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Introduction: Towards a New History of Humanitarianism

Humanitarianism is in crisis. As we completed the introduction to this special issue, in spring 2016, the first refugees were leaving Greece under a deal signed between the European Union and the Turkish government to try to limit the flow of migrants entering through Europe's southern borders. Its premise was simple: every individual who arrived on European Union shores from across the Aegean Sea would be automatically sent back to Turkey, and in return the European Union would admit an asylum applicant from the 2.7 million already gathered in refugee camps on Turkish soil. This "rather tawdry agreement"—as the *Economist* so politely put it—epitomises the pressures facing Europe's establishment.[1] The rise of the far right has been a feature of the political landscape in France, Germany, Poland and elsewhere in recent years. The British debate leading to Brexit took place under the shadow of a perceived "migrant" threat and its impact on welfare and employment. Even Denmark, supposed bastion of equality and tolerance, has been a leading proponent of the position that "large-scale Muslim immigration is incompatible with European democracy."[2] "In limiting the kind of social turmoil now playing out in Germany, Sweden, and France", Hugh Eakin wrote, "the Danes may yet come through the current crisis a more stable, united, and open society than any of their neighbours. But they may also have shown that this openness extends no farther than the Danish frontier."[3] If we take Denmark as a microcosm of Europe, we can clearly see the unpreparedness of governmental institutions in dealing with the largest humanitarian catastrophe in recent history.

This is, in other words, a crisis of great complexity, and with far-reaching consequences. Yet, the accepted humanitarian narrative only rarely acknowledges the complex multiplicity of factors that shape both governmental and non-state aid efforts. Even the briefest of glances through Western media highlights the altruistic veneer that covers the crisis, separating its deep-rooted political, social, economic, and cultural undercurrents from the devastating human consequences of war in the Middle East. In that telling, the

1 Desperate times, desperate measures: Economist, 12 March 2016.
2 Hugh Eakin: Liberal, Harsh Denmark, in: New York Review of Books, 10 March 2016, pp. 34–36, p. 34.
3 Ibid., p. 36.

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humanitarian response can be reduced to the simplest of messages. On British television, actor and British United Nations Children's Fund "ambassador" Michael Sheen has made an appeal for the children that represent "Syria's future."[4] Online, the International Committee of the Red Cross has asked its supporters to aid the "lifesaving" effort that it provides in the region: "With just 100 francs you can feed a family in Syria for four months."[5]

That reductivist message has been a constant feature of humanitarian appeals for more than two centuries. It remains to the forefront, in spite of the endeavours of scholars and popular commentators to study and analyse the many different facets of what is a very complex phenomenon. In the 2000s, a rash of popular texts appeared in bookshops in the West, telling us "why foreign aid isn't working" and "what can be done about it."[6] They were accompanied by a revival of historical interest in the subject. Michael Barnett (on humanitarianism as disaster relief), Bruce Mazlish (on the concept of "humanity"), Samuel Moyn (on human rights), Gilbert Rist (on development), Seymour Drescher (on antislavery), and Peter Stamatov (on humanitarianism's early modern origins) provided new interpretative syntheses and sparked a new wave of scholarly debate on humanitarianism.[7] In recent years, the relationship between historians and representatives from the non-governmental sector has also begun to blossom, as together they seek to encourage "an illustration of how perspectives from the past […] can provide an additional lens through which to assess humanitarian response and gain new insights into recurrent issues."[8] Yet, this rapidly expanding field has, with some notable exceptions, resulted in a

4 UNICEF UK: UNICEF UK Ambassador Michael Sheen on 5 years of the Syria conflict, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dS5GLPyRh7k (accessed on 11 April 2016).

5 International Committee of the Red Cross: Syria Crisis Appeal, at: https://www.icrc.org/en/support-us/operations/syria-appeal (accessed on 11 April 2016).

6 See, for example, Robert Calderisi: The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working, New Haven 2007; Paul Collier: The Bottom Billion: Why The Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It, Oxford 2007; William Easterly: The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good, Oxford 2006; Dambisa Moyo: Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa, London 2009; Linda Polman: War Games: The Story of Aid in Modern Times, London 2010; and David Rieff: A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis, London 2002.

7 Michael Barnett: Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism, Ithaca 2011; Bruce Mazlish: The Idea of Humanity in a Global Era, New York 2009; Samuel Moyn: The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History, Cambridge 2010; Gilbert Rist: The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith, 3rd ed., London 2011; Seymour Drescher: Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery, New York 2009: and Peter Stamatov: The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy, Cambridge 2015.

8 Eleanor Davey/Kim Scriven: Humanitarian Aid in the Archives: Introduction, in: Disasters 39:2 (2015), pp. 113–128, p. 114. See also John Borton/Eleanor Davey: History and Practitioners: The Use of History by Humanitarians and Potential Benefits of History to the

fractured understanding of humanitarianism.[9] Historians of "humanitarianism" largely confine themselves to the history of disaster relief, while scholars of development, of antislavery, and of human rights, mostly privilege their individual fields of expertise. This academic division of labour has resulted in an artificial compartmentalisation of historical phenomena and the actors that shaped them. As a result, scholars have tended to underplay or ignore the reality that these diverse fields were inherently linked under the umbrella of humanitarian activity across time and space.

The essays in this special issue forge a different path. They take as their starting point the understanding that, for most of its history, the ideal of "humanitarianism" was understood to apply to any form of activity undertaken in the name of organising and "improving" the lives of the less-well-off. Humanitarianism, in other words, has a complex and multi-faceted past. To understand that past, we need to employ a holistic historical approach that takes into account those complexities. The new history of humanitarianism that we propose, therefore, is defined by the following characteristics. First, it emphasises the primary importance of capitalism as a source of specific motivations and interests in humanitarian action, and as the focus of an alternative narrative to the prevalent one based on altruism. Second, its validation comes from the many recent studies on the specific historical context of humanitarian action, in which scholars, including the authors in this collection, have clearly highlighted the pre-eminence of capitalist logic. Third, as our definition relies on historical specificity, we argue that humanitarianism needs to be understood as an umbrella concept that includes a wide variety of activities, all of which must be analysed in their specific historical context. Fourth, we also argue that the altruistic veneer that humanitarianism shows to the world deflects attention from a set of core interests that are not, in essence, moral; rather, they are economic. That altruistic veneer serves a set of different, but connected purposes: since humanitarian intervention is an action that is taken by one dominant power over a subordinate community in distress, it needs to appeal to both volunteers and the largest possible constituency; it needs to be presented as a positive, ethical contribution to constructing a better world; and it is altruistic, in the sense that the people who are involved in this work believe, as a result,

Humanitarian Sector, in: Pedro Ramos Pinto/Bertrand Taithe (eds.): The Impact of History? Histories at the Beginning of the 21st Century, Abingdon 2015, pp. 153–168; Matthew Hilton/Kevin O'Sullivan (eds.): Humanitarianisms in Context: Histories of Non-State Actors, From the Local to the Global, special issue of European Review of History 23:1–2 (2016); and the series of publications produced by the Overseas Development Institute's "Global history of modern humanitarian action" project, available at: http://www.odi.org/projects/2547-global-history-modern-humanitarian-action-moving-forward-hpg (accessed on 10 March 2016).

9 One of those exceptions is the journal Humanity, which, since its launch in 2010, has proven an important convergence point for these different narratives, largely by encouraging its authors to address the "integration of human rights, humanitarianism, and development under the rubric of 'humanity'": Statement of the editorial collective, in: Humanity 1:1 (2010), p. 1.

that their actions are moral.[10] Humanitarian intervention, therefore, is essentially multi-layered; at different levels, historical actors have different perceptions, knowledge, and awareness of the significance of humanitarian activity, its motivations, and the interests it serves.

At present, there is a sharp divide between social science approaches that aim to write an over-arching theory of humanitarianism, and scholarship written by historians who look at specific case studies and add much depth to the general picture.[11] In our view, the two approaches should be combined, so that specific historical case studies become the building blocks of a new history of humanitarianism. We argue that by unravelling the political and economic motivations, and uncovering the specific interests of individual actors and agencies, we can unlock the deep undercurrents of humanitarian activity. In this perspective, micro-studies have the potential to lay bare the true mechanics of humanitarian action by combining the specificity of work on the ground with a narrative of the context in which it takes place. Current theories of humanitarianism are strongly influenced by an ethical model, which renders them inadequate to explain the complex web of motivations and interests that drive historical actors to engage in humanitarian action.[12] Grand narratives of this type, rooted in human morality, have heavily influenced how we understand those issues. No matter what the micro histories tell you, they argue, there is still a "good" moral grounding on which humanitarianism is based.

Once we look beneath the altruistic veneer, it becomes clear that a plethora of economic interests have provided the prime reason for concerted and large-scale efforts of humanitarian intervention. Those economic interests were strictly related to the capitalistic logic of the world economy. Any attempt to rearticulate a grand narrative of humanitarian intervention, therefore, must take into account the capitalist context in which it took shape. At critical historical junctures, humanitarian intervention occurred for specific reasons: from the struggle against slavery as an unprofitable labour system

10 For a description of the intersections between the philosophical and historical foundations of humanitarianism, see Didier Fassin: Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present, Berkeley 2012; and Bruce Mazlish: The Idea of Humanity in a Global Era. On the construction of humanitarian solidarity, see Sandra Lee Bartky: Sympathy and Solidarity, Lanham 2002; Kurt Bayertz (ed.): Solidarity, Dordrecht 1999; and Carol C. Gould: Transnational solidarities, in: Journal of Social Philosophy 38:1 (2007), pp. 148–164.

11 Many of the general histories of humanitarianism have been written by social scientists. See, for example, Michael Barnett: Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism; Micheline Ishay: The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalisation Era, Berkeley 2004; Gilbert Rist: The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith; and Peter Stamatov: The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy.

12 Miriam Ticktin's comments on the tensions between individuals and collectives in the history of humanitarianism are instructive in this context: Miriam Ticktin: Humanitarianism's History of the Singular, in: Grey Room 61 (2015), pp. 81–85.

to the humanitarian agitation for peace at a time when war destroyed the lives of large numbers of workers.[13] The Red Cross movement was instituted in the mid-nineteenth century with the aim of saving as many soldiers—rather than civilians—as possible on the war front. It is no coincidence that the movement rose to international prominence during the First World War, when conflict became global and casualties were measured in their millions.[14]

These examples show us that, within specific historical contexts, humanitarianism takes different forms, but it consistently operates as part of the grand narrative of the development of a capitalist world economy. There were, however, always humanitarian activists who acted outside the logics of economic self-interest, and others who genuinely felt that they helped the less-well-off. We must honour and acknowledge these extraordinary individuals who put their lives to the forefront, and at great personal risk. However, we equally need to recognise that their efforts took place in a context in which others, motivated by less altruistic interests, were in control. We must also be careful not to over-privilege the study of those "hero"-like individuals, whose storyline, Johannes Paulmann rightly argues, "frequently follows what could be called a 'fairy tale' emplotment."[15] As Eleanor Davey and Kim Scriven put it, those histories "obscure as much as they reveal."[16] In this special issue we call instead for a contextualisation of humanitarian action that takes into account the rank-and-file activists and the crucial work of legions of unknown volunteers who constituted the humanitarian community. This allows us to move away from a simple analysis of the most prominent individuals, without sacrificing their stories altogether. In fact, in our new history of humanitarianism, prosopography has a special relevance, provided that it is conducted in an appropriately critical fashion. This idea is further explored in the review article at the end of this collection.

13 See Thomas L. Haskell: Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1, in: American Historical Review 90:2 (1985), pp. 339–361; Thomas L. Haskell: Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2, in: American Historical Review 90:3 (1985), pp. 547–566; and Bruce Mazlish: The Idea of Humanity in a Global Era.

14 See David Forsythe: The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross, Cambridge 2005; John Hutchinson: Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross, New York 1997; Julia Irwin: Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening, Oxford 2013; Kimberly Lowe: Humanitarianism and National Sovereignty: Red Cross Intervention on Behalf of Political Prisoners in Soviet Russia, 1921–1923, in: Journal of Contemporary History 49:4 (2014), pp. 652–674; and Davide Rodogno: The American Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross: Humanitarian Politics and Policies in Asia Minor and Greece (1922–1923), in: First World War Studies 5:1 (2014), pp. 83–99.

15 Johannes Paulmann: Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid During the Twentieth Century, in: Humanity 4:2 (2013), pp. 215–238, p. 218.

16 Eleanor Davey/Kim Scriven: Humanitarian Aid in the Archives: Introduction, p. 118.

This approach also enables us to go beyond the history of the institution/organisation as a monolithic entity and engage in a more nuanced understanding of humanitarian action. In doing so, we can increase our knowledge of the constituent elements of voluntary societies and state-sponsored agencies, for instance the individuals and actors who worked in them at different levels and—often—held different views about their shape and direction. It allows us to look behind the ethical face of humanitarian activity, and understand that, in every time and place, the first important question to ask is *cui pro bono*, that is, to whose advantage was this action taken? We need to ask why certain ideas were co-opted at certain moments while others fell away. With this approach, we look at humanitarianism not from the top down—as it is usually articulated in the existing grand narratives—but from the bottom up, as it is analysed by historians working on specific contexts.

In building this new history of humanitarianism, we draw on the concept of "acceleration" developed by Kevin O'Sullivan, Matthew Hilton and Juliano Fiori. This approach allows us to claim that the history of humanitarianism is marked by continuity, and to see it "in terms of bursts of activity that refreshed the sector while carrying with them the baggage of what had come before."[17] In this special issue, we utilise that concept of acceleration to describe the development of a modern humanitarian sensibility as part of an alternative narrative focused on global capitalist expansion. We begin our narrative with the Enlightenment and the spread of universal human rights at a time when humanitarian activities, especially antislavery, were becoming more organised and more global in their reach. From this perspective, the first major humanitarian moment coincided with the expansion of a global economy and the influence of global financial institutions that reached the four corners of the earth.[18]

Thus began the history of humanitarianism as a global enterprise, which, as a result of colonisation, then developed into imperial rhetoric. Humanitarianism and imperialism were intertwined when the next moment of acceleration coincided with the height of imperial domination in the world economy.[19] When competition for resources took hold in the imperial context, the justification for expansion was to bring "civilisation", to "improve" lives in the colonies, and in so doing justify the exploitation of colonial subjects. That embryonic form of humanitarianism was particularly visible in the British Empire,

17 Kevin O'Sullivan/Matthew Hilton/Juliano Fiori: Humanitarianisms in Context, in: European Review of History 23:1–2 (2016), pp. 1–15, p. 6.

18 See especially Christopher L. Brown: Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism, Chapel Hill 2006.

19 For a review of the intersections between humanitarianism and empire, see Rob Skinner/Alan Lester: Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 40:5 (2012), pp. 729–747; and Pennelope Edmonds/Anna Johnston (eds.): Empire, Humanitarianism and Violence in the Colonies, special issue of Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 17:1 (2016).

which provided a model for undertaking humanitarian action within the parameters of colonial domination and capitalist expansion.[20] For example, at this time in Africa—a continent that witnessed the most wide-ranging efforts at colonial control—compassion for slaves exploited in an inhuman labour system morphed into compassion for dislocated refugees in the post-slavery world.[21] This important ideological shift allowed activists to claim that they continued to "save" the inhabitants of what was perceived as a "backward" continent. In time, this led to a situation of "permanent emergency", which was used to justify continued humanitarian intervention in "under-developed" parts of the world.[22]

The next period of acceleration coincided with the First World War. The war, as William Mulligan and Bruno Cabanes have both argued, was instrumental in creating a heightened humanitarian sensibility.[23] We argue, however, that this could happen only as a result of concurrent changes in the global economy. The intensification and further globalised nature of capitalism, combined with the enormous human losses and geopolitical transformations caused by the war, created the context for the further rise of global humanitarianism. In both the imperialist phase, and in the period during and after the First World War, therefore, humanitarianism underwent an acceleration in its appeal and global reach. At times of intense economic transformation, which in turn generated further exploitation of large numbers of people, humanitarianism became a coping mechanism that rationalised the existence of inequality on a global scale. As Didier Fassin put it:

20 See, for example, Alan Lester/Fae Dussart: Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire, Cambridge 2014; and John Darwin: The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830–1970, Cambridge 2011.

21 Bronwen Everill: The Italo-Abyssinian Crisis and the Shift from Slave to Refugee, in: Slavery and Abolition 34:4 (2013), pp. 349–365. On humanitarianism and antislavery, see also Amalia Ribi Forclaz: Humanitarian Imperialism: The Politics of Antislavery Activism, 1880–1940, Oxford 2015.

22 Mark Duffield: Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples, Cambridge 2007.

23 Bruno Cabanes: The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924, Cambridge 2014; and William Mulligan: The Great War for Peace, New Haven 2014. On the First World War as a humanitarian moment, see also Branden Little (ed.): Humanitarianism in the Era of the First World War, special issue of First World War Studies 5:1 (2014); and Adam Tooze: The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916–1931, London 2014.

> Humanitarian reason, by instituting the equivalence of lives and the equivalence of suffering, allows us to continue believing—contrary to the daily evidence of the realities that we encounter—in this concept of humanity which presupposes that all human beings are of equal value because they belong to one moral community [...] by relieving suffering, it also relieves the burden of this unequal world order.[24]

It is no accident that the United States emerged as the leading economic power in this phase, as well as the leading humanitarian power—replacing Britain on both counts. The Great Depression represented a key transformational moment in global capitalism, which in turn led to the next acceleration in global humanitarian activity. That process began in the United States, which became a laboratory for interventionist governmental policies aimed at organising the lives of those who had been particularly affected by the Great Depression. American hegemony later led to an idea of international welfare, which replicated the New Deal's key tenets in a global context.[25] First, those policies were structured in a centralised fashion that allowed the state to intervene in the peripheries. Second, that relief aimed to transform those areas according to a model devised by governmental organisations, as in the example of large infrastructural projects such as dams and roads controlled by specific agencies. Third, those same agencies were presented as saviours to the people who received their benefits, and who in turn subscribed to their policies. However, it must be pointed out that Franklin D. Roosevelt considered immediate relief only as the first phase of the New Deal programme—the so-called "100 Days" in 1933—while in the second phase (1935) he sought to build structures that would secure the long-term future of the American economy.[26] This is important also in a global context, since this *modus operandi* characterised later interventionist actions in different parts of the world. Typically, the immediate justification for relief would be provided by a calamity occurring in "peripheral" areas, necessitating a swift response from the "centre" (the global North/West). Later, however, a more incisive form of intervention would ensue, with the aim of bringing structural changes aimed at integrating the affected region into the global capitalist economy.

Equally important is the fact that it was ultimately the Second World War, rather than the New Deal, that saved the American economy. The war effort led to an expansion of industrial production in response to the global demand for war machinery, and to a drastic drop in unemployment due to the need to replace the millions of workers sent to fight

24 Didier Fassin: Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present, p. 252.

25 See Ira Katznelson: Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time, New York 2013. On the broader impact of the New Deal, see also Steve Fraser/Gary Gerstle (eds.): The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980, Princeton 1990; and Kiran Patel: The New Deal: A Global History, Princeton 2016.

26 See Anthony J. Badger: The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933–1940, New York 1989.

on the European and Pacific fronts.[27] This has important implications for our narrative. The New Deal saved the existing model of capitalism in the United States and beyond. Similarly, contemporary models of development emphasised "saving" economies, and in turn "saving" the structures of global capitalism through economic intervention. Also, the recovery of the American economy as a result of the Second World War shows us that an important factor in sustaining capitalism has always been the waging of warfare. Conflicts in different countries, therefore, provide at once the justification and the pathway through which economic intervention in the form of humanitarianism enters and transforms the economies of "under-developed" regions. In other words, states allow humanitarian aid to come through the front door, while weapons come through the back, creating an unstable situation that justifies humanitarian action. In this context, it is no coincidence that, since the nineteenth century, humanitarians have always employed military language to describe their actions: a "crusade", a "war on want", or a "war on poverty".

The next moment of acceleration in global humanitarian action occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War.[28] The end of hostilities and the global dominance of the Atlantic alliance led to the creation of world economic and financial structures, specifically through the new institutions established at Bretton Woods in 1944: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.[29] This led not only to the transformation of colonies into nations, but also to the development of major global strategies in geopolitical terms.[30] In the early part of the Cold War, Japan functioned as a laboratory for the

27 See David M. Kennedy: Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945, New York 1999.

28 The post-Second World War moment has drawn considerable attention from historians in recent years. See, for example, Gerard Daniel Cohen: In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Post-War Order, Oxford 2011; Marc Frey/Sönke Kunkel/Corinna R. Unger (eds.): International Organisations and Development, 1945–1990, Basingstoke 2014; Jessica Reinisch: Introduction: Relief in the Aftermath of War, in: Journal of Contemporary History 43:3 (2008), pp. 371–404; Jessica Reinisch: Internationalism in Relief: the Birth (and Death) of UNRRA, in: Past and Present suppl. 6 (2011), pp. 258–289; Jessica Reinisch: "Auntie UNRRA" at the Crossroads, in: Past and Present suppl. 8 (2013), pp. 70–97; and Silvia Salvatici: "Help the People to Help Themselves": UNRRA Relief Workers and European Displaced Persons, in: Journal of Refugee Studies 25:3 (2012), pp. 428–451.

29 The restructuring of the global economic order in the 1940s has been the subject of renewed interest from historians in recent years. See, for example, Ed Conway: The Summit: The Biggest Battle of the Second World War—Fought Behind Closed Doors, London 2014; and Daniel Stedman Jones: Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics, Princeton 2012; and Benn Steil: The Battle of Bretton Woods: John Maynard Keynes, Harry Dexter White, and the Making of a New World Order, Princeton 2013.

30 Joseph Morgan Hodge explores these themes in his very useful recent overview of development history; Joseph Morgan Hodge: Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave), in: Humanity 6:3 (2015), pp. 429–463; and Joseph Morgan Hodge:

extension of American economic and financial structures into the key strategic regions in Asia—as Europe did at the same time with the replacement of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration with the Marshall Plan.[31] The same occurred in Latin America, where economic systems followed the American model in a contested ideological terrain.[32] Humanitarian intervention on the other side of the Cold War has, however, not been analysed sufficiently, even though an important component of humanitarian intervention came from the Communist bloc.[33]

The policies that had been first attempted in the New Deal were translated on to the world stage in the two decades after the Second World War, first through United States President Harry Truman's "Point Four" programme (1949), and then through the "War on Poverty" introduced by the Lyndon Johnson administration in the 1960s. The latter was particularly important in spreading the idea that it was possible to alleviate the conditions of the poor.[34] Those conditions were viewed as endemic in a "culture of poverty" that passed from generation to generation. The way to break this cycle was to provide the poor with the opportunity to become economic actors: as Sheyda Jahanbani put it, policy makers believed that "What poor people need is more capitalism, not less."[35] In this way, ideas articulated by the progressive movement as far back as the end

Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider), in: Humanity 7:1 (2016), pp. 125–174. On the intersections between development and decolonisation, see also Frederick Cooper/Randall Packard: Introduction, in: Frederick Cooper/Randall Packard (eds.), International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History of Power and Knowledge, Berkeley 1997; Arturo Escobar: Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World, Princeton 1995; James Ferguson: The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticisation, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho, Cambridge 1990; Gregory Mann: From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality, Cambridge 2015; and Benedetta Rossi: From Slavery to Aid: Politics, Labour, and Ecology in the Nigerian Sahel, 1800–2000, Cambridge 2015.

31 See Emanuele Bernardi: La Riforma Agraria in Italia e gli Stati Uniti. Guerra Fredda, Piano Marshall e Interventi per il Mezzogiorno Negli Anni del Centrismo Degasperiano, Bologna 2006; and E. Patricia Tsurumi: The Other Japan: Postwar Realities, New York 1988.

32 See Hal Brands: Latin America's Cold War, Cambridge 2012.

33 Erez Manela's work on the eradication of smallpox suggests the need to read the history of humanitarian intervention as a North-South, rather than an East-West story; see Erez Manela: A Pox On Your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History, in: Diplomatic History 34:2 (2010), pp. 299–323. See also Jo Laycock's essay in this special issue.

34 The essays by Patrick O. Cohrs, Sheyda Jahanbani, Nick Cullather, Matthew Connelly, and Erez Manela, in Francis J. Gavin/Mark Atwood Lawrence (eds.): Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the New Global Challenges of the 1960s, New York 2014, provide an excellent introduction to the globalisation of Johnson's "Great Society."

35 Sheyda Jahanbani: "One Global War on Poverty": The Johnson Administration Fights Poverty at Home and Abroad, 1964–1968, in: Francis J. Gavin/Mark Atwood Lawrence (eds.): Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the New Global Challenges of the 1960s, New York 2014, pp. 97–117, p. 112.

of the nineteenth century—that the poor could become "worthwhile" contributors to the national economy—were updated in the 1960s. At this time, a similar concept was at the heart of the "liberal consensus" theory, according to which a stronger capitalist economy would provide everybody—the poor included—with more opportunities for a better way of life.[36] This was part of a broader narrative of "modernisation" that drove much of the West's aid to the Third World in the post-war decades.[37]

In the case of Lyndon Johnson's *Great Society* project, which fully obeyed the logic of the "liberal consensus" theory, the "War on Poverty" failed completely because the governmental structures designed to help people from the top down—specifically the Community Action Programmes—ended up empowering people from the bottom up. This generated unexpected outcomes, since it allowed the poor to challenge the very capitalist order that was intended to "save" them. Policy-makers considered this a cautionary tale for the expansion of that model on a global level: if they were to attempt to alleviate poverty under the same premises, they would need to be careful that the structures put into place on the ground would not subvert the capitalist system in the countries where they intervened. Robert McNamara, who served in Lyndon Johnson's administration as Secretary of Defence, provided the link between the United States model of intervention and its implementation on a global scale.[38] The "basic human needs" programme that he adopted as President of the World Bank in the 1970s followed the same logic: "The extremes of privilege and deprivation are simply no longer acceptable", he told a World Bank meeting in Nairobi in 1973, "It is development's task to deal with them."[39] The programme also owed much to the influence of prominent economist and commentator Barbara Ward. Barbara Ward, who first met McNamara in Washington

36 William H. Chafe: The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II, 8th ed., New York/Oxford 2014, pp. 97–235.

37 See Nick Cullather: The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia, Cambridge 2010; David Ekbladh: The Great American Mission: Modernisation and the Construction of an American World Order, Princeton 2010; David C. Engerman/Corinna R. Unger: Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernisation, in: Diplomatic History 33:3 (2009), pp. 375–385; Arturo Escobar: Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World; Nils Gilman: Mandarins of the Future: Modernisation Theory in Cold War America, Baltimore 2003; Daniel Immerwahr: Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development, Cambridge 2015; and Daniel Maul: Human Rights, Development and Decolonisation: The International Labour Organisation, 1940–70, Basingstoke 2012.

38 See Martha Finnemore: National Interests in International Society, Ithaca 1996; David Milobsky/Louis Galambos: The McNamara Bank and its Legacy, 1968–1987, in: Business and Economic History 24:2 (1995), pp. 167–195; and Patrick Sharma: The United States, the World Bank, and the Challenges of International Development in the 1970s, in: Diplomatic History 37:3 (2013), pp. 572–604.

39 Robert McNamara: Address to the board of governors [of the World Bank], Nairobi, 24 Sept. 1973, World Bank Online Archive, at: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/

during John F. Kennedy's presidency of the United States, had influenced both Lyndon Johnson (Barbara Ward coined the term "Great Society") and the Catholic Church's thinking on development (she addressed Church leaders on this issue on a number of occasions, including at the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s). "Basic human needs" bore her distinct input; by then, Barbara Ward had been co-opted into McNamara's circle of trusted advisors.[40] Those policies were not without their critics, however, particularly from Latin America. Major public figures such as future Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and others claimed that the World Bank's methods obeyed interests that essentially aimed to keep the world divided between dependent countries and dominant economic actors. Thus, the major school of thought called "dependency theory" was both a reaction to, and a sharp critique of, the "War on Poverty" and the idea of the "culture of poverty" in their global application.[41]

This critique proves that the moments of acceleration in global humanitarian activity were also moments of opportunity. They coincided with major transformations of the world economy that created weaknesses in the capitalist system. These cracks could be exploited to put forward alternative views of the world. For example, while Robert McNamara formulated his "basic human needs" programme, others, such as Paulo Freire, and the leaders of the New International Economic Order, emerged as the proponents of alternative futures before being side-lined by the re-assertion of dominant economic interests.[42] A similar moment of opportunity also occurred at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s.[43] In that case, however, the largely unexpected nature of the Communist collapse did not allow for sustained challenges to the dominant structures to emerge. More

WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/03/10/000333037_20080310052811/Rendered/PDF/420310WP0Box0321445B01PUBLIC1.pdf (accessed 1 April 2016).

40 On Barbara Ward's influence on Lyndon Johnson, see Nick Cullather: The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia, pp. 211–212. For an introduction to Barbara Ward's career and her thinking on development, see Jean Gartlan: Barbara Ward: Her Life and Letters, London 2010.

41 See Fernando Henrique Cardoso/Enzo Faletto: Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina: Ensayo de Interpretación Sociológica, Mexico City 1967; and André Gunder Frank: Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, New York 1967. On supporters and critics of the "dependency theory", see Enrico Dal Lago: Underdevelopment, in: Joseph D. Miller (ed.): The Princeton Companion to Atlantic History, Princeton 2015, pp. 463–465.

42 Paulo Freire: Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York 1970, was widely read by aid workers in the 1970s. On the alternative futures offered by the New International Economic Order, see the special issue of Humanity edited by Nils Gilman on that subject—Humanity 6:1 (2015)—and Vijay Prashad, The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South, London 2012.

43 Although focussed on the United States, Daniel Rodgers "age of fracture" framework provides a compelling argument for the social, cultural, and political dominance of the market economy in the last quarter of the twentieth century; see Daniel T. Rodgers: Age of Fracture, Cambridge 2011.

recently, the rise of India and China has provided Asian intellectuals with the opportunity to articulate an alternative to the prevalent historical narrative of development, which built on previous important overtures by postcolonial studies.[44] Another such fleeting moment occurred with the emergence of the anti-globalisation movement, which became an umbrella for protest against capitalist exploitation.[45] The global economic crisis of the past decade, and the consequent tightening of capitalist economic structures, has closed the window on this opportunity.[46]

In keeping with the alternative narrative of a new history of humanitarianism that we have presented here, the contributions to this special issue provide examples of specific historically contextualised humanitarian intervention. Those case studies focus on key moments of acceleration, when heightened global humanitarian activity coincided with periods of transformation in the world capitalist economy. The focus of these essays ranges from the nineteenth century abolitionist movement, to the Western response to Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s, and include particularly incisive reflections on the significance of humanitarian intervention in the context of modern thought. Addressing the first moment of acceleration in humanitarian concern—abolitionism—in the opening essay in this collection, Stacey Robertson focuses on American and British abolitionists' boycott of goods produced by slaves. In doing this, abolitionists created the first free produce movement in history and were able to make a connection between a high moral cause and an economic alternative to the capitalist economy that drove slavery. Stacey Robertson argues, ultimately, that "the moral economy of the twenty-first century offers social justice scholars a path to combine lessons of the past with activism today."[47] Thus, she highlights a moment of opportunity in which humanitarian activists succeeded in putting forward a specific alternative worldview to the dominant economic creed.

The next two essays, by Kimberly Lowe and Julia Irwin, provide different views of the League of Red Cross Societies, whose work took place in the second major moment of acceleration in humanitarian activity: during and in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. In her essay, Kimberly Lowe examines the initial motivations for funding

44 See, for example, Pankaj Mishra: From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia, London 2012; Kenneth Pomerantz, The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy, Princeton 2000; and Jack Goody, The Theft of History, New York 2006.

45 Manuel Castells: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture, Vol. II: The Power of Identity, 2nd. ed., Oxford 2010; and Joseph E. Stiglitz, Globalisation and its Discontents, London 2002.

46 Tony Judt's essays on the failures of social democracy, first published in the New York Review of Books, and then extended in book form, provide an historian's interpretation of the global crisis of the early twenty-first century: Tony Judt: Ill Fares the Land, in: New York Review of Books, 29 April 2010; and Tony Judt, Ill Fares the Land: A Treatise on our Present Discontents, London 2010.

47 See Stacey Robertson: Marketing Social Justice.

the League of Red Cross Societies as a major global humanitarian enterprise that shifted the focus from the traditional Red Cross concern for soldiers to a much more ambitious programme on the promotion of health and welfare. Kimberly Lowe argues that the League of Red Cross Societies' failed attempt to garner support for this major ideological shift in the Red Cross movement illustrates that "inter-governmental humanitarian assistance in the decade following the First World War was not directed towards the general improvement of public health, but the specific reparation of the First World War's political, social, and economic disruption."[48] Complementing Kimberly Lowe's essay by providing a more focussed analysis on the fundamental role of the United States in organising the international humanitarian environment, Julia Irwin draws out the tensions between American national interests and the international concerns of the League of Red Cross Societies. As Julia Irwin puts it in the American case, "in partnering with the League of Red Cross Societies, the nation pursued a distinct—albeit limited—form of transnational humanitarian engagement: one that enabled the United States to maintain significant control over their expanding bilateral relief efforts."[49] Her analysis shows us another example of the brief windows that opened to challenge the existing humanitarian logic. Providing a counterpoint to Julia Irwin, in a particularly innovative essay, Jo Laycock examines transnational humanitarian relief in early Soviet Armenia, thus providing a much-needed treatment of the historical phenomenon of relief efforts in a non-Western context. Jo Laycock looks specifically at the British Lord Mayor's Fund for Armenian Refugees, which operated in Soviet Armenia in the mid-1920s, and in so doing she provides a window on the relationships—and accompanying tensions—between relief agents from Britain and local Soviet administrators. Those tensions laid bare the clear ideological differences on which the concepts and practices of inter-war humanitarian relief, and long-term projects of development, were built in disaster-affected areas.

The next two essays, by Rob Skinner and Christoper Moores, focussing on British humanitarian activism in relation to South African apartheid and the Chilean dictatorship, respectively, offer us two important case studies of the North-South divisions that overlaid the dominant Cold War ideologies. Rob Skinner's piece resonates with Stacey Robertson's discussion of abolitionism in highlighting the importance of radical humanitarian activism in opposing the logics of "global business ethics."[50] Rob Skinner focuses on the era of African decolonisation and those who advocated the idea of "solidarity" as the basis for a transnational boycott movement, targeting goods produced under the apartheid regime in South Africa. In doing so, he draws attention to an alternative form of activism that grew in opposition to the mild Western expressions of reform practised in

48 See Kimberly Lowe: The League of Red Cross Societies and International Committee of the Red Cross.

49 See Julia Irwin: Connected by Calamity.

50 See Rob Skinner: Sanctions, Boycotts and Solidarity.

the colonial period. Christopher Moores' essay looks at another example of transnational solidarity that emerged in the Cold War era: British humanitarian opposition to Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. He argues that Chile became a paradigmatic focus in the transnational activity of human rights supporters. Yet, the story that Christopher Moores recounts moves beyond our understanding of human rights as a universal, uncontested ideal. Christopher Moores argues that "even in the case of Chile human rights were understood in different ways", and that "Anti-junta mobilisations show how different political agents—campaigners, political parties, and branches of Government—all engaged with Chile through languages of human rights."[51]

In the final contribution to this special issue, Jeffrey Flynn brings us back to the philosophical arguments on the nature of humanitarianism. He focuses our attention on two classic essays on the subject by Peter Singer and Thomas Haskell, who interpreted the philosophical underpinnings of humanitarian action as intervention in the lives of suffering strangers. In reassessing the work of those two authors, Jeffrey Flynn highlights the limited appeal of humanitarian action as a moral and intellectual undertaking. Thus, in his essay, Jeffrey Flynn provides an important corrective to our analysis of humanitarianism by arguing that "to actually be able to intervene from a distance requires being at the end of a causal chain that links or could link our actions to the fate of the suffering stranger."[52] In the most basic sense, therefore, we are all implicated and we all instinctively understand, intellectually and morally, the "principle of humanity" that justifies humanitarian action.[53] But Flynn shows us that there are clear constraints that determine whether or not we will act on that principle.

The contributions in this special issue point the way forward in the writing of a new history of humanitarianism. That history will look beneath the accepted altruistic veneer that currently dominates the narrative, and will take into account the crucial context of capitalist economic development in which humanitarian action took place in the modern era. It will also acknowledge the specificity of historical time and place as an important factor in analysing humanitarian activity. The essays in this collection provide examples of this new approach. In doing so, they show that it is possible to identify—much more than hitherto—moments of acceleration in humanitarian activity that coincided with capitalist expansion, and, simultaneously, moments of opportunity when it became possible to express alternative views to the global capitalist order. Those alternative humanitarian visions and activities were often, if not always, carried out at a transnational level. Therefore, we urge both historians and scholars of other disciplines to search for those moments of possibility and opportunity in the past, and in doing so to focus their

51 See Christopher Moores: Solidarity for Chile.
52 See Jeffrey Flynn: Philosophers, Historicans, and Suffering Strangers.
53 Giuseppe Mazzini's expression, quoted in Eugenio Biagini: The Principle of Humanity, in: Richard Carwardine/Jay Sexton (eds.): The Global Lincoln (New York, 2011), pp. 76–94.

investigations on the contributions brought by rank-and-file humanitarian activists. As the essays in this collection show, their activities were as important as the contributions of major historical figures and institutions in shaping modern humanitarianism. To adapt the words of Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, humanitarianism "is not the story of ideas separated from the dramatic historical conjunctures in which they developed."[54] Rather, it is the history of individuals who took decisions under specific historical constraints and under the influence of many different factors, among which both altruism and economics were primary.

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54 Jay Winter/Antoine Prost: René Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration, Cambridge 2013, p. xxi.