Summaries

Andreas Eckert, Late Colonial Rule, Decolonization and International Order. Introductory Remarks

The end of European colonial empires in Africa and Asia is one of the most important developments of the twentieth century. This article discusses several essential aspects of the subject. In this, it reflects the growing sensitivity of more recent historiography for global linkage and the increasing interest in the role of international organisations, the significance of knowledge and science, and the impact of colonial violence. The rise of the paradigm of development is discussed above all by means of the example of Germany, a country that was long regarded as irrelevant to the process of decolonization. Closely bound up with the concept of ‘development’ was the theory of modernisation prevalent in the 1950s and 60s, which is here discussed above all mainly at the example of the rise of developmental economy. After reflections on the end of the British Empire and French decolonization, the article discusses in conclusion the question of the ‘colonial legacy’ in the former colonies by means of the example of Africa. Following the pioneering studies of Frederick Cooper, it argues that fragile states emerged in consequence of specific processes of decolonization in Africa, characterised on the one hand by a European idea of modernity and on the other by local forms of social organisation.


The importance of international organisations as historical actors is one of the aspects of twentieth century history that has been studied least. By means of the example of the ‘world social organisation’, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and its coming to grips with decolonization, this article shows the manner in which international agencies took part in this epochal process to a not inconsiderable degree. Following a survey of the major questions and previous studies on the history of international organisations, the article investigates the ILO as a forum where central political debates about decolonization were argued out. In addition, the article assesses the quite independent role played by the International Labour Office, the secretariat of the Organisation, as an active participant in the discussions, particularly in the area of social and human rights and development policy.

Jérôme B. Elie / Jussi Hanhimäki, UNHCR and Decolonization in Africa. Expansion and Emancipation, 1950s to 1970s

In contrast to its current status, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began in the early 1950s as a non-operational organisation, with limited resources and a circumscribed mandate. This article deals with the process of expansion and cautious emancipation which allowed the UNHCR to overcome its original limitations, and investigates the role played by the African decolonization process in this regard. In particular, the article looks at the importance of United Nations General Assembly resolutions related to decolonization and how events, extending from the Algerian War in the 1950s to the struggle for independence in Angola in the 1970s, shaped the evolution of the UN Refugee Agency’s mandate and activities. UNHCR officials generally believed in the universality of their mission and were eager to expand and strengthen their organisation, but this process also exposed the Refugee Agency to new challenges. In particular, the situation on the ground and the UN General Assembly directives sometimes con-
flicted with the UNHCR’s original legal underpinnings and mission as understood by its officials. A difficult issue in this context concerned how the UNHCR should provide assistance to liberation movements. In sum, the UNHCR managed to deal with the consequences of decolonization, while maintaining its non-political role and avoiding being directly involved in local struggles.

Frieder Ludwig, Strivings for Independence and the Decolonization Process. On the Policy of Churches in Africa and Asia

This article examines the role played by the churches in the process of decolonization. It first sketches the development in India before and immediately following independence, so as then to show the effects of the lessons learned there on the positions adopted by the churches in other countries (particularly Nigeria and Tanzania). The article focuses mainly on the interactions between African and Asian Christians in the discussion of colonial rule and supervision by Western missionaries. Since Christianity was often felt to be an »import« and a »foreign body«, surmounting Western structures, coming to grips with native religious traditions, and finding a position with respect to nationalist movements have become major concerns. All this has received an essential impetus from the positions that were developed in India in the 1920s. The publications and conferences of the International Missionary Council formed the basis for the reciprocal perceptions within the intensifying South-South exchange.

Christoph Kalter, »Le monde va de l’avant. Et vous êtes en marge«. Decolonization, Decentring the West and the Discovery of the ›Third World‹ by the French Radical Left in the 1960s’

Using the example of the French journal Partisans, this article analyses the reciprocal constitution of a new radical Left and a comprehensive concept of global explanation in the shape of the so-called Third World. In the 1960s, Partisans became the most important organ in France of radical left-wing ideas about the Third World. The programme for de-centring the West undertaken by the journal found its framework in the concept of the Third World and accompanied the genesis, differentiation and radicalisation of the French Left until the end of the decade. There emerged a forum for anti-colonial intellectuals and activists divided into periphery and metropolis. First, the analysis illustrates this using the example of one of the monumental political texts on decolonisation of the twentieth century, Frantz Fanon’s manifesto Les damnés de la terre. Then it throws light on important topics, arguments, developments and functions of radical leftist discourse about the Third World by means of relevant texts from Partisans. Finally, the analysis is placed within a wide-ranging spatio-temporal genealogy of critical discourse about Western modernity, which makes evident the fundamental ambivalence of radical leftist discourse about the Third World.

Esther Helena Arens, »Mission interrupted«? The Discussion About Decolonization in the Netherlands

Once the Netherlands recognised the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the main task of decolonization seemed to the majority of the Dutch population to have been accomplished – in spite of the fact that the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and in South America continued to exist, and above all in spite of the fact that Dutch society was pervaded by questions and problems of decolonization no later than the first waves of immigration from (former) colonies. This article interprets the events of decolonization –
Indonesia in 1949, West Papua in 1962, Surinam in 1975 – under the categories of loss, conflict and action, and describes the social-political discussion on the necessary inner decolonization by means of the concepts of self-perception, the perception others have of oneself and image politics. The aim is to analyse the change in the Dutch image of the world that may lie behind these events and to inquire about new (trans) social understandings.


Beginning with the concept of a knowledge society, this article uses the example of the Centre for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to examine how modernisation theory was delineated as a kind of knowledge by means of which decolonization could be interpreted and the scope of action for American foreign policy demonstrated. In this development the »action intellectuals« Walt Rostow and Max Millikan in particular became influential mediators between scholarship and politics. By the narrative dovetailing of historical laws of development and visions of modernity, they aimed at establishing an American hegemony of knowledge which would ensure stable North-South relations even under the conditions of decolonization. The article traces this development in the case of Nigeria, which provides a typical example. The promise of realisable progress possessed an extraordinary attraction for the Nigerian elites, with the result that modern Nigeria could not only be oriented along the guidelines of American theories, but also decisively shaped by American experts.

Daniel Speich, The Development Automatism. Economic Expertise as a Promise of Salvation in East African Decolonization

This article investigates the role of macro-economic expertise in decolonization. The analysis is based on the observation that developmental economy has been able to acquire knowledge from the history of industrialised Western countries from which an automatism can be abstracted that appears to be applicable to new states. This technocratic approach was bound up with a promise of salvation whose effect I analyse in three steps. The first part of the article reconstructs the genesis of essential sources of knowledge about economies, whereby national accounts and estimates of gross national product are given priority. The second part looks at a series of debates on the application of these abstractions to the emerging post-colonial African reality that were held at international conferences in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa in 1961. The third part turns to the case study of Kenya and shows that the availability of economic expertise essentially structured the domestic politics of East African countries in the 1960s.


Within the decolonization process begun after the Second World War, the Algerian War (1954–1962) is a symbol for an uncommonly high degree of physical violence, the systematic use of torture and offences against human rights. In few other cases of colonial war has a Western democracy so radically and so extensively broken with its basic principles as did France in this war. Less frequently noted is the »modernisation programme« for the country and its population that was launched in the midst of the war. This article discusses individual aspects of the simultaneity or dialectic of late colonial »developmental policy« and a brutal policy of repression. Using the concept of a »war of
modernisation, it debates whether the special features of the Algerian War lay in the brutality of its conduct or rather in the grotesque double structure of violence and modernisation mission. The violently catalysed modernisation process that was to be imposed here resembled to a striking degree that postulated by the simultaneously emerging modernisation theory. It may be interpreted as the last attempt to carry over late colonial rule into post-colonial hegemony.

Fabian Klose, On the Legitimation of Colonial Violence. Colonial State of Emergency, Anti-Subversive War and Humanitarian International Law in the Kenyan and Algerian Wars of Decolonization

This article investigates the common pattern of legitimation with which the two colonial powers of Great Britain and France sought to justify the removal of all constraints on violence in the wars of decolonization in Kenya (1952–1956) and Algeria (1954–1962). It focuses on the colonial state of emergency and its sweeping emergency laws, the new doctrine of anti-subversive war, and the role of humanitarian international law in the form of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 in both conflicts. It argues that the specific combination of emergency measures, anti-subversive military doctrine and the negation of the validity of humanitarian international law was decisive in radicalising the violence of the wars and led to the breach with all international humanitarian norms.

Frank Schubert, The Colonial Roots of Post-Colonial Violence. The Making of Martial Tribes and Political Ethnicity in Uganda

This article studies the long-term effects of colonial rule on political and military conflicts in post-colonial Africa, using the example of Uganda. An historically grown potential for conflict arose from the colonial administrative boundaries and hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups, particularly the privileges granted the Kingdom of Buganda in the protectorate of Uganda. Colonial administrators assigned particular ethnic groups certain functions in administration, in agriculture and in the employment market. This ethno-functionalism also affected the colonial military, which ascribed special military abilities to the ethnic group of the Acholi and so created a martial tribe. A consequence of this colonial policy was to ethnicise the military and the political system beyond the colonial period. The article discusses in particular lines of continuity from early colonial times to the difficult negotiations over independence, the political conflicts of the 1960s, the military dictatorship of Idi Amin in the seventies and the civil wars that have been waged in various regions of Uganda since 1981.

Robert Heinze, »Decolonising the Mind«. Nationalism and Nation Building in Namibian and Zambian Radio

This article analyses the role of radio in the decolonization process. Using two examples, Namibia and Zambia, it investigates the communication of African nationalism, which was reflected in efforts at nation building following independence. The most important mass medium in African states, the radio assumed (and still assumes) a major part in this process because it is used to communicate the various ideologies. The article analyses not only the ideologies, but also the role and self-perception of journalists and the perception of the radio programmes themselves. The contradictions of the desired political policies, the existing infrastructure, the ideas of journalists and the wishes of listeners, made the communication of nationalist policies and the production of a virtual national space in radio into complex processes whose realisation was not always successful.
Larry Butler, Mining, Nationalism, and Decolonization in Zambia. Interpreting Business Responses to Political Change, 1945–1964

This article examines the responses of Zambia’s copper mining industry to rapid political change, leading to the country’s independence in 1964. It investigates a situation in which two strands of nationalism, white settler and Black African, competed for power and threatened to create problems for an industry vital to Zambia’s future, but adapting to a volatile business environment. In analysing the collapse of settler aspirations and progress towards African majority rule, it compares the success of Zambia’s two major mining companies in devising strategies to safeguard their interests while accommodating themselves to imminent independence, and suggests that their differing responses, one apparently ›progressive‹ and the other highly conservative, stemmed partly from the contrasting outlooks of their respective South African and US controlling interests.

Hubertus Büschel, Helping Africa. Actors in West German ›Development Aid‹ and East German ›Solidarity‹, 1955–1975

This article looks at the actors engaged in West German ›development aid‹ and East German ›solidarity‹ in sub-Saharan Africa from 1955 to 1975, and so takes up a perspective on decolonization and development policy that has hitherto been largely neglected. It concentrates on development work in Tanzania/Zanzibar, Togo and Cameroon, the former German colonies and most important destinations of ›development aid‹ of both German states. Adopting a cultural-historical perspective, it asks about the training and social background of development experts, development workers, members of the solidarity brigades and, not least, their African counterparts. It likewise analyses the information with which the German actors were supplied before their work ›overseas‹ and the portrayal of development aid. Looking at the self-interpretation of the actors, it becomes clear that they were far from satisfied with the guidelines and premises of development policy, harboured considerable doubts about their work and expressed feelings of guilt about it. In the 1960s and 70s, however, the vision of progress and changing Africa in accordance with the standards of American and European societies (a vision shared by their African counterparts) outweighed these misgivings.

Corinna R. Unger, Rourkela, a ›Steel Mill in the Jungle‹. Industrialisation, Modernisation, and Development Aid in the Context of Decolonization and the Cold War (1950–1970)

In the 1950s, industrialisation was regarded as the most promising way of modernising a ›backward‹ country like newly independent India. In addition, by industrialising the country, Western Cold War strategists hoped to integrate India into the West and to limit the Eastern bloc’s influence in Asia. A West German consortium’s plan to build a steel mill in Rourkela thus met with enthusiasm in Bonn and New Delhi. Indian and Western experts hoped that the plant would simultaneously ›develop‹ the ›backward‹ region and modernise its inhabitants. However, the project suffered from tremendous problems, and the Federal Republic had to invest a lot of money and diplomatic effort to keep it from failing. Rourkela came to symbolise a flawed development aid approach that focused on showcase projects instead of promoting structural change ›from below‹. India’s decision to intensify its efforts at increasing food production was, in part, an answer to industrialisation’s challenges. Thanks to the Green Revolution, the country achieved independence from external food aid in the early 1970s and became anchored in the West economically. Yet India’s original goal to improve the rural population’s living standard by democratic, egalitarian means got lost along the way.
Andreas Hilger, Revolutionary Ideology. Competing Systems or Development Politics. Soviet-Indian Economic Relations during Khrushchev’s Cold War

Only recently has historical research looked again at the relations between the ›second‹ and the ›third‹ world in the Cold War era. In doing so, it has not only taken advantage of the often clearly improved access to national sources, but also taken up the broader range of questions posed by the modern history of international relations. This article first discusses the foundations of Soviet foreign trade policy after 1945 and then analyses the formative phase of East-South relations under Khrushchev using three case studies from Soviet-Indian economic relations. Soviet political ideological and foreign trade ambitions in the East-West conflict encountered ambitious, independent strategies of modernisation in Nehru’s government. In the long run, India’s autonomous development agenda and the USSR’s own overloading of foreign trade over-extended the would-be Soviet economic offensive in the Third World.

Patrik von zur Mühlen, Paradigm Change in Development Aid Policy. The Example of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung from the End of the 1950s to the 1990s

One of the pioneers of development aid in Germany, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (F. Ebert Foundation) transferred political approaches drawn from the history of the workers’ movement to the Third World. It regarded the building up of trade unions and fostering of adult political education and a co-operative society as the urgent tasks, to which was soon added media relations. Setbacks, criticisms from politicians, press and scientists, and the Foundation’s own experience, has led to a gradual paradigm change in its development aid policy since the end of the 1970s. Farmers’ associations, women’s groups, citizens’ groups and self-help groups, forums for a broad intra-social and international dialogues, small credit banks, Chambers of Commerce and of Crafts and other organisations that represent the interests of their members towards state administrations and can in turn support the work of grass roots enterprises, have come to the fore. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation has thus turned away from earlier models of developmental aid and towards more flexible concepts.

Véronique Dimier, Bringing the Neo-Patrimonial State back to Europe. French Decolonization and the Making of the European Development Aid Policy

This article deals with the role of French ex-colonial officials in the setting up of the Directorate General 8 (DG8, Development) of the European Commission during the early years of the European Economic Community. It addresses the question of the transfer of values, norms, practices and methods of public action, from colonial to development administrations. Within the framework of the building of a multi-national administration, it also deals with the issue of loyalty and autonomy of Commission officials vis-à-vis their member states.