To what extent did early development work and international charity campaigns mark a shift in thinking about Britain's relationship to the world?

Development work and international charity campaigns—often compiled under the umbrella term ‘humanitarianism’ or ‘international aid’—saw a surge in significance for Britain in the post-war era. Growing British involvement in development projects and international charities across the newly-dubbed ‘Third World’ was contemporaneous with the unravelling of the Empire, as national liberation movements exploded across the colonies, and liberal internationalism and anti-Empire sentiment came to dictate the world order through new concepts of ‘human rights’ and institutions such as the UN. The Second World War had helped to strengthen the United States’ economy and left it as the leading global power, whilst leaving Britain and the other colonial powers in tatters and deeply indebted to America. And vitally, the world had oscillated into a Cold War, between the capitalist, U.S.-led West and the socialist, Soviet-led East.

This essay will argue that as a result of these factors, development work and international charity campaigns became vital for Britain to reposition itself into the new world order, and particularly to the moral one-upmanship of the Cold War. Britain certainly was no longer the Empire it once was, and there was a clear shift towards the use of this ‘soft power’, as opposed to the ‘hard power’ of colonialism. However, through analysing the history and rhetoric of British development, charity and colonialism, this essay aims to highlight that Britain's relationship specifically with the Third World fundamentally remained an imperialistic one of exploitation and domination.
Liberal Internationalism and American Hegemony

‘Out of war,’ Camilla Schofield writes, ‘there grew a liberal consensus on the need to reconstruct the international order on a new basis’.¹ A new global era of human rights had been heralded with the creation of the United Nations in 1945, which was followed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and an explosion in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), forming a part of the emerging ‘development machine’, as Manji and O’Coill put it. It was ‘a vast institutional and disciplinary nexus of official agencies, practitioners, consultants, scholars, and other miscellaneous experts producing and consuming knowledge about the "developing world"’.² Rather than merely focusing on the Westphalian concept of state sovereignty, the rights of individuals both within and without states came to the forefront of international relations.³ Particularly, notions of ‘self-determination’ highlighted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were aimed at the colonial powers.

The United States was the figurehead of this new liberal world order. It had handsomely profited from the Second World War whilst the European powers lay in tatters, and had accepted the title of ‘leader of the free world’.⁴ In the years following the war, ‘most Americans regarded empires as obsolete. British claims to world power seemed pathetic.’⁵

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³ Schofield, Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain, 146.
British colonialism evoked no sort of nostalgia for US officials, nor was it of any immediate economic or strategic benefit for the U.S. at this time.\textsuperscript{6}

Struggling with economic recovery, Britain’s Lend-Lease debt to America was eventually written off. But, as Wm. Rodger Louis writes, the U.S. ‘saw no reason to rescue the empire.’ As such, ‘in return for a dollar loan of £3.75 billion, which the Canadians topped up to £5 billion, the British were forced to make the pound convertible to the dollar within twelve months. The imperial economy, in effect, was to be dismantled.’\textsuperscript{7} Meanwhile, the 1948 Marshall Plan—American aid to war-torn European nations—kick-started the new era of foreign aid, and at his inauguration a year later, President Truman heralded a ‘development age’, in which the U.S. would ‘act as a midwife to a new era that nourished minds and bodies.’\textsuperscript{8}

The ‘cracks’ in Britain’s colonial authority produced by the Second World War had begun to be exploited by increasingly militant and revolutionary nationalisms which called for independence from the Empire.\textsuperscript{9} To try alleviate these anti-colonial tensions, Britain initially attempted to repackage the Empire, with announcements of the death of imperialism, new development schemes for colonies, and a new rhetoric of ‘friendship’ between the colonies and the metropole.\textsuperscript{10} The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945 ‘provided some £120 million for development projects in the colonial empire over a ten-year period,’ and in the following years the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and the Colonial Development

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Barnett, Empire of Humanity, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Louis, Ends of British Imperialism, 455.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Barnett, Empire of Humanity, 101.
\item \textsuperscript{9} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Howe, S. Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1993) 144.
\end{itemize}
Corporation (CDC) were created. Yet Britain’s violent colonial wars, such as the ones against the Mau Mau in Kenya and Communist insurgents in Malaya, undermined these efforts, as well as the economic constraints of post-war reconstruction at home.

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was the nail in the coffin for the Empire, demonstrating ‘how little room for manoeuvre old-style colonialism now had.’ As Louis writes, the crisis had ‘shattered Britain’s ethical position’ and, as a consequence, ‘virtually none of the Third World countries took the British at their word.’ Britain was forced to succumb to pressure to conform to the newly established international standards. Two reports emerged in Britain in 1957 and 1958 after a major government enquiry, which highlighted Britain’s situation: Its future was ‘not the surrender of international power, but, in fact, a transformation of power into informal control over colonies through the Commonwealth.’ The report clarified that ‘We shall not maintain our influence if we appear to be clinging obstinately to the shadow of our old Imperial power after its substance has gone’.

Further blows to British power also came with the 1960 UN General Assembly resolution calling for a rapid and unconditional end to colonialism, describing self-determination as a component of human rights. In 1961 ‘Committee 17’ was established to work towards these aims, and ‘became famous in the history of the UN for its persistent, voluble and

12 Howe, Anticolonialism in British Politics, 305.
13 Louis, Ends of British Imperialism, 24.
impassioned attacks on Western colonial powers, especially Britain’. Furthermore, in 1961 the Non-Aligned Movement was formed. This was a group of newly-independent states who had led successful national liberation struggles against imperialism, who not only pledged neutrality during the Cold War—taking sides with neither East nor West—but became ‘an influential force in the anti-colonial, national socialist, pan-Arab and pan-African movements.’ Kirstin S. Tassin explains how, ‘under the circumstances, developing countries had to devise foreign policy concepts that would, on the one hand, ensure their separation from the evolving superpower military-political alliances; and, on the other, help create the conditions most favorable for the defense of newly-gained sovereignty, the raising of living standards, and the promotion of general socio-economic progress.’ Finding inspiration from the discourse of pre-1947 India, the nations involved in the movement argued for their rights ‘in European terms and languages’, and played a significant role in building ‘a sense of nationhood throughout the Third World, and engendered a nationalism built around an anti-colonial identity and a need to confront the traditional powers from a position of strength.’

The 1960s had been declared a ‘development decade’ by the UN General Assembly. Resolution 1522 insisted that 1 per cent of ‘developed’ countries' Gross Domestic Product should be dedicated to the ‘Third World’. Charity and development came to be

16 Louis, Ends of British Imperialism, 456.


19 Tassin, “Lift up your head, my brother”: Nationalism and the genesis of the Non-Aligned Movement’, 147.

internationally recognised as the solution to the global problem of ‘underdevelopment’;\textsuperscript{21} led not just by rich nations, ‘but also by newly independent states and an ever-expanding set of humanitarian organisations, including Oxfam, CARE, World Vision, Christian Aid and War on Want.’\textsuperscript{22} Between 1958 and 1965, ‘nearly every industrialized nation started volunteer programs to spread the message of economic development and good will’.\textsuperscript{23} British contributions to international aid more than doubled between 1957 and 1961, from 81 to 180 million pounds.\textsuperscript{24}

However, as Manji and O’Coill have noted, many charitable organisations had been ‘tainted in the eyes of the majority by their association with racist colonial oppression.’\textsuperscript{25} As a result, these organisations remodelled themselves in a bid to avoid becoming obsolete. Poverty and racial injustice was condemned ‘with as much conviction as they had justified racial exclusion in the past. The exigencies of African resistance and international politics had forced them to reconstruct themselves as indigenous "development NGOs".’\textsuperscript{26} Administrations were ‘indigenised’, ‘replacing white staff, clergy and secular managers with educated Africans’, and the ‘overt racism of the past’ was replaced with the international discourse of ‘development’.\textsuperscript{27} This ‘offered an alternative language and set of practices that, at least on the surface, were free of racial signifiers. And it appeared to imply some connection with emancipation, the prospect of "progress" that would benefit all.’\textsuperscript{28}

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\textsuperscript{22}Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 880.
\textsuperscript{23}Bailkin, J. \textit{Afterlives of Empire} (London: Berkley University Press, 2012) 58.
\textsuperscript{24}Schofield, \textit{Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain}, 146-7.
\textsuperscript{25}Manji and O’Coill, ‘NGOS: A Tainted History’, 17.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, 16.
\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Ibid.}, 17.
\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushleft}
One of the most prominent displays of Britain’s attempts at redemption was the adoption of a leading role in the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) in the 1960s, which aimed to retrieve the ‘moral authority’ lost by the Suez debacle.\textsuperscript{29} The FFHC was an international campaign organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, aiming to ‘help the hungry to help themselves’. Anna Bocking-Welch notes that, whilst satisfying the liberal moralism of the international community, this leading role in the campaign was also a ‘satisfying substitute for the imperial burden’ which ‘called on the particular administrative and organisational skill set Britain had developed as an imperial power.’ As such, Conservative Prime Minister Douglas-Home boasted of Britain’s aptness for leading the campaign thanks to its ‘genius for voluntary effort and coordination’ at the launch party for the fundraising campaign in June 1962. This revealed the internal insecurities of Britain’s declining status as a world power, through stressing the ‘narratives of continuity and British exceptionalism’, which also ‘implicitly sought to make the British Empire and Commonwealth a shining example of moral intervention.’\textsuperscript{30}

The 1964 Labour Party manifesto clarified the importance of development aid in shaping Britain’s post-colonial role in the world. A large section was dedicated to ‘A New Role for Britain’, within it highlighting ‘The End of Colonialism’, which insisted that aid would be a necessary part of Britain’s bid to ‘keep pace with the dramatic changes in the world scene’. As Charlotte Lydia Riley highlights, ‘by identifying the Labour Party with a progressive approach to the end of the empire, Wilson could argue for a continuing role for Britain in its

\textsuperscript{29} Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 885.

\textsuperscript{30} ibid.
former overseas colonies without drawing accusations of neo-colonialism.\textsuperscript{31} And indeed, this moral alignment of Labour with the issue of aid was mostly popular with the public.\textsuperscript{32}

‘Through guilt,’ Graham Hancock argues, Britain ‘at a particular moment in their history came to see foreign aid as a vehicle of restitution, of righting past wrongs, of buying pardon.’\textsuperscript{33} But this redemption was used to Britain’s benefit. Through the development of the Commonwealth, supplemented by development schemes and charity campaigns, Britain was able to ‘hold the new states as far as possible within the commercial and possibly also the monetary, systems of the metropolis, and so retain the supposed economic benefits of empire.’\textsuperscript{34} As Graham Hancock put it, ‘when thrown together with the stew of American intentions … the international aid process became a seething pot-pourri of humanitarianism, commercial self-interest, strategic calculation and bad conscience’.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Cold War Diplomacy}

The role of the Commonwealth in the Cold War was highlighted in a 1949 Conservative Party statement, which declared:

\begin{quote}
‘[W]e live in a dangerous world and it would be sheer folly to ignore the threat to democratic freedom which Soviet aggression presents. The British Commonwealth has greater resources of political experience than any other nation. Moral leadership in the ‘cold war’ against the new barbarism must, therefore, devolve upon its shoulders. To those who believe that the days of world
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\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
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\textsuperscript{34} Fieldhouse, \textit{The West and the Third World}, 231.
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\textsuperscript{35} Hancock, \textit{Lords of Poverty}, 72.
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leadership for the British Empire and Commonwealth are over, we reply ‘British
leadership is more vital to the future of civilization now than at any time in
history’\textsuperscript{36}

America’s adoption of ‘development’ was very much an instrument to counter the influence
of the Soviet Union and communist expansion, and this was equally the case for Britain. It
was a game of moral one-upmanship. ‘The battle against communism’, writes John Kent,
‘was essentially about winning hearts and minds over to accepting the values of capitalism
and democracy, and this was particularly important in the newly emerging African states
who had just achieved, or were about to achieve, independence’.\textsuperscript{37} Britain, unsurprisingly,
had gained a negative reputation in the Third World thanks to the memories of colonialism.
The Soviet Union, however, were ‘happily unencumbered by the weight of colonial
history’,\textsuperscript{38} and this gave the Soviets a clear advantage in attracting support from post-
colonial nations. British policymakers feared that the exercise of ‘hard power’ would
reinforce this aversion to Britain and push the colonies into the arms of the Soviets.

In theory, upon independence ‘ex-colonies were now free to adopt whatever systems of
government and style of economic management they chose.’\textsuperscript{39} But most of these states
also suffered high levels of poverty, which western leaders were well aware provided the
conditions for communism to arise.\textsuperscript{40} Manki and O’Coill highlight that the discourse

\textsuperscript{36} Imperial Policy: A Statement of Conservative Policy for the British Empire and Commonwealth
(Conservative and Unionist Central Office, June 1949), p. 8, quoted in Schofield, Enoch Powell and the
Making of Postcolonial Britain, 82.

S. (eds.) The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonisation (London: Palgrave Macmillan,
2013) 198.

\textsuperscript{38} Bailkin, Afterlives of Empire, 83.

\textsuperscript{39} Fieldhouse, The West and the Third World, 225.

\textsuperscript{40} Hancock, Lords of Poverty, 71.
emerging in the age of development served to subvert the ‘popular aspirations for radical change in the context of independence struggles while legitimating the continued marginalisation of non-Western peoples.’ And post-independence, development continued to undermine popular mobilisations and prevent the expansion of communist ideology in order to defend the continued growth of 'Euro-American capitalism' in the ex-colonies.\textsuperscript{41}

As such, NGOs licensed to work in Africa found that their freedom was conditioned by an ‘unspoken assumption that they accepted or did not comment on the manner in which the state exercised its power.’\textsuperscript{42} This was the key aim of development in the context of the Cold War: that the governments of ex-colonies would cooperate with the Western powers’ economic and military agendas.\textsuperscript{43} But more than this, development and foreign aid helped to foster dependence in the Third World, thus keeping them from the lure of the Eastern Bloc. As U.S. Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey said in 1957: ‘I have heard that people may become dependent on us for food. To me that is good news – because before people can do anything they have got to eat. And if you are looking for a way to get people to lean on you and be dependent on you, in terms of their co-operation with you, it seems to be that food dependence would be terrific.’\textsuperscript{44}

The creation of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) in 1948 was Britain’s answer to the ‘considerable attractions’ of the Soviet World Federation of Democratic Youth, which already boasted a membership of ‘more than 100 million young people in 112 countries’.\textsuperscript{45} The aims of WAY were to create ‘sentimental attachments between First and Third world

\textsuperscript{41} Manji and O’Coill, ‘NGOS: A Tainted History’, 17.
\textsuperscript{42} ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Hancock, Lords of Poverty, 71.
\textsuperscript{45} Bailkin, Afterlives of Empire, 80.
youths’, luring them away from the attraction of communism.\textsuperscript{46} However, as Jordanna Bailkin highlights, WAY was chronically underfunded, with most money coming from anti-colonial American sources, which ‘struck many British officials as embarrassing’. Furthermore, ‘its own allegiances to left-wing political platforms were always under investigation’, being described as a ‘kind of junior Bandung’\textsuperscript{47}—the Bandung Conference being a conference of Asian and African states as part of the Non-Aligned Movement. This highlighted the disharmony between maintaining the influence of the empire and the fighting of the Cold War.

A new approach was developed in 1958, which saw the creation of the Commonwealth Youth Trust. Its chairman was Sir Gerald Templar, a military commander and ‘Cold War hero’, specialising in counterinsurgency ‘with extensive experience in psychological warfare and anticommunist propaganda.’\textsuperscript{48} African and Asian children would be recruited to boarding schools in Britain, ‘to promote personal contacts among Commonwealth youth.’ Also, ‘scholarships, travel, work camps and welfare centres’ for British youths would help to ‘promote interracial friendship’.\textsuperscript{49} As Bailkin writes, though the older generation in the ex-colonies may ‘be inflexibly wedded to the imperial past’ the younger generation may be more likely to embrace the new Commonwealth, ‘having never really known the empire at all’.\textsuperscript{50} This was a more cost-effective way to ensure allegiance to Britain and the West in the Cold War through fostering bourgeois elites in newly independent states.

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\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ibid.}, 81 - 2.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{ibid.}, 84.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{ibid.}, 83.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{ibid.}
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Finally, the British narrative of its supposed new-found morality helped to deflect attention away from the increasingly volatile issues of race relations at home. As Schofield highlights, ‘as in the United States, racism in Britain carried an international meaning. It was, for both, a Cold War liability.’\footnote{Schofield, \textit{Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain}, 150.} The Soviet Union circulated propaganda across the world which emphasised the racism of the West, and often pledged support for racial liberation movements. Moreover, domestic racism had the potential to radicalise colonial students at universities in Britain, ‘who were nervously viewed, by British government officials, as the future leaders of their homelands.’\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 86.} As such, ‘a political language of moral superiority and capital development continued to require Britain to be ‘above’ the ‘colour problem’ at home.’\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 150.} The notions of ‘interracial friendship’ and the ‘indigenisation’ of NGOs could be used as evidence for Britain’s dedication to racial equality, even when events such as the Notting Hill race riots would garner attention from around the world.

\textbf{Imperial Continuities}

Yet development and philanthropic projects were not a new phenomenon, exclusive to the postwar world. Britain had been at the forefront of humanitarian campaigns since the nineteenth century. As Anna Bocking-Welch writes, ‘from the humanitarian “discovery” of hunger in the late nineteenth century to the Colonial Welfare and Development Act of 1940, imperial Britain played a central role in describing the modern meaning of hunger and determined the systems for redressing it.’\footnote{Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 880.} Manji and O’Coill nicely summarise the rise of philanthropy in Britain:

‘the industrial revolution opened up a great gulf between the bourgeoisie and the swelling ranks of the urban proletariat. In the 1890s, when industrialists were
amassing fortunes to rival those of the aristocracy, as much as one third of the population of London were living below the level of bare subsistence, and death from starvation was not unknown. At this time, private philanthropy was the preferred solution to social need and private expenditure far outweighed public provision.\textsuperscript{55}

Fittingly, Cecil Rhodes once described imperialism as ‘philanthropy plus a 5 percent dividend on investment’\textsuperscript{56}. And indeed, in the majority of African countries, ‘imperialism and colonialism were embedded into the notion of humanitarianism’.\textsuperscript{57} Su-ming Khoo highlights how ‘development’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was synonymous with colonialism—“opening up natural resources”, promoting labour migration and developing infrastructure such as railways, ports and roads to facilitate their exploitation.’ Conservation policies ‘were colonial acts which often excluded, dispossessed and sometimes forcibly eliminated or displaced native populations’. And of course, Colonial officials very much believed their actives to be ‘humanitarian and benevolent’.\textsuperscript{58}

‘At independence’, writes Sarah Stockwell, ‘British companies retained commanding positions in the economies of many former British colonies’.\textsuperscript{59} In fact, the rush of British personnel to new development projects in the ex-colonies was such that it has been referred to as a ‘second colonial occupation’.\textsuperscript{60} The role of NGOs in Africa ‘represents a

\textsuperscript{55} Manji and O’Coill, ‘NGOS: A Tainted History’, 17.


\textsuperscript{58} Khoo, ‘Sustainable Development of What?’, in Fahy and Rau (eds.), Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences, 93.

\textsuperscript{59} Stockwell, The Business of Decolonization, 3.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, 5-6.
continuity of the work of their precursors, the missionaries and voluntary organisations that 
cooperated in Europe's colonisation and control of Africa. Indeed, many 'colonial experts' 
who had previously worked throughout the empire found themselves landing roles in the 
new international development movement. Many ex-officers saw their role in 
development as the logical next step, or even simply 'the same thing', highlighting the 
'institutionalized links between colonialism and development'. One former colonial officer, 
in an interview conducted by Uma Kothari, remarked, 'When I meet young chaps who now 
work as development advisers or listen to people talking about development aid, and they 
say "We're doing X, Y and Z", I think "Oh my God, we were doing that twenty years ago 
and we failed as well!"'

Stephen Howe describes how 'Britain was seeking, with at least partial success, to 
maintain her imperial role by transferring authority to approved if not manufactured 
successors, retaining exploitative economic arrangements, and tying new states to the 
former colonial metropole through manipulative political, diplomatic, cultural, and military 
structures. NGOs played an active role in suppressing anti-colonial struggles which had 
the potential to sever these exploitative arrangements. 'Armed with their manuals and 
technical tricks', Manji and O'Coill write, NGOs aimed to reorientate the struggles of 'the 
poor' in the developing nations away from 'seeking justice for past crimes against them' 
and towards 'participatory means for coping with the present'. 'Like their missionary 
predecessors, ... [NGOs] offered the poor blessings in the future (albeit on earth rather

61 Manji and O'Coill, 'NGOS: A Tainted History', 16.
62 Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse', 882.
63 Kothari, 'From colonial administration to development studies', in Kothari, U. (ed.), A Radical History of 
Development Studies, 55-6.
64 Ibid., 58.
65 Howe, Anticolonialism in British Politics, 302.
66 Manji and O'Coill, 'NGOS: A Tainted History', 19.
than in heaven).”

For example, in Kenya the Women’s Association, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (MYWO) and the Christian Council of Kenya (CCK) were both involved in government-funded schemes designed to subvert African resistance during the Mau Mau uprising. Charity was just as much—if not more—about protecting the rich, than it was about helping the poor.

In Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, he argues that ‘African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the international capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the last five centuries.’ Indeed, ‘underdevelopment’ of the so-called ‘Third World’ are not merely the effects of capitalist development, ‘but rather they are integral and determinant parts thereof’. As Peter J. Taylor summarises, ‘imperialism is part of the structure of the capitalist world economy and hence has existed and will continue to exist as long as this world system exists.’

And it is by virtue of this system of perpetual poverty that NGOs thrive. Their business is poverty, and they are kept in a circular bureaucratic existence by the maintenance of this poverty. Writing in 1989, Hancock highlighted that the ‘real failure … is symbolised by the continued existence of the aid agencies themselves.’ Moreover, NGOs ‘managed to stay

67 *ibid.*

68 *ibid.*, 16.

69 *ibid.*


73 Hancock, *Lords of Poverty*, 74.
firmly on the scene despite the rapid changes that have taken place in the post-war world. Neither have they simply, doggedly persisted: the majority have grown from year to year with ever bigger budgets, ever more projects to administer and ever more staff on their ever-expanding payrolls. Employed to serve the poor, these staff rank ironically amongst the best-paid professionals on earth.\textsuperscript{74}

As such, the work of development and international charity only marginally contributes to the relief of hunger and poverty, and mostly undermines the struggle of the citizens of developing nations to break free from economic, social and political exploitation.\textsuperscript{75} ‘What humanitarianism did was provide the imperialists and capitalists a ‘reason for being there’,’ writes Keith Tester, ‘regardless of whether ‘there’ was a colony or, more locally, a factory or a slum. Humanitarianism harnessed exploitation to civilisation, the profit of some to the imagined well-being of all.’\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{Language and Modernisation Theory}

‘Although military interventions had been taking place between European states for centuries … often on the grounds of misgovernment, “tyranny” or religious sympathy,’ Everill and Kaplan argue, ‘a more widespread, popular humanitarianism emerged with Europe’s contact with new worlds in the expansion – and contraction – of empires.’ This coordinated with the ‘development of the universalism of humanitarianism, as, combined with a missionary revivalism, “sympathy” was now crucial to the self-definition of European empires as they came into contact with ‘barbarous others’.\textsuperscript{77} ‘Afrientalist’ discourses, as

\textsuperscript{74} ibid.

\textsuperscript{75} Manji and O’Coill, ‘NGOS: A Tainted History’, 16.


Everill and Kaplan put it, became key components of Western colonial identity, in which humanitarianism played a critical role.\textsuperscript{78}

Development and charity campaigns during imperial rule also helped to legitimise and soften the image of ‘a colonialism that increasingly looked exploitative to those back home’.\textsuperscript{79} Concepts of Britain as a paternalistic, benevolent leader, and an ‘uplifting force’ had been a strong component of Britain’s imperial identity and national psyche since the latter half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{80} The idea of humanitarianism as a ‘selfless act by which the British went out and civilized the world’ had long been ‘a thread in the British national imagery’.\textsuperscript{81} Much of this discourse bled over into the rhetoric of development and charity campaigns during the decolonisation process, in many ways intensifying with the onset of decolonisation.\textsuperscript{82}

The ‘modernisation’ school of thought—the theory that something is ‘wrong’ inside Third World countries, for example ‘traditional culture, overpopulation, little investment, lack of achievement motivation, etc.’\textsuperscript{83}—became an increasingly popular narrative in the era of decolonisation. This way of theorising ‘underdevelopment’ as an issue of perpetual deficiency dictated that the guidance of ‘developed’ nations could lead the Third World into modernity, as social and economic problems of British dependencies were ‘recast … as technical ones that could be fixed by rational planning and expert knowledge’.\textsuperscript{84} Kothari

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{78} Ibid., 17.
\bibitem{79} Barnett, \textit{Empire of Humanity}, 100.
\bibitem{80} Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 883-4.
\bibitem{81} Tester, ‘Humanitarianism: The group charisma of postcolonial Britain’, 377.
\bibitem{82} Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 883-4.
\bibitem{83} Khoo, ‘Sustainable Development of What?’, in Fahy and Rau (eds.), \textit{Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences}, 93.
\bibitem{84} Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 889.
\end{thebibliography}
highlights how this ‘concealment of a colonial past thus becomes, perhaps unwittingly, part of a project that creates and maintains a dichotomy between a colonialism that is ‘bad’, exploitative, extractive and oppressive and a development that is ‘good’, moralistic, philanthropic and humanitarian.’

Framing the ‘menace of poverty’ and ‘underdevelopment’ in this ahistorical fashion means that it is not viewed as ‘something actively produced by countries like Britain in the course of empire and colonisation’, nor is there any acknowledgement of how the wealth extracted from the colonies ‘made possible the vigour and prosperity of modern Britain and its associated institutions.’ This discourse depoliticised poverty, and was popular within development and international charity campaigns, as well as the British government itself, as it helped to justify their role within these nations. Many charities and development schemes conformed to this discourse of modernisation, even those supposedly more politically aware such as Christian Aid, which called upon ‘a duty of care rather than an acceptance of British accountability for the situation in recently independent African nations.’

By the 1960s these assumptions about poverty and hunger dominated development discourse, and the underdeveloped world was rarely seen as something actively produced in the course of colonisation. Most commentators adopted a wilful blindness to the political struggles which took place at this time, such as in Kenya and Malaya, ‘in order to

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87 Bocking-Welch, ‘Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourse’, 889.

88 ibid., 886.

89 ibid., 889.
ensure the realignment of British imperialism with a distinct humanitarian ethos. Bocking-Welch adds that the Freedom from Hunger Campaign in particular 'facilitated both those forms of internationalism that were explicitly anti-colonial and those that were wilfully forgetful of imperial past and its impositions on the post-imperial present.'

‘Caught in the torrent of upheavals that characterised the victory over colonialism,’ writes Manji and O’Coill, ‘it was easy for these Western NGOs to become romantic and blinkered by their own enthusiasm for "bringing development to the people" in the newly independent countries.’ The discourse of charity was not framed in emancipatory terms, but ‘with the vocabulary of charity, technical expertise, neutrality, and a deep paternalism (albeit accompanied by the rhetoric of participatory development) that was its syntax.’ This way of framing foreign aid and international charity helped to reinforce hierarchal ideas of global society in colonial terms, but the language was easier to swallow, offering ‘a more palatable perspective on Africans and Asians.’ And as Manji and O’Coill rightly assert, 'It was more palatable because it was similar in many respects to the racist discourses of the past, this time with a vocabulary consistent with the new age of modernity.’ No longer were African nations ‘uncivilised’; instead, they were underdeveloped'. ‘Either way, the "civilised" or "developed" European has a role to play in "civilising" or "developing" Africa.’

**Conclusion**

Having suffered both an economic and moral collapse in the ashes of the Second World War, Britain found itself nervously navigating a new liberal world order, at the mercy of

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90 ibid., 885.

91 ibid.


93 ibid.
American hegemony and increasingly tense Cold War diplomacy. The 1956 Suez Crisis was the wake-up call which confirmed that the old-style colonialism was no longer viable.

As Tancredi informed the Prince in Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*: ‘If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.’ Britain's increasing investment in international charity and development campaigns was the only way in which it could continue to be a leading world power under this vastly different world order. Indeed, this was the end of the British Empire and its direct, imperial form of governance. But, in many ways, little had changed. Primarily, the economic structures which ensured the continued impoverishment of the ex-colonies remained. Development aid and international charities encouraged the same racist attitudes towards so-called 'underdeveloped' African and Asian nations: the benevolent mother country bringing aid to the barbarous nations who couldn't support or govern themselves. Furthermore, they played a significant role in reinforcing the hegemony of Britain and the West and undermining radical anti-colonial movements. The 'civilising mission' of empire continued in all but name.

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