than tracing the uncomplicated rise of a force for good in the world, new work on humanitarianism – in line with the articles presented here – will problematise the nature and the effects of such organisations. In doing so, as with work on human rights, it will present the humanitarians not so much as angels of mercy but as powerful forces that raise fundamental questions about the development and dynamics of modern humanity.

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[49] Mazlish, *Idea of Humanity*, 69.

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